



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2013

CONTENTS

PAPER LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

MOTION

BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

Members

THE CABINET**(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)**

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, Attorney General
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology
Hon. Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum	Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	Minister of Fisheries
Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment

Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Tourism and Leisure
Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Sayyad Abd-Al-Cader Sayed-Hossen	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Surendra Dayal	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Jangbahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola Roopchand Seetaram	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

<i>Mr Speaker</i>	Peeroo, Hon. Abdool Razack M.A., SC, GOSK
<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Peetumber, Hon. Maneswar
<i>Deputy Chairperson of Committees</i>	Deerpalsing, Hon. Ms Kumaree Rajeshree
<i>Clerk of the National Assembly</i>	Dowlutta, Mr R. Ranjit
<i>Deputy Clerk</i>	Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena
<i>Clerk Assistant</i>	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
<i>Clerk Assistant</i>	Gopall, Mr Navin (Temporary Transfer to RRA)
<i>Hansard Editor</i>	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
<i>Senior Library Officer</i>	Pallen, Mr Noël
<i>Serjeant-at-Arms</i>	Munroop, Mr Kishore

MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 25 of 2013

Sitting of 14 November 2013

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 3.30 p.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 2012 of the Sugar Insurance Fund Board.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

SEMI-PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE – SETTING UP

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether in regard to Government's decision to make arrangements for the traditional football clubs to be revived and to establish a "Semi-Professional Football League", he will state -

- (a) if the Mauritius Football Association and the *Fédération Internationale de Football* Association have been consulted in connection therewith;
- (b) how the national representativeness of those clubs are to be measured and ensured, and
- (c) how the some ten clubs that would form the League would be established.

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, c'est un fait. Le football déchaîne les passions, suscite des sensations inimaginables, et même dans certains pays il est considéré comme une religion, où plusieurs millions de fidèles ne ratent jamais une occasion pour aller encourager leurs équipes et pour faire honneur à leur couleur respective.

L'île Maurice n'est pas étrangère à ce phénomène, puisque le sport roi compte des milliers et des milliers de partisans farouches, y compris parmi les membres de notre noble Assemblée.

Le football est une fierté dans la plupart des pays au monde. Au-delà de sa simplicité à jouer, ce sport véhicule des valeurs essentielles comme l'esprit d'équipe, l'intégration sociale, la combativité, le respect, la fraternité, la discipline, le travail collectif, la cohésion, l'abnégation, et le don de soi entre autres.

D'ailleurs, rien qu'à voir le buzz créé, l'engouement provoqué, et les débats organisés, on peut dire que les Mauriciens, dans leur grande majorité, ont déjà adhéré à ce projet national. Non pas pour des raisons extra sportives, mais bel et bien dans l'unique objectif de revoir le football mauricien briller de mille feux. Ce sont aussi des preuves que la flamme est toujours présente dans le cœur des Mauriciens, et que c'est à nous, responsables, de faire de sorte de la raviver.

Ainsi, de par la PNQ posée par l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition, nous pouvons dire que le sort de notre football ne laisse personne insensible. Cela faisait longtemps que notre football n'avait pas été autant sous les feux des projecteurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has said: 'sometimes we have to take bold decisions when we are convinced we are right. This bold decision is about setting up the necessary mechanism to revive football.'

Mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been made for reviving traditional clubs, but the project does not stop here. We have targeted ten clubs, which can include traditional clubs. But I must hasten to add, traditional here does not mean communal. We are going to ensure, through conditions to be imposed on these clubs, that they promote multi-culturality and social cohesion.

For 2014, an amount of Rs10 m. has been earmarked for ten clubs. Should there be more demands, we shall cater for such needs in 2015 Budget.

There are clear indications that we will attain the target of ten clubs in 2014. The new Sports Act will spell out the qualifying conditions for becoming a semi-professional club. As soon as the Bill is passed, we will have to discuss with the Mauritius Football Association for implementation modalities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the regionalisation strategies implemented by the Ministry in the late 1990s did not lead to expected results.

No concerted effort by authorities has been made to promote the project. This has resulted to the public deserting stadiums during the local football league.

Clubs lack facilities for training, and in most cases there is no club house and a home ground, no lighting facilities for training at night.

In February 2000, Mauritius was ranked 116 at the FIFA World Ranking classification. It was the first time that Mauritius reached such a stage in World Football. During the same year, Mauritius participated at the African Cup of Nations, and achieved a notable performance by finishing 3rd of its group with six points.

Financial assistance was granted to clubs by the Government as an incentive. The revised Sports Act provided for teams to bear the name of region or locality in their appellation.

Regional 1st Division teams were provided with a financial assistance of Rs500,000, and 2nd Division team with a sum of Rs200,000.

A few years later, in 2011, Regional Committees were also allocated a financial assistance of Rs80,000. In 2013, apart from the Rs5,860,000 of the normal yearly budget, a budget of Rs16,800,000 has been allocated by the Government to assist Premier League teams, 1st Division and 2st Division teams and Regional Committees.

Malgré tous ces investissements, M. le président, notre football a continué à dégringoler pour atteindre la place peu enviable de 198^e sur 209 pays d'après l'indice de la FIFA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I confirm that the Mauritius Football Association has been consulted. The Association was agreeable to the proposal. Two meetings were held under my chairmanship on 10 and 13 July 2013 with the MFA team. The MFA confirmed that the introduction of professional football in Mauritius was already part of the scheme of the FIFA.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to refer to the “Win in Africa with Africa Club Management Course” organised by the FIFA in August 2009.

The FIFA course came up with a declaration known as the FIFA Wolmar Declaration, and I would like to quote one of its deliberations as follows –

“Clubs of the MFA 1st Division League and representatives of the MFA Managing Committee undertook to allow the first steps towards Professional Football at the level of Premier League Football in Mauritius by 2012”.

This was followed by appropriate amendments of the MFA statutes, duly endorsed by the FIFA.

During consultations which my Ministry had with the MFA in July 2013, the project of Semi-Professional Clubs was presented as well as the provisions of the Sports Act to be amended.

During the first meeting on 10 July 2013, my Ministry made a complete exposé of the project on Semi-Professional Football League, and at the second meeting held on 13 July 2013, the updated project was again presented, discussed and agreed upon in principle.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is surely aware, FIFA does not deal with Government, but with its member, that is, the Mauritius Football Association. We have confirmed with MFA that the project is in line with FIFA proposal for setting up of a professional league in Mauritius. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a semi-professional league, that is, the project we are now proposing, is but the first step towards the professional league.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, as I have already mentioned, the setting up of a Semi-Professional Football League, announced in the Budget 2014, is only the first step towards the creation of a full-fledged professional league.

Given the Mauritian context, every care is being taken to ensure that the football clubs that will form part of the league will have no communal connotation whatsoever, be it in its name, constitution of its Board of Directors.

The new Sports Bill that will be tabled in the National Assembly has been discussed with all stakeholders. Provision will be made to ensure that teams reflect the diversity of our society, and are not tainted by communalism as it was in the past. The law will also provide the broad legal framework for operation of clubs and the league. The nitty-gritty will be finalised in close consultation and collaboration with the MFA, so as to be in line with FIFA statutes.

My Ministry is already having working sessions with all stakeholders, so that once the Bill is passed, we shall be in a position to immediately launch the first phase for the creation of the Professional League. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the MFA will be playing a prominent role in the process. To start with, it will have to launch an invitation to those wishing to form part of the Professional League to express their interest by fulfilling “*un cahier des charges*”.

A number of safety provisions are being included in the Bill to ensure, *inter alia*, multi-culturality and promotion of social cohesion -

- Clubs will have to adopt as one of their objectives – the promotion of multi-culturality and promotion of social cohesion;
- Sponsors will have long-term relationship with the clubs and they will have a representative on the Board of Directors so that they can ensure that their funds are being judiciously utilised, and

- Clubs will have to satisfy prescribed conditions which will be monitored by the Ministry in collaboration with the MFA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to point out that sensitisation about the League has already started. Once the Sports Bill is passed, I am proposing to have a round table with all stakeholders to fine-tune the modalities of operation of the League. All worthwhile proposals will be taken on board.

Initially, interested clubs wishing to join the League will have to satisfy a set of criteria which will be conditional to, *inter alia* –

- showing evidence of their seriousness and viability, clubs to confirm having at their disposal a football ground for training purposes, and
- confirming having their technical staff.

Once some four or five clubs have been formed, they will join to set up the League which will eventually be registered and affiliated to the MFA.

M. le président, en l'espace de 13 ans, notre sélection a dégringolé au classement de la FIFA pour atteindre la peu envieuse place de 198^e sur 209 pays et, les gradins, jadis pleins à craquer, ont été désertés.

Devant l'ampleur des dégâts, trois possibilités s'offraient à nous -

Primo: ne rien faire et laisser perdurer la situation.

Secundo: hurler avec les loups et se lamenter.

Tertio: agir dans la concertation avec la *MFA* pour mettre fin à cette situation lamentable.

En tant que ministre responsable et redevable pour chaque roupie investie, j'ai opté, bien évidemment, pour cette troisième voie.

Eu égard aux problèmes de notre football, nous ne pouvons nous attendre à ce qu'il guérisse miraculeusement d'un coup de baguette magique. Au contraire, nous devons être à son chevet, lui prodiguer les meilleurs soins afin qu'il puisse sortir de ce mauvais pas et définir une stratégie visant à lui rendre son éclat.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that the MFA has been consulted. You will allow me to be rather surprised, because I read statements in the press, for example, in “Week-End” of last Sunday, by the President of the MFA, Mr Samir Sobah; we are referring to this project of reviving the old clubs, and the comment made by the President of the MFA in last Sunday’s “Week-End” was, I quote -

« *La fédération n’a jamais été approchée pour des discussions sur ce projet.* »

Again, I mean we are talking about this project of trying to revive the old clubs. Is the Minister maintaining that the MFA has been consulted on this project and, if yes, is he prepared to table the documents for the same?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is stating something from “Week-End” newspaper. I think he is not aware that the so-called Mr Samir Sobah is not yet being recognised as the President of the Federation by FIFA. Il y a eu tellement de vice de procédure que cette fédération n’a pas seulement un président, deux présidents, mais au moins trois présidents.

(Interruptions)

Il y a un président local, un président international et un président remplaçant de temps en temps. Donc, c’est pour cette raison-là qu’au niveau du ministère, we dealt with the Federation that existed before this election, I mean, the Vice-President, Mr Thomas, was present together with all the officers of the Mauritius Football Association. Dans tous ces mélis-mélos, la *FIFA* n’a pas encore reconnu l’authenticité du nouveau comité de la fédération mauricienne.

Mr Bérenger: I didn't hear the Minister replying to my point. Is he prepared to table the documents from the MFA, whichever part of the MFA that supposedly approved that project?

Mr Ritoo: I am ready to table it, because we had two meetings on 10 and 13 July.

Mr Speaker: Yes, next question!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister - I listened to him - was careful to say, rightly, that it is the Federations and so on that decide and not Government, both in the case of the Olympic movement and of FIFA. And yet, at the same time, I think I heard the Minister using the words -

“We are going to impose conditions; we are going to impose safeguards.”

Can I know which is which? Whether Government is going to impose on the MFA - or the MFAs if that is the case - referring to the words used by the Minister?

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, l'Etat investi; we invest. We cannot just say that after investing millions and millions of rupees, I don't have any say. I decide about the policy. Le ministre des finances, le gouvernement, nous avons décidé qu'il fallait faire quelque chose pour que le football puisse revivre. Donc, c'est pour cette raison-là qu'on a dit qu'on va mettre R 10 millions, peut-être après cela va augmenter. Il ne faut pas oublier, M. le président, que je viens de dire dans ma réponse, que depuis 2009 il y a eu une réunion - *a FIFA declaration, a Wolmar declaration* - et même la fédération mauricienne du football en consultation avec la *FIFA*, a fait une réunion pour venir de l'avant avec la *professionnalisation of football* et nous avons cette déclaration Wolmar signée par tous les clubs de première division, deuxième division et tous les membres de la *MFA*.

Quatre ans après rien n'a été fait. Je ne peux pas m'asseoir et attendre indéfiniment. Donc, c'est pour cette raison-là qu'il fallait agir et je suis tellement convaincu qu'on va définitivement faire revivre le football mauricien.

Mr Bérenger: In the past we know there have been different reports, *le Comité des Sages*, years back, then *Juge Robert Ahnee* in his Commission of Enquiry report made recommendations in the direction of genuine *régionalisation* of sports in Mauritius. Can I know whether any report has been produced on this project of reviving the old clubs and, if yes, whether the Minister will table a copy thereof?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have seen *le rapport du Comité des Sages* that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about but, at that time, that report was good. It does not mean that when that report was good at that time, it should necessarily be good now, it should be applicable now. *Le football change, l'entraînement change, les joueurs changent, à part le Leader de l'Opposition.*

(Interruptions)

On ne peut pas rester comme ça !

Mr Speaker: Order, please !

(Interruptions)

I said, order! Yes, proceed!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are told that Government will impose conditions, safeguards to ensure the national representativeness of the clubs that will be concerned. My question is the following: at a time where, supposedly, there is unanimity, including the Prime Minister, on the fact that, I suppose, you are all in favour that candidates in general elections should no longer have to declare their community. Now, can I ask how is Government supposedly going to impose conditions so that those clubs have the required national representativeness?

Will the football players be expected to declare their community? And who will decide that such and such a club is not nationally representative supposedly, and eventually, advocate, propose or impose remedies as we are being told?

Can I know the nitty-gritty mechanism - I repeat, at a time when we are all trying to leave communalism behind in politics, what is the nitty-gritty mechanism that is supposed to achieve that end and whether we are not going to enter into an *engrenage* that will lead us very far?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, who is talking about communalism? Communalism in football! It is only from there that I am hearing...

(Interruptions)

No one on this side is talking about communalism in football. There will definitely be guidelines. I have played football. I have been playing with all sorts of communities. I was a player of the Hindu Cadets team, communal team and I have been playing together with Arnaud de Robillard, David Bathfield and all these people. There was no communalism. You want to talk politics; you put your own guidelines, but, in sports, please, for the sake of sports don't come with any communalism aspect in sports. We know where we are going. I am very much determined that we are going to revive the football so I want the collaboration of each and everyone. Actually, the whole public, the majority of Mauritians are for the revival of the football because they know the passion created by football in Mauritius. It is only *quelques personnes...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some silence, the Minister is answering. Yes, next question!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is very telling that the Minister should get excited when I put a question that, I am sure, should be of interest to the Prime Minister, and to everybody who claims to want to make communalism go back in this country. How in practice, who in practice is going to evaluate that this or that club is not nationally representative? How is this going to be measured? How are we going to identify supposedly the community otherwise? What are we talking about? We are talking of a mechanism to ensure the national representativeness of clubs. This can only mean that the players will be identified communally and that someone supposedly following some procedure will decide that this and that club is not communally representative and this and that remedy should be adopted. My question is: who is going supposedly to do that? What is going to be this mechanism that is going supposedly to bring us decades back?

Mr Ritoo: *M. le président, tous les mauriciens dans leur diversité culturelle sont appelés à jouer au football. Ce n'est pas réservé pour une communauté. Tous les mauriciens! Il y aura des critères qui vont être établis.* There are criteria and guidelines that will be established together with the concerned authorities and it will not be for one community only, so all Mauritians can form part of the football community.

Mr Bérenger: The country, football lovers, everybody will take note that we are not getting any answer. If the Minister understands my question: we are told that somebody, some organisation following a given mechanism will identify which club is not nationally representative, it can only mean that, supposedly, all communities are not sufficiently present. My question is: what mechanism is supposed to do that? Are we going to ask the MFA to do that? We know what has been the reaction of the Electoral Commission when they have been approaching certain circumstances. Are we going to ask the MFA to go and identify the different clubs, whether they represent all communities? That is the only possible meaning to be put on this idea of Government will ensure the national representativeness of the different clubs. So, the country will take note; I repeat again, let us be told what mechanism, which organism is going to ensure that.

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, il ne faut pas communaliser le sport. Ils ne comprennent rien au sport. Surtout eux, ils ne comprennent rien. M. le président, le MMM n'a jamais eu une culture sportive.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, listen! The question has been put...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I am speaking to you. The question has been put, now if you want an answer you have to allow the Minister to answer.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can ask the MMM how do they choose candidates, *à ce moment là il y a communalism. Quel mécanisme on se sert pour choisir les candidats au niveau du MMM?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bérenger: Is the Minister aware that this idea of going back to the past clubs that we know were communal is being very badly received by the youth of this country?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, FIFA, the World Organising Committee regulating football does not authorise any communalism in football, so how can the MFA - because the professional league will be under the aegis of the Mauritius Football Association and the latter delivers the licences, so how can FIFA authorise MFA to come up with teams with communal connotation? That's why I say we don't have any communal connotation here. All Mauritians are supposed to play. *C'est ouvert à tous les mauriciens...*

(Interruptions)

Because I want guidelines... *bouche to la gueule do!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Now it is clear that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some order now!

Mr Bérenger: Now, it is clear that we will have no responsible, serious answer to this very important question that we are asking. The Minister is aware that we are against this project. We are dead against this project. We think it is very dangerous for Mauritius and I consider it even more dangerous then, when we cannot get an answer from the Minister on the fundamental point which I am raising. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are told that some ten clubs would be established; established, again in English, means something; 'chosen from amongst so many clubs' means something else and I listened to the hon. Minister. Therefore, those clubs that are going to be invited to be part of this League, are they existing clubs? Will they include other clubs? Which clubs are we talking about?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we are coming with the project with money available and the guidelines together with the Mauritius Football Association. Now, if the teams feel that they fit in with this project, they come up, maybe existing teams or new teams but it all depends upon if they fit in, *s'ils respectent le cahier des charges, ils peuvent venir de l'avant avec leurs équipes pour se présenter.*

Mr Bérenger: The words used 'imposed' and so on by the Minister - if a Semi Professional League of that kind is going to be set up, from what I have heard the Minister say, because they are dishing out money, they can do this and that. Who is going to choose the membership of that League? Is it the MFA or is it Government?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, each team will have a sponsor - we will insist - because if I am contributing Rs1 m., I should assure myself that the sponsor is also contributing, so that the sponsor will come with the team and they will have one representative to form a Professional League; and in the Professional League there will be a representative of the Ministry. They are going to set up the League. That is done everywhere in the world. In South Africa, England everywhere - FA is something different and then you have the English Premier League. Those, who know football, know it very well. In South Africa you have the South Africa Football Association and then you have got the PSL – Professional Sports League. So, they come up with these teams. They have their representative at the level of the Federation and the Ministry will have its representative because we are injecting money.

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mr Bérenger: There is still no answer. I will try to get answers, then there are no answers coming, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me try to put it differently; money, Rs10 m.. My question is: who will disburse this money to which clubs, chosen by whom? Is it again Government or is it the MFA that will disburse that money and identify those teams?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I just want to inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition; the Professional Football League will have ten teams. Let's say each team has got its representative, so they will form this Association of the Professional League. They will have their representative at the level of the MFA, because MFA is the authority which regulates football...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ritoo:...they will have their licensee there. Then, only the representative of the Ministry will be present there. I mean, the league will decide about setting up, with the money that we are going to put there, because that's why we have a representative at the level of this meeting and they are going to be distributed, taking into consideration that they respect the *cahier des charges* that is being put.

Mr Quirin: L'honorable ministre nous a fait part de son intention d'introduire, de faire les équipes à caractère communal effectuer leur retour.

(Interruptions)

Ki pou assizé! Le club d'antan...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, let us have some silence! I want to hear the question, please. Yes, proceed!

Mr Quirin: Le club, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, le ministre, dans sa réponse, nous a fait part de son intention de permettre aux clubs, soi-disant traditionnels, de faire leur retour sur la scène footballistique. Il a insisté à ce que ces clubs vont faire revivre le football, rehausser le niveau. Peut-on savoir sur quoi il s'est basé ? Est-ce qu'il y a eu une étude ? Est-ce qu'il y a eu un rapport des techniciens, des experts ? Il a critiqué la régionalisation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want silence now. I want to hear the question.

Mr Quirin: Il a parlé de la régionalisation comme un échec. Sur quoi se base-t-il pour affirmer que le retour des clubs anciens vont permettre au football de revivre et que le niveau va être rehaussé ? En même temps, M. le président, il a fait référence...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is putting too many questions. Yes, Minister, answer!

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody knows all football matches which are being played actually in all the football grounds in the rural or urban areas that bear the names of the traditional teams, the stadium is full.

(Interruptions)

Why? He was present at the Racing tournament together with me. He was seated with me.

(Interruptions)

He was seated with me, applauding and saying: "*Ça ki apel enn mari la foule ça*".

He knows very well...

(Interruptions)

He knows very well that crowd-pullers are the teams that have goodwill, be it Cadets...

(Interruptions)

Arrête fer hypocrite! Cadets, Scouts, Sunrise, Police, be it Fire Brigade, are teams that have a goodwill. So, these teams definitely, Mr Speaker, Sir, are crowd-pullers. So, tomorrow, you cannot say...

(Interruptions)

Do you think if I am a football player...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I am...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order now! Proceed!

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, si je suis un footballeur, je m'entraîne tous les jours – enfin parfois je fais l'école buissonnière...

(Interruptions)

Bouche to la gueule! To pa fer lekol buissonnière! Dan sport to pa konn narien twa, journaliste "Weekend" qui finn montrer twa. Bouche to la gueule do ta!

Mr Speaker: Last question to the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, je ne peux pas me préparer pour aller jouer au foot, ensuite dans le stade, il n'y a personne pour m'applaudir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ritoo : Je ne peux pas m'entraîner.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, je ne peux pas me préparer nuit et jour pour aller dans un stade, avec toute la personnalité que je dois créer tout autour de mon nom, et ensuite je vois qu'il n'y a personne pour applaudir, sauf peut-être 'médaille ferraille'!

(Interruptions)

C'est inacceptable! Ce qu'on veut aujourd'hui c'est de créer l'ambiance, c'est de créer la ferveur pour...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last question to the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, I say order! Let us listen to the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Of Course, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government will have understood that we are against this project. We believe that it is not only retrograde, archaic, but dangerous, very dangerous for the future of this country. Will Government go back to what *le Comité des Sages, Juge Ahnee*, advised upon: genuine *régionalisation* with the Municipal Councils and the District Councils getting sufficient financial resources to stir the crowds, as we all want, and the Municipal Councils and the District Councils having their own stadium? And, therefore, will the Sports Act and the Local Government Act be amended to allow this *régionalisation* which is the only solution if we want both to revive and to preserve national unity?

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition est en train de parler de Comité des Sages. Je vais citer un autre sage. Il – *casquette avek foulard*, très habitué au football - a dit –

“Dans la biographie de Mamade Elahee - qui a été écrit par Jean Claude Antoine - il a concédé que la régionalisation a tué le football à Maurice.”

C'est Sir Anerood Jugnauth!

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan and others, quiet now! There is a motion!

(Interruptions)

Now stop! No more interruption! No cross-talking!

(Interruptions)

It is enough now, please! Yes, proceed, hon. Minister!

(4.18 p.m.)

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2014) BILL

(No. XXIII of 2013)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2014) Bill (No. XXIII of 2013).

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr S. Moutia): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a great privilege and honour for me to be the voice of the people in my constituency who have placed their trust in me, and in this Government, led by the hon. Prime Minister since 2005. I stand with a sense of great pride to comment and share my appreciation on the Budget 2014.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would, first of all, congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval and the hon. Prime Minister for such a brilliant budget document that proposes to take the nation to new heights in 2014.

It is the natural and logical aspiration of the country to continue the journey that started in 1995. Thank God, with the blessings of the people and their renewed trust in the team led by the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, we are back in business since nearly a decade now.

We are back in business and it is a deal with the population. It's a deal for the whole population within the overriding vision of this Government to broaden the circle of opportunities through the democratisation of the economy.

It's the real deal, Mr Speaker, Sir, to empower the nation and we are on the right track. We are succeeding where others have failed. We are positively changing the destiny of the nation.

We are transforming the economic base by adding new pillars and we are creating very positive legacies for generations to come. It's happening only because the hon. Prime Minister has a vision. A vision of an empowered nation!

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have continued to broaden safety nets to further protect the people and we have never stopped consolidating the Welfare State as we are totally convinced, on this side of the House, that all of our achievements are the result of redistributive economics. Mr Speaker, Sir, the 2014 Budget is the confirmation of our sincere commitment. This Government has not shied away from its responsibilities and has all the way been focusing on fairer redistribution. Of course, we have to create wealth before we can redistribute.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we set to task, we have developed resilience and sustained growth and it is just natural that the benefits should spillover to the people. It is not a question of just trickling down! This Government is rather showering the benefits on a wider segment of the population. We have always believed in the potential of this country to spring back amidst all sorts of adversities and the records are there to prove it! The regional and even global indices speak loudly of our nation's achievements against all odds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget reflects the ideology and philosophy of a Labour-led Government. It is socialism in action! The people should not forget that this is a Budget prepared after the effective implementation of recommendations of both the PRB and the EOAC Commissions, with its bearing on the Public Sector Wage Bill. It is a Budget prepared after meeting additional provisions necessary to implement land drainage projects following the flash

floods. It is a Budget that ensures that we remain competitive on the economic front, while further increasing provisions for the most vulnerable segment of the population.

It is a document with very bold provisions in favour of households with income not exceeding Rs50,000 per month. We are in fact a nation where more than 85% of families have a housing property of their own. Yet, we are not developing a sense of complacency.

On the contrary, this Government proposes to increase the housing stock on one side while allowing 17,000 families holding a lease on State land on which they have constructed their houses to become owners after payment of a nominal fee of just Rs2,000.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is coherent and consistent all the way. Some time back, in 2007, is this the same Government led by hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam which allowed 19,000 families living in CHA housing estates to become owners of their housing units just for Rs2,000. This is one of the major forms of social justice that a small country like Mauritius is affording to do at a time when the most powerful nation, the US, was practically paralysed for over two weeks with the Government shut down because of just one social policy: the famous Obamacare!

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the same Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, which introduced the grant for casting of slab in 1997 in its first mandate of 1995-2000 and it has sustained the scheme in its second and third mandates, while increasing the amount of the grant from Rs40,000 to the present rate of Rs65,000. For instance, since the introduction of the Roof Slab Grant Scheme in 1997, some 48,853 households have already benefited from the grants, totalising some Rs2 billion. It is further interesting to note that from 2005 to 2013 some Rs1.5 billion have been disbursed by Government and granted to around 21,500 beneficiaries. No other Government has gone to such an extent in democratising access to a house over and above the social housing schemes of the Ministry of Social Integration!

The population is fully conscious, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all these promises kept by this Government are within the vision of 'Putting People First'. We have succeeded where others have failed because all the way we have remained convinced that a population with a feel good factor remains a motivated human resource at the service of the nation, especially in a country where we rely almost entirely on the resourcefulness of the population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, extensive provisions are being made for the most vulnerable and working and lower-middle classes. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development provides for refund of VAT up to a amount of Rs300,000 on the construction of a house or purchase of an apartment costing less than Rs2.5 m. The same facility will be extended to the first buyers of residential property up to the value of Rs4 m. over and above the removal of registration duty. Has any other Government made such extensive provisions when the situation was not bad at all? This is the right response to the rising concern among the lower-middle class and that most social policies tend to leave them out. This Government is not leaving them out, Mr Speaker, Sir.

While the 9th successive Budget of this Government is working extra miles to integrate those below the poverty intervention line, while all those in need of social housing remain on the top of this Government's agenda, we are also making considerable efforts for the lower-middle class who should no longer feel as a sandwiched class.

And, the most interesting part of it is that we are not curtailing Government subsidies on essential commodities such as rice, flour and cooking gas. We are neither reducing our investments in capital projects nor in the traditional welfare budget. On the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget provides new universities, hospitals and sustained investment on road networks after realising the most modern airport infrastructure in this part of the world.

The population will note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government has invested to transform our public health infrastructure. After the recent reconstruction of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, the 2014 Budget is further providing Rs715 m. for capital projects in the health sector. This Government is also increasing the quality of care and shows a greater level of compassion towards families afflicted by a close member needing treatment abroad. The assistance of Rs200,000 introduced in 1999 by the first Government of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam has been raised to Rs500,000 in 2013 and it will go up to a maximum of Rs800,000 in 2014. This is how a caring Government works, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the projected construction of a new fire station in my Constituency is very much appreciated, especially when the Budget also makes provision for hundred new posts of firefighters. I am happy both as a representative of my Constituency, No. 11, as well as the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

All the massive investments on the social front do not impinge on our drives to protect and create jobs in the Public Sector.

Everybody knows, Mr Speaker, Sir, about the fate of the Civil Service in developed countries. Pay is reduced, bonuses are curtailed and employees are being laid off.

In Mauritius, it is a totally different story as a Labour-led Government is in power.

We have successfully protected the jobs in the six Service Providing Institutions; we are further protecting the jobs of employees in the Ex-Servicemen Trust Fund and the Tobacco Board.

On top of that, we have continued to recruit in the Civil Service. Again, in 2014, the Budget provides for further recruitments especially in the Police Force, Fire Services and in the Health Sector just to name a few.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a Budget that protects borrowers from the claws of unscrupulous lending institutions which have remained inconsiderate towards their plight regardless of circumstances.

This country has seen many human tragedies caused by lending institutions and I know a case where a debt of Rs5 m. rose to Rs18 m. because of the inhuman penalty interest rates, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This reminds me of the notorious character 'Shylock' and his pound of flesh in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice.

On this side, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is one of full compassion and we try to ensure that if a pound of flesh has to be given, it should be without a single drop of blood.

A special provision in the Budget ensures that no new borrower will be victim of such a system as from January 2014. This is another reason why I am proud to belong to such a Government. This is a revolutionary measure, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In fact, the 2014 Budget is charged with compassion and confirms the vision of a modern and progressive Government which is looking at the medium and long terms without neglecting the shorter term objectives. We are looking at the future of the children of this country.

After providing access to pre-primary education in the last Budget, this year's Budget provides for a scheme to address infrastructural works to upgrade such privately-owned schools in the greater interest of those young children who may not be privileged to attend fee-paying 5-star pre-primary schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I come from a very modest family and I have my own personal experience of education in underprivileged conditions.

Today, I am very proud, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be a Member of a Government that is making provisions to place modern technology in the hands of more than 26,000 upper secondary students. Again, we are not targeting a few!

This measure will benefit the entire upper secondary student population of the country. This is how we make the difference and I have no doubt that such measures are causes of envy among our friends on the other side.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have always said that we are a caring Government and the 2014 Budget strongly confirms this. The different multi-sectoral provisions aim at leaving no child out.

The Welfare State is often referred to a system that takes care of the individual in her/his journey from the womb to the tomb.

Referring to what Government does for the individual child, I should say that we have free health care that covers the child since the pre-natal phase.

Last year, we made provisions for assistance for crèches and pre-primary school fees. Prior to that we have introduced free bus transport for students. School materials are already provided up to the end of the primary stream.

This year the Budget makes provision for an improved scheme with regard to hot meals in ZEP schools. We are also providing cover for some 6,300 children under the New Child Support Scheme.

Now, we are providing for the tablets as just mentioned. We are providing for Special Needs Schools and also extending cover to children of poor families who are suffering from some severe handicap.

The financial assistance in favour of such children will henceforth be paid for three additional years and will integrate more cases as the income ceiling is also raised by Rs100,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there can be hardly any country in our part of the world with the level of resources as ours and which makes such exhaustive provisions in favour of children!

The list is long, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Government is producing the right mix of approaches to ensure comfort for the population.

The right mix or the most appropriate option is only possible when we have a good team and a very good captain. This is exactly what we have on this side of the House.

We are not yet at the end of the present mandate and we already have so many realisations, thanks to the vision and leadership of the hon. Prime Minister.

However, this does not imply that there may be no problem at all. Problems may exist or crop up, but we have the right mix of competencies to effectively address them. This is the strength of our team and we are prepared for all the challenges.

This Government has worked on solutions and the Budget 2014 is proposing to usher the country into a new phase of development defined as the next economic architecture in the Budget Speech.

The new architecture is within the reach of men and women on this side of the House and we have an uncontested leadership in the person of the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now move to the achievements of my Ministry and what the country may expect from the Civil Service in 2014 with the help of the budgetary provisions.

The population does certainly appreciate that this Government has meant business and accelerated the process of public sector reforms in 2005.

My Ministry and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development had the responsibility to assume immense responsibility for transforming public sector administration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as executive arm of Government, the Civil Service has always responded effectively to implement all Government policies even if resources have not always been at optimal level. Here, the population should not forget that the Father of the Nation, late Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, gifted the nation with a stable and dependable Civil Service.

The credit also goes to the Civil Servants and their representatives who have given their entire support to the Government at difficult times.

Government recognises that the whole Civil Service has contributed towards the achievements of our nation and today Mauritius is a significant player at least in this part of the world.

I should, therefore, not hesitate the least, Mr Speaker, Sir, to state it in this House that Government appreciates the harmonious employee relations that exist in the public sector and we have been nurturing and promoting gentlemanly relations.

Credit also goes to the men and women who are leading public sector trade unions. We have shown a high level of dedication as major partners in all the reform initiatives within the Civil Service.

There is no doubt that positive and constructive dialogue has contributed in the translation of reform policies and measures into realities.

We have successfully made the paradigm shift in budgeting. We have effectively ensured the cultural change and Programme-Based Budgeting is a reality.

We have also worked on a new Performance Management System which is being fully implemented as from January 2013. It is appreciated that the Budget 2014 provides some Rs50 m. for the implementation of a new Civil Service Performance Related Incentive Scheme.

These new schemes aim at a cultural change in the whole Civil Service. This is how this government is proceeding to adapt the Civil Service to meet the expectations of the people.

The population aspires for a responsive Civil Service which certainly puts people first. Putting people first remains our cherished mission, and my Ministry has developed approaches and practices that are in line with this noble mission.

To that end, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is promoting a culture of excellence...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Too much noise!

Mr Moutia:in the Civil Service. In fact, the Public Service Excellence Award launched by the hon. Prime Minister in 2006 was the new start for the Civil Service.

Excellence is determined by a series of factors which my Ministry has tried to take into serious consideration. We needed a clear policy and strategy on human resource development, which explains our concern for a Civil Service College to assume responsibility for all HRD activities of the Civil Service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Civil Service College has, in fact, been set up as a State-owned company, with Government as the sole shareholder. All human resource development programmes are already being run under the aegis of the Civil Service College Mauritius.

The governing body of the College will be constituted soon, and it would be the responsibility of that entity to determine how best they would meet the HRD objectives of the Civil Service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, excellence in service delivery is already a reality at a few service outlets. Here, I would like to refer to improved services at -

- Passport and Immigration Office, where a passport is delivered within seven days compared to more than 15 days some time back;
- Civil Status Office, where an extract is issued without any delay;
- the Search Room of the Registrar General's Department, where computer technology has been installed to facilitate access to documents;
- the Companies Division, which has turned into an icon symbolising a modern Civil Service;
- the Forestry Services, which have been awarded at the regional level;
- the Forensic Science Laboratory, Civil Aviation Department, the National Coast Guard, etc.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Civil Status Division of the Prime Minister's Office has become one of the most efficient services of the country, so much so that, just to quote one example, it is now possible in Mauritius to help bereaved families who intend to bury or cremate a deceased close relative on the same day. This is not the case in very developed countries, Mr Speaker, Sir.

All our stakeholders recognise the changing face of the Civil Service in Mauritius. At this juncture, Mr Speaker, Sir, I should inform the House and the population that all efforts are being focused on improved standards of service delivery, and Cabinet has decided that, at least, one Unit or Division of each Ministry should send an entry for the next PSEA, which was launched two weeks ago.

This proves the very high level concern for excellence in service delivery in the public sector, and I have no doubt that we are on the right track.

Mr Speaker, Sir, sincere effort is given due recognition, and I have no doubt that the models will be emulated across the Civil Service. My Ministry is using all means available to provide the necessary support to organisations which feel like embracing the culture of excellence.

For instance, Mystery Shopping is done to assess service delivery standards. Funds are provided under the Work Environment Enhancement Programme, and Counter Services are upgraded. Organisations are furthermore encouraged to produce their own Customer Charter, and key persons are being provided with training to that end.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry explores all avenues to ensure that our officers pursue further academic programmes, and as far as possible, have the opportunity to be exposed to training both in Mauritius and abroad.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Civil Service is progressively taking advantage of the IT-enabled environment, and with the help of my colleague of the ICT Ministry, we are increasing the number of services that people can access by electronic mode.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the benefits of the reforms and modernisation are spilling over to our population, and we are generating smarter outcomes with the help of an increasingly efficient Civil Service. The population will appreciate that e-payment services will be a reality in 2014 in at least ten departments.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we do still have a long way to go, and we do not intend to relax the effort.

While some strategies are developed on the basis of lessons learnt or best practices, others become necessary upon recommendations of specialised bodies such as the PRB/EOAC, or the World Bank amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration such recommendations in the higher interests of the Civil Service, we have already initiated actions to -

- reduce the time taken for consultation procedures in view of prescription of schemes of service from 51 days to 15 days;
- specify only the highest qualifications for positions in line with international trends;
- procure a Human Resource Management Information System, which will be operational in the whole Civil Service by the end of 2014, starting with the Payroll and basic Human Resource modules, while it will be fully implemented across the Civil Service by the end of 2016. It is comforting to note that the Budget provides a sum of Rs101.5 m. for this project;
- Mr Speaker, Sir, we also encourage organisations to work towards ISO certification of their services, and
- to see that each department has a Reform Steering Council and Reform Cells.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Civil Service is supported in all its efforts by a few strategic organisations such as -

- the ICAC, which helps in system enhancement;
- the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal, which provides for an appeal mechanism in the interest of aggrieved parties as well as to ensure fairness, and
- the Equal Opportunities Commission, which is working on an education and information campaign to ensure higher levels of fairness in matters related to recruitment and promotions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Moutia: Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the new Public Sector Re-engineering Bureau and the proposed Independent Board of Enquiry to address adverse observations of the National Audit Office will aim at both reviewing processes as well as deterring malpractices.

These will enhance the level of efficiency and accountability in both service delivery and public finance. It will ultimately contribute towards the culture of excellence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget furthermore provides for a new Strategic Policy Unit under the PMO. This Unit will, no doubt, help in crafting strategies that will take the Civil Service to meet upcoming challenges of 2020 and beyond.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the population entrusted the destiny of the country in the hands of this Government in 2005, we had to make the right choices to overhaul it out of a very difficult economic situation.

We knew the realities of that time, but could not anticipate the unexpected global economic downturn that took all economic specialists and governments unawares.

I can safely state that this government redressed the country, effectively addressed the challenges in the wake of the economic downturn, and placed the nation in a prominent position in the regional and global indices.

We have succeeded in ensuring a human-faced development, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have balanced growth with social justice.

The population can rest assured, Mr Speaker, Sir. The country is in safe hands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to thank the hon. Prime Minister who has given me the opportunity to serve the nation.

I also thank the people of my constituency who have given their entire support to me since 2005.

I again congratulate the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development as well as his whole Budget team.

Finally, I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for your kind attention.

At 4.51 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.33 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

(5.33 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): M. le président, la présentation du budget n'est rien d'autre qu'une incantation de bonnes intentions. De bonnes intentions qui n'auront pas de suite. En réalité, personne n'est dupe car nous savons que la plupart des mesures annoncées ne sont que des mesures attrape-nigauds comme tous les budgets présentés auparavant par ce gouvernement.

Aucune suite ne sera donnée après le vote et cela aura été, encore une fois, un exercice pour épater la galerie. De plus, M. le président, c'est un budget qui n'est nullement porteur d'espoir car il ne répond pas aux attentes de la population. Le mauricien moyen et la classe pauvre s'attendaient à ce que le budget soit un qui s'attaquerait aux problèmes à leurs racines. Rétablir le pouvoir d'achat par exemple, un budget qui combattrait le problème de la pauvreté relative ou absolue mais il n'en fut rien.

Les petites gens, M. le président, les '*ti-dimounes*' continueront à se faire tondre par la spirale des prix. Ils continueront à être rongés par la pauvreté. La classe moyenne continuera à se fragiliser et à faire face aux risques d'appauvrissement. Le fossé entre les riches et les pauvres continuera à s'agrandir. La population n'en sera que plus frustrée. Le malaise social et le mal-être mauricien continueront à s'amplifier et l'agressivité, malheureusement, continuera à gagner du terrain.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the situation? Statistics Mauritius in its 2012 enquiry reveals that 122,400 persons find themselves within relative poverty threshold. Ten years before, the figure was 104,200. The same report mentions the widening gap between those who have and those who have not. I quote -

“Income inequality increased between 2006/2007 and 2012. The share of total income going to the 20% of households at the lower end to the income range decreased from 6.1% in 2006 /2007 to 5.4% in 2012.

On the other hand, the share of the upper 20% of households increased from 45.6% to 47.4%. The rise in income inequality is confirmed by an increase in the Gini coefficient from 0.388 in 2006/2007 to 0.413 in 2012.”

Statistics Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, also shows that for households whose monthly earnings are less than Rs10,000 the percentage moved from 26% to 14% during the last five years. For households with a monthly income from Rs10,000 to Rs20,000, the percentage has decreased from 42% to 30%. But, households with a monthly income from Rs20,000 to Rs40,000, the percentage has increased from 24% to 35% and households with a monthly income of more than Rs40,000 the percentage has increased from 8% to 21%.

The gap continues to widen. The same report goes on to show that food accounts for 27% of spending, followed by transport travelling expenses, 15.5%. *Qui a dit que le transport était gratuit?* Followed by utilities and accommodation, amounting to 12%. Monthly average expenses have increased by 20.6% in real terms since 2006/2007.

It is ironical that households' monthly expenses on education, transport and health have increased while these are supposed to be free services, which makes one conclude that this is an *aveu d'échec*. *Échec* on our education system which has no sense of direction, things being done *au petit bonheur*.

There is no vision; there is no long-term plan. *Echec* on our health system, where people who get sick are scared to go to hospitals! *Echec* of the *transport gratuity*, where there are not sufficient buses, no roadworthy buses, bad management, lack of transparency, and again, we will be made to pay for the incompetence of the NTC by a levy of one rupee on each litre of petrol bought!

Ticket d'autobus, redevance télé, lait, tout cela pèse lourd dans le panier de la ménagère. While some of them have only the *panier* and nothing in it, others do not even have the *panier*. And, adding insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister announces removal of VAT on milk and meat products on which there is no VAT! The population was expecting that, with this budget, they would be able to redeem their purchasing power.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to *l'Association des emprunteurs abusés*, *75% des ménages sont endettés et ont des difficultés à rembourser leurs dettes*. One third of the persons who have managed to get a house from the NHDC cannot pay.

Measures announced with regard to interest, with regard to bank will not solve the problem as the issue is the purchasing power; as the issue is that, real income has decreased, and expenditure on food items will continue to increase.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when there is a feeling of injustice, people get easily angry and sometimes become aggressive. There is today, unfortunately, a feeling of unfairness in the population, where those who are in the good books of *les puissants du jour*, those who are *proches du pouvoir* get all, while others continue to suffer an impression of *une justice à deux vitesses*; where those who indulge in white collar crimes like the Ponzi Scheme, the Ponzi scandal, get scot-free and those who steal '*trois giraumons ou enn paket kotomili*' get jailed; where those who are *proches du pouvoir* are awarded juicy contracts at the airport to open shops, contracts for infrastructure, contracts for the school feeding projects; project contracts given to Betamax, for example, while others are penalised; where some people have the privilege to be in the *carnet ration* of honourable Khamajeet, for example, while others do not. *Petits copains* or *vendeurs* are being placed at the head of parastatal bodies. *Petits copains* with no experience at all, the only qualification required is proximity with the Government or being a *vendeur* or a *vendu*.

In some sectors where Mauritius have the necessary competence and could have done the job, foreigners are being called in.

There is the issue of the new identity card, Mr Speaker, Sir, where money belonging to the population is being thrown through windows. Billions of rupees are involved, and the Prime Minister tried to justify his decision to award the contract to a Singapore firm. According to him, there are too much *magouilles* in Mauritius. This is insulting the population and this is more dangerous for our reputation, the reputation of our country, our nation. Investors will have some apprehension before deciding to invest in our country. They will think that Mauritius is a nation of *magouilleurs*.

While some blessed few are enjoying life at full speed, for others it is difficult to earn a living and they continue to *'tirer le diable par la queue'*. This kind of situation is frustrating and frustration entails a lot of social problems as people become aggressive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the CPE exams we were all shocked and sad to learn about the behaviour of some children who were taking part in the exams. I am referring to the incident – if we may call this an incident – involving prevoc pupils and those in the mainstream.

The situation was such that, the prevoc pupils were sent back to their respective schools, their respective institutions to continue the exams there. That episode was really sad and I am sure that every one of us felt bad about it. Mr Speaker, Sir, this episode should not be considered in isolation. This situation reflects a feeling of *mal-être* of our society, a *malaise* in our society. The adage which says that *la vérité sort de la bouche d'un enfant* must now be *la vérité sort des gestes d'un enfant*.

Violence is today *le maître mot*. Physical violence, criminal acts, burglary ending in murder; rape on adults, on old people; rape on children, be it boys or girls. There is no limit.

- In a school, a pupil throws thinner on his friend, almost burning him. The latter had to be admitted in the hospital.
- In another institution, students physically aggressed teachers.
- A woman is found dead in her flat after a burglary.
- Another burglary, a woman gets tied up while her baby was in tears.
- A young man kills his grandmother and steals her purse.
- A Chinese national was violently killed in China Town. He was murdered while he was on his way back home from his work because of a cellular phone.

This morning, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we have a glance at the written press, we see how violence is becoming a culture. Some people will argue about figures, but one case is too many.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not condone violence, yet this is a fact. The disparity between the haves and the have-nots is increasing. Poverty alone, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not a factor to violence, but when coupled with a sense of injustice, it does.

The Budget does not address the issue of poverty. What is needed is not peaceful measures in the form of aid or *assistanat*, but a form of solidarity which will help people to gain back their dignity as human beings. Of course, in the short run, that would help, some aid would help, but it must be accompanied with measures that empower them to stand on their own feet.

In parallel, Mr Speaker, Sir, examples should come from the top, from the leaders, from our leaders, from those who hold power. I just said example should come from the top. But what is really happening is that, while, on the one hand, people have difficulties to make both ends meet, on the other hand, they are witnessing how our public goods are being looted by some *petits copains* and *protégés du régime*. State lands are being distributed here and there, even *pas géométriques*, *M. le président*, which reduce further the leisure space of '*ti-dimounes*'. That situation creates frustration.

Do you realise what may be the feeling of those people who are unable to benefit from CIS (Corrugated Iron Sheets), from the Government, from NGOs, as they do not own a plot of land. To benefit from CIS, one must own a plot of land or have the authorisation to use the plot of land, a piece of land belonging to someone else. Do you know many people who are willing to lend a parcel of their land, even to relatives? I have known cases where relatives have done it, but later on disagreements come in and they are made to vacate and these people go back to square one. The policy should be worked out anew, Mr Speaker, Sir, in a more humane way. Some people would say: "This is *assistanat*." Nothing of the sort! The thing is that they should be given a good start in life to stand on their own feet and regain human dignity.

Some people are criticising the Illovo deal. We have nothing to be ashamed of. We are proud of our doing. Acres of land have been given to SIT, to cultural centres. This is democratisation of the economy. This is the same Illovo land which has been used for the construction of the new airport terminal. But who are now benefitting from this deal? Who others? Who else? Apollo Bramwell Hospital has been built there. Private universities or so-called universities are mushrooming there. Other people having some proximity with the Government are getting lands there. When people learn how public money is being thrown out through the window, they feel frustrated, because this is their money.

We have only to look at the report of the Director of Audit. Year in year out, the same wastage of public funds is reported, mismanagement, overspending, projects costing much more

than budgeted for originally. A carefree attitude on the part of the authorities: “The money does not come from our pocket. So, let us do as we feel.” The best recipe for social unrest, for aggressive behaviour and violence!

Le fossé se creuse entre les riches et les pauvres. This is dangerous and reflects on the behaviour of the have-nots.

I would like to comment briefly on the prepaid meters. This is the worst measure a Government can take, supposedly, to alleviate poverty. Mr Speaker, Sir, imagine a cut-off of the electricity while the poor student is doing his homework at night. Imagine a blackout in the House where there are small kids. This is not the way to do things. This problem of households not being able to pay their electricity bills should be worked out in a more humane manner.

However, I wish to congratulate the Minister for the laudable measure. With regard to the measure of assistance to patients inoperable in Mauritius, I must say that this is laudable indeed. But I am still of the opinion that in some cases, the Government should find the means to help *in toto*. It is shameful for Mauritius as a tourist destination and a humiliation for those people who have to go and beg for money in public places, near supermarkets and otherwise, doing door to door to supplement the money which the Government provides. Besides increasing the grant in a general manner, each case should be examined and helped on its own merit. Mr Speaker, Sir, it must be acknowledged that there is a vast gap between what is made available to the poor in terms of facilities on paper, according to policy, and their actual experience in almost every sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now come to the issue of women. The Government should transform its understanding of the role of women. Women should be regarded as essential contributors to the countries’ development process. The undervaluation of women is both a cause and an effect of problem, such as poverty. Here also, we must acknowledge a wide difference between the existence of women’s rights in law and the exercise of those rights in fact.

In 2000, we introduced the concept of microcredit where women get a loan without collateral. They were given necessary training and there was appropriate follow-up by the Ministry of Women Rights through the National Women Entrepreneur Council.

We laid the foundation of the markets centre at Phoenix and built it, centre which this Government was zealous to inaugurate. But is the centre operating as it should? Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee talked lengthily about that to demonstrate its shortfalls and weaknesses. We did it, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we firmly believed in the concept of economic empowerment of women to fight the then scourge of the feminisation of poverty and some women managed to move out of poverty. But, unfortunately, today the specter of feminisation of poverty is again making its appearance. When women have no job and are not financially independent, the risk of domestic violence is high. This has been amply proved.

And, today it is no secret that the number of reported cases of domestic violence has increased. The Ministry which is supposed to tackle the issue of Family Welfare should now be named the Ministry of Family Warfare after a complete failure to tackle the issue!

Government is introducing the Going Back to Work Programme. This is a measure that will suit those women who had already secured a job. Fair enough! But what about those who want to join the workforce? A glance at the October 2011 statistics of the Ministry of Gender shows that 72.6% of men are employed whilst only 38.5% women are employed. The question is whether Mauritius will be able to meet its millennium development goals by 2015. I am referring to the third goal which is to promote gender equality and empower women.

During job fairs, Mr Speaker, Sir, some people are encouraged to follow courses to secure a job. But, very often they have to wait for a long time to get that job. In a Parliamentary Question which I asked on Tuesday this week, I mentioned a case where the main breadwinner has been waiting since two years to get a job on a cruise ship. The Government should review the situation in order to minimise the period between training and securing a job. I suppose they understand that.

I will just say a few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, on private television. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is treating the population as fools when it states that when issuing licence for private television, these televisions will not broadcast news. Where is our right to information, Mr Speaker, Sir? This is most scandalous! This is a missed opportunity for this Government to review its policy on access to information. We all remember the old days in the 70s when the Labour Party then in power came with measures to stifle the press, *censure de la presse, l'état d'urgence*, everything to restrict access to information.

The Prime Minister, after having erased the Bill on the Freedom of Information in his last Government Programme presented on 16 April 2012, has expressed his scepticism on the introduction of such an important Bill following the release of the Robertson Report. An increase in the *redevance TV* of 50% has been imposed on the population. I will not lose the time of the House by commenting on the quality and standards of the MBC News.

Statistics Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, has revealed a decrease in the expenses for newspapers by households as more money has to be put in food, education, transport and health and that *redevance TV pèse lourd dans le panier du consommateur*. What type of regime does the Government want to put in place? Where is our right to information? The Government once again wants to prevent access to information.

Before ending, Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words on my Constituency. Mr Speaker, Sir, regions like Pailles have been newly annexed with the City of Port Louis without the needful being done with regard to finance in order that at least a good service is provided, be it in terms of road resurfacing, scavenging service, setting up of infrastructure, lighting and other amenities. I am making an appeal so that this situation be redressed in a fair and equitable manner.

Another problem which the inhabitants of Morcellement Raffray, Pailles face is the sewerage problem. I have, on several occasions, raised the issue of overflow near the Mosque in Perruche Street. A real nuisance! People going to the Mosque get muddied with fecal matters on their way to prayer. I make an appeal, once again, so that a solution be found to that effect.

The Chagossian Community, Mr Speaker, Sir, forms an important part of my Constituency. In our struggle on the issue of sovereignty, the human dimension should not be forgotten. Many of the Chagossian people are now living in the UK. Yet, they are not at home there also. Many did not feel at home in Mauritius and many do not feel at home in UK as well. Now, they are encountering another *déracinement*. Going back home on their native lands is a must! If some of them have chosen to settle in UK it is because of the education facilities and because of the children. The move of the Government on the issue of Chagos on both fronts: sovereignty and human front has been very timid and ‘maladroit’ up to now. In our struggle on the issue of sovereignty the human dimension should go in parallel and the Government should not play with the nerves of the community, when during his various ‘escapades’ in UK the Prime

Minister makes us believe that he is there to discuss the Chagos issue, and that situation creates lots of unnecessary expectations among the community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the region of Pointe aux Sables has been since some years welcoming new *morcellement* and the population there, of course, has been increasing. However, the streets are in a bad situation. Very bad! And they need to be resurfaced or repaired. Additionally, as you know, the main road has a lot of curves and is rather narrow. Several accidents have occurred there and I think that it is of utmost priority that this road be enlarged. We have been making requests in that sense for years. The Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Beebeejaun or even the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, hon. Bachoo, if my memory serves me right, have once or twice made a site visit to assess the problem. I think that the widening of this road is more than urgent in order to avoid more fatal accidents there.

Fishers form an important community in Constituency No. 1. They are the *parents pauvres* of this Budget. Whilst the Government is talking about the Blue Economy, that community should not be left behind but, be part and parcel of that *grande aventure* if *aventure* there will be.

Government has been organising conferences on the issue of the blue economy, but fishers have not been brought on board. If the Government really means business, wider consultations should be carried out and fishers be roped in.

Je vais conclure, M. le président, en disant que le Budget ne contient rien d'autre que des mesures attrape-nigauds. Le gouvernement annonce une série de mesures pour épater la galerie, des mesures censées soulager la population. Or, il n'en est rien. La population continuera à souffrir et le fossée entre les riches et les pauvres continuera à s'agrandir et cette situation va accentuer un sentiment de mal-être au sein de la population. Il est temps donc que le gouvernement se ressaisisse. Cette situation sociale malsaine n'a que trop duré. Gare à l'effet boomerang!

You can fool some people some time, some people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

I have done.

(Interruptions)

(6.11 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will set to prove, in the first instance, and refute some of the arguments of my dear hon. lady and I will prove that this Budget is not an *attrape-nigaud*. We are catering, as far as I know, for my Ministry for the '*ti-dimounes*' more than anybody else. *Le transport gratuit* is not a failure, judging by the number of old people travelling free in the buses and the number of children going to school. Parents are saving up to Rs1,000 if they have got two or three children travelling. Is that a failure?

(Interruptions)

I can control my nerve, don't worry! And 'a feeling of injustice'! What injustice? Our Judiciary has been shaken, I understand, but we are a free democratic State where there is separation of powers between the Judiciary, the Legislature, Government and, therefore, there is no *justice à deux vitesses*. Nobody is above the law and, as the hon. Prime Minister said recently: whoever thinks he is above the law, the law is above him.

(Interruptions)

Now, as far as Singapore is concerned, the Prime Minister has got the guts of his conviction and he is not afraid to speak out his mind. He has said it to all of us - to all the Ministers when we started - that we are here to serve the people, not to line our pockets, and he has said it and he will continue to say it, whether it pleases somebody or not, and we, Ministers, know where we stand and everybody knows that there is a red line that should not be crossed.

Now, this unfortunate incident at Raoul Rivet School with Pre-Vocational school children, I think. People cannot blame Government for everything. Parents should assume their responsibility. They cannot blame Government if some of the children in Pre-Vocational misbehave. They cannot put on the shoulders of Government all sexual violence, rape, which is happening in the country. Go and see in Europe what is happening! Murder of the Chinese cook! We have all been very, very upset about it. But again, is Government responsible for that?

(Interruptions)

Law and order, we are taking care of that. You call it looting of public space, I will come back on that, let there be no doubt that all our public beaches will be cleared and space allowed for the public to have the unfettered access to the beach.

Now, they are speaking about social housing and CIS as far as empowerment is concerned. I have allocated land to very poor people, to people in distress and they were paying R1 per year. I thought this is a waste of time. We just take R1 once and for all, and I will mention that in detail soon. Illovo deal: we prefer not to talk about that.

Now, let us come to the subject of private TV. There are many private TVs that show only films. I will say Cine 12, Star TV, there is Canal Plus Cinema and this is also private TV. I will not go on.

I will now get on with my speech. I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his presentation of this Budget. It is a laudable exercise, building a modern, inclusive and caring society while invigorating investment and growth which is a really remarkable feat.

Whatever our detractors say, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a place *où il fait bon vivre*. Since 2005 when this Government came to power, we had to face numerous challenges that really threatened our very existence. We faced the triple shock of abolition of tariff preferences for clothing and textile exports to western markets, the phasing out of the European Sugar Protocol that led to a 36% reduction in our income followed by the explosion of energy prices and similarly, by a surge of food prices. Government took the bull by the horn and instead of going for austerity measures - a traditional remedy all over the world - Government opted for bold measures to develop the economy in investing infrastructure and attracting foreign investment and stimulus package and income tax reform which gave a boost to GDP which went up to 6%.

As the Euro Crisis grew worse in Europe, European countries one after another fell victim to the recession and some were on the verge of bankruptcy, namely, Iceland, Ireland, Greece, Spain and others. This invariably impacted on our economy. Our tourism industry dipped down slowly. Yet again, Government refused an austerity programme. We turned our attention to the East, China and India, whatever the situations there, these two giants are called upon to drive the economic growth in the decade to come.

In this context, we diversified our efforts to move towards these countries. The tourism industry is now picking up from its new destination. In the same breath, the Euro Crisis is showing sign of relenting; the tourists are trickling back into our country. These are more than a few green shoots. Let there be no doubt that we are on the right track. Mauritius continues to invent itself as the Financial Times mentioned recently.

This talk of gloom and doom from the Opposition is premature or politically pessimistic. I refer to my good friend, hon. Kee Cheong Li Kwong Wing, an old Royal, who has been launching a diatribe of litany which, at some stage, I think, he must have gone in a state of semi toxic confusion. In fact, in September last year, he was quoted by the Financial Times of London. You see how important he is; that Mauritius is running out of steam, referring to the downturn in the tourism industry with a glut of hotel rooms. Yes, there was a downturn as the Euro Crisis deepened. But, we did not sit on our laurels. The tourism industry was turned around, as I have said, and looked to China, India, and South East Asia. With a fast economic development on the horizon, there will be a growing clientele for our tourist industry.

Already, as I said, the green schools are appearing.

Now, I come back to the Budget. Indeed, the Budget has got a strong social component, where important measures have been introduced in the housing sector. The new National Home Ownership Programme and Social Housing, with emphasis on a decent living environment, goes no doubt in the right direction of satisfying the expectation of the less fortunate and vulnerable groups of our society.

Protecting the vulnerable groups of society will, at the same time, boost investment and going further in improving the country's ease of doing business, Mr Speaker, Sir, can only be beneficial to the country. Foreign Direct Investment, which is an important vehicle for economic growth and development, will be further encouraged.

The Government is very much concerned of the difficulties encountered by the low-income as well as the middle-income families to secure a housing unit. To this end, in the Budget, Government is addressing this issue by providing low and middle-income household with a variety of support schemes to increase access to affordable housing and land through the new National Home Ownership Programme.

In addition, the Budget provides for improving the quality of life of beneficiaries by enhancing the living environment and upgrading the existing utility services in the housing estates. Our home environment occupies the pride of place in the maker of what we consider as an acceptable of quality of life. A sound environment will not only act as a deterrent to social problems, but will also ensure that people live harmoniously in their homes. With the National Home Ownership Programme, the Social Housing Fund will be replaced by the National Habitat Fund, which has wider objects. The Social Housing Fund finances the construction of housing units and the provision of infrastructure for serviced lots only, while the National Habitat Fund provides for a more comprehensive facility in respect of housing and related amenities. Funds amounting to about Rs1.5 billion have been provided in the National Habitat Fund for the implementation of the housing programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, shelter is a basic need; a need that we all share, and one which is essential to a healthy happily life. Government has thus embarked on a number of projects to pursue the housing programmes. We will continue to provide affordable houses to those needy families. In that context, during the current year, contracts for consultancy services for three major housing projects, involving the construction of 1,395 housing units and provision of 432 service plots, have already been awarded. All these service plots are all over the country. Tender for works regarding the construction of 70 housing units and 48 service lots at Henrietta has already been launched. Construction works are expected to start early next year. For the middle-income group, the construction of some 36 units at Military Road, Port Louis, has been completed, and the housing units will be delivered soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now say something which I think has caused a lot of problems in this country. This Government has been accused of providing either *boîtes allumettes* or *kazot poule* to poor people. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a basic social house. I am laying it on the Table of the Assembly. You can all see it. This house has been conceived with facilities of expansion both laterally and vertically, and this is one of the houses which has been extended both laterally and vertically. We are empowering people to do so, and there are facilities for them to do that; for casting of roof slabs, and they can get soft loan. Finally, some go beyond that, and you will be shocked to see how a small social housing unit has been converted nearly to a palace. Mr Speaker, Sir, I lay this on the Table for the appreciation of the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, fortunately, a large promotion of our population has the ability and purchasing power to cater for its own needs. They can build their home. They can improve it as time goes by in accordance with their needs and expectations, or else they can choose to change their home, moving to a larger unit, depending on circumstances. To support these families, Government has already disbursed Rs80 m. and some 1,352 households under the Roof Slab Grant Scheme to enable them complete the construction of their housing units by casting their roof slabs for this year. A similar amount of Rs80 m. is being provided for next year. This Government has gone a step further in supporting middle-income families, up to Rs50,000, who are willing to buy a housing unit in the open market. These families will now be able to have easier access to finance through lending institutions for the purchase of a housing unit. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a measure which will have *effets d'annonce*. These are concrete projects, and people will benefit by it, and improve their environment and their life.

I seize also, Mr Speaker, Sir, this opportunity to thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for proposing measures geared towards reducing the financial burden of housing loans, and reducing cost of a housing unit. For instance, the reduction in down payment from 10 % to 5%, and the purchase of property and reimbursement of VAT up to Rs300,000 on the construction or purchase of an apartment costing less than Rs2.5 m. This is a very laudable initiative, which will no doubt bring relief to the beneficiaries.

To protect the vulnerable groups who are finding difficulties to repay their outstanding loans - now, this is very important. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie just mentioned that for people who get in the debt trap - as from 01 January 2015, lending institutions and banks will henceforth cease to apply the normal bank interest at any applicable penalty interest rate once the accumulated interest on a customer's account equals to the capital outstanding. Mr Speaker, Sir, thus customers will not be charged any interest on interest. We have seen people who have taken a loan of Rs200,000, at the end of ten years, they are owing about half a million, and invariably these people lose their house.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while there are people who can build their house, there are many others who face financial difficulties and cannot afford to do so. Sometimes, this is a silent group of people who are at their wits' end who are prepared to make sacrifices in order to find an alternative accommodation, which they know will make a difference to their lives.

However, over the years, many families have grown impatient with formal system of acquiring housing and have created informal settlements. These settlements can create unsafe conditions for residents and can cause chaos in urban and rural areas. But they are home to many people who have no other alternative to address the growth of informal squatters' settlement and to improve the overall quality of housing, Government is providing Rs184 m. for upgrading and resettlement projects to be implemented by the National Empowerment Foundation and for the construction of some 450 housing units for vulnerable groups.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to improve the living conditions of inhabitants of the NHDC housing estates, Government is maintaining its rehabilitation programme in these housing estates. Presently, works are in progress in 50 housing estates, which involves rehabilitation of sewerage disposal system and water reticulation networks, roof waterproofing and other associated works, an amount of Rs54 m. have been spent and a further Rs250 m. have been provided for the year 2014. This is not a measure which has an *effet annonce* fortunately.

To encourage ex-house owners to become owners of State land on which their houses are, this scheme has allowed some 10,000 ex-CHA residents to own their respective plots of land.

In addition, Government will also provide financial assistance in terms of legal and other charges to those families who do not have the means to purchase this land. To that effect, a provision of Rs2 m. has been made in the next Budget. We have found out, over the course of the year, that people have had all their documents ready, but that they cannot pay the Rs2,000 of legal fees. So, we have stepped in and doing that as well.

I am pleased to announce that a syndic has been made operational in each of the 41 NHDC housing estates. An amount of Rs7 m. has been disbursed to these syndics as financial assistance to help them to improve the living environment and maintain the common areas; an amount of Rs17 m. is being provided this year. But this has to be very strictly controlled, because we have found that in certain housing estates, money has been used for an end of the year party, which is not in our project.

The National Habitat Fund also finances two special habitat schemes, namely the Water Tanks Scheme and the new Solar Water Heater Scheme for which funds amounting to Rs30 m. and Rs100 m. respectively have been provided. These schemes will enable families to have

access to individual water tanks and solar water heater, thus improving their living conditions. This money is being kept at my Ministry, but will be disbursed to the Ministry of Environment for the scheme. My Ministry is also the authority for land use planning and development. This plays a leading role in guiding and steering urban development.

The Programme-Based Budget objectives, with respect to the outcomes expected from my Ministry, are of utmost importance. The planning system controls the amount of land available for development to be exercised and land located, whilst ensuring most valuable and environmentally sensitive areas are preserved, a greater choice of sites is offered for development with a quicker and more flexible response to application.

In this respect, we have to ensure that land earmarked for development effectively accommodate projects and activities. For that to happen, the right incentives are put in place for developers and, as responsible authorities, we endeavor to make a most judicious use so that a greater amount of development can be sited on the least amount of land.

To that effect, development plans and planning design guidelines are being updated and reviewed. Urban outline schemes for the five municipal areas as defined by the new administrative boundaries will be completed by December and become operational next year. Work will start on the district outline planning scheme to review plans which are concerned with development up to 2015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the development control process will be further reform to allow the policy-based approach of outline scheme being supplemented with a set of design principles updated and improved to help timely delivery of clearances and permits for major projects while attaining a high design standard.

Master plans will be prepared to stimulate growth and business facilities to allow a take-off within the plan period.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on a medium to long-term perspective, the National Diplomatic Strategy approved and operational since 2005 will be reviewed. The objectives of the NDS (National Development Strategy) are to create and stimulate investments so that economic and social development in relation to land development can be undertaken in a sustained manner.

I support and encourage these measures announced to promote the green economy in order to maximise the productivity of agricultural lands through derocking and cultivation of higher value activities in the agricultural sector. These measures will give a new lifeline to that sector, at the same time contribute to promoting a balance type of development in the country and contribute to our food security. The NDS will, in addition, correct the distortion in the land use allocation by promoting more compact living communities; maximise the use of infrastructure; reduce urban expansion and corresponding carbon footprint; control the expansion of slum like settlements. Higher densities of development reduce land intake and make some services that are important for sustainable communities such as transport more viable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to achieve these targets' objectives, besides changing our methods of working more smartly, we shall have to be assisted by technology to supplement shortage of human resources. The use of the Geographic Information System (GIS) will be maximised, given the vast possibilities of development review analysis and monitoring it offers.

The GIS software can give an overview of options by integrating and inputting information to provide decision-makers more choices. The benefits associated with GIS, namely in the field of natural disaster risk reduction management will be greatly aided, as it is especially efficient during crisis or disaster times when quick response is required. GIS will assist planners and decision-makers in identifying land use trends and non-developable sensitive areas, providing decision supports, saving time and increasing accuracy and multiplying the number of overlays or geographic layers depicting information on constraints, roadwork infrastructure network, community facilities within an area and catchment zones for different activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on another note, my Ministry has the responsibility to declare public beaches which are then managed by the Beach Authority for the benefit of beach users. My Ministry will use its powers over land use control to define with the collaboration of stakeholders what activities should be carried out on beaches to prevent outcries from the public and allow peaceful and passive enjoyment of beachfront and lagoon.

Under no circumstances will we allow the space to be enjoyed by the public be invaded wildly and illegally. We must also ensure that the public has unfettered access to the beach. All tracks linking public roads to the beach should be kept open. Anybody hindering, in any way whatsoever such an access, will have to bear the full brunt of the law.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have taken a historical measure to empower low-income families to fulfill their dreams of becoming owners and having the pride of acquiring in full ownership a plot of land on which stands their houses at a nominal price of Rs2,000 as from January 2014. This sale exercise will include building site leases granted with permission to run home-based activities for all purpose, a mini shop as well as building site leases with a commercial component. Some 17,000 families, building lessees, who already have their lease agreement with my Ministry, will benefit from this measure. This will further empower the middle-class. This is not something with *effets d'annonce*, but it is a concrete measure which will help. In this context, the State Land Act will be amended to effect this decision.

Although Government will forego some Rs15 m. annually in terms of revenue on rental or State land, the shortfall in income will be offset by savings in respect of expenses that would have been incurred on administrative costs, including survey of land, issue of claim reminders, processing of files and other costs relating to legal action being initiated in cases of default. The purpose of implementing the sale of State land mechanism will be put in place at my Ministry to receive and process the applications expeditiously. This measure is a continuation of the Government policy to democratise access to land and to ensure a sustainable economy and provide a socio economic development, as was the case for owners of the houses of CHA in 2007.

State land leases are granted also for various purposes, including residential and industrial. The revenue generated from leases for period January to mid-November 2013 amounts to Rs1.2 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that building site leases are granted to persons of low-income. Again, this shows how we care for the poor, the under-privileged, for the low income group who, in all intents and purposes, cannot afford to purchase land to build a house. This facility has also been extended to hardship cases and to victims of natural disasters, disabled persons and persons in distress. As at date, some 17,000 families have benefited from this facility. These beneficiaries construct their housing units either on their own through self-help or with the assistance of the National Empowerment Foundation. The annual rental claim is according to a scale established by Government and which takes into consideration the family income of the lessee.

In December 2012, Government decided to alleviate among the 17,000 building site lessees the financial burden of 7,600 lessees who were paying an annual rental of Rs500 or less, by reducing their rental to a symbolic Rs1 annually to be paid as one-off payment for the whole period of the lease which may run up to 60 years. This is virtually giving them for free. With the new budgetary measures these lessees will now become owners of the plot of land on which stands their respective houses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, my Ministry has already set up the Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS) - a powerful tool for land management. For the effective implementation of the project, several regulations have already been passed. One of the important attribute is to issue a Parcel Identification Number (PIN) which is unique for each parcel of land. As at date 13,264 PINS have been issued, generating revenue of Rs15 m. Consequently, these new regulations have, *inter alia*, laid down standards for land surveys in the same line as with a view to regulating the practice of land survey profession. A draft of the Council of Surveyors Bill is under preparation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is further embarking on another major project: the Mauritius National Special Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The NSDI is a concept for the acquisition, maintenance and sharing access and distribution of land related data. The main function is to facilitate access to special data that identify geographic locations of features, provide a general enquiry framework that will enable Government staff and industry and citizens to readily access the range of Government information that is available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is geographically positioned in a strategic point in the Indian Ocean. There was need to update our nautical charts which dated as far back as the mid seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for safe navigation of mariners as well as coastal zone management. Being conscious of the potential of our Exclusive Economic Zone which initially covered an area of 2,000,000 km², this Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding on hydrography with the Government of India in 2005. The MoU resulted in the Indian authorities updating some of our charts and conducting bathymetric surveys in our waters, thus contributing in our claim for extended continental shelf which is presently jointly managed by Mauritius and Seychelles.

Another potential area of cooperation of the MoU is the provision of hydrographic expertise for the setting up of hydrographic infrastructure in Mauritius. Accordingly, the Government of India has deputed three Indian officers for setting up a full-fledged hydrography unit in my Ministry and they have only come in a couple of weeks ago and have already started working.

The inshore survey vessel pathfinder donated by the Government of India in February this year will be used to conduct hydrographic surveys in the lagoon with the help of the Indian officers using the latest technology available, again donated graciously by the Government of India. The main objective is to train and empower officers of my Ministry to take over such exercise in due course. Moreover, these surveys will help our industry of the sea, the Blue Economy and eventually becoming an important economic pillar of our country.

My Ministry has also the responsibility to acquire private land for the implementation of Government projects to payment of adequate compensation to landowners. It is to be noted that whenever agreement has not been reached on the quantum of compensation, the owner has to wait for the award of the Board of Assessment to obtain his compensation. This may take a long time. However, to relief those owners of this lengthy procedure, my Ministry has already brought necessary amendment to the Land Acquisition Act for an interim payment of compensation to former owners within the least possible delay, pending the award of the Board of Assessment. To further expedite the full payment of compensation, the Revenue and Appeal Tribunal Act will be amended to replace the Board of Assessment and the Land Acquisition Act by a Tribunal.

I am fully convinced that these measures announced in the Budget are not *effets d'annonce*. With regard to the housing sector, we will go a long way to achieve the objectives set out to protect the vulnerable group of our society, the poor people of our society; the poor people of our society - I have to repeat -because we are being told we are doing nothing for the poor.

I again thank my colleagues for their attention and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Before concluding, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a dream which I want to share with the House. Looking far above the Indian Ocean from outer space, I see a bright star shining over Mauritius in the middle of the Indian Ocean, extending from the East coast of Africa to Australia, from the Indian sub-Continent and Gulf countries to the Arctic. I also see a huge silver

key unlocking all the resources of the deep ocean, hydro-carbon, oil, gas minerals and other precious metals as gushing cool water flowing deep from the ocean bed to our cities for refrigeration.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(6.52 p.m.)

Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): M. le président, j'ai écouté attentivement le précédent orateur.

Pour lui, il fait bon vivre à Maurice, tout va bien, les personnes au bas de l'échelle qui bénéficient d'une maison vivent dans des palais. Il a même déposé des photos. Pour moi, M. le président, il est clair que l'honorable ministre n'est pas sur terre. Comme il a bien dit, lui-même, il est sur les nuages, il regarde d'en haut, de loin et il ne voit pas ce qui se passe vraiment dans le fin fond de l'île Maurice. Ils voyagent en limousine, en vitres teintées, et je peux comprendre. Mais dans quelque temps, ils vont devoir retourner vers ces gens-là et c'est là qu'ils vont voir la réalité dont beaucoup de mauriciens sont en train de faire face. J'espère qu'ils auront la réponse qu'il faut.

M. le président, vendredi dernier, le ministre des Finances a présenté, à la population de cette République, son troisième budget. La lecture du budget 2014 restera dans les annales comme étant le plus long. Si seulement dans le contenu, le petit peuple pouvait voir son sort s'améliorer. Mon analyse de ce budget est que c'est un budget qui mettra la main encore plus dans la poche des pauvres et des gens de la classe moyenne pour subventionner les riches. M. le président, je viendrais sur des exemples un peu plus tard.

Avant-hier, la députée, l'honorable Mlle Deerpalsing parlait d'un budget révolutionnaire. Je pense que ce serait pour amadouer son colistier, le ministre des Finances. C'est un budget qui a fait plutôt révolter la population, M. le président. Ce budget est tellement une répétition des mesures des précédents budgets que même le Gouverneur de la Banque de Maurice a brillé, par son absence, à l'Assemblée nationale lors de sa présentation vendredi dernier.

The Deputy Speaker: The Governor was not in Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Mr Seeruttun: Encore une fois, M. le président, le ministre des Finances a mis l'accent sur la croissance, comme il a fait pour ces deux derniers budgets. Et je dirais: jamais deux sans trois. Il est vrai qu'il faut accélérer la croissance pour permettre de tirer le pays de cette situation catastrophique dans laquelle nous nous retrouvons aujourd'hui. Mais quel a été le bilan de ces deux derniers budgets en termes de croissance, M. le président. Lors de sa présentation de son premier budget qui avait pour titre -

“Growth for the Greater Good.”

Et au paragraphe 48, il disait ceci, je cite –

“During the next three years we will set growth on a more sturdy course.”

Avec les mesures annoncées pour l'année 2012, il prévoyait une croissance de l'ordre de 4% qui déjà, je dois dire, représentait une baisse par rapport à l'année 2011 qui était de l'ordre de 4.2%. Malgré cela, M. le président, beaucoup de personnes l'avaient cru et, au final, la croissance pour 2012 n'a jamais atteint le taux de 4%, malgré qu'il dit lui-même que plus de 90% des mesures annoncées ont été mises en œuvre. La croissance n'était que de l'ordre de 3.3%. Le budget 2013 avait pour titre -

“Rising to the Challenges of a World in Transition.”

Et le Budget allait entre autres –

- *embrace technology and reinforce our Africa Strategy;*
- *support growth and create employment, and*
- *strengthen public services.*

Et fort de sa déception du taux de croissance de 2012, il n'avait pas osé avancer un chiffre pour 2013. Malgré cela, M. le président, certaines personnes lui ont donné le bénéfice du doute. Mais voilà, M. le président, il a annoncé lui-même que pour l'année 2013, le taux de croissance serait de l'ordre de 3.2% et il ose parler de *a good 3.2%*. Il me semble, M. le président, que ce gouvernement est très satisfait de son bilan, malgré que la croissance baisse encore une fois après 2012.

Parlons du budget 2014, M. le président ! Le ministre des Finances parle aujourd'hui de –

- *Building a Better Mauritius.*

- *Creating the Next Wave of Prosperity.*

Et pour réaliser ces objectifs, le ministre des Finances nous parle de sa stratégie.

- *Invigorate investment and growth, and*
- *Build a modern, inclusive and caring society.*

Aux dires du ministre, la prévision du taux de croissance pour 2014 sera mieux qu'en 2013 et est estimé entre 3.8% et 4%. Si en 2012, beaucoup de personnes ont cru et en 2013 on lui a donné le bénéfice du doute, pour le budget 2014, personne ne le croit plus, M. le président.

Tous les experts sont unanimes à dire qu'il faut voir pour croire. Annoncer des mesures c'est une chose, la mise en œuvre de ces mesures en est une autre. Et c'est bien là où ce gouvernement fait un tort immense à notre pays et aux générations à venir. Nous savons tous que notre pays a besoin d'une croissance soutenue de plus de 5% pour faire baisser le chômage et créer la richesse réelle. M. le président, nous avons cette capacité de le faire et nous l'avons fait déjà dans le passé.

Nos voisins en Afrique sont en train de réaliser une croissance de plus de 6%, voire même 14%. Les pays comme la Tanzanie, le Gabon et le Mozambique, qui, pas longtemps, étaient à la traîne, sont aujourd'hui des exemples à suivre.

M. le président, à la page 2 de son *Budget Speech*, on parle de l'économie domestique. Il dit, et je cite –

« *Domestic Economy - Remarkable Resilience in 2013.* »

A l'entendre encore parler d'une économie résiliente, je me pose la question : est-ce qu'il sait vraiment ce que veut dire ce terme « économie résiliente » ? Comment peut-on parler d'une économie résiliente quand la croissance ne dépasse pas le cap de 3,2% ? Comment peut-on parler d'une économie résiliente quand le chômage est en hausse continue et surtout parmi les jeunes ? Actuellement, il y a plus de 50,000 Mauriciens qui sont sans emploi dont 41% des jeunes ! Et n'ayant aucune solution à les offrir, ce gouvernement leur demande d'aller trouver du travail à l'étranger. Ce budget vient inciter les jeunes à aller trouver du travail en Afrique et, en même temps, encourager les étrangers à venir prendre de l'emploi chez nous en leur donnant encore plus de facilités en termes de baisse du coût de permis de travail et la possibilité d'acquérir des

biens immobiliers! Et on connaît quel impact cela a eu sur le prix de l'immobilier. C'est pour dire à quel point le gouvernement est à bout de souffle et n'a rien à proposer à nos jeunes.

Même Robin Sharma n'a pas pu inspirer nos dirigeants. Comment peut-on parler d'une économie résiliente, M. le président, quand l'investissement et l'épargne sont en baisse, moteurs même du développement d'un pays ? Sans investissements dans des secteurs productifs, il n'y aura point de création de la richesse et pas de création d'emploi. Comment peut-on parler d'une économie résiliente quand la dette publique a atteint un seuil alarmant, à tel point qu'on n'est pas loin d'entrer dans le *debt trap*, M. le président ? Plus de R 200 milliards de dette que nos jeunes vont devoir rembourser à l'avenir.

M. le président, comment peut-on parler d'une économie résiliente quand le nombre de familles vivant en dessous du seuil de pauvreté est en hausse ? D'après l'honorable ministre lui-même, aujourd'hui 8,000 familles se trouvent dans cette catégorie. En fait, M. le président, plus de 100,000 Mauriciens vivent aujourd'hui dans des conditions précaires dans cette île Maurice dite moderne. M. le président, comment peut-on parler d'une économie résiliente quand la confiance des entrepreneurs locaux est à son niveau le plus bas et trouvent que le pays souffre d'un manque de *leadership*.

Ce budget prévoit, encore une fois, des dépenses faramineuses dans des projets d'infrastructure pour doper la croissance. Mais on sait très bien qu'aussi longtemps que l'investissement n'est pas canalisé vers le secteur de la production, on va continuer à faire de *jobless growth* et notre problème de chômage restera entier et nos jeunes n'auront aucun avenir dans ce pays.

Pour résoudre nos problèmes, l'honorable Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances annonce la création de plusieurs *hubs*, notamment l'*aviation hub* qui inclut le *passenger hub* probablement pour faire prospérer le *Airway Coffee*, une compagnie basée à l'aéroport. Il parle aussi d'un *cargo hub*. Mais pas un mot sur l'*air access policy*. Comment peut-on développer l'*aviation hub* sans parler de ce fameux *air access policy* qui est la base même de ce développement?

Autre pôle de développement, M. le président, est le *petroleum hub*. On a connu le Betamax, Red Eagle et voilà Beta Oil qui va prendre son envol maintenant. Le ministre disait

que chacun se retrouve dans ce budget. Il parlait sûrement de cet entourage proche du pouvoir qui est en train d'accaparer tous les biens de l'Etat, M. le président.

Quelques années de cela le gouvernement avait annoncé un projet phare, le *Land Based Oceanic Project* qui allait devenir un nouveau pilier de l'économie. Plus rien ! Peut-être que c'est resté au fond de l'océan ! Ensuite est venu sur table le *Blue Economy*, mais encore une fois rien ! Cette fois-ci c'est l'*Ocean Economy*. Que de belles paroles, M. le président. Qui peut les prendre au sérieux cette fois-ci, M. le président ?

Pour développer le *Green Economy*, le gouvernement veut cultiver, sur une base commerciale, l'*Arundo Donax* plus connu comme *fatak* à Maurice, M. le président. La question que je me pose est : est-ce que l'avis des experts a été recherché ? Est-ce que les chercheurs du MSIRI, du FARC et autres institutions de recherches ont été consultés ? Il me semble que non, M. le président. On n'a qu'à faire une petite recherche sur le net et on trouvera les travaux de recherche d'un certain David A. Crouse, un *soil scientist* de North Carolina State University en Amérique du nord. Dans un de ses travaux de recherche, il parle de sa crainte de la cultivation à grande échelle de cette plante ; que cela peut représenter un danger réel pour l'écosystème car c'est une espèce envahissante. Je vais citer un extrait d'un rapport qui donne raison à ce scientifique de renom, Mr Crouse. Je cite -

“Crouse’s concerns resonate with those of officials in California, where *Arundo* is the subject of an eradication program in the state. *Arundo* was originally introduced in the U.S. for erosion control. A report from the California State Water Resources Control Board calls *Arundo* “an extremely problematic invasive plant characterised by extensive infestations and a range of severe impacts to both ecosystem and human infrastructure.” *Arundo* is a fast-growing plant that grows in dense stands, particularly in riparian areas – boundary areas between land and streams. Its high growth rate and productivity even on marginal croplands make it desirable as an energy crop for production of cellulosic ethanol. The Biofuels Center of North Carolina says that “*Arundo donax* can produce 20 dry tons per acre annually, making it one of the most productive of all energy biomass crops.” W. Steven Burke, CEO of the center, tells *The News and Observer* that *Arundo* is “a miracle plant in that you can grow it on less land and you get higher mass.”

But ecologist Sam Pearsall of the Environmental Defense Fund calls it “an amazingly dangerous plant” and says, “All it takes to propagate the stuff is for the stalk to fall down on the ground, and the nodes in the stalk put down roots and grow. The fact is that a hurricane or a flood is capable of taking *Arundo* vegetative matter all over the place.”

Voilà, M. le président, une plante qu’on veut introduire à Maurice dans le cas de ce *Green Economy* avec la vision du projet MID. Je me demande qui était à la base de ce projet.

On connaît déjà l’effet d’une plante envahissante comme la goyave de chine et comment notre forêt indigène a été affectée et combien de millions de roupies ont été dépensées pour empêcher la propagation de cette plante à Maurice. Si on aime notre pays et qu’on croît sincèrement au projet MID, il ne faudrait même pas penser à cultiver ce *Arundo donax*.

Et parlons de ressources humaines, M. le président, ce gouvernement parle de ‘*Put People First*’. Je me pose la question au ministre des Finances, qu’advient-il des employés et planteurs de ce secteur, qui est le secteur de la canne à sucre. Je me pose la question : est-ce qu’il y a des *vested interests* pour insister d’aller dans cette direction?

M. le président, j’avais dit plus tôt que ce Budget est en train de faire les pauvres et la classe moyenne payer pour les riches, et que c’est *un real rip-off Budget for the poor*. C’est la première fois à Maurice qu’un gouvernement a accordé une augmentation sur le ticket d’autobus sans que les compagnies d’autobus en aient fait une demande. M. le président, il y avait même certains opérateurs qui s’étaient opposés à cette augmentation. Mais comme un gouvernement irresponsable, une augmentation de 30% sur le ticket d’autobus a été imposée à la population. Et comme dit l’anglais: *adding insult to injury*, nous voilà pour remplacer les autobus de ces mêmes opérateurs, le gouvernement va leur faire un cadeau de R 1.6 millions par autobus comme subvention et exemption de la TVA. D’où sort cet argent, M. le président? De la poche de la population, et qui seront les plus pénalisés? Les gens pauvres et les gens de la classe moyenne bien sûr! Et ici, je pense aux personnes touchant plus de R 20,000 et aux employés de service civil et des corps paraétatiques qui ne recevront aucune compensation en janvier 2014.

Après la saga du *hedging*, où la population a dû casquer plus de R 5 milliard à cause de l’incompétence d’un ministre qui, soit dit en passant, s’il était dans un autre pays démocratique, il aurait eu à démissionner pour avoir fait autant souffrir cette population. Mais comme le ridicule et la médiocrité ne tuent pas, il est toujours ministre et continue à faire gaffes après

gaffes. R 1 sur chaque litre de carburant vendu sera casqué par les contribuables. Et qui va profiter de cette manne du gouvernement? Ce serait bon de savoir qui sont les actionnaires de certains opérateurs du secteur de transport et peut-être on pourra mieux comprendre le motif de cette mesure. Si cela n'est pas prendre des pauvres pour enrichir les riches, je ne sais pas ce que c'est, M. le président.

Le gouvernement dit encourager les opérateurs avec ces mesures pour renouveler leur flotte d'autobus et ce budget parle en même temps de l'arrivée imminente du métro léger. M. le président, est-ce une manière déguisée de transformer des autobus actuels pour éventuellement venir introduire ce qu'on appelle le *feeder buses* pour le métro ? Si c'est le cas, il faut le dire. Mais est-ce la population qui doit les subventionner ? Je ne le crois pas, M. le président.

L'année dernière on avait imposé à la population, mais surtout aux jeunes, une nouvelle taxe sur le SMS envoyé. Une taxe de 20% sur chaque SMS envoyé et le gouvernement avait découvert une nouvelle manne pour faire entrer de l'argent dans la caisse du gouvernement avec cette nouvelle mesure. Cette fois-ci le *Environment Protection Fee* sur les portables connaîtra une augmentation de 40% et pour rire, M. le président, les Smartphones coûtant moins de R 1,000 seront exemptés de cette taxe. Mais moi, je voudrais bien savoir où on peut trouver un Smartphone à moins de R 1,000.

Au final, M. le président, tout nouveau acquéreur d'un Smartphone devra subir cette augmentation de 40%. Encore une fois, M. le président, qui sont ceux qui vont subir plus de cet impact? Bien sûr, ceux au bas de l'échelle. Nous parlons encore de la classe moyenne, M. le président, sont-ils les dindons de la farce? Autre taxe verte dont nous parlons, M. le président, 25% de *duty* sur les climatiseurs domestiques, les sèche-linges et les lampes électriques, des produits dits *energy inefficient*. Mais on sait très bien qui sont ceux qui vont aller acheter ces équipements qui coûtent normalement moins cher. Bien évidemment, ce sont des gens avec des revenus faibles et surtout pas les *high income earners*.

Donc, voilà un autre moyen qui va appauvrir les gens vulnérables, M. le président. Par contre, les promoteurs des projets photovoltaïques connaîtront une baisse de 15% sur ces produits car le ministre annonçait que ces produits seront exemptés de la TVA. A qui profite cette mesure? Surement pas le petit peuple, M. le président.

L'année dernière, une nouvelle taxe avait été introduite. Deux sous sur chaque gramme de sucre que contient une boisson gazeuse. Cette taxe touche tous les consommateurs de boisson gazeuse sans distinction, et d'après les chiffres disponibles, R 170 millions sont rentrés dans la caisse du gouvernement et cette année-ci cette taxe connaîtra une augmentation de 50% et comme cette taxe est applicable à tous les consommateurs, encore une fois, ce sont les gens avec les revenus faibles qui vont sentir l'impact de cette augmentation. Et là, comme nous entrons dans la période festive, M. le président, cette hausse va peser lourd sur la bourse des petites gens et cette année-ci il est prévu que R 240 millions vont entrer dans la caisse du gouvernement à travers cette taxe.

L'année dernière, le ministre des Finances avait annoncé une baisse de *duty* sur les *vintage cars* et, l'année d'avant, le *duty* sur les voitures de grosses cylindrées du type Aston Martin, Ferrari et autre Porsche avait été revu à la baisse. Lors d'une inauguration d'un showroom d'un concessionnaire de voiture, le Premier ministre avait annoncé fièrement que c'était sur son instruction que cette baisse a été possible. Qui sont ceux qui ont bénéficié de cette baisse de *duty*? Sûrement pas les mauriciens moyens, M. le président, qui travaillent toute une vie pour pouvoir acheter une voiture pour leurs familles, une petite voiture.

Cette année, M. le président, le ministre des finances annonce que le *registration duty* au moment de transfert de *ownership* d'un véhicule connaîtra une augmentation de 30% avec effet immédiat indistinctement sur tous les véhicules, sauf les motocyclettes d'une capacité de moins de 250 CC. Ce gouvernement, M. le président, quand il s'agit d'offrir une concession, c'est toujours les riches qui sont visés et qui en profitent. Mais, quand il faut payer plus de *duty* ou de TVA, les vulnérables passent aussi à la caisse. M. le président, la cigarette et l'alcool connaissent le même sort chaque année. Le ministre avait annoncé une hausse de 5% sur tous ces produits, et à entendre les associations des consommateurs, les fumeurs et les consommateurs d'alcool vont connaître une hausse de 10%, ou même plus comme augmentation.

Une autre mesure qui devrait alléger le fardeau de la population d'après l'honorable ministre des Finances, M. le président, je parle du *Land Transfer Tax*. Auparavant, ceux qui faisaient de la spéculation foncière et vendaient leurs biens immobiliers dans une période de moins de cinq ans, le *Land Transfer Tax* était de 10% au lieu de 5% si c'était vendu après cinq ans. Ce budget, présenté par l'honorable ministre des Finances, vendredi dernier, vient

uniformiser le taux à 5% ; donc, au profit des spéculateurs fonciers, M. le président. Est-ce une mesure qui va profiter aux Mauriciens à faibles revenus ? Je ne le crois pas, M. le président.

Au moment où l'honorable ministre a annoncé qu'il allait reclassifier certains produits alimentaires comme le thé, le lait, le fromage, le miel ainsi de suite, du statut de *VAT exempt* au *VAT zero-rated*, les membres de la majorité étaient en train de jubiler. Peut-être ils se disaient 'enfin une bonne nouvelle pour les consommateurs.' Mais non, M. le président ! Cette reclassification ne va nullement impacter sur le prix, car il n'y avait pas de TVA sur ces produits. Mais, les seuls bénéficiaires seront les supermarchés/hypermarchés qui vont pouvoir réclamer plus d'*input tax* et, donc, encore faire grossir leur profitabilité. La plupart de ces petites boutiques du coin ne vont pas bénéficier, car elles ne sont pas *VAT registered*, M. le président.

Comment peut-on dire que c'est un budget qui va alléger le fardeau de la population de ce pays ? On nous a imposé une augmentation de 50% sur la redevance télé, et même si la majorité des Mauriciens ont un dégoût de notre MBC national, on doit payer les R 150 chaque mois. Alors, je demande comment l'honorable ministre peut-il convaincre la population que c'est un budget pour le petit peuple, et qu'il va améliorer leur pouvoir d'achat. Toutes ces mesures vont dans la direction d'appauvrir davantage la classe moyenne et ceux au bas de l'échelle, M. le président. Ce n'est surtout pas avec ces mesures qu'on va *build un modern inclusive and caring society*. Bien au contraire, M. le président, l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres va agrandir de plus en plus.

M. le président, après les gaspillages dont font état les différents rapports du Directeur de l'Audit, je m'attendais à voir des mesures concrètes afin d'éliminer les gaspillages des fonds publics. Mettre sur place un *Board of Enquiry* comme indiqué au paragraphe 347 n'aboutira à rien, quand on connaît le sort de l'*Equal Opportunities Commission* et le *Competition Commission*.

Tout récemment, le *Public Accounts Committee* avait fait certaines propositions pour renforcer l'*accountability*, et pour qu'il y ait plus de transparence et de *oversight*. Moi-même, ici, j'ai demandé récemment à ce que chaque ministère prépare et soumette leur compte mensuel, comme cela se fait en Inde. Cela va permettre de prendre des mesures correctives à temps. Mais rien de tout ça, M. le président. On connaît la position du Premier ministre. Il avait même osé

critiquer publiquement les observations faites dans le rapport de l'audit l'année dernière. Donc, on ne peut pas s'attendre à une amélioration dans la manière dont les fonds publics sont gérés.

M. le président, on parle beaucoup du secteur de l'*ICT* comme un secteur porteur et aussi pourvoyeur d'emplois, et cela fait des années qu'on parle d'un manque de personnel qualifié dans ce secteur; un *mismatch*. Et le ministre responsable avait déclaré qu'il avait trouvé la solution en instituant l'*ICT Academy*. Combien d'années ont passé, et toujours rien de cet *ICT Academy*. On n'a toujours pas trouvé l'oiseau rare pour diriger cette académie, et entretemps les opportunités passent sous notre nez.

M. le président, chaque année *Mauritius Telecom* rend public son bilan financier et déclare des profits par milliards, et ce n'est que maintenant que le régulateur, l'*ICTA*, découvre que des abonnés des *packages* d'internet sont en train d'être volés. On paye gros pour un *package* d'un *megabyte*, deux *megabytes*, mais on sait très bien qu'on n'a pas le service qu'il faut. Et ce budget vient reconnaître qu'il y a vraiment un abus.

Le paragraphe 235 parle que les ISPs devront garantir ce *minimum service* dorénavant ; c'est bien. Mais comment est-ce qu'ils vont *monitor* et s'assurer que les abonnés reçoivent les services qu'il faut, pour lesquels ils payent gros ? Cela n'est pas dit, M. le président. Mais j'espère que le ministre concerné, lors de son intervention, nous donnera plus de détails ; quel système de contrôle qu'ils vont mettre en place pour que ces vols qui se font en plein jour cessent une fois pour toutes, M. le président.

Je voudrais quand même parler de quelques projets concernant ma circonscription, M. le président. En mai de cette année-ci, j'avais abordé, à l'heure de l'ajournement, l'état pitoyable dans lequel se trouve le lieu de crémation du village de Vieux Grand Port, et le ministre m'avait informé que les travaux de réaménagement allaient débiter incessamment. Ce n'est que maintenant que le budget prévoit ces travaux. Comme on dit : mieux vaut tard que jamais. Mais j'espère que les travaux vont débiter au début de 2014, et pas à la fin de l'année 2014.

A la page 47, paragraphe 403, je vois qu'une somme de R 30 millions. est allouée aux travaux ayant trait au glissement de terrain à Chitrakoot et Vallée Pitot, et aussi pour le relogement des familles de Quatre Sœurs. R 30 millions pour ces trois projets - je sais que dans le village de Quatre Sœurs, il y a une quinzaine de familles qui sont affectées à cause du glissement de terrain et, ici-même, j'avais posé une *PQ* il n'y pas longtemps et j'avais même

sollicité, aux noms de ces familles concernées, une rencontre avec le responsable du ministère concerné pour trouver des solutions à la satisfaction de tous. Malheureusement, le ministère n'a jamais répondu. J'espère, sincèrement, que le relogement de ces familles ne va pas prendre le temps que cela a pris comme dans le cas des habitants de Mare Chicose.

A la page 53, paragraphe 450, mention est faite que quatre nouveaux terrains de foot vont être construits, dont un à Anse Jonchée. Pas plus tard que mardi dernier, à l'heure de l'ajournement, j'ai fait mention des travaux de réaménagement du terrain de foot de Saint Hilare et Quatre Sœurs qui sont en cours depuis plus de trois ans et qui ne sont toujours pas terminés. Construire un nouveau terrain, j'espère prendra moins de temps, M. le président.

Donc, pour conclure, M. le président, ce budget n'a convaincu personne, sauf quelques *happy few*. Rien dans le court terme et moyen terme pour vraiment soulager les souffrances des mauriciens et ce n'est certainement pas la réintroduction des football clubs traditionnels qui va construire une vraie nation mauricienne.

Merci, M. le président.

At 7.33 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.04 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr J. Seetaram): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me at the very outset to congratulate my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the excellent Budget which he has presented to the nation, and I should say that this Budget is totally in line with the vision of making Mauritius a *nation d'entrepreneurs* and this Budget has all the ingredients that can stir Mauritius into a new era of prosperity. In the field of business and enterprise, this Budget is in total harmony with the vision of the hon. Prime Minister to make Mauritius a *nation d'entrepreneurs* and also for our future generation, our future youth, and this is by no means no hollow slogan, but a dream come true through the measures announced in this Budget.

But, without coming to the basically different opinions – and, obviously, we have had different criticisms, it is a fair game - on the other side, obviously, they should criticise, they should have criticisms and we do welcome constructive criticisms, and we do also welcome

appreciation on the other side of the House. Whereas, concerning some criticisms which really do make us think, and it really makes one think about it, when someone comes and says that there is nothing in this Budget for the population and *rien pour alléger le fardeau des plus démunis*. I don't know which Budget hon. Seeruttun has read, whether it was one between 2000 and 2005.

When you look at this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the measures which really *frappe une personne qui est concernée, ce sont tous les problèmes de dettes que beaucoup de personnes ont parmi la population en général - première chose*.

Et deuxième chose, cette attention qui a été donnée à nos frères et sœurs qui sont malades et aussi pour nos frères et sœurs qui n'ont pas pu même avoir un dépôt pour construire une maison et, bien sûr, pour les entrepreneurs ou les *entrepreneurs to be* qui ont eu des facilités, je dois dire, historiques. Venir faire de la politique, qui est pour ma part, de mauvaise foi et venir dire qu'il n'y a rien pour les démunis ! Si on regarde le paragraphe 63 du budget, on voit tout de suite comment le ministre des Finances a su venir de l'avant avec telle mesure qui est révolutionnaire.

Auparavant on n'a jamais pu proposer une mesure pareille et quand je me réfère à ce paragraphe, on voit bien que concerning the unscrupulous bankers, there was no consideration whatsoever for the plight of the poor, and mostly my friends who have been at the Bar and who are also practising would know the plight. Coming with a measure, that is, we call it the *in duplum* rule, where it takes out the person who is entwined into the vicious circle of indebtedness, I think the Minister of Finance and Economic Development deserves our congratulations.

Also, the measure says that at the point where the accumulated interest reaches the capital outstanding, there is no further penalty interest to be paid and I believe that is a measure that has been very much welcomed from the whole of the population. Hon. Seeruttun is talking about la population *se révolte. Mais non!* We even take the intervention of one of these plight representatives, I should say for the past years, who *a militité pour cette cause*. Mr Salim Muthy, himself said that such a measure has been very much welcomed. So, such proposals are very much in bad faith, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Secondly, concerning the comment on the economic growth of Mauritius comparing with other African nation, but one thing that hon. Seeruttun has failed to mention is, he did not mention *per capita* of other African countries, while comparing the economic growth of Mauritius to those of other countries. He even failed to give the figures. The 4-digit figure of Mauritius *per capita* 9,500 compared to new countries which have just emerged for the block with 3-digit *per capita*, I think it is unfair as comments.

Further, I believe coming again to say that there is nothing in this Budget for the vulnerable, when we have this measure that last year, the patients who are inoperable in Mauritius and are sent abroad, which was last year increased to Rs500,000 and this year it has been increased to Rs800,000.

I believe this is also commendable and all the credit goes to the good office of hon. Lormus Bundhoo. I should say we have good Ministers of Health down the years – except for the Medpoint *parenthèse* in 2011. But excellent measures were taken and we see even the specialised care that has emerged, *Technologie de pointe dans la santé*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, those hollow slogans coming to say nothing has been done *pour alléger le fardeau*, I believe this should be put in a corner, rightly and simply.

On the other side, when we see all those measures, concerning the housing sector, as just mentioned by hon. Dr. Abu Kasenally, where you have people who cannot even put together a downpayment to start a house on their own. Now they are being given the opportunity of only putting 5% and 95% is going to come in the form of a loan. I believe this is an exceptional opportunity. On top of that, the VAT refundable for the construction of those residential units is refundable up to Rs300,000. So, these are exceptional measures that this Government came up with and I believe such measures are excellent.

Here again, it was pointed out - and was underpinning the fact that Mauritians should not be going abroad to work, downplaying Mauritians who are going abroad to work. But there is nothing wrong in going abroad to work. For any Mauritian, even myself, I did work abroad. Friends, colleagues, even hon. Members of this august Assembly went abroad to work; hon. Obeegadoo went to UNESCO, hon. Uteem went to Singapore, and I too. So, there is nothing shameful in working abroad. So, why character assassinating that argument? This argument of

underpinning and also putting down all the good measures that this Government came up with, I believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this should be given very less consideration, if not at all.

Let me come to the crux of my speech where, the Government, which is fully conscious of the socioeconomic important of SMEs, has continuously and systematically laid down the building blocks that would provide our enterprises with the necessary framework and instrument that can allow them to compete in the global market to thrive and to go.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Some silence, please!

Mr Seetaram: This year's Budget, as rightly stated by my colleague, is the final chapter of the Marshall Plan for our SMEs. If I can sum it up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2005, we have one Prime Minister and one clear vision. We have adopted different approaches, but we are all marshaled around one single cause: making Mauritius a *nation d'entrepreneurs*.

Looking back on the path, we have travelled, we can appreciate the importance of having a long-term perspective on development and change. It is people acting together with a common vision that connects the past to the present and makes a better future. SMEs are critical to the economic transformation of this country and they have played and will play an important role in fostering growth, employment and also in diversifying and democratising our economy.

SMEs are also important in stimulating innovation and act as stabilisers of growth during an economic slowdown. SMEs bring to the economy numerous factors, creation of new jobs, of new employment, like I said, economic diversification, economic democratisation and it improves exports and balance of payments.

As at today, the contribution of SMEs to this economy has been 40% of our GDP, more than Rs140 billion worth of output and they give employment and provide a living to 54% of the total working population, that is, around 255,000 men and women. As the House is already aware...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin and hon. Hossen, please!

Mr Seetaram: ... recent years have been very severe and the impact on SMEs has been even more severe. SMEs had fewer defences against economic downturn and it is also very sad when Members of the other side say that nothing has been done for SMEs by this Government.

Let me enumerate now. I seize this opportunity to enumerate all that this Government has been doing for SMEs. With a view to enable SMEs to face problems encountered, this Government has put into place ambitious packages, policies to cover almost every aspect of SME development and requirement for growth. Tailor-made financial instruments have been designed to suit the convenience of SMEs, specifically.

Recently to help SMEs to become more resilient, namely, to have more access to finance, more credit facilities, more access to markets, technology and industrial space. What is extremely important to highlight is that access to finance has been one of the most challenging aspects for SMEs, and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has understood it very early.

The high cost of credit was dangerously stifling the drive of entrepreneurs. It was threatening growth, profitability and even competitiveness of the sector itself. In order to remedy the situation, this Government has put in place several schemes aimed at maintaining the flow of credit to SMEs, improving their access to capital. Just to name a few -

- the RWG Credit Financing Scheme,
- the SME Financing Scheme;
- the Equity Participation in enterprises;
- the Import Loan Facility;
- the SME Partnership Fund;
- Booster Micro Credit Loan Scheme,
- Quasi-Equity Financing Scheme, and
- Business Development Scheme.

For agriculture there are the -

- Special Loan Scheme for Agricultural Sector;
- normal scheme for agricultural sector and, recently,
- the SME's Credit Guarantee Schemes, and now,

- the loan to MMSMEs without guarantee.

I will come to that later.

Even now I am going to cite a few figures as, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, figures do not lie. Let me cite some figures from which we can measure the extent of the assistance provided to SMEs.

For loans and other credit facilities to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises -

- a total of 11,281 loans for a global amount of Rs2.1 billion to the SME sector approved for the period starting July 2005 up to July 2013.
- The amount disbursed was Rs1.99 billion.
- for Micros, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 3,800 loans were approved for a total amount of Rs257.1 m.

Concerning financial support for the Agricultural sector, I heard hon. Seeruttun saying that nothing has been done for the agricultural sector.

Financial support for the agricultural sector during the period July 2005 to June 2013 -

- 13,796 loans were approved for an amount of Rs1.13 billion for the sector.
- Rs1.05 billion disbursed during the same period.
- Altogether an overall number of 28,877 loans were approved and the amount disbursed was Rs3.29 billion for that period.

Secondly, concerning the restructuring working group only for SMEs 612 with an amount of Rs5.80 billion has been approved to date. The amount disbursed was Rs3.83 billion.

As announced in the Budget 2012, the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme, after the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has lengthily dealt with banks and that the banks had directed money to the right sources, a total of 1,073 enterprises have been financially assisted for that amount and the total amount being Rs1.2 billion only for the period of January to September 2013. Over the whole period of the scheme, 1,889 enterprises have been assisted and a total amount of Rs2.467 billion was disbursed.

Further, in 2012 there was another special scheme with Rs200 m. for those having a turnover of up to Rs10 m., that is, for the Micros. The total amount available would thus be

altogether Rs6 billion. In this Budget, the exceptional and revolutionary measure altogether is the new loan for SMEs where the collateral guarantee has been removed altogether for MSMEs for the purpose of a loan. That is, for those having a turnover of under Rs10 m., there is no collateral, there is no need to go and mortgage your house, your land or your assets. You come with your project and you get your loan without guarantee or collateral.

Some have the argument that there is a guarantee for 70%. No! In remote cases of default, obviously the Government has said, okay, commercial banks will give 70%. Surveys have it that for such types of loans the possibility of having defaults is very low. It is not for such types of loans. This concept has been introduced altogether a few years back in India and it has worked really well. Today, we have it here. It is a revolutionary measure, a very courageous scheme that has been put by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. All the congratulations go to him, his team and also to the Permanent Secretary and the team of my Ministry as they have worked really hard to come up with such a measure.

Secondly, many entrepreneurs who have brilliant ideas come with innovative projects, but their innovative projects stay only as projects. They do not take effect and they do not become reality. Why? Because they do not have any collateral or any guarantee to offer. But, now with this measure banks will be able to help and provide such loans.

Since my assumption of office, I had noted this missing link in our palette of products and this missing link was the collateral free loan to deserving entrepreneurs who had brilliant innovative ideas, viable projects and good business plans. Today, this Government has corrected this lacuna. It is now possible for them to access finance and make their projects become a reality without having to provide such collateral upfront.

Again, such amount that has been put forward is to the tune of Rs750 m. and will be dedicated to Micros and Small Enterprises over the next three years. I am confident that such a scheme that has been put forward would boost our SME sector, especially in the segment of Micro and Small Enterprises.

Again, concerning access to technology that is another segment which has been given much thought by the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, more specifically, the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme where, in the field of technological and innovative

improvements, the MBGS which has become the institution of reference in respect of enterprise growth has provided assistance to more than 800 enterprises.

Mentoring and handholding activities have been ongoing and 194 enterprises have benefitted from the assistance under the 90:10 Payback scheme and the Start-up Entrepreneurship Scheme.

I should mention that the total value of the above scheme is about Rs225 m. that have already been approved and the rest is currently being assessed and further mentoring is being provided prior to finalisation of the growth scheme.

Again, concerning access to technology, the SME Resource and Technology Centre, the SRTC! In order for SMEs to remain competitive, they should be encouraged to attain and meet higher standards and become quality-oriented.

Also the other aim, that is, the ability for the individual entrepreneur to absorb, to assimilate and to improve technology has been given much boost and the SMEDA has established an SRTC which acts as a knowledge hub, providing all necessary resources to SMEs for effectively doing business.

Another limb is the coaching and the support provided to those entrepreneurs.

Again, another step taken since I assumed office was the provision of a Statistical Unit for SMEs. When I assumed office, I noted that one of the omissions was a lack of updated statistics relating to different aspects of SMEs.

I, therefore, decided to address this omission, and since May 2013, a Statistical Unit manned by qualified personnel from Statistics Mauritius is fully operational at the SMEDA and much progress has been achieved so far. Like I said, statistics are the showroom for progress in the entrepreneurship sector.

Concerning the access to markets which is one of the main constraints, this has affected the development of SMEs and as such has been given the necessary attention.

In order to facilitate access to markets, my Ministry has organised 48 joint SME/Cooperative Fairs around the island.

In addition, that is, over and above, the SMEDA has organised five fairs during 2013 with the participation of 406 entrepreneurs. Moreover, craft shops operated by the SMEDA notably at -

- the SSR International Airport;
- Mahebourg;
- the Port Louis Waterfront, and
- Plaine Corail Airport.

These craft shops have served as useful platforms to some 120 artisans/SMEs for the marketing and sale of locally manufactured products.

The exhibition centre at SMEDA, itself, with the objective of showcasing locally manufactured products, above all to representatives of hotels and foreigners, has registered so many visitors for the period only January to October 2013.

Another measure which I believe is extremely beneficial for entrepreneurs is the provision of these free websites for SMEs. This would give them a tool, a very efficient tool, for them to be visible, for interaction. This new measure for visibility has a second limb to it where if one entrepreneur thinks that he might need a more sophisticated website costing up to Rs6,000, he shall get a subsidy of 50%.

Another very important measure is the procurement for SMEs and, I believe, that this has been a very good example of democratisation. Before it was 6% - the procurement up to 6% - SMEs were allowed to have procurements at the Government level. Now, the Public Sector is leading the way by giving for example, by the end of 2013 an estimated 11% of the total procurement for SMEs and the target in three years is 20%. So, basically, it is a very good example of democratisation.

In this respect, the bidding document would be simplified and training sessions will be held by the Public Procurement Office to upgrade the skills of small entrepreneurs in filling their bidding documents. Thus, giving the opportunity to SMEs to grow, democratise the access to procurement. We don't only rely on large enterprises, big enterprises, on the traditional enterprises to have access to procurement for the State, but giving the opportunity to SMEs also and the target that has been laid down by the Minister of Finance in three years' time; that is,

20%, one fifth, for the total goods and services concerning only procurement for Government, I believe it is a very commendable measure.

Further, going forward, again, with the vision of the Prime Minister concerning democratisation of the economy! Much democratisation has been given to the district contractors. We had a list before of some district contractors, but now with this new measure we have new SMEs coming in, new SME contractors coming in with this new measure. I shall commend the President of the Association of SME Contractors, Mr Sam, who has, I should say, fought really hard for this measure to be implemented and I don't think the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Anil Bachoo, would say the contrary because democratising district contractors has been one of the fights that has been undertaken by that association of contractors which has gone through very hard path over the past years.

There is also another measure which the National Inclusive Business Award which I want to associate with the private sector. However, we want it to be a voluntary venture. It is in this particular context that we are launching this National Inclusive Business Award and the whole point is to reward those enterprises which have fully integrated with SMEs in their supply chain and also, doing some outsourcing. So, basically encouraging larger enterprises to take with them, to include with them, SMEs to work along in the supply chain, and we are starting with the National Inclusive Business Award.

Secondly, the access to the industrial space; this has been a major headache, I should say, for the past years, where obviously we have carpenters, those doing manufacturing in the fabrication of aluminium stuff. All of them had several complaints concerning the space for them to be able to perform their activity.

Usually, when they did perform their activity, there were a lot of complaints, nuisance complaints on the part of neighbours, and this question has been addressed. Several spaces have been earmarked. The last one inaugurated was in La Tour Koenig. For the next one, tender has already been approved; one in Solitude, and one in Plaine Magnien. This is real access to industrial space. The construction of 55 new industrial units at Roche Bois and La Tour Koenig, like I said, has been completed. The one at Bambous, La Valette, is nearing completion, and like I mentioned, there is also Solitude and Plaine Magnien.

Precisely, all the measures put together have provided the means for our enterprises, our SMEs to be more resilient and to drive through rough waves in such an economic climate. Our SMEs have been able to navigate successfully during difficult days, and I believe they should be congratulated for their hard work. I should also provide some statistics relating to SMEs, where we see that there has been a growth in the SME sector, most precisely in the GDP, where in 2002 the contribution of SMEs to GDP was 31.1% only. In 2007, due to bold and daring measures, it went up to 38.8%, and in 2012 it stood at 39.2%.

Employment in the SMEs sector, percentage of the total employment was at 47% in 2002. It went up to 51% in 2007, and that figure has demonstrated an increase to 54% in 2012. The assistance compiled for SMEs amounts to 32,378 enterprises which have been assisted under different schemes concerning the SMEs sector altogether; from 2005 to 2013. That is a total assistance of Rs12.1 billion, which has been approved, and Rs9.8 billion already disbursed. Like I said, the figures do not lie. They reflect the blunt and stark truth, and such measures have contributed significantly to enhance the status of SMEs as an essential element of our economic structure. I would point out that, obviously, unfair criticisms, mostly of bad faith, would tell you that nothing has been done, that these figures are not correct; like my good friend on the other side who is not present, hon. Li Kwong Wing, who is a bright and seasoned economist. But I did not know that his economics and entrepreneurship teacher was none other than Amar Deepalsing. This is the impression I was under, on Tuesday, when the hon. Member quoted comments in full in a daily newspaper. He said that –

« C'est un long discours pour ne pas dire grand-chose. Il n'y a rien de nouveau. »

Well, we have heard the figures; they speak for themselves. This comment being only sensationalistic. The fact that another Rs2 m. have been voted for the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme for the next two years, amounting to a total of Rs5 m., spanning over a period of five years, *is rien de nouveau!* The fact that Rs750 m. of loans will be provided to micros and small enterprises, without the need for collateral or any third party guarantee, for the next three years, *is rien de nouveau!* The fact that that the Government has doubled its procurement for SMEs in one year, to be increased to 20% for the next three years, *is rien de nouveau!* The democratisation of the district contractors *is rien de nouveau!* *Il n'y a pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir, M. le président.*

To sustain my argument, I shall refer to the analysis made in Business Magazine, where BDO Chartered Accountants refer to SMEs that have been well looked after with measures that will give them a much needed scope for expansion as the engine of growth. The analysis by Grant Thornton, - ‘A visionary Budget’, where it states –

“The choice of the four pillars identified by the Minister to turn Mauritius into a ‘land of opportunity’ (...).”

And also supporting SMEs to boost the economy, it states -

“In continuation of the drive started last year, this Budget relies on a larger pool of entrepreneurs to drive the economy rather than relying on the usual, traditional “big wigs”. The average population has been invited to the party (...) it is up to them to perform!”

Also, analysis of the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by Ernst and Young, which states –

“In order to enhance visibility of small businesses, the Government will provide free basic website to all small and medium enterprises; more elaborate web sites costing up to Rs6,000 will be subsidised.”

And went on to mention further measures concerning the SMEs. Again, analysis: *les petits entrepreneurs au premier plan de l’agenda gouvernemental*, where the Chief Executive Officer of McMillan Woods stated –

« *Il ne cache pas sa satisfaction à la lecture des mesures budgétaires. Ce sont de bonnes mesures qui aideront à propulser les petites et aussi les micro-entreprises.* »

Also, funny enough, we have even Mr Amar Deerpalsing applauding the measures, where he, himself, stated –

« *Nous saluons le renouvellement du Refund Scheme.* »

Il encourage la participation des PME dans les salons internationaux.

« *Je suis satisfait que certaines initiatives de ce genre ont été renouvelées.* »

And also several other measures being commended in the analysis. Again, last but not the least, Mr Swaraj Uchit, Partner at Nexia –

« Les décisions prises en faveur des PME lors des trois derniers budgets constituent effectivement un plan marshall. L'accès au financement des PME a été démocratisé, et bien sûr, de ce fait, les PME n'auront pas à fournir la garantie constituant un obstacle à leur développement, dans le but de réduire davantage le coût qu'il revient des espaces qu'ils ont aménagés. »

So, there is altogether in the business community a sense of trust, a sense of hope, a sense of satisfaction concerning measures for SMEs in this Budget. And like I said for all those reasons, I am sure that the SME community at large will share my point of view, and the list is long and non exhaustive. I am not pretentious in claiming that, never - I repeat, never - has any Government done so much for the SMEs, and this is real democratisation of the economy under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

Secondly, let me move on to the Cooperative Division. As Minister of Business Enterprise and Cooperatives, I wish to underline that cooperators are also acclaiming the Budget, and it is a known fact that, 99% of all cooperatives have individual turnover of less than Rs50 m. and, *de facto*, as per definition of enterprise as per the SMEDA Act, they may avail themselves of the array of facilities and support enumerated for small and medium enterprises development.

The 2014 Budget is indeed creating a new wave of prosperity, not only for the small entrepreneurs but also for our cooperators and the cooperative movement in general.

As the House is aware, the cooperatives are democratic self-help institutions, which, similarly to the Government, are guided by the motto of putting people at the heart of the economic decision-making and at the centre of development.

Moreover, the DNA of Cooperatives contains values such as solidarity, equity, fairness, social responsibility and sustainability.

Cooperatives offer an alternative way of doing business, which better answers our national goals such as democratisation, poverty alleviation, employment opportunities, inclusive growth and effective empowerment.

May I remind the House that last year we had earmarked the UN International Year of Cooperatives, whereas this year has equally been eventful as we are still celebrating the 100 years of cooperatives in Mauritius.

Both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, cooperatives operate in over 30 different sectors, the main ones being agriculture (sugarcane and vegetable production, fruit production), livestock, fish, consumer, credit union, and handicraft. These are measures that obviously would benefit cooperatives, as I already mentioned, such as free website, overseas marketing missions, loan to MSMEs without guarantee.

Now, I will come to the Agro-industry sector and the impact on the cooperatives sector. Planters and farmers would also benefit from the Rs400 m. for FORIP to carry out derocking in 2014; therefore, increasing the productivity of cooperatives and providing derocking, land preparation and replanting services.

Also, the Rs30 m. for the continuation of the Compost Subsidy Scheme to the benefit of all planters to improve land yield, thus reducing the cost of fertilisers and operating costs of farmers in the agricultural cooperatives. There is also a new promotion for organic fertilisers leading to organic production in cooperatives.

Again, sugarcane planters grouped in cooperatives will continue to benefit from the measure provided for the sugarcane planters to remain in the sugarcane sector, which today is facing so many challenges. The Bank of Mauritius will provide Rs1.3 billion to maintain the advance payment of 80% made on delivery to the sugar factories.

Another revolutionary measure is the LEMS. The LEMS equipment leasing facilities under the Planters' Harvests Scheme is extended for another year. The measure concerning the Rs3 m. to set up the Natural Plant Varieties and Seed Office within the Ministry of Agro-Industry is also beneficial for the cooperatives sector. This is a new sector where cooperatives will have many opportunities. This measure would also help in achieving food sufficiency.

To tackle the problem of increasing losses incurred by fruit growers, Rs4 m. are provided to cover 75% of the purchase price of bat nets. As such, it would help cooperatives who are engaged in fruit production, and they will benefit highly from this measure. Why do I say that? Because lots of cooperators who are traditionally doing fruits, they have moved into agribusiness, now doing crystallised fruits, that is, processing the fruits into crystallised fruits, selling them to lots of markets, like Winners and so on, and even now they have started doing premarket testing.

Premarket testing is also subsidised by this Government up to Rs25,000 and they have also recently showcase their products, that is, crystallised fruits from Mauritius in *La foire* in La Reunion.

Another measure, provision for freight rebate scheme for horticulture exports from Rs10 m. to Rs15 m. Again, this will benefit cooperatives, and this measure will definitely encourage more cooperatives to export fruits and vegetables, thus reducing the operation cost of cooperatives. And now, we have altogether two cooperatives which are exploring the exportation of pineapples to fair trade markets. They are beneficiaries of the premium allocated to the fair trade market.

Again, I am encouraging cooperatives to modernise their activities and increase production. Coming to livestock, animal breeders will benefit from the scheme implemented under the Food Security Fund and also making use of the bio-fertiliser scheme. Moreover, the federation itself, the Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation is presently importing bio-fertiliser and with the technical and financial support of an Indian Cooperative, it is planning to set up a bio-fertiliser plant in Mauritius by April 2014.

We have another measure for the cooperatives for pig breeders. Rs4 m. has been allocated for a *salle de découpe*. Another measure which, I believe, my friend and colleague, hon. Minister Von-Mally has been toiling upon is the fisheries and aquaculture. I believe that around 35 cooperatives have applied for the cage culture, the fish cage. So, around 35 have expressed their intention to embark on the aquaculture project and, obviously, the floating cages will benefit all the members of such cooperatives. A sum of Rs5 m. is being provided to triple the pace of replenishment of our lagoons by increasing the number of fingerlings released to one million in 2014. Thus, improving the fish stocks, and also encouraging off lagoon fishing.

Government will further provide a 50% grant on the purchase of off lagoon canoe up to an amount of Rs200,000 per canoe. Sir, such measures will obviously motivate many fishermen cooperatives to opt for off lagoon fishing, which is in line with the Blue Economy.

And last but not the least, concerning Women Cooperative Sector, a financial assistance of Rs500,000 is given to the Mauritius Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative Federation (MWEFCF); this is a yearly financing.

This Budget will continue to support women empowerment through cooperatives, that is, policy being women empowerment through cooperatives.

In order to address the limited access to markets of women cooperators, the MWEFC has set up a sales outlet in Port Louis. The financial assistance will be used by the federation to continue financing the shop, trade licence, insurance and other expenses. And also, the grant will be used to empower, assist the capacity building of women cooperatives, and provide other marketing outlets. I shall here congratulate my friend and colleague, hon. Mrs Martin, where 40% of the women entrepreneurs have been going to the National Women Entrepreneurs Council. I believe that cooperatives have got lots to gain in such a Budget. Difficulties have arisen for the enforcement and also for non-compliant societies, and now such lacunas have been addressed in the new legislation. I also have to mention that Mauritius Excellence Award for Cooperatives has been launched, with the main objective to find those societies excelling in all fields of cooperatives. The model is unique, as it caters for continued improvement from top management to support sector level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, I should obviously mention that these measures have been very much inspired. I should not forget all the members of the staff and everybody who have toiled very hard for such measures, and I cannot forget my constituency. I wish to thank Ministers who have worked really hard, as well as both colleagues, namely first, the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Anil Bachoo - TGV - for the inauguration of Mont Ida football ground, as well as lighting at Bramsthan and GRSE, and second, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Utilities. Four water pumps have been installed in the constituency so as to alleviate the problem of water.

I also wish to thank the one and only hon. Minister Deva Virahsawmy, who has given great help, together with my friend, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Anil Bachoo, for the GRSE waterfront, which is a major project. If you remember, in GRSE, the quay itself was in a derelict state. I should thank the Minister for having given all the help he could.

In the end, I would say that making Mauritius a *nation d'entrepreneurs*, which is a vision of the hon. Prime Minister, the base of which has been very well set, is a dream which is coming true, and this dream is not going to be too long to be true.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

(10.05 p.m.)

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, after having heard all the *intervenants* on this Budget, I feel one needs to have a sense of humour to be able to last the pace, especially in view of the last orator having taken us for a long, long ride. But, I promise that I will not try to get even by keeping your attention that long.

I will take one sentence from my good friend, hon. Thierry Henry, who said yesterday, when he was intervening on the Budget 'health is wealth.' Health is not wealth. In Mauritius, there is no health without wealth. The way things are going right now, I am quite grateful to and will show a lot of gratitude to the Minister of Finance for his contribution to the chapter on health in this Budget. A major health contribution has been to increase the assistance to patients inoperable in Mauritius from Rs500,000 to Rs800,000, and we have to be grateful for that. The only thing I have to remind him is that, very often, you have people who need to be operated more than once; who need to go back and be reviewed, and for these people who are going to be reviewed, there is no money available.

Apart from that, when I see the input that has come in from the Ministry of Health towards this Budget - because this Budget carries the title 'Budget of the Government of Mauritius' - one needs, Mr Speaker, Sir, to have a sense of humour to be able to digest the amount of loose statements made in the pages of this Budget. For example, cancer is the modern disease of our society. I would not like to see anybody afflicted with cancer in any way, and this Budget gives it six lines! Only six lines! And all you are going to have at the end of the day is a National Cancer Agency, which is going to be set up under the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care. Cancer needs to be treated in its own right.

There needs to be something done out here. MPs from both sides of the House need to be able to go out; and when we meet somebody who has got cancer, at least, we should have some form of information, some form of guidance that we can offer these patients. Right now, none of us have any idea, except that there is a Cancer Ward which is a disastrous Ward in Victoria Hospital, though the Minister having recently promised a decentralisation of the services. But the decentralisation lies only with outpatients. The machines cannot be moved. They are often broken down; far too often. You should see the plight of the patient who comes to the Cancer

Ward for treatment as an outpatient. He spends the whole day out there. And if you want a ward which is depressing, a Gulag Archipelago, go to the Cancer Ward in Victoria Hospital. I should know because I have seen it for a long while. While we do not even have the decency to introduce a good programme for cancer, we turn left and look at diabetes.

Diabetes seems to be the general word that you introduce in any Budget when you have nothing else to add. In Mauritius, we have leading specialists of every type in diabetes; leading surgeons, leading physicians, leading ophthalmologists. We have had the NCD programme for years! Mauritius has become a medical tourist hub, with medical specialists turning up from all over the world, to kind of teach us how to run diabetes. An exam has been introduced recently and I would wish that the Minister gets these specialists to write this exam as well, and we will see how many pass. Because, they do not know our local situation! I am speaking under the correction of the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Beebeejaun, for whom I have a lot of respect medically, and the hon. Minister, Dr. Bunwaree, a leading cardiologist. They can probably say that we have the talent in Mauritius to help our countrymen, that we do not need to be at the mercy of medical mercenaries - and I am choosing my words rightly - who turn up in this country just for the fun of it. And with no great changes in our diabetic results at the end of the day. You cannot keep coming up with diabetes again as a priority. This year, we will have a National Diabetes Register. So what? You are going to get yourself registered. What for? Registered with the national identity card? Get all your personal info in it? How much insulin you need, etc? No! It's a waste of money and waste of time.

In this context, a context of providing medical care; boosting Primary Health Care, we are going to now have, I use the words of the hon. Minister of Finance –

“In this context, an initial cohort of 40 doctors will be trained at the *Université de Bordeaux* and London University, among others, to specialise in Primary Health Care.”

I do hope they are getting trained in medicine, not in other things, but medicine. We do not need either Bordeaux or London to train anybody in Primary Health Care. Again, I will say that you have the University of Mauritius, you have universities which have transferred from overseas which are in Mauritius, you have the Mauritius Institute of Health and you have a lot of senior doctors. I wish to pay respect to the seniors in the profession who can train the family doctor. Again, I see somewhere it is written ...

“to improve care and delivery of services and reduce overtime costs, we are providing for recruitment of –

- 33 specialists to implement a 24-hour service in all our Regional Hospitals;
- 36 doctors to implement the shift system in the Accident and Emergency Units;”

I belong to a class of doctors, to the group of doctors, which, in my time, were there all the time in casualty. It is rather a matter of choosing the right people in casualty. Whenever you have a problem, how does the Ministry of Health deal with the problem? Somebody makes a complaint and the complaint is usually aired through the radio - “*Explique ou cas*” or *explique* somebody else’s *cas*, you ring, the Ministry listens and all they do is increase the number of doctors in casualty, without staff, without the necessary nurses, just one table, and one extra doctor comes in.

Recently, I went to Victoria Hospital. I was not identified as a doctor, being given I was not dressed properly. I had a piece of wood in my finger and I went through five new junior doctors, who each one was referring me to the next one, until honestly, I swear it is true, the ambulance driver and a nursing officer removed my piece of wood. And yet, I am a senior doctor. This is the quality of our medicine. We have built a monstrosity in Victoria Hospital.

(Interruptions)

A monstrosity which is the Accident and Emergency Department! Try to get access to it in an emergency situation. At the end of the day, you start wondering whether you should turn to the prayer room on the right, the chapel on the far end or Out-Patient Department on the left.

(Interruptions)

There is no parking, absolutely almost nothing, no access. You end up parking near the Cardiac Unit and you walk your way back.

The problems of a hospital are not addressed in this Budget. It is addressed in the only way that you have had in the past, the amount of money that has been earmarked to pay for the salaries, to pay for the doctors, to pay for the nurses, to train the nurses. I think the Minister of Finance, after consultation with the Minister of Health, has missed a golden opportunity not to train nurses, but to create a nursing hub.

To produce nurses, not only for our market, we need the ancillary staff, we need the supporting staff, so that we are able - a bit like Sir Gaëtan Duval did in the 70s - to get everybody out on a nursing programme, becoming nurses in Germany, nurses in Australia and nurses in Europe and these nurses, on the circular migration, have been able to help their family at home. One nurse per family helped a lot of people to survive, but you should be able to create this kind of a vision, and you need a vision to be able to look at health. You don't need a vision to be able to end up in Brown Sequard Hospital. The vision is something else. You should look at the future. I do not note anything about the specialised hospital that was promised. Yet, there is one hospital which is glaring at us in the eye, which demands to be converted into a major hospital, because it is actually right now being used as an old people's home and this is Brown Sequard. Out of 600 patients, you have 400 long stay who barely see a doctor once a month, who could be placed somewhere and with this 50-acre piece of land you could create an active hospital in the centre of Beau Bassin, taking the pressure off Civil Hospital, taking the pressure off Victoria Hospital. The buildings are there, the land is there, the Outpatient Department in Brown Sequard is so lovely, you could even have a wedding reception and divorce procedure as well. That is interesting.

You need a vision. What I want to see in this Budget is a vision of the future. Like I said, I am grateful to the hon. Minister to have provided an increase from the Rs500,000 to Rs800,000 for cases inoperable in Mauritius, because all of you MPs, you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure, do not like seeing these people with the aquariums in the centre of Port Louis, collecting money. Even if you want to give money, you have some doubts as to whether the money will reach the target it is meant for. People get permission from the Police to collect. This is the easiest permission to get. It is quite easy for me to get a paper and collect from you any time I need money to enjoy myself. I don't trust these collection papers. Mrs Bappoo, I am sure, has had enough of people coming to her Ministry and asking for help. We may need to have this kind of help but, at the same time, we are now reaching the stage where with the quality of service which is being given in our hospitals, when you don't know someone in a hospital, please do not go there! We do not want this situation to be the same in 2014 or 2015 or 2016.

You are getting to the stage now that behind closed doors people are now even collecting money for operations in our local clinics. They have lost confidence in the hospitals and I do not blame them. What is the answer to this poor service? In last year's Budget the hon. Minister of

Finance suggested the setting up of an exam. That was beautifully done. In January regulations were changed and in August at three weeks' notice, the first batch of doctors who were due to take the exams, thirteen of them, were informed without any syllabus that the exam was coming. Who were the examiners? India provided this national board - God knows which council - and the examination came up.

Now you have to realise, in Mauritius, we have doctors who come here to practise from all over the world. In medicine, you have a lot of people who are on ego trips. So, one disease which might be labeled as, let us say, Jin Fei disease in China becomes, maybe, Neo Town disease in India, - or God knows whatever disease - Ferguson disease in UK. Out of these thirteen who wrote the exam, only two passed and they were not Mauritian nationals. The eleven who failed were Mauritians. I feel sorry for them, but I am not going to embark myself on any form of demagogical agenda and I still say we need to have exams. We need to be able to sort out exams to ascertain that those doctors who are practising in Mauritius have a certain minimum quality of care which they can afford to give to the patient.

We are living in a world of medical negligence, but with this exam we are not going to solve the medical negligence aspect. Negligence is the duty of care and the dereliction of duty leading to damage and some doctors do not even have a knowhow. It is quite scandalous when you look at the hospital staff and you read about one doctor beating up another, especially at the end of an unrequited love affair. It becomes ridiculous. I agree with the hon. Minister, that it is the Medical Council which is organising the exam.

Now, we are getting to the stage, has there been any study to find out who decided on the group from India to run the exam? If the Ministry had a vision, an exam should have been introduced which has an international status, which will not only allow us to separate *le bon grain de l'ivraie*, but also give these doctors to write the exam and access on the US market, on the Botswana market, on the English, Australian and English markets and this exam would also help locally, you can turn to all these organizations for help. It is not going to cost much, because anyway the poor doctors will have to pay for the exams themselves. Now we have doctors who have failed – 11 of them – all the dentists have failed – and thank God we have only 32 teeth. All the dentists seem to have gone out on the first wave and now we are getting to the stage where, how do we go about helping them to pass. Is there a programme which has been set up to assist

them? Is there a programme in this Budget, money in this Budget which is going to help us to improve care and delivery of the services? The statements are nice. We are going to introduce a new scheme which will entail the posting of well-trained *médecin de famille*.

(Interruptions)

I was hoping you would not say that, Minister. You cannot have a form of affirmative action. We are dealing with people's lives and people's lives go beyond our reasoning. I am sure hon. Dr. Bunwaree, who was a senior cardiologist before he became a politician, knows exactly how the system functions. I used to be the junior doctor - believe it or not - to hon. Dr. Beebeejaun. When I go to a hospital, the hon. Minister tells me he has not had enough sleeping space in the hospital for the interns who are on night duty. I happened to mention it to a close member of my family who is a doctor in Australia, and he said: "why do you need sleeping space for doctors on night duty? You don't take doctors on night duty to hospital to sleep! They are supposed to be there to work! Get rid of the beds and get them to work. Improve the service!" When you get to this stage, you have to think. When going through this kind of Budget, I am trying to keep my sense of humour about me.

(Interruptions)

You are trying to introduce the system of shift workers. Can you imagine! This should never even be considered! A casualty works 24 hours a day and the doctor who does not like it may go and queue up somewhere else to work. Doctors are not machines by any standards, but they have to provide a service ...

(Interruptions)

... not a lot of work for the Almighty upstairs, through the autopsy room sometimes!

(Interruptions)

Now, when you are trying to introduce the GPs System 'family Doctor, properly trained', that takes me instantly to the Budget of the social security which is appropriate. There, in this Welfare State we have...

(Interruptions)

A caring Government! This is nice!

(Interruptions)

We already have a medical domiciliary service...

(Interruptions)

Hang on!

(Interruptions)

Please, hon. Minister, I am sure tomorrow all your advisers will come and say we should have an exam over here as well for MPs.

(Interruptions)

Hear me, please!

(Interruptions)

“For greater effectiveness of our medical domiciliary visit programme, we are providing eligible elderly the option to either continue with the monthly free medical visit or benefit from a cash allowance amounting to Rs6,000 per year, payable in monthly installments.”

To put it simply, instead of the domiciliary visit to elderly, to the handicapped, you are now offering money and it is a safe bet that the majority will opt for the Rs500 because it is going to add to the family budget, be it for whatever reason, and the elderly will not have the benefit...

(Interruptions)

You can say “*non*” hon. Ms Deerpalsing, but I am telling you. You are offering either money or Doctor. This is what is written in English.

(Interruptions)

No, I totally agree with you!

(Interruptions)

I agree with the hon. Member that there are Doctors who have been to see patients who are already dead and have been charging. But do you see what happens? If there is a broken cupboard in your house, do you burn the whole house? This is what is happening! For a couple of Doctors who need to be taken to task and booted out and told simply where to get off, you

stop the scheme. You challenge the very essence of domiciliary service. Domiciliary service is one way - let me assure the House - of the Doctor having access not only to the patient but to ensure that there is no elderly exploitation. At least, you see the person. The person is alive; the person does not have scars and has not been exploited beyond reason. If you give Rs500...

(Interruptions)

I know I will be told, eventually, that the person has a choice. This elderly person does not have a choice. She probably has Alzheimer or is completely *gaga*. It is her children who make up the choice. Far too often, in an ashram with which I am acquainted, I have seen relatives who come and dump their elderly only to turn up at the end of the day when the person is dead, to look for the jewellery or whatever else may be there.

(Interruptions)

While I am still on the field of medicine, there is one item which is quite relevant in the field of medical education. Mauritius is becoming a medical education hub! We are all talking about hubs; I might as well use the word hub. What will surprise you, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that a student who has studied medicine at the University of Mauritius with a BSc in Medical Science and goes off to Bordeaux, Genève or South Africa, in the past they used to go to South Africa and all, the length of study is 6 years. If you go to SSRN Hospital at Belle Rive, it is 5 years. If you go to Annamalai at Pointe aux Sables, it is 4 ½ years. I believe all the organisations have granted permission to run their courses. I am surprised that the hon. Minister had not been invited for the inauguration!

(Interruptions)

Maybe they do not trust him!

(Interruptions)

You can imagine the length of the course changes. At the end of the day, this is pre-internship. Then, you are saying: "Are we ready?" I do not know whether the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Public Infrastructure who is the Member of Parliament for Flacq, is aware that Flacq Hospital, which falls in his Constituency, had an agreement with Annamalai University as per the advertisement which has appeared in the press.

Some of our hospitals are not even fit and ready to accommodate patients and now they are going to accommodate students! What kind of training shall we be affording to these Doctors? Already we know the type of training. Those who are not in the medical profession, but who do drive, I am sure they have often come across a bus with the name of a medical school on the side. This is clinical training at its best with the bus leaving Reduit at 9.30 and going to hospitals where they arrive at about 10.30. After the Specialist has done the round for about half an hour, they are given an access to patients with a couple of retired cowboys, their tutors who have turned up from India and who will teach them something. They are packed in the bus by 11.30 and back they go. This is medical education in Mauritius! And, these are people who will be Doctors, men in white! There is absolutely no standard! We need this Budget to correct the inequalities of education. We need this Budget to be able to inspire us to have people who are Doctors because we are dealing with people's health.

I am not trying to compare with any other profession, but an Engineer who is not too good at the most he can cause a short circuit in your house. Nobody will die. But, concerning the Doctors ...

(Interruptions)

Now, I am told even for that there are people who have died! I would humbly suggest that my proposition for an international examination for all Doctors who want to practice in Mauritius be held. I do not think that I will surprise you, Mr Speaker, Sir, by telling you that the examining board in India which has held the examination for Doctors has informed the Ministry of Health that this examination results is not valid even in India!

(Interruptions)

It might not be...

(Interruptions)

I would be very pleased if I could be informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, officially by the hon. Minister that those who pass this examination in Mauritius will be entitled to work as Doctors in India.

(Interruptions)

We will wait...

(Interruptions)

I will wait for your answer. I am addressing the Chair. I just want to be reassured and, if that is the case, then my propositions for an international examination for these guys no longer apply. Then, they may all pass the exams and we will send all of them to India. We are having a film hub over here. They can come back eventually.

Also, when I am talking about this kind of medical education and I am insisting that our hospitals are not fit, are not equipped to receive medical students. Our hospitals, if you see in the Budget, if you see the amount of money which is paid by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to clinics of the private sector because of the breakdown in the apparatuses in the hospitals, the amount of operations which have to be postponed, the millions. The last time I asked a question about payments to private clinics, I think it was about Rs21 m. being paid for X-Rays and MRI's. It may be sabotage; it may be vested interest ensuring that the hospitals do not function because the day our hospitals become efficient, that day private clinical work will actually go only to the very best Doctors. Right now, it is going to almost everyone.

As a Doctor, Mr Speaker, Sir, I dream of the day that the relatives of a patient in a hospital no longer have to go and see that specialist in private, and that the specialist in private also does not consider the hospital as a catchment area for his private practice and, if Government goes in that direction here, on this side of the House, we will only too gladly cooperate, because we are not here for politics. We are here really to be able to ensure.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, I would not allow any conversation. There is a speech we have to listen and especially, you, hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life. Proceed!

Dr. S. Boolell: Well, we are now getting to the stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, that maybe I should vary my subject because one cannot stay on medicine for too long it becomes depressing. It has become depressing. It does become depressing. But, I will try to turn to this bit of the Budget towards law and order especially in the matter of recruitment for the Police Force. Having been involved, having been associated with the Police Force as a doctor for a lot of years and every year in almost every single Budget you find the recruitment being of 500 to 700

policemen which once they are recruited you never see them. They seem to disappear in the black hole of Calcutta. You don't see them.

Out of 700 people who would be recruited, it would be about a couple of months before 200 leave that job altogether. During that year, because Policemen have a right to be pensioned off after 18 years' service or 25 years' service automatically, you will have a lot who will be pensioned off. So, at the end of the day, the amount of Policemen who do actually join the force is minimal and I fail to understand why, so far, we have not had an audit of the Police Force. I would have expected this Budget to give us an indication even if the hon. Minister were to vote a sum to have an audit of the utilisation of Police Officers in Mauritius, it would be interesting.

I am yet to be convinced that you need to pass an HSC to be enrolled as a Policeman to manage traffic, parking and surveillance of the Magistrates at the Minor Courts. While I agree their presence at pedestrian crossings might be something good for the Policemen until such time you have professionals of the game. The amount of wastage in Police personnel has to be established and, at the end of the day, when larceny goes up, crime goes up and I would love really for the sake of my own satisfaction to meet that Statistician who has come up with the conclusion that the crime rate is going down in Mauritius. Such a brilliant man ought to be decorated on 12 March, because all over the years, the percentage of decrease in crime has been impressive! We ought actually to be now at zero tolerance of crime, but every day you have crime rates going up.

I would like also, maybe, to have a humble suggestion, Mr Speaker, Sir, that when you recruit for the national coastguard you do not recruit for the Police Force at the same time, because when you recruit for the national coastguard at least you will be recruiting people who know how to swim, whilst when you recruit generally you end up with recruiting people who are taught how to swim and still hate water. I would like some affirmative action to be shown towards the poorer classes of our society - not necessarily poorer classes. Why can't the son of a fisherman, who knows the sea better than anybody else in an area not be recruited as a coastguard? In the past, many of the finer investigators of the Police Force have been people without any basic qualification. The more qualified some are at entry point, the less effective they may be sometimes later. But, at least we could start somewhere especially for the coastguard and that might help a little bit. But, unfortunately, there are allegations that

recruitment of Policemen are done in mysterious ways. So, I would like the mysterious ways, this element of doubt, to be totally eliminated.

I thank hon. Mrs Labelle for a remark which she made about the body mass index. Any Policeman who is tall cannot be recruited for the Police Force, because with his height it becomes inconsistent with the body mass index that will turn up. So, it is absolutely amazing, all this protocol which has been created for recruitment in the Police Force by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life actually. They are the ones who set the standards and I think every Adviser at Ministry of Health and Quality of Life looks at himself in the glass and sends his own statistics to have clones or clowns to be recruited accordingly.

Also, before I turn to the next topic, I would like to get on with it and finish my intervention because it is getting late. There is one topic which I would like to be very clear and have some reassurance from the hon. Minister, when he probably will answer on the Budget, is the quality of medicine in Mauritius. What is the quality of the medication which we are giving to patients? Far too often people tell you the medication does not work and every time I asked a question in the past, I am told there is a quality control and when you go out, I would state here that the quality control of the pharmaceutical products used in our hospital service is not exactly up to standard. Otherwise, Mauritius would be the only country in the developed world which has no problem with the quality of its medication. France has had problems; UK has had problems, with a lot of pharmaceutical products being booted out and asked to have a quality control on the pharmaceutical products. I would like to have a certain degree of quality control. At the same time, I make a plea to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether one could also, at the same time, ensure that a lot of the basic gadgetry needed for patients, especially to monitor pregnant women be made available in the service.

It's a bit like I am looking at the Social Security Budget, where I note that we are providing personal alarm bracelets or pendants to 1,000 elderly and persons with severe disability. Nice! It's nice for the protection of the elderly; the pendants and the alarm bracelets. But, you know how long it takes to get a hearing aid and if you are bilaterally deaf in both ears you are entitled to have only one ear taken care of. So, you are allowed to hear on one side. Basically, it's almost like the Government and the Opposition and we will each wear one hearing aid and from one side, hearing aid. You are allowed in a lifetime to have dentures only once. So,

you have got to make sure that the dentures do not break or otherwise, you will end up sharing your dentures with your wife to be able to eat and these are minor things.

I would like to conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, with coming back to one item which has created quite a bit of trouble in the House earlier. Many of you on the other side, from the reaction to the PNQ of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, please hear me out, and today on the issue of the football match and the clubs.

I have had the great pleasure of being the Police Football Team Manager over five years, maybe more, and I have lived through all the events of sectarian football. I was Police, and whenever I went to the stadium, it was in the face of the enemy; anybody who had a score to settle with the Police came to the match to swear at us - a couple of generations of mothers, etc - and take us apart. But it became good fun. We were Police, we were protected. I wish to assure you that I never went to a football match in my own car, because the car costs a lot. I used to get a lift from the Police jeep and go to football matches. Following that, I also happened to be the forensic pathologist who was involved with L'Amicale.

In my experience, today, following sectarian football, we have two types of victims. We have the eight who died, including the baby in the mother's womb; an image which I have never been able to get rid of. We have the other victims, those who are locked up, and who claim they are innocent and trying through any means to prove their innocence. Nobody knows the answer when there is an attack by band. I wish to assure you - it is no secret; it was open - that I examined about 320 suspects in that case. That was a product of sectarian football.

I remember these matches between the Scouts Club, the Cadets Club, the Fire Brigade and the Sunrise, when traffic had to be deviated from either Plaine Verte, where I was born, or deviated from St Croix, or deviated from Paillotte, or deviated from Phoenix to avoid buses being torn apart; the state of siege in Curepipe, where now you have the Manhattan, coming out of the stadium. And it's not the fans! I'll there probably agree with all of you. The fans are decent people who love football. But it is a bunch of half-baked idiots; not necessarily hooligans with a racist touch; hooligans with a communal touch, who use this opportunity to come and destroy our fragile social fabric. When you get to this stage, there is no point trying to claim that we are going to get the crowd back. We might never get the crowd back. But, who cares? But we are going to get the racist hooligans back. The founding fathers of Mauritian football have

some blood on their hands already, with death resulting from the football matches. The founding fathers, I mean those who created the communal clubs. And I would have thought we would have turned the page by now, and that was over, past history. But history is being rewritten, inspiring ourselves from the past, and what we write now, the blood will be on our hands, maybe 20 years from now.

I have said. Thank you.

(10.43 p.m)

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): “Suppose someone were to describe a small country that provided free education through university for all its citizens, transportation for school children and free health care, including heart surgery for all, you might suspect that such a country is either phenomenally rich, or on the fast track to fiscal crisis.” This country is Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is what a distinguished Professor from Columbia University and a Nobel Laureate said about this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we listened to so many self-proclaimed experts on the other side of the House. We listened to long protracted speeches by Members of the Opposition on this Budget. I must say some were long and some were very long and tedious. Some, we have already heard several times in the past. Probably, next year, as well, Mr Speaker, Sir, mark my words, we shall hear the same sing- song. Let us get to serious matters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the House that, in the late 60s, we had these two famous Professors: Professor Titmus and Professor Meade, Nobel Prize winners who dismissed Mauritius as a hopeless case for development. Then, one begs the question: what proved them wrong? What had changed? The answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we had a leader in the person of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who had a coherent vision about the country’s development and future, and who was able to implement that vision for future generations. The fate of this country has changed for the better. We have to remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, post-independence we had a GDP per capita of 100 dollars. Today, we are touching 9,300 dollars GDP per capita. What is it that made it happen? If we were to look into our economic history, we would find free education, free transportation for students from primary, secondary, tertiary, both local and overseas students - free health care, universal pension, building the sea port, the airport and the motorway; building schools, colleges and establishing university institutions. Name me, Mr

Speaker, Sir, any concrete policy measure, any concrete action or achievement that took place in this country, and you would find the imprint of the Labour-led government and by extension, 40 years; our learned friends on the opposite side, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, angry very often, insulting at times. My question to him: what will he be known for? What is the major project that he has implemented towards building this country? *Lanate dans disik, cochon dans la farine chinois?* And the list goes on like this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote Professor Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate from Columbia University, USA. He points out that in Europe and the USA, young people and their families have to bear the costs of university education. He further states –

“Mauritius, a small island nation, is neither particularly rich nor on its way to budgetary ruin. Nonetheless, it has spent the last decades successfully building a diverse economy, a democratic political system, and a strong social safety net. Many countries, not least the US, could learn from its experience.”

Now, my dilemma is who I do listen to? Hon. Members of the Opposition who, year in year out, come out with the same cut and paste speeches, or a Nobel Laureate? This person is not a Member of the Labour Party, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my speech, I will first comment on the Budget, then, look at the work done by my Ministry, and then chart out how we are going to meet the challenges. But, before I do so, it would be right and proper to dwell on some of the comments made by hon. Dr. S. Boolell from the other side of the House. I think he has been very unfair. It is rather unfortunate that he has left the House. Since he was talking about his sense of humour, I wanted to ask hon. Dr. S. Boolell when was the last time he treated a live patient.

(Interruptions)

I just wanted to know. Mr Speaker, Sir, under the correction of my friend, hon. Lormus Bundhoo, Minister of Health and Quality of Life, the fact remains that the public health sector treats 22,000 patients day in day out. That makes for eight million patients every single year. This has been so for a number of years. The fact remains, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health has been provided with a budget of more than Rs14 billion - a record in this day and age. The fact remains, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in this small island, without any natural resources:

whether it is dialysis, whether it is open heart surgery, whether it is neonatal care, whether it is endoscopy, diabetes, food care, nutrition and other specialised units, everything is provided for free.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it would be good to know that, by the good work done by my colleague, the Minister of Health, patients are picked up at their place, taken to the hospital, provided free blood tests, provided a lunch, and taken back to their dwellings. This is Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a country where the good Doctors that we have in the Ministry of Health have been able to deal with malaria, which has been eradicated. They have been able to deal with H1N1 and Dengue.

With regard to medical education, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of pride that this week we had the first batch of post-graduate medical students coming out of the D. Y. Patil Medical School working in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital. I think the hon. Member ought to know that there is a full medical course being offered by the University of Mauritius in collaboration with the University of Geneva, one of the best medical institution in the world.

With regard to quality, we have international monitoring committees, whereby we have members of the medical council and experts from around the world who sit and look at validity of exams and results and so on and so forth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to a point made about law and order. I don't want to get into that, but I think it is good to remind hon. Dr. S. Boolell - maybe he was not a politician then - that, with regard to law and order, we do not have much to learn from Members of the Opposition. I remember when I first joined politics around 2003, we had a murder in the vault of the Mauritius Commercial Bank - would you believe it, in this country, in 2003 or thereabouts. I think the hon. Member has to go and check his notes again.

I would like to come to the last point made by hon. Dr. S. Boolell with regard to the PNQ. I think my colleague, the Minister of Youth and Sports did a good job, and he scored a number of goals. What matters here is that hon. Minister Ritoo referred to the rules laid down by the MFA and *FIFA*, and he did quite clearly say that things have changed. We are not living in the past. We have to open up to the future. He did say that players have changed, the games have

changed, the facilities have changed. He also remarked that the only thing that has not changed is the Leader of the Opposition, who has been sitting there forever.

Another point was with regard to another SAJ; Sir Anerood Jugnauth was dead against regional football. I think there has to be some order on the side of the Opposition - *il faudrait peut-être accorder leur violon*.

And with regard to hon. Quirin, he was against such appellations. It is clear that he has been attending games with the Racing Club and he will have to deal with that himself.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to get back to my speech. At present, this Government is going further on the innovative path. We have built the most modern airport in this region, which is our pride, and rightly so. New roads that we could never have imagined, are being offered to the Mauritian citizens; the New Jeetoo Hospital, to mention only a few. And, believe it or not, I have not heard anybody talking about it. We used to have about 1.9 million km sq. in terms of our EEZ, and our country, this little great country of ours, has been able to increase the size of our EEZ through the good diplomatic work done by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and our Prime Minister, to 2.3 million km sq. Thus, transforming Mauritius into an ocean State and opening vast opportunities for the country and its people.

Let me thank my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the presentation of the 2014 Budget, which brings a number of important social measures together with a new impetus to investment and employment.

I also wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his vision in charting the future of Mauritius - a vision which balances growth with equity. Future generations, Mr Speaker, Sir, will remember that, in 2013, decisions were taken to create the petroleum hub, including petroleum exploration, ocean economy, marine services, green economy and the Africa strategy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, Mauritius is a bridge between Asia and Africa. We are positioning ourselves to contribute and participate in the economic development of Africa, and rightly so. The IMF world economic outlook reminds us that to pull the world economy out of the economic crisis will require, first and foremost, to address old challenges and to steer the growth transitions with credible policies. This is exactly what the budget is doing. It has proposed a number of credible and pragmatic policies and strategies. These have generally been

well accepted by the population and favourably welcomed by major stakeholders. I have many reasons to be proud of this Budget, and I will name five of them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a sum of Rs40 billion is being invested in social welfare, that is, in health, education, social security - a record figure. Today, we are not talking about billions of rupees; we are talking about billions of dollars and euros. Some 17,000 families are now being given the opportunity to have full ownership of their lands and free architectural plans for their houses, which is taking care of social welfare equity.

The second point I wish to make is about economic growth, equity and fiscal responsibility. This year, we have grown by 3.8% and our GDP is expected to grow to 4% next year. We are making massive investments in infrastructure: Rs18.4 billion in 2014 and Rs54.7 billion over the next three years.

I hope people do realise that this small country, when the great nations of the world, be it Europe, the United States facing all those difficulties, - recently, the United States Government had to shut down for so many days - here, we are talking about investment of nearly two billion dollars in infrastructure. Now, how did all this happen? This is through leadership and vision, Mr Speaker, Sir, thanks to our Prime Minister and his team.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a sum of Rs14.8 billion is invested in education, with additional support to the children from poor families, such as hot meals, support to *crèches* and pre-primary schools. Later on, I will talk about how the Opposition dealt with the poor kids in *ZEP* schools. It would make good reading. I'll refer to that in a moment.

The fourth point that I want to point make is that we are creating new pillars: Mauritius Investment Africa Fund, that is, Rs500 m. to tap opportunities in Africa; the proposed creation of a petroleum hub, which will offer new opportunities in financial services, including captive insurance.

And the fifth point is sustainable development to meet the challenges by maximising our renewable resources and, in time, people will realise that it was this Prime Minister, Dr. N. Ramgoolam, who charted out the way to be a beacon for the rest of the countries in this region.

Now, I come to the higher education sector, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to talk about the following – higher education, science, research and innovation. It is for the first time in our

history that this sector is going to benefit from over Rs2 billion. We are going to build, over the next 10 years, university campuses over 175 acres of State land, estimated at about Rs1 billion. Grants to higher education will amount to about Rs900 m.

For the first time, we are going to allocate to research Rs100 m. and Rs228 m. over the next five years for an IIT Research Academy. Opportunities and opportunities for the youth of this country!

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2010, when Government set up a separate Ministry to deal with tertiary education, the scene was set for a new outlook for higher education in Mauritius. Government's commitment was clear and well-defined to make Mauritius become a centre of knowledge in this part of the world, to provide opportunities for quality higher education to all young people of the Republic of Mauritius and the region, and give a new impetus to research and innovation.

Most importantly, the Government's vision is to make knowledge a strong and viable pillar of the economy. Mr Speaker, Sir, over the past three years we have lived up to this vision. We are indeed on the right track as indicated by the tangible progress achieved.

The gross tertiary enrolment rate was barely 16% in 2000; it has increased from 43% in 2010 to 46.6% in 2012 and the same goes for the number of foreign students that we had about three years ago. We had about 500 students; now we have more than 2,000 this year. We have also opened two new public universities, that is, the Open University and the *Université des Mascareignes* and we have also established two new campuses at Bel Air and Curepipe. We have also had the opening of 19 new private Tertiary Education Institutions. The acquisition of 175 acres of land to build new modern campuses in 2014-2015 at Montagne Blanche, Pamplemousses, Piton and Réduit is here Mr Speaker, Sir. There is the introduction of medical courses with the University of Geneva and the diversification of programmes with about 800 currently on offer. Soon, we will have almost all the courses that are offered around the world so that a student wishing to stay in Mauritius will be able to stay here and take any courses he or she would want to do. This year we launch a strategic plan for the sector for the period 2013 to 2025, which is a result of a consultative process with all stakeholders. In fact, this is a requirement of many Ministries now. The plan is to get closer to the stakeholders. This plan focuses on five main strategic goals -

- (i) widening access and ensuring equity;
- (ii) internationalisation;
- (iii) strengthening quality and relevance;
- (iv) research and innovation, and
- (v) governance and financial sustainability.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have set ourselves ambitious targets; having one graduate per family, raising our gross tertiary enrolment rate to 72% by 2025 and before I justify that I have to explain this again, what do we mean by this one graduate per family? Once again, this is not meant for the rich and famous. This is not meant for those who already are wealthy or, the more able or economically able in the society. This is meant for those who do not have people who have been able to attend University, who do not believe in education because they have had so much difficulty in life. This is our target, that is, to get to each and every dwelling and the more humble the dwelling is, the more we focus on this group of people, and I must say slowly but surely we are achieving our objective. The other day I went to a graduation ceremony where we had a student who graduated with an ACCA at the London College of Accountancy. It was my pleasure to meet, Mr Speaker, Sir, his parents, a mother and father who sell vegetables in Mahebourg, and they were so happy that now they had an accountant in their family. This is the kind of progress that we would like to see in this country. Our people are our assets, the expansion and decentralisation of primary and secondary education over the past four decades have been critical to the economic and social advancement of Mauritius. To sustain our progress and move up the development ladder, we have no other option than to democratise access to higher education. We believe in equality of access and want to give every child a chance to pursue higher education. No one should feel deprived of this chance because of his or her social status or for financial constraints. Higher education leads to more productivity, innovation and creativity. We need a nation of creators, innovators, and people with entrepreneurship spirit. Higher education, Mr Speaker, Sir, is one of the most successful ways of ensuring social mobility and improving the life and health of people and I would like to refer to Professor Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize who said, and I quote –

“There can be no sustainable economic growth without universal health care, basic education and productivity of all people. The more healthy, educated and productive a nation’s population is, the more they can consume goods, pay taxes, (...)”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have stated many times in this House and I should again repeat that higher education, economic growth and human development are closely interrelated. Countries with a high gross tertiary enrolment rate have higher GDP and rank highest in the human development index. Australia, with a GTER of 76%, ranks second in the HDI (Human Development Index) and has a per capita income of US 42,000 dollars. USA has an enrolment rate of 89% and ranks fourth in HDI with a GDP per capita of 45,000 dollars. UK with 59% ranks 28 and India with 12% ranks 134. So, we know the direction that we have to take. There have been criticisms from some quarters regarding massification of higher education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is too much hypocrisy and dishonesty from people who themselves had in the years 2000-2005 headed missions to India, to convince Universities to set up base in Mauritius. It is essential to remind ourselves and if I may quote the name of the person who was in charge of education then, hon. Steven Obeegadoo, who travelled to India to convince Indian's institutions to come and set base here in Mauritius. The results I must say were very poor indeed, with Mauras setting up here without a framework in place and only with Cabinet approval. This is indeed putting the cart before the horse. The basis on which Mauras and *Ecole Louis Pasteur* and I must say it - were set up on the criteria of friendship, with a letter addressed –

«*Mon cher ami,...* »

Not only did you fail, but you have always limited higher education for the elites - my dear friends on the other side of the House. Those people who already have several graduates in their families - I suspect, do not want children of labourers to become graduates and rise in this country. This is why they opposed the University of Technology, this is why they opposed the creation of the *University of Mascareignes* and the children of *Camp Le Vieux, Stanley, Trèfles, Bassin, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin* need to read the speech of hon. Obeegadoo - the way he went on opposing the creation of a University, would you believe in Camp le Vieux, as if the kids of Camp Le Vieux do not deserve to have a University next to their dwelling. *Combien d'enfants de Camp Le Vieux go to Camp Le Vieux University?*

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the idea? What is the vision of this Prime Minister? Give chance to the people. I am not going to stand as a candidate in *Camp Le Vieux*, but it is just that the child walking across an institution seeing the sign of *Université of Camp Le Vieux, Université des Mascareignes*, he would want to know what is happening inside and, hopefully, he might be

inspired. The family would be inspired and we all know that in all the big cities where we have great Universities, how it automatically brings up the quality of life. Let's have a look at Manchester, Oxford, Cambridge, and Newcastle. Name a town with a great University and you will find the benefits provided to the people of the area and it is only hon. Obeegadoo who could not see that and some of the Members from the MMM.

The constant hurdle of setting up of public Universities can only come from a certain narrow mindedness. They wrongly believe that they have the monopoly of intelligence – I am speaking towards the Members of the Opposition - and that graduates and professionals should only come from certain groups and not from the children of workers and labourers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, how many Universities have the Opposition created when they have been in power and they have been around for about 40 years. None, Mr Speaker, Sir! They profess socialism, but in reality they want to keep down the working classes and prevent them from rising. I do not see any other reason. I have tried to think about it, but I could not find any other reason.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side, we are the true socialist. Do we have to remind them about the old age pension? We reinstated the old age pension and we are the caring Government of this country. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I speak today, 49,625 young Mauritians have the opportunity to pursue higher studies and increase their knowledge as well as improve their career prospects. A large number of students would not have pursued higher studies without the new opportunities offered by this Government. Higher education should not be seen as a privilege for the chosen few, but the right of every child of this country. Today, the tertiary sector comprises 52 private tertiary education institutions and some 800 programmes, as I mentioned earlier on, with 71 awarding bodies.

I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, last year, we established the *Université des Mascareignes* in Camp Levieux. In my opinion, this is a rather underprivileged region of the country, but not for too long. This university is headed by a very reputed professor, a French Professor, in the name of Professor Guillon, who has had the chance to work with *l'Université de Limoges* and he has had also the chance to serve as a Director in CNRS in France. This institution is offering our students the chance to obtain a French degree as well as a Mauritian degree, here, in Mauritius.

We need to be forever grateful to Professor Guillon, who, I believe, has done a great job, alongside the Chairperson, Professor Driver.

The Open University, Mr Speaker, Sir, which started last year, has widened opportunities for higher education, especially those in the labour force for which the traditional mode of classroom teaching and learning is not suited to the circumstances. Would you believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, a University that was opened this year, is now currently working with the University of California, Irvine and Coursera, the Commonwealth of Learning, the University of Columbia and Imperial College, London. In its first year, it has reached an enrolment of 2,000 students. Opportunities and opportunities for the youth of this country! This is what we call access; this is what we call equity. Can you imagine those calling themselves socialists and yet be against the creation of universities? Would you be able to stand up, my dear friends from the Opposition, in Camp Leveux and looking at the students in the eyes, telling them that you are against that institution?

Mr Speaker, Sir, need I repeat what happened in 2001/2005? Mr Speaker, Sir, if I was to go through the achievement of the previous Government, there are 5 or 6 points one would wish to know. One: CPE results, between the period 2002 and 2005 - the Minister must have been hon. Obeegadoo – when they took power in 2000, the pass rate in Mauritius and Rodrigues in the CPE exams, was 66.4%. It is a pity that I am not having a chance to reply to hon. Obeegadoo, but he would probably clarify what he actually did. It kept on going down to get to a low of 62.6% in 2003 and currently in 2013, thanks to the good work of my colleague, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, the current result is 68.79%. I think there is one measure that I, particularly, like – and I am sure, all my colleagues here, on this side of the House - it is the chance that hon. Dr. Bunwaree, Minister of Education and Human Resources, is giving to the students who have failed one subject. In fact, I am in favour of giving a chance to all. We are looking into that, and I think that's a very good measure. He will be able to give a chance to thousands of students who would have missed a few marks. This is called progress in education. When hon. Obeegadoo was in power, he produced the worst results ever since 2000 in CPE exams, the worst Minister that this country has seen. That's point one. I can table these figures if somebody would like to – maybe, I can table it later on.

A second point I wish to make. I think I heard somewhere that they talked about this very innovative measure that was taken with regard to providing a hot meal and we did accept that we had certain difficulties. I think it is coming back again and the whole project has been reviewed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to spend a few minutes on this. I know I have 15 minutes or so, but I will try to keep to my time. Look at what they pretended to do. They suggested that they will have a menu to feed students at ZEP schools and I have the Audit Report 2003/2004. Who was the Minister then? Hon. Obeegadoo! Monday, it was going to be *poulet, salade laitue, tomate* and mixed *salade* and *laitue*. Tuesday, it was going to be *salade de thon, mayonnaise et cresson et sauté de soya* and *tomate*. Wednesday, it was going to be *oeuf, salade de carotte et laitue et puis ça aurait été un peu de salade de pomme de terre et laitue, mes amis*. Thursday, it was going to be *salade de poisson, tomate ; pour les végétariens, ça aurait été un peu de burger végétarien, salade de cresson, mes amis*. Friday, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was going to be *saucisses de poulet, laitue, carotte, sauté de légumes, salade de laitue*. And look at the...

(Interruptions)

No, there is no pizza here. Look at the observations of the Director of Audit, and I quote –

“Tenders were not requested from caterers of experience, no valid trading licence in that field was requested. A single contractor was awarded a contract to supply *pains fourrés* to ZEP schools all over the island from Bois des Amourettes to Pointe aux Piments”

Mes amis, and that’s not all!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I quote here again. Look what they did. Instead of offering all the items on the nice lists, they just showed a mirage – *un mirage comme-ci pour les enfants pauvres, on est en train de parler des écoles ZEP*. These poor kids, they are not poor, because of their own wish, these are life circumstances. So, they give you a list of *salade de thon, mayonnaise, cresson, sauté de soya*. Look at what they offered!

(Interruptions)

Non, pann donner! Look at what they offered, my dear friend! They had a revised programme. *Pitay inn aller la, mais programme révisé*. Only one supplier: bread, peanut butter, one fruit and yoghurt. I have to tell you, Mr Speaker, Sir, they provided kids with overripe bananas – *veut dire*

bann bananes zetter dans bazaar, ramasser, vine donn zenfants – and/or too green being supplied four days so that they were supplying overripe bananas or too green four days a week and in unhygienic conditions of transport of the food. *Et ça, ce n'est pas trop mauvais là!* I have to tell you this. This is the worst crime that you could actually do to these kids. Do you know what they have done, Mr Speaker, Sir? I am going to lay this on the Table of the Assembly. They took pieces of bread and they rubbed fish on it, just to make it get the smell of fish - as you say, *besagne* - and they fed the kids, our kids in this country. And these guys are going to give us lessons in education!

(Interruptions)

Every time, I have to stand up and reply to these hon. Members, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have this feeling of disgust, when I read about what they have done to our kids in this country. Every time, I stand up to talk about education, I have to talk about what they have done to our kids. I have been working as a teacher for nearly all my life. 10 years at the University of Mauritius, 10 years in a school, in Manchester, and some time in Flacq. I think people who have taught students can understand what a teacher is supposed to do. Here, look at the way they have treated our kinds and now they are going to give lessons, they are going to come up with large speeches, etc.

(Interruptions)

No wonder we had...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Obeegadoo! No wonder 62.6% of the children were failing when he was Minister.

(Interruptions)

The supplier! Who was the supplier? One day I would say who was the supplier, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

I have to say also, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: Would you like to know?

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned the failure of CPE; food supplement, they treated our kinds worse than slaves in a manner of speaking.

Thirdly, in the tertiary sector, the only two schools that I have problems now as Minister of Tertiary Education is Mauras and Louis Pasteur. For Louis Pasteur what actually happened, we had a letter –

“Mon Cher ami, ...”

There was his friend, Professor Baligadoo, who wrote and because of their friendship, through Cabinet decision, they opened these schools and they took a short cut.

Normally, if you want to do medicine in France, you have to go through PACES and take the entry examination. They introduce some kind of a subterfuge for these kids and 13 years down the road, we are still struggling to get these kids to practice. And these are good students. It is none other than hon. Obeegadoo who keeps on asking questions. Well, I have to stand up to answer. My mind just does not work.

The fourth point I want to make, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: how come somebody who has been Minister of Education, who has worked at the UNESCO, can speak so much against the creation of the University of Technology and *Université des Mascareignes*? Somebody must explain this to me! I had to sit here and listen to all that rubbish! Look at the words he said against the creation of a university! It is as if, once again, people living in Camp le Vieux, people living in Barkly, Bassin, Rose Hill and Beau Bassin are not people of this country! Once again, they will come and give lessons! I will face him when he speaks! I would wish to hear from him, I hope he does answer.

The fifth point, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the phantom schools. I have heard of the Phantom of the Opera, I liked it actually. It is quite a good book.

(Interruptions)

We have had the creation of phantom schools. We had a school where students got admitted in Nouvelle France *supposément*, and they graduated where? In Forest Side! Supposedly, there are

others who got admitted in Quatre Bornes SSS and they graduated in some other school! Apart from phantom schools, have you heard of a school or college without a lab for SC exams? I have my own personal relatives who have been to these schools, who have done O Levels without a lab. Now, when you say that students have got a dislike for science, we had to go and correct these shortcomings because of these wonderful people sitting there. But, I must give it to him; he speaks wonderful French and English. I must give it to him.

(Interruptions)

No, that's good. All talk and these are the results, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I want to table this, and we get back to serious works.

What is happening here, in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir? I need to talk about what has happened since the hon. Prime Minister with his vision to create a new Ministry. We have three sites now, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are going to get a university campus in Montagne Blanche, *n'en déplaie à l'Opposition*. We are getting a new campus in Pamplémousses. We are getting a new construction starting in Réduit for the Fashion and Design Institute. I am here only talking about public institutions. It has nothing to do with my family because, very often, I get attacked on what my family is doing. But, I am talking about public institutions here.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first time in the history of this country, Oxford University - I checked this morning - has signed with the Mauritius Research Council to set up a lab to do research in diabetes. How does this happen? Is it just because you just write a letter and it happens like that? It is a matter of pride for this country that now we have Oxford University. It is going to collaborate with the MRC and initially would be based in Bel Air. Well, then, I will have to go and knock at the door of the hon. Minister of Finance to get a larger space. Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, the strategy is here for our bright Doctors to get an entry in Oxford University. How does one get an entry in Oxford if you just write to them or apply to them? It is nearly impossible. But now we are having Professors: Professor Mark McCarthy actually and I know him very well. I met with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Hamilton, and they have agreed to collaborate with us.

Would you believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, today we have the Imperial College. Hon. Dr. S. Boolell was talking about the quality of teaching, London, etc. I think he seems to be against London and he thought that we can do it all by ourselves. Imperial College is teaching a Masters

in Public Health at the University of Mauritius. Nanyang University has been able to attract Imperial College at the cost of two million pounds. I happen to know all these universities now because these people are all like good friends of mine. We have managed to get Imperial College to offer this course here in Mauritius for free. Of course, there are certain charges for the students, but we did not have to pay those two million pounds that others had to pay.

L'Université de Limoges, Mr Speaker, Sir, has agreed to work in Camp Le Vieux to give our kids from all over the country - not only kids in Camp Le Vieux - a chance to get a degree of *l'Université des Mascareignes*, mais aussi a degree that bares the seal of *l'Université de Limoges*, that is, our public universities in Mauritius are offering a certificate with a seal of a European University. The hon. Member is talking about quality! I wonder if he understands the meaning of quality! The University of Geneva, I have already mentioned, is working with the University of Mauritius. The IIT New Delhi - I think my hon. friend will be happy to hear that. Hon. Mrs Bholah's husband has had a chance to study at an IIT. I do not know which IIT it was, but we all know that these are institutions where only a few get a chance to go and study because they are highly competitive. I also suppose it depends on the wish of the student.

Next week, we have a team of Professors from IIT; Professor Shevgaonkar, Professor Balakrishnan, Professor Koul visiting Mauritius. I am given to understand that the Minister of HRD would be here as well. Well, I hope he will be able to make it. Hon. Balrama Raju would be here and we would be signing a protocol to start setting up the base for the creation of an IIT in Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que je dois faire un dessin to show the kind of quality institutions that we are dealing with here. We would be working with *l'Université de Montpellier* in the field of architecture. We are nearly exchanging documents.

Concerning the Fashion and Design Institute, our latest small Fashion and Design Institute that we created some years back is now growing quite well and it is collaborating with Marangoni Institute in Milan and Central Saint Martins in London, one of the best in UK in the field of design. During my last visit at Kyoto University, I had the chance to meet with the President and we are going to look into collaborating on 'Disaster Management' because, obviously, we know some of the difficulties that they have been through. There is Tongji

University and South East University with whom we will be collaborating in engineering and so on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to mention also that we have currently, in Mauritius, 31 UK higher Education Institutions and 13 French Institutions, two Australian Institutions, three Malaysian and one Canadian Institution presently operating in Mauritius. But then, if we look at the questions that I have to answer it would appear that it is only my family. Well, they've been in education for 60 years, they do their business and I do my business for the public sector here and I am giving a chance to our people.

The next item I have to show to prove that we are aiming for high quality is access to EBSCO, Science Direct, Emerald to 13,500 top rated journals through e-journals and having access to 10 million peer reviewed articles on a 24/7 hour basis. I need to congratulate and thank my colleague, the hon. Minister of ICT, for providing free WIFI at UOM and UTM.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need also to thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for enabling us to recruit 30 foreign professors from a grant of Rs15 m. which would enable us to increase the level of quality in our institutions. Mr Speaker, Sir, higher education is on the move all around the world. According to UNESCO, there has been a worldwide increase of total enrolment at the Tertiary education level from 32 million in 1970 to 165 million in 2009, that is, a 500% increase and the figures keep on going up. Tertiary enrolment in 2009 was 24 times the 1970 figure in sub Saharan Africa and 17 times in the Arab States. Enrolments multiplied 15-fold in East Asia and the Pacific while enrolment in sub Saharan Africa increased from 200,000 in 1970 to 4.5 million in 2008. This trend is reversible *Madame la Marquise comme dirait l'autre*. There is a greater demand for higher education and every citizen of this world has the right to aspire to study.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the global market for tertiary education is presently evaluated at around 3.5 million students. It is projected that by 2025 this figure would rise to some eight million students and we would like to capture 1% of this market over the next ten years or so, and by the year 2025 we would like to have an enrolment of about 25,000 students yearly that would make for about 100,000 in a four-year cycle.

The achievement of these goals brings a number of challenges. Even countries such as Singapore have had to face similar challenges and to introduce regulations in 2009. We are

learning by experience in the same way as many major higher education destinations have done before us. Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to talk about the rationalisation of our institutions. We have recently faced some issues regarding enrolment of international students, mainly, those enrolled in courses offered by both TEC and MQA registered institutions.

There have been various underlying factors such as false and misleading advertisements, absence of guidelines for refund to students and some weaknesses in the procedures for entry of foreign students. My Ministry has consulted all the Ministries and Departments concerned and, as announced in the Budget, new regulations will be introduced to require that higher education institutions wishing to recruit foreign students should, in the near future, obtain a licence subject to satisfying certain conditions and for the suspension of the licence in case of poor performance or failure to comply with the approved guidelines and regulations.

I am introducing regulations shortly to prohibit misleading advertisements by our higher education providers and their agents. Education is not a cheap commodity, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has to be treated as it deserves to be treated. Guidelines for a refund policy as well as guidelines for student accommodation would be issued with a view to protect the interest of students.

In order to ensure that international students feel at ease in our social environment, my Ministry, in collaboration with the tertiary education institutions, is in the process of organising international students' cultural events annually. We are also addressing the issue of mutual recognition of qualifications. A MoU for mutual recognition of qualifications has already been signed with Tanzania and one with Kenya is in process of being finalised. We have also planned to sign MoUs with Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Mozambique and Uganda. With this strategy of expanding opportunities of higher education, this year Government has made an offer of 50 scholarships to African students. This was announced by our Prime Minister at the African Union Meeting. It was very warmly welcomed.

This friendly gesture of the Mauritian Government, as I said, has been well-appreciated and I am pleased to inform the House that 20 scholarships have been approved and 18 African students are already in Mauritius. The scholarships will be re-advertised next year with some improvements in the eligibility criteria and guidelines.

In the same breath, the Open University has awarded 20 scholarships to students from 13 Commonwealth countries for a course leading to the award of the Commonwealth Master of

Business Administration. The total number of foreign students studying in Mauritius, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, is around 2,200 compared to 1,200 a year ago and 500 some time back which constitutes about 5.5% of the local tertiary students' population. It is estimated to bring to the country currently with those 2,200 students some Rs600 m. in revenue. On the other hand, 20% of Mauritian students are studying in overseas University which cost the country an estimated sum of Rs5 billion annually in hard currencies, and if we can achieve our target of 100,000 students by 2025, this will rectify the present imbalance and it will create a significant impact in terms of income generation and, of course, the spill over effect on the rest of the economy. We are working towards increasing our share of GDP from 0.3% to over 10% of GDP over the next decade.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention that we have a number of foreign students who are working here. There is one point I wish to make is the restructuring of two institutions. We currently have the Tertiary Education Commission which does the registration, accreditation and monitors quality. So, in a sense we can say that it is acting as a judge and party, because many times it is the same officer who recommends that the institution be registered, the courses accredits and then, go back there again to look at the quality. We have the same work being done at the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA). So, now the Government has decided that both institutions should fall under only one Ministry. It could well have been in any Ministry, I don't mind the process. But, what we are doing here is we are shifting the registration and accreditation functions of the vocational sector from MQA to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) which would have the responsibility of registration and accreditation of all post Secondary courses in this country. Then, we would have Mauritius Qualifications Authority which will be converted into a Quality Assurance Agency into an independent body; independent of the Tertiary Education Commission which would be acting as a watchdog as it is in Singapore and England.

Recently in the *Assises de l'enseignement supérieur* we had the visit of the Deputy Director of the QAA in England and that of the Executive Director of the CPE Singapore. This gentleman is from Cambridge University and also a MIT graduate. We are going to collaborate with them to ensure that we have the process from two - in my mind, in our mind - of the best jurisdictions in terms of higher education.

With regard to employability, Mr Speaker, Sir, our people, as we all know, are our most precious resources. Tertiary education must provide the type of training that meet the needs of industry and our economy. In this perspective, tertiary education institutions have a responsibility to revisit on a continuous basis the relevance of their programmes to avoid any mismatch in the labour market. Now, it has become mandatory for our Public Tertiary Institutions to have consultative committees set up. It is not because I know how to teach a subject that I keep on teaching the same subject without asking myself these tough questions as to what actually happens to my graduates. Now, by law, it has become mandatory that our public universities will have to meet with the stakeholders as I have to give some feedback with regard to what is actually happening.

I must also, maybe, report that the Youth Employment Scheme and the Service to Mauritius Programme have facilitated the employment of about 2,000 graduates. Promotion of science, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a core component of my Ministry. In this perspective, the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre has extended its range of activities offered to the public. Besides its galleries which are opened to the public, lectures and seminars are regularly arranged for focus groups on various topics pertinent to our daily life. So far, the centre has welcomed over 250,000 visitors, most of which are students, and they do things such as science through colours, slam competitions, and so on and so forth. With the vision to reach every corner of the island, the Centre has increased its outreached activities to over 50 from an annual average of 12. Some of the major events organised by the Centre include the National Science Week. Over 30 locations have been visited and, for the first time this year, we have reached 40,000 participants and I have raised the target to 100,000 in the near future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to research and innovation, there is no doubt that we have to step up this transition into an innovation-driven economy through enhanced domestic knowledge generation, innovation and technology transfer.

To boost research, my Ministry has taken a number of actions. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have created National Chairs, centres for applied research, we have granted 90 PhD scholarships, Business Angel Meetings have been held and we have introduced a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education.

We have introduced a requirement for would be lecturers to have mandatorily a Post Graduate Diploma in higher education as from 2015, to improve the quality of teaching. We have set up a number of research centres. Now, we are enabling our students to go and visit Nobel Laureates at the Lindau Meeting, and we have also set up the Best Scientist Award.

Mauritius has played a crucial role to obtain that the Square Kilometre Array Project, and it is good to know that this is the world's largest telescope be set up in the Southern Hemisphere. The University of Mauritius has successfully obtained a bid to host the Pan-African Institute of Space Studies of the African Union.

For the first time in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been conclusive findings from the research on wheat cultivation. There is now increasing interest for the results of this research.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MRC (Amendment) Bill will soon be introduced to strengthen the mandate of the Council, to set up a National Research and Innovation Fund and develop a five-year research strategy. As mentioned by the hon. Minister of Finance in the Budget Speech, the Bill will also establish a National Research and Innovation Advisory Committee to advise on research, and give the necessary strategic direction. This Committee will also include Nobel Laureates. For the first time, the percentage of the national Budget allocated to research will increase with the allocation of Rs100 m. in this year's Budget for research. We have a few new projects such as the construction of a planetarium at Pamplémousses, and acquiring a mobile telescope.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to governance, we are coming up with a system of ranking of our TEIs, with a view not only to give a rank, but with a view for them to develop a rating system where they will have to look at using tools for self-improvement, healthy competition, quality of research, quality of teaching, assisting in building reputation, visibility, raising funds and so on and so forth.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, the development of a knowledge hub is a daunting challenge. We have talked about it for a long time, but I think that slowly but surely we are getting there. I can say that they failed miserably in 2000/2005. The legacy from the Opposition is Mauras and *Ecole Louis Pasteur*, whose pitiful fate we know, and now it is this Government that have to tackle this very difficult situation.

This Government has embarked in the development of a knowledge-based economy, and we are prepared to overcome all the challenges that this vision bring with this. We believe that we are on the right track.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are, therefore, fully confident that the knowledge-based economy will become a reality, and higher education will be one of the strongest pillars of the economy by 2025.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the difficult world economic conditions in which this Budget is being presented, we have to acknowledge the bold efforts of the Government to sustain economic growth, while providing measures to improve the conditions of the people.

In the field of higher education, we have taken a number of measures not only to increase access, but to enhance quality of teaching, learning, as well as research. Most importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are giving the youth the chance to access all these great institutions of the world coming to Mauritius. Just imagine, we have been here only for about three years, and we have been able to attract all these world famous institutions. The next Minister, or whoever who will be here in 10-15 years' time, will have a much easier task and will be able to work closely with these wonderful institutions.

Let me end with these words of wisdom from Sir Sewoosagur Ramgoolam, and I quote -

“No real progress, Mr Speaker, Sir, can be made without the participation of the youth.”

We are here doing exactly this: building for the future of the youth of this country, therefore, building for the future.

I thank you for your attention, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Von-Mally rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 15 November 2013 at 3.30 p.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 11.46 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 15 November 2013 at 3.30 p.m.