

No. 25 of 2012



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

MONDAY 19 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
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, GOSK, FRCS	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
Dr. the Hon. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree	Minister of Education and Human Resources
Hon. Satya Veyash Faugoo	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology
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Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Tourism and Leisure
Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
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Members

Members

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GOSK*Deputy Speaker*

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Deerpalsing, Hon. Ms Kumaree Rajeshree

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 25 of 2012

Sitting of 19 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)

PAPER LAID

The Prime Minister: Sir, the Paper has been laid on the Table -

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

The Annual Report 2011 of the Civil Service Family Protection Scheme Board (In Original).

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION
PRB REPORT 2013 - RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the PRB Report 2013, he will state –

- (a) how same was approved by Government when the recommendations thereof widen the gap between the highest and the lowest rank paid civil servants, indicating the requests submitted by the Unions in relation thereto, including if they have proposed an interim wage increase;
- (b) the names of the persons proposed by the Unions as Chairperson and Members of the Committee on Errors, Omissions and Anomalies, and
- (c) if Government has discussed with the Mauritius Employers Federation and the Unions of the private sector regarding any request from the employees of the private sector for an adjustment of their salaries, as a consequence thereof.

The Prime Minister: The House will surely appreciate that Government has fulfilled its promise by ensuring the publication of the 2013 PRB Report ahead of time, despite a very tight and extremely economic difficult context. A salary review is normally due every five years. As the last report was published in July 2008 - in fact, this new report should have been published in July 2013 and, therefore, should be applicable in January of 2014 - we are, therefore, in real terms having a salary review in four and a half years instead of five years. This report is also applicable to Rodrigues and all the parastatal bodies.

Nevertheless, the Government has approved the 2013 report *in toto*, to be effective on 01 January 2013, that is, instead of July 2013. Payment will be effected in full. The House will recall that in 2003, even though there was no global economic crisis, payment of the PRB salaries had been phased over two financial years.

In evolving the proposed package, the PRB has taken into consideration the following factors -

- (i) the capacity of the Government to pay;
- (ii) the economic and financial development in the country;
- (iii) the remuneration trends in the economy and market realities;

- (iv) the need to retain experienced and scarce talents;
- (v) the need to maintain an acceptable salary ratio of General Worker to Permanent Secretary;
- (vi) the need to partially bridge the gap between public sector and private sector at the appropriate levels of the echelon;
- (vii) the need to establish fair relativities to maintain harmonious employee relations;
- (viii) the erosion of purchasing power since the 2008 Pay Review;
- (ix) the unparalleled job security, pension benefits, work life balance and status provided by public sector jobs, and
- (x) the need to strike the right balance between providing an adequate pay package and ensuring social acceptability, among others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, Government decided to approve the 2013 PRB Report in the full knowledge that the Report, itself, makes provision for errors and omissions as in the past. After the publication of the Report, Government received a number of representations from the Trade Unions and including they were asking for a meeting with me. I accepted to meet them on the 26 of October 2012 and, as a responsible Government, decided to extend the scope of eventual corrective measures not only to errors and omissions, but also to alleged anomalies. This decision was communicated to the representatives of the Trade Unions at the meeting I had with them.

The Trade Unions unanimously approved the proposed course of action and, at their request, Government decided to extend the deadline for the submission of Option Forms to 19 November 2012. It was also agreed that all submissions relating to Errors and Omissions and alleged anomalies should be submitted by 30 November 2012. It was further agreed that the Committee set up to look into Errors and Omissions and alleged anomalies should submit its Report by the end of February 2013.

I wish to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the salary ratio General Worker to Permanent Secretary which was 1:8.6 in July 2008 was reduced to 1:7.7 in December 2012. This ratio has been reinstated at 1:8.8 with the 2013 Report.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, during the meeting with Trade Unions, I invited them to submit the names of potential persons who may form part of the Committee on Errors, Omissions and Anomalies.

I am informed that the Trade Unions, subsequently, submitted the following names -

<i>Trade Unions</i>	<i>Names</i>
(i) State and Other Employees Federation	Mr Mick Gujadhur as Chairperson and Mr Abdool Hamid Malleck Amode as Assessor
(ii) Government Teachers' Union	Mr Bijaye Coomar Appanah, former Director of PRB
(iii) Primary School Common Front	Mr Bijaye Coomar Appanah
(iv) Trade Unions Common Platform	Mr Paul Matthews - Consultant Mr Chandan Jankee, Professor in Economics Mr Kemil Gobin

However, the Unions were unable to reach consensus on either the Chairperson or the Members of the Committee. In the circumstances, Cabinet decided on 16 November 2012 that the Committee on Errors, Omissions and Anomalies of the PRB Report 2013 to be as follows -

- (a) Chairperson Mr Dharam Dev Manraj, former Financial Secretary and presently Senior Adviser, Project Management and Delivery Unit of my Office;
- (b) Members Mr Devendra Parsad Ruhee, former Senior Chief Executive and presently President of the Public Officers' Welfare Council, and
- (c) Mr Khemil Gobin, Director, Edge Consulting, a company specialised in Human Resource Services (his name was proposed by the Trade Union Platform itself).

I wish to highlight the fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Trade Union Common Front has welcomed the appointment of Mr Dev Manraj as Chairperson of the Errors, Omissions and Anomalies Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the same meeting, a request was made by the Trade Unions for an interim increase of Rs2,000 to be paid across the board to public officers. However, following

the decision to set up the Committee on Errors, Omissions and alleged Anomalies, they did not pursue the matter further.

This is, Mr Speaker, Sir, not the first time that the publication of the PRB Report is the subject of representations from Trade Union Representatives relating to errors, omissions and alleged anomalies. For instance, the 1987 PRB Report was accepted by Cabinet but rejected by the Unions. This led to considerable tension and Government, subsequently, appointed Mr Donald Chesworth as Salaries Commissioner in April 1987. Mr Chesworth submitted his Report in September 1988 in which he made, inter-alia, the following observations and I quote -

“It is of course the custom that after a major salary review this is followed by the vigorous pursuit of anomaly claims. Since there is a convention that for existing holders of all posts there should be no deterioration in remuneration or conditions of employment, there is every incentive for both Unions and individuals to reiterate their claims described not just as anomalies, but glaring anomalies. Presentation of anomaly claims is a highly developed art, not to say popular sport in Mauritius. The temptation to do this is enormous since nothing can be lost, and there is always the prospect of improvement if there is some forum with revising powers”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after the publication of the PRB Report in 1993, many Unions reported industrial dispute on alleged anomalies arising out of the Report. The then Minister of Civil Service referred the dispute to the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal which decided to set up an Ad-hoc Anomalies Advisory Committee to assist in the determination of the dispute. It was only three years later in 1996 that the Tribunal came up with a set of awards.

The PRB Report of 1998 was released in August with effective date being 01 July 1998. The Errors and Omissions Report was published in June 1999.

Following complaints received from Trade Unions on the 1998 Report, the then Government decided in July 1999 to set up an Ad-hoc Committee to look into representations regarding the alleged anomalies. The Committee submitted its Report in October 2000.

The 2003 PRB Report was published in June 2003 with effective date being 01 July 2003. The Errors and Omissions Report was published in May 2004.

The 2008 PRB Report was published in May 2008 and the Errors and Omissions Report in June 2009. Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, this amply demonstrates that there is nothing anomalous about representations being made about anomalies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (c) of the question, salary adjustment in the Private Sector is a matter for collective bargaining between employer and employee in sectors not governed by Remuneration Orders. Government otherwise intervened with statutory increases that take into account cost of living and these are addressed yearly in the additional Remuneration Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should also perhaps add. It is a fact that salary increases in the public sector at certain echelons tend to gradually lead to adjustments in the private sector. However, it is well known that, in the private sector, salaries and perks are skewed in favour of the top and middle management. It is important for good industrial relations that such disparities be remedied.

Had the PRB Report been a mere unit within the Ministry instead of an independent institution, the need for Government approval and the provision for a post-PRB mechanism for correction of errors, omissions and anomalies would then not have arisen. Because PRB is allowed to operate independently, Government reserves to itself the freedom to approve its Report purely and simply or, as it has done in this year's Report, to have the Report re-examined as regards errors, omissions and anomalies.

The approach that Government has taken in the implementation of the 2013 PRB Report has been endorsed almost unanimously. In fact, as at 10 a.m. this morning, 51,940 out of the 52,612 civil servants have already submitted their Option Forms which comes to about 98%.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Prime Minister refer repeatedly to alleged anomalies. May I know whether Government is disputing the fact that the PRB Report 2013 has indeed widened the gap between the highest and the lowest paid civil servants?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, just to answer that question, I'll refer to Will Hutton's pay proposals which has been done in the UK and this is what he said, and this is a bit what we are also concerned about. He said -

'Throughout the public sector most pay differentials are well within the 20 to 1 ratio recommended by him. Only 4,000 senior public sector managers are within the top one per cent of earners and most of these are in highly demanding and challenging positions. More to the point, the qualities required to perform those

roles effectively are not that common and so in order to attract candidates of the right calibre the appropriate level of rewards has to be offered.’

In other words, if there was a rigid pay differential, he goes on to say, that would make things very difficult. That is also one of our concerns, Mr Speaker, Sir. For example, it is misconceived, we feel, and unfounded to talk excessive remuneration of top public officials, because professionals like medical specialists or members of the legal and judicial services, engineers, architects are people we need to have in this country. Now Government cannot afford to lose these skills and expertise to the private sector and that is very often what happens. For example, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure has an immense problem to the pay that we give to the engineers, they prefer to go to work in the private sector, because there is a huge pay differential. Their salary levels, therefore, are not comparable to what happens for the CEOs or the professionals in the private sector and, therefore, there is a risk of brain drain of the higher echelons from the civil service and this is considerably higher than for the lower echelons. If this were to happen, Mr Speaker, Sir, we would be in a situation where we would have to start recruiting foreign nationals, pay them even higher wages to be able to perform, to make sure that there is no deterioration in the public services and then we would get the blame. So, the differential is something that we have to look at in that sense. As I said, in UK it is 20 to 1.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from what the hon. Prime Minister has just said, he quoted figures referring to - if I heard him correctly - the wages of manual workers as compared to the salaries of Permanent Secretaries and that might cause doubt. Can I, therefore, ask the hon. Prime Minister to confirm that the terms of reference of Mr Manraj and his committee, include eventually, reducing this gap between the highest and lowest paid civil servants?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we have asked him to look at the whole issue, he will have to look at everything, including, I suppose, this. But as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is this problem that there is too big of a differential between the higher echelons in the public sector and in the private service. We have to take this into account. Just to give an example: Chief Executives in the private sector. Some of them get Rs1 m. per month and, God knows, if we compare with ourselves what we get, it is nothing comparable, the middle level also, the heads of departments are getting somewhere between Rs100,000 and nearly Rs400,000. These are things that we have to look at otherwise we will get a brain drain, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not getting personal, but Mr Mohun Aujayeb, as Head of the PRB, added insult to injury, when after having come out with that report, came out with provocative statements in the press, in the public, to the effect that '*Je ne suis pas là pour faire plaisir*' and so on. Can I know whether Mr Mohun Aujayeb is still Head of the PRB?

The Prime Minister: I suppose he said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, because his job is to look at what compensation he is going to give and not try to please everyone. Yes, he is still Head of the PRB.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the possibility of an interim rate increase is concerned, I heard the hon. Prime Minister saying that the request was made by the unions at a given point in time, but not raised further. My question is: is Government in presence of a formal withdrawal of that request from the unions?

The Prime Minister: It is not that I am aware that there is a formal request. I am not aware that this is so, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as we have set up this committee to review everything, not just 'errors and omissions', but also 'anomalies', they will take it up and we have put up a time frame on that, February 2012, I suppose that it is why there has been no formal request.

Mr Bérenger: Whereas to be expected and I think by the way the hon. Prime Minister has expressed himself, he understands that there is frustration among the employees of the private sector, when PRB Report has been produced and there is no comparative move in the private sector, whether there can be or not is another matter. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the trade unions in the private sector have made any representation to Government and, if yes, the details thereof?

The Prime Minister: Representation about the private sector?

(Interruptions)

No, I do not recall, I think there was a general talk about the gap in the private and public sector, including, I mentioned the top echelons, but I suppose they will discuss this, if they'll have, with this new committee set up.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister rightly pointed out that the PRB exercise is carried out at regular intervals four or five years' interval. Does not the hon. Prime Minister feel that there is a case for, at least, regular review of the remuneration orders in the private sector?

The Prime Minister: That is something that we have to look at, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the private sector has not mentioned whether they want to review or not. I am not aware

of, but that it will be up to them, whether we need to do something. As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are other differentials between the private and public sector, maybe all this will have to be looked at, at the same time.

Mr Ganoo: Can I pick up from where the hon. Leader of the Opposition just stopped? With regard to the workers of the private sector, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there are sectors where remuneration orders have not been reviewed for the past 10 years or more? Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to consider the possibility of legislating so that every five years, as obtains in the case of public employees, remuneration orders are compulsorily reviewed?

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that the Minister of Labour has, in fact, sent every single one with them.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that one of the criteria used by the PRB in the PRB Report was to prevent brain drain among top civil servants. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many civil servants of the rank of PAS and above have left service since the last PRB Report to join the private sector?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the number exactly, but many have, Mr Speaker, Sir, they prefer to go in the private sector. Not just them, but also, as I said, for example, engineers, even doctors. There is one case, at the moment, of a highly qualified doctor who cannot be recruited, who is going abroad and we would wish to have him here. But, let me also say, Mr Speaker, Sir, the salary earners, in the public sector, earning above Rs46,250, that is, Rs46,250 or above represent only 2.4% of public officers.

Mr Jugnauth: Would the hon. Prime Minister assure the House that the Committee that has been set up under the Chair of Mr Manraj to look into 'errors, omissions and anomalies', in fact, the mandate of that committee would be wider, in the sense that they would also look at the relativity of salaries within the service?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that would be the case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Baloomoody: Just to take up from hon. Alan Ganoo, with regard to the private sector, the hon. Prime Minister just replied that the Minister of Labour has sent all the files to the NRB. In fact, replying to PQ No. B/600, that was two/three weeks ago, the hon. Minister of Labour replied that only nine cases have been referred to the NRB. May we know which is which? All the cases which have been referred or only nine, because there is a lot of cases which have not been referred to the NRB, according to our information?

The Prime Minister: I think the hon. Member has just answered more than 10 years, but that was three weeks ago, that was recently.

Mr Obeegadoo: My point was the one just raised by hon. Jugnauth. I listened carefully to the hon. Prime Minister. On the one hand, he criticised the private sector, because of the skewed...

(Interruptions)

...the word was 'skewed'.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, order! The hon. Member has a question, he should put it. I have said the other day: 'Do not make a statement, just put the question'.

Mr Obeegadoo: Being given that on the one hand the Prime Minister said that salary differentials in the private sector are skewed in favour of middle and top level management and, on the other hand, he was making the case for incentives, for skilled staff within the public sector, will he agree that while allowing for such incentives to be provided for, there is a specific provision, within the terms of reference of the Manraj Committee, to ensure that salary differentials, as they now exist between lowest and highest income earners within the public sector are not increased?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is for them to decide. I did not criticise the private sector. I am just saying, as a fact, this is what it is. It is not criticism; it is as it is. As I have just said, Mr Speaker, Sir, he will have to look carefully because we don't want to reach a situation where, actually, we can't attract the best and the brightest in the public sector. It is very important.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: With regard to the review of the anomalies, will the hon. Prime Minister consider fixing a maximum ratio between the highest paid and the lowest paid in the Civil Service, taking into account all the allowances, fees and membership benefits for sitting on different Boards in both parastatal and public enterprises?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I mentioned in my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the ratio used to be 1:8.6 in 2008; it was 1:7.7 in 2012, and it has been brought back to 1:8.8 in this report. But, as I said, in the U.K it is 1:20.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the PRB Report 2013 made recommendations as far as the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister,

Ministers and Members of Parliament are concerned and, if yes, whether those recommendations are also being referred to the Manraj Committee? Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to confirm that, at any rate, there will be no allowance or salary increases for the President, Prime Minister, Ministers and Members of Parliament until the Manraj Report has been published and implemented in one way or the other?

The Prime Minister: Yes, from what I understand, the Civil Servants will be getting theirs. That is so. They have made recommendations again to be in line with what I was just saying earlier, but nothing will be done until the final report is submitted.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

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.

(11.53 p.m.)

Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): M. le président, je voudrais commencer par féliciter le Premier ministre et le ministre des finances pour ce budget. Je voudrais dire que j'ai trouvé une opposition totalement déroutée dans les arguments qu'ils ont mis en avant. Et je dois dire que dans l'argument qu'ils ont mis en avant en premier, c'est que plusieurs des orateurs de l'autre côté de la Chambre ont dit : 'ah, c'est un budget qui a été désapprouvé par les travaillistes.' Mais c'est basé sur quoi ? Sur des bruits de couloir ? Sur des faits ? M. le président, c'est clair que les membres de l'opposition sont complètement déroutés et trouvent seulement à - comme on dit en créole - *mette choula*. Mais rien sur les faits. Je vais venir maintenant dans le vif des critiques qui ont été faites de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

M. le président, quand je regarde ce que le premier orateur sur le budget a dit, notamment l'honorable Li Kwong Wing, je suis désolée de le dire, mais plein de choses qui ne sont pas vraies ont été prononcées par lui ; des choses qui sont complètement fausses. Au début de son discours, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing dit –

“All these were promises made to be broken.”

Parmi les *promises made to be broken* il mentionne –

“40 out of 175 units of industrial space (...)”

que soi-disant le gouvernement n'a pas fait. Désolé, M. le président, mais ça c'est quoi ? Ce sont les *industrial estates that are being constructed at Pointe aux Sables and Roche Bois*. Peut-être que l'honorable Li Kwong Wing ne va jamais à Roche Bois ; peut-être qu'ils ne vont jamais dans les endroits suivants ! Mais, voilà la preuve que ce que l'honorable Li Kwong Wing a dit est absolument faux ! L'autre dérouté ...

(Interruptions)

Je ne sais pas si l'honorable Li Kwong Wing ne vit pas à Maurice !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: M. le président, je ne sais pas si l'honorable Li Kwong Wing ne vit pas à Maurice. Dans son discours, parmi les *promises made to be broken*, il parle de *three new District Councils*. Mais il vit où ? Les élections sont là, et les gens sont en train de poser pour les *three new District Councils*. Où est-ce qu'il vit ? Sur quelle planète est-ce qu'il vit ? Dans quel pays est-ce qu'il vit ? Parmi les *promises made to be broken*, Il parle de *three new District Councils, 40 industrial estates*, alors que c'est en train d'être fait.

Mais, M. le président, où cela devient encore plus grave c'est que lorsqu'on fait un discours ici, c'est répercuté dans la presse non seulement pour la population de l'île Maurice, mais internationalement, et les gens peuvent avoir une conception totalement fausse. I will not go and say that he is misleading the House because I cannot say that. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am concerned that the things that hon. Li Kwong Wing have said might mislead the population and even international investors. I will come to the facts of the matters, Mr Speaker, Sir, in terms of growth rate, inflation ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: ...unemployment rate, it is absolutely wrong. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will give you the proof. Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Li Kwong Wing says that since this Government came to power, the growth rate has been declining. Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry, Statistics Mauritius, the CSO is not the property of the Labour Party or the PMSD. Statistics Mauritius shows that the growth rate, when they left power in 2005, was 2.3%; *le fameux état d'urgence économique*. The next year, what was CSO's figure for the growth rate? It was 5.1%, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Et l'honorable Li Kwong Wing a le culot de dire que*, since Government took power, the growth rate has declined. No, I am sorry! The statistics are here to prove it. It was 2.3% when the Leader of the Opposition, who was then Prime Minister, said '*on est en état d'urgence économique*.' That was 2.3%. It has not declined since then. It has gone up. Not only that. Let me show you the graph, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, no interruption! Hon. Members have to listen!

Ms Deerpalsing: Facts hurt, Mr Speaker, Sir. When you come and say things and you are proved wrong, of course, it hurts. This is the graph, Mr Speaker, Sir, of not only when they left, but when the previous Minister of Finance was here. What was happening to the growth rate? And what has happened when my friend, hon. Duval, took over as Minister of Finance? These are the facts! I am sorry! But these are the facts from the CSO!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Is the hon. Member producing it?

Ms Deerpalsing: Yes, I can lay it on the Table, Mr Speaker, Sir. These are official CSO figures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us now come to another thing. I am very disappointed.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member was not here! Let me show him the industrial estates that are being built. Look at this, hon. Mr Li Kwong Wing!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: Look at this!

(Interruptions)

All these industrial estates being built!

(Interruptions)

I am very sorry to disappoint the hon. Member!

(Interruptions)

But, what he said was totally false. It has to go on records that when the hon. Member stood up and said that that was not being done, that was not at all the truth, it was totally false!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, now let us come...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Excuse me! There are too many interruptions. The hon. lady is making her case, give her the opportunity to do so!

Ms Deerpalsing: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is very disappointing when you hear an hon. Member like hon. Li Kwong Wing, who is an economist, comes and says things like that – I am totally aghast. I have studied a little bit of economics as well....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member says ‘aghast’. The hon. Member means ‘annoyed’?

Ms Deerpalsing: Annoyed, yes. Mr Speaker, Sir, he comes to the unemployment rate. Then he says that the unemployment rate is 8% and he says, and I quote: “if we take into account the workers who refuse to register their respective employment exchange on the ground that they will not get a job, then we can ‘safely’ add another 2%”. Mr Speaker, Sir, any economist *digne de ce nom*, any student who studies economics at Form III level knows that unemployment rate – it has been the case in England and the States just now – can increase also because people who were inactive have now a hope that they will get a job and they go and register. This is also the case; so you cannot as an economist who is intellectually honest, just give one side of the picture...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, if you are an economist *professionnel digne de ce nom*, intellectually honest, you cannot just give one side of the coin. You have also to say that unemployment rate can also increase and, in fact, does increase when people have hope that they will get a job and they rush to the registers and they put their names. That is also the case! That is false what hon. Li Kwong Wing said as well!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, another false statement which hon. Li Kwong Wing said is that this Government has not only created, and I quote: “(...) created not only jobless growth but a job loss growth (...)”. *Absolument faux!* This Government has created over this year, for the information of hon. Li Kwong Wing, 2,400 net jobs. Net, Mr Speaker, Sir! That was the third thing that he said that was false. Let me come to the fourth, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

C’est absolument incroyable, M. le président ! Je n’ai pas le droit de dire le mot...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Ms Deerpalsing: Je n’ai pas le droit de dire le mot ‘menteur’ dans cette Chambre, M. le président, comme vous le savez.

Mr Speaker: Oui, l’honorable membre n’a pas le droit.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mais, je suis absolument ahurie par la malhonnêteté intellectuelle. M. le président, regardez ce que l'honorable Li Kwong Wing a dit sur l'inflation. Il a dit que l'inflation va être à 6%. Je vais venir avec les faits. Ce qu'il ne dit pas, et que chaque économiste sait, c'est que dans une année où vous injectez R 4.6 milliards dans l'économie cela chauffe l'économie et en ne faisant rien, avec aucune augmentation de prix - des commodités à l'extérieur - vous n'injectez que R 4.6 milliards dans l'économie, l'inflation va augmenter, M. le président ! Mais regardez ce qu'il dit ...

(Interruptions)

Il dit

(Interruptions)

Monn écoute twa cozer ! To écoute mwa cozer! Tonn coze menti partou tonn aller même!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Mrs Deerpalsing: M. le président, il dit: *"this is an indication of economic misery (...). About the increase to the pensioners, qu'est-ce qu'il n'a pas dit, M. le president? Il dit: "They will get 4.3% when the inflation next year has been estimated at 6%". M. le président, depuis l'indépendance de ce pays, l'augmentation qui est donnée, que ce soit aux travailleurs ou aux pensionnés, is with respect with the current year, not with the next year's inflation. Next year they will get according to next year's inflation. You cannot say they are getting 4.3% when inflation next year will be 6%! What kind of dishonesty is this? Mr Speaker, Sir, never ever in this country or anywhere else has any government given compensation based on next year's figures! Mr Speaker, Sir, what kind of dishonesty is this?*

(Interruptions)

Total dishonesty! This is totally false! Ce qui m'inquiète M. le président c'est qu'un tel discours - comme je vous l'ai dit tout à l'heure - a une répercussion sur la population ; mais oubliez la population, internationalement it is completely misleading, Mr Speaker, Sir, surtout quand cela vient d'une personne avec une formation d'économiste. Cela ne se fait jamais! Jamais un gouvernement ne donne des augmentations par rapport aux chiffres d'inflation de l'année prochaine! L'année prochaine ils vont avoir par rapport à ce que cela va être l'année prochaine, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, surtout quand il vient parler d'augmentation aux pensionnés de 4.3%, et cela venant d'un parti qui a fait quoi avec les pensionnés de ce pays ? Personne ne sait, personne ne se souvient?

(Interruptions)

Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement MMM/MSM avait fait

Mr Speaker: Please address the Chair!

Ms Deerpalsing: *I am addressing you, Mr Speaker, Sir.* Qu'est-ce que ce gouvernement MMM/MSM avait fait avec les pensionnés ? Toute l'Ile Maurice se souvient encore du traumatisme qui a été infligé à nos aînés dans ce pays avec la politique de ciblage et, aujourd'hui, ils ont le toupet de venir donner la leçon à ce gouvernement qui est en train de donner une augmentation plus que l'inflation ? Ce parti qui avait retiré la pension à nos aînés, ce sont eux qui vont venir donner la leçon maintenant ?

M. le président, en sus, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing ...

(Interruptions)

Je sais qu'il doit partir....

(Interruptions)

Je sais que la vérité *hurts* !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: Au revoir!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: Bye-bye!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Ms Deerpalsing: Je sais qu'il ne pouvait tenir le coup. Ce n'est pas grave.

(Interruptions)

Truth hurts and truth hurts terribly!

(Interruptions)

M. le président, il a aussi dit : « *economic misery and economic wreckage* » Tout à l'heure le Premier ministre était en train de parler au sujet de la *PNQ* que le *leader* de l'opposition avait posée, le *gap between the highest and the lowest paid and hon. Li Kwong Wing talked about economic wreckage. I do not have the figure here with me but I showed it last time when I spoke about the Budget. You know Mr Speaker, Sir, between 2000 and 2005 - and these are CSO figures - the share of income produced in this country, the way it was distributed between the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile, c'est-à-dire les 10% plus pauvres jusqu'aux 10% plus riches, savez-vous, M. le président, qu'entre 2000 et 2005 la richesse qui a été produite dans le pays, de quelle façon cela avait été redistribuée, de quelle façon cela avait été accumulée par les différentes sections de la population? Tout le monde a perdu sauf les 10% plus riches! J'ai le graphe aussi et je pourrais l'amener la prochaine fois ; ce sont les CSO figures. Et ce sont ces gens-là qui sont en train de parler de 'gap between the highest and the lowest'! Ce sont ces gens-là qui sont en train de parler de 'economic wreckage'!* M. le président, je vais juste vous dire ce qu'ils ont fait quand ils étaient au pouvoir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about employment rate, do you know when they were in Government – and these are facts, I am sorry to state them as they are – they even resorted to a new method of calculation of unemployment rate because the unemployment rate was just skyrocketing.

D'ailleurs on avait eu l'ancien ministre qui avait dit: 'nous perdons des emplois à une vitesse vertigineuse'. C'était l'ancien ministre, l'honorable Cuttaree, qui avait dit cela. Puisque cela était en train de déborder le taux du chômage, vous savez ce qu'ils ont fait; ils ont changé la méthode de calcul. Mais, même avec le changement de la méthode de calcul - c'est documenté ça, vous pouvez aller vérifier - le taux de chômage avait *peaked to 9.6% when they left power, Mr Speaker, Sir. S'ils n'avaient pas changé la méthode de calcul, au lieu de 9.6%, cela aurait été 11% avec l'ancienne méthode. 11%! Mais, quand ils ont changé la méthode et cela a été recorded as 9.6%. These are the people who are going to come and talk about unemployment rate! These are the people who are going to come and give lessons!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us now talk about the health of our economy. Let us talk about that. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, on a un déficit budgétaire prévu de 2.2%, mais si on retire - on ne va pas le retirer, mais juste pour notre compréhension, si on n'avait pas considéré le PRB, le déficit budgétaire aura été de 1.1%, si on n'avait pas à payer le PRB. Cela aurait été le *record low of 1.1%* déficit budgétaire. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire quand on parle de ces chiffres-là, M. le président? Cela a une importance, parce que *it has its meaning, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, when Government is faced with public debt crisis as Governments elsewhere are being faced, what happens? What is the consequence? *Quand il y a la dette publique qui explose*, Governments cannot focus on the future. They have to focus on current level of spending and they have to focus on *retourner l'argent aux lenders*. They cannot focus on the future. This is what happens *quand la dette publique devient trop haute, M. le président.* Vous savez c'est quoi la dette aujourd'hui avec ce budget? *La dette publique pour l'année qui s'écoule est à 54.2%, forecast for next year 53.7%. Vous savez ce que c'était quand eux ils ont quitté le pouvoir, M. le président. C'était à plus de 60%. Il y avait même une année où c'était 71%, la dette publique. 71%! Chiffre officiel, s'il vous plaît! Wait a minute! This, despite of what! Despite, the fact, that these are the same people who were in Government and which was the first one in 25 years to increase the rate of personal tax to 30%. Malgré le fait qu'ils ont augmenté la taxe, personal rate of tax. Malgré le fait que c'est ce gouvernement quand ils étaient au pouvoir, qui avait augmenté la TVA par 50% en deux fois. Malgré le fait qu'ils ont augmenté la taxe- personal rate of tax - first time in 25 years à 30%. Malgré le fait qu'ils ont augmenté la TVA à deux reprises, malgré cela c'était quoi le déficit budgétaire comparé à 2.2%? C'était quoi? Attendez, je vais vous dire, M. le président. J'ai mes chiffres là. M. le président, le déficit budgétaire, quand ils sortaient, quand le peuple les mettait dehors, était officiellement 5.3% du GDP.*

(Interruptions)

Ce n'est pas tout! Attendez! *The best is yet to come. Wait a minute!* Il y a la cerise sur le gâteau. C'était juste le gâteau. Il faut aussi ajouter la cerise. 5.3% de GDP et sans les squelettes! Les squelettes, c'est quoi, c'est 2.8% de GDP. Je vais vous dire c'est quoi. Quand vous ajoutez tout cela, 5.3% + 2.8%, cela vous fait 8.1% de déficit budgétaire. Malgré avoir augmenté la TVA à deux reprises; malgré avoir augmenté le *personal rate of tax*.

(Interruptions)

Talere to va réponn.

Malgré avoir augmenté le *personal rate of tax* à 30%, malgré tout cela, le déficit budgétaire à 8.1%. Pourquoi? 5.3% le pourcentage de GDP + R1.2 milliard qu'ils avaient mis de côté pour la pension de la MRA, de *Post Office*, R 1 milliard pour BPML, pour *Cyber Village*, etc., etc. et R 900 millions de dettes qu'ils ont mis dans les *off-budget items*. C'est-à-dire, ces items-là, ils n'avaient même pas mis cela dans le budget, M. le président. 2.8% de notre GDP avait été caché dans des *off-budget items*. Même pas dans le budget quand ils étaient au pouvoir pendant la dernière année. Ce sont des chiffres officiels, M. le président. Je suis désolée. *And these are the people who are going to talk about economic wreckage! These are the people who are going to talk about economic misery, Mr Speaker, Sir! Come on! Come on!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know, d'ailleurs, le peuple de ce pays sait très bien c'est quoi le *track record* de ces gens de l'opposition, du MMM et du MSM.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. Member should not use the words "*ces gens de l'opposition*".

Ms Deerpalsing: Les honorables membres.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members of the Opposition.

Ms Deerpalsing: *Yes, hon. Members* de l'opposition. Le peuple sait exactement c'est quoi leur *track record*. Le peuple sait ce qu'ils ont laissé derrière comme état d'urgence économique; eux-mêmes ils ont dit : l'état d'urgence économique dans lequel ils ont eux-mêmes avoué avoir mis le pays eux-mêmes.

(Interruptions)

Sans la crise. Merci, pour le *cue*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank hon. Aimée, for reminding me to show some graphs here. M. le président, l'état d'urgence économique, les 8.1% de déficit budgétaire, le 9.6% de *unemployment rate*, les squelettes dans les placards, la TVA qui augmente à deux reprises et le *personal rate of income tax* qui augmente à 30%. A ce moment là, il y avait quoi? Le calme total internationalement. Ça c'est le graphe.

(Interruptions)

Il faut apprendre dans la vie, mon cher ami. Ça c'est le graphe. You can go on the internet, Mr Speaker, Sir. You can go on the FAO - I hope the FAO is credible enough – website and you will see the price of commodities, the way they have increased over the years. Look at this, Mr

Speaker, Sir, totally constant. It is totally stable. It is only in 2007 that it starts peaking up and being unstable and *imprévisible*.

(Interruptions)

Voilà un autre qui part.

(Interruptions)

Another one down. Another one bites the dust. La vérité est trop offensante, M. le président.

Allons voir maintenant, M. le président, *the price of oil*. *Mr Speaker, Sir, look at the price of oil*. *Over 1970 to October 2011* – regardez moi ça, M. le président,

(Interruptions)

Oui, je vais déposer. Le prix du pétrole totalement *stable*, enfin *more or less at a certain point*. C'est seulement ici, en 2006, que cela commence à monter, M. le président.

Tout ce temps-là, pendant qu'ils étaient en train d'augmenter la TVA à deux reprises par 50%, pendant qu'ils étaient en train d'augmenter le *rate of income tax at 30% for the first time in 25 years*, pendant qu'ils étaient en train de mettre 2.8% de notre *GDP off budget items*, pendant qu'ils étaient en train de faire un déficit budgétaire de 5.4%, ce qui se passait c'était le calme total au niveau international, M. le président. Vous allez voir aujourd'hui que depuis 2000 - c'est les chiffres de la FAO - le prix du blé sur le marché international *has more than tripled and price of maize has more than doubled*. *Since the start of 2006 the average world price for rice has risen by 217%*. Je dis cela encore une fois, M. le président. *Since the start of 2006 the average world price for rice has risen by 217 %, wheat by 136%, maize by 125%, soya beans by 107%* M. le président, et aujourd'hui, pendant qu'ils étaient en train de retirer la pension aux aînés, on est en train de donner plus que l'inflation. Ce n'est pas tout, M. le président, ce gouvernement sous le *leadership* du Premier ministre, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, garde les subsides et augmente les subsides qui sont à un milliard de roupies aujourd'hui. Vous voyez les prix qui ont augmenté là - un milliard! Le transport *remains free* ; il y a l'éducation, la santé, les services sociaux. Il y a aujourd'hui, M. le président, 165,000 – merci à l'honorable Madame Bappoo, j'ai eu les chiffres - 165,000 personnes dans ce pays qui ont le *Basic Retirement Pension*. Il y a aujourd'hui 18,000 personnes qui touchent le *Social Aid* ; il y a aujourd'hui 25,000 personnes qui touchent la pension de veuve et ils auront leur augmentation.

Tout cela, M. le président, pendant qu'il y a tous ces problèmes au niveau international. Tout cela, pendant que mon ami, l'honorable Xavier Duval, ramène le déficit budgétaire à 2.2 %.

The state of the economy in the macroeconomic indicators is sound, Mr Speaker, Sir, at a time when Europe and elsewhere, big economies like the US, are really reeling with shock after shock. You see what is happening, Mr Speaker, Sir. Look at the unemployment rate - this is from the 'Economist' - in Greece. It is getting to 55%. *On va dire qu'on ne va pas nous comparer avec la Grèce.* Look at the unemployment rate – this is the 30% mark where my finger is. Look at all these countries in Europe! We are at 8%, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, when we talk we have to know that Mauritius does not exist as a planet by itself. We live in a planet that is interconnected, which happens to be totally affected by what is happening elsewhere.

Mr Speaker, Sir, look at the GDP forecast growth for the Euro zone. The blue coincidentally is 4%. *On peut voir que seul Latvia peut s'attendre à un growth rate de 4% cette année. Le reste, M. le président, concernant le taux, on est en train de parler de zéro à 1.9 % et en dessous de zéro à 1.9% dans tous ces pays d'Europe. Anémique! C'est pour 2012 et concernant celui-là, c'est encore pire, même Latvia disparaît from the blue mark.* Everyone else is way below, Mr Speaker, Sir, *et nous, petite île Maurice, on est à 4% de growth rate - 4% de growth rate, 2.2% de déficit budgétaire, 53.7% de dette publique,* balance of payment, positive, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are many European countries which would look at us with a lot of envy and admiration.

As I said let us not forget what is happening in Europe. They are cutting wages, benefits, we are keeping Rs1 billion of subsidies, and we are keeping public transport for the old and for the students, free. We are keeping Health free and you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, since I am talking about health, in the United States they spend about 17% of GDP on the provision of health and yet there are about 50 million Americans who go without any health care. But now it is changing with President Obama, but only starting to change, because of all the opposition and so on.

But here in Mauritius the Health sector expense is about 2.4 to 3% - I don't have the exact figures - and Health is free, Mr Speaker, Sir, universal with only 2.5 to 3 % of GDP whereas in the United States 17% of GDP spent on Health and yet not everyone has access to free health care.

Il faut savoir de quoi on parle et quand on parle de l'économie c'est toujours relatif, on ne peut pas regarder dans l'absolu comme si l'île Maurice est une planète par elle-même.

Everything is relative. You have to compare what is going on elsewhere and you cannot compare with other countries and then you don't compare with what is happening to our main

market in Europe. Of course, I know what some Members of the Opposition will say. They can come, for example, and say in Soudan the Growth rate is 9%. Well, I don't know if anyone wants to go and live in Soudan because arms race – if you buy a lot of arms and you have a lot of war, you can have 10% growth rate.

(Interruptions)

It is the right of the hon. Member, but I am saying as an example ...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Ms Deerpalsing: I am saying as an example, country X could have 10% growth rate because it is buying a lot of arms. Growth rate is about what makes the economy turn. It is about the quality of the growth as well. It is not just a number.

M. le président, je crois que j'ai passé assez de temps pour dire combien *misleading*, combien de choses inexactes, totalement fausses qui ont été dites sur ce budget des bancs de l'opposition.

Je vous ai donné des preuves ce dont ils ont parlé et qui étaient faux.

M. president, whereas for the MSM, I don't think it is even worth for me to talk about what they ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: I don't know ...

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! I said no interruptions!

Ms Deerpalsing: I don't think that it is even worth for me to reply to what people from the MSM have said because, Mr Speaker, Sir, we all remember that in hon. Jugnauth's Budget, when he was Minister of Finance, what did he want to do in the Finance Bill? We all remember that. He wanted to go from zero rated to exempt a whole list of food prices which would have made what, in terms of the effect, he wanted to do. Immediately with that one line that he wanted to do, the price of all food prices would have gone up by 15%. That's what they wanted to do. So, it is not even worth I reply to what they...

Mr Speaker: Please, carry on.

Ms Deerpalsing: What they have said in the MSM. Hon. Seeruttun has talked a lot, very nice words, about the small planters. Again, I would refer him to go and see what was in the budget of hon. Pravind Jugnauth, in one measure which concerns the small planters: the 60

tonnes exemption for the small planters was solely on sugarcane. That is, planters who only were in sugarcane. Then, they would have exemption for their first 60 tonnes. But, we all knew that there are practically no one, no small planters, who have income that come only solely from sugarcane. Therefore, there was absolutely no one that was going to benefit from that. *C'était un trompe œil. Donc, je voudrais référer l'honorable Seeruttun parce qu'il a parlé beaucoup de small planters comme-si eux, ils ont beaucoup de feeling for the small planters, but that was what they wanted to do, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

M. le président, en tout cas, moi je voudrais dire qu'au niveau de la démocratisation de l'économie avec les mesures pour les petites et moyennes entreprises, ce budget va encore plus loin. Encore plus loin, with the provision of funds for SMEs. Let me give one figure because when we talk, we have to give facts. Last year, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, in his budget, said that the banks will provide Rs3 billion - Rs1 billion every year - for the SMEs for uptake as loans at a lower rate of interest. When he announced that in the course of the debate here, there was a lot of - "oh, this is just effet d'annonce, etc. Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development said it in his speech, but it was lost on them because they don't want to hear the truth. Instead of Rs1 billion, the banks were putting for the SMEs, you know how much uptake there has been, Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs1.5 billion.

So, there was more demand that was initially put and, therefore, because there was so much more, les petites et moyennes entreprises ont pris R 1.5 milliards pour avancer leurs entreprises. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, M. le président? Ça veut dire que c'est un indicateur concret que les petites et moyennes entreprises sont en train de s'agrandir, de créer plus d'emploi et c'est pour ça que le net figure of jobs created is 2,400; not as was said 'job lost', job creation.

M. le président, je ne vais pas parler trop longtemps parce qu'il y a tellement de choses à dire, mais autre chose que moi j'apprécie réellement dans ce budget et qui a un effet direct pour les petites et moyennes entreprises ; et je sais qu'ils sont contents. Mais pas juste pour les petites et moyennes entreprises, pour la classe moyenne et pour tout le monde; c'est la mesure où on annonce que la Banque de Maurice va instaurer un cap sur les charges abusives que les banques font sur la paperasse.

Vous savez, M. le président, quand une entreprise fait des profits, elle doit faire des profits avec des risques qu'elle prend; risk and reward. It is the same everywhere, but the banks

- I am sorry to say this - in this country, not only in this country, make profits not on risks that they are taking, they make profits for just pushing paper from one office to the other. Abusive bank charges have gone on for too long and I am absolutely happy and I congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Development for making a courageous move to stop these abusive bank charges.

Dans ce registre, M. le président, je voudrais faire un appel à la State Bank, à travers le ministre des finances et le Premier ministre ; je pense que la State Bank devrait revoir sa copie. La State Bank a vu le jour avec une certaine mission et, aujourd'hui, la State Bank est en train de faire quelque chose d'autre que sa mission principale.

(Interruptions)

Exactly!

Mr Speaker, Sir, State Bank is supposed to be there to help. Bien sûr, je sais que les autres banques commerciales ont joué le jeu avec les R 1 milliard, etc. Mais, je ne comprends pas pourquoi la State Bank ne prend pas les devants pour mettre des programmes innovateurs et compétitifs pour les petites et moyennes entreprises. Ce n'est pas acceptable. Surtout quand on sait que le gouvernement est un *major shareholder*. Donc, je fais un appel à la State Bank pour qu'elle revoie sa copie.

M. le président, je vais juste terminer, encore quelques minutes. Mais je ne peux pas terminer sans parler de ma circonscription, de notre circonscription; la circonscription que je partage avec mon ami, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. Dans la circonscription de Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes, M. le président, il y a eu grâce à nous...

(Interruptions)

Il est là-bas mais c'est grâce à nous...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Ms Deerpalsing: Oui, vous avez raison. Je ne prends pas.

(Interruptions)

Il est là-bas. M. le président, mais c'est grâce à l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval et moi-même, et la collaboration de nos collègues ministres et la collaboration de la Municipalité de Quatre Bornes que plein de choses ont été faites. Je vais vous donner des exemples concrets.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Ms Deerpalsing: M. le président, c'est grâce à l'argent dans le dernier budget de l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval qu'il y a eu R 200 millions qui ont été allouées aux collectivités locales pour apporter des améliorations dans différents endroits. A Quatre Bornes, on a doublé l'espace public sur trois centres communautaires; celui de La Source, celui d'Ollier et celui de Cité Résidence St. Jean. On en est fier, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval et moi-même, d'avoir pu doubler la superficie et les services, avec la superficie des *Fitness Centres* qui vont donner aux habitants de Résidence St. Jean, des avoisinants de l'Avenue Ollier, de La Source, qui va améliorer la qualité de vie. Bien sûr, le parc...

(Interruptions)

'Ki to pé causer'

Mr Speaker: Well, I am sorry; this is not the way....

Ms Deerpalsing: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am being interrupted.

Mr Speaker: I would invite hon. Aimée not to interrupt!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard something, but I won't comment on it. Mr Speaker, Sir, for the information of people who do not know, the park in Sodnac started by a PQ that I addressed the hon. Prime Minister here in 2006. It started in 2006 - for those who are ignorant - by a PQ which I asked the hon. Prime Minister in 2006, by a PQ that I came again in 2008 and with the help of the ex-Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the current Minister of Finance and Economic Development and hon. Aimée and hon. Bachoo, we have made, we are absolutely proud of having put this park there. It will stay there for ages and ages for the benefit of the people in the neighbourhood of Candos and Sodnac. We are proud of this, Mr Speaker, Sir. Et, on en est fier parce que cela n'aurait pas vu le jour sans la collaboration étroite du gouvernement central et de la Municipalité de Quatre Bornes. Il en est de même pour Canal La Ferme. Ce qu'on a fait en collaboration avec la Municipalité de Quatre Bornes, pareil pour tous les drains. Je dois rendre hommage au travail et à l'efficacité de la NDU, qui a aidé, avec la municipalité de Quatre Bornes, à améliorer plein d'espaces publics dans la circonscription de Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes. La cerise sur la gâteau, la dernière chose ; on en est absolument fier.

(Interruptions)

Members can laugh all the way they want, but the fact is that the hon. Minister of Finance has announced the Urban Renovation Project.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, silence!

Ms Deerpalsing: They will not have the opportunity to do anything, anyway!

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair and carry on!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, those who are interrupting have not ever had the opportunity, and will not even have the opportunity to do anything!

(Interruptions)

We are the one who are the doers, and we will continue to do. Mr Speaker, Sir, in this Budget, there is a provision for the setting up of a Citizen Facilities Centre in Quatre Bornes. There is a Citizen Facilities Centre in Quatre Bornes that will be set up, and hon. Duval and myself are absolutely proud of the concept that we have worked in collaboration with many of our colleagues here, to make this happen in Quatre Bornes, and it will happen. Mr Speaker, Sir, there are some people...

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, some people cannot help but be jealous. But we have done, and we will do this.

(Interruptions)

This Citizen's Services Centre, Mr Speaker, Sir, will incorporate a modern market. But it will not be just a market.

(Interruptions)

It will be a market with a facilities centre, where people will be able to go and pay their electricity bill. They can go and pay their water bill. They can go to the Ministry of Social Security. They can go to the Ministry of Employment. All these things together under one roof! So, when the citizen goes there on Saturdays or any day, they can walk in. Not only they will be able to do things that they will need to do, they can go and buy their fruits and vegetables, their flowers, and they can go and be entertained as well, Mr Speaker, Sir. What we are talking about is a modern infrastructure which will make Quatre Bornes proud. When you go there – this is what we were envisaging – you will have a number of street artists. You will have art forms. You will have a little amphitheatre.

(Interruptions)

They can laugh, Mr Speaker, Sir, because they cannot do anything, but laugh. They will see! They will be there to see, but we won't invite them!

(Interruptions)

Never mind, that's all they can do anyway! Sitting there, that's all they can do!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramano, don't interrupt! Soon you will be speaking.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, because when I talk about these things with my colleague, the vision that we have for Quatre Bornes, I know it makes them uneasy. *Je sais que cela les rend un peu triste parce que nous, l'honorable Xavier Duval et moi-même, avons une vision pour Quatre Bornes. On a une vision pour cette ville, pour que cette ville soit la ville modèle de l'île Maurice, et on s'attelle à cette tâche avec beaucoup de passion et de dévouement, M. le président. Et c'est cela qui les rend un peu inconfortable.*

(Interruptions)

Parce qu'ils ne voudraient pas qu'on soit aussi dédié à notre circonscription. Ils voudraient que ce ne soit pas le cas, mais malheureusement pour eux, nous, l'honorable Xavier Duval et moi-même, sommes dévoués à cette circonscription, et on va faire cette circonscription devenir la ville modèle. D'ailleurs, on n'a rien à apprendre avec des gens qui ont été dans l'opposition...

Mr Speaker: No, I am sorry! You can't point to the Opposition and say '*des gens*'. They are honourable members, and so you have to address them as honourable Members. But I will invite hon. Ramano again, not to interrupt.

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir. On n'a rien à apprendre des honorables membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre. Je prends, par exemple, une circonscription qui est à côté, notamment Rose Hill. A Quatre Bornes, on a retiré ce casino qui était gênant. Mais ce que Rose Hill est devenu aujourd'hui comparé à Quatre Bornes, ce que nous, l'honorable Duval et moi, sommes en train de faire pour Quatre Bornes, on en est fier. On en est fier, et l'honorable Duval et moi-même allons continuer à travailler avec toute notre passion, tout notre dévouement pour cette circonscription de Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes, avec les autres collègues ministres et la municipalité de Quatre Bornes, avec la nouvelle équipe qui sera notre équipe à la municipalité de Quatre Bornes. Merci.

(12.46 p.m)

Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Speaker, Sir, a cursory glance at the Budget hon. Xavier Duval has presented impresses any casual reader by its simplicity and straightforward approach, its timely marriage of punctual social measure and fiscal discipline. On the one hand, the hon. Minister wants the nation to remember him as a caring Minister, while on the other hand he wishes to convey the image of serious responsible Minister who would not budge on the issue of fiscal management. On both counts, the hon. Minister miserably fails. On closer analysis, we cannot help noticing how this Budget is couched by economic incongruities and social deceit, conceived more by political strategies that can potentially be even perceived as damaging to the interest of its partner. He takes the nation for a ride. He equally takes his ally in Government for a ride as he targets to expand his electoral base. Yet the hon. Minister claims that he is not using the Budget to attain political objectives. The Opposition is not naïve. Nor do I believe for once that his partner has failed to notice this little game.

With this brief introduction, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall proceed to examine and comment on selected sectors, namely indebtedness of households, the macroeconomics outlook and a glance to my constituency.

Let me start with the tourist industry. This House will recall that the hon. Prime Minister set as target, and announced with pomp and circumstances out of proportion, that Mauritius would host two million tourists in 2015. As the tourist landscape unfolds itself, it dawns on any observer that this target cannot be attained. More fundamentally, the tourist sector is stagnating. It is so easy to announce big dreams, and of all persons, the hon. Prime Minister should have realised that he was announcing a pipe dream that has not the least chance of being materialised. It was “the desire of the moth for the moon, of the day for the morrow.” If it was an announcement meant to impress the gallery, then sadly enough this has boomeranged back to the announcer. When we look at the figures, the policy and the nominations to whom positions of responsibility were entrusted, it is obvious that we have in place a Government that lacks seriousness of purpose. We have a leader who can bluff his way to maintain his popularity.

When any serious Government announces a goal, it has to ensure that it is responsible and feasible. It sees to it that an enabling environment to ensure the materialisation of the goal is created. It monitors the performance and expenditure of the sector, takes corrective action within

a framework of good governance and accountability so that it comes close to the target set. The tourist industry holds huge potential. We have failed woefully to exploit this sector even, though we had built acquired competitive advantages over some four decades. What we have lacked is serious leadership who can enlighten us and take bold decisions to inspire the nation.

Based on data are available statistics Mauritius forecasts tourists' arrivals for 2012 at 960,000. This is 20,000 lower than the initial forecast of 980,000, representing a drop of 0.5% over the figure of 964,642 recorded in 2011. Tourism receipts, according to the Bank of Mauritius will drop by -0.4% from Rs40.7 billion to Rs42.5 billion. This is the third time the tourist sector will show a decline of tourists' arrivals since 1974. The two other years of decline in tourism growth being 1979 and 1982 under a Labour Government, be it noted. Hopefully, perhaps November and December may reverse the declining trend. Even so, growth in tourism arrivals would be quite low, far short of the Prime Minister's target and below the one million marked. Yet, the Minister, a former holder of the tourism portfolio, talks of honourable performance, and he is an hon. Member with great responsibility.

Our achievement is much below the forecasts of Boeing or Airbus, which reflect our real potential. Boeing forecasts tourism arrivals growth at 6.4% compared to 7.5% for Airbus. Mr Speaker, Sir, these are independent operators making forecast to assess the sales of the aircrafts. Emirates also feel Mauritius has higher potential. Indeed, the increase share of Emirates should indicate to the nation that this is a potentially growing sector, but it is Mauritius as a whole with the lack-lustre leadership, which is the basic cause of our low performance. It does reveal one thing: that we are not doing as well as we could, and this underperformance in turn affects our GDP growth and job creation. Unemployment has remained awfully high for the last eight years. This year it is 8.2%. The record of this Government is one of the worst in the annal of the recent Mauritian history taking time period into account. The Government defends its poor record on the ground that external factors have adversely impacted the sector. This is plausible to a limited extent, but the Government has a big share of responsibility in this poor performance.

Let us compare ourselves with two of our direct competitors, the Maldives and the Seychelles. Both compete in the same market as Mauritius, but had greater foresight and have been significantly more efficient in terms of market diversification, product diversification, scientific approach or innovation. For instance, France is still at the helm of Seychelles leading markets...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Ramano: Seychelles' second best performing market is Germany, followed in the third place by Italy, and ranking fourth is Russia, while UK and the Republic of Ireland is currently sixth. Seychelles, therefore, share the same common markets as Mauritius. However, Seychelles has been able to diversify its market. The UAE sits as Seychelles' fifth leading market. Seychelles saw a 57% growth from other Middle East countries. Mauritius has dismally failed to tap the Middle East market. Saying that the Euro crisis is responsible for the downturn in the tourist industry is a mere pretext. The Government is hammering *ad nauseum* on the public so much so that the Minister of Tourism starts to believe in such inaccuracies as gospel truth.

Seychelles has recorded 163,715 in visitor arrivals, showing a 7% increase over the previous year. I quote some selected recent headlines pertaining to the robust tourism industry in these two countries –

- Seychelles tourism industry quotes 11% growth in visitor arrival.
- “Seychelles monthly visitor arrival numbers soared to new heights in April.
- Seychelles records upsurge in tourist arrivals from UAE.

Mr Speaker: Shall we break for one hour?

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.10 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Ramano: Mr Speaker, Sir, critics argue that the bottom line is Maldives and Seychelles. Maldives and Seychelles have seen remarkable increases in their visitor arrival numbers, indicating it pays to keep your name out there with a positive message. Was Mauritius starved of resources that it failed to keep its name with a positive message or did we squander our resources on a poor message that fails to click: ‘Mauritius *c’est un plaisir, c’est un flop M. le président*’. That is what one commentator wrote about these two competitor destinations: ‘After the successes of the Maldives, it is the Seychelles that has grabbed all the attention. They are constantly under the microscope, along with the Maldives, two very visible destinations in the world demonstrating successful tourism. The Seychelles Tourism Authority remains dynamic - they are everywhere always ensuring that Seychelles remains visible and on the minds of

potential visitors. The Seychelles Tourism Board protected a 7% increase in tourism arrivals. That is what is surpassed by 4% implying tourist arrivals grew at 11% for the year.

I wish this House to take note that this increase came despite the uncertainty in the tourism industry triggered by the financial crisis in the Euro zone, the cutting back of Air Seychelles flights, the two freak shark attacks on Seychelles shores, and pirate attacks on the region's African coast.

Tourism growth in Maldives is even more impressive. 2012 will be the landmark year as Maldives will hit seven figures into tourist arrivals, that is, one million. While Asia-Pacific dominated the market, Europe was estimated at 7% growth; Africa 14%; the Americas 26% and the Middle East 25% growth. From Western Europe, we will see Germany and Belgium continuing to grow given the robustness of their economies. While Maldives is able to attract one million tourist, arrivals are expected to decline in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I spent some time talking about the Seychelles and Maldives, both smaller economies than Mauritius, both thriving on tourism just as Mauritius depends to a large extent on tourism. Both experienced high growth whereas Mauritius faltered. The argument of Euro crisis should have affected both countries in the same way that it affected Mauritius. It did not. More importantly, both countries hosted more tourist arrivals from Italy, one of the worse hit European economies. In contrast, the tourist arrivals from Italy to Mauritius shrunk drastically. All these, Mr Speaker, Sir, are underlined to show that there are other reasons peculiar to Mauritius that explained our underperformance.

We failed to take appropriate measures. We failed to diversify our market or promote our image in a significant way. Mauritius Shopping Fiesta or even Festival Creole has been a complete flop. Mauritius has out-priced itself and failed to innovate because it no longer proceeds in a scientific manner. Take the Chinese tourists. They are more gregarious than others. They travel in groups, but, as host country, we have not carried out any survey nor designed a product to meet their tastes and preferences. At the MTPA, there is no close monitoring and what we can call as Tourist Economic Intelligence has been simply abolished at the Mauritius Tourism Professional Authority.

There is no study focused on estimates of the price or income elasticity of demand, key concepts to monitor the determination of our pricing policy.

A more attractive and competitive package may reverse this trend and lead to high revenue, assuming a price elastic demand for a long haul tourism. Studies during the last three decades have shown that demand for the Mauritius destination is price-elastic. The private sector believes that there is an 18% overcapacity, which means that investment injected recently is not achieving the optimal returns. While Government and Mauritian operators ignore this important factor, foreign operators on the Mauritian tourist sector have hired foreign consultants to carry out studies. Why an important airline has increased share of the local market while our national airline is facing tremendous difficulties?

Many factors weigh heavily on the performance of a sector. Decision-makers often show hesitation. When this occurs we cannot influence the course of events. The sector cannot expand, businessmen lose opportunities and jobs are not created. The tourism sector shows such symptoms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on a totally different issue, we note a worsening social problem. Of course, we cannot hold Government responsible for every individual act. But when a problem involving society takes an alarming proportion, a responsible Government should leave its shell and address the issue before it experiences more casualties. While the Government has stepped up efforts to reduce public debt, household indebtedness is significantly on the rise. Part of the reason is that a large number of households earn relatively low income and cannot save to purchase consumer goods and consumer durable goods. Emulation effect is a strong influence. As such they resort to hire purchase and enter the hell of high interest and high debt. Many cannot pay and their purchases are seized by the seller firms. Many are equally inveterate gamblers, but would not hesitate to contract debts. The hire-purchase interest rate is high even though the repo rate has been successively brought down. This exacerbates the situation and the consumers are fleeced. The current hire-purchase rate was set when the repo rate was significantly high and should have been proportionately adjusted downwards. This has been done, but the Government has failed to resist the strong lobby of the private sector. Profits are abnormally high. With the MCIB in force, risks are significantly lower. The Ministry has initiated action to revise the rate downwards, but the rate still remains high and remains unfair and inequitable. We expect the Minister of Commerce to show greater concern for consumer protection, but the decisions seem still skewed in favour of big operators. Household indebtedness remains a national social problem which we need to address as a matter of urgency.

The concept of democratisation is diffused with pride, but one should admit that this does not rank in the priority list of the Minister of Finance who did not have even a single word for the democratisation or even for its Members. This lack of consistency in policy approach within such a short period is fraught with the danger of sending the wrong signal to both domestic and overseas investors. No wonder private sector investment is declining.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now turn to examine our economic performance. I am disturbed by what I have heard in the course of the Budget Speech. The Minister is satisfied with a growth rate of 3.4% knowing fully well that this is insufficient to absorb the rising number of people who enter the labour market. We are producing at an insufficient economic level. Unemployment has reached the staggering rate of 8.2%. Unemployment has remained sadly high throughout the seven years of this Government. This represents a loss of production that will be forever lost. Had these unemployed been economically exploited, Mauritius would have achieved a higher growth rate. Sadly, the incidence of the youth and women unemployment remains high. While this reflects the bankruptcy of this Government, it also reflects considerable individual and family pain, loss of revenue and frustration. And frustration is a social evil.

Everywhere we hear critics condemning the Budget as one that lacks ambition. Indeed, such is the case. The Government in general and the hon. Minister in particular are saying on every forum that their poor performance stems directly from the euro crisis. We have seen earlier that the euro crisis has little to do with our performance. We have failed to respond to the situation. The Government has not even been innovative. Other countries are doing well and the various international organisations report of a general pick up of the global economy.

Apart from Japan, all the Asian economies are growing at an impressive rate. What is true is that some, such as India or China, are growing slightly lower than the target set. Even so India would achieve a more than satisfactory growth rate at 5.8% while China would still grow at 8%. Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and even Burma – 5.5% growth – are all growing at higher rates than that of Mauritius. Of the 48 countries in Africa, 28 are growing at above 6%. Many of these countries had low or negative growth rates when Mauritius was sustaining annual growth rates at 6%.

This Government is driving us on the verge of a precipice and is manipulating public opinion. The hon. Minister of Finance goes in solo on the National Propaganda Broadcasting machine to blow his own trumpet and manipulate public opinion, taking care to conceal the

country's poor performance. If the Minister feels he has accomplished such a wonderful task, why didn't he have a real public debate face to face with enlightened economists and Members of the Opposition? Members of the Government go unashamedly to defend their incompetence using the euro crisis figures as a pretext. But figures do not lie, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Europe too is picking up. The French President has publicly announced that Europe is emerging from the euro crisis, and the European crisis would soon be a thing of the past. Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the 192 countries only four countries are in the red: Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain. We have very little economic interdependence with either Greece or Portugal. While Italy supplies us with tourism, we equally import from Italy. A weak euro helps Mauritian consumers, for instance, to buy quality plumbing tools, tools, nuts, bolts and other accessories. In any case, in spite of the economic strain in Italy, both Seychelles and Maldives maintain robust tourist arrivals from Italy. Mauritius fared red badly on the Italian market.

The hon. Minister deliberately avoided mentioning the savings and investment variables, two key variables to simulate growth. On both counts the Minister has failed, and this Government is dragging on with the poor performance of these variables for seven consecutive years. Gross national savings have fallen to historical lows. Last year it was 15%. This year it drops to 14.9%. Gross domestic savings are even lower. Gross domestic investment has hovered to the 28-24%. This is significantly lower than the desired 30% as a share of GDP to sustain an economic growth rate at 6%. Moreover, the share of private sector investment has dropped to below 25% in this already low investment level. If going into business in Mauritius is encouraging, why then the private sector is shying away from investing?

In turn, Mr Speaker, Sir, this affects our export potential because there is too little investment in machines and in equipment. It is well established that the same savings in the long run become available as investment through the financial system. These policies of the Minister discourage both savings and investment. That's why both are low by our own historical standards. Savings and investment are correlated, and investment is an injection to fuel growth. The fact is that we have low economic growth because of insufficient investment owing to the incompetence of the Government. The private sector hesitates to invest. Government crowded out the local private sector from the Jin Fei Project. This Government is responsible for the slow pace of development because everywhere instead of using the instrument of competition to stimulate growth and development, Government adopts a skewed policy to protect people in its

good books. The Land-Based Oceanic Industry has not only been entrusted to a bunch of incompetent persons, lacking in vision and unable to take decisions, but there is an implicit policy of not trusting domestic private sector while favouring foreign strategic partners. Singapore is one of these examples. This is why the investment wing of Government ended up wasting valuable time resources in luring foreign strategic partners who have no funds to invest! The proposed city of Highlands again suffers from the same fate while the pharmaceutical sector has to content itself with two sentences in a Presidential Address before being shelved to gather dust.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget contains no incentive to correct the downward trend in either savings or investment. The Government fails to stimulate the confidence of the private sector investors. We do not have an economic crisis. If crisis we have, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a crisis of confidence and a crisis of expectations - a crisis of ethics. This Government carries on its operations as if it is business as usual when it is imperative to initiate actions and take corrective actions to fuel the economy and meet the aspirations of the nation. What the Government excels is to use the charm of their honeyed words to lull the population to drowsiness.

With this Budget, we have sad news after sad news, not results after results, rather mediocre results after mediocre results. This Minister will bleed this country to a slow death because of his illiteracy in advanced economics. He got his priority wrong as he cannot shake off an over-empowering influence that focuses exclusively on debt management and on manipulation of budget deficits.

While savings, such a key variable to attain high growth, is not being addressed, the hon. Minister takes measures that would exacerbate savings. He forecasts a rise in inflation to 6%. This will cause a financial repression that further discourages savings.

While the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius is struggling to avoid the phenomenon of financial repression and protect savers' money, hon. Duval labours strenuous efforts to offset the positive impact of monetary policies of the Bank of Mauritius. The conflict between the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius is no secret. The Minister spends his time to undermine the benefits of monetary policies through a contrived artificial depreciation of the rupee, and creates the condition to trigger an inflationary spiral just to protect a few operators while ignoring the structural transformation of the economy. This implicit and

explicit policy war between two key institutions sends the wrong signal to economic operators and they shy away from investing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation is unhealthy. It leaves a wide resource gap. The resource gap which was manageable at around 4% during the mid 2000 has worsened to a staggering 10% during the period 2010-2012. The hon. Minister's strategy is to attract an alternative approach instead of curing the present ills and of preventing the situation from deteriorating.

The Minister retaliates by opting for the easy track. He banks on foreign direct investment and is proud to announce a 20% rise in FDI. The country does need FDI, but it equally needs domestically-generated savings. We need to strike a balance. But the Minister prefers to take the populist approach and indulge in folklore economics. We respect his choice, but cannot agree to his jeopardising the future of this country. Over-reliance on FDI adversely impacts on the structure of economic ownership. We become a vulnerable nation with the wealth created in Mauritius vested in the hands of foreign nationals. Singapore is again an example. Mauritius becomes a mere production base and exposed to international volatility.

Let us take a journey backward in our own history. When the EPZ manufacturing sector experienced his first shock, foreign nationals packed up, closed their companies and disappeared, leaving thousands of workers stranded to watch the twinkling stars. It caused both an economic and social upheaval, not to mention the family pain it inflicted on those who lost their jobs. In contrast most of the Mauritian firms survived the shocks, consolidated the assets and stabilised the country. The experience of Thailand during the early 1990s, led to the Asian contagion effect, should sound the alarm.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to distil lessons from our own history, learn what theory teaches us and take initiatives on the basis of the experience of other countries to avoid the painful task of re-inventing the wheel of our wisdom. The resilience of Mauritius is partly traceable to the strong asset ownership of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not against the flow of FDI. Far from it. But I am against a skewed policy approach. What I am advocating is a balanced blend of both high domestic savings and FDI.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister claims high when the country achieves low budget deficit and progresses in public debt management. However, his behaviour is couching the inflation scare smacks of intellectual dishonesty and cowardice. This reflects he is aware that he

has done or is committing something wrong to the detriment of the nation. His inflationary policies will not only further erode the purchasing power of Mauritians, but also cause the repo rate to rise and undermine prospects of an early recovery. This is why I remain skeptical if the forecast of 4%, especially in light of the 2.2% fiscal deficit in the current conjecture, will materialise, although I wish, in the interest of the country, we achieve something higher. I also wonder if the public deficit announced is not concealed or manipulated. We need to start asking question about the arsenal of funds set up. I would invite the hon. Minister, in the spirit of accountability and good governance, to enlighten this House and explain how these funds are being operated and their relationship with expenditures and fiscal deficit calculation. I fear something odd and fishy may be taking place.

Another area which has adverse implications on savings, growth and export is the current account deficit. When economic growth is low, and the current account deficit is so high, there are signs of trouble lurking in the horizon. Once again, the hon. Minister takes the nation, including Members of the House, which cut across all parties - hon. Members must have noticed that the Minister proudly mentioned a surplus on the Balance of Payments. Since the Balance of Payments always balances, this implies very high deficits on the other accounts of the Balance of Payments. It is the current account which is the most important variable to look at. The visible trade balance shows huge disequilibrium with continuing widening gap between export and imports. Indeed the current account has worsened from 5% of GDP to over -10%. This is an intolerable situation, which deters savings. Moreover, it deviates from the SADC rule set at 9% which was made very flexible owing to the peculiar characteristics of such countries as Lesotho.

On the social front, there is not much firm proposal how to cater for social housing or how to modernise existing social housing. Many of the low cost housing estates have been created decades ago. Some have lived their times. The children have become adults on the outlook for jobs. We cannot, as a modern nation, allow these estates to develop into drug habitats and degenerate into ruins. Here was an opportunity to bring innovation to upgrade these estates and turn them into a pleasant place to live. We cannot continue managing the nation's resources as if we are in eternal crisis. We need to plan ahead and ensure that people not only live, but are happy and enjoy their life. We cannot continue managing the nation's resources as if we are in eternal crisis. We need to plan ahead and ensure that people not only live, but are happy and enjoy their life.

All this entire Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while containing some minor sporadic measures to mitigate undesirable trends, it misses the opportunity to set a new direction for greater wealth, stronger resilience and better preparation. It focuses too much on the accounting functions on the Budget and overlooks the fact that the Budget could have been used as a more effective instrument of development. It equally spent more resources manipulating public opinion, concealing the evolution of key economic variables and taking the coward's way.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder ici quelques points qui me touchent particulièrement en tant que député et habitant de la ville de Quatre Bornes.

The Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. Member moves to that segment, the hon. Member may take his seat, please! Earlier on the hon. Member stated that the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance went on radio and manipulated public opinion. 'Manipulated' is an unparliamentary word, I will kindly request the hon. Member to withdraw that word.

Mr Ramano: I do withdraw this word, Sir.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder ici quelques points qui me touchent particulièrement en tant que député et habitant de la ville de Quatre Bornes.

La ville de Quatre Bornes a connu une mutation profonde mais il est quand même dommage que les deux autres représentants de la ville de Quatre Bornes ont choisi d'être absents. Par respect pour cette institution moi-même j'ai été présent pour écouter ce meeting public dans cette auguste Assemblée mais, M. le président, il est temps de reconnaître que l'administration locale et centrale sont en déphasage complet quant à la gestion de la ville. Un des problèmes principaux de la ville est la congestion routière. Pas un mot des représentants de cette circonscription du côté du gouvernement sur cet aspect des choses ! La congestion routière dans le centre ville pour tous ceux qui fréquentent la ville de Quatre Bornes savent de quoi je parle et aussi dans le centre ville et dans les régions avoisinantes. Le calvaire des habitants et de tous ceux qui fréquentent ses artères est tout aussi pertinent quelle que soit l'heure de la journée. A part de la construction de l'axe Phoenix – Pierrefonds, rien n'a été entrepris pour résoudre ce problème. Rien ! Il vous prend plus de temps de relier La Louise à St. Jean que de relier St. Jean à Port Louis ! Je n'exagère rien, M. le président. Aucun plan d'ensemble n'a été commandité jusqu'à présent. On se contente des mesures panadol avec l'installation des panneaux *one-way* ou de *no entry* comme mesures trompe l'œil. L'indifférence de la présente administration est tout simplement révoltante !

Les constructions en hauteur se multiplient dans la ville de Quatre Bornes. Le nombre d'habitants par mètre carré est en progression constante mais les infrastructures sont restées les mêmes. Aucune politique d'urbanisme pour la ville de Quatre Bornes, que ce soit à travers les collectivités locales ou à travers le gouvernement central.

M. le président, c'est la cacophonie totale dans la ville de Quatre Bornes. On n'arrive même pas à distinguer les quartiers résidentiels des quartiers commerciaux. Ne soyez pas surpris un beau jour de découvrir que votre voisin a décidé tout simplement de convertir sa maison en espace de bureau ou de commerce avec la bénédiction des autorités, s'il vous plait. Un plan d'aménagement du territoire Quatre Bornais longtemps annoncé est resté lettre morte.

M. le président, on nous annonce des technologies modernes pour la force policière pour combattre le crime, la drogue et la prostitution. La prostitution a pris des proportions alarmantes dans le centre ville de Quatre Bornes. Cela ne semble pas être le problème des représentants du gouvernement. Les hôtes d'accueil, par excellence, sont toujours très actives dans le centre ville de Quatre Bornes, M. le président. Cela avec l'indifférence des autorités, l'indifférence des représentants de ce parlement du côté du gouvernement. L'indifférence totale!

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire que les points de vente de la drogue dans la circonscription numéro 18 dans la ville de Quatre Bornes ont pris des proportions alarmantes. M. le président, les points de vente ne se limitent pas aujourd'hui aux cités ouvrières que sont Cité Kennedy, Cité Beau Séjour ou la NHDC de Palma. Les points de vente se situent tout aussi bien aujourd'hui à La Source, à l'Avenue Ollier, à la Rue Boundary, à Belle Rose ou même à La Louise, pour ne citer que cela. Est-ce que cela fait partie des priorités du gouvernement ? Non, M. le président.

Ceux qui sont sur le terrain sur une base permanente et non guidés par les membres de la NIU ou des *bouncers* ou autres gorilles se rendront bien à l'évidence que la réalité sociale à Quatre Bornes est alarmante au vu du calvaire de ces mères de familles qui ont la malchance d'avoir un drogué parmi leurs siens. Le nombre de drogués sous traitement de la méthadone, rien que pour la ville de Quatre Bornes doit être une indication de l'ampleur de ce drame dans la ville de Quatre Bornes. Le développement d'une ville ne se mesure pas uniquement par les millions dépensés pour la construction des éléphants blancs mais aussi par un souci de vivre sainement en famille, M. le président. Ce calvaire social est aussi bien le reflet de la situation économique de ces familles qui vivent aujourd'hui en dessous du seuil de pauvreté.

Le présent président du *National Empowerment Foundation* en sait aujourd'hui quelque chose. Il a été lui-même candidat lors des dernières élections. Il connaît maintenant la gravité de la situation dans la ville de Quatre Bornes, M. le président. A Quatre Bornes il n'existe pas seulement les quartiers huppés, il existe aussi des familles qui mangent seulement un seul repas pendant une journée. Il y a aussi des familles qui empruntent à leurs voisins pour pouvoir procéder à un enterrement de leur sien. Cela c'est la réalité de Quatre Bornes. Ayez le courage de ne pas fréquenter seulement les quartiers huppés de Quatre Bornes, ayez le courage, allez à la Résidence Beau Séjour, allez à la Résidence Kennedy, allez à la NHDC de Palma et vous saurez l'Ile Maurice profonde de quoi il en retourne actuellement, M. le président.

M. le président, parlons maintenant du système de drain dans les *flood prone areas* dans la région de Quatre Bornes. On confond aujourd'hui l'aménagement des trottoirs et les drains. On confond les *absorption drains* et les canalisations d'eaux. On procède aujourd'hui pendant la campagne électorale à un semblant de *uplifting* des drains existants. Mais les *flood prone areas* de Candos, de Hilary Blood, d'Ollier, de Telfair sont restés les mêmes, M. le président. Il est dommage que les représentants du gouvernement de la circonscription de Quatre Bornes soient absents et font la sourde d'oreille à ces problèmes de *flood prone areas* dans la ville de Quatre Bornes. Et ils disent qu'ils sont fiers de leur bilan ! C'est cela la fierté, M. le président ? *Résultat lor résultat !*

M. le président, l'aménagement des drains formant partie du contrat du *Plaine Wilhems Sewerage Project* est d'autant plus révoltant car bon nombre de drains n'ont pas été réaménagés après l'asphaltage des routes, après les fouilles et cela au vu et au su des autorités.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder maintenant cette blague que je qualifie de la blague du siècle à Quatre Bornes : la construction d'un nouveau marché. On est passé de l'annonce d'un *tourist market* grandiose en 2006, référence par excellence de l'Océan Indien. Ensuite en 2007 on annonce un *uplifting* complet du marché. Après on découvre abracadabra, que cela ne peut pas se faire parce que cela se situe sur le tracé du métro léger. On a perdu quelques années encore. En 2010, pour les besoins de la campagne électorale, on annonce en grande pompe la pose de la première pierre d'un *civic centre* comme cela existe au Canada.

(Interruptions)

Tout le monde sait pourquoi comme cela existe au Canada, en 2010. Rien! Même pas un coup de pioche ! Mais il y aura bien un coup de pied le 09 décembre, M. le président.

L'honorable ministre Aimée a même avoué ici que la somme de R60 millions *earmarked* pour le nouveau marché dans le *Local Infrastructure Fund* a été utilisé dans d'autres projets en dehors de la ville de Quatre Bornes.

C'est une réalité. L'argent a été utilisé ailleurs. Les fonds ne sont plus disponibles, M. le président. C'est clair. C'est fait tout simplement pour les besoins de la campagne électorale. Et, voilà 'Abracadabra' et, comme par magie, le projet du marché refait surface. On annonce la construction d'un nouveau marché à l'Avenue Victoria. Pour ceux qui connaissent l'Avenue Victoria, je vous demanderai de tendre une oreille attentive. A l'Avenue Victoria, vis-à-vis de l'ancienne usine à sac, c'est là le site qui a été identifié pour la construction d'un nouveau marché. Pour ceux qui connaissent Quatre-Bornes, c'est la blague du siècle, M. le président ! C'est vraiment prendre les habitants de Quatre-Bornes pour des ... – je ne vais pas me servir de ce mot, M. le président. C'est un endroit qui ne peut même pas contenir les 700 marchands existants, sans parler du parking qui est nécessaire. Le réseau routier est extrêmement encombrant. On imagine difficilement comment et quelle distance les habitants qui habitent Sodnac, Ebène, Morcellement St Jean, Malartic, Candos, Kennedy, Bassin, Palma et La Source doivent parcourir, et comment ils vont faire pour y accéder, M. le président. Parcourir 75% du territoire Quatrebornais pour faire des achats en légumes et autres emplettes.

M. le président, cette blague doit cesser. Et, cette blague cessera le 09 décembre.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(2.41 p.m.)

Mr F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues): M. le président, Mesdames et Messieurs les honorables Membres, la communauté planétaire traverse des instabilités, des crises, des effets du changement climatique, et bascule vers la 3^{ème} révolution industrielle à travers la technologie de l'informatique.

Au niveau local, nous avons la chance d'évoluer dans un contexte de résilience, d'*empowerment* et d'intelligence éclairée dans ce contexte global et mondial dynamique.

M. le président, notre république a un long chemin à parcourir et a besoin de chacun de nous, encore plus qu'hier, afin d'apporter notre contribution, et de faire preuve de solidarité, afin d'avancer ensemble comme un peuple.

Nous débattons l'exercice budgétaire qui comporte trois axes principaux : la croissance économique, le bien-être de la population, et la position de Maurice au niveau de la région

Afrique. Nous, les décideurs politiques de ce pays, avons le devoir de consacrer au pays le meilleur de nous-mêmes, tant en termes de décision et de participation, pour ouvrir le chemin du progrès et réussir dans la république sur tous les plans; environnemental, culturel, social et économique.

Je parle de la république, parce qu'il ne faut pas laisser de côté Rodrigues, Agaléga et les Chagos qui sont des éléments importants dans la nation mauricienne. Dans ce contexte aussi, j'invite à une réflexion profonde qui ne s'arrête pas simplement au niveau concept de l'Etat-océan, et de considérer un concept plus large de l'océanisation des îles de la république et la région de l'océan Indien. Je prends note d'un bon début dans cette direction, avec la démarche du Secrétaire général de la Commission de l'océan Indien de soutenir la création d'une télévision régionale. C'est le début de la création d'une identité des îles de l'océan Indien, que mon *Leader*, Serge Clair, a tout récemment exprimé lors de la célébration des 25 ans de la MBC à Rodrigues. La MBC, que je félicite d'ailleurs pour l'excellent travail abattu ces derniers temps, avec des innovations, des modernisations apportées tant au niveau des programmes radio et télévision locales. Aujourd'hui, on reçoit des informations locales produites à Rodrigues pour la télévision. La MBC s'est transformée en un véritable outil de communication, d'ouverture et d'échanges au service du peuple de Rodrigues.

Revenons sur le budget, M. le président. Le budget 2013 s'inscrit dans la continuité de conduire notre République vers le cap du progrès dans un effort de maintien de l'équilibre et de la responsabilité fiscale dans un contexte mondial marqué par la crise. Le peuple de Rodrigues, dont je suis aussi représentant, exprime son appréciation et sa considération pour l'effort d'augmenter la dotation et l'acceptation des propositions budgétaires pour Rodrigues dans ce présent budget, malgré la situation économique difficile en cette année de dix ans d'autonomie de Rodrigues. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de souhaiter un bon anniversaire à Rodrigues, et de dire merci à la République de Maurice pour le plus beau cadeau offert au peuple de Rodrigues.

M. le président, j'accueille avec satisfaction ce budget 2013, qui, dans la réalité, comporte ses limites, mais présente tout le mérite de vouloir renforcer la résilience du pays dans un monde instable et dynamique à travers des politiques publiques et des programmes économiques et sociaux, reflétant les valeurs de la république. Les exemples sont nombreux, mais je vais, au cours de mon intervention, faire référence à quelques mesures énoncées par le

ministre des Finances et Vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Xavier Duval, aussi bien que l'honorable Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam et le gouvernement central, que je félicite et remercie d'ailleurs.

M. le président, c'était prévu que la croissance de l'économie mondiale devait ralentir en 2012, avant d'accélérer de nouveau en 2013. Quant à Maurice, la croissance économique s'établit à 3% en 2012, et devrait remonter à 4% en 2013. Cette croissance devait contribuer à maintenir le taux de chômage à environ 8%. Sur le plan mondial, les Etats-Unis affichent un déficit budgétaire de 8.7% en 2012, et une prévision de 5% de son PIB en 2013; le Royaume-Uni de 8.4% à 7.6%, la France de 5.4% à 4.5% ; les pays de la zone Euro de 4.1% à 3.2% en moyenne, et le Japon de 9.4% à 9.3%. A Maurice, nous avons un déficit budgétaire de 2.5% du PIB en 2012, et de 2.2% prévu pour 2013. Peut-on dire, M. le président, que la république traverse mieux la récession que la plupart des économies développées, et cela en raison des bonnes mesures ? Ceci dit, la vigilance reste de mise dans cette conjoncture transitoire et de rééquilibrage de l'économie mondiale, pour ne pas tomber dans les pièges de mauvaise prévoyance pour les enjeux à long terme.

M. le président, ce budget, je crois, nous invite donc tous à conjuguer nos efforts pour construire l'avenir et l'espoir de la nation ensemble, d'une manière responsable. Il nous faut parmi tant d'autres –

- contrôler nos finances publiques ;
- favoriser la capacité de nos travailleurs et nos entreprises à participer à la création de richesse;
- consolider notre leadership, comme dit l'honorable vice-Premier ministre au niveau de l'Afrique;
- accentuer le combat pour l'écologie et le développement durable, et
- propulser la jeunesse dans le monde de la révolution de la technologie informatique.

M. le président, de nombreuses excellentes mesures ont été prononcées dans le discours du budget, mais je vais me référer à quelques unes. Le gouvernement reste fidèle à sa vision d'accorder la priorité à l'éducation, afin de permettre le pays de se moderniser, et de tirer des bénéfices de l'ère de la technologie de l'informatique. L'enveloppe allouée à l'éducation connaît une augmentation de plus R 1 milliard, et cette croissance significative permettra de soutenir les

institutions d'enseignement dans leurs actions pour assurer à nos enfants et à nos adolescents, aux jeunes comme aux adultes, des services éducatifs de qualité, résolument orientés vers la réussite.

De plus, afin d'encourager de saines habitudes de vie dans la pratique régulière d'activités physiques, différents programmes ont été prévus. Un repas chaud - *School Feeding Project* - pour les écoles ZEP, pour une bonne alimentation au coût de R 130 millions. A Rodrigues, ce concept du *School Feeding Project* existe depuis longtemps. On a commencé avec des achards, des œufs, des confitures, mais il est nécessaire de voir comment réorganiser, de concert avec le *Regional Assembly*, car les enfants pauvres se retrouvent dispersés à travers toute l'île. *Rodrigues still remains among the least developed regions, according to the 2011 population census economic and social indicators.*

En ce qui concerne la pauvreté, M. le président, le gouvernement a été sensible à ce sujet et je crois sincèrement qu'il est essentiel de faire davantage pour les plus fragiles d'entre nous.

Notre société fait face à de nombreux niveaux de pauvreté et j'espère que le *Social Register* prendra en compte les vraies sources de la pauvreté, incluant les dettes et les séparations familiales, l'échec scolaire, et non seulement les privations en terme de revenus.

Nous saluons la réorganisation de la *National Empowerment Foundation* (La NEF) à Rodrigues en partenariat avec l'Assemblée régionale. Je note la bonne décision de doter Rodrigues d'un nouveau modèle de logement social avec des toilettes, une cuisine et une dalle comme toiture.

Je souligne la compréhension mutuelle du bureau du Premier ministre, du ministre des finances et le ministère d'intégration sociale qui ont cordialement accepté la proposition pour un modèle digne d'une maison sociale.

En ce qui concerne l'agriculture, M. le président, la protection du secteur agricole pour plus de production et de sécurité alimentaire préoccupe toutes les nations dans ce monde. Les mesures annoncées, tant au niveau des facilités pour l'achat des équipements, les *rebate schemes*, le subside sur le compostage vont dans le bon sens. Au niveau de Rodrigues, nous travaillons déjà sur la promotion d'une agriculture-bio en utilisant du compost produit localement par des agriculteurs sous le financement des petits projets par le *UNDP*.

Au niveau des artistes, l'appui à la culture par le gouvernement, par des multiples façons apporte un soutien important aux artistes. Je pense que la politique culturelle doit promouvoir la reconnaissance du statut de l'artiste pour encourager davantage l'économie culturelle.

En ce qui concerne la politique maritime, M. le président, le développement du port dans le dossier du *master plan* - je parle de Rodrigues, de Port Mathurin - mérite une attention particulière de sorte à concrétiser un projet durable dans ce sens. J'espère que le *Mauritius Ports Authority* (MPA) finalisera incessamment tous les documents nécessaires pour Rodrigues dans ce sens. La priorité ce n'est pas de dynamiser le '*coral outcrop*' mais de voir le développement du port dans tout son ensemble.

En ce qui concerne les jeunes, M. le président, la provision de R 300 millions, pour conserver et attirer les jeunes diplômés professionnels et dynamiques, est extraordinaire pour favoriser l'employabilité et d'ailleurs je félicite le ministre pour cela.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to education, I welcome the measure for the student loan scheme up to Rs 100,000 as well as the increase in scholarships and special scholarships for students from vulnerable families. This is a fantastic measure for those students coming from vulnerable families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to amendments to the CSR guidelines, to enable the financing of the cost of construction and improvement of child day care centres, I will suggest that for Rodrigues we make it mandatory that a special clause be inserted, that 'priority be given to the Educational Tours to Mauritius for Standard V students'. The tour is very expensive and no students in our Republic shall be discriminated because he is poor with regard to education and educational facilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our education system still needs improvement to produce skilled human resources. *Le dossier du 'Kreol Mauricien' à l'école* is still subject to debates. On the other hand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Enhancement Programme, especially with activities such as slam, music and sports has gained great momentum.

The summer and winter school is well underway with interesting activities. However, it has been brought to my understanding that the programme shall change its name to avoid the perception of a full extension of academic programme.

More students attending the programme - I refer to the summer and winter school programme - come from vulnerable families or living with grandparents, with no entertainment

or family emotional support. It is suggested that the programme be reviewed to an Educational Exchange School Programme. The student should not only be faced with academic programme, but other activities such as gardening, handicraft and leisure components also.

Coming more specifically to Rodrigues, M. le président, le budget 2013 pour Rodrigues c'est la rupture et, assurément, le premier du changement, contrairement à ce qu'on a vu ces cinq dernières années sous le règne d'un parti politique sans *leadership* et vision. Ils ont mis en ruine l'avenir d'un peuple.

Le budget 2013 renforce le gouvernement régional dans sa mission d'instaurer un gouvernement de confiance, intègre et efficace au sein de Rodrigues et au sein de la République Mauricienne. Le budget donne un appui considérable pour relancer le développement économique et palier les retards économiques de l'île Rodrigues. Le budget pour Rodrigues est réaliste et réalisable. Un budget de lutte, de pensée, de vision et de choix pour la consolidation, le redressement de Rodrigues dans la simplicité, la moralité, la responsabilité, d'ouverture et de transparence, M. le président.

J'ai été témoin des débats à l'Assemblée régionale pour constater de visu le sérieux, la différence et la discipline pour la gestion des finances publiques à Rodrigues par le présent gouvernement régional, comparé à l'amateurisme politique précédent qui avait plongé Rodrigues dans un état d'urgence économique.

J'ai constaté le grand dynamisme de l'île Rodrigues autonome, les nouvelles ambitions qui doivent être encouragées et soutenues par le gouvernement central. Rodrigues a une équipe de dirigeants sérieux, responsables et de confiance. Le gouvernement régional a indiqué ce choix et précisé ses priorités dans sa vision pour 2013 dans le plan de 10 ans sous l'*Economic Social and Transformation Plan* et le *PPB*.

M. le président, j'aimerais dire dans cette Chambre que le Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues a affirmé la mission de son gouvernement pour Rodrigues : faire de Rodrigues une île écologique. Pour y arriver, nous devons, ensemble, rétablir la confiance – je vous ai dit cela, la confiance, et j'appuie beaucoup sur le mot 'confiance' - pour relever les défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés. C'est là le nouveau partenariat entre le gouvernement central et le gouvernement régional de Rodrigues. Comme soutenu par la section 46 de la loi de l'Assemblée régionale, *the physical separation of Rodrigues et Rodrigues isolation from national growth centres*, et là je constate que plusieurs ministres et même le Premier ministre ont effectué des

visites pour consolider ce partenariat dans le strict respect de l'autonomie de Rodrigues, à l'exception de l'ingérence d'un, qui, malicieusement, veut mettre du désordre dans les affaires de Rodrigues.

M. le président, permettez-moi de partager avec la Chambre quelques uns des dossiers discutés, ou déjà en cours de discussion par rapport à ce partenariat et les dispositifs de travail mis en place à la satisfaction du gouvernement central, et je dis bien aussi du Premier ministre -

- Les sessions de travail régulier au niveau du *Project and Delivery Monitoring Committee* du bureau du Premier ministre et l'Assemblée régionale.
- Le retour de l'installation du *Police Band* à Rodrigues.
- Le dossier de la Santé, les Protocoles signés, l'achat d'un *CT scan* au coût de R 30 m., le *posting* des spécialistes pour suivre la santé du peuple.
- Le *gender issue*.
- Le TIC, etc.

La liste est tellement longue, M. le président, dans cette nouvelle aire de partenariat extraordinaire.

Revenons sur le TIC, M. le président. Dans cette nouvelle aire de Technologie Informatique et de la Communication, Rodrigues à lancé le premier *ICT Training Center for Excellence* à Camp du Roi, inauguré par le Premier ministre Navinchandra Ramgoolam, le Chef Commissaire Serge Clair et son adjointe Madame Gaspard Pierre-Louis, accompagnés aussi du ministre de l'informatique l'honorable Pillay Chedumbrum. Cela en vue de former et préparer nos jeunes pour l'arrivée du câble optique. Ce projet a nécessité des investissements de plus de dix millions de roupies. Cette institution formera des jeunes dans le domaine du *Business Processing Outsourcing*, le BPO, en prévision de l'arrivée prochaine du câble optique.

Ce projet a été réalisé avec le concours des différents collaborateurs dont le bureau de Premier ministre, le ministère des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication, l'ICTA, le *National Computer Board*, le *Business Park of Mauritius Ltd*, the *State Informatics Ltd* et the *Development Bank of Mauritius*.

On note aussi l'augmentation de débit d'internet à Rodrigues de 37 MB à 155 MB par le réseau satellite ce qui représente un soulagement extraordinaire pour la population, pour nos jeunes, pour les étudiants, pour les *businessmen*; la tenue avec succès du salon de l'Infotech et l'installation de WIFI dans trois zones à Rodrigues, M. le président.

M. le président, le peuple de Rodrigues est sincèrement reconnaissant envers le gouvernement central pour son effort d'une meilleure considération pour Rodrigues.

Même les membres de l'opposition Rodriguaise ici présent et à Rodrigues accueillent favorablement et applaudissent les mesures spécifiques pour Rodrigues.

M. le président, quand même, pouvez-vous m'expliquer comment, ici, dans cette Chambre, ils applaudissent les mesures spécifiques pour Rodrigues en agissant en membre loyal du gouvernement, mais à Rodrigues en opposition déloyale, ils disent tout à fait le contraire du budget de Rodrigues à Rodrigues, M. le président.

M. le président, l'île Rodrigues autonome est aujourd'hui dirigée par un gouvernement qui symbolise l'honnêteté et l'engagement public par une vision et une philosophie claire et bien définie, un gouvernement aux mains propres, non-corrupteur, ou cupide dans un environnement de confiance, de discipline et tolérance et plus de justice sociale sous le *leadership* de mon *leader*, le Chef Commissaire Serge Clair.

Le Premier ministre a récemment dit dans une de ses allocutions que '*mwa ek Serge nou éna même vision*'.

Le respect et la confiance établis encouragent les fonctionnaires à Rodrigues à travailler en toute liberté et confiance, à l'exception de quelques têtes brûlées.

Rodrigues a un gouvernement qui veut autrement accomplir le développement du pays mais pas un gouvernement de faire semblant pour aujourd'hui venir répétitivement parler de '*nou ti pou faire ceci, nou ti pou faire cela.*' *Mais to pa ine faire.*

Même la jeunesse rodriguaise aujourd'hui a retrouvé leur traitement de noblesse et de créativité. Imaginons, quelle image avait notre pays et comment l'argent public a été utilisé quand un fonctionnaire a dû rapporter à la police d'avoir pris en intrus un ancien commissaire sous le lit dans un centre de jeunesse. L'immoralité au plus bas niveau. Vous imaginez-vous, M. le président : un politicien sous un lit dans un lieu public.

M. le président, le peuple de Rodrigues est soulagé et parle même de '*aster nou lib dan nou pays et nou pou faire tout pou reconstruire nou pays dans la république mauricienne*'.

C'est cela la confiance et la leçon politique de la grande victoire et grand retour historique de l'OPR le 06 février dernier.

Une victoire de l'OPR face aux abus, la mauvaise gouvernance, les millions, les abus de l'appareil de l'Etat et les gaspillages. Le dernier rapport de l'Audit, M. le président, en est la preuve.

Certains méprisent encore l'institution de l'Assemblée régionale pour aller jusqu'à même *hijack* une rencontre officielle pour confondre entre l'institution régionale et leur parti politique.

M. le président, Jean Jaures, un homme politique français du 19^{ème} siècle disait ceci, et je cite -

« Quand les hommes ne peuvent plus changer les choses, ils changent les mots. Le courage, c'est de chercher la vérité et de la dire; c'est de ne pas subir la loi du mensonge triomphant qui passe, et de ne pas faire écho, de notre âme, de notre bouche et de nos mains aux applaudissements imbéciles et aux huées fanatiques. »

Je ne voulais pas prendre le temps de la Chambre, M. le président, mais la gravité de certains éléments d'informations inventées et malicieuses concernant Rodrigues soulevés dans cette Chambre par des honorables membres de Rodrigues obligent que je donne la réplique nécessaire pour mieux éclairer la Chambre.

Certains sont contre que le gouvernement régional ré-audit la finance publique des comptes de l'Assemblée régionale sévèrement critiquée, j'aurai dit par l'Audit. Pourquoi?

Qu'ont-ils fait avec l'argent public à Rodrigues? Le gouvernement régional a hérité seulement R 80 millions sur R 360 millions du budget 2012 pour des dépenses en capital, par des '*over commitments*'. Ils l'avaient bien dit pendant la campagne électorale, soit 'quitte ou double', et ils l'ont fait.

M. le président, le grand défi c'est la bonne utilisation des finances publiques. C'est pour cela que nous débattons aujourd'hui aussi ce budget présenté par l'honorable Xavier Duval.

Cette situation difficile pour l'île Rodrigues aurait pu constituer un prétexte pour baisser les bras, mais c'est tout le contraire qu'a fait l'OPR. Nous avons remué ciel et terre pour innover, pour trouver des moyens permettant de concilier les contraintes budgétaires de l'État avec les besoins de nos concitoyens.

Il y avait même une compagnie, Rodrigues Water Company, une compagnie d'État qui opérait sans provision budgétaire pour l'année 2012, M. le président. Encore tant critiqué par l'Audit, le gouvernement régional du jour a entrepris de faire des réallocations ou même '*coustic fiscal*' de l'ordre de quelques R 12 millions de plus pour faire rouler cette compagnie.

L'audit aujourd'hui aussi critique sévèrement les cas controversés pour les 245 stagiaires en formation dans la fonction publique, qui se sont ensuite retrouvés avec un contrat comme *General Workers*. Il convient de souligner, qu'un ancien chef commissaire a été condamné par une Cour de Justice sur ce dossier.

M. le président, j'insiste sur ma demande, que l'*Office of Good Governance* du Bureau du Premier Ministre mène une enquête sur les dépenses publiques ces cinq dernières années à Rodrigues. Le public a le droit de savoir sur les irrégularités et gaspillages des fonds publics.

M. le président, une fausseté de taille, je cite, ça a été dit la semaine dernière -

« Le dernier voyage de *Mauritius Pride* à Rodrigues - plus de 34 conteneurs sont restés au Quai D à Port Louis et le *Mauritius Shipping* ne transborde pas les conteneurs non remplis. Ainsi, il devient très difficile aux commerçants de convoier des marchandises à Rodrigues et ceci depuis quelques mois. »

C'est faux !

M. le président, pour les derniers voyages du *Mauritius Pride* et le *Mauritius Trochetia*, 192 conteneurs sont arrivés à Rodrigues. Aucune pénurie de quoique ce soit n'a eu lieu. Une chose est vraie, c'est qu'une des grues de 32 tonnes du *Mauritius Pride* est en panne mais ceci n'a pas empêché le transfert des conteneurs vers Rodrigues.

M. le président, on est ici comme des parlementaires responsables et nous ne sommes pas mandatés pour venir raconter des mensonges ici, M. le président.

Et j'ajoute, les critiques face à notre politique contre 'l'assistantat'; M. le président, l'assistantat est un des cancers de notre société, que ce soit à Maurice ou à Rodrigues ou Agalega ou les autres.

Alors que nous, au niveau de l'OPR, on veut responsabiliser le peuple, on nous accuse de '*pou coupe ti-pension*', c'est-à-dire de l'aide sociale qui est un droit garanti par la loi - Mme Bappoo est là - dont la provision budgétaire, j'ai vu dans le budget là, passe à R 984.4 millions pour 2013, si mes chiffres sont corrects.

J'ai étudié aussi, M. le président, les chiffres dans le *social statistics* de 2006 à 2011, les chiffres pour Rodrigues, les bénéficiaires sont passés de 1841 en 2006, 1611 en 2007, 1587 en 2008, 1570 en 2009, et 2193 en 2010, et puis 2489 en 2011, soit une augmentation de 39%. On doit s'interroger sur les raisons de cette hausse considérable du nombre des bénéficiaires, à la veille des élections de 2010, et celles de 2012.

M. le président, c'est là que j'aime bien la vision de Lee Kuan Yew, qui dans son livre « *From Third to First World* » *the Singapore Story*, il a écrit et je cite -

« Comme nous l'avons observé, lorsque les gouvernements assument les devoirs essentiels du chef de famille, les gens perdent leur dynamisme. L'Etat-providence sape l'autonomie. On n'a plus à travailler pour le bien-être de la famille. L'assistanat entre dans les moeurs. A mesure que la motivation et la productivité diminuent, la décente en spirale est inévitable. Ils deviennent dépendants de l'État pour satisfaction de leurs besoins essentiels. »

Et Lee Kuan Yew continue en disant ceci -

« Nous avons jugé préférable d'affermir la tradition confucéenne voulant qu'un homme soit responsable de sa famille : ses parents, son épouse, et ses enfants. Nous avons été la cible de critiques et d'attaques fréquentes de la part des partis d'opposition... »

C'est Lee Kuan Yew qui le dit par rapport à Singapour -

« ...et des médias occidentaux au travers de leurs correspondants à Singapour pour avoir appliqué des politiques aussi rigoureuses et refuse les subventions à la consommation. Il a été difficile de contrer les promesses alléchantes d'assistanat faites par l'opposition lors des élections. »

M. le président, et là je redis ici, l'engagement de l'OPR envers le peuple de Rodrigues depuis 1976, je cite –

« OPR veut installer à Rodrigues une mentalité créatrice et productrice, bannissant ainsi la mentalité d'assisté qui est néfaste pour l'avenir du pays ».

M. le président, c'est exactement ce qui se passe à Rodrigues. L'OPR veut réorganiser et promouvoir une autre société Rodriguaise avec un peuple travailleur - je comprends les picotements - un peuple entrepreneur, un peuple discipliné, un peuple responsable et capable, et un peuple qui se met debout sur ses deux pieds et marche vers le progrès en construisant son avenir.

Vous avez entendu vendredi dernier, M. le président, quand un honorable membre parlait de démagogie face à l'assistanat alors qu'on veut responsabiliser tout un peuple. Que puis-je dire, M. le président ? Ils sont atteints du syndrome de l'échec et d'illusions quand l'électorat de Rodrigues l'a bien compris et a choisi l'OPR à la direction de Rodrigues.

M. le président, franchement je ne veux pas prendre le temps de la Chambre, mais vendredi dernier j'ai écouté un honorable membre et je suis écœuré d'entendre la façon dont ce membre de l'opposition Rodriguaise a traité l'accolade du l'honorable Premier ministre au Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues – en mars 2012 et de nouveau en novembre de cette année - son homologue au niveau de l'institution régionale de Rodrigues. Dans les hebdomadaires à Rodrigues, ils ont dit et traité cette accolade 'de baiser de Judas' et d'autres parlent de 'l'accolade à quelques centimètres près des embrassades sur la bouche'. Je suis écœuré, M. le président. Quelle insulte ! Quelle insulte au Premier ministre qui incarne l'unité nationale ! Ce Premier ministre qui parle de la fraternité !

Mr Speaker, Sir, I challenge the hon. Member to table records in this august Assembly where he mentioned -

'La même personne qui débarquait en 2007 que l'on se moquait ouvertement, qu'on qualifiait de tous les noms, qu'on diabolisait dans les journaux et les meetings'

I challenge to table this Assembly all those information. Cheap politics!

« De toute façon les belles paroles ne résoudreont pas un problème que leur comportement a provoqué » disait Steven Covey.

Une autre chose est sûre, en 2007- je ne voulais pas descendre à ce niveau, M. le président- l'accueil de l'honorable Premier ministre s'est résumé en un accueil politique et non celui du peuple de Rodrigues car orchestré par un parti politique. Voilà la différence et la vérité !

Je déplore encore l'attitude de l'opposition Rodriguaise sans *leadership* qui agit en opposition à Rodrigues et en gouvernement ici à Maurice et le *leader* de la minorité à Rodrigues a écrit et je cite –

« Qu'est-ce que la visite du Premier ministre va apporter à Rodrigues ? »

Le *leader* de la minorité à Rodrigues, M. le président, qui a écrit cela dans leur hebdomadaire. Puis, c'est le cinéma sur la MBC/TV pour venir dire : « la visite du Premier ministre était cordiale. »

M. le président, c'est l'incohérence, l'ineptie. N'est-ce pas là que de l'hypocrisie envers le Premier ministre, les collègues du gouvernement et la délégation dirigée à Rodrigues ? Aller donc y comprendre quelque chose de la logique de ces gens ?

M. le président, je suis même tenté de dire dans cette Chambre, les manœuvres d'un ministre avec un groupe de personnes en vue d'embarrasser le Premier ministre lors de sa visite à Rodrigues. L'hypocrisie est à son comble, M. le président !

M. le président, je voulais souligner ces points afin de rétablir la vérité, face à l'irresponsabilité et action défaitiste avec les vieilles habitudes de divisions et de recul de certains.

Coming to the Budget measures, le subside sur le riz, la farine et autres, M. le président, la décision de subventionner le riz, la farine, le lait, le thé, l'huile comestible et le ciment dont certains trouvent que 'cela a été une bataille de longue haleine et ne datant pas d'hier.'

M. le président, beaucoup cherchent la paternité de l'approbation de cette décision du Premier ministre et du Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances de subventionner des denrées de base à Rodrigues et le ciment aussi malgré le fait que le prix des barres de fer pour la construction reste encore très cher sur le marché local.

M. le président, seulement huit mois au pouvoir, le gouvernement régional de Rodrigues l'a fait à travers des négociations cordiales et respectueuses avec le bureau de l'honorable Premier ministre, l'honorable ministre des Finances et autres.

Je suis heureux de constater que la proposition de subventionner le fret constitue une décision et geste majeurs du gouvernement central envers le peuple de Rodrigues. Nous avons obtenu plus que nous avons discuté. Je dis merci.

Le Premier ministre et le Vice-Premier ministre ont décidé de redistribuer le revenu national par des subventions qui toucheront tout le peuple de Rodrigues, par la réduction des inégalités dans la concurrence de notre économie et la situation sociale.

Cet égalitarisme doit être ancré au sein de la république. Nous sommes tous égaux dans la république mauricienne. '*Mo pas oulé ki ena 2 catégories de citoyen dans la républik*', tel est le propos du Premier ministre lors de sa rencontre populaire avec succès à Malabar à Rodrigues.

M. le président, certains sont venus dire ici que 'des gros projets sont en panne, le port, l'aéroport, le câble optique. »

Et ajoute –

« Je ne sais pas ce qui se passe.' »

Mais, M. le président, le développement et la modernisation de l'aéroport à Plaine Corail reste une priorité. Le rapport de faisabilité préparé par un consultant propose plusieurs options

de développement, dont l'aspect environnemental, technique et en particulier l'aspect géologique et économique qui mérite encore des approfondissements.

Le précédent régime préconise l'option la moins viable du point de vue économique, de construire une nouvelle piste. Je redis : l'aéroport de Sir Gaëtan Duval à Plaine Corail n'est pas la priorité des priorités à l'heure du jour, mais il reste une priorité.

(Interruptions)

Si pas comprend français, alle étudié !

M. le président, le gouvernement régional OPR, de son côté, a pris la décision d'aller de l'avant avec l'option 2 comme fortement recommandée par le consultant. Cela implique une extension actuelle de la piste pour arriver à une longueur totale de 1800 m pour accueillir des avions type Airbus 319 sur des vols régionaux tels que Maurice-Rodrigues et Réunion-Rodrigues. L'option 3 est une extension de l'option 2 sur une longueur de 2200m. Cela veut dire quelque 400 m encore de plus. Il est à noter qu'entretiens une étude géologique sera entamée d'ici peu pour fournir des éléments techniques importants pour la préparation des documents pour l'appel d'offres.

M. le président, gouverner un pays ça implique une vision, une direction et ce n'est pas que les gros projets comme mentionnés. Mais d'abord de la stabilité, la sérénité dans le pays.

M. le président, gouverner c'est choisir. C'est de faire des choix aussi difficiles que cela pourra être. Des choix en termes de priorités et c'est là, que l'OPR considère que le développement de l'aéroport à l'heure actuelle - et je le redis - n'est pas la priorité des priorités mais il reste une priorité.

L'eau est la priorité des priorités. On n'a pas eu la pluie, M. le président, et ce matin même j'étudie les statistiques de la pluviométrie. C'est incroyable, on n'a rien. La production de l'eau à Rodrigues a baissé drastiquement. Nous sommes environ 30 % de la capacité de production de l'eau en ce moment et c'est pour ça qu'on dit l'eau est la priorité des priorités avec des projets de dessalement préconisés dans le budget au cours de R 70 millions avec quelques millions encore totalisant R 112 millions et quelques.

M. le président, au delà de toutes ces inexactitudes dites, Rodrigues a présenté son premier budget de changement et là je réitère les thèmes pour la compréhension, c'est pour relever les défis du développement durable de Rodrigues et de son peuple. Rétablissant la confiance et comme vous voyez j'ai parlé beaucoup de la confiance, répondre aux besoins de

base de la population, assurer un développement économique social et culturel durable et améliorer les infrastructures publiques.

Venant sur le domaine des dossiers de la pêche, la fermeture de la pêche à l'ourite M. le président. La fermeture de la pêche à l'ourite est un *landmark* du gouvernement régional et de Rodrigues. Certains disent, *pas faire croire zot ène saint*. Pour même venir dire de ne pas mélanger l'économie et l'environnement qui est sacré. Mais, qu'ont-ils fait en utilisant leurs agents politiques camouflés en pêcheurs face à cette décision extraordinaire de la fermeture temporaire de la pêche à l'ourite.

Des manifestations politiques et des menaces, contre le pauvre commissaire Richard Payendee responsable du dossier de la pêche à Rodrigues. Lui, le commissaire qui est courageux et résistant face à ces personnes, n'a pas cédé à la pression populaire. Les résultats de la fermeture parlent d'eux-mêmes et le président de la République présent pour la réouverture et le Premier ministre ont qualifié cette fermeture de *ène très bon décision*.

J'ai l'exemple d'un pêcheur qui a touché R 22,000 pour six jours de pêche d'ourites. Des ourites pesant jusqu'à 24 livres comparées aux petites ourites de 500 grammes pêchées quelques mois de cela.

Formidable, extraordinaire, M. le président, et c'est ça la révolution économique pour les pêcheurs et aujourd'hui avec un changement de *mindset*, ils réclament des fermetures, eux qui étaient farouches contre cette décision il y a quelques mois de cela. Extraordinaire, M. le président !

Quand à l'introduction de l'aquaculture dans nos eaux, nous restons quand même très prudents pour ne pas commettre l'irréparable à notre environnement marin à l'exemple de la surexploitation et presque disparition des concombres de mer ou bambaras par le régime précédent.

M. le président, le langage de la vérité est infaillible. Permettez-moi de rappeler que la politique a pour finalité que l'action. C'est ce que nous faisons et pour longtemps encore à Rodrigues. Le succès n'est pas le fruit des bonnes intentions mais celui des bonnes actions. Je demanderai à certains de cultiver bien de la patience, comme à l'exemple du président Alpha condé qui a passé 40 ans dans l'Opposition.

M. le président, le Premier ministre s'est engagé à donner chance égale aux citoyens de la république en particulier celle de Rodrigues, c'est la l'importance et le bienfait que Rodrigues

est sous la tutelle du Premier ministre. Celui-ci rencontre régulièrement le Chef Commissaire pour discuter des affaires de Rodrigues, et comme préconisé par la loi de l'assemblée régionale et cet arrangement permet de considérer la réalité de Rodrigues bien différente de celle de Maurice.

M. le président, je fais un appel pour une compréhension mutuelle afin de consolider l'autonomie de Rodrigues au sein de la république de Maurice. Il y a le besoin des institutions et je cite que le *Project Planning Committee* soit sensibilisé aux réalités spécifiques de développement de Rodrigues. Le rapport du PRB n'a pas pris en ligne de compte la nécessité de proposer des structures spécifiques pour Rodrigues comme proposées conjointement par les syndicats et le *management* de l'administration de Rodrigues et ce ne sont que des exemples.

Je peux dire que le Premier ministre a parfaitement raison de dire comme rapporté par un hebdomadaire, je cite – '*pas kapav tout zaffaire Rodrigues décide dan Moris, mo pas d'accord are ça!*' Et c'est ça l'importance de l'autonomie de Rodrigues.

Le Chef Commissaire a prononcé la phrase « *La république bisin contan nou ene l'autre manière* », même si certains ridiculisent ces mots. Mais la récente visite de la délégation ministérielle a valorisé cela, même si certains lors de la campagne électorale ont dit, '*vote nou pou ène Rodrigues fort, Ramgoolam pas pou vine Rodrigues, robinet pou fermer*'.

Mais cet exercice budgétaire approfondi, la révélation d'une préoccupation grandissante pour Rodrigues dans la république de Maurice, contrairement à ce politicien qui est présent dans cette Chambre et, dans un hebdomadaire en date de 1994, a fait allusion à la sécession de Rodrigues, si Maurice persiste dans sa manière de faire.

Rodrigues doit demain, avec n'importe quel parti qui est au pouvoir, que ce soit au niveau central ici, que ce soit au niveau de Rodrigues de pouvoir bénéficier d'un traitement d'une culture de l'autonomie dans le respect et l'égalité des chances dans la république mauricienne, M. le président. Et là il y a pas mal de priorités à considérer aussi dans ce sens en termes de développement qui touche la vie d'un peuple, de tout un peuple, M. le président. Je ne vais pas être trop long.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, il faut que je souligne ici les problèmes d'eau à Rodrigues. Il y a une question qui n'a pas été mentionnée par rapport au dessalement. Le projet de dessalement à Mourouk et un grand barrage à Pavé Labonté budgétés en 2006 qui avaient été abandonnés par

l'ancien régime et aujourd'hui si tous ces projets de dessalement et des barrages ont été faits, Rodrigues n'aurait pas eu autant de problèmes. Actuellement l'avenir de l'eau à Rodrigues passe par le dessalement. Même les hôtels installent leur propre unité de dessalement M. le président. Et là je parle de quelque chose d'important, il y a des actes de sabotage - *coupe tuyau distribution* - orchestrés par des personnes malhonnêtes pour nuire à la population et on connaît bien les motifs : faire la population s'en prendre au gouvernement. On connaît bien. Il y a aussi des propagandistes qui veulent fermer la fameuse piscine de Maréchal. Ils lancent des propagandes, ils disent il faut fermer la piscine vu que l'eau potable est en manque mais la question qu'on nous demande est : est-ce qu'il faut fermer la piscine de Maréchal pour distribuer l'eau de la piscine aux gens des alentours ? Incroyable ! Non, l'eau date de trois, quatre ans et cela est recyclé, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Et j'ajoute, le gouvernement régional prendra des décisions en venant de l'avant avec des règlements pour récupérer l'eau des forages privés pour arrêter les gaspillages et redistribuer l'eau à toute la population en cette période de sécheresse et de crise. Et là je souligne, j'ai assisté à un geste M. le président et il y a aussi la colère de la population, quelqu'un qui a un forage dans sa propriété sur la terre de l'Etat qui passe son temps à arroser l'herbe alors que les voisins n'ont pas d'eau.

(Interruptions)

Là il faut s'attaquer à ce problème parce que j'étais très en colère par ce que j'ai entendu vendredi dernier.

Mais par contre M. le président, Rodrigues attend la possibilité de travailler avec des bailleurs de fonds comme l'AFD, la Banque Africaine de Développement pour réaliser des investissements dans le secteur d'eau.

L'énergie renouvelable j'en passe, on parle de l'installation de parc éolien c'est une très bonne décision mais, quand même, je plaide pour un quota au niveau de bourses d'études pour Rodrigues dans le domaine de *l'Ocean Economy*.

Pour le tourisme on a vu, et là nous avons tout récemment assisté à l'ouverture d'un nouveau hotel 'Le Tekoma'. Et là je souligne aussi la décision budgétaire pour le *Tourism Stimulus Package* passant de quatre à trois nuits et cela est très bien accueilli à Rodrigues M. le président. Cela donnera une impulsion aux arrivées touristiques de nos frères et sœurs de

Maurice à Rodrigues. La MTPA doit aussi inclure Rodrigues dans le concept des Iles Vanille; cela je le souligne.

Au niveau du sport, j'appuie l'excellent travail du Trust Fund pour le sport pour produire et encadrer nos sportifs. Les athlètes parlent de 'enan lavenir dan sport zordi' et il nous faut continuer à viser plus loin et plus haut. Nous avons la capacité de briller au sommet mondial, j'en suis persuadé que ce rêve se réalisera un jour mais le travail commence dès maintenant.

C'est pour cela que je félicite le dévouement du ministre des Sports. Nous avons eu l'occasion de discuter et travailler ensemble sur certains dossiers visionnaires dans ce sens en collaboration avec l'assemblée régionale de Rodrigues pour que Rodrigues devienne cette pépinière d'athlètes pour la république. Les résultats des jeux de l'avenir tout récemment en est l'exemple du bon travail au niveau de Rodrigues sous le *leadership* du Commissaire des Sports, Ismaël Valimamode. C'est pour cela que les athlètes attendent avec impatience la réfection du stade du Camp du Roi dont l'appel d'offres est en cours de finalisation. Je souligne aussi quelque chose de très important le vœu de Rodrigues de participer en tant qu'île aux jeux des îles de l'océan indien.

Au niveau de *law and order* de la police, je salue le bon travail effectué en ce moment au niveau de Rodrigues et je constate que le service mérite encore un renforcement de personnel qui va être certainement amorti avec de nouveaux recrutements. Le combat contre la prolifération de trafic de stupéfiants demeure une priorité. Il y a trop de gandia dans le pays. Il paraît que la drogue dure aussi a fait son apparition. C'est sensible ce que je dis mais j'ai le courage de le dire ici, M. le président.

Pour conclure, M. le président, au terme de ce discours sur le budget 2013, j'ai pu exprimer encore une fois toute la fierté que je ressens à contribuer à ce débat budgétaire et faire partie de cette équipe, mon équipe l'OPR.

Au niveau de Rodrigues, en moins d'un an, le gouvernement a commencé à poser les jalons d'une autre île Rodrigues autonome et nous entendons poursuivre ce beau travail en partenariat avec le gouvernement central.

M. le président, permettez moi d'exprimer ici un sentiment personnel dans ce contexte politique budgétaire. J'ai une pensée pour un grand homme décédé il y a 18 ans de cela, mon père, qui un jour – j'avais dix ans, nous travaillâmes dans nos champs de maïs - m'a dit: « mon fils, quelle est ton ambition dans la vie? » Je lui ai dit « père, je crois que je peux être un

serviteur du peuple ». C'est à ce moment que j'ai compris que l'amour pour mon pays est très important; l'amour pour la patrie. Aujourd'hui c'est avec ce même courage, cet amour, ce dévouement et cette lumière reçue de mon père que j'ai parlé par responsabilité envers cette jeunesse, ces hommes et femmes pour une autre société sur un chemin encore long à parcourir - long et difficile aussi, là où les difficultés devront être notre chemin de demain pour construire une république durable.

M. le président, mesdames et messieurs les honorables membres, je vous remercie pour votre attention.

(3.33 p.m.)

Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that the former orator has really got the opportunity in the Assembly to talk about the vision of his party. I personally know the hon. Member and I have also gone through his speeches in the past. This speech is completely different to what had been said in the past, but I understand. I understand that he is doing his best for the population of Rodrigues. He is doing his duty and I appreciate. *Il se sert de la carotte et du bâton en même temps.* I think that he deserves our congratulations and he understands very well the situation of Rodrigues. *Comme on dit quand deux éléphants se battent, c'est l'herbe qui est écrasée.* We don't want to be the grass.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these last weeks have been very important on the political and social scene. We had the publication of the PRB Report which is vital for the tens of thousands of the public servants and the staff of the parastatal bodies. In fact, we had the Budget Speech for the year 2012 which is crucial to the charter; to the economic and social strategy to give a boost to our economy and a new hope to our people for a better future. We have also the announcement of the Municipal Election due since 2005. On the first two fronts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government has lost a battle. On the third front, we know that it is going on the 09 December; the writings are on the wall. The PRB was a total disaster for all those concerned. Government is now trying to salvage a critical situation. So the report has created havoc and complete dissatisfaction. I have been through the statement of one of our friends, the Minister on the other side. He, himself, was not agreeable to the PRB report concerning his Ministry; the workers and the staff of his Ministry. This PRB report has not been unanimously approved by all the people even in the Government. Somewhere, I think, the Prime Minister, himself, has mentioned it.

Let me come to the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This Budget 2013 presented by the hon. Minister of Finance is unique in the history of a young nation as the Minister has succeeded in creating unanimity against this Budget. I, myself, am here since six mandates. I have never seen such a Budget. I have never witnessed such a budget. There are so many criticisms inside and outside. I can understand my friends on the other side. They cannot voice it. It is normal, they are in the Government, but, in fact, we can see the feeling of dissatisfaction of the Members of the other side of this Budget.

Following the presentation of the Budget on the 09 November, negative has been spelt by all the stakeholders. I think there is nearly a decade that the following day of the presentation of the Budget, all the organisations be it the businessmen, the trade unions, the NGOs and, in fact, there has been a *micro trottoir* of these people. I am sure that all my colleagues on this side as well as the other side.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have never disturbed anybody in this House. Everybody has his own opinions. I have due respect and I congratulate the Minister Von-Mally. He never said anything, there was something very strong, but this is the way; this is democratic.

(Interruptions)

I have read in the newspaper, there is even: *les rouges ne sont pas d'accord*. This also has been mentioned. It is a fact I am telling you, it is not something I have been creating. Some days before, the decisions taken by the Minister of Finance *avaient été qualifiées de farce*. We know it. We have read it in the newspaper what has been said by the Governor of the Bank against the Minister. It is the first time that people in this country are witnessing such a quarrel between the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry of Finance. They have to work hand in hand. In all Governments, the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank have to work hand in hand for the development of the country. As I have just mentioned, when these two elephants are going to quarrel among themselves, the population is going to suffer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will refer to a recent survey made by an independent organisation, which reveals that 66% of the population think that this Budget won't bring equality in our society. I think it is a fact. For the first time, when I was listening to the speech of the Minister of Finance, it was as if *ce n'est pas son plat*. I thought that he, himself, is not convinced by what he was saying. So, instead of praising the actual Minister of Finance, they referred to an ex-

Minister's Budget for any credit. Much as said in the newspapers and, even in the House, some Members of the Government referred to the former Minister - I mean Minister Sithanen. I think this shows how they qualify the actual Minister of Finance. *Je me rappelle l'année dernière, M. le président, les voix fortes du pouvoir avait qualifié l'actuel ministre des finances comme le meilleur que notre pays ait connu. C'était l'année dernière. Et cette année-ci, c'est tout le contraire.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second Budget of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development confirms that though he has a reputation as an accountant - I have no doubt - I sincerely doubt his ability to lead our nation towards prosperity. He has been Minister of Finance, since the last two years, and yet he has not been able to show us his vision for long term, for modern and prosperous society; for short term, nothing for the poor and the middle-class, nothing for the *petits planteurs*, as we know. I sincerely believe that, on the other side of the House, there is a lack of imagination and creativity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not return to the tiring accounting exercise we had to ensure during the Budget Speech. But, let me point out some truth that the vice-Prime Minister has stated in this Budget exercise. At least, I had to admit he mentioned that 5,000 children did not have adequate education. *C'est bien grave! 5,000 children!* And it might be more. The facts are pertinent as to the failure of leadership since 2005. These past months, we've seen some self-proclaimed modernists. Let me tell them that, in a respected modern society, there should be equal justice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me quote a statement in the Budget, which can resume the failure and flop of this Government, particularly the Minister of Finance. In fact, we all know we have to criticise the Budget, the Minister of Finance, but it is not a Budget of the Minister of Finance. I agree. We cannot only blame him. This is the Budget of Government. I have been Minister too, and I know that the Prime Minister has to be in touch with the Minister of Finance on a day to day basis to prepare the Budget. As I mentioned, I am going to quote a statement –

“The State is doing its part, but this is not enough. Some 5,000 children of school age do not attend school or do so sporadically - in Mauritius. This causes great harm to children themselves.”

On this International day for prevention of Child Abuse, it is with great concern that I note that the Minister of Finance, his advisers, and his Financial Secretary have completely forgotten to

provide anything as regards solutions to the problem of abuse in this Budget. We had a PNQ, and we know the story; I am not going to go into this today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the purchasing power, as a former Minister of Labour, I cannot omit the situation and the measures taken against workers and households. Through measures announced by the former Minister of Finance, that is, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the price of 4,000 items went down. 120,000 people are the beneficiaries of income support. The number of absolute poor families increased day by day. This is a fact. Families have to face a nightmare when they do shopping. We have many big shopping malls, but go and see that all people are just visiting. The fact is that they cannot buy, they do not have money. What they are earning is not enough; it is just to feed their family. What do people expect? We do understand the situation, but people expect that the Budget is going to help the poor and the needy. We can imagine how Government in the past, due to bad governance, lost lots of money.

Concerning the hedging saga, I know it very well because I have been Minister of Commerce. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know the crisis that different economic sectors and the population had to face with the hedging saga. What has happened is very sad. We have to pay the costs, which we are not supposed not to because it is not the fault of most of the Members; it is even not the fault of Government; it is not the fault of the population. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hedging saga will remain as one of the worst decisions of history because I know how this has taken place. Even many Members are not aware of the hedging saga. It is unimaginable, and we cannot approve this in any paper. Any responsible people, any responsible politician cannot approve this because of the way it has been done. No sanction has been taken against anybody. In fact, today, we have to pay Rs5.4 billion. *On a jeté de l'argent* because nobody is responsible.

I know the case personally, and this should have been referred to the CCID. Many people would have been severely punished on this case. *Mais on ne pouvait s'attendre à mieux d'un gouvernement qui est anti-socialiste et pro-capitaliste* because sanctions should have been taken. Let me tell you something. The consumer already has to face the burden of the Value Add Tax. What is the price of petroleum, *essence et diesel*? The population has to pay the tax. There is subsidy on rice and flour, cooking gas. They also have to pay for Rodrigues and, on top of that, they have to pay for the hedging. We cannot understand. This is why the price has gone up. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the State Trading Corporation has made a profit of merely Rs1 billion since

one year. When I was Minister, the price was fixed and till today there is no change, the price is still the same. There is a fluctuation in the price, up and down, and also we buy all our petroleum products in dollars and the dollar is fluctuating, there is a decrease and an increase. So, they have a reserve of merely Rs1 m. So, what is the Minister of Finance waiting to waive this hedging? At least Rs151 in *l'essence et diesel*. Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't understand. They have the money. Recently, the Board decided to increase the price. Thanks to the Leader of the Opposition and myself we had all the information, we know and we come forward with the press conference, they stopped immediately and just forgot all the increases. How come? How can we explain that? So, they were doing it just to increase it and get more money. This is exactly the situation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to review the situation and bring down the price of diesel and *l'essence*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the salary compensation. The Bank of Mauritius called for 5% rate of inflation while Government has decided to allocate a compensation of only 4%. Again, we have seen how Government has been unfair towards the employees. Mr Speaker, Sir, in this country, more than half million of the population represents the working class, that is, the working class in the private sector and public sector. In fact, we have approximately 600 workers who have contributed to make the country what it is today. Since hon. Xavier-Luc Duval has been appointed Minister of Finance, the purchasing power is falling. The working class is suffering. The hundreds of thousands of families are becoming poorer and poorer. Every year, those who have a job in the private sector – my friend the Minister of Labour can say. Today, all the people working in the private sector – not *les cadres* – don't have the job security. It is a pity. You can go and ask everybody in the private sector. In the past, people preferred working in the private sector than in the public sector. But today you can see the absence of this security. We had this law amended. The Anti-workers Legislation is doing lots of harm to the jobless in many sectors. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the majority of the jobless people is aged between 16 and 29. Can you imagine what will happen to the new generation? Our youths have no other alternative than to immigrate. This is why my friend is doing his best for these people can immigrate in Canada and elsewhere. But only 150. *Nous tirons la sonnette d'alarme* to save the employment. Government has to get rid of the Labour Law which represents a danger for the workers today. Under this law job security does not exist.

Now, especially in the private sector, when the law was passed, I brought 28 amendments. I know the sufferings of the workers who lost their jobs. The Labour Law now gives power to employers to hire and fire at any time. *Les chiffres publiés récemment parlent d'une moyenne de 10,000 pertes d'emplois depuis l'entrée en vigueur au début de 2009* of the The Employment Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act. I understand my friend very well. He has a good intention to come forward with the amendment. I understand, but he cannot do it alone. It is the Government who decides. He has given his statement many times. But he can't do so. They act like the pro-capitalist agent night and day. The trade unions have been opposing these laws since the application and they did nothing. Recently, I read that these amendments will be presented.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, I suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

At 4.00 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.35 p.m., with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Soodhun: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I was saying, since these last five years, the economic indicators showed a growth in the building sector, and it is with great disappointment that I take note of the crisis in this sector since some months. The BASECA, which is the Building & Civil Engineering Contracts Association - association of all the employers of the construction of houses and roads - already informed Government of a projected loss of 5000 workers this month; in November. This means that 5000 workers working in the construction and road sector *vont être licenciés d'ici quelques semaines*. It may be after the elections. The fact is that these 5000 workers are not going to receive their yearly bonus, and the reason they have given is that many contractors are employing foreign employees. For example, the Chinese contractor has brought all the lorries, drivers, workers, and today this is the result. All the shopping malls in La Croisette and everywhere else are completed now. So, all are going to be redundant. That means that 5000 families are going to be in a difficult situation. Since works have ended in November, they will not be bound to pay the yearly bonus, as per the law. In fact, this should have been paid.

Mr Speaker, Sir, do you remember that in 1992 there were 80,000 unemployed? Do you imagine that 19.7% of our population were jobless at that time? Then, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the then Prime Minister, took the challenge to solve this problem. He even went further to state in a public gathering in 1987 that if he did not solve the unemployment problem, he would never

stand again as candidate for Primeministership; and he succeeded in 1987. He succeeded in offering a job to all the youths in this country in 1981. We remember *les gradués chômeurs*, and all that. The rate came down to 2.7% - from 19.7% to 2.7%. What an achievement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! We were then cited as a model, and in many countries it was known as *le miracle mauricien*.

We reached a period where we were obliged to import foreign workers for the textile industry. Normally, we need experienced and skilled workers, so that Mauritian workers can work in all sectors of the factory be it in production, spinning and so on, so that they can mix their knowledge. Mauritians could learn from the foreign workers. That was the idea to bring people, and not what we are doing today. There was prosperity and progress in all families. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, the rate has reached nearly 9%, that is, more than 45,000 Mauritians are jobless!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the so-called oceanic economy. There was a lot of *tam tam*, and it was said '*résultats lor résultats*' when the last Government Programme was presented. I remember some people saying that our exclusive economic zone is larger than France and Spain put together. Alike the land-based oceanic industry, the ocean economy will only be another flop and *fusette*. Sincerely, I expected more from this Budget on this aspect, when the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance mentioned the strategic partner to explore and to exploit our mineral resources. Let me quote what has been said by the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance –

“Government will look for strategic partners for the exploration and exploitation of our mineral resources. Already a lot of interest has been manifested. Given that many exploration firms are now converging to the East African region, there is every reason to believe that the Mascarene Plateau also holds significant levels of mineral deposits.”

He showed clearly that this Government is incompetent, without any study, any expertise, they bring a concept on the table, which they themselves do not know what can really be done. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it may appear insignificant; the measures will cause a lot of harm to the fishing sector in this country.

Coming to equal opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Public Service, we have observed that many civil servants do not get the treatment they deserve. There is inequality; those in higher positions are well paid compared to those in the lower ranks. We are talking about equal

opportunity in our society and, with more funds allocated to the Commission, we should pay more attention to some inequalities in the Public Sector and also at the Local Service Commission. It is clear that some powers are given to the Head of the Government with regard to selection for certain services, and if some officers in a higher rank are close to power and to some people in Government, they will be promoted. If not, they are not going to be promoted even if they are good workers, even if they are brilliant workers, and have a long service in the Public Sector. In all fields, it is like this. We have witnessed it, and there are lots of examples which we can give, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In 1982, when the country was in a complete mess, a new Government came, namely with the present Leader of the Opposition, *camarade* Paul Bérenger, the then Minister of Finance, and Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister, together with a team of competent Ministers put the country back on the rail. This happened again in 1991, and the MSM/MMM won the elections. Each time the country was going down in a mess, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Paul Bérenger joined their forces and saved the country; in 2000 also. We are now again ready to save this country. With the legacy that we are getting from this Government, it is indeed *les vrais patriotes* who can build confidence and trust. We need a team which can be trusted by people of all walks of life; businessmen, investors, tourists, all of them need a safer country to stay. The team is on this side of the House. I am sure that the people will choose - they are witnessing all the problems that we are having and we can say that in the forthcoming Municipal elections, they will get a *bonne raclée et lors des prochains élections générales, ils seront envoyés dans des 'carreaux piquant loulou.'*

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, Mr Speaker will take the Chair.

At this stage Mr Speaker took the Chair.

(4.46 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, frankly, I must admit, I am in a state of semi-confusion after listening to the hon. Member. *Comme on dit : sauter du coq à l'âne.* He spoke about elections, PRB, criticisms about the Budget, stakeholders, hedging saga, the increase of petrol last month. Now he says that there is a certain fear among civil servants about security of tenure. He spoke about redundancy of construction workers. He talked about 1987 when it is completely different as it is now. He referred to the Civil Service

where some people were not given a fair chance. Lastly, before he signed off, he spoke about 1991 when the country was going to the dogs. I will start from that one.

From 1983 to 1991, who were in power? He said economic miracle, father of development and the country was going to the dogs. They had to go with the MMM and then they went up. So, they always need a sort of “*béquille*”.

But, as far as the PRB is concerned, I think, to say mildly, his judgment is not correct. He said in a crowded imagination that Members of this Government spoke openly against him. I know one Member said perhaps that in his sector the teachers did not get what they want. This goes to show that there is free speech and people are free to vent their feelings. We are a Government, with a Cabinet responsibility and we all have to assume our responsibility of what we say.

There has been a bit of discontent to be honest to ourselves. I think the hon. Prime Minister - this gentleman was here this morning - adequately ventilated the problem. About the salary compensation, I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that some people don't seem to have the notion of what is going on in this world. I will come over it again of what is happening. Greece is burning. Ireland is sinking. UK is going into a double deep depression, where people are either being made redundant or taking drastic cuts in salaries. Here, yet, we can afford to give a certain amount of compensation.

I resume my speech as far as the Budget is concerned. First, allow me to congratulate my colleague, the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his presentation of the Budget. Rising to the challenges of a world in transition, the Budget addresses many topical issues –

- bringing IT within the reach of students;
- improving our human capital;
- delivering better social schemes;
- providing housing units for the people falling within the vulnerable groups;
- creating jobs with emphasis for our young graduates;
- strengthening of safety, security and justice;
- enhancing our health system, and
- protecting our environment.

Yet, the hon. gentleman says that this Budget is empty! I am really at a loss to understand what he was meaning.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it would appear that Members of the opposite side, have lost sight of the fact that this Budget is being presented at a time when the prevailing world economic situation has become precarious. Indeed, the Euro zone where our main economic partners are, have been fighting for their survival over the last few months. Right now, no one can vouch for its very existence. The double-dip recession that is shaking many of the European zone countries has impinged negatively upon their credit rating. In the USA, after his outstanding performance and success at the Presidential election, Barack Obama has still to face a financial cliff while the Dow Jones is going downhill. That is why he has taken a trip to Burma, where the cooler wind and breeze of southern Asia could put him in a better mood to face the uphill battle in the Congress.

France, one of the very large economies in the Euro zone, lost its prestigious triple 'A' rating. The Netherlands with a triple 'A' label has also sustained a sharp 1.1% fall in its GDP. Only a few days ago, the Governor of the Bank of England warned of the risk of a double-dip recession while Moody has threatened to downgrade the triple 'A' rating of the UK. Germany has witnessed a slowdown in its growth. The Spanish financial system is totally fragile at this point. Moody's recently downgraded the credit rating of 28 Spanish banks and the Spanish debt to one level above junk status.

The situation in Italy continues to deteriorate and many analysts believe that it could be one of the next domino to fall. The financial nightmare that is unfolding in Greece is far from over. Greek politicians are asking for a third bailout package. Cyprus is the fifth member of the Euro zone to ask for a bailout. What a grim situation, Mr Speaker, Sir? And yet, we are trying to come out of this economic *marasme* by not very popular, but certainly sustainable measures that will see us through this difficult moment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the stringent authority path that many of the Euro zone members have been compelled to adopt, is causing an immense social upheaval throughout the zone.

Austerity policies meant to turn around the European economy and reduce the debts and deficits of countries like Italy, Portugal, Spain and Greece continue to have the opposite effect. A study recently found that rather than increasing growth and reducing debts, austerity was driving down economic growth and increasing debt level. Posters filled the streets of Lisbon, Madrid,

Rome and Athens recently against austerity policies. The protests have even taken a violent turn recently with protestors setting fire to urban streets and riot police firing back on them.

Yet look at Mauritius, there are protests, we are in a democratic State, but everybody is keeping cool. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government under the able leadership of our Prime Minister has been capable of steering wisely the country out of the economic marasm without great collateral damages. We have been able to achieve a reasonable economic growth and unlike our European economic partners there has been no social unrest in our country. Our credit rating was upgraded and two of our banks were classed among the top of the African region. Indeed, we have to be proud that thanks to bold socio-economic policies taken by this Government not only have we been able to medicate the impact of the economic crisis, but we have been able to ensure social stability and hold our commitments. In many respects, it is obvious, that had there not been issues beyond our control we would have been able to fare much better.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the worsening world economy this Government has succeeded in maintaining and even consolidating the Welfare State, while at the same time containing public debts which is remarkable when we see what is happening around us. We need not, however, rest on our laurels, we need to be more vigilant than ever and this Budget goes a long way in this action. However, Government programme 2012 and 2015 had already set the scene for all major activities to be undertaken by the different Ministries. This Budget has now paved the way for Mauritius to rise to the challenges of the day. One of the most important ways to improve people's quality of life is to respond to their need for adequate housing. Our efforts during the current year have been geared towards providing a clear strategic policy on the provision of housing and improving the living environment of residence and housing estates.

In 2011 and 2012, Government came with a National Housing Programme which is steadily rolling out a range of initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of our fellow citizens for affordable housing and are already on the way.

Allow me Mr Speaker, Sir, to sketch out the main achievements of my Ministry to that effect. In that current year, 508 housing units on ten sites across the island have been allocated. Namely at Glen Park, La Tour Koenig, Roche Bois, Camp Diable, Plaine Magnien, Grand Bel Air, Britannia, Calebasse, Cottage and D'épinay. Over the same period some 700 additional owners of ex-CHA houses have purchased a plot of land over which stand their housing unit. Moreover, financial assistance to meet the cost of legal and other charges have been provided to

some 775 families who are facing difficulties in acquiring the plot of land while the price of land has been waived off. To this end, an amount of Rs1.93 m. will be disbursed. In providing protection to our fellow citizens at the lowest rung of the ladder, this Government has empowered a large number of families. They are adding to their quality of life and have succeeded in maintaining economic and social stability in the country. Under the Roof Slab Grant Scheme we are continuing in our endeavour to assist families to put up their houses to this end, some Rs68 m. have been disbursed to some 110 eligible applicants. An additional sum of Rs50 m. will be disbursed to some other 900 eligible families before the end of the year. We have thus contributed to the welfare of these families who needed some help to complete the constructions of their housing unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, additionally Government has maintained its rehabilitation programme in the NHDC housing estates. During this current financial year, water proofing works and repairs to cracks and associated works have been completed on the following sites. Plaine Verte, Vallée des Prêtres, Beau Vallon, La Tour Koenig Malaysia 1 and Alpha, La Caverne and Camp le Vieux. This initiative is a major effort to preserve the value of the housing estates. This has brought relief to their residents and enhances their standard of living. Furthermore, to ensure safety of the residence, 90% of the repairs to electric meter cabins on some 12 housing estates have been completed. I am sorry to say that these electric cabins have been mauled by hooligans. For the rehabilitation works already effected Government has disbursed funds to the tune of Rs36 m. For the year 2013, water proofing works on some three more sites, water reticulation on 15 sites and rehabilitation of sewage disposal system on 48 sites will be carried out. Tenders for these works are under probation and works are expected to start by March or April next year. The rehabilitation works are being undertaken in phases across the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall the long debates we have had on establishing syndics on NHS housing estates and making them function. As the Leader of the Opposition rightly said it was indeed a difficult nut to crack. Well Mr Speaker, Sir, I am proud to announce that as at to date out of 41 NHDC housing estates identified for setting up a syndic, 36 have already been set up. Government has disbursed a total sum of Rs10.2 m. in respect of the monthly contribution of Rs200 to each family for the 30 syndics which have already signed their memorandum of understanding. The provision of housing, Mr Speaker, Sir, does not only mean brick and mortar. Housing requires available land, appropriate services such as the provision of

water, electricity, road, sewerage and infrastructure facilities. Therefore for a person to have access to adequate housing there must be land services and infrastructure. Considering that land is a limited resource it is imperative that its uses are effectively planned and guided to ensure sustainable development.

In this context, the integrated housing development through a mixture of schemes on some 165 *arpents* of land and over some 16 sites namely at Beau Vallon, Chebel, Pointe aux Piments, Sebastopol, Quatre Cocos, Camp Ithier, Mme Azor, Goodlands, Melrose, Mon Gout, Petit Bel Air, Souillac, Surinam, Beaux Songes, Piton, Henrietta and Khoyratty have been identified under the Government/MSPA agreement. The housing scheme will be premised on models advocated in the National Housing Programme which plays a pivotal role in the Government thrust to make housing accessible. Over and above project at the National Housing programme, Government will be partnering with non-governmental housing providers to increase the number of social housing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs1.5 billion provided under the social housing development for the next three years for an all inclusive framework for housing development. The forthcoming year will witness an acceleration of housing projects, namely in the construction of some 588 housing units and the provision of 151 service lots for which a sum of Rs833 m. has been provided. Concurrently, various vacant plots of land within the existing NHDC estates will be developed.

It is expected that some additional 347 housing units will be available. The project cost is estimated to be Rs300 m. With a view to enabling families to benefit the Social Housing Scheme, my Ministry is embarking on the social housing projects in-house, eventually to see the construction of 85 units and the provision of 35 service plots over 10 *arpents* at Henrietta. The project cost has been estimated at Rs79 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some 8,000 families in need of housing have registered themselves under the Social Register of Mauritius at the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. Government, through the Housing Development Trust, is coming up with a new measure to assist these families. Despite the economic sluggishness, as a compassionate Government, we found ways to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised group by increasing expenditure in targeted sectors. One of the areas of responsibility relates to the bottommost of the housing market affecting mainly those who earn below Rs6,200 a month.

In this fiscal period, Government will spend some Rs75 m. on programmes, with a view of boosting up construction of social housing units across the island for the most vulnerable groups. In this context, the Housing Development Trust will, *a priori*, develop sites located at Gros Cailloux, Piton, Beaux Songes and Madame Azor, Goodlands.

In order to facilitate the process, Government is granting the Housing Development Trust tax-free status in respect of the land conversion tax, registration duty, land transfer tax and VAT. This will no doubt enable more affordable housing to be built for these targeted groups.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the housing projects are structured not only to provide houses to the needy who earn less than Rs6,200 per month, but also to address some of their physical and social needs. To this end, the process of housing delivery is being used as a vehicle for broader social upliftment, whereby crèches, open space structure, commercial units will be operational with the housing estates. This will lead to job creation as well.

The integrated project shows us that low-cost housing needs not always to be expressed as a single box on a single stand, and at a low density in some peripheral location. In all, the beneficiaries will enjoy better living conditions and larger living space. These innovative projects will contribute to community without compromising the living environment, and represent a departure from the traditional way which local low-cost housing has been delivered to the needy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have also catered for the lower and middle income groups. The construction of 36 housing units at Military Road, Port Louis, is in progress, and is expected to be completed in June 2013. Additionally, two housing projects at Penang Street are under consideration for the provision of a total number of 120 units. The consultant has been appointed, and the projects are at feasibility stage.

The housing census 2011 confirms that the house ownership has increased from 87% in 2000 to 89,000 in 2011, that there is an increase of 44,000 housing units. However, it also confirms strangely enough that there are some 28,000 privately owned houses which are vacant. Experience shows that some landlords would prefer to leave their houses unoccupied rather than lose more unpaid rent and resort to tedious court processes to assume possession of their own property. The current legislation does favour the tenant who may be guilty of antisocial behaviour, damage to property or who has accumulated excessive rent arrears. Consideration will also be given to a more robust accelerated method to permit landlords to evict bad tenants.

Furthermore, the Landlord and Tenant Act, as it stands, is too rigid to encourage landlords to rent their property. To create a more conducive environment for landlords to bring their housing units in the rental market, we will review the Landlord and Tenant Act.

Our objectives in the housing sector are to score greater achievement in housing development, enhance the quality of residence or housing estates, and attain the goal and targets set in the National Housing Programme. Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, is making major investment for our citizens, as we all want those in need of housing to have a home of their own which they can take pride in, and which will allow them to share the prosperity of our country. Ultimately, the housing programme signals a shift in the drive for more affordable and sustainable housing provision.

Last year, in my speech on the Budget, my Ministry took a commitment to improve the planning process, and to provide updated policies and proposals associated with living spaces to cater for certain types of land uses. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that we have, during the current year, completed a series of additional planning policy guidance on certain activities, including the following -

- design sheets on desalination plants;
- wastewater treatment plant;
- location and siting of filling stations;
- sustainable development and energy efficiency;
- heritage conservation, and
- residential *morcellement*.

The existing design guidance in respect of industrial development, tall buildings, sloping sites, residential development, commercial development, requirements for infrastructure and utilities have been reviewed and updated.

New provisions regarding *campement* site rentals during the preceding years has resulted in more and more lessees turning towards an intensification of building development on their respective sites. This is being envisaged without paying due regard to the sensitivity of the coastal fringe on which the *campements* are located. My Ministry is, therefore, coming up with guidelines for development on *campement* sites to strike a proper balance between a site sensitivity, location and economic returns.

As announced last year, we have undertaken the revision of the long overdue outline planning scheme for five urban areas. The first final drafts will be put on public deposit before the end of this year. The full study is expected to be completed by August next year. In order to modernise our procedural setup, we are undertaking to reduce the public deposit period from three months to 28 days in the existing Town and Country Planning Act 1954.

As regards the concept of a cleaner and greener Mauritius, I am pleased to announce that my Ministry has already started to address the issue by preparing plans for the upgrading of our town centres, as part of the revision of the five municipal areas. In order to achieve the desired result, we need to ensure their proper implementation. The financial package of Rs500 m., which is provided in the Budget for a series of urban and rural renovation projects to improve the living environment, will definitely be a good step in the improvement of the overall outlook of our town and village centres. It is also noteworthy to highlight that the upgrading will be undertaken strategically in the context of the light rail study, and existing standard in town centres will be valorised.

Furthermore, since the proclamation of the Land Government Act 2011, the provisions proposed in the upcoming Land Use Planning and Development Bill has to be streamlined to avoid duplication and other provisions included to pave the way for a more practical approach to the administration of territorial planning. Planned implementation will be set as a key objective of urban plans in the legislation, and necessary mechanism for implementation will be built in the right from the beginning when urban plans are developed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has a density of 42% of its population in urban areas, which is similar to the trend in the African cities with 41% of urban population. The implications of urban sprawl service delivery are significant. Extended distances increase investment as well as operational costs. Most urban plans have not been linked to major Infrastructural Investment Programmes, including industrial parks, power networks, modern wastewater treatment and even neighbourhood revitalisation programmes. For example, it has not been uncommon for major investment in the transport sector to neglect the needs of pedestrians, cyclists or even mass transit. We have, therefore, a series of challenges to address in order to support innovative urban development and land management practices on the urban front.

We have to encourage urban governance which needs to be strengthened, champion the cause for equitable access to land, housing, basic services and infrastructure, promote public

transport, mass transit system and non motorised transport with equitable space for pedestrians and cyclists; provide enabling house using policies, slum upgrading initiatives to facilitate the delivery of affordable and adequate housing solutions; develop a better understanding of the urban land dynamics that can lead to growth of urban markets and, subsequently, to help to renew the urban fabric, and encourage the mobilisation of domestic financial resources for urban development and economic investment opportunities if we want to become a high income country. To improve our capacity or to address these issues, my Ministry has been participating in the regional and international initiatives such as the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMHUD), the world city's summit and the world urban forum where opportunities were explored for accelerating national development and for creating the foundation of a sustainable urban future. The budgetary incentives announced to revitalise the town centres are highly commendable as they are very much needed so as to offer the same level of services and facilities as those who visit dedicated out of town shopping malls.

Furthermore, the decision to confine entertainment facilities such as gaming houses, night clubs and similar establishment and shopping malls will certainly alleviate nuisances, which residential areas are subjected to. However, we still have to be cautious as many shopping malls are planned on the periphery of towns where they occur very close to residential suburbs.

My Ministry has already a draft planning holistic guidance on gaming houses and places of amusement which it will revisit in the light of the new policy decision. Actually this has been the complaint of the hon. Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes, hon. Ramano, and hon. Ms Deerpalsing also, who has been in the forefront of evicting the notorious Ti Vegas from Quatre Bornes.

The country is engaged in a vast reform of the way public affairs are conducted and all measures likely to promote economic growth will be used to optimise our chances to push the country on the high income track. We are accordingly strengthening our capacity to train our officers by providing training opportunities both, locally and abroad, through aids scholarships and training workshops.

My Ministry also intends to liaise with the University of Mauritius to mount tailored design courses for planners for both, and central Government, given that planning issues are becoming more complex and planners have to be multi-skilled and proactive in their output.

As Rodrigues forms an integral part of the Republic, we have extended our help to improve the delivery of services in the planning sector. We shall continue to monitor results next and provide some add-ons in terms of guidelines for developments. As I reported earlier, we have closer interaction with UN Habitat on the housing issue to reconcile. We are trying to reconcile the housing sector requirements within its wider planning concerns with a renewed focus on integrated urban planning.

My Ministry coordinated and supervised the preparations of four urban profiling reports under the participatory Slum Upgrading Programme approved by UN Habitat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a new Environment and Land Use Tribunal has been set up to hear appeals and is now fully operational. Prior to the Town and Country Planning Board stopping its appellant function, which had been taken over by the Tribunal, it heard and determined around 135 cases until October. It still has to hear about six cases which have started, but not finalised. About 285 outstanding cases have been transferred to the Tribunal.

My Ministry is taking steps to improve the permitting process for a *morcellement* permit and will be posting guidelines to help potential developers out of the procedural steps that they should take to lodge in applications. At the same time, all necessary information and technical requirements will also be provided so that there is a user-friendly set up.

The *Morcellement* Unit of my Ministry has issued around 300 *morcellement* permits as at date. It is expected that with the availability of these guidelines, the process will become more fluid and transparent and result in a higher number of applications being determined.

One of the priorities of this Government has always been to facilitate access to land and to foster economic development by encouraging an entrepreneurs and promoters to carry out their activities that were previously underdeveloped. I heartily welcome the proposals of my colleagues, the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development to enforce a claim nominal symbolic fee of Rs1 from lessees of residential and agricultural sites who actually are paying annual rent up to Rs500. This is a well thought strategy, which besides relieving the poorest section of our society, will also pertain administrative hurdles. The officers of my Ministry will have the opportunity to devote more time to more productive use.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to comment on two aspects of the speech of hon. Dr. Satish Boolell. He seems to be particularly upset about the words 'cohort of nurses'. Actually, it means a group of people and is not particularly rude. At the university where I was teaching, in

Aberdeen, very often, we refer to the medical students as cohorts of 5th year, 6th year students and it is a common expression which is used in the medical jargon.

I am very surprised that he is criticising the concept of CPD, which is Continuous Professional Development. CPD is as old as the medical profession itself, but it has drastically changed over the years and more significantly over the last decade. Initially, when medicine started developing, the students were gathering around the master, especially the surgeon, who will dissect bodies and show them. Eventually, they were going to the operation theatre where they are shown how to operate. They have to watch. They go to the ward where they are following the patients. Subsequently, it has evolved. We used to have teaching ward rounds; we used to have clinical discussions, but now over the last 20 years, it has become more formalised and, recently, it is even more so, so that now doctors, whether they are surgeons or clinicians, they have to produce evidence of their work. How many patients they have seen, how many complications have been happening, what they have done to treat it and how many deaths there have been, especially operating deaths and each operating death mandatorily followed by a conference, where everything is examined, vetted and evaluated by experts and our peers.

We have to know what has been done and what has not been done. What omissions there have been or what wrongful commissions, because eventually its aim is to ensure the safety of the patient. We don't want the surgeon to make the same mistake and call it experience. This is very bad experience.

That's why I heartily welcome the decision of Government to make it mandatory. So far it has been only on a voluntary basis. In fact, as the Regional Director, I started it officially. We had a cup of tea and then they were being given instructions to go and attend these conferences. But unless something is mandatorily and made my law, it will be very reluctant to control it. That's why I hope what Government is doing, will be eventually for the good of the people of this country. We will try to have a better safety for the people of this world, of this country and ensure that we have as fewer complications as necessary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I had a lot more to say, but I think I have overrun my time. I again thank my colleagues for all their attention and, again, I thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and the hon. Prime Minister, who have put a lot of efforts. I must stress this is a Budget of this Government. It has been an effort, each and every department has had its output and this is why

we are working as a team. It is not one upon the other, but we are all moving forward for the benefit of this country.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.22 p.m.)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Speaker, Sir, a budget is an annual financial exercise, a short-term development plan as well as a medium-term and long-term agenda, which inevitably heralds something imaginative and visionary to get the country on a path of sustained and sustainable development. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my opinion, this year's exercise is devoid of the very elements to shape a better future. In brief, the 2013 Budget lacks ambition and demonstrates this Government's incompetence and total absence of leadership and vision. I shall try to restrict myself to a few points to explain my stand and I won't be long.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Patrick Assirvaden has stated that the Opposition is absent during the debates and qualified it as irresponsible. In fact, I would say that there has been a sinister agenda set out by the hon. Prime Minister whereby Government itself has devaluated the budget exercise.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, Budget Day was announced well before after a Cabinet meeting and the hon. Prime Minister was the first one to know that Budget will be presented on 09 November. Despite that, he decided to organise village council and municipal elections on 02 and 09 December respectively, placing the whole country in electoral mode during normal Budget debating period. We all know that these elections were long overdue and this Government could not run away any more. However, it is the very first time in the history of independent Mauritius that a Budget is presented during an electoral campaign, thus disrespecting all democratic principles. In fact, not only there has been a total devaluation of the budget exercise, but this Government has also shown disrespect to the electorate and to all of us, Parliamentarians, as well. Therefore, hon. Assirvaden should look up to his leader before accusing the Opposition.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, I ask the question whether the devaluation of the budget exercise is not *un aveu de taille de la faillite de ce gouvernement dans la gestion économique du pays*. Or else it is a way for the Prime Minister to tell his Minister of Finance that it is not worth of consideration.

Faillite sur faillite, M. le président. Voilà le bilan de ce gouvernement et du ministre des finances. Le bluff du *résultat lor résultat* éclate à la figure du ministre des finances, faillite sur la croissance, faillite sur l'emploi, faillite dans la lutte contre la pauvreté, faillite sur le logement social, faillite sur le pouvoir d'achat. Les Mauriciens constatent les dégâts et en subissent les conséquences amèrement alors que le Premier ministre vient dire que les Mauriciens vivent bien. Il est en train d'insulter la population!

In the course of the preparation of the present Budget, it goes without saying that the Minister of Finance must have taken into consideration the holding of the forthcoming village and municipal council elections. But what the 2013 Budget concretely provides for Local Government? Nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir! We have waited for six long years for the new Local Government Act and seven years before regional elections are held. We were told that the new legislation would be revolutionary and spectacular and would give more autonomy to local authorities in terms of finance and decision-making. Yet, it turned out to be a fiasco and as we stepped into elections, we have found the numerous problems with this legislation. Many of the issues being encountered today were raised by the Opposition during the debates on the new Local Government Bill.

The idea behind the creation of new District Councils is to alleviate the burden of the existing ones and to render them more efficient in terms of service delivery. So, achieving such an aim requires additional efforts from the Government. Does this Budget reflect this commitment? Certainly not, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Dramatically, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been made aware recently that all the Local Authorities, especially the Municipal Councils are facing major financial difficulties, some having funds only to ensure the salaries of the employees. Deficit amounts to an astonishing Rs231 m. *Faillite encore une fois, M. le président.* This, in itself, shows the *pillage* that there has been going on in our municipalities for the past seven years. I have not heard the Minister of Local Government saying a word about this mess.

Nous savons tous comment les conseillers travaillistes et PMSD ont commis abus sur abus. Les voyages à gogo, le fantasme de voyager en jet privé, la conseillère Caba arpentant la plage de Flic en Flac pour collecter les pactoles en échange des étaux à la foire de Quatre Bornes ; les bottes à R 2000, les poubelles à R 7,000 et les festivals Manger/Boire témoignent de l'opération de dilapidation dans nos municipalités, sans oublier la mal-administration, les

querelles intestines, le manque répétitif de quorum paralysant les décisions, le manque de projets ou la réalisation de projets jackpot et la mentalité, si je peux me servir du mot 'joueur'. Il ne faut pas oublier non plus qu'un maire travailliste ...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member must withdraw the word.

Mr Nagalingum: I withdraw. Il ne faut pas oublier non plus qu'un maire travailliste a dû démissionner de ses fonctions suite à un scandale au goût aphrodisiaque.

I would invite Members from the other side to have a look at the statement and interviews of my good friend Reza Issack on the situation in our Municipalities. C'est l'état des choses où on est actuellement M. le président. Formerly Mr Speaker, Sir, when the MMM was at the head of the Local Authorities, the towns they administered were models of Local Government, recognised not only by the inhabitants but also by the political adversaries. Unfortunately, the situation has now completely degenerated.

Formerly the town of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill was a centre of Arts and Culture and the Plaza theatre was a temple of art and culture. Today, the town centre is a centre of gambling, attracting drug trafficking and prostitution. People are attacked and robbed in broad daylight; law and order has dramatically deteriorated. The town suffers and is still suffering from a continuous degradation, poor maintenance, if not, no maintenance at all of main buildings: markets, roads, pavements, drains, public services, waste collection, public lighting; waste land has been regular site of crime. The Mayor, himself, has pitifully admitted that he is not in a position to remedy the situation because of lack of resources in spite of repeated requests to the hon. Minister of Local Government and the hon. Minister of Finance.

Has this Budget contributed in some way to improve their fate? No Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to raise some issues pertaining to my Constituency, but which might be affecting many parts of the country also. We have just stepped in summer and water supply is already a national issue. In my Constituency, for example, water is supplied in some regions for one or two hours only. I have read that this situation also prevails in other regions. Mr Speaker, Sir, this problem should be treated as an urgent matter, but has any action plan been developed in relation to this problem. The latter problem cannot be subject to piecemeal solutions. It calls for a national plan. True it is that the Minister has juggled with figures to show his commitment to tackle this problem, but we should not forget that such has been the case in

the previous Budgets this Government has presented to this House. Unfortunately nothing has concretely been realised today as far as this issue is concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of law and order is yet another thorny problem. On several occasions, I have raised the matter in this House particularly regarding the situation in the town of Rose-Hill. I must admit that some measures have been taken by the Police to remedy the situation, but so far only one-off solutions have been initiated. As a result, prostitution and other related problems have migrated from the downtown Rose Hill to another part of the town. This is a clear illustration of the fact that piecemeal solutions should be avoided. Will the recruitment of 600 Police Constables be an answer to the issue of law and order? I don't think so. I shall appreciate if the hon. Minister of Finance could enlighten us about how his budgetary provisions could help address this particular issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that the cost of living is constantly increasing at an uncontrolled rate. We all here agree on the point, but what does the 2013 Budget provide in order to fight the painful truth?

Mr Speaker, Sir, has the Minister given any thought to those at the lowest rung of the ladder who are unable to give their children three meals a day? Mr Speaker, Sir, There is no better place than a supermarket where you can find *de visu* how difficult it is today for people to make both ends meet. Can a country be called a prosperous one when a fraction of its population is not even able to have a glass of milk every day? I know that there can be no '*solution magique*' to this problem, but we must not forget that the Prime Minister promised that prices would go down since 2005. Have we forgotten the *carnet la boutique* being used to fool people during the 2005 electoral campaign? Taking into account the fact that the Minister of Finance had a big *marge de manoeuvre*, it could have perhaps contemplated some sort of subsidy on basic and essential items.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I expected strategies, programmes and initiatives crafted in 2013 Budget to be directed towards achieving the aims I enumerated, but unfortunately this is not the case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in recent months, the Prime Minister has often talked about the world economic crisis and its effects on the economy of Mauritius. Yet, both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance give the impression that they were absolutely unconcerned about the dangers which the population is facing. They criticise the Opposition for raising real questions about the ongoing threats to the livelihood of thousands of our citizens. It has repeatedly

qualified the opposition as *antipatriote ou oiseau de malheur*. There is today unanimity in the country that the Budget failed to address the concerns of the private sector, the small entrepreneur, the workers, the middle class, the unemployed and the poor. The Minister's Budget is taking from the pockets of consumers an additional sum of Rs6.4 billion while distributing peanuts to those who find themselves at the lower rungs of the social ladder. At the end of the next financial year, what looks inevitable is a real pauperisation of the working people in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to end by quoting an eminent editorialist of an important business magazine who qualified the Budget as follows:

'Le budget 2013 apparait ainsi comme une succession d'appositions, de rustine, ces petites pièces de caoutchouc destinées à obstruer les trous dans une chambre à air ou tout autre objet gonflable' End of quote.

Obviously I am not talking about the Minister.

Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.38 p.m.)

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum): M. le président, je tiens tout d'abord à féliciter le Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances et du Développement Economique, notre ami Xavier-Luc Duval d'avoir présenté un budget sérieux et clairvoyant et qui cadre parfaitement avec la vision de notre gouvernement et celle de notre Premier ministre en particulier, c'est-à-dire, moderniser le pays, apporter plus, accroître la richesse du pays et avoir une redistribution, une grande justice sociale.

M. le président, je félicite notre ami, le Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances parce que, pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, il y avait une conférence à Cape Town où il y avait la présence de ITU, l'instance suprême en ce qui concerne le TIC et tout de suite, ils ont fait remarquer - Maurice a été reconnu comme le premier pays du continent africain à accorder autant d'attention au secteur du TIC dans le budget national.

M. le président, je dois vous dire une chose. J'ai pris la peine d'écouter bon nombre de mes amis de l'opposition, plus d'une dizaine mais je suis navré de constater qu'ils ont critiqué. Je suis tout à fait d'accord mais venez s'il vous plaît avec des propositions fermes, crédibles, intelligentes. On peut ne pas être d'accord, mais quand même, je dois admettre que nous ne

sommes pas censés tout connaître ou tout savoir. Mais, vous, de l'autre côté de la Chambre, vous vous présentez comme des donneurs de leçon, au moins, chers amis, venez ; faites des propositions valables et soutenez vos arguments sur ce que vous nous reprochez, à ce moment-là, on peut comprendre.

L'opposition, fidèle à son habitude, continue à jouer au prophète de malheur et par pure démagogie, M. le président, avant même la présentation du budget, vous avez entendu ce qu'ils ont dit à la radio ? Ils ont été aux antennes pour dire, une semaine avant la présentation du budget, que le gouvernement a les moyens pour donner tout ce qu'il faut à la nation. Quand on arrive à l'étape du budget, et là, cette fois-ci, qu'est-ce qu'ils disent ? Ils partent, ils se sauvent ! Après la lecture du budget, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont à nous dire cette fois-ci ? Que le budget n'est pas clairvoyant, il n'y a rien de prévoyant, ils ne voient rien et c'est fade. Il y a les élections municipales qui arrivent et quand ils vont recevoir une bonne raclée, vous savez ce qu'ils vont dire, que c'était un budget *'la bouche doux'* et c'est à cause de cela que nous avons gagné les élections. Pour le moment, ils disent que dans le budget on n'a pas fait assez pour les citoyens. Mais demain, vous allez voir ce qu'ils vont dire !

M. le président, le premier intervenant du côté de l'opposition a ironisé sur le prix du gaz ménager en faisant référence au feu Sir Gaëtan Duval. L'honorable membre sait très bien que le prix du gaz ménager est hautement subventionné par l'Etat. Lorsque le gouvernement MMM/MSM *was in office between the year 2000 to 2005*, la subvention de l'Etat sur cet item était de R 287.8 millions. Aujourd'hui, ce chiffre est passé à R 704.3 m. en 2012. Au fait, la subvention représente actuellement 68% du prix de ce produit comparé à seulement 38% en 2004 à 2005 - plus de 50% de subvention de plus.

M. le président, il y avait un autre membre qui est intervenu sur le My.T et *Broadband Internet*. J'ai essayé de la comprendre mais, malheureusement, c'était très confus. Elle disait que le prix du *Broadband Internet* est plus cher que le My.T. M. le président, laissez-moi faire la lumière là-dessus. Le My.T est un produit commercialisé par Mauritius Telecom tout comme il y a d'autres produits tels que ALICE par la compagnie DCL, vous avez Chili par la compagnie MTML. Mais les gens qui ne peuvent pas s'offrir ces produits, M. le président, nous avons ce qu'on appelle ADSL avec qui ils peuvent se connecter à l'internet. Ils disent que rien n'a été fait *to break the digital divide*. M. le président, sachant très bien l'importance de l'internet, pour avoir accès à l'internet, il faut avoir un PC. Mais ceux qui n'ont pas un PC, le gouvernement,

dans tous les centres communautaires, dans le *Day Care Centre*, a mis sur pied des *computer clubs*. On avait pensé faire 150, finalement, on est arrivé à 178 computer clubs, M. le président. Les personnes âgées, les veuves, les femmes sans emploi, les étudiants pauvres qui n'ont pas un PC à la maison, peuvent s'y rendre et faire leur travail de recherche. Depuis qu'on a mis ce système en place, il y a plus de 500,000 utilisateurs à ce jour, M. le président, et ils disent qu'on ne fait rien *to break the digital divide*.

(Interruptions)

Oui, cher ami, on a fait cela d'une façon scientifique pour calculer le nombre de personnes qui fréquentent les centres communautaires aujourd'hui. Moi-même, j'étais agréablement surpris de voir ce chiffre. C'est vrai, cela saute aux yeux. On a tendance à croire que je suis en train de dire quelque chose qui n'est pas sérieux, mais je sais ce que je dis! Ce qu'on a fait de plus c'est qu'on est venu avec le projet *Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) in Post Offices*. Les enfants qui n'ont pas de PC, peuvent toujours se rendre à la poste. Et vous avez vu comment la Poste fonctionne aujourd'hui ? Dans tous les bureaux de poste il y a ce qu'on appelle un coin pour l'internet où ils peuvent avoir accès. M. le président, ce qui est plus intéressant encore, on a créé des zones WIFI ; à l'île de la Réunion c'est payant. A Maurice, vous avez pu voir dans tous les conseils de districts et dans toutes les municipalités, on a installé des antennes WIFI où nos jeunes peuvent avoir facilement accès à l'internet.

Quelqu'un a parlé du repas chaud. D'ailleurs, ce budget fait provision pour le repas chaud. Ils n'avaient rien donné. On donne le repas chaud mais qui nous dit qu'il n'y aura pas de lait inclus ? Il faut attendre, puis voir comment cela fonctionne.

M. le président, l'opposition a aussi critiqué la mesure visant à offrir une tablette aux élèves de la Forme IV au lieu d'un Laptop, comme on avait dit lors de la campagne électorale. M. le président, il est dommage de constater que l'opposition ne semble pas être au courant du développement dans le domaine informatique car la tablette est une technologie qui vient après le Laptop. On veut donner à nos enfants la technologie la plus récente, dernier cri. On avait dit qu'on allait donner aux élèves de la Forme VI lors de la campagne électorale. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on a fait de concret, M. le président ? Donner cela aux élèves de la Forme IV ! Et vous allez voir c'est chose faite. Vous savez pourquoi on l'a fait ? C'est parce que nous avons dit qu'on allait faire de l'internet un droit de tous les citoyens, on avait dit qu'on allait révolutionner la façon dont on éduque nos enfants, et c'est ce qu'on fait, M. le président. On donne ces tablettes

aux enfants et maintenant on veut augmenter la capacité de l'internet dans les écoles ; *it is in the pipeline*.

M. le président, l'opposition comme toujours a osé critiquer l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse même si cette augmentation est supérieure au taux d'inflation. Il est bon de rappeler, M. le président, que la pension universelle fut remise en cause par le gouvernement MMM/MSM en 2004 et bon nombre de personnes fut déclaré non éligible pour cette pension. Et là, je voudrais ouvrir une parenthèse pour dire ceci, M. le président. Je ne faisais pas la politique à cette époque, c'était en décembre 2004. En décembre 2004, une personne était venue à mon bureau pour un conseil. Au moment de partir - c'était durant la période de fin d'année - j'ai souhaité 'Bonne année' à cette personne. Vous savez ce qu'elle m'a répondu ? 'Quelle Bonne année, vous me dites, monsieur ! Je n'ai même pas les moyens d'acheter une chopine de boisson gazeuse pour donner à mon voisin qui va venir chez moi pour les souhaits de fin d'année'. Et je lui ai demandé : ' pourquoi ?'. Elle m'a répondu: 'vous savez je n'ai pas reçu ma pension pour le mois de novembre et ils ont supprimé pour le mois de décembre aussi'. Donc, vous vous rendez compte, M. le président, quand nous, nous sommes au gouvernement, malgré tous les problèmes que nous avons, on a quand même pensé à nos aînés et on a continué à donner cette augmentation de Rs3,500. Vous pouvez demander à ces personnes qui touchent cette pension - je ne généralise pas - combien leurs enfants leur donnent. Si je ne me trompe pas, le gouvernement donne beaucoup plus que ce qu'ils reçoivent de leurs propres enfants. M. le président, il y a une chose qu'il faut prendre en considération. Non seulement on donne cette augmentation, mais on continue tous les services qu'on a donnés à nos personnes âgées en construisant des centres récréatifs pour eux. Il y a un centre à Pointe aux Sables, à Pointe aux Piments et à Belle Mare. Pour vous dire, M. le président, *really this is a caring Government*. C'est parce que nous avons du respect pour nos aînés. Si aujourd'hui nous sommes là c'est parce que ce sont eux qui ont travaillé pour nous mener là où nous sommes aujourd'hui. C'est pour cela qu'on le fait. Cet effort est continu. Il faut bien prendre en considération que quand le gouvernement, mené par le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, donne quelque chose à la population, jamais on va le reprendre. Cet exercice de donner est continu. Et quand vous dites que nous n'avons pas fait assez, nous n'avons rien supprimé de l'autre côté, M. le président. Tout ce qu'on a donné dans le passé, on continue à donner et on augmente. Mais il faut bien prendre en considération ce que nous sommes en train de faire. Heureusement, quand l'honorable Dr.

Ramgoolam est retourné au pouvoir en 2005, il a corrigé tout de suite cette injustice du gouvernement MMM/MSM.

M. le président, il y a une chose que je voudrais faire ressortir. Il y a un membre du côté de l'opposition qui disait : pourquoi on nous compare avec l'Espagne, l'Italie, la Grèce, le Portugal de Ronaldo et la France ? Pourquoi se sert-on de ces pays ? M. le président, nous sommes tous des Mauriciens. A un certain moment nos grands frères ou oncles sont partis en Angleterre, en France, en Allemagne ou en Italie *to seek better prospects*. Ces pays représentaient un Eldorado à cette époque et, aujourd'hui, M. le président, demandez à ces mêmes personnes d'aller dans ces pays-là, elles ne vont jamais le faire. On a pu constater pourquoi elles ne partent pas. C'est parce que l'herbe n'est plus beaucoup plus verte là-bas, que c'est actuellement à Maurice, on travaille de ce côté-là, M. le président. Même les étudiants qui partent à l'étranger pour étudier, ils disent qu'une fois leurs études terminées, ils vont retourner parce que ce n'est pas facile. Eux-mêmes ils ont des parents en Angleterre, en France et d'autres pays d'Europe. Ils savent que ce n'est plus facile pour eux de rester. Et les enfants veulent retourner une fois leurs études terminées. Ce qui est aussi vrai, c'est qu'il y a certains enfants, y compris les miens, qui préfèrent étudier à Maurice à cause des facilités qu'ils ont et ils vont faire leur dernière année à l'étranger. Pour vous dire, M. le président, qu'il y a de la peine et de la misère, ça ce n'est pas sérieux. Vos propres parents, quand ils sortent de l'étranger pour venir à Maurice, ils sont agréablement surpris de constater le progrès que ce pays a fait. Ils sont fiers du progrès accompli. Où étiez-vous à cette époque ? Dans l'opposition, à critiquer. Continuez cet exercice, vous avez encore beaucoup de temps à rester là-bas pour faire ce genre de travail.

M. le président, s'il faut continuer à réfuter ce qu'ils ont dit, finalement, il ne me restera pas beaucoup de temps pour dire ce que nous allons continuer à faire. M. le président, étant donné que j'ai commencé à faire de la politique active à partir de 2010, je me suis dit peut-être eux, quand ils avaient préparé leur budget en 2000/2005, il y avait des idées plus révolutionnaires, plus extravagantes pour faire bouger les choses. J'ai pris la peine, M. le président, de lire les précédents budgets présentés par le gouvernement MMM/MSM durant la période 2001-2005. Dans le tout premier budget, le ministre des finances d'alors a choisi un thème. Savez-vous quel thème ? « Anou redresse nous péi ». Si je ne me trompe pas, c'était ce même thème qu'ils avaient utilisé lors de la campagne électorale pour embêter les gens en 2000/2005. Malheureusement, M. le président – cela vous ne pouvez pas le nier – au lieu de

redresser le pays, ils ont laissé derrière eux un bilan catastrophique, malgré un contexte économique international plus favorable que celui prévalant durant les sept dernières années.

(6.01 p.m.)

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

Et pourtant, aujourd'hui, M. le président, ils continuent à se comporter comme des donneurs de leçon.

(Interruptions)

S'il vous plaît, supportez vos arguments, à ce moment nous pourrions vous écouter. Voyons quelques faits, M. le président, pour soutenir ce que moi, j'ai dit. Il y a un honorable membre de l'opposition qui faisait des remarques sur l'*entertainment tax*. On a augmenté l'*entertainment tax*. Mais, M. le président, l'*entertainment tax* touche ceux qui ont les moyens d'avoir ce type d'*entertainment*. Il y a les touristes. Mais, quand les membres de l'opposition étaient au gouvernement, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait ? Ils ont augmenté la TVA par plus de 50% et cela touche les petits bébés qui viennent de naître jusqu'à la personne la plus âgée. Vous vous rendez compte !

M. le président, quand le gouvernement du Dr. Ramgoolam part en 2000, la dette publique était de 49.8%. M. le président, bouger la dette publique par 0.1% ça demande beaucoup. Quand eux, ils ont quitté en 2005, la dette publique était de 55.7% du PIB comparée à 49.8% en 2000. L'honorable Soodhun était ministre de l'emploi ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please refrain from cross-talking !

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: M. le président, ils avaient parlé sur un sujet très intéressant.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please !

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: L'honorable Soodhun était ministre de l'emploi dans le gouvernement MMM/MSM. Savez-vous, M. le président, en 2005 ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, allow the hon. Minister to continue his intervention without any interruption, please! Please, carry on!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: M. le président, concernant le secteur du TIC, quand le gouvernement MMM/MSM quitte le pouvoir en 2005, le nombre d'emplois créé dans ce secteur

était de 7,000 mais là, je dois dire que quand ils avaient pris le pouvoir en 2000, le nombre d'emplois créé était de 4,400. Et pendant 2000 à 2005, seulement 2,600 emplois ont été créés dans le secteur du TIC. Alors, savez-vous ce qu'ils ont promis à la nation : 20,000 dans ce secteur d'ici 2005. Qui était le ministre de l'emploi ? C'était l'honorable Soodhun qui tout à l'heure parlait sur 'pas suffisamment de création d'emplois dans le pays'. C'est bien de lui rappeler que *it came from the horse's mouth itself. The Prime Minister at that time came before the nation to say that*: « le chômage augmente à un taux alarmant... »

(Interruptions)

Vertigineux ! *My goodness* ! Je préfère ne pas aller encore plus loin, oubliant à la fois les squelettes laissés dans les placards.

Je suis ravi de constater que le vice-Premier ministre ait choisi de se départir d'un discours budgétaire normatif en adoptant une approche axée vers la modernité, qui est d'ailleurs la vision phare de notre Premier ministre. *From history to modernity*. Ainsi, il a accordé une importance particulière au secteur des TICs...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dayal, please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: ...dans son budget, et ceci dans l'attente de voir dans ce secteur un moteur qui accroîtra la croissance économique du pays.

M. le président, ce qui est bon avec ce gouvernement c'est qu'on respecte ce qu'on a dit. On avait dit qu'on allait faire de l'internet un droit de tous les citoyens. On avait dit qu'on allait révolutionner notre système d'éduquer nos enfants. On va améliorer la connaissance du savoir. On va faire de Maurice le pays le mieux connecté au monde et, voilà, vous pouvez voir dans le concret ce que nous sommes en train de faire, M. le président. L'universalisation de l'accès à l'internet à haut débit d'une connexion de 256 KB par seconde, au prix mensuel de R 200 seulement. Savez-vous combien les gens payaient l'ADSL en 2005 ? R 950. Le nouveau prix est de R 200, et placera Maurice parmi les rares pays au monde où l'internet large bande est offert à un prix le plus abordable. Notre souci de baisser le prix de l'internet n'est pas seulement dû au fait que nous voulons baisser ce prix ; nous avons une vision à long terme.

D'après notre National Broadband Policy, on avait dit que d'ici 2014 nous allons passer à une pénétration de 60% du *broadband Internet*. Cette mesure va inciter cette situation pour qu'on puisse dépasser largement les 60%. Nous avons à prendre en considération ce que le

Millenium Development Goal dit. M. le président, d'ici 2015, d'après le *Millenium Development Goal*, le coût de l'internet de tous les pays du monde doit être à la hauteur de 5% de la moyenne des revenus d'un citoyen. C'est ce que le *Millenium Development Goal* prévoyait en 2005. C'est vrai que lorsqu'on est arrivé en 2010, c'était à plus de 5%. Mais il est dit que c'est en 2015 que cela va passer à 5%. Je dois vous dire qu'avant même qu'on ne vienne avec cette baisse de R 200, on était déjà à 2.7%, alors qu'ils disent qu'en 2015 le prix de l'internet doit être 5% de la moyenne des revenus d'un citoyen. En passant à R 200, on est arrivé à 1.3%, M. le président. Vous rendez-vous compte quand le *Millenium Development Goal* dit qu'il faut, d'ici 2015, avoir 5%, nous, on est déjà à 1.3% ! C'est pour vous dire le progrès que ce gouvernement est en train de faire sous le *leadership* du Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'il nous donne cet espace pour pouvoir travailler. Il nous donne cette liberté pour qu'on puisse amener ce pays et le secteur là où il le faut.

M. le président, le secteur TIC/BPO est appelé à se développer davantage. En 2009, sa contribution au P.I.B. était de 5.9%. D'après les chiffres du *Statistics Office*, en 2011 nous sommes à 6.7%. Bouger par 0.1% le chiffre du PIB n'est pas quelque chose de simple. On a fait un *forecast* que, d'ici la fin de l'année 2012, on va passer à 7% quant à notre contribution au P.I.B.

Nous avons cette légitime ambition de créer beaucoup plus d'emplois dans ce secteur, et on va le faire. M. le président, savez-vous par combien les exportations des services TIC ont augmenté ? Par 48% ; sortant de R 3.1 milliards en 2010 pour passer à R 4.6 milliards en 2011 ! La valeur ajoutée de ce secteur est de l'ordre de R 19 milliards, alors que le chiffre d'affaires s'élève au-delà de R 30 milliards !

M. le président, tout le monde le sait, la crise de l'euro est là, elle persiste, et ce n'est pas seulement l'Europe qui est concernée par cette crise. Le monde devient un village global, et nous subissons les secousses de cette crise. Mon ministère travaille en étroite collaboration avec les différents *stakeholders* du secteur TIC/BPO, afin d'identifier les contraintes qui empêchent l'industrie de se développer. Il y a trois contraintes majeures qu'on a identifiées : la facture d'électricité qui était très élevée, le prix des communications, et le manque aigu de main-d'œuvre qualifiée. Je suis sûr et certain que vous aussi vous allez être content. On a pu apporter ce changement dans ce mécanisme et, avec l'aide du BOI et du CEB, on a pu obtenir un tarif préférentiel pour les compagnies travaillant sous le secteur des TIC. Le coût de l'électricité a

baissé par plus de 50%. C'est une bonne chose qui va rendre nos compagnies des TIC plus compétitives.

Concernant les prix de communication, M. le président, il y a une baisse. Tout en apportant la baisse pour nos citoyens, c'est-à-dire avoir de l'internet à R 200 ; pour les *corporates* il y a eu une baisse de 15%, le IPLC, qui va, encore une fois, apporter plus de dynamisme à ce secteur, pour qu'on puisse faire encore mieux dans l'avenir. Je dois vous dire que d'autres baisses sont à prévoir au cours de l'année prochaine. On y travaille déjà.

En ce qui concerne la main-d'œuvre qualifiée, M. le président, c'est vrai qu'on a mis du retard pour trouver la formule idéale pour contrecarrer ce problème de manque de main-d'œuvre qualifiée. On a mis sur pied le *ICT Academy* et, pour le soutenir, on est venu avec le *ICT Skill Development Programme*, qui aidera à former les jeunes sans emploi pour le secteur. Les cours de formation seront dispensés par les entreprises en fonction de leurs besoins, et pour rendre cette situation plus intéressante, le gouvernement prendra en charge 50% des frais de formation ainsi que 50% de l'allocation destinée aux stagiaires.

M. le président, afin de faire bouger davantage ce secteur, il y a une chose qui est très importante : la visibilité. Il va sans dire que Maurice a toujours été connu comme une destination touristique. Vu le bon travail qui se fait au niveau de l'industrie touristique, forcément Maurice est connu à travers le monde comme une très belle destination pour le secteur touristique. M. le président, nous voulons faire du TIC une destination pour Maurice. *We want Mauritius to become a preferred, safe and secured ICT destination.* Pour ce faire, M. le président, il y a toute une campagne de visibilité qu'il faut mettre en avant. Nous participons déjà dans diverses manifestations au niveau régional et international où nous avons eu l'occasion de présenter Maurice comme une destination fiable et sécurisée.

M. le président, l'Afrique, comme on le sait, a un très bon potentiel pour devenir un marché émergent pour le secteur TIC/BPO. M. le président, vu que maintenant on a acquis autant d'expérience, autant d'expertise dans le secteur, nous voulons vendre cette expertise sur l'Afrique. C'est pour cela qu'on est venu avec l'idée de faire de Maurice un centre régional du TIC. C'est en bonne voie et le travail se fait, M. le président.

M. le président, quand on parle de la campagne de visibilité, mon ministère, en partenariat avec le *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)* – c'est mon ami

l'honorable Dr. Arvind Boolell qui nous a mis en contact avec cette organisation - nous avons pu organiser la première conférence ICT/BPO l'année dernière et cela a été un grand succès.

Cette année-ci, M. le président, l'UNECA, qui a vraiment vu en Maurice un potentiel, est venu nous dire qu'ils veulent, en partenariat avec nous, organiser cet événement chaque année à Maurice. Cela est très important pour notre campagne de visibilité. En septembre de cette année-ci on a organisé la conférence ICT/BPO. En octobre, il y a eu le forum *Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation (CTO)*. Et, en novembre, on a eu le *SADC ICT Ministers Meeting*. Tout cela, M. le président, pourquoi ? Pour donner plus de visibilité à l'île Maurice ! Nous avons toujours été connus comme une destination touristique, mais maintenant pour devenir une destination TIC, cela ne va pas se faire tout seul. Il nous faut cette visibilité. *As the hon. Prime Minister always said: nobody owes you a penny, you have to work for it. That's why we have organised the three conferences this year.* Nous voulons gagner cette bataille de visibilité et *earn that international recognition*. Et c'est cela qui va faire de nous un grand pays.

M. le président, tout cela a contribué à donner à l'île Maurice une grande visibilité sur le plan mondial dans le domaine des TICs. Ce qui est intéressant ...

(Interruptions)

On reçoit de temps en temps parce que maintenant nous sommes visibles. Je tiens à informer la Chambre que le *Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation (CTO)* a choisi Maurice pour un 'Case Study' sur *the 'e-accessibility using ICT'*. Vous savez ce qu'ils ont fait, ils ont voté une résolution pour cela et, d'ici six mois, une fois qu'ils obtiendront ce rapport, ils vont communiquer cela dans tous les pays du Commonwealth. Donc, vous vous rendez compte quelle visibilité cela va nous donner. Le Commonwealth, les Nations Unies et l'Inde se mettent de la partie eux-aussi. Il y a eu l'*Outsourcing and Technology Summit* organisé par Fintellect de l'Inde. Il nous demande si on peut accepter de *host* – ils vont nous aider – une conférence en février 2013.

M. le président, on continue à faire cette progression. Nous avons des ambitions dans le secteur et on veut faire mieux. On est content avec ce qu'on a pu réaliser jusqu'à présent, mais nous croyons sincèrement que nous avons le potentiel pour aller encore plus loin.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to highlight - I know we are running out of time - some of the major achievements of the ICT sector during 2012. Firstly, our National Broadband Policy. C'est bien de savoir. Alors que nous, nous avons fini de lancer notre *National Broadband*

Policy, l'Afrique du Sud actuellement cherche avec le ITU, l'instance suprême, de l'aide pour mettre sur pied leur *National Broadband Policy*.

M. le président, nous avons une population mondiale de 7 milliards d'habitants. Actuellement dans le monde, nous avons près de 6 milliards d'abonnés mobiles. A Maurice, on suit ce *train train* et nous avons largement dépassé 100%. On est arrivé à 110% de pénétration mobile. Là, ce qui est intéressant à faire ressortir, M. le président, c'est qu'avec le mobile, la communication est parfaite pour les journalistes, pour tout le monde. On voulait faire de Maurice le pays le mieux connecté au monde. Et maintenant voilà le résultat : 110%! Et on continue. M. le président, autrefois on avait le câble *South African Far East (SAFE)* - le câble optique - qui venait à Maurice. Certains opérateurs, avec raison, ne voulaient pas venir à Maurice de crainte que s'il y a un problème quelconque tout risque de s'écrouler. Ils avaient des doutes et on a fait venir le câble LION2. On avait annoncé cela dans le budget de l'année dernière et c'est chose faite. On est déjà connecté depuis avril. Juillet de cette année-ci il est devenu opérationnel. Donc, nous avons la capacité, M. le président.

On a fait davantage, M. le président. Après avoir fait le '*Open Access Policy to Sea Cable*', on est passé à la deuxième étape de cette ouverture de l'espace informatique. Nous avons ouvert *notre landing station* aux opérateurs étrangers. Ce qui est intéressant à faire ressortir c'est que le câble SAFE va venir et nous avons le câble LION. Maintenant, même si nous n'avons pas d'autres câbles qui arrivent, il y a le consortium ; par exemple, le câble SAFE ; Mauritius Telecom est un des membres de ce consortium. Il y a 36 membres de ce *Submarine cable consortium*. Quand on a ouvert ce *landing station*, M. le président, un opérateur étranger en la personne de Belgacom avait demandé une licence auprès du régulateur pour vendre la bande passante sur Maurice. M. le président, autrefois il n'y avait que *Mauritius Telecom* qui le faisait. Avec le *Open Access Policy to Sea Cable*, *Mauritius Telecom* a vendu the *Indivisible Rights of Use (IRU)* à la firme Emtel et maintenant on a eu Emtel aussi comme *wholesaler*.

Maintenant, nous avons le câble LION. Nous avons d'autres opérateurs. Il y a Belgacom qui arrive. Il y a 36 opérateurs potentiels qui peuvent venir et cet espace est déjà ouvert. Tout à l'heure j'avais dit que d'autres baisses sont à prévoir. Nous, ce que nous voulons, ce n'est pas seulement de réussir pendant ces cinq années. Il faut mettre des structures, M. le président. On est sincère, on est honnête dans ce qu'on veut faire. On veut mettre des structures, pour soutenir les développements à venir et on travaille dans cette direction. *Radio spectrum has been*

released to allow emergence to new technologies such as 4G. M. le président, nous sommes le premier pays africain à passer au 4G. Quand on dit 4G, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire ? Cela veut dire que vous aurez *un faster download and better user experience. Speed increases by 100 times*, M. le président. C'est ce que nous sommes en train de faire. Avec la libération *of this scarce resource*, on a mis sur pied un *taskforce* pour gérer cela, M. le président. Je dois vous dire que nous sommes en bonne voie. Nous sommes à la conquête des marchés de nos principaux compétiteurs, et moi, je crois que nous sommes suffisamment armés pour pouvoir le faire.

M. le président, quand on arrive au *digital migration*, ITU a mis le *deadline* à 2015 pour entamer cette migration digitale. Et je dois dire - nous avons deux amis qui sont de Rodrigues - que Rodrigues est déjà à 100% de migration digitale. Maurice, on est à 100% mais l'adoption est à seulement 70% et là on va faire un *survey* et on a demandé aux bureaux de poste de faire un *survey* pour voir pourquoi cette résistance de la part de ces 30% de personnes qui ne se sont pas connectées à la migration digitale.

M. le président, je dois vous dire qu'une fois qu'on atteint les 100%, vous savez ce qui va se passer? Vous aurez accès à beaucoup plus de chaînes de télé. Nous aurons ce qu'on appelle identique au 4G, vous donnant la capacité de *download et upload*, de pouvoir surfer à une vitesse de plus de 100%. Vous aurez ce potentiel de facilités devant vous. Maintenant, vous n'avez plus rien à envier aux pays d'Europe en ce qui concerne le TIC parce qu'on joue jeu égal à ces gens-là. Il y a ce qu'on appelle le 'Protocole IPv4', nous avons une population mondiale de 7 milliards d'habitants. Le 'Protocole IPv4' a une capacité de 4 milliards d'adresses.

M. le président, il y a l'IPv6 qui arrive bientôt. Sachant très bien, avec la vitesse qu'on va, on risque de se trouver dans une situation où demain on peut avoir des problèmes, tout comme YouTube, vous avez vu, des fois quand vous voulez *download* une chanson, il y a des coupures et des cassures, et cela risque de se produire avec les *IP addresses*, et là on est passé au 'Protocole IPv6'. Cette migration vers IPv6, on sort de 4 milliards d'adresses pour aller à 340 *nonillion addresses*. Donc, vous vous rendez compte dans quelle dimension cette migration est faite et tout cela est pour le plus grand bien de tout le monde. Voilà un peu ce qu'on est en train de faire et là nous venons avec ce qu'on appelle le *Public Key Infrastructure (PKI)*.

Vous savez seuls Maurice et l'Afrique du Sud qui bénéficient de l'*Electronic Transaction Act*. Nous seuls nous avons cette technologie PKI qu'on a *outsourced* de l'Inde. Le PKI c'est

quoi? C'est la signature digitale. Quand on envoie des lettres, M. le président, sans signer, on dit que c'est une lettre anonyme, qui n'a pas de valeur, et de la même façon, vous envoyez un *mail*, n'importe qui peut se servir du *mail* de son ami, met le nom au bas et il envoie. *And it cannot be tabled, it is not acceptable in any court of law; it is not admissible evidence in any court of law.*

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, ce qui va se passer, en utilisant la signature digitale, on va du coup authentifier tous ces documents. Nobody can tamper with a document which is digitally signed. Somebody can forge your signature, but with the digital signature, you can never be forged and nobody can tamper with a document which has been digitally signed. Donc du coup avec notre ambition du MID, on va dans le sens de *paperless country* aussi, parceque quand vous avez un document qui est *digitally signed, there is no need to have the paper, you can still have it as a soft copy and it is admissible*. M. le président cet élément de *trust and safe*, c'est là pour vous garantir l'authenticité de ce que vous faites.

M. le président, vous savez que l'Amérique a adopté la signature digitale en 2008. Aujourd'hui, on joue dans la cour des grands. Vous savez on vient avec un *optic fibre to the home*. Vous avez vu les progrès qu'il y a à Maurice : les autoroutes et toute la série, mais dans le secteur TIC on avait prévu que l'autoroute de la communication passera devant votre porte et c'est chose faite avec les fibres optiques qui iront jusqu'à votre demeure. Vous avez vu comment on a fait, M. le président, pour *trigger* des baisses de prix. Maintenant, vous avez un opérateur qui vient avec une technologie vendant cela à R 270. Qui c'est qui va pouvoir offrir à plus de R 270? Donc, forcément tous ceux qui vont venir doivent être sous R 270 et pour le plus grand bien des citoyens. Nous voulons de la compétition, nous voulons la baisse des prix, nous voulons la capacité et on travaille dans cette direction, M. le président. Avec cet *optic fibre to the home*, Canada vient d'être admis à cette nouvelle école. Nous avons pris le dessus sur l'Angleterre ; nous allons réussir notre cours sur les fibres optiques avant même que l'Angleterre puisse le faire. Donc, on travaille pour qu'on puisse *carpet the whole island with optic fibre to the home* d'ici l'année prochaine.

M. le président, une autre chose qui est très importante - des fois on n'arrive pas parce que, nos amis peut-être, ne savaient pas ; ou peut-être, il y a d'autres choses qu'ils sont en train de préparer et en ce qui concerne les téléphones mobiles, à une certaine époque, il y avait des vols de téléphones portables. Quand je marche sur le chemin, moi-même, j'avais peur de prendre mon portable et si quelqu'un souhaite me parler, je préfère ne pas répondre parce que quelqu'un

peut le voler et cela va être difficile. Il y a beaucoup de cas qui ont été rapportés à la police et là, M. le président, *we have come with a new directive to blacklist mobile phones duly reported stolen*. Ce qui veut dire que si votre mobile est perdu, vous n'avez qu'à informer l'opérateur - que ce soit X, Y, ou Z - que votre téléphone portable est perdu, il arrête la communication et cette personne ne va pas pouvoir se servir de votre mobile même s'il le prend et change le SIM. Cela va être comme une pièce de musée, on ne peut rien faire et du coup mon ami ...

(Interruptions)

Ils ne peuvent rien faire et si demain vous retrouvez votre téléphone - peut-être par mégarde, ou bien quelqu'un l'a volé - vous allez voir votre opérateur et donc vous allez pouvoir continuer cet usage. Il y a eu une baisse considérable et nous sommes tous contents que maintenant il n'y a plus cette situation difficile. Il y a eu beaucoup de débats parce que, quand on croit dans l'émancipation, quand on croit dans cette volonté de faire mieux ...

(Interruptions)

Je ne peux pas aller longtemps encore. Et le 8-digit, ça va venir. Le 1^{er} du mois de septembre 2013. Le wifi zone, vous avez pu voir et il y a plein de choses comme ça qui arrive pour le plus grand bien des citoyens. Nous avons le '*Computer Emergency Response Team*'. Quand on veut faire de notre île une cyber île, il faut s'attendre à ce qu'il y ait des cyber criminels et ces personnes agissent comme des *professional hackers who are there waiting for you. Once you forget them, they are not going to forget you and they are going to attack* Et ce qui est embêtant en temps normal, vous pouvez voir vos ennemis en face de vous, mais les cyber criminels, vous ne les voyez pas et, en une fraction de seconde, ils peuvent vous attaquer. Donc, nous avons mis sur pied le '*Computer Emergency Response Team*' et nous avons affilié le *Computer Emergency Response Team de Maurice (CERT MU)*, on l'a affilié avec la prestigieuse agence, *first* de l'Inde. Pourquoi? On peut bénéficier de tous les nouveaux développements dans ce secteur pour protéger nos informations.

Government Portal, c'est quelque chose qui va être une réalité. D'ici Décembre on va l'inaugurer. Vous serez parmi les invités. On a 178 *computer clubs* et on veut avoir encore plus. Il y a 500,000 utilisateurs à ce jour dans ces *computer clubs* et cela on peut voir, je vous montre comment on a calculé ce chiffre. Il y a plus de 21,500 personnes à qui on a donné des cours de formation en ce qui concerne l'IT. Quand quelqu'un n'a pas étudié, on dit que c'est quelqu'un d'illettré, mais maintenant même si vous avez étudié, si vous ne connaissez pas la science du

computer, you become computer-literate au même titre que cette personne qui n'a jamais été à l'école. Donc, quand nous voulons émerger, nous voulons faire de notre île une cyber île, forcément, nous avons à donner des cours de formation. Et on a fait plus que prévu, M. le président, dans ce secteur. Il y a le *e-education plan*, je ne vais pas m'attarder là-dessus.

Laissez-moi dire un petit mot sur iPad. A few weeks back, I made headlines for using my iPad in this august Assembly. I can say I was unjustly criticised by my good friends of the Opposition. Today, we are pleased to acknowledge the prompt response of the vice-Prime Minister for announcing the provision of tablet PCs to every Member of the House. *Donc, vous avez pu voir : 'Nou pou change zot la vie aussi avec le iPad'.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, il y a la signature digitale et quand on a dit qu'on veut réduire par 25% la paperasse dans les ministères et qui va nous faire économiser R 43 millions, *Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this clearly demonstrates the coherence of Government action, strategy, to Go Green and to adhere to MID concept.* Il y a le *online payment* qui va être une réalité très bientôt.

Concernant le *ID card*, s'ils veulent que je fasse un débat là-dessus, je peux toujours le faire. La première carte arrive d'ici octobre de l'année prochaine. A Rodrigues, à peine quelques semaines de cela, la capacité de l'internet était d'environ 12MB. Avec l'arrivée du Premier ministre, il y a eu des augmentations. On est passé à 37MB et là, on veut passer à 155MB par seconde.

Donc, vous pouvez voir que nous sommes sur la bonne voie. On fait le travail. C'est intéressant pour vous-même, c'est bon de savoir que Maurice *is ranked 53^{ème}* dans le *Network Readiness Index for World Economic Forum*. Nous sommes 53^{ème}. La Chine *which leads the BRICS* est à 51^{ème}, Brazil à 65^{ème}, l'Inde à 69^{ème}, l'Afrique du Sud à 72^{ème} et nous, à 53^{ème}.

Donc, *according to Gartner, a firm of international repute, a benchmark firm, Mauritius is among the first 30 most attractive ICT-BPO destination.* C'est la cerise sur le gâteau et we will bring it to this House bientôt. *A.T. Kearney ranks Mauritius 36^{ème} et Everest ranks Mauritius first as the most competitive ICT-BPO location for the French market.* Et là, M. le président, *ICTA was awarded best regulator for the Southern and Eastern Africa. Mauritius Post - more than just letters, as we say.* Ce n'est plus le temps où on va à la poste seulement pour affranchir des lettres ou bien pour acheter des timbres. Il vient de décrocher le *Gold Award*

du *Universal Postal Union (UPU)*. Le *CIB* a reçu quatre *awards* tout récemment, M. le président, et on est en train de faire notre bout de chemin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to close my speech, but before concluding I would like to say that this is a time for change; from voice to data; from text to Apps; Broadcast to Social; North to South; Youth to older age; from what we know to what we don't even understand. The game is changing; the world is changing, we have to move forward. This Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has the ambition to make Mauritius the first country in the world which has made ICT its main pillar.

With that, I thank you all for your kind attention.

(6.34 p.m.)

Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to join my colleagues who have expressed themselves before me, and express my great disappointment at the Budget 2013. My friends on the other side have used a series of adjectives to qualify the Bill; one more bombastic than the other. We have heard pragmatic, achievable, visionary, honest, realistic, gender, responsive and we have just heard *parfait et clairvoyant*, and what not.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we just have to walk on the street, listen to people, read the newspapers, see the analysis of well-known economists and listen to the radio to realise that the opinion of the inhabitants is just the opposite of that of our friends on the other side of the House. I have long wondered whether I would make a speech on the Budget. The simple reason, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that there is nothing concerning women in that Bill. Only three times has the word 'woman' been mentioned, *en passant*, throughout the Budget speech.

I was greatly taken aback that the hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare expressed the great surprise that my colleague, hon. Mrs Labelle, had said that there was not a single measure concerning women in this Budget and she opined that hon. Mrs Labelle had failed to read between the lines of this Budget and between the lines of all the measures announced last Friday.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are not meant to read between the lines here. What we do, and rightly so, is to read what is written in black and white. That is, the measures as they have

spelt out in this Budget. I will express my great disappointment that, in fact, the Mauritian woman and the Mauritian child do not find themselves in that Budget.

My first disappointment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that not a single word has been uttered on a problem which I consider as the one undermining the welfare of the Mauritian woman and family and the inhabitants at large these days and for some time now; I mean the problem of water or rather the problem of shortage of water, and I am sure that the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, if he was here, would share my opinion since his Constituency is also facing an acute problem of shortage of water these days. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot ignore the harsh realities of the Mauritian families these days.

First of all, they cannot afford a full night's sleep as they wake up as soon as they hear the very first drops of water coming from the tap; be it at two or three o'clock in the morning. Then, they cook food, they wash clothes, they put the washing machine on, they collect water for the next day. Someone in my Constituency pointed out that in his region, at three or four o'clock in the morning, everyone is awake and all pressure cookers are whistling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we believe that a person, after having spent such a night, can be productive at work the following day? Water has become a source of stress for the Mauritian family, mainly for the women, for the housewife, for the mother. It has become the talk of the town and a source of dispute among neighbours. Even the personnel of the CWA is in danger, because, when they come with the lorry, the ladies just come out and try to aggress them. Everyone gets nervous on talking about the shortage of water and yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not a single word on water in the Budget Speech. This seems to be of no concern at all to this Government who keeps boasting of being a 'caring' Government 'putting people first'.

However, adding insult to injury, the hon. Minister of Finance has abolished customs duty on sinks, wash basins and vases. My colleague, hon. Li Kwong Wing called that '*lavage à sec*'. I will add that the items, on which taxes should have been removed, should have been *baquet, cuvette* and *la moque*. As these are what the 2012 Mauritian uses to take a bath. *Un pays qui ne peut par pourvoir au besoin de ces habitants en matière d'eau, ne peut pas s'octroyer l'appellation de 'caring' et de 'compassionate'*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also greatly disappointed that no measure has been announced to curb violence against women and violence against children. Yet, the figures speak for themselves. The number of cases of violence against women and against children is

continuously on the rise. The Crime Justice and Security Statistics report published last August stated that there was a rise of 8% in the number of sexual assaults, out of which 59% concerned minors less than 16 years of age. From January to September 2012, the police have registered 251 cases of sexual assault on minors and 190 cases of assault have taken place in educational institutions. The hon. Minister of Gender Equality and Child Development and Family Welfare - unfortunately, she is not present - enumerated a few measures that her Ministry is taking or at least is trying to take, to address that issue. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we must admit that these measures are far from being enough and far from being appropriate and that they are not producing the results that they should produce.

Last year the hon. Minister congratulated and heartily thanked her colleague the hon. Minister of Finance for having increased the number of support officers attached to the Child Development Unit and the National Children Council from 20 to 40. She then declared that those 20 additional support officers would, I quote -

“Undoubtedly help to rationalise the service delivery of the CDU”

If the hon. Minister was honest, she would admit, as her colleague, hon. Bappoo had done in the past that this number is far from being enough and that she could not manage with this skeleton staff. At every single problem that is raised, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have the same reply -

“The case has been referred to the CDU”.

Those officers are far from being supermen and superwomen. Their scheme of duty range from intervening promptly to calls from doctors, police, teachers, grandparents, neighbours or any other anonymous calls. They also have to encompass family therapy, child therapy, parent education, emergency sheltering, among others. We believe that those support officers are simply overtaken by this situation. Is it humanly possible to expect 40 support officers to be able to deal with 5,000 to 6,000 cases? This explains their lack of dedication and follow-up.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not later than two days ago, from the reply of the hon. Minister of Education to the Private Notice Question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we have learnt that a serious case of alleged paedophilia referred to the CDU more than one year ago is still on. No report has been produced yet. Various hon. Ministers on the other side of the House have accused the hon. Members of the Opposition of not making any constructive criticisms and proposals. The hon. Minister who talked just before me made that accusation too. To prove

them wrong, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will substitute myself to the hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and in her place, make a plea in the House today: let us find ways and means to increase the number of CDU officers so that they can deliver the goods. We cannot expect results when a CDU officer is expected to deal with an average of 150 cases, the one more difficult than the other.

The hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare unlike us, on this side of the House, has the great capacity of reading between the lines of the Budget and she said that she has found interesting measures concerning women in the field of entrepreneurship, ICT, computer clubs, tourism, fishing, aquaculture, ornamental fish enterprises and leisure activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a few serious problems that our youths are facing these days are the increasing number of teenage pregnancies, of cases of child prostitution, of sexual tourism, of suicide, of alcoholism and violence. Can we imagine that regarding child prostitution, we are still referring to the 2002 report? Can we imagine that the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has no policy regarding suicide and attempted suicide among youths and adolescents? The case – I am basing myself on a reply of the hon. Minister in this House - is simply referred to the Life Plus Unit for appropriate intervention at the level of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions and to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for psychiatric treatment. Can we imagine a Minister of Child Development and Family Welfare saying in this House that the proposal to carry out a study in connection therewith, that is, suicide among the youths, does not rest with my Ministry? The fact that the hon. Minister did not spell out measures her Ministry intends to take to address those problems is a confession in itself that those issues have not been addressed in the Bill, not even between the lines.

La Commission des femmes du MMM has expressed deep concern for those problems faced by our youths and we are expecting the Ministries concerned to take their responsibilities and to come up with appropriate plans of action to address those issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another issue that I would like to raise today is that of women's health. True, the Bill did come up with a few measures such as increasing the Budget for health and making sure that our doctors have an acceptable level of clinical competence. The hon. Minister of Finance rightly said in health care, 'quality is as important as quantity'. I will thus make an

appeal to the hon. Minister of Health to see to it that the health services are humanised. For example, in the cancer section of hospitals, there is still a lack of staff, a lack of place, a lack of organisation and a lack of hygiene. Patients are still seen to be waiting for hours seated on a bench before they are examined by a doctor. Some still undergo their chemotherapy in the corridor or seated on a chair. Some, after having come by bus or by taxi, and having waited for hours, are asked to go back home and to come back the following day. There have been cases where patients have not been able to undergo their chemotherapy because they had their blood test done at nine in the morning and the results at two in the afternoon, which was too late for the chemotherapy.

We have also read in the press that patients suffering from cancer are made to be transferred to other wards, be it that of children, that of children in quarantine because they are suffering from gastro enteritis, or the female ward.

Un autre scandale de notre service de santé, M. le président, est le service gynécologique dans nos hôpitaux publics. Il se trouve que la plus grande majorité de cas de négligence alléguée rapporté au *Medical Council* concerne la section de gynécologie. Par exemple, M. le président, la presse a fait état que le comité d'enquête du *Medical Council* a trouvé en 2012 trois gynécologues de l'hôpital de Rose Belle coupables de « négligence assez sérieuse » en 2010, et les conclusions ont été transmises au ministère de la Santé. Nous attendons toujours pour voir si ces gynécologues sont ou seront passibles de sanction.

Le nombre de césariennes pratiquées est alarmant. Il tourne autour de 40% à 50% des naissances, et l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé dit bien qu'un pays où le taux de césariennes dépasse 15% des naissances a un sérieux problème avec son système de santé. Le nombre de bébés naissants et de mères qui ont trouvé la mort pendant ces derniers mois écoulés nous fait frémir. Nous pensons à cette habitante de Tamarin qui, après avoir subi une césarienne depuis bientôt deux ans, a dû subir cinq opérations à l'hôpital et une opération dans une clinique privée, relatives à des complications liées à sa césarienne. Et M. le président, cette femme a encore aujourd'hui le ventre encore ouvert, courant ainsi le risque d'avoir une septicémie.

Nous avons une pensée spéciale pour ces trois jeunes mères de famille âgées de 19, 22 et 25 ans qui ont succombé, suite à la naissance de leur bébé, dernièrement. Nous pouvons lire la souffrance de leurs familles dans la presse d'aujourd'hui. Nous savons qu'un *Fact Finding Committee* a été mis en place pour mener une enquête sur ces trois cas. Néanmoins, M. le

président, plusieurs questions me viennent à l'esprit. Comment se fait t-il que des 80 cas de négligence médicale alléguée de 2007 à 2011, le *Medical Council* a reçu l'autorisation de n'enquêter que sur une quinzaine ?

Les médecins mis en cause sont-ils suspendus le temps de l'enquête, ou continuent-ils tout bonnement à exercer, mettant ainsi en danger la vie d'autres femmes ? Qu'en est-il de ce gynécologue de l'Etat qui a fait un accouchement qui a mal tourné dans une clinique privée, alors qu'il était en congé de maladie ?

N'est-t-il pas temps de revoir les procédures pour faciliter une enquête après une allégation de négligence médicale et, si besoin est, appliquer des sanctions qui s'ensuivent ? Trop de cas d'allégations de négligence médicale restent lettre morte, restent sans réponse, restent sans résultat, et sans conclusion.

M. le président, la femme mauricienne est première au hit-parade des chômeurs. Les derniers chiffres de *Statistics Mauritius* font état d'un taux de chômage de 12.6% chez les femmes contre 5.5% chez les hommes, toutes tranches d'âge confondues.

Par rapport au premier trimestre de 2011, il y a, en 2012, 2,100 personnes de plus au chômage. De ces 2,100 personnes, on compte 100 de moins chez les hommes et 2,000 de plus chez les femmes. L'honorable ministre de l'Education nous a surpris lors de son intervention, en affirmant que le taux d'échec au niveau de la CPE n'était pas si alarmant que certains - dont nous - voudraient bien le faire croire.

M. le président, je laisserai le soin et le grand plaisir à mon collègue, l'honorable Obeegadoo, de répondre au ministre de l'Education. Mais, ce que je voudrais faire ressortir aujourd'hui, est le chiffre alarmant d'analphabètes à Maurice en 2012. 10% de la population, soit 105,521 habitants, ne savent ni lire ni écrire. Une fois de plus, quasiment deux fois plus de femmes que d'hommes sont affectées par l'illétrisme. M. le président, un système d'éducation qui produit autant d'échecs, autant d'analphabètes, est un échec en soi.

Pour terminer, je réitère, n'en déplaise à certains, que ce budget est tout sauf *woman and child friendly*. It is not, as the honourable Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare said, in an intervention, 'adding on to the well-being of our people.' This Budget has simply ignored the well-being of the women and children of this country. Women and children are not among those people that this "caring" and "compassionate" Government is boasting to put first.

On dit qu'on juge un pays de la manière dont il traite ses femmes et ses enfants. Je laisse ainsi le soin, M. le président, à toutes les femmes et à tous les enfants de ce pays de former leur propre jugement.

Merci de votre attention.

(6.57 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to start exactly where my friend has ended, namely that this Government, that is, the Labour/PMSD Government is not women and children friendly.

Allow me to remind her very modestly that it is the Labour party, under Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, that has reduced the age of vote, to enable ladies in this country to vote at the age of 18.

(Interruptions)

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, very humbly to remind the hon. lady that it is the Labour Government, under Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, that has given free education in 1976, to enable all girls to go to school. This is the most friendly girls, ladies, women Government that has ever existed in history.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to remind the hon. lady that it is this Government, under this Prime Minister, that has voted the Domestic Violence Bill to protect women of this country. Let me remind the hon. lady that it is this Government, under this Prime Minister, that has amended the Local Government Act and the Constitution to ensure that there is, at least, a minimum of 30% of women standing as candidates in the municipal and village council elections of this year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me remind my hon. friend that there is no Government that is woman friendly as the Labour Party, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. Regarding children friendly, she has not read the Budget properly. When we have decided to give free hot meals to the neediest students of this country, is this not friendly? This, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a *gouvernement qui a à cœur l'intérêt des enfants les plus pauvres de ce pays*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is this Government that gives free books every year to the students of this country. It is this Government that provides – my hon. friend Suren Dayal is

somewhere here – free shoes, uniforms, books, bags - what else now - free hot meals every year in January, February for those most needy children.

(Interruptions)

She is a nice lady, I always agreed on that, but it is the system of the MMM that makes up her speak the way she speaks. We allow this. We are speaking and I am sure she will appreciate that it is not fair to say that we are not a friendly Government with regard to women and children. If I go by the health standard - if a Prime Minister, in his wisdom, decides to create a hospital unique in order to address the issue of health for women, is this not women friendly? If a Government decides in Moka to earmark acres of land to set up a hospital to cater only for diseases with regard to children, is this not children friendly? When a Government decides to give free vaccination to each and every child of this country in all primary schools, is this not children friendly? It's the same for dentists. *Il n'y a pas plus aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir, M. le président.*

(Interruptions)

Anyway let's leave it aside.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my good friend has mentioned about cancer. I have to remind my good friend – I am sure she is aware, maybe she is not aware of it – that this Government has just opened two units one male and one female at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam hospital for chemotherapy for cancer patients. It used to be only in the Victoria hospital now it is also being done at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Hospital. We are planning to open new centres in all five regional hospitals. Again Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my good friend had spoken about women or children who unfortunately, for reasons which we are not going to dwell into, had passed away while they are in hospital. It is quite funny and Dr. Hon. Beebeejaun is sitting here, he is a doctor of high reputation. In fact, it is when he was at the Head with regard to paediatrics, he instituted the basic principles irrespective of whether there is a complaint or not. All maternal tests and child tests must be inquired into as a basic protocol in all five hospitals in Mauritius. All reports are computerised and then submitted, and action is taken when and where necessary by all regional Heads in all regional hospitals. I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have dwelt enough on what was said by my good friend who has just spoken before me.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come to the speech given by Dr. Satish Boolell – we must make the difference because Arvin Boolell is a boss and Satish Boolell is in the

Opposition. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I, with your permission, quote hon. Dr. Satish Boolell and hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell. When Dr. Satish Boolell was speaking, he made a remark on what was written in the Budget with regard to cohort of students. According to him, he says and I quote: 'I took the time to go to the Library and check the meaning of the word 'cohort'. It is quite derogatory in a sense, but where it means anything, it means a number between 300 to 600 on and on and on. I personally feel that it is an insult to the profession. His definition of what he said about cohort, about legion and all these things is not founded, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Me too, I can speak a little bit of English like Amitabh Bacchan in those Indian films. I took the pain of looking at the compass Oxford English dictionary and I have taken the pain also of looking at the Edition and by whom it was edited. I am referring to the Third Edition of 2005. Let me for the benefit of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tell you what does cohort mean? An ancient Roman military unit equal to one tenth of a legion and the second definition of cohort, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a group of people with a shared characteristic, a cohort of students. This is what a cohort is all about and for the benefit of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to lay a copy of the definition of cohort as it appears in the Oxford dictionary for the benefit of the Member. Secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my good friend also made references to the Medical Council which has no right to investigate any hospital doctor because this is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Again for Dr. Satish Boolell, who had been in service for so many years it is totally incorrect. I would thought the hon. Member would have known since September 2010, the Public Service Commission Regulations were amended to enable PSC to delegate its powers to any appropriate disciplinary body including the Medical Council of Mauritius; to inquire and report on cases of professional misconduct or negligence committed by a medical practitioner in the public service.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while he was addressing the House, he made a few remarks with regard to private clinics, with regard to private hospitals. Let me recall what he said: let me tell you a monthly intensive care in a private clinic would cost you one million rupees and he was telling us: because this Government has decided in its wisdom to reintroduce tax rebate for those who have decided to go and pay for a private health insurance. He thinks that we did that to promote the private sector. Totally false! Totally unfounded! These measures have always existed. I agree that it is some time back that we withdrew these measures for a couple of years and we are only reintroducing the same measures. Anyway, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for

the last 20 years, the amount of patients being treated in our hospitals has varied from 80% to 85% and it has not changed despite of giving tax debate, tax deductions whether you have an insurance policy or not. Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while my good friend was speaking, he said: I would gamble my 30 years of experience as a doctor to assure you that not all medication which is available in our hospital services is of good quality. It will probably contain the usual flour, this comes from a doctor who has served. I can understand him, because he has been a doctor working in the mortuary with dead people, he is not well accustomed with what is happening in the living world and people living and breathing. Can you imagine a doctor by profession, 30 years of experience telling you that the medicines we supply in the hospital will probably contain the usual flour? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that at the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, there is a rigorous system of procurement of medicines as stipulated under the Public Procurement Act of 2006 whereby all suppliers, bidders must submit a complete list of documents as required by the best international practice so that their offers can be considered. All consignment of medicines received in store must be accompanied by a Batch Analysis certificate from the Quality Control Department of the company certifying that the products have passed all tests of quality and that the products meet the standard specified in the pharmacology.

This Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has set up a quality control laboratory for the analysis of medicines on a regular basis by random, sampling method which is being used universally. Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would wish that it goes on record. All the medicines supplied in our hospitals or area health centres have to pass the test - locally and internationally - and for all suppliers it is mandatory that they must supply a certificate that these medicines are to the standard of the tender where it was issued. Over and above this, at the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life we do our own personal check at random to all the medicines which are delivered in our hospitals, in our country before they are distributed to patients.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore, my good friend was talking about – I cannot understand that – at one hand, when we reintroduced the tax rebate systems for people to take a health insurance policy, we are protecting the private clinic. On the other hand, in the same speech, five minutes afterwards, Dr. Satish Boolell said that we should subsidise and allow patients who go to see a doctor, when they are given their prescription of medicine, allow them

when they go in a private pharmacy to make tax deductions of the medicines, of the drugs that they purchase in the private pharmacy. This is the problem with the Opposition, especially when you are from the MMM. You never know on which leg you want to dance. The only thing that you know, you have to criticise Government irrespective whether the argument is acceptable or not and within a couple of minutes he was contradicting himself. It is quite unfortunate that he is not here when I am speaking and, as a matter of courtesy, when both himself and hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee supposedly they spoke on health and other issues with regard to health and quality of life, I was here. This is typical of the MMM. They come, speak and go and they do not pay any respect to the decorum of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Lastly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to make mention of what was said, that we need to set up a death conference consisting of a Fact-Finding Internal Committee to investigate on every death which has occurred in that hospital. I am quoting from what he said while he was speaking. Again, I think he is doing it on purpose; he has been working in the hospital for so many years and he should have known that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that coming from an ex-Chief Police Medical Officer, his comment is damning more to him than to Government. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why didn't Dr. Boolell, in his capacity as PMO and CMO for all these years, never take the initiative to introduce a coroner system when he was in the hospital? Or why didn't he advise his leader to introduce it in the next programme of the Government *fantôme du* MMM, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how wrong could be that he does not realise that all doctors - Dr. Kasenally, who has been an RHD, knows that - in hospitals have what is called regular meetings and is termed as Hospital Mortality Review Committee to examine cases of death and take appropriate remedial actions/measures as necessary and it is a normal routine thing that is done in all regional hospitals in Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to come back to this in a minute, but as a matter of courtesy and in order to set the record straight with regard to health and what has been said, I quote -

“And he was not happy that we are going to introduce a pre-registration exam that all medical graduates will have to pass before becoming a registered medical practitioner.”

I think it is a real shame, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When a country like Mauritius has decided in its wisdom that we should have some form of assessment in order to allow doctors to practise in Mauritius, we did not just get it out of air. All this is being done in all civilised and developed

countries. In the United Kingdom, they have what is called an assessment examination in order to allow you to practise medicines in the UK. In Canada - hon. Mohamed knows that very well - you must sit for an exam, inform the Canadian Government, and even if you are qualified in the United Kingdom or in the United States of America, you need to go through an assessment in order to enable you to practise medicine in Canada. Everywhere in the world it is being done. The only country where there is an objection, it comes from the MMM and it comes from a Doctor who has been 30 years dealing with dead bodies, he is telling you why do we do it now. But there is a time in the history of the country that we must start something at a point in time and we have to thank the Prime Minister who personally pays so much attention with regard to the health services and we know what are the difficulties we have in being a doctor - and hon. Bachoo knows the same thing with regard to road safety. It is the Prime Minister who has decided, in his wisdom, to rethink and to reengineer on the manner in which our students are admitted to study medicines, on the manner in which those who do the registration, the internship and on the manner in which we select them in order to make sure that they are able to practise medicines and they have to undergo some form of an assessment. It is only fair and necessary that, as a responsible Government, we make sure that all our doctors who practise in the Island of Mauritius and Rodrigues are subject to what is called professional development. They are kept abreast of all developments in medicine. It is only fair and natural in the country of Mauritius where you have four universities producing graduates, two producing post-graduate doctors in medicine. It is only fair, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we set up a Board of Specialists in order to look at those students who want to practise in Mauritius in a specialist field and hon. Dr. Satish Boolell is not happy with this. When we do not do it, he criticises us; when we do it, he is telling us it is too late. We never know on which leg they want to dance, this is why the remake. It took some time to make it, it took some time to break it and even when they make it, at a point in time *zot lors point mort*, it was broken; it sets up again and now everybody understands that the remake is a fake, because the MMM just cannot take decisions and this reflects in the spokesperson for health on the matter in which hon. Dr. Satish Boolell delivered his speech and the comments which he made.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a last thing, and I find this quite funny to come again from somebody who has been in medicine, who has studied medicine and who has practised. And he tells us, as a responsible Government, that we have 23% of the population suffering from

diabetes. We also know that we have 22% of the population who are pre-diabetics. He told us that we should not have increased the price of soft drinks. I won't mention peps or coca cola because I am not going to pinpoint any one of them. He was criticising us for having increased the price by 85 cents and why didn't we decrease the price of diet coke? Coming from a Doctor, I think it is very serious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Why and on what basis does he think that it is the role of a Government to promote diet coke or anything? What is the content of diet coke or anything? How do we know whether it is safe for human consumption? Is it good for our children? Or should we, as a Government, encourage our children to consume pure juice, non carbonated juice and should not we, as a Government, encourage people to consume as many bottles of water, at least, three litres per day, and is it not, as a responsible Government, for us to reduce the price of water by Rs1.50 and increase the price of carbonated, sweet coke or peps by 85 cents? He tells us not to do this. It is not in order. I don't understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reasoning behind these arguments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to my other friend, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, who, during her speech, talked, in fact, lengthily about the budget allocated to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, and I quote –

“There are a host of measures which could have been included in the budget, and sometimes these measures would not have entailed additional funds.”

One wonders, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. She has been Minister of Health for 14 months. I would be happy if one day she gives the House a list of measures she has initiated except the one when she wrote: “My dear Pravind, make the funds available for the purchase of Mediclinic”. That was the only measure that she had initiated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to Medpoint.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find it strange. In fact, I was with hon. Choonee and hon. Gungah when hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, as Minister of Health and Quality of Life, was launching what is called a health club in Grand Gaube. Hon. Gungah was sitting next to me. She was criticising us: we need to talk a layman's language with regard to diabetes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when she was making her speech at Grand Gaube, let me tell you what is the layman's language she spoke, and she only knows what was the *raclée* she obtained from the press after that. Should I remind the House that she referred to overweight: “*gros depuis en bas jusqu'à la haut.*” That's the message she wants us to give to the public and

to the laymen. And no wonder she is no longer Minister because of this kind of statement that she has made time and again when she was Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to a few other points that were raised by the hon. Member. I think there was a misprint where she said that in each packet of crisp, there are two litres of oil. I am sure she meant two spoons of oil. But in her verve to criticise, she sees everything in litres, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me quote something else which she said -

“While I was in Geneva, I met Mrs Margaret Chan, the Director of the WHO and I raised the issue and we came to the conclusion that there should be regular meetings with fast food producers and policy-makers of the Ministry of Health so that healthier foods are proposed to consumers.”

How wrong she is? Unfortunately, hon. Dr. Jeetah is not here. This House will remember when hon. Dr. Jeetah was Minister of Health, what was the law that he has amended in order to change these types of foods that we sell in the school canteens? Hon. Faugoo was there before hon. Dr. Jeetah; we will remember all the efforts that he has done in order to change. He even launched the nutritional survey of that time before it was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture. When hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee spoke for the last 14 months that she had been Minister, you gather the impression that she had been there for 140 years. I think she is confused between her position as PS, PAS, clerk and her position as a Minister. In fact, I am not so sure whether she has been in the Ministry of Health in the capacity of a civil servant. I don't have to mention all the things that all the Ministers before her have done. I don't think it is proper for me to do that. I think I have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to take some time of the House to set the records straight with regard to this, and I quote –

“At the same meeting, I requested for assistance for a National Salt Survey while I was discussing with Mrs Chan. She immediately told me that she is going to give the greenlight and I am glad the study has been completed.”

False! It's a lie! This study, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been done by a group of IDI people in Australia and the World Health Organisation was not either directly or indirectly involved in the study and the result has already been published under the banner of the Baker IDI of Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, she said that we are doing nothing with regard to subsidisations with brown flour. I had the opportunity of taking up the matter with hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen,

and he assured me that they are looking at this policy and soon he will come up with a policy to review this policy with regard to white flour and brown flour in order to ensure that people in this country have the opportunity to use brown flour which is more healthy, especially for diabetics in order to put the price at par. Let's wait and see how this is going to evolve, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, she mentioned about *les bourses de nos médecins et infirmières*. I don't want to delve into that, but we know all the arrangements that were done with the University College of Geneva, with the University of Bordeaux and how the previous Minister of Finance has been instrumental in securing scholarships for our Mauritian doctors to specialise in all these different fields, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need to say something. She was criticising my good friend, hon. Bachoo. She says: "how come for road asphaltting there is no feasibility study?" But, of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we don't expect hon. Bachoo to conduct or to propose a feasibility study for road asphaltting. She also said that for Ministry of Health project, we need feasibility study. How can she compare asphaltting a road and setting up a hospital specialising in treatment for diseases for women on the same footing? The New Jeetoo Hospital has taken almost 10 years before it has come into operation. Hon. Faugoo – I have gone through the file – was the first one who has done the conception of the Jeetoo Hospital. Almost ten years before it has come into operation. Soon afterwards, hon. Minister Jeetah came in and started the project from what was initiated by hon. Minister Faugoo. All was done under the guidance of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. Soon afterwards, she came in as Minister of Health. She is gone and I am now Minister of Health and it is only now that the second phase of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital has been completed. We are now embarking on the third phase. I am saying all this for the hon. lady in the Opposition to understand that constructing a hospital of Rs1.2 billion is not the same as constructing a road of Rs200,000, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Coming from a previous Minister of Health and Quality of Life, is, I should say the least, a shame from a person of her stature Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are other things that she has said, but I do not want to dwell on that. I want to refer to the House what she said on decentralisation and I want to say that everything in this Ministry is being decentralised. With regard to the Health Institute that she mentioned, she forgot to tell us that she, herself - I am not accusing her of anything - I must say

that all Ministers at a point in time do travel overseas. She also had travelled to Geneva on a World Health Organisation meeting. I am quite happy with that. She did take at that time the opportunity, while she was in Geneva, to make a jump to London to go and visit the University College Hospital which is advising us on the setting up of the hospital. Do you know when she was there? Early 2011! And do you know when she resigned? It was in August 2011. For six months, I could have put the same question to her about what she did. She visited, spent public funds and what was the progress? But, I do not think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it is fair, because we are all aware that it takes months, years and years to set up a project of this magnitude, especially for a small developing country like Mauritius. We have to say here, again, thanks to the hon. Prime Minister who has got personal contact and relationship at the University College Hospital and who is supervising the setting up of this hospital in Mauritius from point 'go' till the time it is going to be completed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I conclude on the remarks made by my friend, I quote again –

“C’est encore un autre projet que j’avais à coeur, l’informatisation de tous les services hospitaliers which I was following very closely so that the whole hospital system be computerised before 2010”

The hon. Member goes on and on. I must say one thing here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When I took the file as Minister it was at a standstill. I have to say that I had a few meetings with my friend, hon. Minister Pillay Chedumbrum. We looked at it and it went to the High Powered Committee chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr Seebaluck. It is now that the whole project is taking off the ground and it has to take the time it needs because we are now introducing the E-health in only the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and once it is done completely, checked and verified that it is working that we are going to duplicate it in all the five other regional hospitals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. She mentioned a few things about other services and I do not want to dwell on them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you want me to continue I shall, but if you want to break, I will stop here.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, before you go ahead with another segment of your intervention, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that you did utilise the word ‘lie’

while you were developing one of your arguments. This word is unparliamentary and I would kindly request you to withdraw the word.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did not do that voluntarily and if I did so, I would wish to withdraw the word.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. How long is the hon. Minister going to take to round off his intervention?

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, I have not started my intervention

(Interruptions)

I was only replying to the criticisms made by the Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: My point is simple: how long is the hon. Minister going to take to round off his intervention?

Mr Bundhoo: It should be a good 20 minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: 20 minutes, please, go ahead!

Mr Bundhoo: I will try to rush through it as much as I can, but you do understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a Budget of Rs8.8 billion and I need to speak for at least 88 minutes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow to come at the main thrust of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life budget and I am here again pleased to thank the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Duval, for having presented a second Budget to the nation and, in fact, to meet a Budget which meets the aspirations of the citizens and pave the way for a better future. We have every reason to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister whom we know has put so much effort and looked after carefully of what is being presented. I would also like to say especially a big thank you to both the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to have presented this Budget when we are facing such a global economic crisis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say it in simple terms. A Budget is, of course, an accounting exercise with the need to manage revenue and expenses. However, a Budget is also a sharing of vision to bring a nation, a country and its people towards a goal whereby the whole population senses the good factor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you are fully aware as well as everybody that Europe is going through major recession and crisis. Just name it, England, Ireland, Portugal, Greece, all are going through a major crisis, and we have to understand that these are the countries where we send our export products. It is from these countries that we receive the tourism upon which our tourist

industry grows. When we are having a double barrel of negativity from a source where we have to send our textile is in difficulty and a source from where they send us their tourists is in difficulty, both are having a direct impact on our economy. Despite all of this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, we are able to continue with the process of giving free education, free transport and everything. On top of that now, we are providing free meals to the children.

My good friend, hon. Pillay Chedumbrum, mentioned earlier the way in which we are introducing the PCs for Form IV students. But we have to remember one thing at this moment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When we give PCs for Form IV students, the tablets are for them. They will use it in Form V, Lower and Upper VI, for the next four years. When we did that, we had something in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Just observe carefully what was done! We have made sure that those who cannot afford a meal are being given a meal, because we believe that we cannot teach a child and make him or her assimilate with an empty stomach. What we did was that we wanted to narrow this divide between the rich and the poor and the haves and the have-nots.

Tomorrow's world is an IT world, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You are the Deputy Speaker, I am a Minister and we can afford to give our child an iPad. But what about the common man on the street? Is it because they are from middle class and low income families that their children should not be able to enjoy the privilege and the benefits of IT in this country? We are this very Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that has voted the Equal Opportunity Bill in this country. We are this very Government that has set up a Commission for Democratisation of the Economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have voted the Equal Opportunity Act in this country. We are in this very Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that has set up a Commission for Democratisation of the Economy. We are this very Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that has given free education. But, if we want to ensure, to make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity to be able to study, to have access to IT, this is what we did in this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Feed the have not. Give IT facilities for those who do not have the facilities in order to ensure that the young of today become the IT literate of tomorrow. We want to give everybody an equal opportunity with regard to technology and this is exactly, what hon. Minister Pillay is saying. We are today the second pillar of the economy's IT. I have every reason to believe, if Mauritius wants to be *l'île de pont entre l'Asie et l'Afrique*, the only way to do that is through Information Technology and with a visionary like the hon. Dr. Ramgoolam.

Free education, free meal and now free IT facilities. *Gouverner, M. le président, c'est prévoir.* This is exactly what we are doing in this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 2013 Budget has something for everyone because the economy was well managed. The Budget, that is, a Government which has delivered on its promises as pointed out by hon. Duval. 91% of last year's budget measures have been fully implemented, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget makes provision for Rs330 m. to be invested in youth empowerment scheme, with regard to job placement, training and employment.

Pensions are being raised by 4.3% above inflation. Government is reducing financing cost for SMEs whereby setting the leasing equipment, modernisation scheme. We have set up means and ways to decrease administrative cost for small enterprises whereby Government is doubling the VAT registration from Rs2 m. to Rs4 m. Thus, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this measure will cost Rs300 m. to the checkers. First time buyers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are encouraged through a lowering of cost to be incurred. They will save Rs125 m. on a Rs4 m. house benefitting every Mauritian in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote with regard to Health, what the late Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam had to say -

“Education and Health services, a social service and a better distribution of the national income based on sound economic policy have all contributed towards a Welfare State, in which people can breathe freely. Without a healthy educated and a contented nation, it would never be possible to develop the resources of this country”.

This is the philosophy of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam that we are carrying today forward. It is on the shoulders of such giant that we sit today to build the future of this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and it is precisely in line with this principle and despite global economic turmoil, Government is maintaining *l'Etat Providence* through the provisions of social services, which include education, transport and free meal that I have just mentioned earlier.

In the health sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, though the measures announced in the Budget 2013, Government has shown its commitment and its vision of a sustaining high performing quality health system, that is, patient-centric, accessible, equitable, efficient and innovative. Investment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has a significant increase over the years. In

2010, it was Rs7.55 billion, in 2011, it was increased and in 2012, it was further increased to Rs7.88 billion.

Let me now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, turn to the financial contributions of this Budget to the health sector. My Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been allocated a sum of Rs8.67 billion. This represents an increase of Rs783.8 m. which is an increase of 9.94%, that is, nearly 10% over the 2012 Budget, more than two and a half times the rate of inflation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The per capita of Government expenditure on health, which is at present Rs6,291 per Mauritian, with this Budget will increase to Rs6,919 in the financial year 2013. Government expenditure of a percentage total, which in the current financial year is 8.3%, will increase to 8.75% for this financial year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Despite all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to face some realities. One of them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that success comes with a price.

Life expectancy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - yours and mine - has increased for male from 68.9 to 69.7 years for the last seven years. That is, this Labour Government has adopted 1½ years in your life, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For women, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has increased from 69.9 years to 77.2 years. They are doing better than us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they are living longer. What is the reason? Probably, we have to conduct a study. This, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will have a direct impact, whereby infant mortality rate per 1,000 live birth decline from 13.2 in 2005 to 12.6 in 2011.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said, success comes with its pill, sometimes sour pill. One of the sour pill is along with the improvement, we have to face major challenges; namely an ageing population. We are getting old, all of us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. By 2030, Mauritius will start to have what is called a reverse population. The number of people getting old will grow on and on till year 2030 where the increase in population will start to decrease. We will be witnessing what the United Kingdom and other European countries are witnessing at this moment in time. This will, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, certainly have an impact on the health system because an increase in the disease associated with the ageing, which will need an expansion and consolidation of our services to cope with them especially in terms of bed capacity and some specialised services dedicated to the elderly. Why I am saying all this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Bappoo, responsible for Social Security has also mentioned that.

It is a responsible Government that acknowledges this issue and starts to take appropriate measures in order to enable us to face the challenges by the year 2030.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me go and say a few words about the structural changes that we have brought forward. First, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to what has been announced in the Budget, the minimum basic qualification required before enrolling for medical and dental courses will be laid down as from January 2013. Any prospective medical or dental student would need a minimum number of points in any three subjects at Advanced Level and at one sitting or its equivalent. Up to now, it has been noted that some students not possessing Advanced Level qualification have proceeded or are proceeding to several Medical and Dental Universities of their choice to study either medicine or dentistry. In order to improve quality of medical staff, dental staff, it is imperative that medical staff and dental students possess minimum basic qualifications that are necessary before enrolling on their courses of study.

Secondly, bold measures – all medical graduates whether qualified locally or abroad will have to undergo a written examination or assessment of their completion of the pre-registration training. The pre-registration training is a practice that Mauritius has adopted from the United Kingdom and it is also carried out in countries that follow the UK pattern of medical training such as Australia and India. Mauritian doctors who undergo pre-registration training receive their medical education in different systems; the practice so far has been to conduct an oral assessment in five major specialities conducted at the five regional hospitals twice a year. This system will now be further improved and consolidated by replacing the oral assessment by a written examination or assessment that will be carried out at the end of the period of pre-registration.

Currently, at the moment I am talking to you, Prof Bello, *président d'honneur* of Bordeaux University is on mission in Mauritius to advise my Ministry on issues pertaining to pre-registration training. Last week, I met him, we had a long session of work and he is conducting a study in order to advise us on how to set up the institution with regard to assessment in our hospitals.

Thirdly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Board of Postgraduate Medical Education will be set up to advise the Medical and Dental Council on the registration of medical and dental practitioners for a specialist practice. Medical and dental practitioners obtain both graduate qualification in different systems of training and we have to review that.

Fourthly and very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, continuing professional development will be made mandatory for all serving registered medical and dental practitioners. The Mauritius Institute of Health will be responsible for the overall organisation and coordination of the continuing professional development programmes. In this modern world, the modes of learning have changed drastically and anyone who does not use information technology is bound to be left behind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Government is going to ensure that all sectors make use of IT to pursue their continuous professional development and their assessment in order to be done in a manner which is fair to everybody.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me quickly go through the primary health – I will take only 10 minutes in order to complete it so as to allow us to go. I will try to rush through it as soon as possible, but it is a pity I cannot circulate that. I will come to one of the fundamental components of the health service, that is, Primary Health Care. In 2010, important work had been kick-started in order to modernise our primary health care in a phased manner. Infrastructural works are ongoing and will continue in 2010. New Medi-Clinics are planned to be set up in Triolet, Stanley, Goodlands and Floreal and new centres at Trou d'Eau Douce, Baie du Tombeau, Phoenix and Grand Baie.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to non-communicable diseases, as far as NCDs are concerned, my Ministry is already implementing a number of Action Plans on diabetes, cancer, tobacco, physical activity and nutrition. I wish to highlight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some of these measures strongly recommended by the World Health Organisation as being evidence-based and most cost-effective for preventing of NCDs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we have done so far has brought some results and I would like to mention a couple of them -

- The number of cigarette sticks smoked per year per person has fallen from 1071 in 2009 to 759 in 2012;
- Alcohol consumption per person has fallen from 41 litres in 2009 to 38 litres in 2012;
- Deaths due to heart diseases have decreased from 22.8% in 2005 to 17.3 % in 2011;
- We have also set up and we are working at the possibility and we have spoken with Mrs Margaret Chan, the Director-General of the WHO to assist Mauritius to

set up in what is called a Framework for a National Health Literacy Program, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With regard to the public health, the program with communicable diseases is ongoing. We should keep up the success that we have achieved with regard to chikungunya/Dengue/Malaria, but we are not going to sleep on our laurels. Summer period is approaching and we need to do whatever is needed in order to ensure that we do not face with the difficulties we encountered previously.

With regard to infrastructure and equipment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, seven major projects have been completed and the services are already operational totalling a sum of Rs3 m. The Jeetoo hospital, the Plaine Verte Medi-Clinic, the new Accident and Emergency Department at SSR hospital are operational; the Long Mountain hospital is already operational. Block C at Flacq hospital was opened this year and the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit at the Victoria hospital is also operational. For the year 2013, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rs1.16 billion are being provided especially for the third phase of Dr. Jeetoo hospital, for the construction of a new block to accommodate operation theatres, a new block DNE at the Flacq hospital; to redesign and to redo the ICU at SSRN hospital, and the construction of four blocks at the Accident and

Emergency at Jawaharlal Nehru hospital. Feasibility studies with regard to the Women's Health, Paediatric Hospital, National Health Laboratory, modern warehouse and a five-storeyed radiotherapy block for cancer patients.

With regard to equipment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the sum of Rs125 m. is provided for and a series of things with regard to video endoscopy, blood group analyser, spectrometer, 25 additional haemodialysis machines, and angiography machines are all being catered for the year 2013. Curative and dental services will also be upgraded and we shall continue to do the same with regard to all these things.

With regard to overseas treatment, I don't have to recall to the House that it has gone up from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000 in the last Budget and furthermore, this year we have sent a total of 198 patients overseas. The amount we've spent at the moment I am standing to speak to the House is almost Rs37 m. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With regard to dental services, it has been announced in the Budget, it is going to go round-the-clock, I mean, at least, for certain hours, on Saturdays and Sundays also. Same is going to be done for the laboratory services.

With regard to HIV, drugs, methadone programmes, we have had major success, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we have here to be thankful to the hon. Prime Minister who chairs the committee on HIV/AIDS. It has fallen from 25 cases yearly prior to 2000 and increased to a staggering 921 cases in the year 2005 and when it has fallen less than 500 for the year 2011. We shall continue with our efforts with regard to HIV/AIDS and, at present, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a team - I met them only this morning - from *l'Université de Genève* comprising of Professor Daniele Zullino and Dr. Riaz Khan both experts on methadone and drug issues. They are in Mauritius looking at our system, advising us what has been done, why is it now and how it can be improved in order to address the issue of methadone distributions and the consequences thereof.

Beside, another expert on the World Health Organisation namely Professor Allsop will also be in Mauritius and this is again on the request of the Prime Minister's Office with regard to advise us on how not only to get rid, but to minimise the effect of drug abuse and substance abuse Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. NATReSA is being reorganised, we have just recently appointed a new Executive Director and we hope that we'll continue in that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, quality treatment can be provided to patients only if we have an adequate number of well-trained health professionals. We are expanding our human resources base and enhancing capacity building. Thus, for the first year in many years in 2012, the Ministry has recruited a staggering 378 Medical Health Officers. For the first time, in the history of Mauritius, we have recruited 400 student nurses. Again, for the first time, in the history of Mauritius, we have recruited or given the opportunity to 350 pre-registration officers in order to do their training in the system in Mauritius.

As regards nursing officer and nursing, for 44 years since independence till today, all nurses were only allocated a certificate in nursing. Since I have assumed Office as Minister of Health and Quality of Life, and under the instructions of the hon. Prime Minister, we have reviewed that. I am pleased to announce and to confirm, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the syllabus has now been upgraded to diploma level and has been accredited by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority, and those who have been recruited now, the first 400 students, will come out after two and a half years, and to use the word, the first 'cohort' of nursing students with a diploma in nursing. This, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a premiere in this field.

We are going to amend and to bring in legislation with regard to the Medical Council Act, the Dental Council Act, the Pharmacy Council Act and a Health Professional Council Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a time when death was the only outcome for citizens of this country with no means, and who needed overseas treatment. This Labour Government has set up the overseas treatment scheme. We have increased the allowance from 200,000 to 500,000. There was a time when the people of this country died because cardiac surgery was not available locally. We set up the Trust fund for a specialised care.

There was a time when children of this country died in our street following an accident, because of untimely access to medical care. We created the modern SAMU services. There was a time when children of this country died because they could not afford dialysis. We made dialysis available free and we also provide free transport for the service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a time when two or three patients were sleeping in one bed in our hospitals. We put a stop to this inhuman practice. There was a time when hardly any health personnel were recruited; doctors had to be recruited on contract from India. We made Mauritius self-sufficient as far as doctors are concerned. There was a time when HIV/AIDS crisis loomed ahead. We altered this crisis. The people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of this country

cannot and should not forget those days and, in particular, who were at the helm of this country at that time when the small child Paupiah was denied access to free dialysis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, priority at that time was given to the construction of the family-owned private hospital infrastructure to be sold at a later date to Government. *Zot même asté zot même vendé!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, faithful to the visions of the Father of the Nation, we, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, continued to consolidate the health service of this country in an unprecedented manner. The health Budget has been increased more than two times the rate of inflation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we remain committed to our mission of providing the highest quality of health care to the Nation and my message to the Nation today, and that of this Government is: your health is our priority. *Notre priorité est votre santé.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we had strong beliefs in the concept of keeping the population in good health. He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything and can do miracle. Health is not only wealth, but the generator of feel good factor and this should be the duty of any responsible Government. Otherwise, we should not be able to achieve productivity, economic growth and untimely general prosperity to our destiny.

I would like to end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to quote the famous English writer Izaak Walton, who in one of his speeches says -

“Look to your health; and if you have it, praise God and value it next to conscience; for health is the second blessing that we mortals are capable of, a blessing money can’t buy.”

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

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for one hour for dinner.

At 8.10 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.12 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in Chair.

The Minister of Fisheries (Mr J. Von-Mally): M. le président, pour son approche prudente, sérieuse et pragmatique à ce présent budget, j’aimerais féliciter mon ami et collègue, l’honorable vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances, Xavier-Luc Duval. On a vu qu’il n’a pas voulu jouer aux dés avec l’économie de Maurice et, moi, je dis toujours, M. le président, en ce qui concerne l’économie et l’environnement, ce sont là deux secteurs où il ne faut pas faire de la politique politicienne parce que cela touche tout le monde. Donc, il faut être sérieux. C’est

pourquoi je voudrai féliciter l'honorable vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances pour cela. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de parler du secteur de la pêche, de mon ministère avant de parler de Rodrigues. Je ne vais pas prendre mon temps à répondre à l'honorable membre qui a fait un discours un peu farfelu de l'autre côté parce que je pense qu'il faut être sérieux en politique. Il y a un niveau qu'il ne faut pas dépasser. Il ne faut pas se croire dans un cirque où on va faire son numéro, etc. Il faut être sérieux et je vais, en quelques mots, dire les choses telles qu'elles sont. Je vais commencer par parler de mon ministère avant de passer à Rodrigues, M. le président.

Concernant mon ministère qui procure pas mal de boulots aux gens, qui s'occupe d'un secteur qui nourrit la population, je voudrais commencer par lui, M. le président.

M. le président, economic crisis is here already, showing its teeth, surtout quand on sait ce qui se passe à l'échelle internationale, dans les pays européens. The global economy is confronted with a major crisis. The recovery in the United States has been very slow. The Euro zone crisis has put major economies in a deep economic turmoil, causing instability worldwide. Yet, in such a dire situation a rapid expansion in food production is essential to ensure nation's food security.

In this conjuncture, my Ministry remains committed to the strengthening of its unflinching support to the fisheries sector and its development as it has a critical role to play in the economic growth, job creation, food security and the transformation of the industry for the benefit of the nation at large. But we need to act in a responsive, responsible and effective manner as we cannot have a thriving seafood industry unless we ascertain that sustainability of fisheries resources is not compromised. In this world of fierce competition, we have no option than to ensure the sustainable use of fisheries resources and protection of the aquatic environment for the benefit of stakeholders at large.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me share with you that currently the seafood sector under the umbrella of the seafood hub Mauritius embraces the entire value chain and contributing around 14.8% of the overall commodity export of Mauritius. So, it is a very very important sector. It has a processing capacity of 120,000 tonnes of fish and fish products and the export value of fish and fish products include re-export which, in 2011, was Rs9.591 billion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I would like here to underline certain achievements in the fisheries sector during this year. *Je vais énumérer quelques développements qui ont eu lieu dans mon ministère durant cette année -*

- i. exportation of fish and fish products attained Rs9.5 billion representing 14.8% of national exports.
- ii. a Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Protocol successfully negotiated for EU vessels to fish in Mauritius waters against payment of a financial contribution to the Government of Mauritius. I will elaborate further on this subject matter later on.
M. le président, beaucoup qui a été dit concernant le *Fisheries Partnership Agreement*. Cela est très important pour notre *seafood hub* et on ne peut pas faire de la démagogie là-dessus parce qu'il y va de la survie même de notre *seafood hub* qui offre de l'emploi directement ou indirectement à quelques 16,000 personnes dans ce pays. Donc, on ne peut pas permettre à certains démagogues de jouer avec cela.
- iii. Draft Management Plans for the Blue Bay and the Balaclava Marine Parks developed.
- iv. the Institute of Marine research in Norway identified as strategic partner with the Albion Fisheries Research Centre. *Quand j'étais à Norvège l'année dernière on a négocié cela. On va avoir un strategic partner pour Albion.*
- v. 200,000 camarons juveniles, more than 2000 Berri Rouge fingerlings and hundreds of freshwater ornamental fish were produced.
- vi. a total of 100,000 fingerlings of Cordonnier were released at the Blue Bay Marine Park, La Cambuse, the Fisheries Reserves of Poste Lafayette, Trou d'Eau Douce and Rivière Noire.
- vii. Crablets - *on a commencé à produire des petits crabes pour remettre dans le lagon, pour repeupler le lagon et on veut produire des milliers, sinon des millions, pour remettre dans le lagon.* They were released at the third Ramsar Site of Mauritius, Pointe d'Esny, and Belle Eau Estuary at Albion.
- viii. 30,000 fingerlings of Gueule Pavé were produced and released at the Black River Fishing Reserve. *Cette année on veut en produire davantage. On a parlé des*

milliers, maintenant on veut produire des millions pour repeupler le lagon et on veut faire de même pour Rodrigues si ceux qui sont à Rodrigues veulent bien de notre aide.

- ix. 4,930 patrols carried out in the lagoon and along the coast; 7,095 metres of illegal nets seized; 104 cases of illegal fishing prosecuted and 228 picked-up cases recorded.
- x. MS ISO 9001: 2008 certificates awarded to the training component of the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre (FITEC) maintained after external audit assessment in August 2012.
- xi. 91 licences issued to foreign vessels, generating a revenue of Rs26,535,000 as a date.
- xii. 27 licences issued to local fishing vessels as a date.
- xiii. one foreign fishing vessel arrested for illegal fishing in the Exclusive Economic zone of Mauritius and we look forward next year to seize many more if this trend continues.
- xiv. 32 fish establishments approved and 3,193 veterinary certificates issued by the competent authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, fisheries sector development is a priority of Government to promote food security, increase livelihood activities and economic growth and the marine sector has a positive future with the right steps being taken in the Government Programme to develop its ocean resources for economic advances. Here, I would like to comfort the House that fisheries was, and will always be one of the important economic sectors contributing to the national economy and we will certainly become more important with time. It is to be noted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this year, for the first quarter, a growth in the fisheries sector was around 35%, exactly 35.1%, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir; one of the highest growth of all the Ministries.

The positioning of Mauritius as a seafood hub forms part of the strategy of this Government to further diversify the Mauritian economic base, due to globalisation effects on our existing traditional economic pillars. Lots of progress have been made and today Mauritius is one of the two biggest ACP exporters of canned tuna to the EU market. Mauritius ranks third in terms of overall EU canned tuna external supply in terms of volume and also ranks third of overall EU tuna loins external supply in terms of value. *Dans le monde nous sommes le troisième*

fournisseur dans le marché européen. We now dare to believe. We have ditched once and for all the old defeatist stereotypes, the old self-depreciation that held us back from becoming all we were capable of being.

Fish is a naturally renewable resource, but it is not unlimited in quantity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Good management practices are *sine qua non* for its long-term sustainability for the benefit of fishing communities, consumers and all stakeholders. In this respect, Mauritius is assuming its responsibilities both as a flag and port state, in cooperating with regional and international bodies for proper management of fisheries resources through responsible practices and policies. Thus, it goes without saying that Mauritius is committed to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. This is what we call IUU fishing.

As you know Mauritius is deeply involved in the fight against illegal fishing because illegal fishing is a crime and a crime which, by undermining the sustainability of fish stocks and marine ecosystems, causes general disruption to marine life and also the foundation of any fisheries policy. Conscious of this scourge, the 2013 Budget has, for the first time, ever made provision to better equip the Fisheries Protection Officers with defensive weapons in their duty.

Conscious of this scourge, the 2013 Budget has, for the first time, ever made provisions to better equip the fisheries protection officers with defensive weapons in their duty to protect the lagoonal waters of the Republic of Mauritius. Cela est très important, M. le président, parce qu'avant quand ils allaient attraper les fraudeurs en mer, ces fraudeurs avaient des harpons, des fouines et les pauvres gardes n'avaient rien. C'est pourquoi on veut les armer pour mieux les protéger et protéger notre lagon.

With a view to guarantee sustainable fishing activities and to ensure the sustainability of our processing sector in the seafood hub, my Ministry has initiated a Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the EU in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), other rules of international law and practices following determination of the first fisheries agreement signed in 1990. Here, I would like to take some time to reiterate the rationale behind signing the Fisheries Partnership Agreement. I have to explain this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Preferential access to the EU markets has enabled Mauritius exports to be further diversified; to include fish products under the Lome IV and the Cotonou Agreement which contributed significantly in growth of export volume. Somehow, this provided the basis of the so-called 'pay, fish and go' EU-ACP Fisheries Agreements.

However, in view of a new world economic order in which global trade rules play an important role, new world trade organisation compatible partnership agreements are negotiated and termed as the Fisheries Partnership Agreement. It is thus a partnership. Ce n'est pas comme certains disent: on est en train de venir dilapider nos ressources. It is a partnership agreement that includes fisheries development objectives to implement sectoral fisheries policy and good governance focused on sustainability principles well embedded therein. Cela veut dire qu'on ne veut pas se tirer une balle dans le pied, M. le président. On sait qu'on doit protéger nos ressources, on doit protéger les pêcheurs.

The Terms and conditions attached to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement negotiated by the EU in the region are the same with the exception of the reference tonnage. Cela veut dire que tous les pays de la région sont payés de la même façon. Ce sont les mêmes conditions qui contrôlent cet accord, M. le président. Il n'y a pas de favoritisme pour un pays ou un autre. Il y a d'autres pays dans la région qui ont signé ce Fisheries Partnership Agreement. Il y a Madagascar, les Comores, les Seychelles. Donc nous ne sommes pas les seuls parce qu'il y en a qui croit qu'il n'y a qu'à Maurice qu'on est en train de signer cela et qu'on n'est pas en train d'avoir ce qu'il faut pour permettre aux européens de pêcher dans nos eaux. It is to be noted that, as provided under the EU Common Fisheries Policy, the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries which we call the DG MARE of the European Commission ensures, prior to concluding the Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Third Countries, an impact assessment study. This is carried out to ensure the sustainability of the resource targeted to avoid overexploitation. Nous voulons protéger les futures générations. On ne veut pas dilapider nos ressources comme je viens de le dire.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore these agreements target among others tuna and tuna-like species which are highly migratory and, in Mauritius, the fishing zone is not part of the main fishing area in the Indian Ocean for tropical tuna except in the north around Agaléga Island. By signing the Fisheries Partnership Agreement, we obtain revenue from the resources without the need for investment which is very huge in this type of fishery.

Laissez-moi vous dire, M. le président, pour aller pêcher ces thons, le thon qui est un poisson migrateur doit être récolté, si on peut le dire ainsi, avant qu'il ne quitte nos eaux. C'est pourquoi on donne des licences aux européens. On signe un accord. On va me demander pourquoi les mauriciens ne pêchent pas dans nos eaux mais la raison est simple. Dans les années

70, il y avait des mauriciens qui avaient essayé de se lancer dans cette voie. Il y a le Mauritius Tuna Fishing and Canning Enterprises Ltd. qui avait acheté trois purse seiners. Vous vous rappelez de l'époque du bateau de thonier senneur Lady Sushil. Pourquoi ont-ils arrêté leurs opérations? C'est parce que, dans nos eaux, on n'a pas autant de thons que dans les eaux de Seychelles, dans les eaux de Madagascar. Ici c'est assez pauvre en thon. Donc, ils ont préféré cesser leurs activités pour aller pêcher dans les eaux seychelloises. C'est à cause de ça mais il y a des gens qui disent : « Mais il faut donner à des mauriciens ! ». Nous sommes d'accord pour le faire mais qu'ils viennent investir. Combien il faut investir. Un thonier senneur, M. le président, coûte à peu près deux milliards de roupies. Combien de mauriciens viendraient investir dedans? Pour un LongLiner, cela coûte entre cinq cents millions de roupies à un milliard de roupies. Là, on est en train de donner des licences. On perçoit de l'argent sans investir un sou et, en plus, ces bateaux là viennent ici, ils utilisent notre port et cela crée de l'emploi pour notre population. Plus de seize mille emplois sont ainsi créés. Il y a six mille directement, dix mille indirectement. Par exemple, ceux qui travaillent dans nos chantiers navals. Aussi les bateaux viennent débarquer leurs poissons ici. Nous avons les plus grosses usines de thon de l'océan indien. Cela se trouve ici, les bateaux vont pêcher dans les eaux avoisinantes, ils viennent à Maurice. Pourquoi? C'est parce qu'on leur offre des facilités qu'ils ne trouvent pas ailleurs. Ils ne sont pas obligés de venir ici, ils peuvent aller dans d'autres pays. On les a attirés pour développer notre *seafood hub*. Il y a des gens qui disent non, il ne faut pas signer l'accord mais qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire, les laisser partir qu'est-ce qui va se passer? Seize mille travailleurs qui se retrouvent sur le pavé. Est-ce cela qu'on veut faire? Il faut être sérieux. Moi, je pense que si l'économie mauricienne est florissante, c'est aussi grâce à la pêche. On ne peut pas jouer avec ce secteur, cela bénéficie à tout le monde. Qu'on se le dise, qu'on fasse passer le message, M. le président.

The present Fisheries Partnership Agreement provides for a total revenue of 918,860 Euros comprising of financial contribution, fisheries sector support policy and licence fees pour développer l'aquaculture; pour construire les fish landing stations – des jetées. Mais tout cet argent vient de là-bas. C'est l'aide des européens. The reference tonnage is 5500 tonnes, but the average catch stands at 1718 tonnes, thereby bringing revenue of nearly Rs22 per kilo which is, in fact, 22% return in value without any investment incurred. Ça veut dire on n'investit rien. On nous paie 22% du revenu. Il y en a qui disent que ce n'est pas bon. Quand on parle de 5500 tonnes le tonnage de référence, M. le président, cela ne veut pas dire qu'ils sont en train de

pêcher 5500 tonnes dans nos eaux. Non. Cela a été dû aux négociations qu'on a faites, des négociations rondement menées car les Européens voulaient nous payer pour moins; parce qu'ils pêchent à peu près 1718 tonnes de thon par an. Ils voulaient nous payer pour 3000 tonnes. Demandez à mon collègue, le ministre Faugoo; mon collègue Arvin Boolell. Ils n'étaient pas d'accord et ils avaient bien raison, on a voulu demander plus. C'est ce que j'ai fait quand je suis allé à Bruxelles rencontrer Madame Damanaki, chargée des affaires maritimes et de la pêche à la commission européenne et elle a été d'accord parce qu'on va investir l'argent dans l'aquaculture, pratiquer une pêche plus soutenable et protéger notre environnement. C'est pourquoi on a pu avoir ce tonnage de référence de 5500 tonnes. Ce qui veut dire même s'ils ne pêchent que deux thons dans nos eaux, ils doivent nous payer pour 5,500 tonnes. C'est cela le tonnage de référence. Et ils ne pêchent jamais 5,500 tonnes ; the *average* is 1,718 tonnes de thon dans nos eaux. Pourquoi paient-ils le *reference tonnage* ? Parce que quand ils pêchent dans les eaux mozambicaines, dans les eaux malgaches, les thons qui migrent, ils doivent les suivre. Quand ils passent pendant quelques jours ou quelques semaines dans nos eaux, ils doivent les pêcher là, c'est pour avoir l'autorisation de les pêcher là et ils ne pêchent pas beaucoup dans nos eaux. Il est bon de le savoir, M. le président.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I tend also to highlight the following -

- (a) the impact of the purse seiners on the local tuna fishery is negligible as those vessels usually operate over 1,500 km of our coastline, at the extreme north of the Mauritian EEZ. Ils pêchent au nord d'Agaléga, ils ne viennent pas pêcher dans les environs de nos îles.
- (b) by-catch from the purse seiners represents only 3.5% of the total annual catch of 265,000 tons in this part of the Indian Ocean. All sharks and turtles are released at sea. In addition, all purse seiners are fitted with turtles - excluding devices.
- (c) Purse seiner tuna fishery in the Southwest Indian Ocean generates some 500 million Euros and provides employment to almost 30,000 persons. Needless to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a collapse in this fishery would cause a major economic turmoil to the Seychelles, with 50% of its foreign exchange earnings coming from this activity. Mauritius would incur a loss of some 200 million Euros in the event purse seining is abandoned. Il y a des personnes qui disent qu'il faut cesser avec ce type de pêche, il faut aller vers le *pole and line* comme aux

Maldives. Aux Maldives, M. le président, ils ont plus de 300,000 pêcheurs qui pêchent à la ligne. Mais à Maurice, si on demande aux mauriciens d'aller pêcher le thon à la ligne, on doit fermer toutes ces usines. C'est pourquoi we cannot do away with purse seining and this would be a severe blow to our seafood hub, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I have said earlier, this will put the jobs of 16,000 of our compatriots in jeopardy.

- (d) All foreign licensed long line fishing vessels operate at a distance of at least 75 nautical miles from the base line of most of our anchored FADs which are allocated not more than 10 nautical miles from the baseline resulting in practically no impact on our FAD fisheries. Il y a des personnes qui disent que ces bateaux sont en train de pêcher nos thons qui viennent sur nos *Fish Aggregate Device* - dispositifs de concentration de poisson. C'est faux, M. le président, parce que les *fisheries aggregate devices* sont installés entre 2.5 milles nautiques à 10 milles nautiques et ces *long liners* vont pêcher à 75 milles nautiques de nos côtes. On a mis dans l'accord qu'ils n'ont pas le droit de s'approcher à moins de 15 mille nautiques de nos eaux. Donc, les dispositifs de concentration de poisson sont bien protégés et cela a été mis en place pour nos pêcheurs locaux.
- (e) Species of fish caught in purse seining are totally different from those caught in the FAD fishery.

The Fisheries Partnership Agreement must also be seen in a wider context of the overall EU cooperation with Mauritius in the fisheries sector, amongst others. Comme je viens de le dire, les aides que nous recevons de l'Union Européenne –

- (a) The Regional Monitoring Control and Surveillance Programme financed to the tune of 12 million Euros. Ça c'est l'aide de l'Union Européenne et c'est dans l'accord ;
- (b) The Smart Fish Programme for the social, economic and environmental development of the Indian Ocean region for improved capacities for sustainable development of fisheries to the tune of 21 million Euros in the first phase and 14 million Euros for a consequent second phase;

- (c) Market access of fish and fish products on the EU market duty free and quota free. Et ça c'est très important. L'accès au marché européen duty-free and quota free, c'est dans l'accord, and
- (d) Spillover effects of this agreement on our port sector activities, namely transshipment, repairs, dry-docking, *le chantier naval*, bunkering, etc. Comme je viens de dire, les gens pourront avoir encore plus de travail dans nos chantiers navals.

Moreover, though our waters are not that productive compared to most other ocean areas, still we are a reference when it comes to fisheries. Our dedication, hard work and commitment are recognised in the international arena. Mauritius chairing the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission - *c'est Maurice qui est en train de présider* the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (L'IOTC) - the various regional and international fisheries seminars, conferences and workshops being held in Mauritius is testimony to what I am advocating. The very next month, the ACP Fish II Programme under which Mauritius benefitted from technical assistance will hold its monitoring workshop.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we may have differences of opinion to be sure, firmly held beliefs and very significant and emotional debates, but I also believe that we are united in our end-goal, that is, to manage our fisheries resources to ensure their health, sustainability, and vitality for today and for the future. Hence, in this endeavour I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is proceeding for the signing of a Fisheries Partnership Agreement. On a déjà initialé et très bientôt on va le signer, parce cela va prendre à peu près dix mois à un an pour que le Parlement européen approuve tout cela. Our waters are not that productive compared to most other ocean areas and yet we are a reference when it comes to fisheries.

We need to be pragmatic, instead of wasting time lamenting opportunities missed in generations past, we have set our gaze firmly on the opportunities before us, determined to capture them to build a sustainable future. Some five tuna purse seiners from compagnie SAPMER amounting to an investment of Rs10 billion are expected to undertake fishing activities under Mauritian flag to secure originating fish through landing. Cela veut dire, M. le président, plus de 30 ans après le thonier senneur, Lady Sushil, c'est maintenant qu'on va avoir des thoniers senneurs battant le drapeau mauricien; on va avoir cinq thoniers senneurs, cela va coûter aux environs de R 5 milliards et cette compagnie va investir dans les usines en partenariat avec des

mauriciens. Pourquoi ont-ils choisi Maurice ? C'est évident parce qu'ici il y a des facilités et ils veulent les utiliser. They will undertake fishing activities under Mauritian flag to secure originating fish through landing. In parallel operators in the seafood hub are negotiating for a joint venture for 10 tuna longliners to operate under Mauritian flag. Avenues for further investment are being explored with Korean and French companies. Il y a des Koréens qui veulent aussi venir investir à Maurice. Ils sont venus me voir il y a à peine deux semaines. Il y a aussi des japonais qui veulent délocaliser leur flotte de l'Afrique du Sud pour venir ici. Donc, je pense que d'ici l'année prochaine l'investissement dans notre *seafood hub* va monter drastiquement – on a dit il y a une compagnie qui va investir R 10 milliards et j'espère que cela va arriver dans les environs de R 20 milliards à R 30 milliards.

Discussions between my Ministry and the Norwegian authorities have reached an advanced stage for this strategic partnership that will evolve through a programme to streamline and increase research and training in targeted areas within the next three years with the goal to improve the production efficiency and environmental sustainability of the fisheries sector. If there is a sector where we have been lagging behind for so long, Mr Speaker, Sir, it's aquaculture. We want to catch up in this field. *M. le président, on dit que la ferme marine de Mahébourg est un exemple de succès.* It is a vivid example of a successful aquaculture development in Mauritius, with an annual production of some 570 tonnes of fish in floating cages, with a target of 2000 tonnes in the medium term. Making aquaculture sustainably prosperous requires coordinated efforts. Hence, based on the success and enthusiasm of the fishermen community through the success of the small scale fish cage culture projects, more projects, namely, as the hon. Minister of Finance has said, at Le Morne and Mahébourg, will be launched. I do not believe in miracles, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I believe that human effort has the power to change the facet when it is done collectively.

Pourquoi veut-on aller vers l'aquaculture, M. le président? Il y a des gens qui disent que l'aquaculture va détruire nos lagons, qu'il y aura la pollution etc. Laissez-moi vous dire ceci: lorsqu'on marche sur les coraux pour aller pêcher l'ourite, n'est-on pas en train de détruire nos lagons ? Quand on est en train de pêcher illégalement avec des harpons, est-ce qu'on n'est pas en train de détruire nos lagons ? Quand on fait trop de pêche à la seine dans les lagons, est-ce qu'on n'est pas en train de détruire les lagons? Les gens sont pauvres, ils essayent de gagner leur vie de cette façon. Nous, au ministère de la pêche, en tant que gouvernement responsable,

voulons aider les gens à sortir de la misère. Et une des meilleures façons d'aider les pêcheurs à sortir de la spirale de la misère, c'est de les lancer dans l'aquaculture. Comment le faire ? Ça ne veut pas dire, comme certains le disent exagérément, qu'on va installer des cages de poissons partout dans les lagons. Non ! On a des scientifiques responsables dans ce pays. On va voir combien de cages on peut mettre dans les lagons, pour que cela ne devienne pas une nuisance. On doit voir où les mettre pour que cela ne dérange pas les pêcheurs et les bateaux. C'est ainsi qu'on va faire. C'est pourquoi on a commencé par mettre des projets pilotes. On a eu trois cages de poissons du Japon. On a installé une à Trou d'Eau Douce, une à Grand Gaube, et j'ai gardé la troisième pour Rodrigues. Concernant Grand Gaube il n'y a pas eu de problème.

(Interruptions)

A Mahébourg, ça va venir et ce sera plus grand. Les pêcheurs sont très heureux, ils essaient même d'ajouter un peu de leur expérience. On a commencé avec le berri rouge. On les a mis dans des cages, et après on a mis des cordonniers et des gueules pavés, parce qu'il y a six cages dans chaque unité. Mais ils ont vu que les cordonniers grossissent plus vite. Ce n'est pas nécessaire de donner de la nourriture concentrée aux cordonniers, car ils peuvent manger des algues. Ils ont même pensé aux feuilles et aux troncs de bananiers qu'on laisse tremper dans l'eau de mer. Les cordonniers mangent cela aussi. Les Mauriciens essaient d'innover. Les cordonniers, à l'état sauvage, mangent n'importe quoi et les gens sont parfois réticents à les manger. Certains n'aiment pas manger des cordonniers. Mais les gens aimeraient consommer les cordonniers venant des cages. On veut aller dans cette direction. A Rodrigues, on a demandé à démarrer un projet pilote et éventuellement mettre ces cages. J'espère qu'ils vont accepter. Mais s'ils n'acceptent pas, qu'est-ce que je peux y faire ? On respecte l'autonomie. Il y a des pêcheurs qui m'ont demandé de le faire à Rodrigues. Je leur ai dit de former une coopérative, et que je vais les aider. Ils m'ont demandé de l'aide, et je suis prêt à les aider. On va donner des cages de poissons à Mahébourg, au Morne, et aussi à Rodrigues. Mais, tout dépend de l'Assemblée régionale. On va le faire tranquillement étape par étape. Ce n'est pas de la politique politicienne. C'est une façon d'aider les pauvres pêcheurs de Rodrigues. Arrivé aux élections les gens vont choisir; c'est leur affaire. Ce n'est pas de la politique, c'est aider les gens pauvres et les pêcheurs.

(Interruptions)

Voilà ! Ici, on ne perd pas de temps, on va très vite. Mon collègue dit qu'on va le faire très vite à Mahébourg, au Morne et à Rivière Noire. Le ministre des finances est d'accord pour donner de l'argent qu'il faut pour aider ces pêcheurs. On va le faire pas à pas. On veut aller plus loin. J'ai été en Malaisie. J'ai vu comment ils élèvent des crabes dans des boîtes individuelles, parce que les crabes sont des cannibales. Si on met deux crabes dans une boîte, à l'époque où ils changent de coque, comme on le dit en anglais, *ecdysis; during the moulting period, they eat one another.*

(Interruptions)

Cannibalism ! On veut aussi aller de l'avant avec l'élevage de crabes, de concombres de mer, d'anguilles et même d'abalones. Bientôt, on pense aller en Chine pour voir comment ils font cela, et apporter ces connaissances ici. On a demandé l'aide des consultants étrangers. Il y a un consultant Américain et un expert Chinois qui veulent nous aider. Je pense que, du côté de l'aquaculture, on va aller très vite. Mais, on veut, M. le président, récompenser l'effort. On dit aux pêcheurs: on vous donne une cage, mais maintenant, faites l'effort de nourrir ces poissons. A Albion, au ministère de la pêche, on veut produire des *fingerlings*, des petits poissons, des petits concombres de mer, des petits crabes pour fournir aux éventuels aquaculteurs. Et on est même disposé à aller à Rodrigues. Mais, il ne faut pas politiser tout cela ; il faut aller de l'avant, et aider ces gens pauvres.

(Interruptions)

Je suis le député de Rodrigues, mais il faut respecter l'autonomie. D'ailleurs, j'ai dit que je suis prêt à collaborer, et en retour j'ai reçu comme réponse : vous êtes obligé de collaborer avec nous. Mais, ce n'est pas une façon de parler. Je tends la main, et ils me mordent la main. Malgré cela, je pardonne, et on peut aller de l'avant *for the sake of these fishermen.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, marine fish stocking – *le repeuplement de nos lagons avec des poissons* – involves producing fish fry or fingerlings, and releasing them into the sea. Fish stocking provides many benefits such as increasing existing stocks, and is recognised for its importance to the fishing community in terms of quality fishing, conservation outcomes, employment and subsequent economic benefits. Responsible fish stocking would be conducted around the island at a faster pace to conserve and protect our unique biodiversity. *Nous voulons - comme je viens de le dire, M. le président – relâcher des milliers, voire des millions de fingerlings dans les lagons. C'est une des façons de repeupler nos lagons. Et avec l'aquaculture, c'est sûr que les gens eux-mêmes vont se dire they will relinquish their nets so that they can indulge in*

aquaculture. *Le bénéfice pour l'environnement sera énorme. Il y a des gens qui ne vont plus aller faire de la pêche sous-marine, et dans le lagon il y aura beaucoup plus de poissons.*

Je voudrais ajouter ceci, M. le président. Dans ces petites cages de quatre mètres par quatre mètres - le projet pilote - on peut avoir jusqu'à 1.2 à 2 tonnes de poissons en huit mois. Mais, avec les grandes cages qu'on pense mettre à la disposition des pêcheurs dans un avenir pas trop lointain - une cage qui coûte environ R 300,000 - on pourra avoir en huit mois, une année, 25 tonnes de poissons. Ce qui fait à peu près 50,000 livres de poissons. A R 100 la livre, ça vous fait R 5 millions.

Dites-vous bien une coopérative de 10 à 12 pêcheurs, avec une cage de poissons qui récolte 50 mille livres de poissons, et qui a R 5 millions en huit mois ou une année, n'est-ce pas merveilleux, M. le président ? C'est ce qu'on veut faire pour les pêcheurs. Pour ceux qui veulent suivre qu'ils suivent, mais pour ceux qui ne veulent pas tant pis. Nous sommes des politiciens, on ne va pas vivre éternellement sur cette terre. On doit faire ce qu'il faut faire pendant qu'on peut le faire. Si on rate des occasions c'est fini.

(Interruptions)

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year budgetary provision has been made for the sensitisation programme for marine turtles with the collaboration of NGOs. We provide the necessary platform to engage in practical and pragmatic cooperation to address many challenges in the fishing sector. In this respect, refund of VAT on purchase of equipment to registered fishermen will be extended for a one-year period.

Registered fishermen group in cooperatives will also benefit from VAT refund. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are growing our fishing industry, undaunted by the challenges and we are determined, through cooperation and leadership, to put this industry on a strong, stable and sustainable footing heading deeper into the 21st century.

Ce qu'on veut faire, M. le président, c'est d'essayer d'apporter notre pierre qui est de plus en plus grosse, à l'édifice économique de notre pays.

M. le président, permettez-moi maintenant de dire quelques mots pour Rodrigues. D'abord, je voudrais remercier le ministre des finances pour les mesures qu'il a prises en faveur de Rodrigues. Pour ne citer que quelques unes, cette mesure qui consiste à faire le prix du riz et de la farine venir au même prix qu'à Maurice. Il y en a qui disent : « c'est grâce à nous ! » Mais nous, au MR, avons demandé cela régulièrement depuis plusieurs années'. On s'est battu. Si on

l'a eu aujourd'hui cela n'est pas tombé du ciel. Mais quand c'est réussi, tant mieux pour la population. On ne va pas se quereller là-dessus. Il y a le *broadband*. La bande passante a été augmentée par au moins cinq fois, de 37 MB à 155 MB. Concernant le *holiday package* il y a eu une réduction du prix des billets d'avion. Cela passe d'un minimum de quatre jours à un minimum de trois jours pour y bénéficier. Donc, c'est une bonne chose.

Rodrigues va aussi bénéficier des VAT *exemptions* concernant les *SMEs*. Cela va aider les petites et moyennes entreprises. Il y a aussi les repas chauds pour les *ZEP schools*, tablette *PCs*, et l'aide aux parents qui perçoivent moins de R 6,200 vont bénéficier de R 650 mensuellement par enfant pour un maximum de trois enfants.

M. le président, pour parler de la situation à Rodrigues, certains disent des belles paroles mais leurs actions sont loin d'être belles ! Il y a ceux qui ne font que parler. Mon ami a fait son discours mais il a oublié de parler de l'exode massif des jeunes vers l'île Maurice et cela est grave. Rodrigues est comme quelqu'un qui devient exsangue, quelqu'un qui saigne abondamment, c'est l'hémorragie. Cela me préoccupe. Le problème du chômage à Rodrigues est grave. Je le dis en toute objectivité et ce n'est pas pour faire de la politique politicienne. Il faut trouver une solution à cela et c'est pourquoi quand nous étions au *regional government* à Rodrigues on avait mis l'accent sur les grands projets.

M. le président, après l'autre gouvernement régional, il semblerait qu'il ne sait pas ce que c'est que la permanence de l'Etat. Ce n'était pas des mesures politiciennes, c'était des mesures qui allaient bénéficier tout le monde, y compris eux. Mais ils n'ont pas compris ! Ils essaient de trouver des petites choses. En fait, pour eux, les gros projets ne sont pas leur tasse de thé. D'ailleurs, l'honorable membre du parti adverse l'a dit. Pour eux ce sont les petits projets, si j'ose dire, des peccadilles qui les intéressent. Mais il est temps de passer à autre chose. S'il y a des politiciens dépassés qui regardent au ras des pâquerettes, il est temps que la nouvelle génération vise plus loin. Au lieu de regarder vos pieds seulement, regardez l'horizon, essayez d'appréhender ce qui va se passer à l'avenir sinon demain on va dire qu'on a raté certaines occasions.

C'est triste. Il est temps de se ressaisir. Il ne faut pas jouer avec l'économie d'un pays. Avec des grands projets il y aurait eu la création d'emplois. Mais là, il n'y a pas de création d'emplois. Au contraire, pendant que les gros projets sont mis au frigo, il y a des gens à qui on donne des coups de pieds pour leur mettre à la porte. Je pense à ces pauvres malheureux, les 250

general workers qu'on va mettre à la porte. Ces gens ont travaillé pendant cinq ans pour le gouvernement et ont aidé tout le monde, y compris l'honorable membre. Je dis que ces 250 *general workers* ne sont pas fautifs. S'il y a certains politiciens qui ont commis des fautes, il ne faut pas que ces 250 travailleurs payent pour cela. Il y a des gens qui sont employés dans la *Rodrigues Water Company*, il y a des gens qui sont employés dans Rodclean. Moi, je dis qu'il ne faut que ces quelques 500 personnes soient sacrifiées sur l'autel de la politique politicienne, M. le président. Il faut être plus humain. Je pense qu'il faut avoir de la compassion pour ces personnes. Il ne faut pas qu'elles soient sacrifiées. Mais à la suite de cela, moi, j'appréhende ; plus le temps passe, plus il y aura des problèmes sociaux à Rodrigues. Plus le temps passe, plus la tension va augmenter. Je le dis aujourd'hui, on va suivre et on va voir parce que les gens ne vont pas se laisser faire. Il y a une grosse déception à Rodrigues. Les gens sont déçus parce qu'il n'y a pas d'emplois. Au départ ils ont dit qu'on a pris l'argent du budget, qu'on a mis dans nos poches et qu'il ne reste que R 80 millions.

C'est faux ! On ne peut pas prendre l'argent du gouvernement, mettre dans nos poches et partir ! Ce n'est pas comme cela, surtout avec le *Project Based Budgeting*. Si dans le budget on a prévu l'argent pour construire une route, on doit construire la route et c'est ce qu'on a fait. Il y a toujours des comptes à rendre. L'argent était *committed* pour tel ou tel projet et si on n'avait pas fait cela beaucoup de personnes auraient perdu leurs emplois. Mais il y a certaines personnes qui ne comprennent pas cela. Je me demande s'ils vont pouvoir utiliser ces R 80 millions d'ici la fin de l'année. Ils ont tardé et maintenant ils ont des problèmes. L'année prochaine, on verra s'il n'y a pas de gros projets qui démarrent à Rodrigues. Je leur souhaite bonne chance ! La façon de faire de la politique de certains à Rodrigues est ce que j'appellerai de l'anachronisme politique. Il est temps que la jeune génération pense à cela et qu'elle se soulève et fait comprendre qu'elle n'est pas d'accord avec cet anachronisme.

Pour terminer, M. le président, il y en a aussi qui disent qu'ici on est dans le gouvernement et à Rodrigues on est dans l'opposition. C'est vrai qu'à Rodrigues, pour le gouvernement régional, on est dans l'opposition mais on a été élu par le peuple ; comme ici, j'ai été élu. L'honorable membre a été battu et je suis au gouvernement et c'est normal. La roue tourne en politique. Chacun doit jouer son rôle. Je suis député de Rodrigues et si les gens de Rodrigues viennent me demander de l'aide, je les aiderai. Si les gens viennent demander de l'aide à l'honorable Léopold, au *minority leader* et aux élus de mon parti à Rodrigues, nous

sommes prêts à les aider, n'en déplaise à certains. Nous continuerons à le faire pour le bien de la République par respect pour la démocratie, et par respect pour l'autonomie de Rodrigues, mais on va le faire honnêtement.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(10.00 p.m.)

Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): M. le président, c'est dommage que les membres de l'opposition ne soient pas là. Que dire de cette opposition depuis que les débats ont repris sur le budget! Nous avons, au cours de ces débats, entendu tant de discours à répétition, d'éternelles élucubrations qui ne répondent même pas aux réels enjeux économiques auxquels le monde fait face actuellement.

La crise touche aussi bien l'Europe dans son ensemble que les États-Unis. D'autres pays qui, hier encore, étaient considérés comme des tigres économiques, notamment le Japon et des pays asiatiques, sont touchés de plein fouet. Que dire de Maurice, M. le président? L'opposition ne semble pas s'en préoccuper davantage! Ici, M. le président, le pays connaîtra une croissance de plus de 3% et cette opposition continue avec sa politique démagogique en faisant de la politique fiction, faisant croire qu'il n'y a pas de crise économique mondiale.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate and thank the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, and especially the Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for the excellent, bold and new measures present in this Budget 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2007, the world is going through a very bad phase. There has been a succession of global crisis, financial, food, fuel and natural disasters. We are also at a time of great uncertainties with regard to climate change, stability of financial systems and food security. These crises are causing considerable economic shut down, thus undermining progress by reducing growth rates. Developing countries are the ones most severely hit by this financial crisis and the ensuing global economic shut down, resulting in lower growth rates. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it goes without saying that this Budget is in line with the philosophy of the Labour Party and the PMSD commitment for more social justice and an egalitarian society.

For a better appreciation of this Budget and for the enlightenment of all those who are making sterile criticisms, allow me to put the Budget in perspective. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Members on both sides of the House and the public in general will recall that in his message

in the Electoral Manifesto, *Programme gouvernemental de 2005 de l'Alliance sociale*, the hon. Prime Minister, who was then Leader of the Opposition, had explicitly stated that, I quote -

“Il faut revoir le fonctionnement de notre société dans toute sa profondeur. Nos problèmes sont d'ordre économique, social, politique, démocratique et moral. Refonder une société en gardant son essence, mais en s'attaquant fermement avec courage à ses manquements”.

These could be no clearer diagnosis of the ills facing the nation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Members on both sides of the House have been delegated by the population to serve the nation. It is our duty to put in proposals and suggestions for the improvement of the socio-economic fabric of the country and not to indulge in sterile criticisms and bad comments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of all those persons who are unnecessarily indulging in negative comments on the Budget, allow me to remind them of the state of the economy and the legacy they left, when they were thrown out of the Government in July 2005. The flashback will help to put things in the right context. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what happened between 2000 and 2005? The then Prime Minister had conceded that –

- *nous sommes un état d'urgence économique;*
- Mauritius had entered the debt trap;
- public debt stood at 70% of GDP;
- employment was hovering at around 9.8%;
- foreign direct investment at all times low Rs2.5 billion;
- net international reserves stood at a critical Rs54 billion;
- domestic economic grow by and all time low 2.2% in 2005;
- increase in VAT by 50% between 2000 and 2002;
- there was a negative growth in the EPZ sector, and
- the textile factories were closing.

In the words of the then Minister of Industry –

“Nous constatons que les usines ferment leurs portes à une vitesse vertigineuse”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everyone in the House knows that the economy was wrecked and they were longing to move out of power and enjoy the comfort of the Opposition seats where *la vie serait plus facile*. When the *Alliance sociale* came to power in 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, besides inheriting a mismanaged economy, it had to wake up to the harsh realities of

globalisation. Trade preferences and safety nets were being eliminated. The sugar protocol was being reviewed and the outgoing Government had agreed to price reduction to the order of 36%. The prices of commodities and the prices of fuel were escalating dramatically. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, had the global recession occurred at a time when the then Prime Minister diagnosed the country as being *en état d'urgence économique* between 2000 and 2005, what would they have done? Certainly, they would have come up with the readymade magical solutions to increase VAT to the great dismay of the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, then Leader of the Opposition, had been repeatedly, ceaselessly saying that "*Gouverner, c'est prévoir*", but those in power at that time had only one agenda, that is, promoting their own political interest before the national interest. We all have self-esteem, however, notwithstanding our ego, we have to acknowledge our faults and weaknesses, and, in all fairness, give credit and appreciation to all those people who, since 2005, have helped to remodel the Mauritian economy and put it on the path of sustainable development and resilience. We should be grateful to the hon. Prime Minister in his endeavour to improve the economic and social conditions of each and every Mauritian.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister stated in the *Alliance sociale* Government Programme of 2005, I quote –

“Beaucoup reste à faire pour qu’aucune région, aucune agglomération, aucune catégorie de citoyens ne se sentent délaissés par le progrès. L’aménagement du territoire national, y compris celui des îles qui la compose, exige une planification réactualisée en permanence. Il faut continuer la modernisation de nos infrastructures en tenant compte de l’impératif d’un souci permanent pour un meilleur cadre de vie’.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the successive Budgets in the *Alliance Sociale* Government have been inspired by its leader: *souci permanent d’un meilleur cadre de vie* for our citizens. The prime concern of the hon. Prime Minister has throughout been the welfare of the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of the bleak prospects arising from the global economic recession which is biting deeply into the Euro zone, our main traditional export markets, this Government has shown throughout its strong leadership and vision that good economic strategies and sound economic management are critical to ride out safely of the storm and shore up our economy. The emphasis placed by this Budget on accelerating our technological transition.

Focusing on the Africa strategy, supporting growth and employment creation, protecting the most vulnerable and maintaining the sound economic fundamentals of the economy reflect the widening circle of opportunities that we have to respond to the crisis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2013 equips Mauritius to respond effectively and efficiently to the Euro crisis, rethink our strategies and policies to emerge even stronger from the impact of the Euro and UK zone crisis.

Following measures taken in the successive Budgets presented by the Alliance Sociale, the national economy is showing signs of a considerable degree of resilience. Members, on the other side of the House, are fully aware of the situation, otherwise they would no doubt have voiced that Government has some degree of manoeuvre to improve the PRB Report, while they, themselves, imposed a two-part payment for the civil servants for the 2003 PRB Report, at a time when there was no global economic crisis. We all know who was the Minister of Finance in 2003. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of the great economic outlook on the international scene, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has created through this Budget an environment conducive to sustain the economic and social development of Mauritius. We should be thankful and grateful to the hon. Prime Minister that no austerity measures have been included in this Budget. Some Members on the other side of the House would recall the austerity measures imposed by them during the 2000 and 2005 period.

A meagre sum of Rs149 was approved as compensation to the rising in the cost of living. They had no human consideration for our senior citizens. They were contemplating to introduce a retrograde measure known as Means testing for the allocation of social aid and to determine the eligibility of our senior citizens for pension. Trauma caused to the pensioners *avec le ciblage*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a draft of austerity measures were proposed by the successor of hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. On this latter count, I am tempted to quote Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, the then Leader of the Opposition, who summarised in his message in the 2005 Alliance Social Electoral Manifesto –

« Un jour lorsque sera arrivé le temps où l’histoire fera son bilan, des images claires nous apparaîtront - celles des années 90. Les dirigeants d’alors nous ont imposé une société de l’argent où était méprisé toute forme de moralité qui affirment-t-ils ne remplissait pas le ventre. Ces dirigeants ont laissé un triste et douloureux bilan. Un éphémère développement économique mais un durable pourrissement moral ».

This durable *morale décadence* culminated in the famous Medpoint Clinic saga. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister as early as August 2005 made it clear that all his actions are directed '*par les principes de justice sociale et d'un développement centré sur les citoyens*'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, leading international financial institutions and agencies are full of praise for the sound management of the Mauritian economy which, thanks to the bold measures taken in each Budget since 2005, has sustained a good level of resilience averaging a growth rate of 3.5 yearly, despite of our vulnerability and dependency on the international economic climate.

With the 2013 Budget measures we are targeting a growth rate of 4%. Expenditure on infrastructure development to the tune of Rs28 billion have been earmarked. Besides providing measures to sustain economic growth, this Budget *fait la part belle au bien-être et à la justice sociale*. Customs duties on a number of household hardware items have been eliminated as well as a substantial number of household daily consumer goods.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, alcohol consumption being responsible for much of domestic violence, the increase in taxes on this item is more than welcome. However, tax relief for all categories of income tax payers has been reviewed.

Civil servants were assured of the payment *in toto* of the 2008 PRB recommendations as well as the setting up of a committee to look into Errors and Omissions and alleged abnormalities arising from the report.

Members on both sides of the House will recall that in all his interventions on the Budget since 2005, the hon. Prime Minister has been putting emphasis on the fact that economic success requires long term planning, stressing particularly on the need for social inclusiveness in the process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards addressing the issue of social inclusiveness in the Budget, laudable measures have been provided, namely a Loan Scheme to a preferential rate to youngsters where parents are unable to afford university fees. Banks will offer low-cost student loans to finance university fees. The Loan Scheme will require no security of any type except of a mere parental guarantee, while Government will be guaranteeing the financial institutions of a refund of 20% of any arising bad debt. Government will provide scholarships to youngsters from vulnerable families who would not otherwise have the capacity to secure a student loan.

The educational hub will be strengthened with the creation of three additional university campuses. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one welcome measure is the provision of Rs130 m. towards the provision of hot meals daily to some 9,200 pupils studying in the ZEP schools. In parallel, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, families' monthly income less than Rs6,200 will be provided basic income support of Rs750 monthly for up to three children. This is an important measure to reduce poverty in the country.

To further encourage collaborative learning practices at the Primary School level through innovative measures the Budget has earmarked Rs5 m. to continue with the summer and winter school projects. The Social Housing Scheme will be sustained with the construction of an additional 85 housing units in 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is conscious of the fact that a number of degree and diploma holders are on the lookout for a first job. To render them employable, an action plan with specific measures will be elaborated and some Rs330 m. is earmarked for that project. This sum will go towards increasing the quantum of allowances or stipend paid to the trainees and financing training amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister, has since 2005 been harping on the urgency for the democratisation of the economy. We have gone a long way in the cane industry. The hon. Prime Minister has dared to step in where angels fear to tread. Planters, labourers and artisans are now entitled to a stake in the cane industry and this, through the entire value change from the production process to the sale of the final products. This was never heard of before.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in our quest to make Mauritius a nation of entrepreneur the Budget 2013 provides a further boost to the small and medium enterprises. Some 1,300 entrepreneurs will benefit and the potential entrepreneur would take advantage of the facilities enunciated in the 2013 Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, major development works are being carried out by our colleague, hon. Anil Bachoo, vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping. Projects in the pipeline in my Constituency; the construction of a multipurpose complex building at Rivière du Rempart together with car park, bus lay-by, construction of a bus stand adjacent to the Ramlallah SSS Mapou, bus lay-by at Villebague near the temple, bus lay-by at Plaine des Papayes near the Government School to ease the flow of traffic and improve on the security of the inhabitants.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am confident that the people of this country who have placed their trust on the hon. Prime Minister and his team would say that this budget flows straight from the vision of the hon. Prime Minister as spelt out in the *Alliance sociale* manifesto to make Mauritius globally competitive and a safe haven for one and all.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, for once again translating this vision into a continued reality *faisant ainsi taire les oiseaux de mauvais augure*.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(10.25 p.m.)

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I rise to speak, hon. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Peetumber, the time of the House is 22.25 p.m. I am saying it for the records, because I cannot see any hon. Members of the Opposition in the House, while we have most of the MPs from the Labour Party and the PMSD alliance present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to make this point, because I had pleasure to say it at the beginning of this Parliamentary session, I was hoping that the hon. Members of the Opposition will take their responsibilities and, once again, they have failed. They have, I suspect, broken all the records in the Commonwealth for an Opposition who has constantly walked out of the House and, I think that this shows the very little respect that they have for this institution.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quickly comment on the speech of hon. Li Kwong Wing, so that I get the name right. I have some serious doubts as to whether he actually read this document, that is, 'Rising to the Challenges of a World in Transition'; Budget Speech 2013 presented by hon. Xavier-Luc Duval. The reason why I have my doubts is that nowhere in his speech, he mentioned the main thrust of this document and the main thrust being in its title, that is, 'Rising to the Challenges of a World in Transition'. He made complete abstraction of the fact that we are in a special moment in the history of this planet where things are in transition. Hon. Dr. Hookoom did mention certain facts pertaining to this issue.

As I speak to you today, Israel is attacking the Palestinians in Gaza, in Syria there is a civil war and we all know that instability in that part of the world is bound to lead to an increase in the price of oil. An increase in the price of oil will cause an increase in the price of food, and cause a lot of hardships around the world. The whole of Europe is in crisis. Once again, as I

speak, there are about no less than 20 countries in Europe where people are marching down the streets, protesting against measures leading to austerity, protesting against unemployment, protesting against losing their livelihood.

Just in Spain, we have about 25.8% unemployment, in Greece - everybody knows the Greek story where - 25.1% people are out of work, in Portugal it is about 15.7%. The whole of Europe seems to be crumbling down and, of course, we rely a lot on Europe for our textiles, our tourism and everything that we do here, in Mauritius. The Japanese economy is stagnating and this is also a major cause of concern. We see these pretty sad pictures on TV where today, millions of Americans do not benefit from free health care like we do in Mauritius. If one is ailing in the United States, you just sit and wait that something good happens to you.

Also, India and China, these two major economies, are also facing a slow down. So, this is a very particular situation in the world and what's happening here in Mauritius? Free education has been maintained and, I must say this again, we take these things for granted; free education, free transportation, and free health care. We have not had any banks that went bankrupt. We still provide free books to our primary school kids. All school kids are provided with their books and booklets. We still have subsidy on cooking gas, flour and rice. I don't have the exact figures, but I expect these are to the tune of hundreds of millions of rupees, nearly Rs1.2 billion every year. We still offer financial facilities to people for casting of slabs for their homes. A measure which was introduced by hon. Dr. Bunwaree as Minister of Finance in the Government under the leadership of Dr. Ramgoolam. We still offer, in this country, in this era of uncertainty, Rs500,000 to people who cannot have their treatment done in Mauritius. Yet, although we have all these difficulties, this Government once again under the leadership of Dr. Ramgoolam is financing the whole Rs4.6 billion of the PRB which will be paid in full. It is being reassessed, and I don't suspect that it will go down. It must, I hope, be improved. It can only go up. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this Budget, once again, when we are facing all these difficulties in the world today, we are offering more than 40% of the Budget to social welfare and education, that is, social security, health and education.

Let me have a quick go at the fundamentals. What matters for real economists is that - not for those who actually just do a lot of demagoguery like my good friend, hon. Li Kwong Wing, who has become an expert in having all these facetious remarks and so on and so forth - in this difficult situation, our public debt to GDP ratio stands at 54.2%, when you could see in Europe,

some countries have gone beyond 100%. Our inflation rate stands around 4.1%, and our GDP growth, despite being far from all our main markets and not having any resources here, apart from ourselves, our system and our leadership, is 3.4%. Over and above this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Moody's has found it fit to upgrade our sovereign debt from Baa2 to Baa1, when even the US and some of the major economies have been downgraded. All the economic fundamentals are right, and will help us to maintain economic growth and protect the people. These are facts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This speaks of the kind of leadership that we have on this side of the House. A Prime Minister who delivers, who makes a promise, and makes sure that his people, his men and women around him deliver.

There are a few measures that have been taken which have made me personally very proud of being part of this Government. This reminds me of the year 2003, when we were walking in this little village called Panchavati, and Dr. Ramgoolam, other Members of his House and I were doing our little campaign, and where, I must say, Sir Anerood Jugnauth had been Prime Minister, I don't know for how many years. We found those kids who couldn't go to school every day. I think they could go to school on alternate days. I don't know if it was on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, but it was on alternate days. Why? Because somebody else had to go to school the other day. And why? Not because he was lazy, but because he could not afford to pay Rs6 as bus fare from Panchavati to Beewa Madhoo, and Rs 6 from Beewa Madhoo back to Panchavati, that is, Rs12. We couldn't buy a box of sardines with Rs12 in 2003. I think the House needs to be reminded who was Prime Minister at that time. Sir Anerood Jugnauth! For how many years? 16 years. Now, he is going to save the country.

I need to ask a question, and I want to put it to that gentleman who sits there, namely hon. Pravind Jugnauth. I am tempted to ask him what has been his role in the 'Altimax' affair. What has been his role in this affair? I think it is important for people to know, and I want to say this again. We need to know what was the role of hon. Pravind Jugnauth when he was Minister of Finance. And, in those days, in 2003, they couldn't do anything for kids in Panchavati. I don't want to mention other things that they have not done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to come to my sector, that is, tertiary education, and I want to make reference here to this Government which wishes to give an equal chance to the people. Everything that has happened in this country has been due to the sugar protocol. We all know the role of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Sir Satcam Boolell, and those visionaries

who had the vision to look forward and take the risk that was for the greater good of the country. Now, after the sugar protocol, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam had the vision to offer free education. Today, we have the Prime Minister saying that he would like to see each and every child in this country, should he or she reach the stage that he or she could join university, should be allowed to do so. So, what did he do? First, he created a Ministry. He had the vision to create a Ministry responsible for tertiary education because the Ministry of Education has its own difficulties in primary and secondary sectors. He said 'let's make sure that people can focus on certain issues.' He had in mind a new direction for higher education by creating this Ministry. He had this exceptional foresight, just like he had the foresight to create the Ministry responsible for ICT, which is the third contributor to our GDP.

What actually happens when somebody has a vision? The Opposition said – 'no, just close this Ministry down.' One of the first things that we did, when I was offered this chance is to see what it is that we can do to improve access. We created *l'Université des Mascareignes*. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir; I need to read what the MMM said. For the record, I must say that *l'Université de Mascareignes* currently has two sites under its responsibility, that is, *l'Institut Supérieur de Technologie* and the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management. One is found in Pamplémousses, and the second one is found in Camp Levieux, Constituency No. 19. I must read this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I quote hon. Steven Obeegadoo, Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands.

« Cela dit, nous ne sommes pas d'accord avec l'idée qu'il soit nécessaire d'avoir une quatrième université publique à Maurice. »

We are talking about *l'Université de Mascareignes qui se trouve à Camp Levieux*. I thought that maybe he did not really mean it. I would like to quote again hon. Steven Obeegadoo -

« Cette université, si elle est créée, sera la quatrième université publique après l'Université de Maurice, l'Université de Technologie, l'Open University. »

They have not created anyone of these, by the way. It is all Labour creation.

« Nous ne sommes pas d'accord qu'il y ait besoin d'une quatrième université publique à Camp Levieux. »

I read forward again, and I quote –

« Première raison pourquoi nous ne sommes pas d'accord... »

As if his passion was about not having a university in Camp Levieux.

« Première raison pourquoi nous ne sommes pas d'accord, c'est que nous, nous ne voyons pas la nécessité d'une quatrième université publique. »

Once again in Camp Levieux. I am quoting from hon. Obeegadoo's speech in Hansard.

« La première des choses à garder en tête, M. le président, et c'est là que je m'adresse à travers vous, au ministère des finances, c'est de tenir en considération le rapport coût et efficacité... »

Kot li ti été coût et efficacité pour Illovo deal ? Whatever billions they have made there.

« ...l'efficience de la dépense dans les dépenses publiques »

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before coming here, you know election time demanding, I was in a meeting in Sodnac and, after that, I went to Chebel. I was pleasantly surprised to be invited in Chebel. They said – “we want to see this Minister of Tertiary Education who is talking about the Prime Minister's vision of one graduate per family. *Ki eté sa*, what you want to do etc?” And here, we have in this House, hon. Members of the MMM - and it is not only three times that he mentioned that – they are dead against the creation of a university in Camp Levieux. I want people to look them straight in their eyes and ask them “*mais pourquoi un petit garçon de Trèfles, par exemple, ou peut être même de Stanley, ou peut être Ste Anne, ou peut être même de La Source - where I have to meet some people in these elections - ou peut être même de Bassin, Camp Levieux, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin n'y aurait-il pas ce droit? Aren't they people of this country? Don't they deserve to have the Université des Mascareignes where they live? Is this the kind of leaders that they would like to get? I am sure people are not stupid anymore. Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam brought in the light of education in people's home. I am sure they will know how to respond to such ways of thinking and using people.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not only Government that is currently creating university campuses. I am pleased to say that, in this Budget, I have been provided with funding to create university campuses in various locations.

I have to clarify this. I have a colleague who is asking me, there is a difference between a university and a university campus. In fact, we have four public universities and we are creating these university campuses, which would enable students of both the public and private sector to have better infrastructure. I must here thank, once again, the hon. Prime Minister, who, through his negotiating skills managed to get 2,000 acres of land from the private sector and my Ministry has been offered 50 acres of land in Pamplemousses and 50 acres of land in Montagne Blanche.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many people smiled when we say that we want to build a university campus in Pamplemousses and one in Montagne Blanche. Today, the private sector has in a way gone a bit faster than ourselves and Medine has started a very prestigious school, that is, ESSEC in Cascavelle or Pierrefonds in that part of the island. So, it is just a question of time that we would have university campuses around the island just the same way the Labour Party created all the secondary schools. At some moment in time in Mauritius, one could only go to Royal College of Curepipe or Royal College of Port Louis and girls had Queen Elizabeth College. Today, we have secondary schools all over the island. The same is going to happen to tertiary institutions. There is no way you can stop that. We all know the destiny of this country rests on its manpower. I am glad that the hon. Minister of Finance has mentioned that we are going to have these new university campuses. I have a number of other institutions that I could mention at a later stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that we, on this side of the House, are very optimistic. The country is optimistic; only the Opposition is pessimistic. Or, maybe, they are just playing a game. They are the victims of their campaign of pessimism. Uncertainty and fear have been the trademarks of the Opposition which has become the permanent Opposition of this country. They have this habit. While reading the history of Goebbels the other day, I have seen how they operate. They keep on saying, as we say in *Kreol*: '*faire attention mo garçon enan bonomm derrière la porte*'. They keep on saying that, they throw mud on their adversaries and so on, but people are not stupid anymore and these things don't work.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, last year, I informed the House that a strategy for the sector would be prepared, that is, the Tertiary Education Sector would be prepared. I am pleased to inform the House that the National Strategy up to year 2020 is ready and will be circulated shortly. The strategy is based on the Government vision to transform the country into a knowledge based economy and rest on four main goals, namely –

- 1) Widening access and ensuring equity - this is fundamental.

I must reiterate, the other day we were in Réduit where the Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation...

(Interruptions)

That's a very good sign. It can only come from the Labour Party. Thank you, Sir. They had the vision to start a tertiary education institution and there a thought came to me, how did we get the

best universities in England? First, they had Oxford University which started in year 1096 or there about. The date is not very clear. Then, some scholars decided that they were not happy with Oxford, they went to Cambridge. It is the same way; we have to allow these institutions to start.

Then you get the quality assurance procedures and even today University of Cambridge is not happy with its status. It is trying to compete with Harvard and MIT. So, we have to give chance to these institutions. The first goal, as I said is –

- 1) Widening access and ensuring equity.
- 2) Improving quality and relevance - quality is the most important element.

There is not going to be any compromise on quality. We all know today all the kids are connected through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and so on and so forth. You can't hide anything in this age of communication with the journalists and all the different media systems that we have. You cannot mess with the issue of quality and in any case the sectors speak for themselves. For those who have a concern on the quality of graduates that we produce, I would like to remind Members of the Opposition that this country happens to be the largest provider of Foreign Direct Investment to India. Not to any other small economy, but to India, and how do they do that. They employ graduates who have been produced by our local universities. They use our lawyers, accountants, our managers and so on and so forth. We still remain competitive in the field of textiles, because we have produced quality graduates here who understand the business of textiles, garment manufacture, fashion, design, loop length, stitch length, whatever technicalities that exist. Whatever sector we have touched upon, for example, tourism, why is it that we are able to offer some of the best hotels in the world. Not because people like us or are only generous to us. It is because we have the skilled manpower who know how to manage the business. I would say that with the resources that we have, we have been able to provide quality graduates and we have to keep on improving.

Thirdly, there is the internationalisation of Mauritian Tertiary Education sector. Now, this has become a very important strategy of my Ministry. We cannot call ourselves an education hub, if in your classroom you have only Mauritian students. One does not only learn from the lecture, one learns from across, from sitting next to somebody from another country. Like many of fellow Members sitting here who have studied overseas. It is important to understand people and networks.

Fourthly, it is enhancing research and innovation. Research cannot be an option, it must be a must and we are working toward this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with increasing competition in the tertiary education sector, higher aspirations of students, more diversified demands and higher skills requirements from business and industry, tertiary education institutions will need to be innovative and responsive to local and international developments. They have to be proactive so as to improve the way of doing business in an increasingly globalised and more competitive market for tertiary education. They have to develop performance indicators driven by the decision-making and communication needs of each organisation. The priorities would be to -

- i. improve internal decision-making processes;
- ii. enhance internal and external communication of performance, and
- iii. improve the quality of university resources, operations, and outcomes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have some weaknesses and I am not scared to mention them. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, presently there are cases of students waiting for more than one year for registration for a research postgraduate degree. There are private operators waiting for three to five years to get the approval of the University to act as their awarding body. This is simply unacceptable; I have in mind here some institutions that the Board of Investment and myself, having invited from India and Africa, following our road shows in these countries. And when they come here, the local people take all their time and this is not acceptable - unless, they could do it themselves.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, this year, the University of Mauritius was ranked 25th in Africa by the World University Web ranking. We have to improve this ranking. Just the same way we are the best in many other sectors, we have to strive for a better ranking. The University of Mauritius regulations and statutes were last updated in 1992, 20 years ago. The decision making process is tedious and extremely bureaucratic and can serve, I must say, as an easy excuse for not taking decisions. This is so, in some cases not in all cases, because I must admit they have done a lot of good work as well.

It is good to remind ourselves what are the parameters that are used to rank world universities. In Times Higher Education, they use -

- 1) Academic peer review which counts for 40% of the score, i.e. an opinion survey asking active academicians across the world about the top universities in fields they know about.

- 2) Faculty/ student ratio accounts for 20% of a university's possible score in the rankings.
- 3) Citations per faculty accounting for 20%, that is, citations of published research.
- 4) There is also an element of recruiter review that accounts for 10%, that is, a survey of recruiters who hire graduates and last, but not least,
- 5) International orientation, that is, 10% measures; that is, 5% counts for the percentage of international students and another 5% for the percentage of international staff.

The point I am trying to make, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that our public institutions will have to start getting used to the idea that they are going to be under scrutiny because it is public funds after all. This requires, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a complete review of the governance and procedures as well as the financial management of the institution as well as the tertiary sector. We are eagerly awaiting the recommendations of the Visitor to the University of Mauritius on these aspects.

My Ministry is also working on the tertiary education legislation, which will lay down the framework for tertiary education.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have set ourselves the objective of widening access, as I said earlier on, that is, we would like to have this objective of having one graduate per family. Despite the scepticism over this objective, the number of students enrolled for higher education, that is higher studies, has been increasing steadily. For the period 2000 to 2009, tertiary enrolment has grown by an average of 10.6% per annum. The Gross Tertiary Enrolment rate has increased from 16,735 in year 2000 to 45,969 in 2011. It went up by 3.7% from 44,334 in 2010 to 45,969 in 2011. I have to mention this other figure. 25% of Mauritian students are studying in overseas universities, and one might get a shock to understand how much it cost the country. It cost our country an estimated Rs4.0 billion annually. I do not have anything against students going overseas, but I see an opportunity here for institutions in Mauritius.

The annual intake is expected to evolve from 16,850 in 2011 to a projected 21,000 in 2015 and 26,000 in 2020.

Today, the demand for seats in our tertiary education institutions largely exceeds intake capacity of our public institutions. The University of Technology, Mauritius requires additional accommodation capacity for about 10,000 students. The University of Mauritius has been facing an acute shortage of space, for labs, research facilities, lecture theatres, and offices. The Fashion

and Design Institute requires about 2000 sq. metres to offer new courses and operate modern technical facilities.

With this in mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier on, we are going to create three new university campuses, that is, in Pamplemousses, Montagne Blanche and in Ebène. A sum of Rs810 m. has been earmarked for the construction of these institutions. The Master Plan for the new campuses is ready. We have been working on it for nearly a year now. It will be shortly placed on the website of my Ministry for public view and tenders will be launched shortly. I still have a couple of hurdles to go through, you know the usual committees that we have to go through. But I think it is just a question of time before we sort out all these procedures.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ex-MBC building has now been vested into my Ministry and it will be used for the Open University, the University of Technology and other institutions.

The former Tradesmen Training Centre of the Development Works Corporation at Bel Air, consisting of a building of a total floor area, which was in a very sad state, has been refurbished and its size is 1,500m². It has been renovated and the University of Mauritius is going to use it as a Marine Science Centre. The University of Technology is setting up an International Centre for Tourism & Hospitality Management. The work has already started. The aim of these decentralised campuses is to make higher education accessible in different regions of the island.

Private promoters will also have the opportunity to bid for the land available in these different sites. A Special Purpose Vehicle is being set up in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development with the responsibility to manage the campuses and devise procedures and criteria for the allocation of land within a transparent system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another important achievement of my Ministry and this Government is the setting up of the Open University of Mauritius, which started operating in July 2012. This new institution will not only increase access to higher education and skills development, but it will also attract a large number of foreign students. In fact, during my recent visit to Kenya, the Minister of Education, who would incidentally be here in a couple of week's time to sign a MoU, mentioned the need for in-service training of 65,000 teachers. We would have an opportunity to contribute. Discussions have been initiated by the Open University and the Kenyan officials on this issue.

The Open University will offer 75 courses ranging from Certificate to Doctorate level and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth of Learning to deliver the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA, that is, Master in Public Administration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our aim is to attract, as I said earlier on, more foreign students. Only a couple of years ago, we had a negligible number of foreign students. This has been growing steadily and we have set ourselves clear targets until the year 2020.

In order to facilitate student entry, a student visa has been introduced. This also allows students to work part to finance their studies and I am glad that in the Budget, the student visa will be extended to technical and vocational institutions also. Foreign students are now eligible to work part-time for a maximum of 20 hours per week.

At the level of my Ministry, we have set up a unit called the Study Mauritius Office. This will be the focal point for students wishing to have information and guidance both locally and overseas. A new website has been created and information is being disseminated through international linkages and social networking sites.

Government, through the BOI, is supporting the participation of private higher education institutions in international education fairs. The grant used to be an amount of Rs100,000 and this has been increased to Rs200,000. I must add here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this is something new. It is just the same way that we have been going out to market our textile products, tourism and so on; now we are positioning ourselves in the tertiary sector. This is a country that has a new service, a new product, that is, quality education in the tertiary field.

Nineteen private higher education providers and three public ones were in Kenya and the next fair would be in India. A MoU, as I said earlier on, will be signed with my colleague, the Minister of Higher Education of Kenya on exchange of students and academics and mutual recognition of qualifications.

The BOI will be organising another fair in Mumbai between 01 and 02 December targeting students from India. Participation in, at least, two education fairs will be supported by the BOI every year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during my recent visit to Kenya, I had - I must say, very fruitful discussions because they hold Mauritius in very high esteem - discussions with my counterpart who suggested that Mauritius will gain a comparative advantage by offering scholarships to students, given the intense competition to recruit students. I am pleased that the Vice-Prime

Minister, Minister of Finance has made provisions for the award of 50 scholarships to deserving students from Africa. This is an important innovation which would allow us to support capacity building in Africa.

In addition, through my Ministry, the Open University has offered 54 scholarships to all Commonwealth States.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there have been many comments passed outside and inside the House as well as in many countries about the impact of expansion of higher education on quality. We are well aware of this. One of the most important challenges is to maintain quality, which implies that there should be policies at the national level that regulate and monitor provision of higher education such as registering and licensing of foreign providers as well as quality assurance or accreditation of new programmes and providers.

Some of the actions taken to improve quality and standards are –

- (i) a complete review of the regulatory framework. A team of experts have submitted their report last month with recommendations which includes a review of the organisational structure of the Tertiary Education Commission, to begin with, and creation of separate functions of registrar to grant registration to tertiary education institutions;
- (ii) in my own personal view this is one of the main components - setting up an IIT-Like institution in Mauritius with the collaboration of the IIT Delhi. The first stage over five years would consist in building a core facility and research strength and this is fundamental in all our actions. We must have these professors who understand the level of expertise and the level of quality it requires and I hope that in time they would be the future leaders of the local institutions;
- (iii) linkages with industry to improve employability and research;
- (iv) linkages with reputed institutions such as Imperial College with whom we are offering a Masters in Public Health which has been successful and now it is being expanded to the region, University of Geneva, with whom - I will mention at a later stage - we would be working on courses to offer medical education and Université de Limoges which will be assisting us with the creation of Université des Mascareignes up to their standard, and
- (v) Upgrading of academic staff to increase the number of PhD's.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, higher education is known to be a driving force for change and innovation, for building knowledge and professional capacity. There should be a strong linkage between the higher education institutions and the world of work. Programmes offered should be relevant. We are conscious that some graduates face a certain extent of difficulty in obtaining jobs while there is a shortage of graduates in other sectors.

In order to address this issue, I recently had consultations with representatives of various sectors, including the ICT and Tourism sectors on how to build a constructive dialogue between industry and academia and ensure that the higher education institutions respond to the needs of the economy. These meetings have been very fruitful and we are in the process of setting up a mechanism to set up Advisory Committees.

Mr Speaker Sir, the Budget has explicitly announced the setting up of a mandatory consultative mechanism within each of the public tertiary education institutions. I think this is critical. We cannot have courses that are not updated after so many years. I was quite surprised to learn myself that in the ICT sector a course can become obsolete after a period of 18 months. So, we have to keep on changing and this can only happen through provisions in the law.

I wish also to thank the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having agreed to the proposal of having an annual *Assises de l'Education*. We have to open up everything and we have to sit and discuss, see what is it that we are doing that is right and what is it that we need to improve with all stakeholders.

I did mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we shall be shortly starting a Medical School with the University of Geneva, but I think the House will be proud to note also that the SSR Medical College has recently obtained recognition by none other than the Medical Board of California. Since its setting up in 1999, it has made constant progress and we ought to be proud of this institution which collaborates with the University of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have mentioned in the past that the Fashion and Design Institute that was set up in 2008 with the aim of training and developing skills for the textile manufacturing industry will be granted awarding powers. A draft Bill will be presented in this House.

Research being fundamental to higher education, we will have to see how it is that we could promote academic excellence through more enrolment at PhD level, promotion of publication in international journals and providing all the facilities required.

I seem to be getting out of time, Mr Speaker Sir. Therefore I will just end here by summarising. We are in a very difficult situation in the world and yet despite whatever is happening around us, our Minister of Finance, under the very able leadership of the Prime Minister, has been able to present a Budget that is fair, that ensures that although we have a difficult situation, he has been able to maintain all the facilities, whereas in European countries, people are negotiating how much salary cut they can take. Here, we are paying Rs4.6 billion for the PRB Report. We have provided Rs330 m. for the youth who need to be prepared for the job market, whether they are graduates or not.

As I said, in the field of higher education, we ought to be proud that when Europe seems to be in dire straits, the United States have their own problems, the whole world seems to be in a very peculiar situation. Here, we keep on progressing, offering chance to our people, be it in higher education, be it in health, social security, business or you name it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The world situation is very difficult, but we have a vision for the people of Mauritius through the eyes of our Prime Minister. He will pursue that vision because we believe in the future. Let me end with these words of wisdom from Winston Churchill. I quote –

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”.

With these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank everybody here for their attention and I thank you.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 20 November 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

*At 11.11 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 20 November 2012
at 11.30 a.m.*