



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 22 DECEMBER 2014

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THE CABINET
(Formed by the Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth)

Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Santaram Baboo	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Fazila Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands
Hon. Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM	Minister of Environment, National Emergency Centre and Beach Authority
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Civil Service Affairs
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Madam Speaker	Hanoomanjee, Hon. Mrs Santi Bai
Deputy Speaker	Duval, Hon. Adrien Charles
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hurreeram, Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena
Deputy Clerk	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin (Temporary Transfer to RRA)
Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Serjeant-at-Arms	Badal, Mr Ramesh

MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 01 of 2014

Sitting of 22 December 2014

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 11.00 a.m.

(The Mace is brought into the House by the Serjeant-at-Arms and is laid near the Table).

The National Anthem is played.

The Clerk: Hon. Members, today's sitting is being held following the issue of Proclamation No. 42 of 2014 under the hand and seal of His Excellency hon. Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK, President of the Republic of Mauritius.

I shall, in compliance with Standing Order 3 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, read out the Proclamation.

Proclamation No. 42 of 2014

**TO PROCLAIM THE OPENING OF THE
FIRST SESSION OF THE SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SIGNED BY
RAJKESWUR PURRYAG, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC**

RAJKESWUR PURRYAG

President of the Republic

RAJKESWUR PURRYAG

-

By His Excellency Mr RAJKESWUR PURRYAG, Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, President of the Republic of Mauritius.

&c., &c., &c

WHEREAS by section 56(1) of the Constitution of Mauritius it is provided that the sessions of the National Assembly shall be held in such place and begin at such time as the President by Proclamation may appoint;

AND WHEREAS it is further enacted by section 56(4) of the Constitution that a session of the National Assembly shall be appointed to commence within thirty days of the date prescribed for polling at any general election;

NOW, THEREFORE, in the exercise of the powers vested in me as aforesaid, I do hereby proclaim that the First Session of the Sixth National Assembly shall begin on the twenty second day of December, two thousand and fourteen, and that the first sitting of the Sixth National Assembly in its First Session shall be held on the day aforesaid at 11.00 hours in the Chamber of the Assembly in Port Louis.

Given at State House, Le Réduit, this sixteenth day of December, two thousand and fourteen.

Hon. Members, Standing Order 4(1) of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly requires that an Oath of Allegiance shall be subscribed or made, as the case may be prior to any Member taking part in the proceedings of the House.

I shall, therefore, invite hon. Ministers to kindly come forward in order of precedence to the Table to make and subscribe the Oath of Allegiance prescribed in Schedule 3 of the Constitution and sign the Roll of Membership and thereafter to take their respective seats.

When hon. Ministers and the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have made and subscribed to the Oath of Allegiance, hon. Members of the House shall be invited in alphabetical order for the same purpose.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO MEMBERS

The following hon. Members made and subscribed before the Assembly, the Oath of Allegiance prescribed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution and signed the Roll of Membership -

The Right Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC (Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit)

Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications)

Hon. Showkutally Soodhun (Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo (Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities)

Hon. Seetana Lutchmeenaraidoo (Minister of Finance and Economic Development)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth (Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation)

Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden (Minister of Youth and Sports)

Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha (Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport)

Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun (Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research)

Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan (Minister of Health and Quality of Life).

Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo (Minister of Local Government).

Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun (Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment).

Hon. Marie Joseph Noel Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade).

Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo (Attorney General).

Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun (Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security).

Hon. Santaram Baboo (Minister of Arts and Culture).

Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah (Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection).

Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud (Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare).

Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain (Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms).

Hon. Soomilduth Bholah (Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives).

Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions)

Hon. Premdut Koonjoo (Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands)

Hon. Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM (Minister of Environment, National Emergency Centre and Beach Authority)

Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK (Minister of Civil Service Affairs)

Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn (Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training)

Hon. P. R. Bérenger, GCSK (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. M. S. Abbas Mamode

Hon. J. N. A. Aliphon

Hon. S. M. A. Ameer Meea

Hon. P. K. Armance

Hon. V. V. Baloomoody

Hon. J. C. Barbier

Hon. T. Benydin

Hon. R. A. Bhagwan

Hon. M. C. E. Boissézon

Hon. Mrs D. Boygah

Hon. A. C. Duval

Hon. S. Fowdar

Hon. J. F. François

Hon. A. Ganoo

Hon. M. Gobin

Hon. J. H. T. Henry

Hon. M. S. Hurreeram

Hon. Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus

Hon. A. B. Jahangeer

Hon. E. S. Jhuboo

Hon. P. Jhugroo

Hon. Z. H. I. Joomaye

Hon. J. B. Leopold

Hon. J. C. G. Lepoigneur

Hon. G. P. Lesjongard

Hon. M. O. C. Mahomed

Hon. Mrs M. C. J. Monty

Hon. G. Oree

Hon. J. P. F. Quirin

Hon. K. Ramano

Hon. D. Ramful

Hon. S. Ramkaun
 Hon. R. Rampertab
 Hon. S. Rughoobur
 Hon. S. Rutnah
 Hon. Mrs M. D. Selvon
 Hon. D. Sesungkur
 Hon. Mrs M. Sewocksingh
 Dr. the Hon. M. R. Sorefan
 Hon. K. Tarolah
 Hon. K. Teeluckdharry
 Hon. J. C. S. Toussaint
 Hon. M. R. C. Uteem

SPEAKER - ELECTION

The Clerk: Hon. Members, in accordance with the provisions of section 32 of the Constitution and Standing Order 7 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, the House will now proceed with the election of a Speaker.

I will, therefore, invite two hon. Members to move and second the election of a Member present in this Assembly, or otherwise, to be nominated to the office of Speaker and to take the Chair of the House as such.

The Prime Minister: Madam Clerk, in accordance with the provisions of Section 32 of the Constitution and Standing Order 7 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, I move that Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee be elected Speaker of the House.

Madam Clerk, Mrs Hanoomanjee had her secondary education at the Queen Elizabeth College, after which, she joined the Civil Service and she climbed up to the post of Permanent Secretary, in which capacity she served at the Ministry of Finance. She also presided over different Boards and she was in charge of putting up the MRA of which she became the first Chairperson. After 33 years of service, she retired and she joined politics. She was first elected in 2005 as a Member of Constituency No. 14 Savanne and Black River, and was again re-elected in the same Constituency in 2010, but unfortunately in the last elections she lost.

Today, it is my pride and pleasure to move that she be elected Speaker of this House.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications rose and seconded.

The Clerk: Is there any counter proposal? Hon. Members, as there appears to be no counter proposal, I declare hon. Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee, present in the House, elected Speaker of the House and I invite her to come to the upper step to make and subscribe before the Assembly, the Oath of Allegiance prescribed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution, in the first instance, and then to take the Chair.

(The House having called hon. Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee to the Chair, she proceeds to the upper step of the Chair.)

Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee then made and subscribed before the Assembly the Oath of Allegiance prescribed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution and signed the Roll of Membership.

Madam Speaker: *(Standing on the upper step)*

Hon. Members, it is with a deep sense of pride and gratitude that I stand in this august Assembly today to take the Chair. I wish, at the outset, to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for proposing me as Speaker of the House.

I am pledging to submit myself to the will of the House and to uphold the dignity, serenity and decorum it rightfully deserves and the respect it commands.

Hon. Members, I have had the privilege of serving this House for the past ten years. I am, therefore, fully aware of the exacting tasks that await me ahead. I have, however, no doubt that I can rely on your support, collaboration and understanding in the discharge of my responsibilities.

I wish to reassure the House that impartiality and understanding will be my guiding principles in the conduct of the business of the House.

In the same breath, my overriding concern will be ensuring that, the rights of all parties are protected and upheld at all times in the House. I will always be available to provide such advice and guidance as hon. Members may require, especially the newly elected Members.

Hon. Members, my election as the first woman Speaker in the history of Parliament of Mauritius is a tribute to the women of our country and I dedicate my election today to all

women of Mauritius who will no doubt share the pride and sense of achievement I am feeling today.

Before I take the Chair, I wish to reiterate my deep appreciation and thanks for the trust and confidence of the House in electing me as Speaker of this august Assembly. Hon. Members can rest assured that I will not falter in my duties and I hope I will be able to stand up to your expectations.

I thank in anticipation the Clerk, her officers and all the Members of the Staff for their invaluable contribution in ensuring the proper and effective functioning of the Assembly.

I thank you for your attention.

(Applause)

(Madam Speaker then takes the Chair)

(The Mace which is, up to that time, near the Table, is placed upon the Table by the Serjeant-at-Arms).

DEPUTY SPEAKER - ELECTION

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of Section 32 of the Constitution and Standing Order 7 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, I move that the hon. First Member for Curepipe and Midlands, Mr Adrien Charles Duval, be elected Deputy Speaker of the House.

Mr Soodhun rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Is there any counterproposal?

There being no counterproposal, I declare the hon. First Member for Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, Mr Adrien Charles Duval, elected Deputy Speaker of this Assembly. I offer him my sincere congratulations.

Mr A. Duval: I wish, first, to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, for having been elected to this high office. I wish also to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to all hon. Members, but more particularly to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and Leader of the House for his trust.

I feel deeply honoured and privileged to be working alongside Madam Speaker.

I give the assurance to all hon. Members that I will do my level best to conduct the affairs of this Assembly and uphold the dignity of the House.

I wish all hon. Members well and thank you once again.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF COMMITTEES - ELECTION

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 7 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, I move that the hon. First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram, be elected Deputy Chairperson of Committees.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Is there any counterproposal?

There being no counterproposal, I declare the hon. First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, Mr Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram, elected Deputy Chairperson of Committees of this Assembly. I offer him my sincere congratulations.

Mr Hurreeram: Madam Speaker, I am deeply honoured to be elected by this august Assembly as Deputy Chairperson of Committees. I can assure the House that I will discharge my responsibilities to the best of my abilities faithfully.

I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for the trust he has placed in me.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY - MR JOSEPH CLAREL DÉsirÉ MALHERBE

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of Mr Joseph Clarel Désiré Malherbe on 28 August 2014 at the age of 79.

Mr Malherbe was born on 7 October 1934 at Mont Lubin. He attended the Royal College of Curepipe for his Secondary Education.

In 1959, Mr Malherbe joined the Civil Service and was posted at the Ministry of Finance. However, Mr Malherbe continued to pursue further studies in Mauritius and in 1989, he graduated with a BSc in Economics.

In 1971, Mr Malherbe left Mauritius to work with the United Nations under contract with UNICEF as Programme Officer for East African countries, including Mauritius. He resigned from that post in 1975 and returned to Mauritius and continued to work in his substantive post at the Ministry of Finance.

In 1976, Mr Malherbe resigned from the Civil Service for active politics. He consequently stood as a candidate for the 1976 general elections under the banner of the Independence Party in Constituency No. 17 – Curepipe and Midlands, but was not returned. He was nominated to serve the Assembly under the Best Loser System. From 1977 to 1981, Mr Malherbe occupied the post of Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Health.

Mr Malherbe ran for the 1982 and 1983 general elections in Constituency No. 17 – Curepipe and Midlands under the Banner of the *Parti de L'Alliance Nationale* and Constituency No.1 Grand River North West and Port Louis West under the banner of the PMSD respectively, but was not elected.

In 1987, Mr Malherbe once again stood as a candidate for the general elections in Constituency No. 17 Curepipe and Midlands and was returned First Member for the said Constituency. He was appointed Minister of Local Government and occupied that post until September 1988. From October 1988 to August 1990, Mr Malherbe held the portfolio of the Ministry of Industry.

Mr Malherbe also ran for the 1991 general elections in Constituency No. 17 Curepipe and Midlands under the banner of the Labour Party and PMSD but was not returned. He was nominated to serve the Assembly under the Best Loser System.

Mr Malherbe contested general elections in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, for the last time in 1995 under the banner of the Labour Party and MMM and was returned First Member for the said constituency. From July 1997 to October 1998, Mr Malherbe was Minister of Housing and Land Development. In November 1998, he became Minister of Land Transport, Shipping and Port Development, a portfolio which he continued until August 2000.

Madam Speaker, may I request you to be kind enough to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

Thank you.

Mr Bérenger: I join the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and with his request to you, Madam Speaker, to convey our condolences to the bereaved family of late Clarel Malherbe.

Madam Speaker: I associate myself with the tribute paid to the late Mr Clarel Désiré Malherbe by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the assurance of our sincere condolences.

OBITUARY - MR HURRYDEW RAMCHURN

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is again with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of Mr Hurrydew Ramchurn on 04 September 2014 at the age of 81.

Mr Ramchurn was born on 20 September 1932 at Dagotière. He attended the Church of England Aided School of his native village for his Primary Education and the New Eton College of Rose Hill for his Secondary Education. Mr Ramchurn was a Civil Servant and has worked as an Executive Officer at the Ministry of Education. In the 1960's, he occupied the post of Treasurer of the Moka/Flacq Youth Federation.

Mr Ramchurn stood as a candidate for the 1967 general elections under the banner of the PMSD in the Constituency of Quartier Militaire and Moka but was not returned. From November 1968 to November 1969, he held the post of President of the Moka/Flacq District Council and in November 1973 he was again called upon to occupy that post which he held until November 1979.

In 1976, Mr Ramchurn again ran for the general elections in Constituency No. 14 - Savanne and Black River under the banner of the Independence Party and was returned First Member for the said constituency. In 1977, he was appointed Minister of Youth and Sports, a portfolio which he occupied until 1981.

Mr Ramchurn also contested the 1982 general elections under the banner of *Parti de L'Alliance Nationale* in Constituency No. 11 – Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, but was not elected.

Mr Ramchurn has also served as administrator of the Swami Krishnanand Ashram at Calebasses.

Madam Speaker, may I once again request you to be kind enough to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

Thank you.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, for the second time today, I join with what the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has just said concerning late Hurrydew Ramchurn and would also

request, like the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has done, for the Chair to convey our deepest condolences to the family of late Hurrydew Ramchurn.

Madam Speaker: I associate myself with the tribute paid to the late Mr Hurrydew Ramchurn by the Rt hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the assurance of our sincere condolences.

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

A. Office of the President

- (a) The Annual Report of the National Human Rights Commission for the year 2013. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report 2013-2014 of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office. (In Original)
- (c) The National Assembly Elections Regulations 2014. (Government Notice No. 201 of 2014).
- (d) The National Assembly Elections Polling Stations Order, 2014 (Government Notice No.211 of 2014).
- (e) The National Assembly Elections (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 215 of 2014)

B. Prime Minister's Office –

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill (No. IX of 2014). (In Original)
- (b) The National Identity Card (Extension of Validity Period) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.146 of 2014).
- (c) The National Identity Card (Extension of Validity Period) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 186 of 2014).
- (d) The Passports (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 192 of 2014).
- (e) The Financial Statement of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for period 01 January 2013 to 31December 2013. (In Original)

- (f) The National Identity Card (Extension of Validity Period) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 200 of 2014).
- (g) The Firearms (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 209 of 2014).

C. Ministry of Tourism and External Communications –

- (a) The Annual Reports and Audited Financial Statements of the Tourism Employees Welfare Fund for the periods July 2009 to December 2010 and January to December 2011. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report 2009/2010 of the Tourism Authority. (In Original)

D. Ministry of Housing and Lands -

The Annual Report and the Audited Financial Statements of the Town and Country Planning Board for the year ended 31 December 2012. (In Original)

E. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities –

- (a) The Annual Report 2013 of the Wastewater Management Authority. (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Wastewater Management Authority for the year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (c) The Annual Report of the Central Electricity Board for year ended 31 December 2011. (In Original)

F. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Republic of Mauritius for the year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (c) The Activity and Performance Report for the period 01 January to 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (d) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Treasury's Accounts of the Republic of Mauritius for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)

- (e) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2013.
(In Original)
- (f) The Performance Audit Report No. 11 – Government Response to Mitigate Beach Erosion. (In Original)
- (g) The Performance Audit Report No. 12 – Livestock Production and Development – Quarantine Services. (In Original)
- (h) The Performance Audit Report No.13 – Provision of Emergency Service – Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service. (In Original)
- (i) The Performance Audit Report No.14 – Livestock Production and Development – Cattle and Goat Sector. (In Original)
- (j) Mauritius in Figures 2013. (In Original)
- (k) The Finance and Audit (de Chazal Maternity Home Fund) (Revocation) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.151 of 2014).
- (l) The Finance and Audit (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.152 of 2014).
- (m) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.154 of 2014).
- (n) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No.3) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.155 of 2014).
- (o) The Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.156 of 2014).
- (p) The Land (Duties and Taxes) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 162 of 2014).
- (q) The Securities (Brokerage Fee for Government of Mauritius Securities and Bank of Mauritius Securities (Amendment) Rules 2014 (Government Notice No.163 of 2014).
- (r) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment of Schedule) (No.2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.170 of 2014).
- (s) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No.4) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.173 of 2014).
- (t) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No.2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.174 of 2014).
- (u) The Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (Arab Republic of Egypt) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 175 of 2014).

- (v) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No.3) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 183 of 2014).
- (w) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No.5) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 184 of 2014).
- (x) The Digest of Industrial Statistics 2012 and 2013. (In Original)
- (y) Digest of Productivity and Competitiveness Statistics 2013. (In Original)
- (z) The Annual Digest of Statistics 2013. (In Original)
- (aa) The Digest of Education Statistics 2013. (In Original)
- (ab) The National Accounts of Mauritius 2013. (In Original)
- (ac) The Annual Report 2013 of the Central Procurement Board. (In Original)
- (ad) The Annual Report 2013 of the Civil Service Family Protection Scheme Board. (In Original)
- (ae) The Digest of Social Security Statistics 2012. (In Original)
- (af) The Digest of Statistics on Rodrigues 2013. (In Original)
- (ag) The Digest of Labour Statistics 2013. (In Original)
- (ah) The Digest of Demographic Statistics 2013. (In Original)
- (ai) The Digest of Road Transport and Road Accident Statistics 2013. (In Original)
- (aj) The National Pensions (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 203 of 2014).
- (ak) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedules) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 204 of 2014).
- (al) The National Pensions (Industrial Injuries) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 205 of 2014).
- (am) The Digest of Agricultural Statistics 2013. (In Original)

G. Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation –

- (a) The Report of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority for the 18 months ended December 2010. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report 2011 of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority. (In Original)

H. Ministry of Youth and Sports –

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Sports Council for the years ended 2011 and 2012. (In Original)

I. Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport –

- (a) The Road Traffic (Immobilisation of vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 Government Notice No.139 of 2014).
- (b) The Construction Industry Development Board (Registration of Consultants and Contractors) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.144 of 2014).
- (c) The Pouce Stream (Authorised Construction) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.168 of 2014).
- (d) The Annual Report of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund for the year 2013. (In Original)
- (e) The Road Traffic (Taxi, Bus and Lorry Stands) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 224 of 2014)

J. Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research –

The Annual Report 2012 of the Mauritius Institute of Education. (In Original)

K. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

- (a) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No.3) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 142 of 2014).
- (b) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 143 of 2014).
- (c) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No.4) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 182 of 2014).
- (d) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 195 of 2014).
- (e) The Annual Report and the Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care for the year ending 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (f) The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No.3) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 217 of 2014).
- (g) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 223 of 2014).

L. Ministry of Local Government –

- (a) The Municipal Town Council of Curepipe (Fees for Outline Planning Permission and Building and Land Use Permit) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.148 of 2014).
- (b) The Municipal Town Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (Street Naming) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.158 of 2014).
- (c) The Municipal Town Council of Vacoas-Phoenix (Street Naming) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.169 of 2014).
- (d) The Municipal Town Council of Curepipe (Traffic Centre) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 171 of 2014).
- (e) The Municipal Town Council of Curepipe (Environmental Health) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 172 of 2014).
- (f) The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (Naming of Public Places at Morcellement Dookun) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.177 of 2014).
- (g) The Curepipe Carnegie Library Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 178 of 2014).
- (h) The Municipal Town Council of Quatre Bornes (Fair) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.189 of 2014).
- (i) The District Council of Grand Port (Environmental Health) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 193 of 2014).
- (j) The Annual Performance Report 2013 of the Local Infrastructure Fund. and the Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Local Infrastructure Fund for the year ended 31 December 2013 (In Original)

M. Attorney General's Office –

- (a) The Revision of Laws (Revised Laws of Mauritius) (Supplement – Issue 5) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.153 of 2014).
- (b) The Accounts of the Curatelle Fund for the year ended 31st December 2012 and the Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Curatelle Fund for the year ended 31st December, 2013. (In Original)
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Curatelle Fund for the year ended 1st January to 31st December 2012 (In Original)

N. Ministry of Agro – Industry and Food Security –

- (a) The Annual Reports and Accounts of the Irrigation Authority for the years 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report 2008/2009 of the Small Planters Welfare Fund. (In Original)
- (c) The Food (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 181 of 2014).

O. Ministry of Arts and Culture –

The Films (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 161 of 2014).

P. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Annual Report 2011 of the State Trading Corporation. (In Original)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No.18) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.140 of 2014).
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No.20) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.141 of 2014).
- (d) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No.21) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.145 of 2014).
- (e) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No.22) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.147 of 2014).
- (f) The Consumer Protection (Importation and Sale of Second-hand Motor Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.150 of 2014).
- (g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 35) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.207) of 2014
- (h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 36) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.208) of 2014

- (i) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.212 of 2014
- (j) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 37) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.213) of 2014
- (k) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 38) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.214) of 2014
- (i) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.218 of 2014
- (k) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 39) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.219) of 2014
- (l) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No.40) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 220)of 2014
- (m) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 41) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.212) of 2014
- (n) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 42) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 222 of 2014

Q. Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare –

The Financial Statements of the National Women’s Council for the year ended 31 December 2010. (In Original)

R. Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms–

- (a) The Annual Report 2013 of the Financial Intelligence Unit. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report of the Financial Reporting Council for the year 2013. (In Original)
- (c) The Annual Report 2013 of the Financial Services Commission. (In Original)

S. Ministry of Business , Enterprise and Cooperatives –

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Co-operative Development Fund for the year ended 30 June 2009. (In Original)
- (b) The Annual Report 2013 of the Saint Antoine Planters Co-operative Trust. (In Original)
- (c) The Annual Report 2009-2010 of the former Small Enterprises and Handicraft Development Authority. (In Original)

T. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions

–

- (a) The Social Aid (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 190 of 2014).
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Senior Citizens Council for Financial Year 2013. (In Original).
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Chagossian Welfare Fund for the year ended December 2013. (In Original)
- (d) The Audited Accounts of the National Solidarity Fund for the year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (e) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund and the National Savings Fund for years 2008 and 2009. (In Original)
- (f) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board for the period ending 31 December 2011 (In Original)

U. Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands –

- (a) The Annual Report of the Fishermen Welfare Fund for the year ending 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (b) The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Extension of the Net Fishing Season) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 191 of 2014).
- (c) The Merchant Shipping (Fees) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.197 of 2014).
- (d) The Merchant Shipping (Fees) (Amendment No.3) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.198of 2014).

V. **Ministry of Civil Service Affairs** –

The Annual Report 2013 of the Public Officers' Welfare Council. (In Original)

W. **Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training** –

- (a) Annual Report of the Export Processing Zone Labour Welfare Fund for the year 2012. (In Original)
- (b) The Catering and Tourism Industries Remuneration Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 202 of 2014).
- (c) The Occupational Safety and Health (Transportation of Employees) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No.210 of 2014).
- (d) The Occupational Safety and Health (Control of Asbestos at Work) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 216 of 2014).

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, 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.

(12.36 p.m.)

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill (No. IX of 2014) was read a first time.

Second Reading

**THE ADDITIONAL REMUNERATION (2015) BILL
(No. IX of 2014)**

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (Mr S. S. Callichurn): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill (No. IX of 2014) be read a second time.

Madam Speaker, let me seize this golden opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of this august Assembly and I wish you plenty of success in this arduous task which lies ahead. I congratulate fellow hon. Members of the National Assembly on their election to this august House. I am, indeed, honoured and privileged to present the first Bill of this Government to the House namely the Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill (No. IX of 2014).

Madam Speaker, on 10 December 2014, the nation has voted massively for this present Government led by the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit. I seize this opportunity, Madam Speaker, to pay tribute to the great statesman, the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the father of modern Mauritius, the one who has led this coalition to steer the destiny of our nation.

Madam Speaker, the Mauritian population has again chosen *ce grand homme de vision* known by one and all for his hard work, his courage, loyalty, honesty and his high sense of patriotism to lead this country once more to prosperity. There is no doubt, Madam Speaker, that each and every Mauritian today feels extremely proud of our Prime Minister who did not look at his personal comfort, but decided to return to the political arena against all odds so that Mauritius can realise a second *miracle économique*.

Madam Speaker, the object of this Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill is to provide for payment of an additional remuneration as from 1st of January 2015 to employees to compensate them to the loss in the purchasing power with the increase in the cost of living for the Financial Year 2014 which is 3.3% according to Statistics Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, as soon as the new Government has assumed office and as promised in its commitment as a caring Government, it has decided to review the decision of the former Government to grant a salary compensation of Rs400 to those drawing a basic wage up to Rs10,000 per month, 4% increase to those drawing between Rs10,000 and Rs20,000 per month and Rs800 to those drawing above Rs20,000 per month. With a view to protecting the most vulnerable and in a spirit of the nation building and in its endeavour to foster social justice, this Government has decided the bold decision to grant with effect as from 1st of January 2015 to all employees a salary compensation of Rs600 across-the-board which is well over and above the inflation rate of 3.3%. Part-time workers drawing up to Rs10,000

will be granted an increase of 6% and those drawing above Rs10,000 will be granted an increase of Rs600.

Madam Speaker, the House will surely agree with me that those who need to be most adequately compensated for the loss of purchasing power are those who are at the lowest rung of the ladder. Hence, the decision of the Government to increase the quantum of salary compensation to Rs600 to all full-time employees drawing up to Rs10,000, the additional Rs200 to those at the lowest rung of the ladder carries more value to them than all of us. This symbolic gesture will contribute to further improve the quality of life of our fellow citizens. I am sure, Madam Speaker, that workers drawing above Rs15,000 will understand that they will not get more than Rs600 per month as salary compensation in a spirit of national solidarity with the less fortunate counterparts.

Madam Speaker, Government's decision is in line with its electoral manifesto and the fight against poverty which states that *le combat contre la pauvreté et les injustices sociales figure au premier plan de notre programme de même que l'amélioration du pouvoir d'achat. L'île Maurice a les moyens de gagner cette bataille. Nous le ferons ensemble*, Madam Speaker.

Government's decision to approve the payment of a salary compensation at the rates I have just mentioned, in spite of the difficult economic situations and global financial crisis, strikes the right balance between responding to the current economic imperatives and granting workers at the lowest rung of the ladder with the maximum compensation possible of Rs600 which I again repeat is over and above the 3.3% inflation rate.

Employees of the public sector will also benefit from the above salary compensation. An administrative arrangement will be made accordingly by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill, once enacted, will impose a legal obligation on all employers to pay the prescribed minimum compensation of Rs600 to their employees. I am, in the same breath, Madam Speaker, making an appeal, *un appel spécial*, to all enterprises which can afford to pay a higher compensation to do so in a gesture of solidarity, as there are some enterprises which are performing very well and may, therefore, have the capacity to pay more.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.

Thank you.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo rose and seconded.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I move that we break for one and a half hours for lunch.

Madam Speaker: Can we break for lunch for one and a half hours, please!

At 12.45 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.46 p.m with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): Madam Speaker, for the year 2012, the inflation rate was 6.5%, and the then Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, gave a wage compensation of Rs330 only. The following year, 2013, hon. Xavier Duval was Minister of Finance, the rate of inflation had dropped to 3.9 %...

(Interruptions)

No, I am saying two years, but I am talking of the year where the wage compensation started as from 01 January 2012. Then, for the year 2013, the rate of inflation dropped to 3.9% and only Rs300 of wage compensation was granted. At the beginning of this year, 2014, the inflation rate stood at 3.5% and the then Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier Duval, gave again only Rs300 as wage compensation. At the same time, the wage earners at the bottom of the ladder got Rs300 only, and the *pensionnés*, the old-age pensioners got only Rs129 as from 01 January of this year, that is, much less than what the lowest wage earners got; Rs300, Madam Speaker.

We, now in the Opposition, proposed, as was pointed out by the new hon. Minister of Labour, Rs400 instead of Rs300 that had been granted during the two previous years, although, if I go by the latest figures which the new Minister of Labour has used, that is, the rate of inflation has gone down to 3.3%, according to the latest figures that we have. We had, therefore, proposed – we, now in the Opposition – Rs400 instead of Rs300. And we have, when we talk of the economy as a whole, to keep in mind that the new Government has already increased *pension vieillesse* to Rs5,000, whereas we, in the Opposition, then proposed Rs4,000, Madam Speaker.

The key question that I put to Government is: that increase in the wage compensation to Rs600 and that increase in the *pension vieillesse* to Rs5,000, is it a one-off electoral event? Is it a one-off electoral wage compensation and old-age, *pension vieillesse*, or rather is this going to be repeated more or less every year, depending on the rate of inflation, of course? That is the key question that we and the country are entitled to ask. Is this a one-off electoral

decision, measure, or is that going to be the trend during the years to come? The new Minister of Labour has said nothing about that, and I am not surprised. *Je ne le dis pas méchamment*. I am not surprised.

I hope that the new Minister of Finance who is going to speak after me will enlighten us, will give us a hint, at least, of what we can expect. Because after all, *en tout cas*, the new hon. Minister of Finance has used very strong words to justify, to explain this increase in wage compensation to Rs600 and this increase *dans pension vieillesse* to Rs5,000. He has used very strong words indeed : « *Nous sommes dans une situation de grande misère. L'écart entre les riches et les pauvres nous a amené au risque d'explosion sociale.* » Such expressions, Madam Speaker, seem to indicate that there is going to be a trend that it is not a one-off *électoral*. *En passant* - before I say where we do agree -, when the new Minister of Finance uses such strong words, « *nous sommes dans une situation de grande misère. Nous sommes au seuil de l'explosion sociale* », well, it speaks volumes on the performance of the two Ministers of Finance who preceded him. It speaks volumes.

(Interruptions)

I think everybody is aware of that. But that being said, of course, we agree that the differential between the lowest paid, those who are *prisonniers de la misère*, and the highest paid and those *les plus riches* should be closed. We agree on that. We have always agreed, and we agree also on the need to *faire reculer dans un premier temps, et éliminer la misère dans les délais les plus brefs possible*. So, that is where we are. We have the performance of the two *précédents* Ministers of Finance. We have very strong words from the new Minister of Finance.

We are entitled as an Opposition, and the country is entitled, to expect to be enlightened whether this is a one-off electoral measure or whether it signals a trend that, year after year, the wage compensation and the old age pension are going to be increased in the light of the inflation rate, of course, but more or less, along the same lines. To me, this is the key question that pending budget time, of course, we cannot have a debate here, as if it was already budget time but, pending budget time, we are entitled to know in what direction, economically speaking, the new Government intends taking the country.

I have two other questions, Madam Speaker. One is the impact of these two measures. Of course, we are debating only the wage compensation, but there is economic impact of the two measures must be considered as one. Therefore, the two other questions that I ask myself

as the Leader of the Opposition: what will be the impact on the budget, and how will those two measures be financed as far as the public sector is concerned and, secondly, what will be the impact on the private sector? These are the two other questions that I wish to raise.

Fortunately, in terms of budget deficit, we have a good *marge de manoeuvre*. But, nevertheless, it would be interesting to know what the new Minister of Finance expects the budgetary impact of these two measures to be, including on capital spending, infrastructure spending, creation of employment spending, that is, capital spending.

As we know, we do not have enough money to do everything. Therefore, the more we spend on recurrent, the less we will be able to spend or we will have left to spend on capital spending. So, I hope that later on the new Minister of Finance does enlighten us on what the impact of those two measures will be on the budget deficit and on capital spending, in general. How those two measures are going to be financed? Of course, the State Trading Corporation comes in.

As the new Leader of the Opposition, it would be easy for me to say: bring down the price of diesel, of *essence*, of petroleum products by so much more. But I sound a note of warning. It is true we all know that the price of oil products on the world market has crashed by 40% since the beginning of this year, as compared to an average for the last three years. As from the beginning of this year, the price has crashed by 40%. I read a lot. All the experts and so on expect that it will go down further. At least, no one really expects that it will pick up in the one, two, three years ahead. We will see; we are never sure in that kind of situation. So, I would advise Government – although, as I said, as Leader of the Opposition, it would be easy for me to say: ‘bring down again the price of diesel, of *essence*, of petroleum products on the local market’. But clearly, with the financing issue of these two measures that have already been taken by the new Government, clearly there is equilibrium to be found. Billions - not millions, *des milliards* - if the price of petroleum products on the world market stays as it is in the one, two, three years ahead, *des milliards* will be cashed by the State Trading Corporation on behalf of Government. I would advise Government to be very careful in striking the right equilibrium in bringing the price of petroleum products down as much as we can, but taking into consideration the need to finance the two measures we are considering, but also capital spending this year, in the next Budget and in the years ahead. Therefore, it will be very interesting to hear both the new Minister of Finance and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister – because he is now on the list of orators, he will be speaking after hon. Uteem. It will be very interesting and it will be very important for the country to get a signal as to how

the situation is going to evolve as far as the public sector is concerned, the Budget and the Capital Budget, in particular.

Then, there is the question of the private sector. Very strong words again, the new Minister of Finance has used. He said bluntly that this new Government – I hope everybody agrees with him; but he said very bluntly, strongly, before *embrasser* Raj Makoond, he nearly choked him, if not to death, but to silence – *est un gouvernement pro-secteur privé*. And he added –

“*Car c’est de là que viennent les emplois.*”

They are very strong words again from the mouth of the new Minister of Finance. He went so far as to say that before granting this wage compensation, he has met the private sector, that there has been consensus reached, I beg to raise the question whether this is the case. As I said, the way he embraced Raj Makoond probably prevented the gentleman from expressing what the private sector really thinks about what is happening, but anyway it will be very interesting to know. He said *que le secteur privé a compris* what he is trying to do and then he added that, him, the new Minister of Finance, for his part, he has *compris les difficultés du tourisme, de l’industrie textile en particulier*.

Now I think we are all aware that a lot of firms are in deep trouble in the private sector, not just in tourism and in textile, but specially the Small and Medium Enterprises are already in serious problems. I hope we are all aware of the level, *le niveau d’endettement*, a lot of firms specially the *Petites et Moyennes Entreprises*, but a lot of firms in tourism, in textile and elsewhere have been borrowing, have been surviving on borrowed time and now we have reached where we have reached. Therefore, it will be very interesting to know. I have been listening very carefully to know, especially when the new hon. Minister of Finance says that this Government is a Government *pro-secteur privé*. It will be very interesting to know what measures will be taken to help those firms that are already over indebted and, in particular, *les Petites et Moyennes Entreprises*.

I think to be taken seriously, Madam Speaker, there is need to fine-tune - the new Minister of Finance who said that *le consensus* has been reached with the private sector. He said that what the present Government is going to pay in terms of wage compensation is going to cost only a hundred million additional to the private sector, whereas the private sector gives other figures completely. So, I think we are mature enough to deal seriously in the figures concerned. It is not difficult to come to agreement of what the impact will be on

the private sector wage bill generally. Therefore, I will be listening carefully to the new Minister of Finance on the impact as far as the private sector is concerned of the wage compensation proposed.

Finally, as far as the private sector is concerned, it will be very interesting to see, because we are talking about the wage compensation that will impact on the private sector, we are talking about *la nouvelle pension de vieillesse* that will impact on the budget deficit.

The key question as far as the private sector is concerned - one key question is: *quelle sera dorénavant la politique monétaire*. In the recent past, we had disagreement, serious disagreement between the Governor of the bank and the then Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, on what the monetary policy should be. Now, the law is the law. We know how the law governing the functioning of the Bank of Mauritius has changed over the recent years but the law is the law. Therefore, I hope that when he speaks, the new Minister of Finance gives us an indication, he does not dictate to the Bank of Mauritius, but what is wished is, as I said earlier on, we must take certain decisions as far as especially the SMEs are concerned and a key issue will be the monetary policy of the Bank of Mauritius which, under the law, has to be coordinated - not dictated but coordinated - with the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, I will be listening again very carefully when the new Minister of Finance will be speaking.

So, these are the three questions that I raise today, Madam Speaker, with your permission: one, is it a one-off electoral measure or can we expect the same trend in the years ahead? Secondly, what will be the impact on the public budget, on the budget deficit, on the capital budget? And thirdly, what will be the impact on the private sector and what measures are expected to be taken?

Madam Speaker, during the electoral campaign that has just finished, I made it a point to say two things: one was to say *que le réel défi à être relevé par le prochain gouvernement* would be *le défi économique*. The rest is a question of *volonté politique*. But the economy is the economy; the world economy and the Eurozone do not depend on our list of wishes. Therefore, I say it repeatedly that *le vrai défi pour le prochain gouvernement* would be *le défi économique* and I repeatedly, from where I was, said that we must all show *un esprit de responsabilité*. We have seen many countries where elections come and go, Governments come in and take decisions that bring the Government either to success or to failure within a

few years. These two points I made repeatedly: one, that *le plus grand défi sera le défi économique* and, secondly, that we must all show *un esprit de responsabilité*.

I said also Madam Speaker, that it will be difficult to do two things at the same time - *le maximum de justice sociale* and when we are talking of *pension vieillesse* and the wage compensation, we are talking of *justice sociale* in general. Therefore, I say it will be particularly difficult to do two things at the same time - *le maximum de justice sociale*, but, at the same time, investing the billions that are required to create productive employment to eradicate poverty, to develop infrastructure, to develop education, *formation*, etc. This is the challenge that is before us.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I thank you for having allowed me, *en attendant que le débat sur le budget au début de l'année prochaine* to have raised those issues because, as I said, as a mature country, as an adult country, democratically speaking, we are entitled to be enlightened as from today on the main issues which I have raised.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.08 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, on a point of personal explanation.

Madam Speaker: What is the point of personal explanation of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has got one thing wrong at least. I was appointed Minister of Finance in mid-2011 and the 2012 salary compensation was given by me and the Government. I headed the Tripartite Committee. So, that part of his speech at least is factually incorrect and can be easily verified.

Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo !

(Interruptions)

(3.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr S. Lutchmeenaraidoo):

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de vous féliciter à l'occasion de votre élection en tant que Présidente et je souhaite aussi la bienvenue à tout le monde qui a été élu ici, y compris moi-même.

La question de compensation est liée à un concept global. Le jour où je sépare la compensation et la philosophie du développement, effectivement il y aura des problèmes de contradiction dans les décisions. Ce qui fait que depuis le début de la campagne électorale, nous avons vécu une expérience extraordinaire - je parle des deux côtés de la Chambre - et nous avons vu la misère, la souffrance au niveau du citoyen. Tout le monde ici, je suis sûr, a réalisé à un moment qu'entre le langage de croissance économique et tout, il y avait d'une part le langage gouvernemental qui voulait faire croire qu'il y avait une distribution équitable de la richesse nationale et là on avait réalisé nous dans les circonscriptions, on avait dit mais s'il y a un problème, les gens vivent de plus en plus mal! Et le rapport de la Banque Mondiale, qui est sorti en juin, est venu confirmer une chose très simple que les réformes Sithanen - je parle bien des réformes Sithanen parce que ce sont les réformes de 2005 à 2010 qui ont jeté les bases de cette nouvelle économie qui faisait la part belle à la grande entreprise et qui faisait la part très mince à ce que j'appellerai moi les consommateurs.

Le gouverneur de la Banque Centrale est venu confirmer ce que nous pensions aussi. C'est que les réformes de Monsieur Sithanen ont appauvri les pauvres et nous avons vécu l'expérience durant la campagne que c'était vrai. Lorsque le gouverneur de la Banque Centrale nommé par le Premier ministre vient lui aussi confirmer que l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres a tellement augmenté que si ça continue, nous allons faire face à une grave exclusion sociale, nous ne pouvons pas - gagner ou perdre n'était pas important - ne pas réaliser que notre pays, la nation mauricienne, a subi une politique économique qui a appauvri les pauvres et qui a enrichi un petit groupe au sommet de l'économie! Je parle en tant que mauricien et non pour une polémique, loin de là ! Et c'est à partir de ce moment que j'en ai parlé à Sir Anerood et je lui ai dit : «*We have a real problem.* » Est-ce qu'on pourra parler d'un deuxième miracle économique ? Est-ce qu'on peut parler d'un nouveau départ économique sur une base sociale qui est elle-même menacée d'éclatement ? On ne peut pas le faire ! Nous avons fait l'expérience entre 1983 et 1990 et nous avons réalisé que sans un soubassement social, sans la paix sociale, il est presque impossible de pouvoir construire une nouvelle économie. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous avons donné priorité au social. Non pour faire plaisir, non parce que ce sont des mesures électorales, loin de la !

Au fait, élection ou pas, il n'y a aucune démagogie dans notre volonté de rétablir le pouvoir d'achat des pauvres dans ce pays. Il n'y a pas de politique dedans. Il y a une situation où nos concitoyens, ceux qui sont les plus vulnérables, ceux qui sont au bas de l'échelle ont été oubliés. Le coefficient de Gini s'est détérioré énormément entre 2005 et 2010. Le coefficient de Gini montre le taux finalement de pauvreté au niveau de la nation. Donc je ne souhaite pas faire un débat sur une réalité qui est une réalité. Les chiffres viennent montrer que le gouvernement 2005-2010 a mené une réforme économique qui a fait du mal énormément aux consommateurs et surtout aux gens au bas de l'échelle. C'est à partir de là que j'ai dit : « *Let us start*, commençons par là où il faut. Commençons à reconstruire cette base sociale. »

Commençons à ramener dans le pays le consensus social, la paix sociale nécessaire - je vous le dit franchement, nous sommes tous ici, on ne pourra pas reconstruire cette économie si cette base sociale ne repose pas sur un fondement solide. Évidemment, j'étais ministre des Finances pendant huit ans et vous tous vous le savez, il n'y a jamais eu des décisions que je puisse qualifier de démagogiques. Loin de là. Je suis parfaitement conscient que les décisions qu'on a prises sur le plan social coûtent très chères. Je ne vais pas cacher le fait que cette décision monumentale nécessaire coûtait très chère au budget, à l'économie.

Quand je me suis posé la question: *Is there any way around?* Non, il n'y a pas. Si nous voulons apporter un soulagement aux souffrances de ceux au bas de l'échelle, il fallait commencer là où il fallait, c'est-à-dire, à ceux qui attendaient leur fin de mois, leur pension afin de pouvoir tirer leur ration comme on dit. Et c'est cet élément qui a été la motivation de base. Vous savez tous que lorsqu'on veut rattraper le pouvoir d'achat on commence toujours par les pensions. C'est par les pensions qu'on rattrape le plus vite le pouvoir d'achat national. Donc, on l'a fait. On n'a aucun regret. Il n'y a qu'à voir le sourire sur le visage des gens actuellement, ce sentiment de bien-être pour réaliser que nous avons pris la bonne décision. R 4.7 milliards c'est beaucoup, je suis d'accord avec le *Leader* de l'opposition qu'on ne joue pas avec les chiffres comme cela. R 4.7 milliards, cela coûte énorme.

Durant la campagne j'avais dit que le gouvernement d'alors avait insisté sur le fait qu'une dépense aussi importante ne peut se faire sans l'augmentation de la TVA. J'avais assuré la population, vous n'avez pas assuré la population, vous avez dit non. Nous allons financer les R 4.7 milliards sans augmenter la TVA. J'irai plus loin aujourd'hui. Je dirai que le prochain budget n'aura aucune taxe additionnelle qui va affecter les gens au bas de l'échelle, sinon ce serait neutraliser le travail qu'on fait en voulant soulager les gens au bas de

l'échelle. Alors cette action touchant la pension devait être accompagnée par un deuxième train de mesure, c'est-à-dire les travailleurs, les ouvriers, ceux au bas de l'échelle. Et on est arrivé donc au moment de la compensation salariale et la compensation salariale effectivement est un instrument - je l'ai toujours pratiquée - de rééquilibrage national, c'est-à-dire qu'en faisant bénéficier aux gens au bas de l'échelle le maximum de la compensation, on privilégie encore une fois les gens au bas de l'échelle.

Maintenant pour corriger, peut-être, ce qui a été dit sur mes collègues: le Premier ministre adjoint et ministre du Tourisme et des Communications externes et mon collègue l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, le ministre de la Technologie, de la Communication et de l'Innovation, il faut se rappeler une chose, ce sont les chiffres encore une fois. En 2005 et 2010, Sithanen a fait tout ce qu'il pouvait pour ne pas donner de compensation. Il avait fait dissoudre même le tripartisme, cette instance suprême, magique - le seul instrument qu'on avait de médiation. 2000 et 2005, le taux d'inflation de 3%, 4% à 5% avait une compensation minimaliste de cent roupies. Pour comprendre pourquoi les gens souffrent dans ce pays, pour comprendre pourquoi nous avons une nation aujourd'hui - ou ce qu'on appelle les plus vulnérables - qui est en train de croître de jour en jour. Il faut comprendre que Sithanen avait tout fait pour ne pas compenser ceux qui le méritaient. Cent roupies pour des taux d'inflation - plus grave encore, je crois que l'opposition et le *Leader* de l'opposition aussi sont| d'accord avec moi - le tripartisme reste une instance magique, une instance essentielle au fonctionnement de la démocratie. Vous avez d'un côté les syndicats, de l'autre les employeurs et puis le gouvernement. Et le gouvernement a ce rôle de médiateur de trouver le bon milieu. Le bon milieu c'est quoi? Une compensation qui soit nécessaire pour les travailleurs mais aussi un niveau de compensation qui ne met pas en danger le secteur privé. Aussi pour arriver à aujourd'hui, la question qui est posée: est-ce que le secteur privé pourra supporter la compensation qu'on a annoncée?

Avant d'arriver à ce point, j'avais regardé le tableau proposé par l'ancien gouvernement, c'est-à-dire, une compensation de quatre cents roupies au bas de l'échelle et puis allant jusqu'à huit cents roupies pour ceux qui touchent plus de vingt milles roupies. Je me suis dit : est-ce que ce tableau, est-ce que cette grille va dans la direction de ce qu'on veut, c'est-à-dire, compenser au maximum les gens au bas de l'échelle? J'ai dit non. Évidemment, on ne veut pas tuer la classe moyenne, mais si on veut vraiment empêcher que le pays sombre dans une crise sociale, moi je dis qu'il faut donner le maximum actuellement à ceux qui ont le plus besoin. Alors j'ai revu cette structure très complexe qui était déjà très

généreuse je dois dire avant les élections et nous avons *worked it out*. Nous avons vu que finalement ce chiffre magique de six cents roupies *across the board* privilégiait les gens au bas de l'échelle ce qui explique pourquoi il y a le sourire aujourd'hui sur toutes les lèvres dans ce pays ; sourire de satisfaction de comprendre qu'ils ont un gouvernement, qu'ils ont une ministre des finances qui sait que finalement le VVIP restera toujours les gens les plus pauvres dans ce pays sans tuer ni affecter le secteur privé. Le *Leader* de l'opposition a posé une question sur le fait que j'ai dit que le secteur privé reste ma priorité, eh bien le secteur privé restera toujours ma priorité. Sans le secteur privé il n'y aura pas de création d'emplois ; il n'y aura pas de richesse nationale. Donc, on ne peut pas jouer sur le mot mais par contre lorsqu'on me parle du secteur privé, il faut définir ce qu'on dit, ce qu'on veut qualifier par secteur privé.

Quand le rapport de la banque mondiale vient dire que les années Sithanen ont rendu les riches encore plus riches, c'est-à-dire que le taux de croissance économique n'a pas été distribué. Avec le peu de croissance économique, il y a eu une concentration de la distribution vers ceux qui étaient déjà puissamment riches. Si on veut me poser la question : le secteur privé - ce sont ces dits-conglomérats qui aujourd'hui contrôlent le pays, je dis non. Non. Je n'ai rien contre eux, mais en même temps je leur dit, vous ne représentez plus mes priorités. Vous avez beaucoup gagné. L'avidité vous a gagné tous car l'ancien gouvernement vous a habitué à gagner facilement beaucoup. Donc ce groupe n'est pas ma priorité, mais ce groupe ne sera pas non plus menacé par ce gouvernement. On n'est pas là pour punir. On n'est pas là pour faire payer aux autres encore moins pour se venger.

Le secteur privé pour nous c'est essentiellement - et le *Leader* de l'Opposition l'a dit avant - ce blog de SMEs qui a une contribution massive à la création de la richesse nationale. Nous l'avons dit et nous le disons aujourd'hui encore on ne menace pas les conglomérats, mais nous allons concentrer notre action économique pour que dans cinq ans la colonne vertébrale de l'économie soit les SMEs. Nous allons le faire. Difficile, pas facile je sais, mais nous allons réaliser une performance durant ces cinq ans où la colonne vertébrale, la richesse nationale ou bien la création de la richesse nationale sera le fait des petites et moyennes entreprises. C'est la raison pour laquelle le prochain budget - malgré le fait qu'on aura des contraintes réelles - aura un item Ile Maurice Nation d'Entrepreneurs, un item budgétaire de dix milliards qui sera de l'argent mis à la disposition de nos jeunes. Qu'il soit fils d'ouvrier, qu'il soit fils de chauffeur de taxi, qu'il soit fils de planteur, fils de policier - nous pensons

qu'un jeune qui a de l'ambition, qui a des idées ; des jeunes qui ont en eux le génie de créativité doivent nécessairement avoir accès au financement.

Madam Speaker: Order, order please!

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Ce projet sera mis en route dès le Budget. Je redis encore c'est cher. Dix milliards ! Et je dois vous dire ici une chose, on avait fait la même expérience entre 1983 et 1990 - Ile Maurice Nation d'Entrepreneurs et, en ce temps-là, on avait un problème parce qu'on donnait de l'argent sans garantie. Mais je pose la question en tant que parlementaire, une banque n'est pas supposée de prêter sans garantie. C'est le rôle d'une banque de demander une garantie ou une hypothèque. Donc, une banque ne pourra jamais sortir les jeunes de leurs impasses et leurs aider au financement dont ils ont besoin. Donc, c'est le rôle de l'État. Et nous avons pris notre responsabilité, nous avons dit que nous allons prendre le risqué. Et en ce temps, sur les milliers d'entreprises, des jeunes qui avaient emprunté, je dois vous avouer qu'aujourd'hui 75% avait fait faillite. Lorsqu'on voit un verre, est-ce qu'on doit dire si c'est rempli au trois quarts ou un quart. Dans le cas de ce projet, effectivement 75 % des investissements avaient été perdus parce que beaucoup de jeunes n'avaient pas d'expérience, n'avaient pas le *know-how*. L'encadrement n'était pas suffisant. Mais, moi, Je vous dis une chose aujourd'hui, les 25 % qui ont survécu sont les jeunes et ce sont eux qui roulent cette économie aujourd'hui. Ce sont eux qui sont en train d'apporter cette valeur ajoutée qui fait qu'il y ait cette croissance économique. Donc, je le vois dans cette perspective, 75 % de perte oui, mais ce sont les 25% qui représentaient l'avenir et qui ont apporté à ce pays une véritable démocratisation qu'on n'a jamais eu après. Ce sont eux la véritable démocratisation. Et une nouvelle fois encore, avec cet item de 10 milliards, nous allons faire confiance aux jeunes. Est-ce qu'on a un choix ? Moi, je suis côtoyé en politique, je suis en transition. Donc, mon rôle n'est pas de penser à moi mais de penser aux jeunes et c'est en pensant aux jeunes que j'ai dit - faisons le maximum pour que dans cinq ans nous ayons une génération de jeunes qui soient capables de diriger ce pays. C'est ça qui est important. Maintenant, le challenge c'est quoi ? Le challenge évidemment il faut que ces jeunes soient maintenant de plus en plus encadrés. On ne peut pas sinon juste prêter de l'argent, pas de garantie et ne pas avoir les mesures d'accompagnement pour les soutenir, on le fera aussi.

Je me suis éloigné un peu du sujet pour faire comprendre que finalement il y a une grande cohérence dans ce que nous avons fait. On n'a pas été généreux parce qu'il y a une campagne électorale, non. On a uniquement remboursé une dette qu'on doit à nos anciens.

(Interruptions)

Cette dette consistait à quoi ? Une chose très simple. Sans eux on ne serait pas là. Sans eux personne ne serait là. Et ce sont eux qui ont le plus souffert des mesures Sithanen. Ce sont eux qui ont le plus payé en termes de prix. Aussi ce n'est pas une mesure politique, démagogique, loin de là. C'est une mesure nécessaire. C'est tout ! Nécessaire pour renflouer le pouvoir d'achat de ceux qui ont le plus besoin.

Maintenant, touchant évidemment la question du financement de toutes ces dépenses, c'est vrai que nous allons injecter dans l'économie l'équivalent de R 8 milliards, presque R 9 milliards et il faut être insensé pour prendre une telle décision si on ne sait pas quoi faire après. L'injection des R 9 milliards dans l'économie va pousser à la consommation, pas consommation de luxe, consommation de base. Je parle d'huile, de farine, de riz, je parle des choses essentielles. Quelque part ça va profiter aux commerces, cela va profiter à l'économie parce qu'il y aura de plus en plus de roulements comme on dit. Est-ce que c'est ma faute si on a de la chance ? Est-ce que c'est ma faute si le prix de l'essence a chuté de 106 dollars à 56 dollars, mais Dieu nous aime sûrement ! Pas comme gouvernement, mais toute la nation, je pense que vraiment nous avons un pays merveilleux qui méritait ceci car cette baisse du prix de pétrole va nous permettre d'économiser R 10 milliards. Vous savez vous-même que c'est notre balance de compte courant qui avait poussé le gouvernement en 1979 à dévaluer. Donc, ces R 10 milliards d'économie sur les produits pétroliers vont nous aider énormément à prendre en charge cette augmentation de la dépense des ménages donc 70 % en moyenne vont à l'importation.

Donc, voilà un peu pour les décisions. Est-ce que le secteur privé peut absorber ce choc ? Cette augmentation de la compensation à R 600 ? Je pense que la paix sociale encore une fois à un prix. Si vous voulez être très riche et vivre entre quatre murs avec des bulldogs et des fusils c'est votre droit. Mais si vous pensez que ce pays appartient à chaque Mauricien, il faut partager. Il faut apprendre maintenant à partager, à créer de la richesse mais aussi à partager. Il n'y aura pas de miracle économique nouveau si nous, comme mauricien, comme nation, on n'apprend pas que la richesse qui est créée doit être distribuée. C'est le message que j'ai eu pour le secteur privé tout en étant conscient qu'il y a des sous- secteurs de l'économie qui ont de véritables problèmes et je vais évidemment prendre des mesures au niveau du budget et au niveau de la gestion économique pour que nous soutenions justement ces secteurs qui ont des problèmes. Je vais le faire.

Donc je pense que ce qu'on a fait au niveau de la compensation reflète la philosophie d'un gouvernement qui est ici et qui pense que d'une part il faut créer la richesse mais que de l'autre part il faut savoir aussi la distribuer. Je pense que jusqu'ici on a réussi. On a réussi, je suis très content pas pour nous, je suis très content pour la nation. Je suis très content pour ceux qui vivaient vraiment dans une misère extrême. Voilà un peu mon message, Madame la présidente, pour soutenir finalement la motion que le ministre du travail a apporté aujourd'hui et évidemment nous sommes en période de fin d'année avec le sourire sur les lèvres je souhaite évidemment à chaque mauricien un joyeux Noël et une très bonne année.

Merci.

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I start by congratulating all hon. Members on their elections and all office bearers on their elections and also congratulate the hon. Minister on his maiden speech.

Madam Speaker, every year, we have the Additional Remuneration Bill and every year the Government comes and gives you the explanation about why it is increasing the salary by so much and we, in the opposition, we criticise that figure and we ask them to adjust it, to take into consideration the fact that people are getting poorer in this country. And I am glad today to hear the hon. Minister of Finance and also the hon. Minister of Labour talk about new factors that are being taken into consideration today to determine the additional remuneration. We are not talking just about compensation for increase in the cost of living, we are also talking about reducing the gap between the poor and the rich and it is a welcome step. But where I don't agree at all is when the hon. Minister of Finance try to come and put the blame exclusively on Mr Sithanen. We are talking about the method of calculating the compensation and as the hon. Leader of the Opposition just said we need to know whether it is a one-off method of calculation or this is the policy that will continue again and again in the Government. So, let me quote what hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the then Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development said in 2010, when addressing the House on the Bill. He laid out basically the factors that a Government, should take into consideration determining compensation and I quote –

“Salary compensation under the Tripartite Mechanism for a particular financial year has always been paid with respect to the rise in the cost of living which is measured

by the rate of inflation and also with regard to other economic factors that have been prevailing for the past year.”

So, the first criteria we need to look at is inflation rate. Then, the second thing that has guided all Government throughout is that ‘the maximum percentage of salary compensation has always applied to those workers at the lowest rung of the ladder’. Here, the Government has decided to get rid of the maximum eligibility ceiling. Everybody across the board except for part-time workers will get a flat rate of Rs600 which obviously would mean a lower percentage increase for those earning above Rs15 000. Third and I quote the hon. Pravind Jugnauth –

“No Government since independence has ever given any compensation for what we call *rattrapage* in terms of inflation that is not accounted for in previous years.”

And I listened very carefully, neither did the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training nor did the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development talk about *rattrapage*, compensation for previous loss in cost of living because this is exactly what the hon. Pravind Jugnauth said we can’t do. Government is not going to compensate for *rattrapage* and then, he went on, it is very important to quote this -

“Standing and saying that we would wish that workers be compensated is easy, but one must always, especially when you are in a position of responsibility, take into account all the factors that prevail, particularly the economic factors, and also what the country can afford, in order to try to strike the right balance and compensate the workers of this country, whilst creating also, at the same time, the necessary conditions for economic growth.”

So, whenever we, in the Opposition, were saying that we needed more compensation not just to compensate for cost of living, but also *rattrapage* and to reduce the Gini inequality, this is what hon. Jugnauth said when he was in Government and it is not just him. And that is why I find it very unfair to blame only Mr Sithanen, because in 2012, yes, when hon. Xavier Duval was also...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Uteem: When hon. Xavier Duval was also the Minister of Finance...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! No cross talking, please!

Mr Uteem: ...and we asked for an increase to compensate for loss of cost of living, when we asked for compensation to fill the gap of inequality, this is what the hon. Xavier Duval, then Minister of Finance in 2012 said -

“What is important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is above all, to avoid what these gentlemen were not able to avoid, that is, massive unemployment in Mauritius. If there is some inflation, there will be compensation. But if you lose job, usually it is gone forever. And this is the whole issue also concerning monetary policy.”

So, refusal to increase wage because it was going to create unemployment. And then he goes on, another reason -

“Not to mention, of course, that we have this international crisis.”

So, you can't give more compensation.

“We have very little room to spare.” And then, the third reason: productivity.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Member talk!

Mr Uteem: And I quote -

“Productivity remains an issue in this country and we must get the population to understand that huge increases in wages can only come with huge increases in productivity.”

So, the reasons have always been, we are compensating for increased cost of living, we can't pay more, there is unemployment, there is international crisis, there is no productivity. So, I am very glad that today I heard the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development talk a language which he knows reflects the feelings of the MMM because he was then...

(Interruptions)

Member of the MMM ...

(Interruptions)

and I will quote...

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Members, can you allow the hon. Member to talk!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I am on my feet! Can you allow the hon. Member to talk, please!

Mr Uteem: And I will quote what we said in 2010. I will quote what we said in 2010 in answer to the remark of hon. Pravind Jugnauth. This is what we said, and I quote -

“An increase in salary should bear in mind that it should not only compensate for the rise in the cost of living, but also to try, as far as possible, in the name of social justice to reduce the income inequality and the gap between the rich and the poor.”

We are not changing guns from our shoulders. In 2010 when you were in Government, when hon. Pravind Jugnauth was the Minister of Finance or when hon. Xavier Duval was Minister of Finance, we, on this side of the House, were always saying that for us compensation should be a social justice to reduce the income inequality and the gap between the rich and the poor. That was in 2010. So, of course, we are...

(Interruptions)

We are very happy.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry, can you allow the hon. Member to talk!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Henry! I am on my feet! Okay, please proceed!

Mr Uteem: So, of course, we welcome the decision to increase the salary by Rs600 because we, ourselves, we are in favour of reducing the Gini gap. The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentioned it and it is a fact, and it is a very disturbing fact according to the household budget survey of 2012 and I quote -

“Income inequality increased between 2006/07 and 2012. The share of total income going to the 20% of households at the lower end of the income range decreased from 6.1% in 2006/07 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 2006/07 to 0.413 in 2012.”

So, we are very much aware that the income gap since 2006/2007 has been increasing. We are all aware that people are getting poorer, that there is not only absolute poverty, but

also relative poverty and we all in our Constituency have these *poches de pauvreté* where people are struggling to make ends meet. So, that is why we welcome this increase of Rs600. But, at the same time, Madam Speaker, as a responsible Opposition we have to ask questions.

We have to ask questions about the financing of this measure which inevitably will have an impact on the economy and I am glad that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentioned that there will be no new taxes, but, again, I heard him say on the poor only. So, I don't know if it means that some people other than the poor will have to fork out to pay for that increase in compensation.

We know also - and I am glad that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentioned it - that there are certain small and medium enterprises that are struggling and for whom an increase in the wage Bill has a significant impact on their cash flow especially and probably on their long-term income and we expect on this side of the House when the budget will come for the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development to come and propose measure to counteract this increase in their salary Bill and measures to increase productivity, measures to increase competitiveness, measures to make the SME, which I agree totally with the hon. Minister, is and should be the backbone of our economy and should be the real engine of growth and engine for job creation. We also would like to know what are the measures which the Government intends to take to absorb this excess liquidity.

We know that the price - as the hon. Minister said we are lucky - of the petroleum products is going down, but also the price of basic commodities is going down in the world market. So, we hope and we expect that the increase in the wage Bill will not have undue inflationary pressure but, again, we hope to hear from the hon. Minister and the Governor of the Central Bank what monetary policies would be introduced to mop up any excess liquidity that is being caused by the increase in pension and increase in compensation. So, Madam Speaker, as we said, on this side of the House, we welcome the decision to increase the pension and to increase the wages by Rs600 and on this side of the House, we would wait for the budget in order to assess what measures the Government is going to take so that this increase doesn't have a negative impact on our economy.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister!

(3.43 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I feel it really funny when I hear some of the hon. Members from the other side of the House. I was told that they have adopted a policy of not looking behind, but looking forward.

(Interruptions)

And then, today, they are struggling to look behind. It is very unfortunate. Now, when they are on the other side, they are the greatest defenders of the poor, the workers and the have-nots. They criticise the former Finance Ministers, but they don't dare say a word about Mr Sithanen's performance. And what is surprising, they were supporting, they wanted to bring again Mr Sithanen ...

(Interruptions)

...as the Minister of Finance of this country. But, they may like it or not, we have come to redress the economy of this country, and we are going to do it.

(Interruptions)

I give you this assurance. We have done it before in worst circumstances, in worst situations, and I am sure we have the commitment. We believe in what we are doing. And you see, God's blessing is with us! It has started raining, the reservoirs are getting filled!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, we are here. We have gone through a general election, we have presented our programme, and if we were to fail, then these are the very people who would fall on us, who would criticise us! But what are we doing today is fulfilling our mission, our promise, our commitment, and again they find it wrong; we should not do that. They are trying to say that we have declared war with the private sector. But we have a long experience of having worked together with the private sector from 1983 to 1995. I was Prime Minister. The private sector was very happy. At times, the private sector also must believe, must know that they form part of this nation, that we are no longer living in the days of slavery or indentured labour. Today, we are living in a free Mauritius. All citizens have got the right to have a certain standard of living, and what we are trying to do today is to see to it that the whole nation understands this and contributes to make it a reality. Therefore, Madam Speaker, my Government's decision to grant a salary increase of Rs600 across the board to all workers is one of the two bold measures that we had promised and which we are taking - the salary compensation and the pension -, which already indicate that this Government's

strong commitment to further consolidate our welfare state is in progress and we are determined to help the most vulnerable groups of our society. There is no getting away from that. We are going to adhere to what we have promised.

Let me remind hon. Members on the other side of the House, Madam Speaker, that this is a caring Government. The fight against poverty is high on our agenda. We shall leave no stone unturned to bridge gradually but surely, as much as possible, the gap between the rich and the poor. What we are aiming at is to achieve, Madame Speaker, is to give some relief to those workers who are seriously affected by the rise in the cost of living, that is, workers who are at the lowest rung of the ladder.

Madam Speaker, one yardstick for measuring a country's greatness is the way it treats its workforce and particularly the most vulnerable ones. I strongly believe that employees are the driving force behind the success of every enterprise, and more importantly for their invaluable contribution in the socio-economic development of our rainbow island. Without workers, the private sector cannot exist and, of course, we know for the workers also to have a decent living, we have to rely on the private sector. Therefore, it is a mutual thing, and each side must live up to its responsibilities. Hence, workers getting a reasonable share through a fair and equitable distribution of wealth will be high on the agenda of my Government.

It is the duty of any civilised society to ensure that its members enjoy respect and dignity and observance of their rights. We should not forget that the level of development we have attained would not have been possible without the efforts and contribution of the workers of this country. That is why I will say 'long live the workers, long live the private sector, long live our nation.'

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

(3.51 p.m)

Mr Callichurn: *Madame la présidente*, the hon. Minister of Finance having already replied to the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, there is no need for me to elaborate again on the issue raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I thank all hon. Members who have intervened in the debate. What the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development have said effectively

summarises the vision and the mission of this Government to protect the most vulnerable group of the working population. This Government has at heart the plight of the most vulnerable and downtrodden of our society.

I note with appreciation the positive stand of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. Uteem on the decision of this Government. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Government's decision to grant a uniform salary increase of Rs600 to all workers has been well received in various quarters, in particular the trade union movement which has already conveyed its deep appreciation with the present measures announced.

I am confident that in order to fulfil my duty as Minister with success, I can rely not only on the support of all stakeholders, but also on the support and guidance of all my colleagues, and in particular of our Prime Minister, the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

I thank you for your attention, and wish all hon. Members and the entire nation a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2015.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill (No. IX of 2014) was considered and agreed to.

On resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Additional Remuneration (2015) Bill (No. IX of 2014) was read the third time and passed.

END OF YEAR MESSAGE

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, before moving for the adjournment of the House, I wish to say a few words as the new Leader of the House since this is the first and the last sitting of the Assembly for the newly constituted Government for this year.

I wish to, first of all, congratulate you, Madam Speaker, upon your election as Speaker and especially for being the first woman ever elected to serve in that capacity in the history of our Parliament. My congratulations are also extended to the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairperson of Committees for their election.

The first sitting of the newly constituted Assembly has been marked by the passing of the Additional Remuneration Bill to compensate the employees of the private sector. I wish to thank Members for their participation in the debate and I wish to place on record my appreciation for the elegant and impartial manner in which you have presided over the conduct of the business of the Assembly immediately upon assuming the Speakership.

My thanks are also extended to the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the Clerk Assistant, officers of the Library, all the staff of the National Assembly, the Serjeant-at-Arms and his officers, for their support and collaboration for the effective discharge of Parliamentary duties.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you, in my personal name and in that of the Members of the House, to present the season's greetings to the President of the Republic and Mrs Purryag, and the Vice-President.

I convey to you, Madam Speaker, to Mr Hanoomanjee and your family, our best wishes for a Merry Christmas 2014 and a Happy New Year 2015.

My best wishes are also extended to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and his family and to all hon. Members and their families.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): Madam Speaker, I wish also to express the best wishes on the Opposition side to the President of the Republic, the Vice-President, to you Madam Speaker, the Clerk and your staff, to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Ministers, all the other Members of the Legislative Assembly and their families and to the country at large a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to associate myself with the season's greetings as expressed to the President of the Republic and Mrs Purryag and to the Vice-President of the Republic. I will, with great pleasure, convey the message to them. In my own name and on behalf of the staff of the National Assembly, I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition for their kind words and good wishes.

I am pleased to extend my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and Lady Jugnauth, to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, to the Vice-Prime Ministers, to the hon. Ministers, the hon. Leader of the Opposition and to all hon. Members and their families.

I also wish to thank the Clerk, all the members of the staff of the National Assembly and to all the civil servants who have assisted in the work of Parliament and to their families.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 27 January 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 4.01 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 27 January 2015 at 11.30 a.m.