



## FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION  
MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2009

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**MAURITIUS**

**Fourth National Assembly**

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**FIRST SESSION**

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**Debate No. 30 of 2009**

**Sitting of Monday 23 November 2009**

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

**at 11.30 a.m.**

**The National Anthem was played**

*(Mr Speaker in the Chair)*

**Papers Laid**

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

**A. Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security -**

The Irrigation Area (Declaration) (Revocation) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 143 of 2009).

**B. Ministry of Labour, Industry Relations and Employment -**

The Road Haulage Industry (Remuneration) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 144 of 2009).

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION****MAURITIUS SUGAR PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION/TRADE UNIONS –  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the dispute between the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association and the Trade Unions of the sugar industry, he will state where matters stand as at to date, indicating if –

- (a) collective bargaining at enterprise, rather than industry level, is being promoted under the Employment Relations Act; and
- (b) Government would agree, after consultations with the Unions, to the appointment of a former judge of the Supreme Court, as arbitrator, with an economist and an accountant as assessors.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Members may be aware, negotiation for a collective agreement between the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association and the recognised trade unions of the sugar industry started last year. The trade unions have constituted themselves into a Joint Negotiating Panel for the purpose.

For the purpose of the negotiation, the trade unions submitted the following main proposals -

- (a) a compensation for lack of agreement between 2002-2008;
- (b) a salary increase of 42-45% + a yearly increment of Rs100 over 4 years;
- (c) increase of all bonuses by 50%;
- (d) an increase of End of Year Bonus from 9% to 12%;
- (e) payment of gratuity equivalent to Blue Print benefits on normal retirement (i.e. 2½ months' wages per year of service) + a plot of land;
- (f) extension of 40-hr week over 5 days during crop season;
- (g) an increase in quantum of sick, local and vacation leaves;
- (h) allocation of land for agriculture diversification to VRS beneficiaries.

The MSPA was not agreeable and made the following counter proposals -

- (a) an increase in basic salary as follows -
  - 1 July 2009: 5%;
  - 1 July 2010: 2.5%;
  - 1 July 2011: 2.5%.
- (b) maintain the 40 hour week as it is, that is,
  - 5 days during intercrop;
  - 6 days during crop season.
- (c) establishment of a new methodology of bonus schemes as follows:
  - A “*Prime de Présence Annuelle*” varying between Rs 3000 and Rs9000;
  - A “*Prime d’Ancienneté*” varying between Rs11,000 and Rs20,000 depending on years of service;
  - A “*Prime de Productivité*” for workers affected at cutting and/or loading canes (The bonus varies between Rs250 and Rs2500 per fortnight depending on workers’ earning);
- (d) end of year bonus of 10%;
- (e) the leaves remain unchanged;
- (f) retirement schemes to remain unchanged;
- (g) the funeral grants to be increased to Rs 5,000 and Rs 2,500 to a worker and a pensioner respectively.

The Joint Negotiating Panel was not agreeable and maintained its demands and, in addition, in a letter dated 24 September 2009, it called for information on 15 specific issues, namely -

- (a) the yearly Financial Reports of all the listed companies from 2001 to 2009;
- (b) the yearly amount of dividends paid to shareholders of the listed companies from 2001 to 2009;
- (c) the yearly value of assets of the listed companies from 2001 to 2009;
- (d) the yearly overall remuneration paid by the listed companies to all its employees (that is total labour force) from 2001 to 2009;

- (e) the yearly overall remuneration paid by the listed companies to labourers and artisans from 2001 to 2009;
- (f) the number of employees employed by the listed companies as permanent labourers, artisans, staff (*état major*) for every year, from 2001 to 2009;
- (g) the number of employees employed by the listed companies as contractual/seasonal labourers, artisans, staff (*état major*) for every year, from 2001 to 2009;
- (h) the overall amount of funds benefitted by the listed companies from the national budget in connection with the EU Accompanying Measures Fund for the funding of VRS/BP/ERS and the application of the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Plan 2006-2015 (MAAS);
- (i) the total amount of bank loan on preferential rate benefitted by the listed companies;
- (j) the area of agricultural land under cane cultivation of the relevant listed companies from 2001 to 2009;
- (k) the area of listed companies for which land related taxes have been exempted from 2001 to 2009, and the amount of money corresponding to these exemptions;
- (l) a copy of all bagasse-electricity agreements between the relevant listed companies with existing Independent Power Producers Companies for the exchange of bagasse and electricity;
- (m) a copy of all agreements signed by the IPP sugar related companies involved in coal-bagasse energy co-generation with the Central Electricity Board;
- (n) a copy of the agreement signed by the relevant listed companies for sugar refinery with Suckzucker;
- (o) a list of all major share holders of the listed companies and a list of other companies in which they hold shares in Mauritius and abroad.

The MSPA indicated, in a letter dated 09 October 2009, that it was prepared to provide information it deems relevant to the collective bargaining exercise at industry level but not information pertaining to individual undertakings. For example, information pertaining to the

Independent Power Producers was not deemed relevant as the institutions concerned are not members of MSPA and, as such, not concerned with the ongoing collective bargaining exercise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Employment Relations Act provides at Section 41 (1) that, in the process of collective bargaining, either party shall provide to the other all relevant information required for the purposes of collective bargaining. Moreover, Section 41 (4) provides that where any party refuses to provide information under this Section, the other party may apply to the Employment Relations Tribunal (ERT) for an order and the Tribunal shall, where it is satisfied that the information is relevant, make an order within 30 days that the information be provided. The order has to be complied with within 14 days of its making.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have had meetings with both the representatives of MSPA and the Joint Negotiating Panel at the end of October this year and have urged them to return to the negotiating table. It needs be noted that my Ministry can only act as facilitator in this process and the decision on how to proceed rests with the parties concerned.

The MSPA submitted a second set of counter proposals on 23 October 2009 to the trade unions which essentially concern -

- a salary increase of 13% over a 4-year period starting 01 July 2009;
- the productivity bonuses and the *Prime d'Ancienneté et d'Assiduité* to remain unchanged, as required by the Unions;
- their proposal regarding the *Prime de Présence Annuelle* was maintained however.

I had a meeting with the representatives of the Joint Negotiating Panel on 30 October 2009. The trade unions indicated that they would only return to the negotiation table if MSPA:

- (a) provides them with all information they had called for;
- (b) withdraws its proposal regarding *Prime de Présence Annuelle* which they consider to be an attempt by MSPA to make their acquired rights less favourable, and
- (c) does not encourage enterprise level collective bargaining as in the case of FUEL and the Sugar Industry Welfare Association (SIWA).

Should MSPA fail to accede to their requests, the Joint Negotiating Panel indicated that the workers would proceed with a one-day strike at the end of November. I drew their attention to the fact that any such strike would be unlawful as the established procedures under the Employment Relations Act have not been followed and urged them to follow the required procedures.

In a letter dated 21 November 2009 addressed to MSPA and copied to the Prime Minister and to me, the Joint Negotiating Panel has reiterated the three requests communicated to me at the meeting of 30 October 2009 and has added a fourth condition, namely that the listed companies of the MSPA should strictly abide to Section 21 (2) of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act 2001 and to the Employment Rights Act 2008, on seasonal/contractual labour.

On 20 November 2009, MSPA has made an application to the Employment Relations Tribunal under Section 86 (3) for an order

- (a) requiring the Joint Negotiating Panel to make use of the procedures and remedies available under the law, and
- (b) to declare the threatened strike to be unlawful.

As an order from the Tribunal is binding on both the parties the order has to be complied with.

It has been reported in the press that the one-day strike is scheduled for this Friday 27 November.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to sub paragraph (a) of the PNQ, I have to inform the House that the Employment Relations Act provides the framework and procedures for collective bargaining at both enterprise and industry level. Where collective bargaining is undertaken at industry level, there has to be a procedure agreement at industry level, which is the case for MSPA and the recognised trade unions. The decision to proceed with collective bargaining at enterprise or industry level rests with the parties concerned.

As regards sub paragraph (b) of the PNQ, the Employment Relations Act provides at Section 63 that the parties to a labour dispute may jointly refer such dispute for voluntary arbitration to the Employment Relations Tribunal or to an arbitrator appointed by them. Where any dispute is referred to the Employment Relations Tribunal under this section, the Tribunal has

90 days of the referral to make an award. Where circumstances so require, this time limit may be extended with the consent of the parties.

Arbitration under the law is a voluntary process at the discretion of the parties concerned. It would not therefore be proper for the Government to appoint an arbitrator and this, after consultation with the trade unions only.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given us completely less of the points in dispute. Can I ask him whether the trade unions have reported a trade dispute as per the law to the Ministry and, if yes, whether the points upon which the trade dispute, if any, has been reported include the 40-hr week in five days?

**Mr Chaumière:** Not for the time being, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** Do I get it that no trade dispute has been reported?

**Mr Chaumière:** Not as regards the first three points, but as regards the 40-hr issue, yes Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am a bit at a loss. I seem to understand the Minister saying that there is a dispute reported to the Ministry on the 40-hr week, but not on the other point.

**Mr Chaumière:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister has said, like the MSPA, that any one-day strike would be unlawful. Has he discussed with the trade unions the possible consequences of the Ministry taking such an attitude?

**Mr Chaumière:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, on various occasions we have met the trade unions.

**Mr Bérenger:** I heard the Minister saying that he read in the press that there is one-day strike envisaged for next Friday. Is he aware and has he reacted to statements made by the same trade unionist to the effect that this would be a warning strike pending *une grève illimitée* at the beginning of the next sugar crop?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot react to what is being said in the press. There are certain procedures which have to be followed and eventually in the law there are sections of the law which describe how procedures should be followed before coming to a strike and I make an appeal to my friends of the trade unions that if they have got a case they have to follow the procedures, Mr Speaker, Sir.



**Mr Bérenger:** Will the hon. Minister agree with me that in regard to the 40- hr week in five days and all the points which have been referred to and that are in dispute, the way Ministers, Government behave on the occasion of the 01 May 2007 raised expectations immensely amongst the workers concerned? What is Government going to do to meet the expectations, which hit itself on the occasion of the 01 May 2007, raised?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is doing everything that it can do in order to come with a solution regarding this issue and I cannot give my own opinion of what has happened on the 01 May as to whether we have raised expectations or not. But what I said is that we are doing everything that we can do as a facilitator to make the parties come back to the negotiation table. This is where we can effectively thrash out matters, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** At this stage, the hon. Minister said that the unions have requested for detailed information on the financial situation of the individual companies and, therefore, the sugar industry as a whole and he made reference to the fact that if information is refused, one of the two parties, either the employers or the trade unions, can appeal to the tribunal to get an order to obtain the information. Can I know whether at this stage such a move has been made by any of the parties?

**Mr Chaumière:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of that, but I don't think that this has been done up to now.

**Mr Bérenger:** Will the hon. Minister agree with me that, although he said that the new law, the new Employment Relations Act, encourages both negotiations at industry level and at enterprise level, the spirit of the law is to move in the direction of enterprise level and that, therefore, the stand of the MSPA refusing to give information unless negotiations take place at enterprise level, amounts to trying to compel trade unions to negotiate at enterprise level?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier in my reply is that the law provides for both situations, but I must add as well that negotiation at industry level regarding the sugar industry has been an example which has worked well, and I think that even the parties concerned are all for continuing this process of negotiating at the enterprise level, safe one of the members of the MSPA.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the unions, in the course of the discussions that he has had with them, have expressed confidence in the tribunal at this point in time?

**Mr Chaumière:** At all time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in his answer the hon. Minister mentioned the Sugar Efficiency Act as one the requirements that the trade unions are asking. According to the Sugar Efficiency Act Section 21 (3), it says -

“Every employer shall on or before 31 January of every year, submit to the Ministry responsible for the subject of labour, separate returns in respect of agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers, showing in respect of the preceding year-

- (a) the number of workers employed by him under section 27 of the Labour Act;
- (b) the number of seasonal workers employed by him;
- (c) the number of workers employed by job contractors under section 28 of the Labour Act, and
- (d) the number of man-days performed by the workers referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c).

This concerns the ratio of seasonal labour to the actual labour force, May I ask the hon. Minister whether the employer has abided to Section 21(3) of the law and have they been in respect of the law in this matter?

**Mr Chaumière:** We are actually in the process of carrying out a survey to determine whether all the members of the MSPA and other sugar planters are complying with this exigency of the law and we will come back to that.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** The law is very clear. The law is not whether the Ministry should carry out a survey, the law is very clear and no one is above the law. I am asking whether they have abided to the Section 21 (3) of the law of submitting the returns with respect to the number of seasonal and non-seasonal workers.

**Mr Chaumière:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as a Ministry, we are also trying to see whether this is really the fact.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two questions to as the hon. Minister if you will allow me.

**Mr Speaker:** I would like to have short questions as there are so many Members who want to put questions.

**Mr Soodhun:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm if the MSPA has committed a serious breach of existing procedural agreement signed between the recognised union, that is, the Joint Negotiation Panel and the single union concerning the Flacq United State Ltd and the FUEL Sugar Mill Company Ltd?

**Mr Chaumière:** This is a more complex issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, because SIWA has gone before the Employment Relations Tribunal after recognition from FUEL. I must say that concerning the collective agreement, there is an award which has been given by the ERT in favour of SIWA. That is why it is a very complex issue and is one of the reasons of the dispute between the Joint Negotiating Panel and the MSPA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if ever there is any discrepancy in the application of the procedural agreement, the Tribunal *peut être saisi* on the issue.

**Mr Dullo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given the vital importance of the sugar industry to the economy and especially the challenges that each partner of the industry, including the workers, have got to face right now, Government should not just stand by and be an onlooker. Should not Government intervene as suggested, especially as there are requests by the Union for very relevant information and concerning the EU funding, contracts with the various other partners, including power supply, which are in possession of Government. As was done in the 1980s and 1990s, instead of brandishing the threat that the strike could be illegal or unlawful, should not Government intervene?

**Mr Speaker:** No, no comment!

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot substitute myself, nor the Government can substitute itself, to the MSPA and the Joint Negotiating Panel. There are bodies under the law, Mr Speaker, Sir, which are the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation and the Employment Relation Tribunal. The only institution which can give an award and interpret the law is the ERT and not myself.

**Mr Ganoo:** The hon. Minister made reference to a letter which was sent by the unions recently to the MSPA. The hon. Minister is aware that the JNP said that there are 4 points which constitute a constraint and preventing them to go back on the negotiating table. Out of these four points, may I ask the hon. Minister, since he himself has said that his Ministry is acting as a facilitator, whether he should not throw his weight to help to overcome these four hurdles and

they are so easy if the Ministry had thrown its weight in favour of the unions? There is a first point raised by hon. Ms Deerpalsing. The MSPA is ....

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member is pre-empting.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the Minister say why he does not help to clear these four points, especially in view of the fact that the law says now - and I will draw the hon. Minister's attention to this new section of the law, which means that we are on for hard days -

“No worker shall cease to be in continuous employment of an employer for reason of his participation for a first time in a strike which is unlawful under the Employment Relations Act 2008”.

**Mr Speaker:** The answer, please! There are so many Members who want to ask questions. I will have to stop because time is running out.

**Mr Chaumière:** Workers may be, Mr Speaker, Sir, but not the trade unionists. That is why I am making an appeal to the trade unionists.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will confirm that the members of the MSPA have not submitted the returns as the law asked it to do? I want to know from the Minister to confirm that the MSPA members have not abided by the law of this country.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister has answered already.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member would come with a substantive question, I will reply. I can provide the information as far as the information is given to me.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should come with a substantive question! Hon. Bodha!

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether when we see the position of the different parties, for example, on the salary issue 13% being offered and 40% being asked, we are moving in fact, towards a deadlock ?

**Mr Chaumière:** I did not hear about that one.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister is trying to be a facilitator. He is trying to facilitate, whether there is deadlock or no deadlock, is a different matter.

**Mr Bhagwan:** I will come back to the question of the responsibility of the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association as far as the Sugar Efficiency Act is concerned. The hon. Minister cannot hide himself by asking to come with a PQ. Has he been informed by his officers or if he has looked at the file himself that the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association has not abided by the legislation?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is where the hon. Members are all wrong. They must go and read the law, it is not MSPA which must provide information, but the sugar estates individually.

**Mr Lesjongard:** M. le président, le ministère en tant que facilitateur attribue l'échec des négociations à un dialogue de sourds. Est ce que le ministre ou le ministère peut nous indiquer qui est qualifié de sourd entre les partis concernés ?

**Mr Chaumière:** M. le président, il n'y a pas d'échec parce que les négociations ne sont pas terminées. L'honorable membre doit le savoir.

**Mr Soodhun:** Will the Minister confirm that, in the letter of 21 November which he mentioned, the trade unions are expecting a reply for a new negotiation for new procedural agreement?

**Mr Chaumière:** That is why I said that there is no *échec*. Both parties are waiting for negotiations under conditions.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the employers of the Sugar Industry are respecting the conditions of the *Tribunal d'Arbitrage Permanent*, whether the Minister is satisfied that the employers have abided by what the *Tribunal d'Arbitrage Permanent* has said?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the *Tribunal d'Arbitrage Permanent*, which is now the ERT, is presided over by the former Magistrate Rashid Hossen and Mr Seebaluck. I cannot, as a Minister, indulge in the affairs of the Tribunal and I think that all the parties know what their responsibilities are and towards the law also.

**Mr Ganoo:** The law on seasonal labour is being flouted by the MSPA! There is a second point within these four points and it is about the *Prime de Présence Annuelle*. Isn't the hon. Minister aware - and I think, he, himself, expressed an opinion on this - that, again, the MSPA is being unfair, unjust in trying to alter the way of calculating this *Prime de Présence Annuelle* ?

**Mr Speaker:** With all due respect to the hon. Member, we are not discussing the nitty-gritty of the matter.

**Mr Ganoo:** Will the hon. Minister intervene to make the MSPA change their minds on this issue of *Prime de Présence Annuelle*?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, these are negotiations. There has been an award in the past, but an award may be subject to discussions and discussions/negotiations are not over. Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe, I should draw the attention of the hon. Member to Section 72 of the Employment Relations Act regarding an award and its effect. An award which is in force may be varied through negotiations. There have been proposals from the trade unions, from the MSPA and there have been counterproposals, so let them come and finish the negotiations. That's all!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not consider, that if the very basis of negotiation has been flouted, that if the MSPA has not respected the ratio of seasonal to full-time labour that should be there, they are in a position of advantage vis-à-vis the workers and no negotiations could be done in a serene manner in this way?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that is another question. That is why I did answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition to say that, regarding the four points, the one regarding the 40-hr also, was a matter which was levelled at my Ministry, even before, by the trade unions. That's why I make a difference between these issues, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** A last question from hon. Ganoo and then the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to my question again. Can the hon. Minister confirm that this *Prime de Présence Annuelle* was the product of *un protocole d'accord* of 1994 which was introduced by the MSPA itself at that time and which now they want to review unilaterally?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is part of the negotiation; this is a proposal and it has to be discussed.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me, I have two final questions. One, it seems clear to me that what is taking place is that there is one day strike proposed for next Friday, then *une grève illimitée* at the beginning of the next sugar crop. I think, I am allowed to say that this shows that the new industrial relations legislation *est un échec* – it is not working. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is envisaging, proposing changes to that legislation?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, not for these reasons. We had come with amendments to the law, because we do believe that when there are things which we can improve, we amend

the law. But, as regards Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that we are doing what is right for the workers in the sugar industry and all the other workers because, the Labour Party comes from the background of trade unionism. And we are all doing what must be done for the purpose of the workers being protected in this country and getting what they should, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we are all aware of the very serious situation in the sugar industry. On the one hand, the workers and the trade unions are very frustrated, preparing for strike action, on the other hand, the industry as a whole is going through a very crucial defining moment. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister, being given that we are clearly *en présence d'un dialogue de sourds* and there is clearly a crisis of confidence - granted that arbitration outside the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal would have to be voluntary - the need to have a holistic view of the industry as a whole and reply to the trade unions' requests, will he not use his services as a facilitator to convince the two parties to agree to a high level arbitrator, as I said, a former Judge of the Supreme Court, with two mutually agreeable assessors? Doesn't he think that he should, as a facilitator, do his best to convince both parties to agree to the setting-up of such an arbitration?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have confidence in the institutions which are established under the laws, particularly the ERT. I must say that there is *une volonté* from both parties to come back to the negotiation table, it is not too late. I make an appeal and, as a Government, we are doing what is needed and what is wanted to make them come back to the negotiation table.

## MOTION

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

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

**Mr X. L. Duval rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**PUBLIC BILL**

*Second Reading*

**THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL**

**(No. XXI of 2009)**

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second reading of the Appropriation (2010) Bill (No. XXI of 2009).*

*Question again proposed.*

(12.10 p.m.)

**The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally):** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is nearly five days since the Budget has been presented and we have had the opportunity within these five days, including a weekend, where a lot of us have been meeting our constituents to have a feedback.

There is no doubt, as *Père Grégoire* said, there is a feel good factor, but there have also been criticisms, both inside and outside the House. The hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about playback. Of course, when the kitty was empty, we couldn't give anything. The economic measures taken over the last four years have paid handsome dividends and, of course, it is quite natural that we now distribute a national cake, which was almost non-existent, a bit more generously. But we had a playback from hon. Bodha who took almost an erotic pleasure in comparing the food prices from 2005 and now. Perhaps, he made his point.

*(Interruptions)*

I must say, however, that some people seemed to have forgotten that last year we had what we called an unprecedented energy crisis which, in its turn, generated the food crisis



worldwide. In this country, at least, we had food in the supermarkets stalls, but there are certain countries where there was no food – the land had dried. In some countries, they had the money, but they didn't have the food.

Some six months back, in this very Assembly, I was talking of the need to have the right mix of intelligence, commitment and energy as a nation to keep our country firmly and soundly on its legs. More importantly, I referred to the bold and reformative decision taken due to the farsightedness and proactivity of our colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment, well before the economy of the world started its downturn. It has been a real *tour de force* and I congratulate my colleague on that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *il se trouve que j'ai eu une information scientifique ou tout est basée sur des faits vérifiés et testés en laboratoires ou ailleurs.* But, I understand that it is a different story as regards economics which is more of a social science whereby we can never be sure of the results until they are there. I knew that the various actions taken by this Government were going in the right direction. There can be no doubt in anybody's mind now that the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment got it right. Our little island, unlike powerful economies, including those of the G20, has fared well amidst the economic turbulence that shook the world. This Government got it right.

Our country besides having to deal with a very difficult legacy bestowed upon us and I think the previous Prime Minister coined such terms as *état d'urgence économique sans précédent*. It has survived two massive triple shocks - the dismantling of the Multiple Fibre Agreement, the 36% reduction in the price of sugar exports to the EU and the oil rising prices followed by rising food prices and a global food crisis. Last, but not least, the financial meltdown and the worst world economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, had this Government lacked both vision and the mettle to translate this vision into reality, our *l'île Maurice ou il fait bon vivre - oui c'est un plaisir*, would have now been our economic curse *sans précédent* on the verge of disaster. What has not been said against the actions taken by the Government! I am not going to list out all the vitriolic and vile recriminations made against this Government. With dignity, honour and perseverance, we made our way to protect our nation and our country.

Today the results are there, tangible, both in terms of figures which speak for themselves and in terms of feel good factor which is very palpable in the population. We, however, cannot afford to be complacent and rest on our laurels. We are not here only to resist shocks. Our ultimate goal is to make this country a nice place to live, a paradise for the whole population and not for a selected few. This is why we need to keep the momentum. This is what the budget is aiming at.

The new development model that this Government has put in place since July 2005 has been paying handsome dividends. We need to reinforce it so that the growth of *le gâteau national* is secured in the first place and, its distribution, to different components of the nation thereafter be more equitable and fair.

Mr Speaker, Sir, though there are positive signs of recovery in the major world economies, it is still premature to take it that the battle is already won. We still need to tread cautiously, but with determination and optimism. The green shoots are now flowering in full swing, but they have to mature until they are perfect.

Social development is also a key factor in the new development model. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will never let down the poor, the needy, the vulnerable income group, *les autrement capable*, our senior citizens. This Budget goes a long way to assist the needy, poor and the downtrodden, the Empowerment Programme, the Integrated Housing Programme, the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme, the CSR Funds, the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups, the free bus transport scheme for the elderly, students and universal old age pension, the subsidy on flour and cooking gas, payment of examination fees and the list is long, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Investment Infrastructure will continue to build the future of this country. However, we need to protect our environment and save our resources so that the future we are building will be even stronger and lasting. This Budget will further secure a green Mauritius. The hon. Prime Minister's '*Maurice Ile Durable*' initiative, all the initiatives to promote energy efficiency, green buildings, green procurement, use of solar energy, embellishment of our environment and improving water supply are indeed laudable.

Overall, I must say that this Budget will further consolidate the resilience of our economy and ensure a fair and equitable distribution of national wealth to the nation and pave the way for a greener Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, six months back, I also mentioned that I was privileged to hold a portfolio which attends to one of the most basic human needs - a house – in fact, the highest investment any individual can make in his life is on a house. *C'est avec une satisfaction du devoir accompli que je peux mentionner* that some 533 low-cost housing units have already been allocated to eligible beneficiaries coming from the low-income groups. The construction of another 550 low-cost housing units on 11 sites across the island has already started and it is expected to be completed in February 2011.

Under the casting of the Roof Slab Scheme, around Rs84 m. for the period starting July 2009 till to date, have been disbursed as non-refundable grants to some 1,500 heads of households who are persevering to construct their own houses. I always said that we care for *les 'ti-dimoune'* and I mean it. I have ensured that funds are disbursed to eligible beneficiaries in less than two months. Never before has the processing in respect of applications for grants under this scheme been so fast and I want it to go even faster. At this very moment, I am addressing the House there are barely a few applications under process.

Furthermore, whilst maintaining the spirit of good governance and transparency; we are now more compassionate and flexible in considering applications, so that deserving applicants are not deprived of their rights to a grant under the scheme. In fact, hon. Members of the Assembly on both sides of the House have, on numerous occasions, approached me when somebody has got up to 10 square metres in excess are denied. I think we are compassionate and we have to be flexible to help these people especially if they are making the effort to build their own houses.

In regard to the sale of State land to owners of ex-CHA housing units, out of some 16,525 owners where there is no impediment to the land being sold, around 6,000 have to date already become owners of land and procedures are being completed for the remaining ones to also becoming owners of the land. For the first six months that the scheme was on, only 1,000 people applied. There was a lack of communication. I, therefore, undertook to have a public relation exercise where members of my staff of the Housing Unit went to each and every single housing estate to explain the scheme to the owners of the CHA houses, and as you can see, it has paid handsome dividends.

There are another 5,000 letters of intent which have already been issued to these applicants. I am aware, however, that there are certain constraints regarding houses which are

found on *Pas Géométriques* or on railway lands. We are working hard towards a solution which, in the end, will, I am convinced, benefit everybody concerned.

The intention of the Government in amending the State Land Act to enable the sale of plots of land, on which stand ex-CHA to the owners of these houses at a nominal price of Rs2,000 was precisely to democratise the access to land ownership particularly, to people who, at a point in time, underwent the trauma of losing their homes after the passage of cyclones Alex and Carole.

I must, Mr Speaker, Sir, share my concern with hon. Members about some disturbing information which has been brought to my knowledge recently, concerning cases where some of these houses are being sold through the “sale by levy” process to some sharks who are all the time *aux aguets, et qui attendent le moment propice pour profiter de la faiblesse des gens qui sont dans la détresse*.

In fact, I must reiterate the answer which I gave to hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee about the pledging of rights. These houses were sold a long time ago at the nominal price of Rs800 and these owners are *propriétaires de plein droit* and they can pledge their rights and, in this context, there are some owners, who have pledged their rights, taken loan from the bank which, unfortunately, they could not pay back. And these houses have been impounded and sold by levy. But there are some people who can afford it, who have bought these houses. One person has bought, at least, three houses and has made an application also. But I find it difficult that to sell these plots of land at Rs2,000 to one individual who can afford it, according to the law, there is some doubt about it, but I want to make it clear, in no uncertain terms, that this Government will, on no account, condone such despicable things which, we must acknowledge, seem to be apparently legally in order. This is why my Ministry has frozen the procedures and started consultation with the State Law Office to find ways and means so that ultimately there is no room for such speculation.

In line with Government policy to democratise access to land ownership, 242 fully serviced lots at Ville Noire (56), Glen Park (63) and Souillac (123) will be ready by end of June 2010 to be allocated to eligible beneficiaries who will benefit from infrastructure, that is, water, electricity and sewerage put in by Government to the tune of Rs50 m.

Social housing is high on the agenda of this Government which is conscious and concerned of the difficulties encountered by those at the lowest rung of the ladder to secure a housing unit. To that effect, some 166 *arpents* of the 1,000 *arpents* of land made available from the Government/Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association Agreement, have already been identified on 12 sites across the island for the construction of housing units and provision of fully serviced sites to low-income households. Identification of other buildable sites is in progress.

My Ministry, in collaboration with other institutions concerned, has already started procedures for the construction of 600 and 300 core housing units of 38m<sup>2</sup> and 57 m<sup>2</sup> respectively. These units will be constructed on plots of land of around 60 *toises* each whereby infrastructure will be provided. This Government is, in fact, providing economically viable solutions to social problems and expects profitable firms to play their role fully under their Corporate Social Responsibility. Part of the land will also be used to provide fully serviced sites of around 60 *toises* each to lower middle-income persons deriving monthly household income of up to Rs16,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I had the opportunity, on several occasions, to talk about the situation in the NHDC housing estates, particularly the high-rise apartments. This is an issue which should be the concern of one and all. We are dealing with living conditions of people. There should be no room for party politics. It is for us all to rise above that. On the one hand, we have people who are owners, *de plein droit* of their housing units and who, individually or through syndics, are legally responsible to ensure the proper upkeep and maintenance of their houses and their living environment, including *les parties communes*. On the other hand, we are faced with a legacy of syndics which have miserably failed to function, resulting in people living in insalubrious conditions. Moreover, the culture of living together is not yet in the *moeurs* of many of our fellow citizens. To make matters worse, the monthly instalments in respect of mortgage fees is poor. Currently, the NHDC house owners owe about Rs100 m. in terms of mortgage payments. Be that as it may, this Government is not insensitive to the living conditions of these people. We are doing whatever is possible and within our means to remedy the situation. But people must realise that while Government is making an unprecedented effort to help, they must also assume their responsibility. No one can have a free lunch for ever. We will help those who help themselves.

Therefore, more than Rs200 m. are being injected in the rehabilitation of these NHDC housing estates. Contracts to the tune of Rs45 m. and Rs 75 m. have already been awarded in respect of waterproofing, repairs to cracks and other ancillary works respectively in no less than 14 housing estates. Here, I will pause to appeal to the owners of the NHDC: for God's sake, don't start messing around with the waterproofing and putting aerials and one aerial can, in fact, damage a hole allowing ingress of water. If you want to put *parabole*, you can put it near your window. Cleaning of the sites to enable eventual taking over sewerage disposal systems by the WMA on some 45 housing estates, have been completed. Contracts in respect of their repair works to electric meter cabins which have been vandalised in 15 housing estates will be awarded shortly whilst tender documents are being finalised in regard to water network in some 13 housing estates. Now that the sewerage system will be rehabilitated like every citizen of this country, sewerage fees will have to be paid also by the NHDC inhabitants.

Government is playing its role fully and my earnest appeal now is for owners of these houses to ensure that their own living environments are properly maintained.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to shed some light regarding the monthly contribution of a syndic fee of Rs200 to Rs240 which was included in the monthly instalment of purchases of NHDC houses in the early nineties. The hon. Leader of the Opposition put the question during his intervention on the Budget. In fact, this arrangement concerned only housing units sold through the MHC which provided mortgage loans to the purchases of the housing units. The deeds of sale made provision for the payment of the syndic fee. However, in practice, loan terms are for specific periods at the end of which monthly instalments stop, whereas payment of monthly syndic fee still has to continue. This matter is receiving my full attention.

As my colleagues are aware, only 20% of the country is State land. Land being a prerequisite for all economic developments, there is a need to ensure a judicious management and proper utilisation of this scarce and valuable resource.

Furthermore, in line with this Government policy to promote access to land and ensure a fair return on its prime land assets, the *campement* site lease policy and the industrial site lease policy have been reviewed.

The *Pas Géométriques* Act was amended in 2006 through the Finance Act to optimise revenue on the *campement* site leases. The revenue collected to date is about Rs1.3 billion. Following the Finance Act 2008, the Industrial Lease Policy was reviewed to be in line with

campement site lease policy to better reflect the market value of the land. Therefore, industrial leases are being granted for a period of 60 years. Henceforth, promoters have an indication of the annual rental zone-wise. Some 300 industrial site leases including 26 found in the city centre of Port Louis have been issued with a letter of option. I must stop here to mention a detail where people in the very prime site of Port Louis were paying only Rs1,000 per year, now, will have to pay over Rs1.5 m. So, this will ensure that we get value for money. Being a caring Government, my Ministry has reviewed its rental policy applicable to the building site leases. This follows numerous representations from beneficiaries that rentals were on the high side and....

**Mr Speaker:** The discussion you have with your friend, you go out and let the hon. Minister speak. He is your colleague, he is speaking and you are talking. Please, carry on!

*(Interruptions)*

Order now!

**Dr. Kasenally:** ....in fact, Members from both sides of the House have approached me personally, the Ministry, the high side for poor people and some people, I think, rent was increased from Rs200 to about Rs5,000 or Rs10,000 and looking at it, we decided to go for a new policy. Henceforth, the rental will vary from Rs150 to Rs6,000 and will depend solely on the family income. I would like to mention that building site leases are granted for residential purposes to families of low-income groups who cannot afford to acquire a plot of land and to build a house. Such leases are granted to victims of natural disasters, disabled persons and women in distress. Anybody who has got a house or a building lease elsewhere is not entitled to any building lease of State land.

In regard, to squatting which is a criminal offence, my Ministry will maintain a policy of zero tolerance against squatters and will ensure that Government land is kept free from unauthorised occupations. My Ministry will thus proceed with eviction of squatters and demolition of unauthorised structures on State land as soon as such cases are detected in collaboration with the local authorities. My Ministry has the responsibility of acquiring private land for the implementation of Government projects. In this respect, 346 *arpents* of land have already been acquired for the implementation of projects, including the Terre Rouge, Verdun-Trianon link road, Plaine Wilhems sewage projects, Grand' Baie sewage projects, Triolet bypass and the Paille-Guibies sewage projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since October 2005, we have entered into a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding), on hydrography with the Government of India, as a result of which, several hydrographic surveys have been undertaken by Indian Naval ships, such as, the survey of Port Louis Harbour and Port Mathurin and approaches pioneer survey of Agalega Islands, deep sea water sampling for land-based ocean projects, survey of St. Brandon shoals and survey of several bays around the island. To ensure safe navigation at sea, charts of the above-mentioned regions will soon be available for sale. These charts will also contribute to the fishing and tourist activities. Furthermore, Mauritius has adhered to the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission in February this year. We take pride in the election of Mauritius as the Vice-Chair of the South African Islands Hydrographic Commission in September 2009.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last year a contract to the tune of Rs620m. entirely funded by the Government, was awarded to a UK based Consultancy firm for the establishment of Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System(LAVIMS) for the island of Mauritius. The project started in January 2009 and is well on track. Three major outcomes of this project are a complete property valuation for taxation purposes, a Cadastre for better management of our scarce land resources and a parcel-based Deed Registration System for secure ownership. All this land-related information will be integrated in a simple Information Management System (IMS). This project will harmonise and bring changes to property transactions with consequent amendments to existing laws. It will also be a powerful tool to plan and administer our limited land resources. Field Data collection on ownership and property valuation is ongoing and we have already received a complete set of high resolution digital aerial photography for the whole of Mauritius. Detailed aerial photography provides a base data for land parcels identification and valuations of properties. In addition, it is recognised that the products derived from digital photography may have a wide applications by other entities. In fact, if any single Member of the House is interested, he can come to my Ministry and we will show him exactly where his house is, where his garden is, where his coconut trees are and where their cars are parked. There is such a fine resolution of this photography. Potential users include other Government and parastatal bodies such as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security, Central Statistics Office, Police Department, Local Authorities, Central Water Authority, Road Development Authority and Central Electricity Board. Also, commercial users such as hotels, advertisers, private surveyors and planners, as well



as individuals who might want to view their own properties can have recourse to aerial photography.

The Mauritius Post has recently solicited the support of my Ministry to develop a National Postcoding and Addressing System. This system is concerned with street naming and property numbering as such and has a lot of similarities with the mapping of properties involved in the LAVIMS project. Mutual collaboration between my Ministry and Mauritius Post Ltd will benefit both parties by avoiding duplication of efforts and in this respect, a protocol for collaboration is being worked out and a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed in due course between my Ministry and the Mauritius Post Ltd. The LAVIMS project is expected to be completed by July 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, sustaining Green Mauritius is one of the main themes of the Budget 2010. In this context Land Use Planning is a crucial activity in promoting sustainable development and combating global climate change. Our towns and villages must be developed at the right density with the proper mix of development to be efficient, especially a good mix of housing and jobs to minimise the need to travel to attend work or school. To make out towns and villages better places to live in, there is a need to integrate land use planning with infrastructural planning; for example, transport, energy, water and wastewater strategies. At the local level also, we need to provide for energy efficient buildings and pedestrian streets and tree-lined accesses to promote urban cooling, green spaces for leisure and a means to reduce the carbon footprint. The building laws are currently being amended to that effect.

Nevertheless, this can only happen if we have a modern new Land Use Planning and Development Bill to replace the Town & Country Planning Act of 1954. This is a major priority for my Ministry, in order to achieve the socio-economic objectives of Government and streamline the plan-making and permitting processes of local authorities. In this context, my Ministry is currently finalising a new Planning Bill that will consolidate all planning legislations, which are at present scattered in four or five pieces of law.

We are also promoting good urban design by producing planning policy guidance for the benefit of developers and professionals. We believe our cities and villages should be architecturally attractive with nice buildings and a lot of open spaces and greening of our streets. We are striving to provide a modern planning framework to guide and control development,

which will promote well-planned and properly implemented projects that are indicators of the level of maturity of our country.

We are also preparing a planning policy guidance on IRS and RES to guide prospective investors. To better regulate the proliferation of gaming houses, a planning policy guidance on game houses will be finalised, after the inter-ministerial committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, has looked at all the issues. My Ministry is contributing significantly to facilitate doing business. To that effect, we have reviewed all the Rural Outline Schemes - core planning policies have been made more flexible and a wider range of activities are now possible within our District Council Areas.

We will soon launch a study to review the Municipal Outline Schemes – some of these dates as far back as 20 years ago. These planning instruments will provide an updated development framework for development opportunities in line with the provisions of the National Development Strategy.

The *Morcellement* Board is a one-stop-shop for dealing with subdivision of land. It processes, on average, 500 applications per year. The *Morcellement* Act was amended with the promulgation of the Additional Stimulus Package Act in April 2009, with a view to shortening the response time to developers to eight weeks and introducing a monitoring mechanism in the system.

This Government is also fully subscribing to the concept of *Maurice Ile Durable* and is fully committed to make this a reality by facilitating its implementation, in spite of our limited resources.

The Town and Country Planning, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, has two main functions -

- (i) prepare/modify Outline Schemes, which set out the planning framework for managing development within the local authorities, and
- (ii) hear appeals from aggrieved persons against the decision of the local authority in respect of building and land use permits.

One important issue, which has been brought to my attention again, is the considerable time taken for the appeal cases to be heard.

It is good to note that appeal cases are heard by the Board on a first come first serve basis, and that most of the hearings of appeal cases get delayed mainly because of the need for counsels representing different parties to agree on common dates. This procedure is being reviewed, with a view to expediting matters. Henceforth, dates on which appeal cases are to be heard, will be fixed in advance and will rest on counsels to agree on those dates. To date, there are approximately 50 such cases still to be heard. However, cases where parties are not represented by counsels, these are dealt expeditiously.

From September 2008 to date, 175 such cases have been heard, determined and disposed of.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I would like to stress on the fact that the current Budget presented by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, reflects well this Government's commitment to place the country on the social economic foothold, despite tough prevailing international economic and financial problems.

I am confident that, through strong State and public participation, we will win over the challenges facing us today, and we will consolidate our situation to fit the new world order.

I wish to thank hon. Members of the House for their kind attention.

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

*On resuming at 1.54 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair*

**Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** M. le président, nous voici déjà au quatrième et dernier budget de ce présent gouvernement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, those who have listened to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance may have noted that the delivery of last Wednesday was not the best that he could have granted us. I did get the impression that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, at times, was not convinced that the measures he was announcing were the best measures he could announce for the betterment of the people of our Republic. As a matter of example, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Minister of Finance, at paragraph 285, announced that Government would provide motorized wheelchairs for use at the University of Mauritius and University of Technology Mauritius, I am sure that the hon. Minister of Finance knows that to go

by the title of this section, that he is upholding the values of compassion, practicing a sort of targeting among disabled students is not the best way to achieve this goal. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister, to uphold these values of compassion, could have made provision for such chairs at our primary and secondary schools which are attended by students who faced difficulties to move. And not all our schools are attended by disabled children, but to make a provision so that students in these schools too are being provided by such facility.

Another example, Mr Speaker, Sir, is when the hon. Minister announced that, I quote –

“We are raising the monthly income ceiling to be eligible for full payment of SC/HSC Examination fees from Rs7,500 to Rs8,500.”

I welcome this increase. *Un petit peu est mieux que rien.* But I think that the hon. Minister knows that with this ceiling many poor families will continue to face difficulties to pay these fees. When we are talking about a monthly income of Rs8,500, we are talking about spouses who can be a maid and the husband can be a cleaner in one of these cleaning companies that we have around. It will bring them to Rs8,500. And we know that these types of families will face great difficulty to pay such fees. These measures make me say that when the Minister announced these measures, he was not convinced that they were the better measures he could have given.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not intend to talk more about education. It's too heart breaking to see *le gâchis* that has been done during the four and a half years. True it is that the present Minister is trying to clean up the mess.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, I am going to focus my speech on another sector which I think is of utmost importance. I have named the health sector. Mr Speaker, Sir, the health sector is being covered in the Budget Speech by five small paragraphs. The first one to compare the funding between 2005 and 2010, three others to say what has been done and one paragraph to elaborate the main measures – I am taking them for the main measures - that will be implemented during the next financial year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the World Health Organisation, the goals for health systems are good health, responsiveness to the expectations of the population and fair financial contribution. Good health, of course, includes physical and mental health. Concerning the

physical health, Mr Speaker, Sir, as time goes on, our Republic is facing increasing health challenges. Among these challenges we have diabetes. According to official figures, we have one of the highest prevalence of diabetes in the world. And it is said that one out of five adults in Mauritius suffers from diabetes. This is not to say that children are being spared. In fact, here too, we see an increasing number of children suffering from diabetes. On the other hand, many of those who suffer from diabetes are not even aware of the conditions and complications of diabetes such as cardiovascular diseases, kidney failures, blindness, damages nerve to limbs and amputations are becoming *le quotidien de la société Mauricienne*. In his 2006/2007 Budget, the hon. Minister announced the removal of VAT on any kind of, I quote –

“(...) glucometers, on strips for glucometers and on lancets for blood tests used by diabetics.”

All reckon that this was a good measure. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, at today's date, the price of a glucometer varies from Rs1,200 to Rs1,500. The strips for glucometers are Rs240 for a box of ten and one lancet costs Rs6. Despite the measures taken in the 2006-2007 Budget, with these actual prices, the equipment for blood test for diabetics remains inaccessible for many, and most probably for those who badly need them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to say that Government should give a glucometer to each diabetic, but I do believe that with some efforts and goodwill, Government could give a glucometer, particularly to those who benefit from social aid. I think that, recently, it has been said that children who suffer from diabetes will be given a glucometer free of charge. It is a very good initiative which I salute, but I am talking about adults and I think that those who benefit from social aid could be provided with a glucometer because, finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, this will decrease the pressure on other services in hospitals.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, sensitisation programme is on. I have to thank the NGOs and some private firms for the good work they are doing on the sensitisation programme. But, here too, I think that on the Government side, a lot more need to be done. I think that this must be an ongoing process as I have said.

It has to be done in our schools, in all training centres, in the workplace and in community centres. We have to do sensitisation programmes to help Mauritians to change their habits, be it eating habits or lifestyle because most Mauritians don't do much exercise. So, I

would even say that we need aggressive sensitisation programmes so that Mauritians change their eating habits and lifestyle.

Another challenge, Mr Speaker, Sir, is cancer and the two most common types of cancer which affect women are breast cancer and cervical cancer. Mr Speaker, Sir, if we take a survey in this very House, I doubt there will be one single Member who does not know a relative or a friend who is suffering or has suffered from breast cancer or cervical cancer. And these types of cancer, Mr Speaker, Sir, are affecting women at a younger age. You have women as from 25/30 years who are suffering from breast cancer or cervical cancer. Some two years back, in 2007, I put a question, PQ No. B/684, to have information regarding the number of breast and cervical cancer per age groups. In his answer, the hon. Minister stated that he was tabling the information, but as at to date, I have not found the information in the library and I consider it to be very unfortunate. He also mentioned that information was being sought from private clinics and so on and this information too was to be tabled, but as at to date there is no information in the library.

Regarding cervical cancer, Mr Speaker, Sir, during the past few years, many countries have included, in their health programmes, vaccination against cervical cancer. After countries like Australia, Canada, India, UK and USA, other countries like Ghana are encouraging women to take advantage of this vaccine to protect themselves. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this vaccine prevents infection from the human papilloma viruses which are the major cause of cervical cancer. In this very House, as far back as 2006, more than 3 years, it was June 2006, the issue of this vaccine was raised by hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun. The then Minister of Health stated, I quote -

*“We have to study all the implications, be it technical or financial before we can implement any plan as far as Mauritius is concerned”.*

When hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun put a further question asking the Minister whether there is a committee working on this implementation, his answer was –

*“This is being done at the level of the Ministry”.*

Some nearly three years after this reply, in April 2009, another question on this issue of vaccination against cervical cancer was put and there has been a change at the head of the Ministry of Health and the Minister stated –

“My Ministry is examining the technical and financial implications for the introduction of the vaccine against cervical cancer in our public hospitals”.

After three years, we have the exact sentence, *mot pour mot*, *M. le président*.

“It is examining the technical and financial implications for the introduction of the vaccine against cervical cancer in our hospitals.”

It is a cut and paste answer. So, after three years, we had the same answer. Regarding such an important issue, I think *ce n'est pas sérieux*. In his speech last Wednesday, the hon. Minister did mention cervical cancer. Regarding prevention because he was talking about “*we are also focussing on prevention*” - paragraph 338, he said-

*“11,900 women have been screened for breast cancer and 9,100 women were screened for cervical cancer.”*

And the way these figures are being presented, Mr Speaker, Sir, one can have the impression that 20,000 women have been screened, but, in fact, it could be only 11,000 and out of the 11,000, 9,000 have accepted for cervical cancer, that is, some have not gone for this and maybe it is just a way to present figures to amplify some facts. It could be. Just to amplify facts, we give these two figures to give such an impression.

Anyway, my main concern is that nothing was mentioned regarding the vaccine against cervical cancer and the implications of this implementation are under study since 2006 according to replies from Ministers in this very House, but nothing has been mentioned in the Budget. True it is that the vaccine is expensive, but it is not as expensive as stated by the Minister.

I would like, Mr Speaker, Sir, to avail myself of this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who are working with those suffering from cancer, be it the doctors, the nurses, the Nuclear Medicine Unit at Nehru Hospital and this unit, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a clear example of how high a standard our public sector can be. I had the opportunity to accompany a close relative, this person was suffering from cancer and I really appreciate this service and I said: yes, our public sector can be of a very high standard.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are also NGOs like Link to Life. I have witnessed the pressure on the doctors and nurses with dozens of patients queuing up and, *en passant*, Mr Speaker, Sir, I've never understood why at our hospitals every patient is being given the same time for appointment. *Tou dimounn 8.30 ou 9 heures*. So, everyone just go there and when people go for treatment of cancer and so on, very often, they have to go for blood tests, so, they have not taken

their breakfast and they remain there for nearly half a day. These are things that have been witnessed. So, there are things to be done. This problem is very serious. I have not mentioned the other forms of cancer which are affecting our society as I have chosen to talk about these two main types which affect women in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should mention the children. Here, too, we have an increasing number of children suffering from cancer. When I talk about children, I can see a little girl. *Je revois cette petite fille, sans cheveux suite à la chimio, avec son 'churidar' rose, cet enfant qui attendait d'être ausculté par le médecin pouvait, à peine se tenir en place, bouger, etc.* I think that something has to be done for children suffering from cancer and I really appreciated to see in the Budget that a Cancer Paediatric Unit has been set up at Victoria Hospital. This is a very good thing. I think that even when these children go for appointment, maybe if there is a room in the ward so that they don't have to queue up with the adults; it would help the children to face this very difficult period.

The other issue I would like to talk about, Mr Speaker, Sir, is HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS pandemic concerns all of us. From an estimated prevalence rate of 0.5 in 2001, we have reached an estimated rate of 3.6. Mr Speaker, Sir, under the MSM/MMM Government, Mauritius became one of the first countries offering free anti-retroviral treatment to those suffering from HIV/AIDS. The Needle-Exchange Programme initiated by the present Government is a good measure since it is a well-known fact that the use of needles among drug addicts is a major cause of infection. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to bear in mind that prevention is the most important tool to combat this pandemic and when the hon. Minister talks about prevention in health sector, I have not seen anything regarding prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Sensitisation Programme must be an ongoing feature and here too in our schools as from upper primary to university and all training centers, in community centers and also in the workplace.

Sexual education, Mr Speaker, Sir, is an important aspect and must find its place in our schools. Our youth is sexually active since very young age. *Il n'y a aucune raison pour nous de se voiler la face.* And you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we talk about young people being sexually active at a younger age, we tend to forget that our grandmothers were sexually active at a very young age. The difference is it was within marriage and today it is outside marriage and we tend to forget that *et nous dire - "Ah, banne zen zordi , banne zen zordi!"* Please, let's reflex



upon it! It is not only “*banne zens zordi*” because our grandmothers got married at 12, 13 or 14 years and so they were sexually active, but within the marriage. But our youth, they are at schools, society has made it that today girls are not going to get married at 12 or 14 years, but this does not prevent them to have sexual urges. We have to be honest regarding these issues.

It is the duty of policy-makers to device means to help our young people pour *une meilleure gestion de leur sexualité*. Le programme de « *thou shall not* » ne va pas marcher avec les jeunes. Qu'on le sache!

It is our duty to protect our young children and it is not by refusing authorisation to install a condom machine on a university campus that we are going to protect our youth, because, Mr Speaker, Sir, our youth does not wait to see a condom distributor to become sexually active. So this is the blunt truth and this is not this type of measure which will help our youth. And, it is neither, Mr Speaker, Sir, by refusing to include questions relating to sexual behaviour in a survey that we are going to protect our youth. Maybe I have to remind Members of this House that in a survey by the WHO, the global school based study health survey, the Ministry of Education has refused authorisation to put questions relating to sexual behaviour of our students. *Mais, quel ridicule, M le president!* As if the Minister of Education is not aware of the present situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have loved to know the reasons for such a refusal. *On a été ridiculisé vis a vis des autorités, mais qu'est-ce qui se passe dans ce pays?* The Ministry of Education is fully aware of the sexual activity of the young people. Let me give some figures. Mr Speaker, Sir, some years back, I took up in this very House the issue of teenage pregnancy. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not to teenage. It is children pregnancy, I should say. Let me give some figures regarding teenage or should I say children pregnancy. For the last year, 2008, and I give it by age groups: *11 à 14 ans : 77 cas; 15 ans: 166 cas. 16 ans: 378 cas. 17 ans: 726. 18 ans: 857* which give us a total of 2,204 cases of teenage pregnancy and among them *de 11 ans à 14 ans, il y a eu 77 enfants qui ont accouché. Et là aussi, on n'arrive pas à comprendre l'urgence de l'éducation sexuelle dans nos écoles !*

There is an increasing trend 2007 *parce qu'en, c'était 1,846* and more over, Mr Speaker, Sir, hospitalisation following abortion age group *de 13 ans à 18 ans, nous avons eu, l'année dernière, en 2008: 120 et en 2007, c'était 104. Voilà les chiffres. Voilà les réalités. Et nous savons que les relations non protégées, manque d'information est un facteur à risques pour la propagation du virus HIV/SIDA. Et que fait-on?*

I have to add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the figures I have just mentioned is from the source of the statistics of the Ministry of Health. So, they are aware of it.

Donc, voilà où nous en sommes, M le président, et voilà ce que surtout je voulais dire concernant le VIH/SIDA.

When we talk about HIV/AIDS, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must salute the efforts made by NGOs such as PILS which, during the past ten years, have been doing a laudable work for the society.

The other issue regarding HIV/AIDS is that those who are suffering from HIV/AIDS are still facing tremendous difficulties when they attend hospitals. We have all heard the story of this young woman who, after having been violently aggressed, was admitted to hospital and the way she was treated because of her HIV/AIDS status, and there are many cases. Up to now, it is very unfortunate that those in the health sector in hospitals they have not been able to overcome the apprehensions regarding HIV/AIDS and they are not able to treat these patients with compassion.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have seen this past year that many of those who suffer from HIV/AIDS have seen the BIP been discontinued. And, here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do believe that the factor of 60% incapacity should not be the only factor to be taken into consideration. I think it is of utmost importance to take into consideration the type of work the person is doing. Because if someone is suffering from the same illness, but, let's say one is a clerk and the other one is a labourer or *maçon*, the type of work is different and taking only the 60% incapacity, I do not think that it is an equitable treatment. So I am hoping that the Minister concerned will look into that.

Let us take other factors because these people suffering from HIV/AIDS, I have seen some of them and they just can't do these heavy works. Now, without the pension, they are taking a lot of drugs and so on and they just can't follow the treatment properly because they can afford the required diet for this treatment.

Once again, I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government must intensify sensitisation campaigns, devise appropriate sexual education, among other measures.

Let me now, Mr Speaker, Sir, take another challenge and I am talking about obstetrics and gynaecology problems and maternal mortality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is most disturbing to see the increase rate of caesarean practice, both in our public and private hospitals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is most disturbing to see the increase rate of caesarean practice both in our public and private hospitals and, here too, in a reply to PQ No. B/598 of this year, the Minister informed the House that the statistics show this increase in the percentage of deliveries by caesarean and he mentioned that the rate in Government hospitals was 31.6% in 2003 and for January to April 2009, the rate has increased from 31.6% to 42% and in the private sector the rate has reached 50.1% in 2008. *M. le président, excusez-moi, nos femmes ne savent plus accoucher! Il y a un gros problème! Et comme pour se consoler le ministre a ajouté:*

“I am informed that the rate of caesarean section worldwide is on the increase and in most countries it exceeds the World Health Organisation standard of 15%.”

So, the World Health Organisation Standard is 15% and our rate is three times more, 42% public sector et 50% *on fait une moyenne de plus de 45%, trois fois plus que* the World Health Organisation Standard.

Once again, in this case, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that he was tabling the detailed information for period January 2003 to April 2009 and, at nine, today, the information was not in the Library! *Cela devient une habitude, je ne sais pas!* This is, of course, very unfortunate !

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister gave several reasons for this increase, but some people - *allons dire des mauvaises langues* - say that the fact that a caesarean costs up to Rs75,000 while normal delivery Rs25,000 in public sector can be one reason for the increase number of caesareans. I don't know, but I think that this is a matter which the Ministry has to look into. How come that half of the women in Mauritius need today caesarean? Because many people are talking about that: *césarienne ça te coûte R 75,000, accouchement normal R 25,000. Que veux tu?* Can this be a reason for the increase? I am just putting the question.

I hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the study by the Mauritius Institute of Health on the issue as announced by the hon. Minister is on and we will soon be apprised of the findings. Because in June it was anytime as from now; so, I hope that we will soon be apprised of the findings of the study. This is a most serious situation as the hon. Minister himself stated. Mr Speaker, Sir, true it is that the hon. Minister of Finance cannot mention everything in his Budget Speech. However, I must say that I have not seen anything under the services to be provided output and performance, information regarding birth by caesarean. I have not seen whether we had a target to decrease this rate. I have seen for the weight of new born, what is the target and so on, but

here I have not seen anything in the Budget for caesarean. Are we targeting to decrease this? I have not seen it.

Some words on maternal death. Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ No. B/318 the hon. Minister gave us the figures of maternal death for the past years. At a time when we are talking about high tech medicine, I do think that too many women lost their lives while giving birth. Here, too, the hon. Minister announced a high level technical committee that has been set up to look into the matters. He also mentioned the recommendations of the committees. It was in April 2009, but after April 2009 we have seen several cases of women who have lost their lives and very young women in the early twenties have lost their lives while giving birth. Mr Speaker, Sir, I just wonder whether the recommendations of this committee are being adhered to. The Minister informed that there was a ministerial committee to look into maternal death and I hope that the House will be appraised of the findings because, very often, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are being told this committee has been set up, that committee has been set up and then there is nothing. We don't know the findings, we don't know what has happened. How are we going to progress if we don't take stock of findings? The most important thing is not to set up the committee, but what we are going to do out of the findings that we hope this committee will come with. We never read about the findings and I think we have a lot to do.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another challenge of our society is ageing population. I can't leave the health sector without mentioning our elders. I do welcome the measure announced regarding the Alzheimer Association because we have an increase number of Alzheimer patients in our country and those who have experienced living with a parent suffering from Alzheimer knows how difficult such situation is. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, despite our problem of ageing population - it is not a new trend - the geriatrics seems inexistent in our health sector. I do believe that, as we have a paediatric unit, we should have a geriatric one. As we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the body of an elderly person is substantially different physiologically from that of an adult, various organ systems of the body are on the decline and that why geriatric differs from adult medicine. We have also the psycho-geriatric, geriatric neurology and so on and there is nothing of all this in our health service. This is something that we have to think over and it's high time that we have such services in our public health sector.

Beside this, Mr Speaker, Sir there are some immediate measures that can be taken to alleviate the sufferings of our elderly, for example decentralisation of the physiotherapy for mild

treatments. For a treatment of 15 to 30 minutes, we get our old people travelling for two hours, getting frustrated because the bus has not picked them up at the bus stop and being tired and so on. If this treatment could be made available in the Area Health Community Centre - I am, of course, talking of the mild treatment - a lot of sufferings would be avoided. Very often, because of these difficulties, many elderly do not complete the treatment and talking about physiotherapy, I must pay tribute to the works done by the physiotherapy units. Despite a lack of staff they are doing a big job. At the same time, Mr, Speaker Sir, I'll appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that the pool in this department is in running condition. There is a pool there, but, very often, it is out of order. If we have put it, we know the importance of it, but more often it is not working. I think this has to be looked into.

Mr Speaker, Sir, can we talk about the health sector without talking about the hygienic conditions in our hospital? And here too, I have difficulties. The cleaning services of our hospitals have been contracted out, but don't we have an officer who is supposed to see that the work - I think there must be a -\* - is being done properly? I just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I had the opportunity to be regularly at the hospitals during the last year and, for example, where the patient of cancer goes in the consultation room, you should see the toilet. Mr Speaker, Sir, *cela pue à dix mètres de vous*. These persons with all their sufferings have to bear with that and Government is spending a lot of millions on cleaning services. Why should our hospitals be in such a state? Where our millions of rupees are going? I would have thought that there must be an officer in the service who is supposed to look after that. I was referring to Victoria Hospital, but this is the case in all our hospitals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think some four months back, I went at the new Casualty at Victoria Hospital. It is so sad, a new building, but just look outside, *des crottes de pigeons, toutes sortes de choses*, I cannot understand. The patients were there and it was after nine, I saw a lady coming with her equipment. In most of the agreement of cleaning, works have to be done at a particular time before all people are coming. I know that in many agreements we have these clauses, but no one looks after that, *cela ne dérange personne*. I make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Health *car ce sont de petites choses qui font une grande différence* particularly when we are spending the people of Mauritius have to get value for money.

After the hygienic conditions, quickly regarding equipment. Mr Speaker, Sir, in every budget, we talk about millions of rupees which are being earmarked for the purchase of

equipment and so on. Very often, year in year out, we hear that a particular service was unavailable because of breakdown of equipment. An equipment which has cost millions sometimes just rests idle because it needs repair. The Director of Audit, anyway, pointed out this issue in nearly all his reports. Do we have a proper after sale service? Do we have proper maintenance agreement? Because if this is so, we just have to call the supplier, the provider of this service and it will be done, but I am sure right now there must be equipment which needs repair and which cannot be used. So many millions are being spent, but the people are not benefiting as they should be because these equipment are under repair.

The other problem in our hospitals, Mr Speaker, Sir, is manpower. Year in, year out, we are faced with shortage of staff, be it doctors, nurses or hospital servants and we are just wondering whether it is wrong planning or simply because there is no planning at all.

*(Interruptions)*

I am not going to let myself distracted by the hon. Minister of Finance. At the end of this present mandate, we are at the end and we see year in year out, some are saying it was like that before, *je donne le bénéfice du doute*, but after another mandate? A next Government can come and say "*mais ti pareil avant, allons continuer*". I think that we must look into these issues sincerely. We have problems at the pharmacy, at our hospitals; there are long queues and we can say sometimes that there is a chronic shortage of basic essential drugs and we tend to say that it is a lack of proper procurement and stock control.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have very briefly talked about some issues in our health sector and before resuming my seat, let me say some words regarding my constituency. Since 2005, I raised the issue of two areas in my constituency, Rivière Sèche and Camp Savanne. At Rivière Sèche, the access road is a very difficult situation caused by soil erosion and the access to Rivière Sèche at Floreal is just becoming smaller and smaller with all the dangers and since 2006 I have repeatedly mentioned this in this House. Unfortunately, at the end of this mandate these people are still facing the same difficulties and, of course, the situation has worsened. It is the same case for Camp Savanne at Henrietta. I said in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a small group of people living at Camp Savanne have to cross a river to go to their places and you can imagine the difficulties which they have to face when it rains and it often rains in Henrietta. I think I have raised that issue for, at least, four times in this very House. Once again, I would

make an appeal to the Minister concerned to do something for the people of Rivière Sèche and Camp Savanne.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(2.37 p.m.)

**Mr C. Sayed-Hossen (Fourth Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE):** M. le président, traditionnellement dans notre histoire comme dans celle de toutes les nations, la rationalité en économie a souvent été en conflit avec la rationalité en politique sociale et cette confrontation s'est souvent soldée, soit par des politiques populistes où le social prédominait, mais sans garantie que la création de richesse ne fût suffisante ou adéquate pour suivre la politique sociale, ou alors, soit par un économisme effréné où seul primait le *business*, la marge de profit, la mesure de la croissance et la création de richesse mais sans dimension éthique et morale confirmant ainsi le maxime de Thucydide, Greek *philosopher Thucydides*, selon lequel « les puissants font comme ils le désirent et les faibles souffrent comme ils le doivent ».

Le budget 2010, M. le président, dépasse très largement cette dichotomie et démontre, si toutefois une telle démonstration était nécessaire, que le social et l'économique ne sont pas forcément irréconciliables. C'est pour cette raison que je souhaite remercier et féliciter le Premier ministre qui a inspiré ce budget, et le ministre des finances qui en a été l'architecte et qui nous l'a présenté dans cette Chambre la semaine dernière.

En fait, M. le président, si nous devons établir un classement des réalisations du gouvernement de l'alliance sociale du Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, cette réconciliation entre le social et l'économique, entre la production et la solidarité, entre la création de la richesse et la distribution de richesse, est sans conteste la plus grande et la plus durable de toutes ces réalisations.

L'Alliance Sociale introduit ainsi dans le paysage politique national une gouvernance économique qui clame haut et fort la primauté de l'humain dans tout développement économique et une adéquation entre, d'un côté, le *bottom line* du profit qui est la rationalité de l'économie et la valeur ajoutée humaine qui est la finalité de la politique. Dans son discours du budget 2010, le ministre des finances, l'honorable Rama Sithanen, explique comment le gouvernement de l'Alliance Sociale a sorti le pays du marasme économique dans lequel l'avait engouffré le gouvernement MMM/MSM entre 2000 et 2005 et rétabli en quelques années la situation macro

économique, la relance de la croissance, la création accélérée d'emplois ; le rétablissement des grands équilibres comptables de la nation, la réduction de l'endettement national et tout cela tout en menant une politique de protection des plus vulnérables, des plus faibles et d'amélioration des services au public ; de redistribution de richesse et d'*empowerment*. Nous n'avons qu'à jeter un coup d'œil rapide, M. le président : création d'emplois – 2001-2005 – 20,000 ; 2005-2009 – 40,000 ; taux de chômage : en 2005, presque 10% ; 2009 moins de 8% ; l'investissement total en pourcentage du GDP : 21,4% en 2005 ; 25,6% en 2009. Le déficit budgétaire en pourcentage du PMD, du GDP, accumulé avec les squelettes bien entendu en 2005 à 8,1% et 4,5% en 2009. Evidemment la croissance est en hausse et la dette publique est en baisse. Et tout cela, M. le président, pour citer l'honorable ministre des finances *against the background of an economy buffeted by external shocks : the now very notorious crise sans précédent; the dismantling of the Multi-Fibre Agreement that has ensured preferential access to our textiles industry on the European market for about 30 years, a 36% reduction in the price of sugar; the dramatic increase in the price of oil and food; the global food crisis and the international financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession that has hit major economies, causing 20 million people to lose their jobs and hundreds of millions to be pushed into poverty.*

M. le président, la gestion économique, des années 2005 à 2009, a non seulement sorti le pays du marasme profond dans lequel l'avait englué le précédent gouvernement, mais l'a modernisé. L'essentiel des ingrédients qui constituent la bonne gouvernance économique et les conditions de vie ont été mis en place depuis 2005 et le budget 2010 vient renforcer le maintien de cette croissance et l'amélioration des conditions de vie de nos compatriotes avec trois grandes orientations données à l'action socio-économique du gouvernement pour 2010. Premièrement, le remodelage de la reprise économique afin d'accélérer la création d'emplois. Deuxièmement, la consolidation du progrès social pour renforcer un développement inclusif et, troisièmement, la mise en marche du projet Maurice Ile Durable pour protéger notre environnement et préparer encore mieux l'héritage que nous laisserons à nos enfants.

M. le président, l'exercice du budget de l'état n'est pas tout simplement un exercice comptable de détermination des recettes fiscales et non fiscales, de prévisions de dépenses publiques et de recherches de grands équilibres macro économiques. Le budget de l'état est avant tout la conception et l'agencement organisé de la politique économique et sociale pour l'année à venir, laquelle politique économique et sociale idéalement se situe et se positionne de manière



cohérente dans un projet de société auquel adhère la nation tout entière quand elle choisit son gouvernement. Quitte à paraître dogmatique, M. le président, ce point de vue, c'est à dire que le budget de l'état est la conception et l'agencement organisé d'une politique cohérente, est le seul point de vue qui soit valable et qui soit suffisamment large pour être véritablement politique. Autrement nous sombrons dans l'économisme pur et simple et dans le management technocratique. Nous savons tous que le gouvernement des hommes et des femmes doit se situer bien au delà du simple management technocratique. De ce point de vue, M. le président, le budget 2010 reflète fidèlement l'option politique rationnelle et humaniste qu'a offerte le docteur Navin Ramgoolam à la nation aux élections de 2005 et il se situe dans la cohérence qui caractérise l'action de ce gouvernement depuis son accession au pouvoir. Et cette action s'est toujours définie par les grands axes suivants : la création et le maintien des conditions pour que les entreprises puissent fonctionner ; puissent générer des emplois ; puissent contribuer à ce que les employés fassent vivre leurs familles ; puissent faire des profits ; puissent payer les impôts pour permettre à l'Etat de financer ses services au public et de protéger les plus faibles d'entre nous. Deuxième axe, l'aménagement des conditions de l'environnement des affaires pour permettre l'élargissement des opportunités, ce que mon ami, le ministre des finances, appelle généralement *the broadening of the circle of opportunities* et pour permettre au plus grand nombre de devenir partie prenante du *mainstream* du *business*. Troisième axe : le maintien et le renforcement du parapluie social pour les plus démunis et, quatrième, l'amélioration généralisée de la qualité de la vie par l'aménagement de la fiscalité, l'amélioration des infrastructures, autant productives que sociales, artistiques et culturelles. A ces grands axes, qui ont été les pierres d'angle de la politique économique et sociale de l'alliance sociale depuis 2005, vient s'ajouter cette année des actions déterminantes pour réaliser le projet Maurice Ile Durable du Premier ministre.

Avec le budget 2010, M. le président, et dans le sillage de l'action politique de l'alliance sociale depuis 2005, nous ne sommes plus tout simplement en face d'un nouveau modèle économique ou tout simplement d'un nouveau modèle de développement économique. Ce qui est nouveau dans le paysage politique, économique et intellectuel national, c'est l'idée que le monde des affaires n'est pas forcément restreint à une élite minoritaire, d'où l'emphase que met ce budget sur le développement des petites et moyennes entreprises ; c'est l'assurance que la femme est agent de développement au même titre que l'homme, d'où les mesures en faveur de la

femme entrepreneur. C'est la conviction, M. le président que l'équité est réalisable, est possible. C'est aussi la conviction, M. le président, que Maurice peut être une terre d'opportunités pour tous. Comme nous le disons dans notre manifeste électoral de 2005, une Ile Maurice pour tous. Nous vivons, M. le président, la genèse d'un nouveau modèle de société dont l'objectif est véritablement '*Putting People First*'. Cet objectif, à long terme, que le Premier ministre a aussi baptisé la démocratisation de l'économie, se met en place de manière maintenant irréversible. Ce que ne semble pas comprendre malheureusement les quelques orateurs des oppositions que j'ai eu l'occasion d'écouter – l'honorable *Leader of the so-called Opposition, at least*, une des deux et l'honorable Bodha. Le Leader de l'Opposition a fait plusieurs déclarations. Premièrement il a parlé de quatre budgets amers, je dirais probablement pour lui les raisins sont verts. Il a parlé de *repackaging*, il a parlé d'effets d'annonce, etc. je vais commenter sur trois ou quatre des points qu'il a soulevés. Il a mentionné sans vergogne, M. le président, avec outrecuidance, comme il le dit lui-même, que le succès du secteur ICT est le fruit direct de l'historique *Illovo Deal*. *He got both wrong*, M. le président.

Le deal historique *Illovo deal*, parlons en, M. le président! Comme tout le monde le sait, les *assets*, les avoirs, les actifs d'Illovo étaient constitués de trois usines, 22,000 arpents de terre, deux hôtels, et un portefeuille d'actions valant à peu près R 75 millions. Un consortium de riches barons sucriers achètent Illovo pour R 1,7 milliards. Tous les exercices informés sur le *deal* Illovo qui ont été faits par pas mal de gens ont estimé, qu'une fois qu'on a discounté la valeur des hôtels, R 700 millions, les trois usines, zéro valeur pour les besoins de l'exercice, et le portefeuille d'actions, R 75 millions, les 22,000 arpents de terre de Illovo valaient R 925 millions ; c'est-à-dire, que le consortium a acheté 22,000 arpents de terre pour R 925 millions ; donc, en moyenne, R 42,000 l'arpent. Je répète : R 42,000 l'arpent, de terres agricoles. Le historique *deal* Illovo - soi-disant historique *deal* Illovo – M. le président, est constitué, en fait, de trois *sub deals*.

Premier *deal* : l'échange *one for two* entre le gouvernement et le consortium. Le consortium cède 600 arpents au gouvernement, en retour de quoi le consortium peut développer 1,200 arpents et en faire des morcellements. *Revenue forfeited by the State* sur cette opération *on land conversion tax*: R 1,7 milliards; *revenue forfeited on land transfer tax*: R 360 millions; *revenue forfeited on capital gains tax*: R 540 millions. Donc, pour le premier *deal*, le *one for two*, *cost to the State* pour acquérir 600 arpents, M. le président: R 2,7 milliards.

Deuxième *deal* : l'achat de 3,000 arpents de terre par BPML au consortium. *The out of the pocket cost* - ce que BPML a payé sur 3,000 arpents - est R 380 millions. C'est documenté, M. le président. BPML a assumé la responsabilité *to carry out VRS*, et les *pensions liabilities* que BPML a payés sont de R 220 millions. Donc, le coût total des 3,000 arpents à BPML est de R 600 millions, *plus exemption from land transfer tax*, R 19 millions. *Total cost* du deuxième *deal* : R 619 millions, payés par l'Etat.

Troisième *deal*, M. le président - le dernier - 7,000 arpents de terre achetés par le SIT - toujours au consortium - à R 125,000 l'arpent. Je viens de dire que le coût originel était de R 42,000 l'arpent. Le SIT achète, quelques mois après, à R 125,000 l'arpent, 7,000 arpents ; plus *VRS cost, pension liabilities*. *Out of the pocket* pour 7,000 arpents, R 875 millions. *VRS cost, pension liabilities*: R 525 millions. Valeur de 7,000 arpents de terre, M. le président, R 1,4 milliards. *Revenue forfeited by the State* sur ce *deal* : R 1,4 milliards.

*Furthermore*, la loi, M. le président, le *SIE Act 2001*, section 10 - *incentives for transfer of land*, sous-section 2(b) provides for payment of registration duty, land transfer tax, capital gains tax and transcription fee in the case of a *morcellement* for properties owned for a period of less than 15 years. In this case, the land was owned for three years only. Simple arithmetic; three years is much less than 15 years. For this particular operation, land transfer tax/capital gains tax was due, whichever was higher; a letter from the Ministry of Finance, Reference REV/4/26.V6, dated 18.07.01. Who was the Minister of Finance? The letter specifically exempts that transaction from land transfer tax, capital gains tax, stamp duty and transcription fee. Capital gains tax exempted on that deal to R250 m.

M. le président, l'Etat a acquis, au cours de cet historique *mari deal*, 10,600 arpents. *Revenue forfeited* plus les sommes payées *out of the pocket* : R 4 milliards 983 millions. So, the actual cost to the State of purchasing - not of acquiring, not of obtaining - 10,600 *arpents* from the consortium, under the historic Illovo deal, is Rs4.983 billion or around half a million rupees per *arpent*. In 2001, Mr Speaker, Sir, the value of agricultural land did not exceed Rs200,000 per *arpent*. This is the midnight deal; this is a Dark Hours' deal, Mr Speaker, Sir, not a historic deal or whatever the so-called Leader of the Opposition has qualified that.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should not use the words 'so-called'.

**Mr Sayed-Hossen:** I withdraw, Mr Speaker, Sir. I was just taking from his example. Mr Speaker, Sir, not only we have seen what the historic Illovo deal is – after hours’ deal – but he links that to the success of the ICT sector. It is as if – we have a few laureates amongst us here – a bus conductor, who is doing an honourable job, conveys the laureate to sit for his exams; the laureate succeeds brilliantly, becomes laureate, and the bus conductor says that he is responsible for his becoming a laureate. He purchased land, and we have seen at what price. I am not even speaking of the Rs7.8 billion that he caused some very rich sugar barons to make as a profit on that. I have not mentioned that; I am just speaking of the cost to the State. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition claims that he is responsible for the success of ICT. Hon. Barbier, I think, two weeks ago, mentioned – almost verbatim – ‘there were already 2,000 jobs created in the ICT sector in 2005’. Mr Speaker, Sir, the ICT sector, today, is something totally different. The ICT sector, today, is made up of call centres, business process outsourcing, of knowledge process outsourcing, legal process outsourcing, software development, IT enabled services, *et j’en passe*. There were 2,000 jobs there in 2005. Today, there are 13,000; plus 550%, *M. le président!* And the visibility is very high. Anybody has just to go through Ebène and see! My good friend, the hon. Minister of Finance, calls that: ‘New York city in Ebène’. So much for ICT, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, about gold. Of course, being given that the very able economic advisers of the MMM have been talking about the purchase of gold for a number of months now, the Leader of the Opposition comes and says: ‘finally, you have listened to us; you have purchased gold!’ Mr Speaker, Sir, *ce n’est pas de bonne foi*. We know that the Leader of the Opposition reads reports. He mentioned Dominique Strauss-Khan, the OECD. He not only reads report; he remembers reports, and even reports on reports. He knows very well in what conditions and in what context gold was purchased by the Bank of Mauritius. Because in the context of attempts at redressing the world economy, the emerging countries have applied for loans from the IMF, and the IMF does not have enough cash, liquidities to hand out to the emerging countries. The member States of the IMF, including Mauritius – we are a member State of the IMF – have instructed IMF to sell part of its reserves in gold to constitute cash, and to use that cash to help the emerging countries. We are a member State of the IMF, and we are among the countries which gave these instructions to IMF. So, we are only honouring a commitment. The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that we are only honouring a commitment. In any case, this country, Mr

Speaker, Sir, never had more than 10% of its reserves in gold. At one moment in time, it even went down to 2% or 3%. The Leader of the Opposition very often refers to India, whom he calls 'Mother India'. India generally has 0% reserves in gold. At present, I think it has got something like 2 or 3% - very temporarily - but it is a matter of political choice. Some very rich countries like the US, Fort Knox have huge reserves in gold because they can afford to do that. Again, that was *un coup d'épée dans l'eau, M. le président.*

The Leader of the Opposition also mentioned about SMEs. Before I talk about SMEs, I cannot understand the political ambivalence, even the political hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition. *Il parle de l'exaspération des petites et moyennes entreprises, et vient ici, la larme à l'œil, pleurer sur les petites et moyennes entreprises, parce qu'il est dans l'opposition. Quand il était au pouvoir et qu'il y avait l'exaspération des PME et des travailleurs, c'est la Riot Unit avec des matraques qu'il a envoyée, M. le président. 'Pas donne biberon' !* In any case, Mr Speaker, Sir, the proof of the pudding – like in anything - is in the eating. Under this Government, the SMEs have grown up to delivering 20% of the GDP of this country, representing 45% of job creation.

Before carrying on with my exposé, I would like to reflect on a few comments made by my friend, hon. Nando Bodha yesterday - I am sorry that he is not here - starting with public debt. I was very surprised to hear hon. Bodha say that what matters is absolute figures of public debt. I think that he even quoted an economist, saying that every Mauritian citizen, including children, will owe something like Rs186,000. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, anybody with a little bit of common sense will understand - you don't need to be a rocket scientist for that; actually, it is part of Form III economics course, I think – that somebody who earns Rs8,000 a month and owes half a million rupees is huge burden for him. It is worth sleepless nights. But, if somebody is earning Rs200,000 a month - there are a number of people in this country earning Rs200,000 a month - and has a debt of Rs4 m., he just does not care. It is a matter of relativity between your revenue and your indebtedness. What is important is the percentage of your revenue that the debt will represent. This is why, all over the world, and under any circumstances, public debt is calculated in terms of percentage of GDP and not in absolute terms. I am sorry that hon. Bodha is not here, because I am sure that he knows and understands that. But I am not sure that he has been of very good faith in mentioning that. *Pas de procès d'intention, M. le président.*

Hon. Bodha made a long discourse on what the MSM/MMM did and, probably, that was an introduction to what hon. Pravind Jugnauth will say later, because hon. Pravind Jugnauth has made us used to listen to what he has done when he was Minister of Finance. Sure he has done many wonderful things but, again, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. What they did together brought the following results -

- job creation floundered;
- unemployment flourished;
- investment dismal;
- FDI – Foreign Direct Investment - almost non existent;
- Budget deficit soared;
- public debt soared as a percentage of the GDP, not in absolute terms, and
- growth was a *dégringolade sans précédent*.

There were two judgements on that performance. One judgement was from the same people in that Government of 2000-2005, when the then Prime Minister, now Leader of the Opposition, spoke - nobody can ever forget that I think - about '*la crise est sans précédent*' et '*nous sommes en état d'urgence économique*', whereas, the whole world over, everything was going well. As the hon. Prime Minister says, 'the sky was blue, the sea was calm, the winds were serene'. There was very slight wind, friendly breeze, but still '*crise sans précédent et état d'urgence économique*'. Then, hon. Jayen Cuttaree reiterated by saying that '*nous sommes en train de perdre des emplois à une vitesse vertigineuse*'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thinking about it, there is a striking parallel, actually striking similarities between political the economy of a country and biryani, one of our national dishes. To run a country properly, you need a certain number of ingredients. First of all, you need to have a proper assessment of the situation; then, you need proper thinking, which will only come from proper knowledge; then, you need the boldness to try revolutionary measures; then, you need the accuracy and the competence to implement these measures properly and, of course, follow-up and, if necessary, if possible - it is not always possible - corrective measures. Biryani is the same thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect to my friend, the hon. Minister of Finance. In biryani, you need, depending on what you want to put in that, between 22 to 25 ingredients. Once you have prepared everything, mixed it, put it in the copper pot and sealed the cover, there is no going back. Then, you have to wait for that thing to be cooked, just like political economy.

Because if you get that thing wrong, maybe you can change policies but, once you change policies, you have wrecked confidence. Investors won't trust you, consumers won't trust you, international organisations won't trust you, and *les bailleurs de fonds internationaux* won't trust you. There is something which is very subjective in that. Then, how does it happen that some people use the same ingredients, and then comes out lousy biryani, and some people use the same ingredients, and then comes out perfect biryani? The answer is very simple. Good cook and bad cook; good Prime Minister and bad Prime Minister; good Minister of Finance...

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to comment on a few aspects of the Budget. I would like to start with the Additional Stimulus Package which is being extended by the Minister of Finance. Again, I have to refer to what hon. Bodha said yesterday. If I remember properly, he compared what we are doing here to what was done in the US. In the US, hon. Bodha said "funds were given to banks", and banks used these funds to bail out enterprises. Government bailed out banks, and banks used these funds to help enterprises, which is the job of the banks and also, because mainly in the US, a little bit in the UK also, banks went bust because of the crisis in the housing mortgage system and the sub prime etc.. We are not going to enter into those details. The situation is totally different here. Hon. Bodha himself said that banks do not play the game, although the Leader of the Opposition, in his speech, said that banks have a 'prudent - he said that some say 'conservative' - management', meaning good management.

When we presented the Bill on ASP, the hon. Leader of the Opposition also criticized it, saying that we were using public money to fund private enterprises. I am sure hon. Bodha - who is here now - will agree with me that we discussed these questions very lengthily. The issue is not using public money to fund private companies - although this is not the case - it is participating in equity. It is not only that the State is now playing the role which the banks should have played, on which I have had the opportunity to intervene before. The fact is that we have to save jobs. Again, it is a people-related issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have to save jobs. Safeguarding jobs goes mandatorily, goes automatically through safeguarding enterprises. If banks don't play that role, then we have to do that. And, in any case, funds given out in a way in the additional stimulus package scheme are not donations. They are equity participations and payback is required. A sector in distress has to be assisted, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't see why anybody should see any problem with using public money to help out enterprises in a problem, when those same people had nothing to say when this Government - and their own Government -

used accompanying measures from the EU to help the sugar industry. The accompanying measures given by the European Union to Mauritius and to other countries were not meant for the industry, but for the country, to help the country to restructure its economy, following the drop in the sugar prices. And yet, when the accompanying measures were used and went in part to the cane industry, nobody found anything to say.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, you cannot save jobs if you don't save enterprises. I was very surprised to hear hon. Bodha say that the ASP did not go to SMEs. We have discussed that again before. It is not the big conglomerates that are getting money from the ASP. Maybe, it is not the 's' but the 'Ms' among the 'Es'. Under the *Alliance Sociale*, Mr Speaker, Sir, SMEs have grown tremendously and they now represent, as we have said before, 20% of GDP, and 45% of jobs. Five years ago, these SMEs only represented only 32% or 33% of jobs. A very particular attention is being paid to SMEs in this Budget.

Recently, two weeks ago, our good friend, the hon. Minister Gowressoo, presented in this House, the SME Development Authority Bill to present a streamline and coherent institutional framework for the development of SMEs and in this Budget there is a whole array of measures, amongst others: Additional Stimulus Package (ASP) through direct support to SMEs; revamping the operation and management of the SME Partnership Fund; launching of the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme to give support to SMEs; linking SMEs Partnership Fund and Mauritius Business Growth Scheme to provide finance to SMEs; introducing monitoring services to support the emergence of new entrepreneurs; expanding activities of leasing equipment; modernization scheme to cover all productive equipment, including goods vehicles for SMEs. At page 19 of the Budget Speech, there are some 20 different measures meant for SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a special word on developments in the Agro-Industrial Sector, not only developments, but revolutionary developments. We have seen how one of the major achievements of this Government has been the historic deal reached by the Prime Minister in December 2007 with the cane industry, through their organisation, the Mauritius Sugar Planters' Association. As part of that achievement, part of that deal, 35% in the value chain through milling, refining, distillery and other final products are being shared with small planters, labourers and artisans. And 2,000 *arpents* of land belonging to different MSPA members are being transferred to the State. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the democratisation of the economy in the making.



The 35% of the shareholding in the cane industry has been secured. Government has set up the Cane Democratisation Fund to hold the said 35% and is being offered, as we have said, to planters, labourers and artisans. A third of that is being given to the future shareholders as a grant by Government. Another third will be financed through Government loans and repayment will be from the dividends earned by the future shareholders and, the last third, will need to be financed by the shareholders themselves. And, in parallel to that, 2,000 *arpents*, - nothing to do with the shady Illovo deal - Mr Speaker, Sir, have been obtained from the MSPA, of which a 1,000 *arpents* are going to be used for social housing and 1,000 *arpents* for agro-industry with a view to contributing to National Food Security. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance explained, in his Budget Speech, how different clusters have been created with the support of the Food Security Fund which will bring in support, in terms of land preparation, initial inputs and common post-harvest facilities, like grading, sorting, cleaning, packing, minor processing and marketing.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is democratisation of the economy in the making, this is history in the making. This is equal opportunities in the making, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are talking of more than 30,000 families, probably some 35,000 families from very modest backgrounds. Most of them are landless and devoid of resources. Three years ago, none of them could even dream of access to productive resources, to land and of becoming meaningful entrepreneurs. As we have said, the other 1,000 *arpents* are being used for housing needs to be used by the more needy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that scarcity of land in Mauritius is a major problem. We all know about the high cost of land, the high cost of building, of construction, and we all know that it is becoming more and more difficult, independently of any other factor. It is more and more difficult to have access to property, especially for the more modest categories.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the less privileged sections of the population should, either totally abandon the idea of ever having access to land and own their house, or get into the debt trap for the whole of their life. This scheme that is being introduced by this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir. For families earning less than Rs5,000 per month, there will be a particular development with a lower cost of leasing.

We have the same sort of scheme with different cost, of course, for those families earning between Rs5,000 and Rs10,000, and others still earning a little bit more, but unable to still have

access to property will have access to land. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, a few years ago, these families could not dream of owning a plot of land, let alone a house. *Les horizons étaient bouchées*. In one clean swoop, the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. N. Ramgoolam, dreamt a dream for them and is now making that dream come true. This is what we said when we campaigned in 2004-2005 and asked our people to trust us. The Prime Minister is doing what he said he would do –

- Opening up opportunities.
- Providing land, finance and facilities to agro-industrial entrepreneurs who will strengthen our food security and contribute towards modernizing our agricultural structure.

The hon. Prime Minister is providing housing at highly affordable cost to our less fortunate brothers and sisters, enabling them to live in better conditions, linking up, of course, with what the hon. Minister of Finance described as the social contract, that is, training, access to a job and going to school for the children. Mr Speaker, Sir, what this Budget is simply doing, is providing for a better future, not only for the adults of today but, hopefully, for an even better future for the children of tomorrow, especially among the less privileged sections of our population. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not only democratisation in the making; this is not only democratisation of the economy in the making. This is not only broadening the circle of opportunities; this is humanism. This is brotherhood, solidarity, caring for people by a caring Government. This is ‘Putting People First’; this is nation-building and striving towards a high degree of social integration and of national unity. For this, I think we should all say: thank you to the hon. Prime Minister and congratulations to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir.

(3.21 p.m.)

**Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis & Montagne Longue):** M. le président, j’ai écouté l’honorable Sayed-Hossen et une chose qui m’a frappée dans son discours, c’est l’absence de son bilan en tant que président du Comité pour la Démocratisation de l’Economie. Peut-être qu’il n’y pas de bilan, mais il a plutôt mis l’accent sur ce qu’a dit l’honorable Bodha.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is always a privilege to stand up in this House and to speak on one of the most important Bills, which is the Appropriation Bill. This is the fifth Budget of the *Alliance*

*Sociale* and of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. When you go outside and you ask comments from people outside, the reaction is ‘*meme zafer dans budget-la*’, ‘*ene budget fizet*’, ‘*ene budget zero plombaz*’. This Budget resembles a lot of *déjà vu, déjà entendu*. At this crucial juncture of socio economic development of the country, when we would need imagination, innovation to help the country to move forward, it is very sad, Mr Speaker, Sir, to note that the hon. Minister came again with ‘*ene budget répétitif*’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are nearly at the end of 2009, that is, four and a half years since *l’Alliance Sociale* is in power. We all travel to town and villages. Everybody can compare what was done by this Government and the previous one. When the MSM/MMM Government was in power, we could see everywhere construction works, tels que la *construction du cybercité, les collèges secondaires, les grands sentiers, les hôtels. Il y avait de l’enthousiasme dans le pays*. Unfortunately, today, it is a fact that development in this country has stopped. We even do not know whether the NDU really exist. *Nul besoin de parler des collectivités locales. Zero plombaz!* When the *Alliance Sociale* won the elections, we heard lots of words and expressions, like ‘*démocratisation de l’économie*’, ‘*amigos*’. But now, in 2009, we ask the question: what is the achievement of this Government in visible terms? Zero!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have gone through the past Budgets and have chosen one item on which Government promised to initiate actions, which is the traffic congestion, as announced in the paragraph 128 of the Presidential Address, on the 29 July 2005. Let me quote –

“In view of the dramatic increase in the number of vehicles, urgent consideration will be given to the problem of traffic congestion. This problem is multi-faceted and a package of short, medium and long-term measures will be formulated to address it”.

Urgently, Mr Speaker, Sir! Zero! Nearly five years have elapsed, and yet, no concrete action has been initiated. Mr Speaker, Sir, do you realise the stressful trips of officers coming to Port Louis every morning and leaving after work in the afternoon? This morning itself there was a *carambolage entre* three vehicles and this led to a massive traffic jam on the motorway. We are at the mercy of one breakdown and it is chaos in the country. This morning also one lorry broke down near Roche Bois roundabout which led to another traffic jam. Construction of several roads to alleviate traffic congestions such as Terre Rouge/Verdun Link Road, Goodlands bypass, widening of motorways, etc. have been repeated in the past four budgets and *zero action* taken.

*M. le président, gouverner c'est prévoir. Il a fallu l'accident de Montebello pour que le Premier ministre décide d'instituer un High-Powered Committee pour se pencher sur les problèmes routiers.* We appreciate to be kept aware of the outcome of the committee and the number of times it met. *La population doit aussi savoir ou sont les projets, tels que Harbour Bridge, Bus Transit System.* One other important issue mentioned in the Presidential Address, and repeated in the consecutive Budget of the Minister of Finance, is the construction of social housing. Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot deny what happened in the mandate of the MSM/MMM Government. In fact, more than 3,500 housing units of all types, namely Firinga type, low-cost houses and very low-cost houses have been built. Let me quote what was said in the Presidential Address, at paragraph 186 –

“Government will, therefore, lay emphasis on the construction and development of social housing”.

Apart from issuing housing units, constructed by the previous Government, and with the MBC propaganda, this Government has not constructed a single house, Mr Speaker, Sir, while the demand for housing units is consistently increasing.

*(Interruptions)*

This is one of the priorities, if we want to fight poverty. Mr Speaker, Sir, on the salary compensation, , that would be paid to employees as from next year, I would request Members of the Government to kindly listen to the reactions of the nation. 3.5%! A pensioner would only get an increase of Rs90, *tandis que le pouvoir d'achat continue d'augmenter de jour en jour. Là aussi, nous avons pu constater que le ministre a outrepassé le rôle et le pouvoir du National Pay Council.* It is now clear that it is the Government that decides the quantum for salary compensation. There have also been several promises made to employees, which have not been executed, such as the payment of shares by Mauritius Telecom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we also thought that taxes on interests would be abolished on this Budget. But again, Government has not reacted to the plight of workers, who, after working several years have kept their money safe at banks. They have to pay tax on interest gained. I think this is very unfair.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal to the Government to restore the 50% subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a real burden for breadwinners who cannot afford to have their children sit for SC examinations. How do you

explain, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government expects to save Rs100 m. to Rs150 m. yearly by not providing subsidies for SC and HSC examination fees while, on the other hand, the STC and Air Mauritius carried out hedging transactions when the price of petroleum products were at the peak? In doing so, Mr Speaker, Sir, the country lost several billions of rupees. And to add insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bank of Mauritius recently purchased two tons of gold when its price is, at all times, high, thus incurring a loss of another Rs20 m. for the country and not paying the 50% subsidy on examination fees. Can you imagine how much the country has lost if we consider all these three issues? In his Budget Speech, at paragraph 312, the hon. Minister of Finance talked about stable employment. I need to remind the House that 17,306 persons lost their jobs since this Government is in power.

Le pays a connu une vague de licenciements en raison de l'insécurité financière des entreprises. Quelques 317 entreprises ont dû fermer leurs portes de 2005 à septembre de cette année, M. le président. M. le président, les petits planteurs ont contribué énormément pour le développement de notre pays et ils méritent toute notre attention et notre considération.

Are you aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the yield on one *arpent* of land is 20 to 30 of sugar cane in certain regions? The average extraction of sugar is 80 kilo per ton of sugar cane. They use an average of 6 bags of 50 kgs of 17-8-25 fertilizer which costs Rs1,100 each. The prices of herbicides and pesticides have increased enormously and it costs about Rs2,500 per *arpent*. And the labour costs Rs8,000 per *arpent* annually. Selling the sugar, the small planters gained about Rs17,400 per ton of sugar and only Rs2,000 per ton of molasses. Mr Speaker, Sir, when you do the calculation, you will see for yourself how much the *petits planteurs* have profits. Just to remind the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance that it is he who removed duty facilities on 4x4 vehicles which were graciously introduced *par le père de l'économie*, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the former Prime Minister. Maybe this is his way of encouraging *le petit planteur*. *Hélas*, one of the pillars of our economy is slowly crumbling. It is a tragedy which leads to the end of the small planters' community.

Another issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to address here is the AH1N1 virus. It is a fact that Government *a caché les chiffres en ce qui concerne les cas enregistrés et le nombre de décès*. No provisions have been made for free vaccination against this H1N1 flu as it is done in other countries. Needless to speak of the situation facing the parastatal bodies, where most of them have become real bazaar with the appointment of *petits copains*. The MBC was a quite

good example. It is after lots of Parliamentary Questions addressed in this House of the mismanagement of the Corporation that the former Director-General has been sacked. The 'Pepsi Segá Hungama' programme had created a real *hungama*, Mr Speaker, Sir. The nation is still waiting to know the outcome of the inquiry on its mismanagement. Do you remember my Parliamentary Question, Mr Speaker, Sir, following which overtime was paid without control? Some employees were paid 25 times more than their basic salary. Someone earning basic salary of Rs9,400 monthly was earning Rs28,000 without qualification. When the new Director-General was appointed, he spoke of *dégraissage*. I thought that it was very good, but now instead of *dégraissage*, there is massive recruitment. *Engraisage! Ils ont recruté des journalistes, des freelancers sans expérience.* And recruitment of former employees with juicy packages, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been done without proper advertisement. There was no advertisement on newspapers! They have recruited journalists without qualifications, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am coming with questions at the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the law and order situation *occupe une place importante dans notre vie quotidienne*. Despite the reorganisation of the Police Force by the Commissioner of Police, there is an acute shortage of staff in several police stations. Though the problem of vehicles has been attended, there is now a lack of equipment for police officers to discharge their duties properly. We have witnessed the death of a police officer at night due to lack of fluorescent lamp. Can you believe this, Mr Speaker, Sir? Police constables who sat for examinations since January last, are still waiting for the results, whereas police sergeants who were selected to be appointed to the post of inspector of police are still waiting for their letters of appointment. The results have been published by the DFSC since May last and yet they have not been confirmed! There is also lack of staff at the middle management level, namely ACPs, Superintendents of Police and Assistant Superintendents of Police. Motivating factor is an important factor in the labour sector. Police officers are unmotivated with such situations prevailing, Mr Speaker, Sir. I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to end their torment, *mettre fin à leur calvaire*.

With the rise in the number of cases of murder, manslaughter and larceny with violence, there is a public outcry at all corners of the island, Mr Speaker, Sir. People are feeling insecure even at home, at work and in public places. They are claiming for the reintroduction of death penalty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to the constituency I serve, that is, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, it is the region from an ethnic, affluent poverty divide or an urban/rural divide.

It is a constituency that is afflicted by poverty and by deviant behaviour. It is also very deprived in terms of infrastructure, social, sports and job opportunities which have resulted in the rise of drug abuse, prostitution, juvenile delinquency and all sorts of violence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very concerned about the law and order situation in my constituency. I will now, again, request the hon. Prime Minister to impress upon the Commissioner of Police the need to pay urgent attention to the construction works of Cité La Cure police station. The Abercrombie police station which covers several regions of the constituency, namely Ste Croix, Cité La Cure, Vallée des Prêtres, Karo Kalyptis, Batterie Cassée, Briquetterie and Paul Toureau which has a population capacity of 35,000 inhabitants. My information is that there is an acute shortage of staff thereat and due to heavy workload, sometimes requests from members of the public cannot be attended to, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is the reason why I keep insisting upon Government to construct the Cité La Cure police station.

As regards the Longue Mountain police station, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been aware that they have not been provided with good running vehicles and there is a shortage of personnel there. I will request the competent authorities to address this issue. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have since long heard about the construction of a new market fair at Abercrombie. In reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/131 of April 2007, the Minister of Finance replied that a sum of Rs20 m. has been earmarked for the National Residential Property Tax, but again not a single *coup de pioche, zéro plombage*. I would like to mention here the difficulties being faced by both the market traders and consumers calling thereat on rainy days due to the leakage of the ceilings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants of Montagne Longue and surrounding areas are still waiting for the promised Long Mountain hospital. After several Parliamentary Questions I put to this House and after four years, the Minister is now providing Rs25 m. for the upgrading. I will now insist upon the hon. Minister responsible for health for an urgent attention to this project.

It is also very sad, Mr Speaker, Sir, that not a single sports infrastructure has been constructed in my constituency, despite, the variety of high calibre athletes at both national and international levels. Mr Speaker, Sir, I should like here to address certain representations received from my constituents by way of letters addressed through.

The fast expansion of residential houses in Le Hochet region needs consideration and attention. The residents have regrouped themselves into a force vive and have made several representations, namely the inadequate lighting system, the bad state of several roads which need to be reinstated and tarred, the irregular scavenging service in different regions and the increasing number of cases of larceny. I will have the opportunity to follow up these issues separately through future Parliamentary Questions.

You will recall, during the intervention on the last two Budgets and through Parliamentary Questions wherein I impressed on the urgent need to construct two bridges – one in Congomah, namely Blackburn and the other one, also in Congomah, Parampath Bridge.

I have discharged my responsibility, Mr Speaker, Sir, as an MP and as the cyclonic period is coming, Government will have to bear the consequences in the event of any tragedy following torrential rains which occurred last year. All of us remember this.

I have also received representations regarding the construction of drains in several regions such as Sushil Lane in Riche Terre, Le Hochet, Congomah and Ste Croix. Mr Speaker, Sir, we, in the MSM, we are not here only to criticise, but we come up with propositions. Our leader, hon. Pravind Jugnauth who is a man vision, will be known in this country as the father of VRS and father of duty-free island of this country. We came up with intelligent criticisms and we also want to be une force de propositions. We made several propositions to redress the state of the economy, to redress the law and order and other issues, and once we will be back to power, we shall make sure that these proposals be implemented *pour un vrai changement*: ‘Seki nou dir, nou fer’.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*At 3.50 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 4.20 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis & Montagne Longue):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with a blend of great relief and satisfaction that the fifth Budget of hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen has been greeted, judging from the reactions at both grassroots level and informed public opinion, contrary to what my colleague, hon. Jhugroo, said : “ the negative public outcry”.



Before I go into my speech, I would like to just refute to my friend and tell him that Constituency No. 4 has been such a neglected constituency for the past 30/40 years, I cannot remember. Maybe, I was a child. It is surprising that hon. Jhugroo has been there for four and a half years - practically, it is going to be five years - in this constituency. He does not recognise the changes "*bizin changement*". When we said No. 4 needed changes, this Government, surely hon. Jhugroo, has brought *changement*.

(*Interruptions*)

Let us start from Chitrakoot. Close your eyes, hon. Jhugroo, and let us drive ...

(*Interruptions*)

He is blinded, I am sorry! Eyes open, changes could not be seen! So, he just has to close his eyes in the trance of a meditation, of the cool atmosphere of Chitrakoot, Vallée des Prêtres. We start from Vallée des Prêtres, we drive to Congomah, hon. Jhugroo, and I would say, my dear friend, the changes are obvious. Let us see the school of Chitrakoot. It is my luck, when people judge wrong, good things happen to them. They say bad things happen to good people. I would say, let us take it positively, when bad things happen to good people.

Firstly, in my Constituency, No. 4, the moment I was elected, there was the drama of La Croisée Vallée des Prêtres and Cipailles Brûlé. We all know the story of that drama. I am not going to go into that.

Secondly, it has given me and this Government a chance to really go and survey. Here, we must congratulate all the Ministers concerned who have participated in the survey and, first of all, the Prime Minister who has taken it at heart and see that "Put People First" is respected. Concerning Chitrakoot, the hon. Member stated that there was no investment from NDU. Last two weeks back, we heard the Minister of Environment and NDU talking of Rs165 m. injected in the construction of drains in Vallée des Prêtres. How can we say Rs165 m. is not noticeable?

I'll just like to say it very loud and clear so that we don't hear it again from *l'opposition* saying "*pena changement* when we said *bizin changement*".

Thirdly, regarding Cité Vallée des Prêtres, recently it was raining heavily during three days and people phoned to say thank you to this Government because no water damaged their homes.

Fourthly, there is the *embellissement de La Croisée Vallée des Prêtres* and the retaining wall of Briquetterie. I will go very quickly and the hon. Member has to close his eyes to see

them. There is the Rs43 m. project of Impasse Eugène - I have gone in details in my speech concerning that matter - the dredging of La Rivière Latanier, which is being done right now and, at the very beginning of 2005 ,the *drain* of Richard Miles Brown in Le Cornu – the hon. Member did not notice that because he does not walk into his constituency - Impasse Eugène, the *passerelle* recently at Ste Croix.

Now when we come to security, we heard hon. Jhugroo saying the Abercrombie police station is having so many things, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. How could we not see the changes, first of all, the nice roofing, the conducive environment that has been set up by this Government to the Abercrombie police station? In the past it was like a river at station and during heavy rainfall, in the past years, all the documents used would be wet and destroyed. That matter has been dealt with. At least, the first thing, we have seen was to put them in a good environment so that they could work properly.

Now when we come to resurfacing, I heard hon. Jhugroo said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the states of roads were *déplorables*. I will just take one or two examples. Ducray road in Ste Croix and Dieudonné in Riche Terre have been tarred recently after 25/30 years. The list is long to mention.

As regards lighting in Terre Rouge, my friend, hon. Jhugroo, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, dares to say that there is no lighting and no scavenging work done in Terre Rouge when he knows very well the 12 elected councillors of the MSM who are looking after Terre Rouge. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why does he not wake up and guide his friends at Terre Rouge, who can do their work at the district Council regarding scavenging and lighting?

Coming to the market fair in Ste. Croix, as you know very well - again, it might be ignorance - not everybody goes and sees the pros and cons of the constituency. there has been an injunction. Everybody knows it; the press has talked about it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. How do we go and fight against the court? It's only legal to wait until the case is over. And, if we don't know, maybe this case has been put up on purpose to stop the construction of the market. We do not know. We cannot comment. I am surprised that we are still talking of Blackburn Bridge and Parampot Bridge not being there, as if this Budget was meant just for Constituency No. 4. After all that have been mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are many more things that have been done and if I continue I might not have enough time to go through my own speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to tell my colleague, hon. Jhugroo, that Rs10 m. has been voted and he knows very well about it and he has heard about the Blackburn Bridge in the Constituency. Instead of commenting negatively, why doesn't he go and find that lady, the owner of the land, where we require a piece of land to construct the bridge and the drain and ask them what happened to their burnt house and the title deed of that land. And we are still awaiting because the money is already there.

This Budget, Sir, is innovative as set out in its introduction. It breaks from a long tradition to reflect the current realities of a transformation in the economic structure and the accompanying flows of revenue and foreign exchange. It continues the trend of reforms embarked upon by this Government to prepare the country to meet the daunting challenges of radical changes in the world political, economical arena in the wake of the erosion of trade preferences and sheltered markets triggered by globalisation and the pressure from the World Trade Organisation for free trade.

The growing concern and shift towards general consensus for lower emission of carbon gases has implied that Mauritius had had to labour tremendous efforts to continue producing more goods and services under increasingly tougher international conditions and more stringent constraints to feed its people and ensure them a decent and rising standard of living.

Against the backdrop of financial crisis, credit crunch and recession hitting our major trading partners, Mauritius emerged triumphantly with positive economic growth, lower unemployment, significantly lower inflation, a more diversified economic structure, new pillars of growth emerging such as the Land Based Industrial Eco-Park Project, higher percentage and rising proportion of women participating in the labour market and as entrepreneurs and above all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hope, harmony and confidence in the nation.

Again, I would remind my colleague, hon. Jhugroo, that this Government not only creates the socio-economic climate to live, let live and prosper, but equally charts the future destiny of the economic welfare of the country. It identifies, in line with the long tradition of the Labour Party, new sectors to shape the future of the country. I was, therefore, quite surprised when the Leader of the Opposition criticised the Government, in his speech, for not having done anything. *Rien n'a été fait!* This is grossly unfair and shows ignorance of the economic potential being explored, implemented and promoted. As mentioned in the Vice-Prime Minister's speech, efforts are being stepped up for the setting-up of a Land Based Oceanic Eco-park. This is the

most innovative and environmentally friendly of all projects ever conceived, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is the blue revolution and the tapping of white gold with huge potential for bottling desalinated water for export, the production of agar and agar rose, the substitution of fossil fuel by sea water air-conditioning system which is expected to attract huge investment in data centres, pharmaceuticals and inputs for cosmetics amongst others. L'Oreal is sourcing huge amount of its inputs for cosmetic from seaweeds as we all know. And the land based oceanic industry will provide the correct space, the raw materials and the climate to produce seaweeds in ponds on an industrial scale while simultaneously promoting SMEs and democratisation of wealth ownership, key areas in the programme of the Labour Party and the *l'Alliance Sociale*. Since the historic visit of the officers visiting the Hawaii, the disbursement of funds for the initial expenses by the Ministry of Finance, the setting-up of a company by the SIC and the promotion of the development concept by the BOI, the project has progressed smoothly.

As we all know, Sir, Rome was not built in a day. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to have the virtue of patience, looking at every angle before implementing it. It is fair that we recognise that the Minister of Finance had invested and, as the Leader of the Opposition, said only the future will tell. So, we have to wait and see. We cannot blame before we see. This project will probably be the first of its kind, integrated, eco-friendly and utilising renewable resources, permitting Mauritius to reduce its independence on imported energy.

All these have been achieved in a short span of time thanks to the bold policies of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who, with a sure confident and caring hand, had relentlessly steered the economy back on the path of high economic growth and social harmony against all criticisms and odds in translating the vision of the Prime Minister for a more just, progressive and prosperous nation. Judging from the many awards and the upward gain in places on the many classifications of the world list such as the Ibrahim Index, the World Bank, the African Development Bank on where it is best to do business, or the more recent award in the tourism sector where the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier Luc Duval was offered a trophy for Mauritius as the most desirable island. All these feats, achievements and improvements in building the image of Mauritius and its people in the international arena did not just happen like that. It was caused to happen by a team of dedicated public men and women, by a responsible Government, 'Put People First' caring Government which placed the interest of the nation and the country first and was never obsessed by popularity. This Government went on a reform

programme, immaterial of the consequences, and we achieve results because we had a vision, we were sincere and we had the best sense of planning and we knew how to dovetail our priorities and the timing of each reform. To a large extent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the credit goes to hon. Dr. Sithanen for his fighting spirit in the belief of the reform package, for which he deserves to be congratulated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, my friend, hon. Jhugroo is not here, contrary to what he said, never in the life of this country has so much been done and planned to be done to build the stock of wealth of the nation than during the mandate of this Government. The deficit in infrastructure has been identified since decades. It is not only now. When we say we did not find a building in Constituency No. 4, it's surprising because this Government has only started. Unfortunately, each time too little was done so that each time we were surpassed by events and the problems continued to grow.

In this Budget, the Government has stepped up efforts, and several projects are being implemented simultaneously in different areas, including Constituency No. 4, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Never in the history of Mauritius, have so many projects of such magnitude, on a scale of investment unheard of, been undertaken. This Government did not just simply concentrate on huge national road, school or hospital project. It embarked on an arsenal of programmes that thought to address local and grass root level problems. For many years, these problems were ignored or paid lip service. Projects were often identified, then ignored and forgotten. In certain regions, second class treatment was meted to some of these regions. As I said earlier, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, infrastructure development is the artery of development. Unfortunately, very often in the quest for rapid development, Government and officers are blinded by the garish attraction of huge national project as motorways, beach development, where we all hurtle and neglect the infrastructure in small regions cut off from the centres of mainstream development.

As an MP, it is my duty; I felt that this imbalance in development has to be addressed with greater seriousness than had been done hitherto. We had a contract to change the life of our citizens for the better. It is a legitimate aspiration of the people to live more comfortably. In the past, many of these citizens have lived in abject fear of flood ravaging their homes, in fear of collapse of their homes, and years of hard work and sacrifice to buy items as television, luxury, a fridge or a piece of furniture evaporate in the thin air due to vagaries of the weather and absence

of proper attention directed to them. We cannot encourage a situation of development *à deux vitesses*, with double standards. Notwithstanding that we have national priorities, it is inconceivable, in the name of social justice, that some regions obtain the lion share in terms of resources while other regions, vulnerable and exposed not only to the vicissitudes of nature, but also to the ills of poverty, are ignored and do not share the fruits of development.

I'll come to my constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now. It is probably the one region more exposed to the all social evils - drug addiction, pilferage, burglary, promiscuity, child abuse, prostitution, unemployment, crimes, sexually transmissible disease victims, battered women, single parents and, to add to it, criminality on top of it. In the past, I had relentlessly toured my region, not like my friend the hon. Jhugroo, and have carried on a crusade to endow my region with better infrastructure facilities, to create the enabling environment for healthy socio-economic development. Even some of my colleagues played down the problem, even shoving me with a wave of their hand, turning my crusade to improve the lives of less fortunate people as a habit of always complaining. Hon. Juggoo is always complaining, not realising that this is my right and the right of a citizen.

In this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my efforts have been paid, and the dividends seem quite handsome in proportion. I, therefore, wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. the hon. Rama Sithanen and, of course, our dear Prime Minister, hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for the resources made available to these deprived regions and, through the NDU, through the MPI, through RDA and other institutions. Yet, this region is the most cosmopolitan, and the various ethnic groups constituting the rainbow nation is the most representative. Precisely for this region, if one remembers, Sir Gaëtan Duval once picked on this constituency to stand as candidate. For this diversity of ethnic belongings, it is equally the most challenging to meet the needs of each community. Given the specificities, characteristics and susceptibilities of each ethnic group, considerable effort had to be made, to be deployed in ensuring that there is no unwarranted perception that one group is being favoured to the detriment of the other group.

There was need to approach the development of infrastructure through a balancing approach of a win-win situation, with no group feeling left out. We invested heavily to ensure that the inhabitants from my region benefited from new infrastructure, so as to mitigate their problem. I am proud to say, hon. Jhugroo and Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we have achieved our

objective even in Constituency No. 4. We have been able to bring sunshine and a smile to the hundreds of people who were perpetually living in apprehension of the worse, especially Constituency No. 4.

I would like to dwell a little on other parts of my region, my commitment to come to their assistance to ensure that they too will benefit from future projects. The first project that I would like to comment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that of Vallée de Prêtres. The zone was prone to flooding, and there was serious danger of human casualties or damaged property. What did the previous Government do to it? We had the Minister of Local Government and also MP of that constituency.

This project to shield the people and property against natural disasters, through the provision of an effective drainage system and retaining walls in some places like Briquetterie, as I said, a typical case how little things can make life more tolerable and less rude, can actually transform the life of not only a household but also of a whole community. Put people first; caring Government. At Impasse Eugene, Ste Croix, where one person lost his life, to remind, I sought the assistance of the relevant Ministries, in particular, hon. Anil Bachoo who was, at that time, at the NDU, and who saw the need to provide for an effective drainage system. The budget allocated was Rs43 m., and the work is

in progress. Today, this has added to the quality of life of these people. It is not over. As I said just a few minutes back, Rome was not built in a day. We should not dream. The money has been allocated, work has started, and it is in progress. If in 5 years, the other Government could not do through, how do you expect this Government to do everything in four years?

Now, the most interesting part of the constituency. The extension of the Long Mountain Hospital through the addition of two wards is like the jewel in the crown for my constituency. This House will recall that the outgoing Government in line - hon. Jhugroo please note. Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because that was mentioned in his speech - with its myopic centralisation policy not only refused the modernisation of this local hospital, but threatened to close it on the argument of cost effectiveness. Today, we have reversed this policy. I believe that development should serve the people, and should be brought as close to their doorstep as possible. I said this policy was myopic. Why? Because it focused simply on an accounting formula of minimising cost and eliminating expenses. However, genuine development

transcends the money factor. I favour development with a human face, for the people and of the people. This Government 'Put People First'. Long Mountain is equally an isolated zone, owing largely to its topography, slightly cut off from the ribbon development this country has known. However, it is a small growth pole with a cluster of villages expanding in its periphery. My view is that we need to encourage and stimulate this growth by endowing it with the appropriate infrastructure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and institutions to serve people. The implementation of this project will also considerably help to relieve traffic congestion towards the Capital. Before I go further, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam; the Minister of Finance, hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen; hon. Anil Bachoo and, of course, hon. Jeetah for their efforts put in to secure mainly our Minister of Finance for the Rs25 m. allocated to the Long Mountain hospital. I will make an appeal to my colleagues, Ministers of Infrastructure and Health, to ensure its early implementation. People are eager to see and benefit from this project. Left out is, of course, our Cité La Cure Community Health Centre which has been pending for the past three years. I hope to see light in the near future regarding the already approved project. I know there have been problems, there was no place to move the Health Centre. Now that the place has been found, we hope that the Community Health Centre of Cité La Cure will also start as a new building so that hon. Jhugroo, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will be able to see it.

Now, let us come to the women part of it. As a result of free education, the enlightening advance in science, telecommunications and technology, and the impact of universal trends, there have been significant improvements in the role and status of women. Many jobs are virtually dominated by women. The Civil Service currently employs more women in certain occupations. With the Equal Opportunities Act, no woman can be discriminated against. More women are also currently occupying top and senior positions as heads of Departments or Ministries. These women have not deserved less on this issue. If performance, merit and equal opportunities are the key criteria for eligibility to a post or to a scholarship, it is high time that the State Awards are open to both boys and girls without segregation or reserved on the basis of sex and gender. It is time perhaps to think whether we need not change the appellation of the Ministry of Women and add some more pervasive words to denote the expanding role of this Ministry.



On another front, many women are still victims of conjugal violence, and in some cases, the protective orders have served little to protect such victims. We need to work together to ensure that such protection is not a mere piece of paper. Protection orders must be made more severe and its enforcement strengthened. While the achievements and progress achieved by women over the last three decades have been remarkable in different areas, this is woefully inadequate to this political field, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. All the major political parties have pledged a thirty per cent representation. It remains to be seen whether we will see this translated in action. We need not forget that this is the one area where Mauritius trails behind most African countries. SADC has already drawn our attention to this issue.

On the social part, one of the objectives of the budget is to consolidate social progress and alleviate poverty. Given the scarce resources on the one hand, and the relative affluence of the major segment of the population, Government, in its wisdom, chose to address the problem of poverty alleviation through selective targeted approach. This approach is justified in that those who are at the lowest range of the societal ladder can expect assistance from the Government. These include the destitute, the disabled, the old, the poor, the orphans and those who have suddenly been struck by calamities such as fire. Villages have been created, housing facilities provided in proto-type villages and, at least, one household member is guaranteed a job. Constituency No. 4 has been lucky, I must say it, as people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have been able to have a NHDC house in Cité La Cure and in Notre Dame within the four years that we are here. This is a cost-effective manner to ensure the success of the project and in utilising judiciously taxpayers' money. In this Budget, Government translates into concrete action its commitment to provide vulnerable members of society with a decent dwelling.

A last point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Last year, I made an observation and a case for the remuneration of local authority councillors, especially the District Councillors. This year, I am greatly disturbed by a rising phenomenon and I would appeal to Members of this august House to support me in addressing this problem. As many hon. Members are aware, there are hundreds of children every year born with difficulties to read, write and learn. We keep saying we believe in education; education is prime. Educating the nation – why leave behind these dyslexia children? Dyslexia, however, is not a disease, but a situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where children experience tremendous difficulties in reading and writing and are, therefore, perceived

as a misfit in society, causing economic loss to health and education departments. Dyslexia is a learning disorder that manifests itself primarily as a difficulty with reading and spelling. It is separate and distinct from reading difficulties from other causes such as non-neurological deficiency with vision or hearing. It is diagnosed in people of all levels of intelligence: below average, average, above average and highly gifted. Identified in 1881, it includes very gifted individuals and an arsenal of celebrities in different spheres of life: Mozart, Abhishek Bachan, Mike Brant and above all Albert Einstein. In the US, it is estimated that dyslexia affects between 5% and 17% of the population. If one per cent is affected by dyslexia in Mauritius, and many do not know or have even not heard about it, it will make over 12,000 cases of dyslexia in Mauritius and some 160 per year. Assume it is half of 1% and makes 80 babies born every year with such problem, can we allow this to go unnoticed, unattended, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? While it is an educational problem, it remains above all a social issue and reflects from an economic perspective, an opportunity cost in terms of gifted individuals who need extra facilities to make their contribution and enjoy their life.

The Ministry of Health provides some assistance for up to 4 years after which both parents and children are left on their own. There is no scientific and organised framework for an early tracking nor an efficient and cost-effective system to monitor and carry out a tracer study on each dyslexia child problem. The biggest problem is at school where the system does not provide for an early identification of any child suffering from dyslexia, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As a result, there is disturbance in class, poor performance and the child becomes a school pariah. The enduring pain of children suffering from dyslexia has touched everybody's heart. It is both a social and economic loss to society. We need to revive and do something about it. There is a need to carry out an inventory of all such individuals of all such individuals to list in its databank, build a domestic network and link it with an international network in order to associate and access to state-of-art technology, build a specialized school to cater for the needs of such children.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget, while continuing the reform programmes, consolidates the economic base and addresses social problems, including housing and poverty alleviation. The biggest contribution is the determination to make good the infrastructure deficit. The Government is aware that physical infrastructure is the artery of

development, the pre-requisite for productivity and growth. The Opposition has clamoured that all the projects were mere intentions and would not materialise in time. Anyone travelling around the island would already have seen that work on a number of road projects have already started even in Constituency No. 4, as I stated. The whole landscape is undergoing substantial change.

In the course of my speech on last year's Budget, I stated –

“It was time, therefore, we devote more time and resources to enhance social justice and adopt measures of greater equity and regional balance. Deprived areas are the threat to growth. It is a breeding ground for all the social evils that can undermine growth, development and social harmony. This is a challenge that both the Government and the Ministry of Finance should take to heart.”

In this Budget it seems that God has listened to my plea and the Minister of Finance, hon. Dr. Sithanen and the hon. Prime Minister have responded positively to the prayer. Before I complete, I would just add -

‘For those who do not see the *‘Bizin Chagement’* that we requested - and that is happening, remember, “it is easy to create new things, change places or do something different. To keep that sense of newness that creates enthusiasm is more difficult.’

Let me say to my friend and colleague of the Constituency, hon. Jhugroo, the secret of newness in life is not to do new things constantly, but to see everything that you do with new eyes, new insight and new perspective.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you.

(5.06 p.m.)

**The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Dr. R. Jeetah):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment for his excellent and well balanced 2010 Budget, which provides for both economic and social development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also seize this opportunity to congratulate and thank the hon. Prime Minister for his vision and outstanding leadership. As a *rassembleur*, he has indeed succeeded, as promised during the 2005 electoral campaign, in building a healthy and prosperous economy and in forging a harmonious society that binds and unites each and every Mauritian.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to put all this in the right perspective. Recently, I got to hear about Lehman Brothers which went bankrupt. I also got to hear about the largest economy whereby about 500,000 people would lose their job every single month over quite a long period of time. I even got to hear about a story where we found investment bankers queuing to get a job in the zoo in the US and about banking systems being collapsed in the US and Europe. I heard about houses being repossessed in record numbers all over Europe and in the US. I also heard about a motor industry which collapsed and crashed. Everything that could go wrong in the economy of the world went wrong. Yet, when I listened to the hon. Minister in charge of Finance in this country, what really pleased me was that, this year, he managed to provide Rs11 billion to the Minister of Education. He provided another Rs10 billion to my colleague Minister, hon. Mrs Bappoo, for the Social Security and I got Rs7.5 billion for Health. Over and above, we maintained the Welfare State. Over and above, we managed to create space for an extra 8,000 kids to go to the university.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one has to ask this question: how come we managed all this? The Minister of Finance is not a magician, but somehow these things happened. I would like to beg your indulgence for a few minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to just imagine what could be the fate of this little boy - who currently lives in Le Morne - forty years down the road. I think this little boy would stand a chance to become the Managing Director of the Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd, for the simple reason that in these five years, we did bring about fundamental changes in the way the affairs of this country are run. This is one law that I am particularly pleased about, the Equal Opportunities Bill, which became an Act. This is a law that would enable this little child at Le Morne - I am taking Le Morne on purpose because we know the difficulties that some people do face in this country - to start having a chance to be what he/she would like to be in life. What about this little boy or girl in Bois des Amourettes? I see this little child having a chance to have his/her own big business here in Mauritius. All thanks to the Competition Commission which we have put in place. Why not from Panchvati? Thanks to that little kid in Panchvati, the hon. Prime Minister offered free transportation. I can see the little kids in Panchvati in about 40 to 50 years time doing awfully well. Why, because this Government came up with fundamental legislations. We brought about laws for competition, equal opportunity, business facilitation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I took the liberty, again, to go through the indices that qualify countries. I have 14 different indices that rank nations around the world. Out of these 14 indices, Mauritius ranks first in 6 of them in Africa; it was either second, third or fourth in all these 14 indices, such as Doing Business, United Nations Agency for Information and Communications, Africa Competitiveness Report, 80 Kearney Global Services, Global Competitiveness Index, Global Corruption Perceptions, International Property Rights, MO Ibrahim Index of Africa, etc.

You can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this country is on the march and I am very positive in what might happen here. It is all thanks to hard work, leadership and well thought policies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like now to come to my sector, that is, the health sector which happens to be the largest employee in this country. But, before I do that, I will try to respond to some of the concerns of hon. Mrs Labelle. I must say that I was quite impressed and I quite liked the work that had been done by her. She had taken time to look into some of the difficulties that this country is facing. The first point that I note here was the mention of diabetes. Hon. Mrs Labelle was worried and, indeed, everybody should be worried. Let me share some figures here as we are talking about health - it is not a political issue. If we were to look at the figures from 1976 till 2006 - independent of Government - this country has faced a 700% increase in the death rate due to diabetes. I would not call it a political issue, because we have had a number of Governments. Today, the problem is very harsh on the resources, if we were to make a survey, nearly 50% of Mauritians are either pre-diabetic or diabetic.

*(Interruptions)*

In fact, about 24% are diabetic and about the same amount are pre-diabetic. This makes us literally on top of the world. In fact, the first country is Nauru but it has only 9,000 inhabitants.

In effect, Mauritius has reached this state and now we have to ask ourselves why it is so. There are three reasons -

- (i) environment;
- (ii) genetic predisposition, and
- (iii) lifestyle.

What are we doing to ourselves, the way we eat, the amount we eat, the amount we consume and so on.

Last year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritians consumed Rs13 billion worth of cigarettes and alcohol. 13 milliards!

*(Interruptions)*

It used to be much more than the health budget.

Then, somebody would ask what Government is doing about this. So, we have to legislate against food in this country. My predecessor brought about regulations where fizzy drinks, soft drinks were banned from schools. As from January, only water will be allowed to be sold in schools in Mauritius. We have also reviewed the food that is being served in schools and education facilities. I must say that all this has been done in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, PTAs, teachers, parents, students and so on. We also brought about legislation against alcohol and cigarette. In this country, we have banned advertising on alcohol and would you believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the day I was in a function with the Mauritian Diabetes Association, I was asked to legislate against advertising on food such as Fried Chicken, which is supposed to be good for you, but now I am getting pressure now to legislate against this because this has become a real killer, here, in this country.

We have legislated against alcohol and cigarettes. We also took out a mobile clinic that went throughout the country and has a target to reach 125,000 people to make them a bit more aware of these difficulties. So far, we have visited 140 sites, we have talked to nearly 100,000 people and the work goes on. In four weeks time, after this conference that we held, which I am going to talk about later on in my speech, we have taken the decision of opening an institute for diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in Souillac. I need to remind my friends here that in this country, more than 50% of people who die every year, die out of heart or heart related diseases, that is, plus de 4,500 *personnes meurent chaque année dans ce pays* because of the heart. So, we must have specialised units to take care of this.

The second point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was campaign and so on. I think the hon. Member is right. We must have aggressive campaigns. We are doing it, but we hope that in time we would achieve the results that we would like to get. As I said, this is a lifestyle, the difficulties that we have, even the increase in cancer. Let me share some important information with the hon. Member. One form of cancer is breast cancer. Over a period of time, there has

been 100% increase in the incidence of cancer. All right, I know there is more detection, awareness and so on, but still I try to compare this with the increase in salary that we get. You normally get 5% to 10% increase in your wages, but, here, there is 100% increase in the incidence of breast cancer. It is very important to see what we are eating as well and, again, the amount of exercise that we do. From what I have been told by doctors, lifestyle does not really apply to what you eat, how much you sit in front of the television, but how much exercise you do. 75% of men in this country do not do any form of physical exercise and when I say any form of physical exercise as recommended by doctors, it is 30 minutes brisk walk every day. 90% of ladies in this country do not do physical exercise as recommended by doctors.

*(Interruptions)*

We can criticise each other here, but this is a fact.

From the figures I have seen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, more than 38% of Mauritians now are either obese or overweight. All these lifestyle problems create diseases such as diabetes, cancer and so on. I do agree that we have to keep on improving.

The hon. Member talked about this vaccine against cervical cancer, but, I think, I also hinted – hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun did ask a question - of the economic issues. It would cost billions. I am not saying that people's lives are not worth enough not to spend, but we are looking into the possibility through some studies and so on. The hon. Member also stated these figures; I won't go into all the details, into the number of women we manage to screen. But, here, we have a cultural issue, we manage to screen 100,000 people and yet it was a much smaller figure for ladies who accepted to come and have themselves screened against cervical and breast cancer. *C'est quelque chose de culturel*. I think, we will need everybody's help to make people understand that these diseases can be cured. If it is too late, it is too late, we won't be able to stop it from spreading and once it is spread, there is not much that one can do. That is a major challenge. I agree with the hon. Member that we have to put much more effort in it just through better ways of communication and so on. We actually go out to meet people. In fact, a few days ago, we were in Barkly where I noticed that there was a majority of ladies who attended to this mobile clinic. We tried to talk to them; you can't coerce somebody to come and have herself screened, but I understand that this is a major problem not only in Mauritius but throughout the world. We are putting much effort in it.

The hon. Member also talked about stigma for patients having HIV/AIDS. Let me reassure the hon. Member that today, in my Ministry, we treat HIV/AIDS just like any other chronic disease. We offer testing for HIV/AIDS through our mobile clinic. It is open. Whether you test for diabetes, hypertension or any other pathology, it is all tested as any other disease.

The hon. Member would probably understand that education is a long-term process. Well, we hope that it would not take too long, but we treat it just like any other disease here in my Ministry. The hon. Member said something a bit harsh to me.

The hon. Member talked about caesarean section. Let me tell her that we take this very seriously. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this country 50% of ladies in the private sector who give birth, do so by caesarean section and 40% in the public sector do so by caesarean section and this is not acceptable. *Mais bien sûr*, I am only a policy-maker, I am only a politician and I cannot go in the practice of a doctor to say what to do and what not to do. *Mais maintenant, laissez-moi vous assurer, Madame, que* I have requested my Director of Service that has got this under her portfolio, to make a register of all the doctors concerned and we would like to be able to follow what is happening throughout *et dans le public et dans le privé*.

Over and above this, the hon. Prime Minister has been talking to the University College London Hospital (UCLH), where, in fact, a few days ago, Dr. Silverstone was here, we were talking with them to get assistance to create an institute for women and children with specialised units to make sure that they view all this globally around Mauritius, because I understand this is one of the finest hospitals in the world, in fact, not only in England.

Some other points were raised. There was this business of long queues and equipment. I will come back on that. I have got some concerns myself and the long queues that you referred to in our pharmacy. Let me just remind the hon. Member that every single day, day in day out, the public health sector attends to 22,000 patients.

You would agree that this is a huge figure and we have limited resources, although my budget has increased, we can only have so much money for whatever we want to do in a whole budget. This is a major issue. I talked about it personally whenever I attend to my mobile clinics. I talk to people as to why we have these long queues. We have long queues not because of the fault of doctors, but, as I said, lifestyle, what we eat and the way we treat ourselves. I would like to get to my sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have broken it into about 15 different sectors. In fact, we can call it priority areas in the health sector. My good friend, the hon.



Minister of Finance, is going to provide me with nearly Rs7.5 billion which is a marked increase in the budget, because if I wish to compare the budget in year 2004-2005, it stood at Rs3.7 billion and today it is nearly Rs7.5 billion which shows that it has had a 100% increase under the life of this Government. In terms of percentage of GDP in 2004/2005 it stood at 2.2% and today it stands at 2.7% which is a considerable increase. There has also been an increase in share of total Government expenditure. In 2010, it would be 9.1% as compared to 7.6% during the financial year 2004/2005. I am mentioning these figures just to show that Government is putting an extra effort to provide resources to this sector so that we have people in a state of health that we would like to have. I would like now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come up to the first priority that we set ourselves in this sector. The first priority being health infrastructural projects. I am glad to say that huge sums of money are being put into infrastructure. We all know the difficulties of this sector. I did hear the hon. Leader of the Opposition talking about value for money and so on. The fact remains that we have some facilities that are quite old, to begin with Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. Funds now have been available and the work has already started and I am hoping that that by next year, the Rs2 billion that have been put at my disposal for creating a modern hospital with 550 beds and all the facilities that could exist in a hospital will be here for the people, not only of Port Louis, but for the region, hopefully for Mauritius, to offer services as is required.

Flacq Hospital – I would not have called it a hospital, I must say frankly. We have got plans to have Blocks C, D and E and work has already started in new Block C to the tune of Rs125 m. and two additional blocks will be constructed with new technologies such as CT Scan and MRI and so on. Victoria Hospital is getting smaller and smaller every day. We are going to invest Rs270 m. for a new surgery block and the work is expected, I hope, early next year. At Mahebourg, the renovation works have already started at a cost of Rs 20 m. For Long Mountain Hospital, I must say, hon. Mrs Kalyanee Juggoo did offer some incentives by the numerous calls and so on. We have managed to find some funds for Long Mountain Hospital. We are getting so many patients in SSRN that we are having to expand the Accident and Emergency Department and this is expected to start, again, in early next year to the tune of Rs78 m. Plaine Verte will get a brand new Medi-clinic at the cost of Rs53.4 m. and here works are expected to end in March 2010 and Triolet will follow suit with a new medical clinic, hopefully starting soon. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are upgrading all the Area Health Centres and Community

Health Centres. I think it is important to know that we have 113 Community Health Centres, 23 Area Health Centres, 2 Medi-Clinics and 1 Community Hospital in the South. We are putting a lot of effort to make sure that we upgrade all these facilities that we have. Over and above this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have started a plan to provide 12 model Area Health Centres/Community Health Centres, we would like to set a kind of a benchmark so that if people from one committee go and visit they would put some pressure on the system to make sure that we have such facilities throughout the island. Water reticulation project is a major challenge where we got pipes which are really old. We are spending about Rs120 m. to improve water reticulation at Flacq, Brown Sequard, SSRN, Victoria, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospitals, as I said, at an estimated cost of Rs120 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the next item I wish to talk about would be equipment. Government has invested massively in biomedical equipment as this is a key component for the improvement of the healthcare delivery system. Whatever facility one has today gets obsolete so quickly; there are huge sums of money getting into this field. As at date I see that Rs500 m. have been spent for the acquisition of new state-of-the-art biomedical equipment and this year I have an extra Rs200 m. I do not wish to list the equipment I think that people are now well aware of equipment such as Double Head Gamma Camera for nuclear medicine, Mobile C-Arms, MRI, CT scans and so on. But here, I would like to respond to hon. Mrs Labelle and she made a good point that often when one equipment breaks down in this country everybody talks about it. I do not want to make any fuss about it. I know that the system keeps going on but I would like to respond to hon. Mrs Labelle. What is required here is not just the equipment, but it is a preventive maintenance plan. I would like to inform the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir that in spite, of all the efforts made by my Ministry to maintain biomedical equipment in good working order, indeed, the downtime for the repair of some equipment is at times very long. There is a serious lack of expertise here in this country for such repairs. I must say also that even foreign expertise at times are not satisfactory and I would like to mention one case which I looked into myself personally. There was this MRI from SSRN Hospital that was off for two years. Last year, I personally took up the matter with one of the directors from General Electric Health Care Technologies when I was in an exhibition and congress in Dubai, it was the Arab Health Exhibition on 26 to 29 January, and then I called the CEO in the United States, I wrote to them personally as the Minister of Health of the country and yet it took another year to get this MRI

fixed. This is a challenge that we have to face. Everybody gets to know whenever an equipment, especially in the public sector, does not function and it puts us all under a lot of pressure. The will is here but the question is: how is it that you get to do it? What we are doing is that we are trying to get links with other institutions, other hospitals which have these facilities and which have better trained people and so on.

Recently, I think it was two weeks ago, I was in Reunion Island to attend to the 8<sup>th</sup> *Colloque DIH Océan Indien*. I personally discussed with the Director General of *CHR - Centre Hospitalier Région de la Réunion* - on possible collaboration, including training of our officers in the maintenance of hospital equipment, not all equipment, I must say these are the latest equipment. I will tell you frankly the problems that we have. We have this propensity to buy the latest equipment. When you buy latest equipment, it requires latest training. Very often, the people who actually made this equipment don't have enough skills to actually treat this equipment as they ought to. These are real challenges. At times, I have even been told: don't buy the latest equipment, buy the older ones, because these can be fixed easily. What are we doing here? We are in collaboration with Reunion and other centres so that we can act fast. If we have to fly somebody to Reunion, or if we have to fly our staff to Reunion to get training and so on, that could be done.

In addition, the Ministry will continue to outsource the maintenance of some high-tech biomedical equipment including the MRI, CT Scan, Haemodialysis machines and the Hyperbaric Decompression Chamber.

I wish also to point out that there are, in fact, some problems regarding planned preventive maintenance of equipment. In this respect, I have set up a Technical Committee under the chairmanship of a Director Health Services to prepare a comprehensive plan for the preventive maintenance of all equipment. This Committee will work in close collaboration with all consultants and technicians concerned to ensure that timely preventive as well as corrective measures are taken to keep all equipment in good working conditions.

The third point I wish to raise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is human resources. The health sector is a highly labour intensive and human resource, is an essential component in the delivery of health services. As I mentioned earlier on, my Ministry happens to have 15,000 wonderful people of 350 different grades. Why wonderful? At a later stage, maybe I will try to explain. This service here runs 24 hours a day. We will have to admit that people who attend the

hospital, very often they tend not to be at their best behaviour. 35% of my clients are there because of alcoholic problems and yet we have to offer the service. So, this is a big challenge.

I am glad to say that we are given the opportunity to recruit 300 doctors and 400 nurses because the system is under a lot of pressure. Since January, we have already recruited 130 doctors and we enlisted 350 student nurses. We also, in the process of recruiting specialists from India, in scarcity area such as anaesthesia, obstetrics and gynaecology and paediatrics to supplement services given in about 25 specialities.

Fourth point, I would like to refer to is capacity building. This again is a major challenge. We don't only have to train our doctors, our medical and health officers, specialists and so on, but also nurses, dispensers, medical lab technicians and other supporting staff as well as receptionists and hospital care attendants. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to be able to make the difference between the medical aspect of this sector, *l'aspect hôtellerie*. I must say if somebody - God forbids - falls sick in this country, I can more or less guarantee that we can give the best to the public sector. Certainly, you will get the best doctors; you will get the equipment that exists and so on. Our weakness, I agree, is the *hôtellerie* side of things, cleanliness, etc, the way people talk. Why? Because here our service is attending 22,000 people every single day, day in day out. That is a real challenge. I won't come and pretend that it is the same service, maybe as a private sector. Let us compare figures. How many people do attend a clinic compared to how many people attend hospital? But that does not mean that we should not treat our patients properly. We feel that this can be won by training. So, we have started training at all levels. How is it that the persons talk on the phone? How the person who cooks in the kitchen does whatever he or she wants? What is the level of cleanliness that is acceptable in a hospital kitchen? If you can give a prohibition order to Kentucky Fried Chicken, you should expect that this could happen to you as well in the public hospital kitchen. People have to understand this and all this happens by training and we are putting a lot of effort in this. So, training programmes are run by the School of Nursing, Mauritius Institute of Health and as well as the University of Mauritius which is collaborating with us. So, we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, started a special programme to train in customer care and in performance appraisal system for receptionists, hospital care attendants and other grades. For this year, we have trained more than 12,000 officers in Customer Care and PMS, that is, Performance Based Systems. More than 2,000 officers have been trained in Quality Management System MS ISO 90012008. We are

trying to have a new culture in this department whereby, people have to understand that, not being a business, but it has to be a business-like approach. 15,000 people working in a department with 8.8 million clients in a year. So, that requires a certain amount of management skills. We are putting all these systems such as ISO and so on, so that people know what they are supposed to do and they do what they meant to do. A third party comes and assesses that whatever was said is being done, that is, ISO principle.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I requested every nurse to get a new training on Venepuncture and Intravenous Management, that is, the insertion of a needle inside the vein for the purpose of giving an injection or intravenous fluid or blood transfusion as the case may be. So, this course is on.

I would like to tell you a little story, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why is this that we started this. I was in a hospital one evening and a father came to see me and he said he was very scared because he had a child who suffered from some disabilities. After having checked, I saw that the nurse did everything *à la lettre* as it ought to be done, because the child was small and he was supposed to give a certain amount of fluid and he did that. He had removed the needle quickly and he put a little bandage and so on. But the parents thought that it was a mistake and it was wrongly done. The problem that we found was that the nurse was an expert in whatever he was doing, but he did not just talk to the patient. He just did not explain that this is what I am supposed to do and this is what I am doing, it will hurt and there will be a few drops of blood and I only put this amount. If he had just explained what he was doing, it would have saved a lot of problem. But, of course, one way to solve all these problems is training, which we are doing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are putting a lot of emphasis on postgraduate studies as well. Internal medicine, orthopaedic surgery, paediatrics, general surgery, psychiatry, cardiology and forensic medicine are conducted with academic inputs from the University of Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2, Montpellier University and Hôpitaux Universitaire de Genève. So far, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 40 specialists have been trained by Bordeaux and five surgeons by Montpellier.

22 doctors are presently following postgraduate studies in Ophtalmology, Anesthesia and Internal Medicine with Bordeaux.

I would like now to come to another point which I feel that deserves some attention. It is policy of this Government to transform itself into a medical hub for the region by encouraging investment in private health care and medical education.

According to WHO Health Report 2006, there is a global deficit of 2.4 million doctors, nurses and midwives. So, I see a big opportunity here. Demand for service providers has escalated remarkably in all countries rich and poor. In this respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we don't only want to benefit from this opportunity, we feel that we have a unique opportunity of upgrading our hospitals and one way we feel is by converting our hospitals into teaching hospitals and we have started so. In fact, Government has given its authorisation in terms of framework agreement to D.Y Patil to start a medical school in the south, in Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital where there would be internal pressure to improve the service. We have professors, teachers, members of the press and people's eyes are on the hospitals. It is bound to improve. This has been shown throughout the countries. As I said, we are going to have D. Y. Patil who is here. It is just a question of time now that students will start their studies in this institution. Over my visit in Dubai, I am hoping to be able to attract Gulf Medical University which is a well-known and well-established institution in Dubai to open up a private hospital and a medical school here in Mauritius. I understand that students of Apollo Bramwell Nursing School, Patrick Sana College of Health Sciences and Florence Nightingale College of Nursing have already been authorised to undergo clinical training in public hospitals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we see a big opportunity here. Probably in time people will come and ask: how many doctors did you need? Why did you create so many doctors here? Would you start creating doctors who would not have enough jobs to do? But we do not see, in Mauritius, here as only 1.3 million people. We see Mauritius as part of a group of 700 million people, as part of SADC and COMESA. I think he would not only improve the health service here in this country. I think we have some moral responsibility as well in the region. There is plenty of opportunities for our Doctors, our businessmen to set up medical institutions not only here in this country just like Apollo and Fortis came over in Mauritius. I do not see it impossible to have groups of people from Mauritius setting up business in the medical sphere in Madagascar, in Eastern Africa and hopefully why not in whole of mainland Africa. This is a major opportunity here in terms of medical hub. And I would like to have some closely linked with medical hubs, it is medical tourism that I would like to discuss now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I recall while you were Minister of IT yourself, you used to talk about the size of IT business throughout the world. Let me share with you worldwide spending on health. This is estimated to be 4.5 trillion US\$. And the global medical tourism industry is

currently estimated at 20 billion US\$. Thailand, Singapore and India have already started taking this opportunity. India actually hosts about 200,000 foreign patients annually and Singapore hosts, from memory, I think it is about 500,000 foreign patients and they have set themselves as a target to double this figure. When we look at Mauritius, I think it is only about a thousand foreign patients that we manage to attract. I see a gold mine here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I see a tremendous opportunity in this sector to become a true pillar of this economy. I know, a few years ago, if somebody would have said that SMEs could have been a pillar, nobody would have taken it seriously. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When I came in, the SME sector only represented a few percentage points share of the GDP. Today, it is 23%. I know that when we came in, the turnover of SMEs used to be about Rs25 billion and today, it is about Rs72 billion which makes 151% increase in the business of SMEs in this country. Here as well, I see a big opportunity for medical tourism to become a true pillar in this country.

The seventh point I want to mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about public health. I need, maybe, to explain what I mean by public health. This has to do with communicable diseases. Recently, we had this major threat of H1N1 and this did not only affect us, it affected the whole world. I asked my officers to give me the exact figure of the number of people who were treated for H1N1 and seasonal flu. But I can say I could not make the difference between any of these two. We had, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over this period, between July till November, 357,000 people who came into our flu clinics, our dispensaries, our area health centres, community health centres, hospitals and so on. We welcomed 357,000 people. I have to put on record my appreciation and the appreciation of Government to all my 15,000 staff who stayed despite the fact that many of us were scared. I remember while listening to the radio at early 5 o'clock in the morning, there was one radio which started breaking the news talking about how people used to do trenches in Mauritius when there was this Spanish flu in the 1918 or so. They talked about mass graves and so on. It did scare people. But my staff stayed, whether it was from the head office or in the dispensary or the flu clinic. The reason I know is that I checked the absenteeism figure. At the peak, we only had 11% of my staff who stayed at home and which was a little more than the normal figure. The normal figure is about 8 to 9%. These wonderful people stayed there, welcomed people who were ill, suffering, although I do understand that it was a difficult period, the hospitals were crowded, as you can see yourself, we managed to overcome. This country would have been down on its knees if it was not for these

15,000 people. I really need to say a big thank you. They did what was required to do. We had reinforcement of the surveillance system at points of entry, we had our sensitisation campaigns, we did have our thermal scanner at the airport, we did buy the PCR machine and it worked straight away. We did close the schools, we did have protocols for treatment, we did buy oseltamivir phosphate, that is, tamiflu and I must also thank all my colleague Ministers who assisted in tackling this problem. I also need to thank Government, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance who brought in Rs172 m. to buy whatever the Ministry of Health requested. This is what I liked in this challenging time.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, everybody! The private sectors as well! I must say we had certain concerns, we discussed, but I think it worked quite well together with the PMPA, the Private Medical Practitioners Association and so on. In between, we had another challenge, dengue came in. There again, this dengue business is a scary business. It can lead to hemorrhagic fever and so on. The first case was reported on 03 June 2009. I have never seen so many people from so many Ministries and I have to mention these people here: the Special Mobile Force, Ministry of Agro Industry Food Production and Security, Ministry of Environment and NDU, Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands, Ministry of Social Security and so on. Everybody!

I have to be grateful to each and everybody here, because when such a disease hits a country, it is not political persons. The interesting thing is the fact that we have managed to clean up this country, and we've got rid of Dengue. It might come back, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is important is to understand that we have a system. These people are not politicians; they do their work as true professionals. We have a system which fought Dengue. Day in day out, I had 1,600 people who worked for about 25 days, who cleaned up the mess and, today, we are saved. There again, that was an opportunity for this country to be down on its knees, but we survived, and we did whatever we had to do. I personally thought that it was going to become endemic, because when I heard that it is endemic in Singapore, I said: how can we do better than Singapore? But, somehow, these wonderful people who are in this Ministry, who very often take a lot of criticisms from everybody, did a marvellous job. They were here, and they did what was supposed to do. Imagine carrying this fogging machine, starting at five in the evening till ten all over the place in Mauritius! And they did it. This is the kind of people that we have in this Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am not saying that we don't have weaknesses. I am sure we



have weaknesses. But they showed of what metal they are made when we needed them. They passed a very difficult exam, and this is what matters to me; the kind of system that we have. Over and above Dengue, H1N1, all the units continued, as if it was business as usual. We continued doing 175 operations in Moka; we continued doing our daily open heart surgery, maternity functioned, blood collection functioned, testing functioned, just as if it was normal, and this is, I think, one sector that we all need to be grateful, independent of politics or whoever standing where I am. This is just a tribute I wanted to pay to this wonderful staff that I get the chance to be head of.

After that, Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, we looked a little bit at our weaknesses. I must say that we did not have any preparedness plan in the past, and we work very hard now to get a preparedness plan for communicable diseases. Today, everybody knows what he or she is supposed to do. We've got trained manpower, plan of actions, protocols, guidelines, standard operating procedures, so that we act promptly. Imagine if the Dengue was like in ten different places, maybe in the South or wherever, it would have been out of control. But we followed it. It didn't go to Flacq, to Riche Mare, to the North. We followed it and we managed to catch it. We now have experience in preparing for disasters. We also have restructured the CDCU, that is, the Communicable Diseases Control Unit. I've made sure that we get an Epidemiological Unit, consisting of an epidemiologist, which we did not have in the past, community physicians, health inspectors, entomologists. Now, we have upgraded our system, to make sure that they are on the alert and they can respond fast.

Another aspect of public health is food safety. We've set up a central flying squad in October 2008 and, from January till October 2009, there have been 85,841 visits of food premises and outlets. I know there has been a bit of an outcry that my officers are a bit hard, tough, but this is only a health issue; this is a major public health concern. When you have got a country where 24% of your population suffer from diabetes, 30% suffer from hypertension, 45% suffer from cholesterol, you have to take these public health issues seriously, and we have seized 850 tons of rotten foodstuffs in this country over the year.

We have also brought about amendment to the Food Act 1998, for a number of reasons, which I am not going to go through, because we have to move on with time. Whatever was being done in the past is the past. Now, we have to move ahead, and to make sure that we safeguard

nutritional rights and needs of consumers. As I said, this mainly public health issue. But, also, I must make an appeal to the public at large. It is not only my 100 inspectors' responsibility to make sure that he or she eats properly. Each and everyone of this House have to start opening their eyes and look at what we are eating, for God sake! This is causing a major disaster in this country. Imagine, 50% of this country are either pre-diabetic or diabetic, and we managed to get 8.8 million patients in a year in the public health sector, for a population of only 1.3 million!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is the Dangerous Chemical Control Act, which falls under my responsibility, as well as environmental health, whereby apart from looking at noise assessment and so on, we have also the responsibility of looking at the quality of drinking water, noise, odour, quality control under the required legislation. So, there is a lot more than what we get to hear about the Ministry of Health.

The 8<sup>th</sup> priority I would like to talk about is primary health care. This very concept of primary health care is the attainment of health for all, by addressing the main health problems faced by the community and, as I mentioned earlier on, we have got a number of centres. 113 community health centres, 23 area health centres, two medi-clinics and one community hospital. The attendance has constantly been growing. It used to be 3.5 million in 2004, and it has gone up to 3.9 million in 2008. This has been done so, with a view to reduce the numbers going to hospital. We are currently trying to give a facelift to all our health centres, just so that, at least, the *hôtellerie* side, where we do have some weaknesses, is taken care of.

My 9<sup>th</sup> area that I would like to talk about is - I will try to answer to hon. Labelle - the NCDs (Non Communicable Diseases), that is, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, and so on.

These represent a major threat to our health and development. This has kept on going increasing. I would like to cite, as an example, the figures for diabetes. The fourth edition of the IDF (International Diabetes Federation) Atlas published this year, estimates that 285 million people worldwide or 6.6 % of the global population, aged between 20 and 70 years, will have diabetes next year, that is, in 2010. If you are getting scared, you should be. This number is expected to increase by more than 50% in the next 20 years, to reach about 438 million in the year 2030. Let us put all this in the right perspective. This, in the world, is a major threat, *et nous sommes champions dans ce domaine, malheureusement*. Imagine the effect this is going to

have on this country, if we keep on doing whatever we are doing; people eating at all times in this country, anywhere, and eating anything. This is something that has to think in everybody here. I think, in my humble submission here, this is probably one of the most important issues that we have to take care of. Everybody needs to start talking at home why are we buying these *boissons gazeuses, quelles vitamines il y a dedans*, about our lifestyle.

Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if one was to take the waist measurement, for a man, if it is more than 90 centimetres, he is already one foot, I would not say, in the grave, but pretty close to it; and for women, if it more than 80 centimetres. Whose responsibility is it? This is a question that each and every one of us here has to start seriously think about, because I can see some major difficulties ahead if we don't change. In Mauritius, NCDs represent 80% of the total burden of diseases and the main risk factors for NCDs are unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol and all these are preventable. In this country, last year, we consumed one billion eighty-nine million cigarettes and that was more than my budget for a year. The alcohol consumption was – I think I have mentioned this in the past, I'll do it again – 6 million litres of rum; 17.7 million litres of whisky and 37 million litres of beer which amounted to more than the budget of my good friend and colleague, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, for the Ministry of Education. Last year, Mauritians in this country consumed more alcohol and cigarettes than the country could offer for my Ministry which is the largest employer in terms of service and the Ministry of Education. We spent more than thirteen billion rupees on alcohol and cigarettes. *Allons critiquer mes amis!* Who are we going to criticise? Shall I throw the buck to them or would they throw it to me? This is a question. And we are number one in this world in terms of prevalence of diabetes. This is the challenge we are facing today, ladies and gentlemen, and I would like to invite each and everybody here to read a little bit about the history of Nauru, a small little paradise with only 9,000 people and today they are down on their knees because people took it lightly. *Mo fine prend enn tiguait grosseur, pas faire narien, mo okay là !* Nearly 50% of this population soon is going to be obese or overweight if we keep on doing whatever we are doing. We are doing whatever needs to be done. We invited all the good and the brains upon the request of the Prime Minister. We held a conference on diabetes a few weeks ago and it was indeed between the 12 to 14 November where we discussed about 'reventing Diabetes and its complications: A challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. It was the first of its kind ever held in Africa. We managed to attract 225 participants, some 100 delegates from 45 member States of the WHO

AFRO region and 225 participants from Mauritius attended this Conference. We did have 25 eminent speakers. I am personally pleased that we managed to get Professor McAfee from Oxford University and Professor Simon from University of Cambridge. We also had experts from the University of Washington, WHO, Geneva and South Africa. It culminated with the adoption of the Mauritius call for an action on diabetes and associated diseases which identifies key strategies and commitments urgently required for planning and implementing national diabetes and NCDs prevention and control programmes with a view to reduce the burden of diseases in the African region. As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not just a question of hosting a conference, of having everybody here discussing and so on, I am quite happy to say that we have managed to have collaboration between Baker Idea Institute in Australia, Oxford University and ourselves, hopefully the University of Mauritius, to sit and look at medium to long term research strategies. We all know of this genetic predisposition that we have in Mauritius to carry diabetes and I think we stand a good chance of cracking this here in Mauritius. So, the work is on and, I hope in time, we would find some potential solutions to this. At least we would start getting a clearer picture of what is happening.

In October last year, we set up a mobile clinic which has been going round the island and, as I mentioned, and as I stated we have visited 140 sites and we have had nearly 100,000 persons screened so far. Our target is 125,000. We have also started a School Health Programme where we have targeted 25,000 students, where we made 165 visits in different schools. We have started cancer screening and, as it has been mentioned by hon. Mrs Labelle, this low figure is an indication that people won't accept the idea of being screened. It is being offered for free and I am making an appeal to people to consider this seriously. Nutrition, as a paradox, sometimes we have difficulties. When I use to be the Minister of Commerce, there was a threat of having no flour in this country and today, we have to develop a National Plan of Action for Nutrition to ask people to reconsider their eating habits. As from January 2010, only water will be allowed for sale in school canteens and other food items are being controlled. Here again, I am sure, there will be an uproar. *On est en train de contrôler maintenant ce qu'on est en train de manger dans les écoles parce que* eating habits start from a very early stage and you would be surprised to hear that some people are sending fizzy drink in their little *gourde* to their children. We are hoping that people will accept that this is a real challenge here in this country. We have also set

up this 'Know Your Number' campaign which was launched on the World Diabetes Day where each person needs to know about how to use a measuring tape to understand the difficulty one might be facing if an adult goes over 90 centimetres circumference of the waist and 80 centimetres for ladies. We are in the process of setting up health tracks. We are offering health facilities in various centres and so on. I have mentioned what we did about tobacco and alcohol regulations whereby new tobacco and alcohol regulations are in force as from the 01 of March 2009 to control tobacco and alcohol consumption in public places. I would like to add here: with this tobacco regulation, today Mauritius happens to be number one in the world in terms of legal requirement to display real pictures as opposed to the Marlboro man that people used to think and see as if *c'était la virilité*, the man with a lasso etc. Today by law, cigarettes suppliers will have to cover their packet surfaces by 65% of health warning and showing a true picture of the heart and lung and so on.

As for future projects, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in the process of setting up a Diabetes and Cardiovascular Diseases Institute in Souillac Hospital. We are revisiting the national service framework for diabetes in the light of the Mauritius Call for Action. We are setting up dedicated diabetes clinics in regional hospitals and health centres. Here, I must thank the NGOs for having discussed and brought about their contribution, their idea. I think it was the president of the Mauritius Diabetes Association who suggested that we had that diabetes clinics. We are also making use of funds under CSR to build health tracks. We would be allocating financial grants to registered health clubs undertaking physical activities in the community.

The next item I wish to talk about is HIV and AIDS. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another great challenge for our generation is HIV and AIDS. This pandemic is not simply a public health crisis, it is associated with harsh human suffering and it is an issue of national concern.

In Mauritius it is estimated that 1.8% of the population, that is, about 12,600 people live with this virus. It is said to be highly concentrated with a high prevalence rate of more than 5% among the most at risk population. The first case of HIV/AIDS was detected in 1987 and, so far, 4,078 Mauritians have been detected, among whom 272 have died. Initially the main mode of HIV transmission was heterosexual accounting for about 70% of all cases. As from 2003, a shift in the mode of transmission was noted with more than 66% of the new cases being due to

injecting drug use and it reached a peak of 92.5% in 2005. As from 2006, the mode of transmission through IDG has gradually decreased to reach about 73.3% in 2008. From 2001 to 2005, the number of newly imported cases of HIV doubled each year to reach a maximum of 921 in 2005 alone. The number of new cases now has stabilised to about 540 as from 2006. There are some reasons why this is so. It is mainly because we have introduced the Methadone Substitution Therapy and the Needle Exchange Programme. I am pushing the officers of my Ministry to keep on increasing these numbers to make sure that we reduce the waiting list and increase the number of people who manage to get into the Methadone Substitution Therapy. I understand that there are technical constraints, because there is certain amount of work that has to be prepared and so on, but this is on; the same goes for the needle exchange.

As you are well aware, the Needle Exchange Programme was also introduced in November 2006 by the NGOs and the support of this Ministry and, as from 2008, the Ministry is also implementing the needle exchange programme. To date, we have 39 sites which are operational and some 5,000 clients. We had a smaller target, but I want to increase to the extent that we do not have somebody who cannot get access to the needle, exchange the needle and proliferate the disease.

Treatment and care centres are being decentralised to regional hospitals. HIV testing and counselling services have been extended to all Area Health Centres and mobile clinics with a view to combating stigmatisation and discrimination. We offer Rs10 m. worth of anti-retroviral drugs, given free of charge to all patients in need. Thanks to Dr. Gaud from La Réunion, we have set up a new protocol of treatment of HIV/AIDS, which is more effective than it used to be.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a viral load machine is operational at the Central Health Laboratory since September 2009. We have been very successful in securing funds from the Global Fund. I understand that an amount of €7.8 million for a period of 5 years for implementing HIV/AIDS programme has been secured.

I would like now to quickly talk about NGOs. These are a very important part of the system. We have a long list of NGOs with whom we work and, very often, they are very effective in some of the areas where they deal. For example, it is PILS for the HIV/AIDS; Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre, Hindu House, Sewa Sangram Sadan of St. Paul for Methadone Substitute Therapy; CUT for Needle Exchange Programme, VISA for the fight against tobacco; *Etoile d'Esperance* for its fight against harmful use of alcohol; NATReSA for the prevention of

drug and substance abuse; Link for Life for its support to cancer patients; the Mauritius Diabetes Association and Diabetes Support Group for implementing diabetes related activities. There are a number of NGOs which are currently assisting us and we think that we have to keep on increasing these links especially with the provision of CSR Funds to keep on extending our services.

I also have a blood transfusion service where we collected 46,255 units of blood in 2008 compared to about 41,000 in 2005 and this service is expected to be soon ISO Certified by mid-December 2009. A Mauritius Blood Service Bill will be introduced in the National Assembly for the setting-up of a statutory body to operate a national blood service, *inter alia*, to ensure a safe and adequate supply of blood and blood services.

I have mentioned earlier on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that my Ministry is putting a lot of effort with all these facilities that we have to implement the ISO system, not only in my Ministry but in each and every hospital – AHC, CHC, medi-clinic and to any service that we are offering. This is a way we think that will improve our level of service delivery and, hopefully, lead to better satisfaction. On top of that, we have secured funds to the tune of Rs123 m. to set up a National E-Health Strategic Plan for Mauritius. This is in the process of being implemented.

Before concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote a few more figures. It is fundamental for people to be aware that even in the world's richest and most powerful nation, that is, the United States, some 22,000 people die each year because they have no access to medical treatment and likewise. Some 700,000 people go bankrupt annually due to medical bills.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to respond to the hon. Leader of the Opposition who said that we have to make sure that we give value for money, and I think that he is right. But, we have to look at the figures as they are. For the year 2009, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned that every day we receive 22,000 persons who attend our public health services, that is, by the end of December 2009 for a population of 1.3 million people, we would have welcome 8.8 million visitors. We carried out 36,100 operations; there were 3,000 cases of angiography, angioplasty and cardiac surgeries. These are simple procedures. We undertook 6,000 eye surgeries. To date, we have 919 patients who follow treatment on dialysis. This is a wonderful country, should the person not have transportation facilities, my service picks up and delivers at home. Some 330,000 patients attended for dental treatment. My laboratory services

conducted 7.6 million tests for more than 250 types of different tests. In a year we conducted 500,000 x-rays. This Ministry spends Rs630 m. on medication. The waiting time to get an appointment for an initial consultation with, say, an orthopaedic surgeon in a country like Canada can be up to 12 months. But here, the average waiting time to see a specialist in my service is 3 weeks in most hospitals. The waiting time for surgeries is 6 weeks, which is well within our set target as per the Programme Based Budgeting.

The waiting time for eye surgery is around 12 weeks. Should we not be able to offer the operation here locally, patients are sent overseas and in 2009, Rs52.5 m. were disbursed to provide overseas treatment to 442 patients in various fields of specialised treatment. In Ayurvedic services, we had 44,342 patients attending 4 Ayurvedic clinics from January 2009 to date and the world goes on. A new children cancer ward was opened in May 2009. Paediatric surgery services are now available. A new endodontic clinic is operational at SSRN Hospital. Cardiology services have been decentralised and are available in all regions. We are going to set up a cardiology unit in Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital. A new MRI service is now available at Victoria hospital. Over and above, since January 2009, we have had 400 complex surgeries having been carried out by 11 medical foreign teams from US, Switzerland, Australia, India and Pakistan and so on which has led to a saving of not only Rs100 m., but they have been able to treat patients locally and give them all the comfort of the family and so on. *Bien sûr* we have our Cardiac Centre which is well poised now to become a centre of excellence in the region and in Africa.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have gone over what this service is about. This is more about just a question of billions of rupees, people's inefficiencies and so on. This is a business where people work 24-hour shift to save people's lives. Here, again, since I have been in this unique situation where I can pass a small judgement on their performance over two major crises that we faced, that is, H1N1 and Dengue, I would like to conclude by thanking everybody here for having been very patient to listen to me, but I would like to pay tribute to all these 15,000 staff, starting from staff of my Ministry to the ambulance drivers, who fought to get into the accident the other day when we have this major challenge on the motorway, who took the patients within matters of minutes, who do this day in and day out, who give the best of themselves despite whatever one might say. I can only say to them a big thank you. This is indeed a gigantic task.



On this, I would like to conclude by saying that the hon. Minister of Finance has done a wonderful job. Despite all the world crises, we have been able to secure funds to make sure that this country, under the very able leadership of our Prime Minister, keeps on moving in the direction we would like to see and become known as one of the true stars of this part of the world and become a place that could become a reference from a country which did not have any resources and which would have achieved so much.

Thank you for your attention.

(6.23 p.m.)

**The Minister of Information and Telecommunication Technology (Mr A. Dulull):** M. le président, je tiens à féliciter le Premier ministre et le vice-Premier ministre et tous les membres du gouvernement pour la présentation du budget 2009-2010. Je dois aussi dire que le budget est aussi un plan de continuité, *a Welfare Continuity Plan*. Donc, je trouve qu'il faut bien situer le budget par rapport au précédent budget et les objectifs du présent et de l'avenir.

En 2005, le gouvernement, dans son premier mandat, a présenté un nouveau contrat, *a new contract* à la population énumérant les grands actes de développements socio-économiques, tels que la démocratisation de l'économie, le combat contre la pauvreté et bien sûr la promotion de l'éducation comme un outil de développement et aussi un outil pour éliminer la pauvreté. Le *new contract* est un encadrement autour duquel sont initiés un bon nombre de projets pour catalyser l'économie déjà asphyxiée entre 2000 et 2005. Sous le *new contract*, ont été aussi prévues des réformes pour promouvoir plus de justice sociale et surtout freiner les excès du libéralisme inhumain pour ne pas dire du libéralisme dévastateur installé sous l'ancien régime.

Nous ne sommes pas opposés au libéralisme, mais nous gérons les questions socio-économiques en alliant le libéralisme et l'intervention mesurée et calculée de l'État. Le gouvernement de l'Alliance Sociale sous le *leadership* du Dr. Navin Ramgoolam continue à assurer que la remise en forme de notre économie dépend de l'intensité avec laquelle nous ferons valoir des valeurs sociales plus précieuses que le profit matériel. Le bonheur ne se réside pas dans la seule possession des biens. Il est dans la joie de l'exploit, dans la sensation des efforts créateurs. Le plaisir et la motivation que procurent les efforts ne doivent plus succomber à la

recherche et freiner des profits fugitifs. Au contraire, ils doivent nous apprendre que notre destinée n'est pas d'être assistée mais bien de nous aider nous-mêmes et nos concitoyens.

Avant de continuer, M. le président, je voudrais mentionner que j'ai bien écouté mon collègue, le ministre de la santé et de la qualité de la vie, avec le dévouement, et je dois dire aussi avec la crainte des grands défis qui guettent tous nos concitoyens, surtout le danger auquel les maladies, telles que le diabète et le cardiovasculaire nous menacent. Trop souvent, le ministère de la santé a été pris pour cible des critiques non-fondées et là je dois vous dire quelque chose.

Le *Deputy Prime Minister* et moi-même, nous avons rendu une visite au Père Souchon victime d'un accident. Vous savez ce que le père Souchon nous a dit sur son lit à l'hôpital, il a dit qu'il a pu détecter une maladie. La maladie de la critique et il est enthousiasmé de voir comment le personnel de l'hôpital se donne pour assurer des soins aux malades. Le Père Souchon nous dit : nous avons une presse qui est très négative; ce n'est pas une presse à l'information mais à sensation. Voilà la maladie de la critique, il faut en cesser, il faut regarder objectivement et surtout savoir apprécier.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his recent Budget, my colleague has made three mission statements. These are –

- (a) shaping recovery to accelerate job creation;
- (b) consolidating social progress to embed inclusive growth, and
- (c) sustaining Green Mauritius to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Bien sûr, après la présentation du budget, on a eu des réactions et je dois dire que certaines réactions sont très légitimes, mais je dois aussi dire que certaines sont non fondées. Le *Leader* de l'opposition, dans son exposé, a fait ressortir que le secteur de TIC est sa création. Le secteur de la technologie informatique et de la communication est la création du gouvernement 2000-2005. Mais je crois bien que le *Leader* de l'opposition se trompe. C'est le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, dans son premier mandat de 1995-2000, qui a initié le ministère du TIC et avait nommé le Premier ministre de TIC à Maurice. Il vient dire que la cybercité est le fruit de ces efforts, de son gouvernement. Là, encore un fois, le *Leader* de l'opposition se trompe. Je cite le Premier ministre de l'Inde, le Dr. Manmohan Singh dans son discours inaugural –

*“The Cybercity project was conceived in the year 2000 when Dr. Ramgoolam led the Mauritian Government and I am thankful for his support to this project in its early days.”*

J’ouvre une parenthèse pour dire qu’en 2000 la cybercité avait seulement le *Cyber Tower 1* et, aujourd’hui, il n’y a plus place à la cybercité. Je dois dire aussi que quand on a mentionné la contribution du secteur de TIC dans l’économie, le *Leader* de l’opposition a réagi. Je vais donner quelques chiffres. La valeur du secteur de TIC en 2004 et la contribution au produit national brut était de l’ordre de R 7 milliards et, aujourd’hui, c’est de l’ordre de presque R 13 milliards. Le nombre d’emplois créé en 2004 avoisinait les 6,000 et il est presque 13,000 aujourd’hui. Donc, je laisse aux membres de tirer les conclusions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mentioned the mission statement made by the Vice-Prime Minister. These statements are very much illustrative of the will of this Government to continue with its declared intention to ensure that Mauritius stays in the path of economic development while maintaining at the same time the social aspiration of the nation in a green decor.

La population dans son ensemble ainsi que les différents composants économiques accueillent très favorablement le budget 2010. Lorsque nous étudions les mesures annoncées, nous ne pouvons pas dire que c’est un hasard que ce gouvernement continue sur sa bonne route pour faire le pays progresser, quand nous continuons à ‘*Put People First*’ et à la démocratisation de notre économie, la construction de plusieurs milliers de maisons pour les économiquement faibles, la contribution du gouvernement pour les nécessiteux pour les frais des examens SC et HSC. La création d’emplois avec ces grands chantiers déjà enclenchés, les mesures favorables pour développer et catalyser le secteur du PME pour citer quelques exemples.

What is equally remarkable in the statements of my colleague is that these bold fiscal and financial economic measures are being taken just at a time when the world economy is emerging from the worst economic turmoil and only beginning to show sign of recovery. An analysis of what we call the J curve, *la courbe J...*

*(Interruptions)*

*... démontre clairement* why nations rise and fall, but most importantly display the impact of export and import on consumers preference.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the shaping of the recovery to foster job creation and the consolidation of social progress are not only two fundamental things underlining the Budget.

These two fundamental measures have been accompanying by a sustained effort to promote a Green Mauritius, in other words, to mitigate the impact of climate change and the effects of advanced industrial and technological development on our great little country.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to quote what the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, stated at the UN Climate Change Conference in December 2008 in Poland –

“The world is watching us. The next generation is counting on us. We must not fail.”

Let me remind the House that for Alliance Sociale Gouvernement, since 2005, failure has never been an option.

*(Interruptions)*

*Resultat lor resultat!* Indeed, since 2005, the protection and enhancement of environment was on the agenda of our political programme. Very close attention has been given to sensitive issue such as greenhouse gas emission reduction, climate change and renewable energy. Government is not only achieving remarkable results in environmental issues, but is also promoting emergence of new sectors in the field of environmental protection. In this respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, on the side of this House, as well as the population, are very much impressed and thankful to the Vice-Prime Minister when he mentioned in his speech about the Land Based Oceanic Park which will, in the first phase, comprise of setting up the base of operation of green data centres. The Green Data Centre will be the first one to be using deep sea water for air conditioning and let me remind you that 60% of data centres operational cost relate to air conditioning and if we can bring down the cost of air conditioning through the use of deep sea water we will reduce the overall cost of operation of our data centres, thus make them still more competitive.

We will use solar energy and bagasse for the production of electricity. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as announced by my colleague, the Smart Card Based Electronic Identification System, commonly known as the Mauritius National Identity Card Project is definitely taking shape. In this context, arrangements are being made for the enlistment of a Service Focused Programme Coordinator to enhance the citizen centric dimension of the project. In addition, the National Identity Card Act is being amended to capture additional features that will store on the Smart Card based on identity will enable generation of his or her digital signature which will enable him or her to effect secured transaction on line.

Aujourd'hui, plus que jamais nous sommes très présents à ce monde virtuel de la technologie de l'information et de la communication. Nous sommes constamment en communication avec le monde qui bouge et que ce soit en affaires, études et recherches ou sportifs. C'est la raison pour laquelle ce gouvernement va continuer à oeuvrer pour réduire la note de la communication tout en augmentant la bande passante pour tous nos concitoyens.

Nous avons accompli un immense progrès depuis les cinq dernières années pour nous positionner dans la région ainsi qu'au niveau international. Nous avons su nous adapter à la vitesse exceptionnelle du TIC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before embarking on the various projects which are being envisaged for the ICT Sector in 2010, I would like to comment on a few remarks made first by hon. Bodha. Hon. Bodha mentioned in his speech that Government should come up with a firm plan to resolve the housing problem once for all. If such plan exists, I will invite hon. Bodha to come forward with it and we will adopt it immediately. The housing sector is a dynamic one. There is no way you can address the problem once for all. It is not a static sector because there is family extension, population growth. This sector is always on growth, it is a dynamic and not a static sector. There is no way you can resolve the problem once for all. Hon. Bodha should have known about the dynamism of this sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to mention also about a few remarks made by hon. Jhugroo. I listened to his *exposé*. I listened carefully to him. What has he been saying about his constituency? *Il a donné un certificat d'incompétence aux représentants de la circonscription en 2000 et 2005. Il a émis un certificat. La raison pour laquelle en 2000/2005, la circonscription avait un PPS et un ministre de surcroît Local Government et Land and Housing et on trouve que rien n'a été fait. Je dois féliciter l'honorable Madame Juggoo pour le bon travail accompli dans la circonscription.*

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to highlight some major achievements since 2005 which have considerably promoted social progress and equity. First, all primary schools have been provided with PCs since 2005. I must thank the Deputy Speaker for the good initiatives and I must also confess he did a very good job in the ICT Sector.

*(Interruptions)*

All secondary schools have been provided with broad band internet, access free of charge through Government online. Over hundred thousand persons have been registered through internet and Computing Course Certification ISO Free Courses offered by the National Computer Board, out of which 75,000 have already completed their course. More than 48 e-services are being provided online. These include, among others, vehicle registration at the National Transport Authority, tax return to Mauritius Revenue Authority and application form for Mauritius Qualification Authority.

Fifth: information system at the blood transfusion service and the cardiac centre are already operational. These have significantly increased the health services to the population.

Sixth: an entirely new computerised system for broader control is operational at the Passport and Immigration office and has brought in additional security features in line with international standard.

Seventh: the first phase of e-Parliament project has been completed and enabling the publication on unrevised parliamentary debates within 24 hours on the website of the National Assembly.

Eighth: a Child Online Safety Action Plan has been elaborated and is currently being implemented.

Ninth: the Data Protection Act 2004 has been amended with a view to rendering it more compliant with the European Union directives and the Data Protection Office has applied to the European Union for accreditation of the office.

The Electronic Transaction Act was amended to enable the ICT Authority to discharge the function of Comptroller of Certification Authorities. The National Public Key Infrastructure (NPKI) is being implemented and will enable secured electronic transaction and digital signatures. The NPKI will also enable the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Card Project.

Tenth: in the context of the PAN Africa e-Network Project a tele-medicine facility has been established at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital and a VVIP node has been set up at the Prime Minister's Office.

Eleventh: The LION Cable, the Mauritius Telecoms Ltd. along with France Telecom and Orange Madagascar have invested in the construction of a new submarine optical fibre cable

network, namely the Lower Indian Ocean Network, commonly referred as (LION) Submarine Cable, linking Mauritius to Reunion Island and Madagascar.

The total cost of phase I of the project amounts to US\$55 m., nearly Rs1.5 billion, out of which Mauritius Telecom Ltd has committed an investment of Rs320 m. A contract has already been awarded to Telecommunication Consultant of India (TCIL), in August 2008, for the cable work on the beach at Le Goulet. Works started in August 2009. The laying of the cable between Le Goulet, Terre Rouge (second landing station) in Mauritius and Reunion Island, will provide redundancy over the SAFE cable at Baie du Jacotet. The LION cable is planned to be launched at the end of this year connecting Mauritius to Reunion Island.

The Inter Island Connectivity Project, named as SEGANET by member States of the Indian Ocean Commission, aims at connecting member States together via a submarine fibre optic cable, thus providing high telecommunication bandwidth for socio-economic development of the region. Mauritius signed the *protocole d'accord* in 16 December 2008 in Madagascar for the implementation of the project. As per the provision of the *protocole d'accord*, a Regional Strategic Committee comprising of all the members of the IOC Island States was established in May 2009. The committee is chaired by Mauritius, and has been assigned with the responsibilities to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the project and to seek funding partners.

Concerning tariff, during the financial year 2007/2008, the local call charges have decreased by an average of 27%, and those of international charges by an average of nearly 20%. Moreover, broadband internet charges were brought down by an average of 26% and 24% for wholesale and retail charges respectively. The cost of international connectivity between Mauritius and Europe has been brought down by 52% over the period 2006-2008, thanks to the Deputy Speaker.

*(Interruptions)*

The cost of local telephone calls has been brought down by 27% and by nearly 20% for international calls. The tariffs for ADSL home offers have been decreased between 33% and 45% for Mauritius, and around 42% for Rodrigues, with effect from 01 March 2009.

Concerning planning and design of the new technology parks, the status of the Infrastructural Development Project at Ebène is as follows -

- 22 buildings completed covering a total area of 177,650 m<sup>2</sup> and providing employment for more than 8,000 people;
- 11 buildings are under construction, covering an area of 209,350 m<sup>2</sup> and expect to offer employment to nearly 6,000;
- construction of 23 buildings is expected in 2009/2010, covering an area of 292,300 m<sup>2</sup>, with an employment forecast of more than 5,000.

In view of the fact that the demand for infrastructural facilities by the ICT sector is in excess of supply, the Business Park of Mauritius is developing an ICT park at Rose Belle on a plot of land owned by the company. The land will be parcelled out to the private sector on a free hold basis. In addition, the BPML is putting up an intelligent 6-storeyed building on one of the plots of land in Rose Belle ICT Park. Tenders for the appointment of the consulting architects and engineers have been invited, and bids received on 10 July 2009. The contractor for the construction work will be appointed early next year.

The postal services have defined a new corporate plan 2010-2013 in pursuance of its previous one 2006-2009. There are lots of initiatives, where 50 post offices have undergone rebranding with the new signage, and 22 more will be completed. Many post offices are being expanded to cater for a larger customer base. The Quatre Bornes Post Office has been relocated in new rented premises next to the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, and this is a model post office offering modern and one-stop shop facilities. This model will be replicated at other post offices in 2010. The renovation of the ex General Post Office stone building has been completed.

Apart from three counties in operation and a philatelic bureau, the postal museum is operational with a new and modern concept. The Mauritius Post Ltd has moved its sorting and delivery section from high cost rented building at Albion Dock building to ex-head quarters building. The Parcel Post also has been relocated within the building with more space facilities both for customers and employees. The Office of Exchange at airport has been transferred to the ex-head quarters. Apart from savings on rental, efficiency in terms of human resource and



processes have occurred. These are the few initiatives that have been implemented, and still more is being implemented.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned about what have been achieved within the sector. But this sector is hyper dynamic, still more dynamic than the housing sector. There is no way you can sit on the fence. You will always have to look not only for the best practices but for the next practices. You cannot afford just to renovate; you have to innovate.

*Let me talk about the future project.* M. le président, nous allons encourager maintenant, après le succès obtenu dans le domaine de l'externalisation des services, notamment centres d'appels, *the right outsourcing* qui prendra peu à peu sa place chez nous. Ceci donnera des opportunités d'une part aux techniciens et ingénieurs du système informatique de travailler dans leurs maisons, chez eux, comme au bureau - 24/7. Nous avons aujourd'hui les infrastructures nécessaires pour qu'ils soient branchés en toute sécurité à leur système informatique. Les serveurs et systèmes de leurs entreprises aideront beaucoup les exports et tous ceux qui ne peuvent pas se déplacer facilement. En même temps, ceci va rendre le pays encore plus *green* et diminuer le coût des transactions, rendant nos prix et nos coûts de travail plus compétitifs.

De l'autre côté de l'équation cette stratégie donnera aux entrepreneurs locaux et internationaux plus d'attention à leurs spécialisations respectives sans se soucier de leur système informatique. *The Internet Data Centres* et le *business continuity* à savoir ce côté informatique - administratives - ainsi que leurs opérations. Ce type de *Right Outsourcing* donnera beaucoup de valeur ajoutée à ce qu'on a déjà.

En amont, il va créer de l'emploi pour tous nos jeunes gradués qui veulent avoir un plus pour leur carrière dans le domaine de la technologie. D'autres spécialités dans le secteur du TIC viendront s'ajouter dans le domaine de l'emploi pour nos jeunes gradués. Les opportunités sont –

- Launching of the National ICT Portal

The National Computer Board is presently setting-up a National ICT Portal, which will provide information on ICT sector in Mauritius through a single window, including -

- (i) News and events in the ICT sector.
- (ii) The Mauritian ICT industry.
- (iii) ICT operators and stakeholders.

- (iv) Opportunities for joint ventures and business partnerships.
- (v) Available manpower and job prospects.
- (vi) Opportunities for developing international trade linkages, with a sub-portal dedicated to exports.

The National ICT Portal will be set up with the objectives to provide –

- (i) The ICT sector with access to relevant information, potential partners and customers.
- (ii) Updated information on the ICT Sector in Mauritius.
- (iii) An opportunity for job creation through the development of an Internet-based IT, job market through the online manpower database.
- (iv) A single window for information on existing operators, joint ventures, potential business partnership through the online database of ICT operators.
- (v) Information on ICT on a global scale.
- (vi) Opportunities for developing international trade linkage for export the market of Mauritian ICT product and services.

The directory of ICT companies in Mauritius - Third Edition - is a key promotional tool that will be published next year in order to further support the marketing of Mauritian ICT industries and its activities.

International collaboration is important for the expansion of the ICT sector. With a view of consolidating the position of Mauritius as a major ICT player in the region and promoting technology transfer and international collaboration, the National Computer Board has initiated discussion with ICT operators in the region. Regional corporation and international collaboration in ICT will be further strengthen through the establishment of agreements and Memorandums of Understandings to facilitate the implementation of joint projects and exchange programmes between Mauritius and foreign ICT players. It is proposed to finalise MoUs with Malaysia, ARTIC and Pakistan. Moreover, in order to build capacity in ICT, an MoU is presently being agreed between the National Computer Board, MITIA and UTM.

In the list of future projects, Government is implementing the e-Register Project. This system will monitor the attendance of students in secondary schools. The objective of the system is to –

- record the attendance of students in secondary schools;
- provide the possibility of sending SMS messages to parents informing them of the absences of their children
- provide reports and statistics of the attendance of students.

The E-Payment Gateway. With the increasing deployment of web-enabled technologies, electronic transactions and home banking are rapidly taking place over the Internet, creating the need for a solid and robust electronic business and payment system. Several public services of Government of Mauritius are already available online *via* the Government Web Portal ([www.gov.mu](http://www.gov.mu)). Additional public services will increasingly be made available online. In order to extend these facilities online services, a common mode of e-payment for Government transactions has been considered.

The payment gateway is an online system for processing credit card and other payment transactions in real time, automating the payment transaction between a shopper and a merchant. The e-payment gateway facilitates the coordination of communicating a payment transaction between the various backend payment networks or banks through secure internet connections.

The e-payment gateway will be an important inter-phase in the implementation of the electronic purse using the smart card.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now wish to move to the e-educational portal. The project consists of implementing an e-education portal for the Ministry of Education, Human Resources. The project consists of the following components -

- Provision of e-mail facilities to teachers and staff of schools. A mail server will be required and mailboxes created for each user.
- A Portal for the education sector and websites for each school.

The e-education portal will provide the Ministry of Education and Human Resources with a central national window providing the necessary front end for a fully integrated management of school activities.

The tender specifications are currently under preparation. The next project is the electronic archiving system, e-archiving. The project covers the core activity of National Archives and will comprise of a turnkey solution (hardware and software) for storing historical documents in electronic format. Initially, nearly half million pages (which are frequently accessed by public) would be scanned. Eventually, the human resources at the National Archives would be trained on the new system and it is envisaged that they would carry on the scanning of other documents.

The aim of this project, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to –

- provide long-term access to electronic records (historical documents are deteriorating and may even disappear) for not only current generation but for future generations as well.
- Provide public access to electronic documents 24-hrs a day, 7 days a week anywhere in the world (using internet).
  - enables public users to access the same document concurrently;
  - enable easier and more effective information retrieval;
  - facilitate storage of large amount of information economically, effectively and efficiently, and
  - enable off-site storage of electronic documents thereby mitigating the risk of loss and theft.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government is also coming up with the project Government Fibre Network with a view to enhancing Government Internet System (GIS) to have a better response to time for accessing Government application, Internet, e-mail services and to provide ample bandwidth for forthcoming applications such as Unified Collaboration Platform, the GINS would be migrated Mauritius Telecom's Fibre Network, thus ministries and departments will be connected to a very high-speed fibre network via Mauritius Telecom Gigabit Passive Optical Network.

The project will be implemented in phases. In the first phase of three months duration, only four sites, namely, Air Mauritius building, Emmanuel Anquetil building, Renganaden Seeneevassen building and Government House, out of the existing 62 GINS sites being

considered under the project. The GFN also caters for the upgrade of the two main links at the Government Online Centre (GOC).

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, cyber security and cyber crime are the main focus of the Government in the virtual world. The Crime Occurrence Tracking System project aims at automating all processes dealing with complaints at the Police stations. The project will attempt to reduce a lot of duplication of work which is inherent in the current manual system. Moreover it will enable the centralised tracking of all criminals, criminal offences lodged at all Police stations and will allow close monitoring of all crime occurrences in the island and provide crime statistics in real times. This project will be eventually linked to the COTS information system for automatic lodging and scheduling of cases as well as to the Detainee Information System at the Prisons Department for tracking movement of people in prisons. This will lead to the establishment of an integrated justice information system which will allow for efficient collaboration among all the different Justice players.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know the long struggle, *la lutte pour la récupération du Dot.MU*. As far as the Country Code top level domain name is concerned, we are in the process of acquiring the Dot.MU, a necessity for the country. We are now working out details and specifications concerning administration and processing for all our local names and to get the necessary international accreditations. For this, I must be thankful to Mr Kwok for his willingness and act of patriotism to have given the Dot.MU without any cost to the Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that Government is much concerned about crime, be it physical or cyber crime. We have established the National Cybercrime Protection and Prevention Committee. Security is another major issue of this Government and through the Internet another channel is now preset – hackers and cyber criminals. Cert Mu, which acts as a national agent to protect and preserve our children on the web, is already in place. Furthermore, Government has already set up the Cybercrime Protection and Prevention Committee with a view to having a concerted national approach to effectively combating cyber crimes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister mentioned in his Budget Speech the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurs – the Technopreneurs. We have, for the past years,

been working on the ICT Incubator Centre under the aegis of the National Computer Board. We are now upgrading the Technopreneurs concerning ICT which will give individuals and SMEs the right framework to start business and create more wealth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the expansion, the survival of the ICT sector does not only depend on hardware and software. It depends also on the humanware. We need to have a trained human resource in the sector. Training must, of course, not only be market-driven but also human focus.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry together with the National Computer Board has initiated discussions with the Mauritius ICT Association (MITIA) to get the right courses and curriculum at tertiary level both in term of certificates and diplomas. In the present Budget, allocation has been made for training and with the support of both the private and public sectors, we have put in place a supply demand type of right training at the right place. I must point that the knowledge-based centre at the ex-BAT building will house the ICT academy.

M. le président, j'ouvre une parenthèse. Quand le gouvernement avait pris la décision d'acheter le bâtiment de l'ex-BAT, je sais qu'il y a eu beaucoup de critiques et je dois dire aussi qu'il y a eu beaucoup de démagogies. Mais je dois vous dire une chose, M. le président. Au niveau de l'Alliance Sociale, nous allons nous engager à pouvoir donner la formation à tous ceux qui se trouvent au bas de l'échelle qui n'ont pas eu jusqu'ici l'occasion de suivre une formation. Pour nous, la formation c'est la clef du développement. Il y a un proverbe qui dit que si vous voulez aider une personne pour quelques jours, donnez-lui à manger, mais si vous voulez aider une personne pour quelques années, donnez-lui un emploi.

Si vous voulez aider une personne pour la vie et des générations à venir, éduquez la personne et donnez lui la formation. C'est ce qu'on est en train de faire, M. le président et nous allons continuer à le faire malgré les démagogies. Ce centre de formation de BAT se trouve dans une région où on peut aider les gens défavorisés. Ils n'ont pas eu l'occasion d'avoir une éducation saine parce qu'ils venaient d'un *background* fragile. Mais aujourd'hui le gouvernement est très déterminé à aider ces personnes surtout dans la région de Roche Bois, Vallée des Prêtres, Plaine Verte, Cité la Cure, Camp Yoloff, Vallée Pitot et toute la région du

nord. Je n'ai pas compris toutes ces démagogies autour de l'acquisition de ce bâtiment. Il fallait féliciter le gouvernement, surtout l'honorable Jhugroo qui se trouve dans la région, il sait très bien que ces jeunes ne peuvent pas être embauchés pour manque de formation.

*(Interruptions)*

Vous aviez donné R 5 milliards à six familles sans rien dire. Quand on est en train d'apporter la formation à la porte des gens,....

*(Interruptions)*

Je ne vais pas commenter là-dessus. Voilà la démagogie. On connaît la saga des R 5 milliards. Quand on dépense pour des gens nécessiteux, on fait de la démagogie. Je comprends très bien l'idée derrière toute cette démagogie, c'est qu'il faut garder les gens sous-développés sans la formation pour faire de leur pauvreté leur cheval de bataille. Voilà la philosophie. Il faut pouvoir se réinventer, cesser avec la démagogie et regarder l'avenir avec beaucoup plus d'optimisme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to mention about green computing. We are encouraging both ICT industry and their customers to be environment-friendly. In this respect, we have worked figures in order to share the advantages of working in a clean technology. Servers and disk systems consume lots of electricity. So, this process of trying to use green technology will definitely make Mauritius a more attractive ICT destination. Today, with emerging technology, computer rooms and data centres do not need to be cooled traditionally. They have got in-built cooling system which makes use of water cooling as I mentioned. Thus, we do not need to keep a standard low room temperature irrespective of what hardware is in the centre. Each unit will have its own cooling system. We are also working on the concept of a paperless environment and my Ministry will sensitise both the public and private sectors to this approach. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we still do have more projects to come and definitely we will have more opportunities to talk about it in years to come.

La vision de notre Premier ministre, le docteur Navin Ramgoolam, de faire de notre République un exemple pour la région et le reste du monde est sur la bonne voie. Nous sommes déjà cités par ces grands de ce monde. Notre model économique est un exemple à suivre, de même que notre model de gouvernance. Malgré les démagogies, les mots *Government index* nous ont placés en première position. Si j'ai à faire le choix entre le classement de notre

gouvernance, entre les mots '*Government index*' et le *Leader of the Opposition's index*, je vais bien sûr me fier sur les mots '*Government index*'.

Notre model économique est un exemple à suivre. Je dois aussi dire que nous travaillons en équipe. *This Government works as a team together and we shall work based on parameters set up in this Budget and from the first month of the coming year.* Notre souci est de plaire encore à la population.

Merci, M. le président.

(7.26 p.m.)

**The Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development & Family Welfare (Mrs I. Seebun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all just heard the dynamic IT Minister deliver his speech and I congratulate him for his commitment and avant-gardist approach. Well, I join the previous orators to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for the presentation of the present Budget. I also wish to express my personal appreciation to the hon. Prime Minister for the support and dedication to the cause of sound public finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government's response to the challenges before us builds on policies we have consistently pursued over the last four years, that is, sound prudential regulation of the financial sector, through our economic reforms, coupled with a strong emphasis on social development.

This Budget remains firmly focused on a longer term transformation challenge while responding to the changed economic outlook. Our primary goal remains the reconstruction and consolidation of our economy, the progressive building of a shared future in which we can take pride in high quality service delivery, creation of jobs and protection of the vulnerable in an enhanced ecologically sustainable environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is precisely against this backdrop that this Budget has been forged with significant funds earmarked to bridge the critical gaps that remain in our development efforts. The challenge is to deepen and broaden the agenda for inclusive development and to ensure that all sectors benefit from the developmental process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to share with the House how the central goals of this Budget are pertinent to economic and social welfare of women, children and families. The main thrust of this Government's policy to empower women economically has been to create a



conducive environment whereby women can access to infrastructural facilities, capacity building for entrepreneurship development, access to credit and land.

Measures listed at paragraphs 120 to 140 clearly spell out a wide plethora of benefits in place for “shoring up the SME sector”. It goes without saying that as more and more women are now fully involved in this sector, they will undoubtedly enjoy these benefits. I am particularly pleased to note that -

- (i) 75 % of the Registration fee on micro credit for women will be paid by Government on the basis of an income threshold of Rs10,000 in lieu of Rs6,000;
- (ii) One third of the 100 acres allocated for industrial areas will be set aside for women, and
- (iii) The ceiling on Booster Loans at the DBM has been raised from Rs100,000 to Rs150,000.
- (iv) Under the Mauritius Growth Scheme, a portal will be introduced to improve information available to women entrepreneurs operating SMEs and a window will be included to match supply and demand.

These measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are indeed re-comforting for women entrepreneurs as these would broaden their scope of operations, thus enabling them to evolve as full-fledged entrepreneurs. In the same vein, the hundred shops to be set up in the two tourist villages at Mahebourg and Belle Mare will provide commercial spaces for women entrepreneurs engaged in local arts and crafts. Another innovative component which will provide a great relief to women who want to reconcile family responsibilities and work is the “Work from Home BPO Scheme”. This measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, goes in line with this Government’s philosophy of a gender-inclusive society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, marketing of goods and services remains the backbone for the success of an enterprise. An envelope of Rs20 m. for a permanent exhibition space addresses a long-felt need whereby our women entrepreneurs can display their products and services for commercial purposes. This measure will also lead Mauritius to align itself with international standards where buyers and sellers meetings become a regular feature in the world of business.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry and the National Women Entrepreneur Council have been relentlessly striving to widen the circle of opportunities for both existing and potential women entrepreneurs. This is well reflected in a comprehensive package of services

and facilities including back-up support in terms of capacity building, marketing and infrastructural facilities. As at date around 2,500 women have benefitted from the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme. Two incubator centres are operational at Triolet and Phoenix whereby women entrepreneurs are presently benefiting from start-up facilities and services. Two additional incubator centres will shortly be set up at Bel Air and Rivière du Poste. On-going fairs have yielded positive results as women entrepreneurs are experiencing increased sales. Similarly, our capacity-building programmes in various business fields have opened up new avenues resulting in innovative and value-added products and services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to applaud Dr. Sithanen's decision to earmark Rs 22 m. for the construction of a Women Empowerment Centre at Rivière du Poste, which will cater for women of constituencies 12 and 13, which have unfortunately been so far deprived of facilities and services offered by women centres. I am convinced that this centre will attract a large number of women to participate in the various activities aimed at their socio-economic and political empowerment.

Women's empowerment and gender equality, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should be the concern of one and all, and partnership with Non-State actors remains crucial to make it happen. The allocation of an envelope of Rs120 m. for the implementation of the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress by my Ministry has already borne its fruits. As at date, around Rs22 m. out of the Rs30 m. earmarked for period July to December 2009 has so far been committed. This clearly demonstrates the interest of Non-State actors to work alongside Government for the cause of women and children. The remaining funds will undoubtedly involve a larger number of NGOs to follow suit.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the National Women's Council has invariably been supportive of my Ministry's Policies and Programmes through the adoption of a trickle down approach.

I can only concur with all those who have rightly welcomed all the measures enunciated under the social progress component of this Budget which encompasses the overall welfare of the vulnerable, the elderly, deprived children and ultimately, the family at large. For instance, the provision of social housing, coupled with educational back up, such as free transport and exemption from exam fees for those at the lower rung of the social ladder create opportunities for families to evolve in a conducive environment. I wish to express my appreciation for all the nine

measures enunciated under the Social Progress Component that would further consolidate the work undertaken by my colleague Minister, hon. Sheila Bappoo.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today I wish to stress on the pressing need that we share as a nation towards strengthening the family which is the most fundamental institution of our society. In fact, we need to further consolidate the Mauritian society both with regard to human relationship within the institution of the family and outside it, including the relationship between man and his environment. The overall objective of my Ministry through the implementation of the National Action Plan on the Family for the Republic of Mauritius which will be shortly launched is to achieve better and sustainable conditions for the family which are conducive for the development and protection of children, adults and elderly based on principles of democracy, human's rights, gender equality and the elimination of violence in the family.

I shall endeavour in conjunction with non-state actors and other stakeholders concerned to strengthen marriage relationships, balance work life and family life, promote economic development and values for the enhancement of family life and create an enabling environment for families to nurture the young. In line with the Maurice Ile Durable initiative and measures spelt out in the Budget for intensifying out actions to sustain Green Mauritius which is also a component of the Action Plan, resources shall also be devoted towards making families aware of their social responsibility to the community and for the protection of the environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our ethos has been to accept what is good and great in our past and allow this to permeate our present. We have made good progress towards the provision of adequate and affordable social housing. Not only did the Labour Government introduce the Casting of Slabs Scheme in 1997, we have also turned 10,500 tenants of ex-CHA houses into proud home owners amongst other achievements. Based firmly on the human right to housing, our "a roof for every family approach" is impacting on both public policy and practice on a national scale. I congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for the provisions in the Budget geared towards the consolidation of the national housing programme and taking it to greater heights.

In line with the National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence and the recommendations of the Audit Report On Existing Services and Care provided in Family Support Bureaux and Shelters which my Ministry is launching, I am looking forward to closer collaboration with the Ministry of Lands and Housing for the development and allocation of

transitional and/or permanent affordable social housing units for vulnerable women who are victims of domestic violence. Very often they are left to their own devices, without a place of abode, with bleak opportunities for reintegrating mainstream society, let alone gain access to affordable social housing and they end up at the shelter of the Ministry. I applaud all the initiatives clearly spelt out by the Minister Kasenally this morning and knowing his commitment, I am sure he will also consider housing schemes from a gender perspective.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the recent incident that led to the death of Mrs Milazar reflects the unfortunate and vicious trap in which women often fall prey. We all know how life circumstances result in women getting engaged in sex work. At the same time when we learn that one of the perpetrators had also experienced a very cruel childhood, denied the right opportunities in life, we shiver to face the harsh realities a traumatised childhood can produce.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, research worldwide has shown that violence at home is likely to perpetuate throughout the life cycle of both the victims, the perpetrators and the indirect victims, namely our children. We must, therefore, work collectively to deal with violence in all its forms so that we can secure the lives and future of our children and our nation. Only this morning the Family Welfare and Protection Unit of my Ministry held a workshop to empower youth with skills that will mould their mindsets with a culture of nonviolence.

I seize this opportunity to thank the Council of Religion for its constant support, in not only expressing its intent of working towards a violence free Mauritius, but working earnestly since 2007 to realise our common objective.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that Child Protection is a cutting across issue and stops neither with the house nor the school. As per research carried out by the office of the UN Secretary General some years back, it has been revealed that a high rate of children have been, or are at risk of violence in various settings, notably at home, at school, and on their way to and fro school, in the community, in institutions, just to name a few.

Another area of concern is that of teenage pregnancy, just mentioned this morning by hon. Mrs Labelle, and my Ministry has been addressing for quite some time, namely through both Parental Empowerment Programme and our campaigns on sexual and reproductive health in schools, social centres, women centres and youth centres. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are empowering parents, teachers, religious bodies to talk on HIV/AIDS and sex related issues

without any taboo, so that parents and the community can be *parti prenante* in protecting children from all forms of sexual abuse. With the number and nature of cases recorded at the level of my Ministry, it is no secret that our country is not spared from child abuse in general. It is basically in this context of very young children being neglected or even abused when left alone or with young siblings when mothers, especially single mothers, are at work or out in quest of work, that my Ministry, in 2006, started a model day care centre for children at Cité Florida, Baie du Tombeau. I wish to inform the House that similar projects will soon find the light of the day in the eastern region, thanks to the Corporate Social Responsibility initiative through the support of Anahita Estate Ltd.

Anahita is working with the National Children's Council for the launching of a child day care centre at Beau Champ, fully financing the project which will, thereafter, be managed by NCC. A Memorandum of Understanding will be finalised in a fortnight.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to stress on the fact that Government of Mauritius has taken the firm commitment to reduce poverty for both women and children, with the view to removing them from their deprivation and encouraging their active participation in society. In fact, directing more funds to the children in greatest need is indeed one of the priorities of this Government. Funds have been made available under the Eradication of Poverty Programme and the Statutory Corporate Social Responsibility, with a view to providing assistance and support for families and their children to enable them to get out of poverty. Very often, many families need to supplement family's income to pull themselves out of poverty and offer a decent living for their children. With the measures announced in the Budget, Government is making a further step in helping these families to improve their standard of living.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is to be noted that, in recognition of the critical importance of protecting the rights of young children to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential, early childhood development has found expression in international declarations and frameworks adopted for the development of countries, including Mauritius. I am very happy to note that all children from three years of age, under the EAP Programme, shall be able to attend pre-primary schooling and will be provided with free food pack for the day. Poor children will also benefit from free clothing and free school material, to ensure that all children are given equal opportunities to grow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish at this juncture to express my appreciation that the issues of arts, culture and heritage occupy a prominent place in this Budget. Funds earmarked for the rehabilitation of Plaza, the setting up of a 'Cultural and Artistic Boulevard', as well as the mobilisation of Rs20 m. for the development of performing arts groups will create a platform for our children to express their artistic talents, whilst paving their way to participate in national and international performances. This measure can also act as a buffer to promote a culture of peace, whereby children from the walks of life can vent out their feelings through positive and meaningful activities, instead of falling prey to social ills.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry, through the National Children's Council, operates kite's clubs, which aim at developing the creative talents of children, and some of them do excel in music and arts. I will ensure that these children are encouraged to maximise on the various facilities that will be offered shortly. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have no doubt that music and arts will pay high dividends for the overall welfare of the family, with long term positive impact on our social fabric.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the way we live our lives impact on our environment; that is, we all leave an ecological footprint. As a responsible Government, measures contained in this Budget aim at taking everyone on board to participate in building a sustainable and green Mauritius. Living in a sustainable way means making provisions for more of things we all need to share, like water, energy, clean air and forests, for future generations. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, changing habits in daily or community life, in Government or in business is often referred to as "greening practices". Most people would like to live in a sustainable community, but they cannot afford to do so, because current business models encourage activities that do not take into account future problems. Sustainable development creates long term economic stability, but does not create short term profits. Governments, businesses and consumers all need to change their habits for sustainable development to be the norm, not the exception. By cooperating in sustainable development, we can all look forward to a green future. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must all acknowledge that making environment issues a core element in this Budget is indeed strategic. For instance, measures pertaining to energy saving, composting, solar water heaters, natural disasters, green procurement, and green buildings are all geared towards addressing long term adverse effects thereof.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whilst environment issues have always figured on the international developmental agenda, our women folk have, unfortunately, not been sensitised adequately on such issues. I would, therefore, ensure that environment and its gender implications become an integral part of all our interventions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget contains many more areas of public expenditure. Increased allocations of Rs24 billion for infrastructure speak volumes. Expansion and enhancement of our road networks remain at the forefront of our infrastructure plans, which impact significantly on both employment creation and our level of development. Together with investment in roads and the Bus Rapid Transit System to the cost of Rs5 billion, we will all move into larger and longer term nation building projects, putting in place the building blocks of our country's future productivity and prosperity. All through these investments, we can one day tell our children and grandchildren with pride that, to respond to the great economic challenges of our time, we created modern infrastructure, generated ideas, and developed strong infrastructural base that led to a new era of prosperity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to once again reiterate that the bold decisions taken by the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister in the first two years of this Government's mandate are today allowing us to ensure fiscal sustainability for the longer term. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been steady in our actions, so that our commitment does not remain only declaration of intent but are translated into concrete actions.

Today, in the worst of economic times, this Budget has proved to be a nation building Budget, carefully crafted to bolster employment now, construct a solid foundation for future growth, and position us to capitalise on the global recovery when it comes. This is exactly what the Prime Minister said when he referred to the Budget as "*un budget responsable*".

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know we can withstand the momentous challenges and we can emerge more productive and more prosperous than before the crisis began, thanks to the unflinching support and guidance of the Prime Minister.

To everyone I say, that at the level of my Ministry, we experienced complex and difficult situations; we prioritised our interventions; doing more with less; but all the time finding solutions to cope with complex tasks.

And it will take us time. It will require discipline, determination and foresight to invest intelligently for the welfare of women, children and families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister deserves our applause for having always been upfront and honest with our citizens about the reality of the fiscal status and the magnitude of the challenge.

And today, I have no doubt that most of our countrymen will understand that the choices and fiscal measures we have made over the last four years have been necessary and responsible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as we shall begin the 2010 journey, the road ahead will not be easy. We will have to manage any uncertainty that may emerge, but we will have to find solutions collectively.

Mahatma Gandhi said and I quote –

“Democracy is the art and science of mobilising the entire physical, economical and spiritual resources of various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is precisely what we are going to do. With strong hearts, enlightened minds and willing hands, we will have to overcome all odds and remove all obstacles to create the modern and prosperous Mauritius as per the vision of the Prime Minister.

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

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

**Mr S. Dayal rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

## ADJOURNMENT

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 24 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

**Dr. David rose and seconded.**

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

*At 8.00 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 24 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.*