

No. 36 of 2009



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION
THURSDAY 03 DECEMBER 2009

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MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 36 of 2009

Sitting of Thursday 03 December 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)

PAPER LAID

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

Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security -

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool Corporation for the years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION
SSR MEDICAL COLLEGE - BACHELOR OF DENTAL SURGERY -
INTERNSHIP

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the hon. Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Bachelor of Dental Surgery students of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if –

- (a) the College is implementing a recommendation of the Tertiary Education Commission for the one year internship to be undergone at the College and, if so, if a sum of USD 3,500 is being claimed therefor from them, without notice or authority;
- (b) the degrees of the students having completed internship thereat are being withheld until the payment thereof, and
- (c) a sum of USD 1,750 is being claimed from students for a resit.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for this question. In fact, the Ministry has been working for a few days on the problem that cropped up there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College started offering Bachelor of Dental Surgery course in 2003 and there have been 51 students enrolled to date.

I would like to inform the House that the Bachelor of Dental Surgery course of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Medical College, Belle Rive is a five-year course comprising of 4-year Theory with para clinical and clinical training followed by 1-year internship at the Dental School of SSR Medical College.

During an International Monitoring Committee (IMC) for the Internship year conducted by the Tertiary Education Commission in March 2008, it was observed that students who had completed year IV of the programme had not yet embarked on their internship. TEC recommended that, among other things, the internship should be started immediately as per the requirements of the BDS programme. This was done.

The Internship was closely monitored and a second International Monitoring Committee was held in December 2008. The Internship year was approved subsequently in June 2009 following implementation of all the recommendations by the SSR Medical College.

As regards the second part of question (a) and part (b), I would like to point out that neither the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the Regulatory Body overseeing Tertiary Education and Training, nor my Ministry has been officially informed of the introduction of the fee of US\$ 3500 for internship.

With regard to the current batch which has just completed internship, we are informed that their certificates have been forwarded to the Dental School, SSR Medical College by the Awarding Body which is the University of Mauritius (UoM) at the request of the college.

It would seem, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a meeting was held lately with these students informing them of the new internship fees applicable and this was

followed by a letter from the College to that effect. We believe that charging of fees for internship at this stage is a departure from the contract entered between the students and the college.

I would like to take the opportunity to inform the House that, on my personal intervention, after consultation with Mr R. P. N. Singh, Chairman of the SSR Medical College, he has taken a verbal undertaking, which has been confirmed by email this morning, to the effect that Mauritian students from all batches will not be charged internship fees. But I am pursuing the matter with him to ensure that all the students of other nationalities also, because we cannot have *deux poids deux mesures* be given the same treatment. At least, he has confirmed for Mauritian students.

With regard to part (c) of the question, students who have failed one or more subjects will have to pay a fee to resit the paper or the term, in line with the prospectus and the agreement signed between student/guardian and the college.

The resit fees depend on when the student was enrolled because each time there is a new prospectus and a new agreement is signed. For those enrolled in 2005-2006, the resit fee is 1,750 US\$ per term irrespective of the number of subjects failed. For those enrolled in 2006-2007, the fee is 2,500 US\$ per term.

As from 2007-2008, the fee is being charged at the rate of US\$ 500 per failed subject. There is some difficulty to understand, but what I want to say is that, according to the cohort, the agreement that has been signed between the students and the college depends on what appears in the contract and this, we cannot change, but there are three different terms for the three different cohorts.

Mr Bérenger: I think I have heard good news, but before I reach those good news at the end of my question, I would like to ask a few points of clarification. Is it a fact that it had been agreed that the students would do their internship even in a country of their choice, anywhere, including outside Mauritius, and that the Tertiary Education Commission recommended that the internship at the medical school itself?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 2007, through the work done by the International Monetary Committee, TEC informed the SSR Medical College that if it failed to provide internship facilities, because these are needed for students, the internship would have to be completed in any other institution and at no extra cost to the students. But the facilities have been inspected at the college by the authorities and they have agreed that they have the necessary facilities and internship can be carried out at the college.

Mr Bérenger: The House will have understood that I wish the Medical School well. There is a problem which is being solved from what I have heard, but the point is not to damage the image of the college, and yet my question refers to allegations that those dollars were being claimed without authority and without notice. From what I have heard there is confirmation of that. Will the Minister agree that the attention of the school should be called upon the fact that Mr Singh, the Director, came out with a statement - because they were informed by way of letter only on the 24 November, it is very, very late, when they were completing their internship – that:” *nous n’avons pas réclamé ces frais plus tôt parce que les étudiants terminaient leur* internship, *nous ne voulons pas les perturber davantage.*” Will the Minister agree that we should call the school to order on that and to give proper notice whenever additional money is going to be claimed, at least, to give notice if there is authority, which there is not in this case?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is why I thanked the hon. Leader of the Opposition right from the beginning. In fact, this PNQ would certainly serve a good purpose because we are proposing to make new regulations. There is a Memorandum of Understanding which is signed between the University of Mauritius and the College, but TEC oversees, of course, everything that is happening. We are proposing to make new regulations under regulatory framework of TEC for any institution to communicate - not only them - to the TEC well in advance of any change in fee for any course.

Mr Bérenger: In my question I referred to the allegation - and it has proved true - that this money was claimed without authority. The hon. Minister has used a very diplomatic term that it is a departure from what had been taking place. Again, we should called the attention of the school that this is not proper, they can't just introduce something like that and then have to admit that it is not only a departure, but without authority.

Dr. Bunwaree: This has already been done, as I made the House understand and, of course, Mr Singh has responded positively to our request to correct this.

Mr Bérenger: I tried to listen carefully to the hon. Minister, but if it is - I don't know if he has information, but my information was that some students from India, South Africa, neighbouring friendly countries had completed the internship, had left, but were asked to pay that sum of money, otherwise they would not get their diploma until they have settle that amount. I will get to the last part where the Minister said that the Mauritian students are not going to be asked that money, but foreign students. Is it the case that their diploma is being withheld and, if it is so, I am sure the hon. Minister will agree with me that we can't act like that, it concerns the image, this time not only of the College, but of Mauritius itself in the case of India, South Africa and other friendly neighbouring countries?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have already informed the House just now that for Mauritian students, of course, Mr Singh has already agreed, there is no problem at all, no certificate is going to be withheld for these reasons and, of course, I don't find it normal for other students; I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this has to be for all the students.

Mr Bérenger: I move to the last part, I am very happy that the Minister has informed us, if I get him right, that the school is not going to claim that sum from the Mauritian students. This is a very good thing, because most of the students are from poor families and some very poor families. Therefore, I am very happy with this outcome, but will the hon. Minister keep pressing for foreign students also; if it is wrong to have acted in that way in the case of Mauritian students, surely it cannot be right that it becomes right in the case of foreign students.

Dr. Bunwaree: I think this is already confirmed, but I should *mettre les points sur les 'i'*. We are talking of no fees to be claimed for internship. Now, it happens that there are some students who had to resit papers within the course of their studies and for the resit, according to the agreement, there is a fee to be paid and who have not paid. This probably could cause confusion in the minds of certain people that they are being asked for that. Insofar as this is concerned, they will have to pay for what they owe to the University, but for the full term internship - two terms of six months, that is, two times six months making one year - nothing will have to be paid.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister will have understood that I made the difference between internship where the problem is solved for Mauritian students and the resit issue. I am not insisting on the resit issue but is the hon. Minister aware - I am putting the question so that he might have a second look or third look at it - that resit fees are being claimed from some students whom, according to me,

are in possession of a certificate from the College that they do not owe any fees at all. It seems that there is confusion there; there is a problem there, it seems.

Dr. Bunwaree: We are going to take that on board and look into the matter. There should be no discrepancy at all, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the quality assurance department of the Tertiary Education Commission has carried out a survey as regard to the infrastructure, amenities, facilities and the standard of training, including the issue of internship, given at the institution and when was this carried out and whether he is satisfied with that report?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is carried out on a regular basis, I must say, and, in fact, I wish to inform the House that for this College we are talking of those students who are already enrolled but, for about three years, they have not been allowed to enrol students for the first year because there were certain discrepancies and this has already been looked into.

Mr Speaker: We are talking of internship and resit.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, in an answer to Parliamentary Question No. B/214 by the previous Minister of Education, I had asked a question whether the Tertiary Education could set up a special committee to look into the technicalities at the SSR Medical College and the Minister replied in this term....

Mr Speaker: No, I am sorry, this is a general question. If the hon. Member is talking about internship and resit then the question is relevant.

Dr. Hawoldar: Exactly, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we speak about the technicalities of the whole course which is being carried out by SSR Medical School this comprises also internship which is part of the training of the students. I am just asking...

Mr Speaker: I recall the hon. Minister saying that there was an international committee which made an inquiry 2007 and found that the College was fully equipped to have the internship. So, we rest with this for the time being.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Minister why the registration of the first batch and the second batch of the BDS SSR dental wing has not yet been registered despite the fact that the internship has been completed for more than five months and all relevant documents submitted?

Dr. Bunwaree: Whether it has been registered – what does that mean, I don't know. But what I know is that there are some regulations that are being prepared and, in fact, Cabinet approved about two weeks ago for these students of the University of Mauritius studying at the Medical College for dental courses be recognised by the Dental Council. Maybe that has caused some delay.

Mr Guinness: In fact, I go in the same line as hon. Dayal. I put a question on 11 October concerning the first batch of 2004 to the fact that after their internship, their qualifications are not yet recognised by the Dental Council, and the hon. Minister said that, in accordance to section 40 of the Dental Council Act, some principal regulations have to be amended. Can the Minister inform the House as to when this will be amended so that this batch of 2004 be recognised by the Dental Council?

Dr. Bunwaree: In line again with what has been said here, I can give the assurance to the House that, in accordance with section 40 of the Dental Council Act 1999, action has already been initiated to amend the principle regulations to include the University of Mauritius, as I have just been saying, in the list of recognised Medical Institutions by the Dental Council of Mauritius. It is good also to note that the appropriate regulations have already been vetted by the State Law Office and the University of Mauritius will be included in the list of recognised Medical Institutions.

The 12 dental surgeons from SSR Medical College who have applied to the Dental Council for registration will then be eligible for registration. The number of dental surgeons, I am said, registered at the Dental Council is to 247 but for the 12 of the Medical College they will be registered very soon.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is certainly aware that this is not the first time that the direction of SSRN is flouting our laws. Does he consider that the mail that he has obtained is a formal guarantee to the fact that students will be exempted from those fees?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, this should be taken into consideration. In fact, I intervened yesterday. The mail is in with me and I can circulate it, if needed, but I think we have to rely on what has been said.

Mr Speaker: I have to remind hon. Bodha and hon. Hawoldar, if they have any qualms about the facilities available generally, they can still come with substantive questions if they wish.

Dr. Hawoldar: The hon. Minister had promised that he will ask the Tertiary Education Commission to carry out an inquiry into all technicalities which include internship, post-internship, pre-internship and the clinical studies. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the TEC has carried it out this and whether he is in presence of the report.

Mr Speaker: Yes, we have to apply the Standing Orders. This question is only for internship and the hon. Minister has answered that all the facilities are available for the internship. If the hon. Member wants to come on this issue, he will have to do so by way of a substantive question.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL

(NO. XXI OF 2009)

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

Question again proposed.

(11.25 a.m.)

Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is always with a sense of pride that one stands up to speak on the Budget as it is one of the most important event that takes place in any democracy. This is very much so as it concerns the population at large. Mr Speaker, Sir, you

will recall that when this Government assumed power in July 2005, the economic situation was, the least, to say, catastrophic. Nobody can deny this fact, including the Members on the other side of this House, with the result, Mr Speaker, Sir, that urgent and drastic measures were required to put the economy back on track.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance under the able leadership and guidance of the hon. Prime Minister undertook an extraordinarily difficult challenge, to the extent of risking the future of this Government by embarking on a very ambitious and bold economic reform process in order to save this country from the economic abyss that was legated by the previous Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House is fully alive to the fact that we were on the brink of bankruptcy. I am not going, at this stage of the debate, to dwell on all the economic indicators that were in the red. Others before me have elaborated sufficiently thereon. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, suffice it to say that it needed tremendous courage on the part of this Government to reverse the economic situation by implementing a series of profound reforms unheard of in the history of this country. *Des reformes sans précédent, M. le président !* We all agree that many decisions which were taken were unpalatable, to such an extent that even some Members from this side of the House had expressed doubts as to whether we would succeed. Others, especially the birds of ill omen, had already written off this Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when today we look back, we have every reason to be proud of our achievement because we have not only succeeded, but we have also put this country back on the right track as no other Government has done before. And this, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been recognised by international agencies. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a famous adage which says that misfortune never comes

alone - *malheur zamé vine tou seul!* When we were fully embarked on this unprecedented reform process, we had the bad luck of facing shocks after shocks which, as the House is aware, made our task difficult. Indeed, the task of this Government was more than daunting. But, we never lost hope, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Government did not falter, and not at all, in its reform agenda. We all know that no reform of that magnitude is without pain and, by the way, reforms are always painful. There is no denying about that. As I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government under the able and visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, took the reform process to its very end. Do you know why, Mr Speaker, Sir? It is because he had faith in the people of this country. Yes, he had faith in the people of this country, he had the capacity and the will to rally men and women of this country in a common purpose. He had the character which inspired confidence and trust. Mr Speaker, Sir, what are the defining characteristics of a leader? At the top of the list, in my view, is his ability to inspire his people and generations to come with a zest for living and a sense of high possibilities and opportunities for his country. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are unanimous in re-affirming that our Prime Minister is imbued with such qualities and values. He is the uncontested leader of this country and will remain so for many, many more years to come.

(Interruptions)

The people of this country have faith in him, in his leadership and his vision. The Budget that is before this House, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a clear demonstration of the fact that this Government has achieved its objective. It has laid down the edifice of a modern and a more prosperous Mauritius while, at the same time, integrating our country in the global economy without for that matter compromising the pillars of our Welfare State. On the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir,

it has gone one step ahead. It has, in fact, further consolidated foundations of the Welfare State created by none other than the Father of the Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish here to pay a special tribute to the people of this country, the workers from all sectors of the economy and the trade unions, for their understanding and cooperation, during these difficult times. They have shown an immense sense of patriotism and this Government is grateful to them. Let me be bold to say, thank you, this country and the generations to come will remember you!

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also a second aspect of the reform agenda of this Government that we cannot in this House afford to be oblivious to, that is, the tenacity with which the Government had weathered the unprecedented economic downturn. At a time, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the richest countries in the world have been brought down on their knees, our little Mauritius has stood up and faced the onslaught of this recession without much damage. Countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany, the three biggest economies of the world, were on the verge of economic chaos. Not only people in these countries lost their jobs, but there is also massive closing down of business and people lost their houses and were even reduced to absolute poverty. In some cases, especially in the United States of America, people had to queue up for food. Thank God! *Inch'Allah*, Mr Speaker, Sir, we were shielded from such a phenomenon.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the most powerful economies have to live with unemployment rates ranging from 10% to 12% with the likelihood of more people losing their jobs in the months and years to come, here, in this House, the Government has been taken to task for a rate of unemployment of 8%, despite the fact that we have some 30,000 foreign workers in this country! Mr Speaker, Sir, we

must be proud of the economic performance of this Government. When a country like the USA has a public debt reaching more than 100% of its GDP and paying USD 4 trillion to service its public debt, Mauritius has, during the same period, been able to reduce its public sector debt from 70% of GDP in 2005 to 58.6% now, in spite of the fact that we had to suffer a 36% cut in our sugar price and a spiral rise in the price of oil, not to mention the dismantling of the Multi-Fibre Agreement. If that is not a miracle, then what is it?

Mr Speaker, Sir, we must not forget that we are right now in the midst of an upsurge in public infrastructure development. I will not dwell for long or in details on this matter as it was so ably done by my friend, hon. Anil Bachoo, on Tuesday last when he intervened on the Budget. Suffice it for me to say that not a single sector has been left out. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, at a time when many economies are contracting, including the economic giant on the African continent, namely South Africa, with all its natural resources like gold and diamond, the Mauritians not only did not contract, but maintained a growth of 2% during that period! Mr Speaker, Sir, if we had a blue sky and a calm sea, as they had on the other side of the House when they were in Government, I am pretty sure that the economic growth of this country would have been twice than we had before the economic downturn and it would have left us with greater *marge de manœuvre*, with more disposable income to achieve our objective.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Labour Party has always stood up to its pledges and promises unlike some who are sitting on the other side of the House. I will seek your indulgence to enumerate on a few of our promises. In fact, the list is too long; nonetheless let me mention a few of them, especially for a few Members and for the benefit of those who may be oblivious to such realities. For, example, Mr Speaker, Sir, free education to the tune of Rs10.5 billion; free health care : Rs7.5 billion; doubling the subsidies on rice and flour and so many other social measures;

free bus transport for over 120,000 elderly and some 280,000 *étudiants*; restoring the universal old age pension; full payment of SC and HSC examination fees for some 9,000 students from families with modest income; doubling the income support for about 100,000 beneficiaries; arranging for 10,500 out of 16,000 eligible families with modest income to become proud owners of the CHA homes; providing Rs1 billion to support small planters for derocking, irrigation and land preparation.

In contrast, Mr Speaker, Sir, can we say the same thing about the MMM? Tuesday last, hon. Madan Dooloo spoke of 60 zeros of 1982 and he had the cheek to say that Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam was kicked out. What a shame, Mr Speaker, Sir! What a shame! Nobody should distort history because history speaks for itself. We all know the circumstances, Mr Speaker, Sir, in which the Labour Party was defeated in 1982. Who does not remember the wildcat strikes, systematic sabotage of the economy of which hon. Madam Dooloo was part and parcel at that time? Especially, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the world as a whole was facing an economic recession driven by the hike in the price of oil. The same 60-0 Government which he referred to in his speech crashed only after nine months. Do you know why, Mr Speaker, Sir? Because that Government was built on false promises given, among others, by hon. Dooloo himself and, Mr Speaker, Sir, what did he do in March 1983? What did he do? Unfortunately he is not here. He abandoned the MMM! Not only that, he turned his back on hon. Paul Bérenger, ditched him and even called him by all sorts of names and he branded the same hon. Bérenger as *l'homme des capitalistes*. Then, as an opportunist, he jumped on the MSM bandwagon and begged for the support of the Labour Party of Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam to be re-elected as a Member of this House. Then, Mr Speaker, Sir, the same hon. Dooloo, *fidèle à son habitude*, came back in 1995 begging for an alliance with the Labour Party.

I am sure he knows about the rest and he was kicked out. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the 2000 and 2005 general election, he begged in order to be accommodated under the banner of the Labour Party. Luckily for him, he stood as a candidate and was elected as a Member of this House. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, he got the guts to sully the memory of the Father of the Nation. The same Father of the Nation, who salvaged his political career. Mr Speaker, Sir, I was to say something else but I will not stoop to his level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same breath, I would wish to come up on one specific point raised by hon. Sunil Dowarkasing. In his speech on Tuesday last, he said that there has been only one *miracle économique* and that is *l'œuvre du MSM*. It is a pity! I do not want to enter into any *polémique* with him, but I am simply telling him this: “where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise”. My advice to him is that he should read the economic reviews published when the Labour Party was in Government after independence. He will get the answer. I will not dwell for long in that. Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that we are nearing the end of our mandate, it is more than an opportunity for me to highlight some of the achievements that have been accomplished in my Constituency, that is, the Constituency with I represent Quartier Militaire/Moka, No. 8. It has been a distinct honour for me to serve that Constituency and I am thankful to my constituents and all the people who have supported me in the discharge of my responsibilities. Mr Speaker, Sir, during the last four years I can stand up and say that I have not failed in my mission. Let me enumerate some of my achievements for my Constituency and the list which I am going to enumerate is not exhaustive.

Before coming to it, hon. Naidu on Tuesday after congratulating me said that I put all my eggs in the same basket. I am going to give him a copy of the several eggs in the several baskets, which I am not going to enumerate here, because it will take too much time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to start with, I should like to thank all the hon. Ministers who have extended their collaboration, support in having the projects materialised in Constituency No. 8. I am going to mention a few of them. The Camp Thorel/L'Esperance/Nouvelle Découverte Road, people were waiting for several decades. This link road, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a very important link road. It connects people of Camp Thorel, St. Julien, Quartier Militaire to L'Espérance, Ripailles, Nouvelle Découverte and from there to Les Mariannes and the North. Avoiding people from Camp Thorel and St. Julien to go through Quartier Militaire, St. Pierre, Réduit and then to Port Louis. Relieving them from the already existing traffic jam. With the coming of the Verdun/Terre Rouge Link Road, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is going to pass near Beau Bois, which is near to Ripailles, this will connect people of the regions to the north.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been construction of three major bridges at St Pierre to the tune of Rs10 m., Dagotièrre: Rs7 m., L'Esperance: Rs4 m. Major drain works at Camp Thorel School Road and resurfacing of works to the tune of Rs40 m in several regions. Now, I should like to talk about the *kabarastan*, Mr Speaker, Sir, which was a source of great hardship and the different societies of my constituency have asked me to extend their thanks to the hon. Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers Dulull and Kasenally for helping in the acquisition of land. In fact, they were asking for two *arpents* of land, now they are having three *arpents* and 48 *perches* and the bids have already been signed. This will also accommodate an incinerator because in Constituency No. 8, we got the problem of crematoriums.

I will not talk about resurfacing of roads, retaining walls at Moka, footpath and drains in several regions. Multiple purpose buildings at Moka, L'Espérance, St Pierre and upgrading of several football grounds, cloakroom, *gradins*. The upgrading of Bassin Loulou, a place of prayer, the bus park at Camp Thorel and

Providence. I think I am making my friend, hon. Naidu, having a round in the constituency, perhaps he knows only Beau Bois.

Resurfacing of major roads at Dagotière, done after 20 years, Mont Ory, Nouvelle Découverte, St. Julien D'Hotman. Renovation of market fair at Quartier Militaire and St. Pierre. Upgrading of religious institutions in several places, Telfair, Moka, Helvetia, Valetta, St. Julien, Providence, Quartier Militaire and Camp Thorel just to mention a few. Levelling of the Providence/Quartier Militaire Road – there is an uphill which is a source of many accidents just near Bombay road; it has already been contracted out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, I take pride and thank the hon. Prime Minister as well as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ministers Dulull and Kasenally that this matter of *kabarastan* has been resolved to the greatest satisfaction of one and all. The problem is now a problem of the past.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I resume my seat, I would wish to clarify my position *vis à vis* the Bank of Mauritius. It is unimaginable that my question on the Bank of Mauritius, on Tuesday last, has raised so much passion. Some have gone as far as interpreting it as an *acharnement* against the Governor of the Bank. My question, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, related, *inter alia*, to the amendment of the Bank of Mauritius Act with a view of having its Budget approved by Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the impression that has been given is that I was having a go at the Governor. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, in a press conference, has treated me of *lâcheté* because, according to him, I had waited for the hon. Prime Minister to be absent from this august Assembly to put my question. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate in this House that it was not the first time that I had put question with regard to the Bank of Mauritius. My first question dates back to 15 May 2007. I put two more questions on 19 August 2008 and the last one on Tuesday last.

In fact, during the last Budget intervention, I raised certain problems regarding the Bank of Mauritius again.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to dwell on PQ No. B/1176 of 19 August 2008, which related to the suspension of one employee and dismissal of two employees of the Bank of Mauritius. On that occasion, Mr Speaker, Sir, more than six MPs, including the hon. Leader of the Opposition, hon. Bhagwan, hon. Jhugroo, questioned the Minister of Finance on the conduct of the Governor of the Bank, highlighting some 58 malpractices at the bank. Hon. Bhagwan went as far as questioning if the Governor considered the Bank of Mauritius to be his personal property. The hon. Leader of the Opposition even asked whether the Minister of Finance has taken up the matter with the Prime Minister for his replacement. On my part, Mr Speaker, Sir, I asked whether the Prime Minister, the Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance would appoint a full-fledged commission of inquiry in order to safeguard the institution. I do not recall having listened to any dissenting voices then. No dissenting voices then. I, therefore, fail to understand all this fuss now. May I remind the House that, following my intervention in the House, the two employees were reinstated, and the one who was suspended resumed duty. The suspension was simply waived. Mr Speaker, Sir, all throughout my mandate, I never had any personal grudge against whomsoever, and my action as a Parliamentarian has been always to stand up to my ideals, characterised by the service of the community and the defence of the defenceless. I will never accept that the rights of innocent people be trampled by those at the helm of power, and that's it. I reiterate that pledge here. Let me conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, by what Dr. Ambedkar, once said, and I quote –

“Lost rights are never regained by begging or by appeals to the conscience of the usurpers, but by relentless struggle.”

Goats are used for sacrificial offerings and not lions. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will always be guided by these principles. Come what may! I have done.

Thank you.

(12.24 p.m)

Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, there comes a time when it becomes imperative for an individual to step back and reflect on his deeds, actions and motivations; to consider whether his objectives have been met or not, whether or not his goals have been attained, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the very basis of reflective practice, that is, to constantly question one's own actions, so as to obtain perfection. Mr Speaker, Sir, whether the Minister of Finance has attained his objectives or not, he only will know. And whether these objectives of his are the same as that of the whole nation, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, he only would know. We won't be able to say a word about it.

M. le président, nous, au MSM, avons suivi de près les actions et les agissements du ministre, et nous avons commenté amplement, ici, et à l'extérieur, sa politique économique. Au Parlement, tantôt en étant la voix du peuple, tantôt en agissant comme un *eye-opener*, permettant aux membres de la majorité parlementaire de mieux comprendre les démarches du grand argentier, nous avons fait notre travail. We have tried to help the Members of the other side to sail through the meanders of the economic policies with eyes wide open, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, les budgets 2006, 2007, 2008 et 2009 ont été très, très douloureux pour l'ensemble de la nation et, surtout, pour ceux de la classe moyenne, et ceux au bas de l'échelle. M. le président, dès le premier budget, la

population dans son ensemble a dû consentir à d'énormes sacrifices. Comme l'ont dit d'autres orateurs avant moi, on s'attendait à ce que ce budget vienne changer les choses. On s'attendait à ce que le ministre vienne dire 'voilà, voyez vous-même, j'avais raison d'exiger de vous des sacrifices ! Et, là, le moment est venu pour nous de récolter et de partager les fruits de nos efforts.' C'est vrai ! Certains ont dit 'bravo ! On n'a pas fait un budget électoraliste'. Mais, d'autre part, M. le président, il y avait l'attente d'une population qui s'est dit 'on a fait beaucoup de sacrifices, et le moment est venu M. le ministre des finances de nous montrer que les actions que vous avez prises ont été en notre faveur !' Mais, malheureusement, M. le président, ce ne fut pas le cas, car M. le ministre a sûrement partagé les fruits des efforts ailleurs, dans d'autres quartiers ; pas avec la population.

Le budget présenté, cette fois-ci, M. le président, est terne et non stimulant. A part quelques petites mesures ça et là, le budget consiste d'une part majeure des projets non-réalisés, et les projets non-réalisés se retrouvent au menu encore une fois. Comme je le disais, si le ministre des finances s'est gardé cette fois-ci d'introduire de nouvelles mesures impopulaires, n'empêche que les mesures impopulaires, injustes et très dures prises dans les budgets précédents sont toujours là et sont toujours d'actualité, M. le président. Je fais allusion à ces multiples mesures des précédents budgets, telles que la taxe sur les intérêts, le *National Residential Property Tax*, l'abolition des déductions des impôts des dépenses encourues pour les études des enfants et les traitements médicaux, l'enlèvement des subsides sur les frais d'examens de la SC et la HSC pour plus de 22,000 étudiants, l'abolition des exemptions de la taxe sur les revenus des petits planteurs sur les premières 60 tonnes de sucre produit, la réintroduction en catimini du *Capital Gains Tax*, le *Capital Transfer Tax* à la vente des biens reçus en héritage, M. le président. Si l'introspection que j'ai demandée au départ n'a pas été faite par

le ministre des finances, la population elle, M. le président, a sûrement fait un constat de ces cinq années que l'honorable Sithanen a passé aux finances.

M. le président, c'est important de réfléchir et de voir quel est l'impact de notre action, de nos décisions sur la vie de nos compatriotes. Le ministre saurait, si jamais il a fait cette introspection, s'il a le cœur net ou s'il a le cœur lourd, s'il a agi dans l'intérêt du peuple, s'il a agi en tant que chef de famille responsable ou en tant que père qui considère seulement les requêtes de certains et non des autres. Le ministre, M. le président, est perçu comment étant toujours au chevet du secteur privé en tournant son dos vers le peuple. On lui laisse le soin de décider les bien-fondés des mesures préconisées dans ces divers budgets.

M. le président, nous avons déjà discuté amplement sur ces points, mais je passerais quand même quelques petites minutes sur ces points. M. le président, la taxe sur les intérêts n'affecte pas la classe possédante, car ils peuvent toujours eux faire transférer leurs comptes vers les banques étrangères sous d'autres cieux. D'ailleurs, cette mesure a contribué à l'exode des capitaux vers l'étranger. Ce sont les petits épargnants qui sont les plus touchés par cette mesure. Ce sont les petits épargnants, M. le président, qui auront à faire d'autres sacrifices, car déjà les épargnes qu'ils avaient mis en banques étaient des sacrifices.

Prenons maintenant la *National Residential Property Tax* que le ministre lui-même concède a des failles, est injuste et inappropriée, mais il n'a pas songé bon après quatre années écoulées de venir rectifier le tir et de revoir ses décisions. Je ne peux m'empêcher, ici, M. le président, de faire allusion au discours du ministre Bachoo, qui nous parlait de la *NRPT* comme étant une abeille qui prenait le nectar des fleurs sans les abîmer. Je dirais, M. le président, que la *NRPT* est loin d'être l'abeille, mais surtout le parasite qui va prendre la sève de la plante et qui va la tuer. La *NRPT*, M. le président, tue l'effort. Nous avons vu, au cours de ces

dernières années, comment il a été dur pour les gens de décider sur l'achat d'un terrain, parce que, bien sûr, ils savent que cela va les mener à d'autres dettes, d'autres taxes, M. le président. La taxe, la NRPT est non seulement injuste mais inappropriée. Là, je compte faire ressortir que – puisque certains font souvent allusion à Panchavati – la petite maisonnette sur 10 perches de terrain à Panchavati sera taxée de la même façon que la petite villa chic dans les hautes Plaines Wilhems à Floréal, M. le président. Nous avons archi décrié cette histoire. Malgré tous les débats, toutes les discussions que nous avons eues dans l'Assemblée, le ministre n'a pas cru bon de revoir sa politique.

M. le président, on ne peut venir avec une taxe qui affecte de la même façon des propriétés dans les régions urbaines comme ceux dans les régions rurales. J'ai aussi entendu le ministre Bachoo dire que la NRPT est en train d'être utilisée pour faire des projets dans les diverses circonscriptions de l'île. Concernant les routes de l'infrastructure, M. le président, est-ce qu'on demande à la classe moyenne maintenant de venir sponsoriser ce genre d'activité ? Est-ce qu'on demande à la classe moyenne - au *working class* maintenant - de venir *subsidise public infrastructure* ? M. le président, je demanderais à monsieur le ministre et ses confrères pourquoi il a cru bon de baisser, de rabaisser à toute vitesse plus tôt que prévu le *corporate tax*. Là, *he is foregoing millions, but he is not willing to let go the NRPT where modest people manage to buy a plot of land. Mr Speaker, Sir, I know of a teacher - teachers are no rich people - who had decided not to continue with his career and to take his retirement at the age of 57, because he knew that the NRPT he had to pay would be a heavy burden on his back and he decided to retire.* Je dis la NRPT tue l'effort. Il a décidé de prendre sa retraite parce que c'était plus facile, c'était le seul moyen qu'il avait car il ne pouvait trouver les sous pour payer la NRPT. La théorie de l'abeille ne tient pas la route, M. le président, car nous savons que la NRPT agit *as disincentive to effort*. Au cours des précédents

débats budgétaires, j'ai souligné que c'est au prix de gros sacrifices que nos parents, nos ancêtres ont dû faire pour pouvoir se procurer un morceau de terrain pour le passer par la suite aux enfants afin que ces derniers puissent débiter dans la vie, mieux que ce que, eux, ils avaient vécu, M. le président.

Aujourd'hui, il y a un autre argument qu'on met de l'avant : ce n'est qu'un pourcent de la population qui paie la NRPT. Mais la NRPT est payé, M. le président, par plus de 33,000 individus et cela a rapporté l'Etat des centaines de millions de roupies. M. le président, au cours d'une *PNQ*, dans cette même Chambre, nous avons eu l'occasion d'entendre le ministre dire qu'un *sizeable amount of this revenue comes from the corporate sector*, pour être par la suite, prouvé *wrong*, parce que les données, les statistiques faisaient preuve que seulement 18 millions des 111 millions de revenus *from NRPT* pendant cette époque venaient du *corporate sector*, le reste provenait, M. le président, de *small households*. *That is why we consider that such a tax should have been done with a long time back and I wonder what is retaining the hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Speaker, Sir*. On laisse perdurer un système qui est mal conçu, sans démontrer aucune volonté de redresser la situation.

M. le président, il y a une autre chose que j'aurais voulu commenter. A plusieurs reprises dans ce Parlement, nous avons entendu les gens venir nous dire que pendant les années 2000 à 2005, nous avons augmenté la TVA de 50%. On est passé, paraît-il, de 12% à 15% et il trouvait cela terrible. *Let me remind the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that between 1995 to 2000, the sales tax of 5% was converted to the TVA of 8% to be finally converted to a TVA of 10% which a child in Standard V will compute easily to show that it was an increase of 100% on such indirect taxes, Mr Speaker, Sir*. *So, please, for God's sake, let us not come over this again and again, brandishing it in front of us – you increase the TVA by 50%*. Regardez un peu ce que vous avez fait vous-même. Et là, M. le président, le ministre des

finances vient à chaque fois nous dire : *'I managed to pass these five years without increasing TVA.'* *Let me tell the hon. Minister something - my friend, hon. Bodha, has mentioned it, but I will mention it again, because it seems that it cannot get through his skull. Let me explain, basmati was sold in 2005 at Rs49 a kilo and it is today at Rs130 a kilo, 165% rise, Mr Speaker, Sir; half a kilo of sugar was at Rs5.50 and today it is Rs22.00, 300%, Mr Speaker, Sir; le pain 'maison' à R 1.35 et aujourd'hui à R 2.35, 85%, M. le président; le fromage Kraft de R 30 à R 65, c'est à 116%. Ce qui veut dire qu'il y a nul besoin d'augmenter la TVA. Encore une fois, un élève de l'école primaire viendra vous dire que si le prix monte, les revenus provenant de la TVA vont monter – ne vont pas monter par 50% ou 100% - nous voyons là 300% et cela pour multiples articles. Je ne vais pas m'attarder sur cela, mais je sentais qu'il fallait quand même les rappeler à l'ordre.*

M. le président, j'ai entendu l'honorable Dayal tout à l'heure venir dire que l'honorable Dowarkasing a dit qu'il n'y avait qu'un seul miracle économique. Certainement ! Nous ne sommes pas comme les gens de l'autre côté de la Chambre, nous viendrons vous dire que le pays a certainement passé par des moments difficiles dans les années 60 et qu'effectivement les gouvernements qui étaient là ont fait leur travail. Ils ont fait un travail mais, *we still maintain* que le miracle économique est venu dans les années Jugnauth. On ne peut nier cela, tout le monde le reconnaît. Je ne reviendrais pas là-dessus. Passons !

M. le président, je prends quelques minutes maintenant pour retourner vers le budget. Je prends maintenant le secteur éducatif.

M. le président, je dois dire que le ministre de l'éducation a jusqu'ici démontré qu'il est un fin diplomate. Il semble toujours avoir les mots justes et il donne l'impression à son interlocuteur qu'il est sur la même longueur d'onde. Le ton de consensus que prend le ministre de l'éducation est certes très intéressant au départ. Il s'est totalement différencié de son prédécesseur et on se demande

maintenant si ce n'est pas une astuce pour faire calmer les choses. Mais les choses semblent bouger à petits pas seulement, avec une telle lenteur qu'on se demande si on arriverait quand même au but. *To cut a long story short, Mr Speaker, Sir, things are not moving as fast as we expected.* Il est vrai que le ministre de l'éducation nous a très vite fait comprendre que, contrairement à son prédécesseur, il croit, lui, en la réforme éducative du régime MSM/MMM. Mais ne remettons pas en question la bonne foi de l'honorable Dr. Bunwaree, mais la lenteur et l'application de la réforme, au primaire, nous tracasse un peu.

M. le président, nous ne sommes toujours pas informés comment se passe l'évaluation continue, si cela se fait sans anicroche ? On ne sait toujours pas la date à laquelle la *National Diagnostic Evaluation*, au niveau de la Standard III, aura lieu. Nous ne sommes toujours pas plus avancés en ce qu'il s'agit de la date du remplacement de la CPE comme examen de sélection par un examen de passage de cycle du primaire au secondaire. On ne sait toujours pas si et quand l'admission au niveau secondaire sera sur une base régionale.

M. le président, si le ministre a fait un effort pour s'assurer que les cantines des écoles primaires disposent d'aliments, d'items qui sont plus propres à la santé des enfants, qui va tout à son crédit, je trouve qu'il aurait dû aussi faire un effort sur l'aspect d'éducation physique, M. le président. *I think that physical education dispensed in our primary schools is still inadequate. We cannot serve 200 primary schools with 34 physical instructors, Mr Speaker, Sir.* Il ne nous faut pas 35 minutes de *drill*, comme j'ai vu dans une *PNQ*, ou d'exercice de respiration par semaine pour une classe. 35 minutes, c'est trop peu ! Il nous faut initier nos jeunes à l'athlétisme, à prendre part dans des disciplines diverses, M. le président. Je pense sincèrement qu'il nous faut faire un effort exceptionnel pour qu'il y ait beaucoup plus de *physical instructors* dans nos écoles et que chaque école ait un *physical instructor* qui est attaché à l'école. On ne peut pas dire que nous avons

déjà un *instructor* pour sept écoles. Ce n'est certainement pas l'idée que nous avons de l'éducation intégrale de notre enfant. Ce n'est vraiment pas le type de réforme que nous voulons amener. Nous voulons amener une réforme vraiment générale *and we have mentioned it a number of times. We are talking about a holistic and comprehensive reform of our education system, Mr Speaker, Sir. We cannot do with piecemeal measures. We need, as I have mentioned, a more holistic approach.*

Il y a eu des efforts, bien sûr, du côté de l'infrastructure dans les écoles primaires. Le ministre a répondu à plusieurs questions, nous disant que dans au moins 60 écoles primaires les toilettes ont été refaites, etc., mais il y a encore beaucoup à faire au niveau de *recreational facilities* au niveau de nos écoles primaires. Cela, je suis sûre, viendra. Mais, M. le président, comme je le disais, nous avons, de temps en temps, des bribes d'information sur cette réforme éducative. Nous pensons qu'il est grand temps que le ministre vienne au Parlement pour nous dire exactement quelles sont les démarches qu'il a entreprises. Où en sommes-nous avec cette réforme ? Enfin, il doit présenter son plan, bien établi, avec un calendrier définitif. Il est grand temps que le ministre vienne avec son projet au parlement et donne des dates précises sur l'implémentation des différents stages de son projet éducatif, M. le président.

M. le président, il est connu de tout le monde aujourd'hui que les élèves de la CPE subissent des pressions d'une compétition malsaine et excessive à leur jeune âge malgré la conviction du ministre que cela devrait être autrement. Et c'est pour cela, M. le président, que je pense qu'il y a urgence. Il nous faut nous presser avec ce projet éducatif. C'est vrai que depuis quelques années déjà, le gouvernement nous fait comprendre qu'ils acceptent qu'ils ont fait erreur quand ils ont *back-pedaled* sur le système éducatif. C'est vrai qu'ils sont venus, en toute honnêteté, nous dire qu'ils vont retracer le chemin. Mais on prend beaucoup trop

de temps. Cinq ans se sont écoulés, M. le président, et nous avons des enfants qui sont toujours dans ce même système que nous n'arrivons pas à secourir, M. le président. Et pour cela que je dis qu'il nous faut bouger plus vite.

Je pense aussi que l'introduction de la musique et du théâtre au niveau des écoles se fait attendre. Le ministre de l'éducation est aussi le ministre des arts et de la culture. Je crois que pour lui cela devrait être plus facile que d'autres ministres qui auparavant n'avaient pas les moyens d'accéder aux écoles. Pour lui, cela devrait être plus facile et surtout paraît-il qu'il y a aujourd'hui the *Knowledge, Education and Arts Fund* qui est doté de plus d'un milliard, mais on n'arrive toujours pas à débloquer les fonds. Je n'arrive pas trop à comprendre qu'est-ce qui ne va pas, M. le président.

Nous avons un autre problème au primaire comme au secondaire, M. le président. C'est vrai que le gouvernement dépense des milliards sur le secteur de l'éducation, mais il est aussi vrai, comme l'avait souligné l'honorable Bodha, qu'il y a aussi un budget d'à peu près deux milliards ou même plus. Si je fais un calcul rapide du nombre d'élèves que nous avons dans les systèmes secondaire et primaire et nous faisons un *average* de la somme prise, M. le président, ce n'est pas normal que nous demandons à nos enfants d'aller faire du rattrapage dans des classes qui sont plus nombreuses que leurs *regular classes*. Quel genre de rattrapage? Quel genre d'apprentissage nous attendons à avoir dans un garage rempli de 40 ou 50 élèves? Je crois que tous les professeurs ne sont pas du même type. Il y a des gens de bonne foi, il y a des gens qui veulent vraiment faire un travail de rattrapage avec ces élèves. Il nous faut régler certaines choses. Il va falloir venir en avant avec un *Educators' Council* comme l'avait proposé le ministre. Pourquoi ce retard, je ne comprends pas. L'*Educators' Council*, les éducateurs eux-mêmes devraient venir avec un code d'éthique, il faut traiter les

professeurs en professionnel, il faudrait aussi leur donner l'occasion de venir dire qu'est-ce qu'ils doivent faire pour assainir cette situation.

M. le président, je ne trouve pas cela normal que le professeur qui enseigne l'élève en classe prenne le même élève l'après-midi dans une même bande et croit qu'il va pouvoir faire un miracle. Je pense que pour commencer l'éthique de la profession aurait dû être que la personne qui enseigne un élève en classe ne devrait pas être le *coach* de l'enfant dans l'après-midi. C'est la moindre des choses. Ce sont ces points-là que nous devons prendre en considération, M. le président.

Il y a aussi l'aspect du nombre d'élèves dans chaque cohorte de leçons particulières. Il y a aussi l'heure. Est-ce qu'on devrait prendre des leçons particulières aussitôt sorti de la salle de classe ? Est-ce qu'on n'aurait pas dû donner du temps à l'enfant pour pouvoir se récupérer avant d'entrer dans le système encore une fois. Il y a beaucoup de solutions qu'on peut ensemble, dans le *Educators' Council*, trouver. Il y a des solutions, je suis sûre. Là, par contre, il nous faut *tread cautiously* et assurer que nous arriverons avec un système plus correct que ce que nous sommes en train de faire subir à nos enfants, M. le président.

Quand nous parlons de leçons particulières, je vais parler un peu du secondaire en même temps pour ne pas retourner sur cet aspect des choses. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'aujourd'hui il y a un aspect de *health and safety* que nous devons prendre en ligne de compte. Il y a des professeurs qui donnent des leçons de pratique dans des laboratoires aménagés chez eux. Est-ce qu'il y a un *regulatory body* pour pouvoir s'assurer ? Est-ce que le ministère est doté d'un groupe de *quality assurance officers* qui pourront vérifier si les normes de *safety* sont respectées. Parce que nous envoyons les enfants dans les salles de classe, dans les laboratoires et nous ne savons pas quels sont les risques qu'ils sont en train de faire face. Tout cela peut être fait. Pourquoi pas des leçons particulières

dans des laboratoires privés ? Certainement, mais pas aussi longtemps que nous avons les normes de *safety* qui sont respectées, M le président, et j'ai comme l'impression que c'est quelque chose que nous sommes en train de *overlook* et, un beau jour, nous allons nous retrouver avec un accident et on se dira : « Personne n'a songé avant, pourquoi ? Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? » Tout cela, M. le président, pour une île Maurice moderne des années 2010, 2020, 2050 et il va falloir commencer à agir, M. le président.

Je parlais tout à l'heure – toujours dans le secteur primaire – et je disais qu'il y avait un manque de *recreational facilities*. Je comprends qu'il y a certaines écoles qui n'ont pas l'espace voulu pour amener ces changements et on peut toujours trouver dans les parages des *sports and recreational facilities*, qu'on peut utiliser, M. le président.

Je disais, tout à l'heure, en passant du secteur primaire pour bouger au secteur secondaire, qu'il y a, ce qu'on appellerait en créole, le 'macadam' de l'admission. Nous savons que le ministre a parlé de l'admission sur une base régionale, mais à quand, M. le président, cette admission au secondaire sur une base régionale ? Qu'advierait-il des *national schools* ? Nous ne le savons toujours pas. Si le *National Examinations at Form III level* se fera avant ou après l'abolition ou le remplacement du CPE ? Cela aussi nous ne le savons pas. Et je disais que cinq années se sont écoulées et nous n'avons toujours pas vu la lumière au bout du tunnel.

M. le président, je retourne encore une fois sur les frais des examens de la SC et de la HSC. Les frais des examens de la SC et de la HSC deviennent de plus en plus onéreux. J'oublie pour quelques minutes le fait qu'on a décidé de priver 22,000 élèves des subsides que l'Etat offrait dans le passé, mais, en même temps, avec le coût de ces examens, est-ce qu'on peut permettre les frasques de Cambridge ? Après le gros problème survenu l'année dernière, nous savons bel et

bien que Cambridge avait pris certains engagements et voilà que cette année-ci, non seulement, il nous laisse un *mistake in a paper* que je trouve inadmissible parce qu'en principe il devrait y avoir des *Quality Assurance Officers* qui auraient dû vérifier ces papiers. Je sais qu'à l'époque on disait qu'il y avait des *batch* d'élèves qui faisaient des papiers et ensuite ils ramassaient les papiers et les plaçaient dans une banque pour nous faire voir après. Mais comment cela se fait-il que cette fois-ci on a eu une telle chose ? Et le ministre a répondu, au cours d'un *PQ*, que de mesures strictes ont été prises pour que cette année-ci nous n'ayons pas des problèmes pareils. Il y a eu le problème avec le questionnaire de la langue Arabe. Les élèves ont dû reprendre un papier. Je ne sais pas si on se rend compte du stress d'un élève qui a déjà pris part à un papier d'examen et qui doit reprendre le même papier après quelques jours. C'est un stress additionnel et je trouve cela inadmissible, surtout pas pour la somme qu'on paie à Cambridge. Si je ne me trompe pas la somme à l'an dernier était dans les environs de R 250 millions. C'est inacceptable, M. le président. Ils auraient dû savoir que les questionnaires de Hindi et d'Urdu se faisaient un jour avant. On ne peut pas demander aux élèves maintenant d'avoir à subir la faute des autres personnes, M le président, et c'est un manque de professionnalisme inacceptable et je pense qu'il est grand temps qu'on songe sérieusement à trouver d'autres alternatives.

M. le président, à plusieurs reprises, au Parlement nous avons parlé des cas de professeurs et des éducateurs Mauriciens à Rodrigues. Le ministre a toujours pris un ton très consensuel et a toujours dit que cela allait être réglé rapidement, qu'il allait rendre visite à Rodrigues et qu'on allait trouver une solution et qu'il n'y avait pas de quoi se tracasser.

M. le président, je suis navrée de dire que le problème reste entier et que nos amis Mauriciens, qui sont en train de travailler à Rodrigues, sont toujours perturbés et qu'il y a une mauvaise entente, malheureusement, entre les éducateurs

Mauriciens et Rodriguais et je pense que ça aussi on aurait dû déjà avoir trouvé une solution.

Vous comprenez, M. le président, pourquoi je dis qu'il y a eu un démarrage extrêmement lent dans le secteur éducatif. Rs72 m., Mr Speaker, Sir, is the sum that would have been required to help the students at SC and HSC level. Rs72 m. c'est une bagatelle quand on considère une somme énorme que le gouvernement a consenti à verser sur le secteur éducatif. It is shame, Mr Speaker, Sir. I fail to understand what the barrier is. Why can't we make this move towards the youth of this population, those who will be called for, to take the bar? When you go through the successive Budget Speech, when you hear the language, the way the thing is brought in front of you: "No one shall be debarred of getting a seat at the university."

M. le président, quand on revoit les questions parlementaires, vous vous rendez compte que sur 6,958 étudiants qui avaient fait des applications à l'université de Maurice, il n'y a eu que 3,597, si je me trompe, qui ont pu trouver une place. Il y a au moins 33 cours – *course programmes* – à l'université de Maurice qui ont été annulés et qu'on a du retourner l'argent aux élèves parce qu'ils avaient déjà payé leur *enrolment fee* et tout cela n'est pas possible. Quand on lit le budget, on croirait que « Mon Dieu ! L'île Maurice est en train de faire quelque chose d'extraordinaire, que tous les élèves sortant des écoles secondaires trouveront une place au tertiaire ! » Je ne suis pas là pour vous dire que tout peut changer *overnight*. Le ministre des finances l'avait dit un jour. Il m'a dit carrément que tout ne va pas changer du jour au lendemain, mais ce que je trouve inadmissible, M. le président, c'est que *we are raising expectations with the Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am shocked* par cette mauvaise foi.

Je vais vous dire quelque chose, M. le président. L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, en tant que ministre des finances, avait mis sur pied le *Tertiary Education Support Scheme*.

Mr Speaker: I understand the hon. Member will have more to go. I will suspend for one hour.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.07 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to get back to the point I was raising just before lunch, I was saying that it is unbelievable, quite a shame that after coming with the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund with billions, the University of Mauritius cannot afford to take up the students who have looked for a seat. Out of 6,598 applications, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the University managed to enroll only around 3,500 students. What was not said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Budget: "No child will be turned out, Mr Speaker." This is what was said in the Budget. And what hurts me most, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that out of vanity, *l'orgueil, M. le président, parce que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, qui était alors ministre des finances, avait mis sur pied le Tertiary Education Support Scheme, où l'élève recevait un loan de R 450,000 sur une période de quatre ans et qu'il n'avait même pas à service the interests until he gets a job and the Government was paying the interest over a period of six months until he would get a job.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Scheme was put up in April and within six months more than 200 students availed of this facility. But what happened, Mr Speaker, Sir? *Je vous disais tout à l'heure out of orgueil, on a décidé de do away with that scheme. Pendant trois ans pas un seul étudiant a pu avail of this facility.*

Dans le budget 2008/2009, le ministre des finances est revenu avec un nouveau nom pour le *scheme*, légèrement modifié, et il est venu avec le

Government Guarantee Loan Scheme for Tertiary Education. Vous allez être choqué, M. le président, croyez-moi, parce que pendant six mois. Nous autre nous avons pu nous trouver plus de 200 élèves et les faire bénéficier de cette facilité. Par contre, là, aujourd’hui, après deux ans presque, pas un seul élève n’a pu être admis dans les universités à travers ce nouveau *scheme* et je vais vous dire pourquoi et je ne suis pas surprise. Regardez ce que le ministre m’a répondu, M. le président – « Today only one student whose loan has been guaranteed by the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund and is following MBBS Programme at the SSR Medical College ». Only one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! And I was telling you I am not surprised. Why? *Parce que maintenant on a changé les données*, you get the criteria for eligibility, Mr Speaker, Sir. I quote –

“We are launching a Government Guarantee Student Loan Scheme for up to Rs150,000 per year to allow commercial banks to make loans to all students with an offer from TEC recognized tertiary institutions in Mauritius and these students will have to service the loan, capital and interests.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the prevailing interests rates. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how would you explain that having a scheme which was already operating and which was performing pretty well, get doing away with that scheme, carrying up with a new scheme, which, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of the billions put in that fund, which is still in the *rodage* state? And, as I told you earlier, from the answer given by the Minister on 20 October 2009, only one student has availed of this facility.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why I say that it is unfair to raise expectations up to this. It is unfair to talk about billions in this Fund and to deny student of a mere Rs 72 m. when we consider the subsidies for exams fees. It is unfair to talk about billions in this Fund when we realise that we are denying students of petty facilities. And, on the other hand, *des largesses dans le Stimulus*

Package de 14 milliards de roupies ! *Personne, à ce moment, ne trouve rien à dire! C'est pour cela, M. le président, je dis que we have to be careful. We are playing with fire. Would you serve the country this way? And if we cannot treat them properly we are bound to have problems in the future, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is only one of the many problems that we are facing.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned earlier, 33 courses have been cancelled and money refunded to students who have enrolled themselves because the University could not afford to run these courses. *Tout cela n'est pas possible, M. le président, parce que nous avons vu que nous autres on avait déjà fait démarré le projet et, simplement, comme je vous ai dit, out of orgueil, these people decided to do away with it, but who has paid for that ? Who has paid for their fits of mood? Ce sont les élèves! Cohorts and cohorts of students have failed to get access to tertiary education à partir de 2006 jusqu'à present, et là, malgré the funds, only one student has been availed of this facility. It is a shame, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Scandalous!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to decide whether we want really to improve access to education or not. In fact, I would think that we should try in these difficult times to help these students. Why not come with what I would call a full subsidy on interests for the moratorium period? Why couldn't Government come with that subsidy? Because we are spending billions in the stimulus package, why can't we afford to give some to these students? And as you have seen the number is not that many. There are countries in the world, with such schemes, like India, which are providing access to hundreds thousands of students whereas we, with 3,000 students getting admitted at the University, cannot we make a special effort. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to revisit all our strategies. I am afraid there is a very urgent need to review our strategies. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mean it, we can come forward with a full interest subsidy on the Government

guaranteed loans. And this is what we should offer to our children if we really want to improve access to tertiary education.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking about tertiary education in the former Budget 2008/2009, provision was made for the establishment of a new campus in the region of Côte d'Or by the State Land Development Company. Rien jusqu'aujourd'hui, M. le président. J'ai comme l'impression que c'est vrai que rien n'arrive à démarrer dans le secteur éducatif, rien jusqu'à présent.

Ce matin nous avons eu, au cours de la PNQ, an idea of what type of things are going on in the tertiary sector, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is high time the Tertiary Education Commission starts taking its role seriously. We have had the MAURAS saga; we have had the Eastern College saga. I won't go over it again, but at the MAURAS College of Dentistry, it is true that today we have heard that a number of students who have passed through this institution, have managed to get, après un dur labeur, M. le président, the possibility to practice in Mauritius, but what about the institution? Has the Tertiary Education Commission ensured that it will be in a position to deliver in the future? Is it still capable of enrolling students or not? Tout ça c'est un flou généralisé M. le président, on ne comprend pas trop ce qui se passe, mais we have to be careful, we cannot put at stake the future of our students. We cannot get parents who work very hard to spend money on the education of their children and yet not be sure about what would be the value of these certificates. The Minister had formerly answered a PNQ and had mentioned a number of foreign institutions coming to Mauritius. It is true, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the knowledge hub has to be set in Mauritius, but, on the other hand, we have to be careful, it is a very lucrative business and when you consider that 35% of the revenues from foreign students in tertiary education in Australia come from our students. Our students make up 35% of the foreign student

community in Australia. It's big-money, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And when we are saying that we need to expand our campus, we have to go fast about it. We cannot continue the way we have been doing and, on top of that, we have to ensure that the Tertiary Education Commission takes its role seriously and manages the system properly. We cannot have other cases like the MAURAS School of Dentistry or cases of abuse of powers as we have noted this morning.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to ensure that all of these institutions, coming to Mauritius to open their doors, offer seats to our students. We have to negotiate, not only for seats, but also for scholarships, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have to ensure that institutions opening their doors in Mauritius manage to offer scholarships to Mauritian students; and why not keep quotas for Mauritian students.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll come to another issue, compassion. The Minister of Finance talked about compassion, values, and said that we should, in fact, show compassion towards people with abilities. I totally agree with him and, in fact, today c'est la Journée Internationale des Personnes avec des Problèmes, avec des Handicaps. I think it is a very valid point to get motorised wheelchairs for the students at the tertiary level. But I tend to agree with hon. Mrs Labelle when she says that we needed to have looked at the primary and secondary levels first. There is a more urgent need to ensure that students with disabilities manage to go to primary and secondary schools and we need to refund *les frais de transport*, *M. le président*, the taxi fares to transport the students to schools. This is a very important point and we need to look into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Il nous faut rembourser les frais de transport pour les enfants avec des handicaps au niveau primaire et secondaire ans nos écoles.

Upholding values of compassion, certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all agree, but I was a bit shocked when I realised that all this was written and only one motorised wheelchair has been provided till now. In fact, the problem is that the students do not make it up till tertiary level because we haven't provided the facilities earlier. The facilities should have been provided at the secondary and primary school levels first. Then we would have more students having disabilities, managing to gain access to tertiary education, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Before leaving the education sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to go back to the secondary sector because I missed one point earlier. We have to ensure that value-based education is dispensed at the primary and secondary school levels. This is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When we look at the atrocities of crimes being carried out in the island, I am not blaming anyone, but then there is something wrong in the way we are bringing up our children, our young people. The problem we have seen with the case of Mrs Milazar; the problem does not stop at Mrs Milazar, the problem goes further than that. The perpetrator of the crime also needs support and we also need to seek what has led him to such atrocities. In fact, there is an urgent need to review our curriculum to ensure that civic education, moral values are taught in our schools. I have always mentioned it that there are lots of values that we can pass on implicitly to our children at home and at school but, nevertheless, it is important now to look into the matter.

Talking about values, what are the values we want to pass on to the students? When you do not show the students a sense of duty - and this not only at the level of the teacher, the school, the rector, but at the level of the MES - what is the lesson that students get when they realise that even the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate cannot do its work properly? Are we teaching our students

to take their work seriously, to be dutiful students, to do their work properly? You realise after the mess created last year the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate managed to come with an error in an examination paper. Now they have the guts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come and say: 'Don't worry, the students would not get penalised'. I suppose each one of us in this Assembly can realise, can feel for the students who, on an exam day, in an examination hall, were trying their best to try to solve that number, but failed to do so, went back to some other number and came back to the same number not to get the answer. Can you imagine the stress that has been inflicted on these students? Can you imagine what has been going on in the mind of those students at that particular point in time? I remember it was question number 2. How many of them managed to reach the fourth question in the question paper and, if they did, how many managed to do it in a serene manner that you expect them to do in an examination?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is scandalous. We cannot accept such things and I don't see how we can still turn to Cambridge. At one time we used to say Cambridge never errs, but I think that we are very far from those days. We need seriously to go back and try to see what are the other alternatives - I was talking about alternatives earlier. Of course, we have the international baccalaureate, but there are still other places in the world we have to look for. I will go as far as considering even the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate. Why not? Because we have to look further, we talk about globalisation, regionalisation. Why cannot we ensure that tomorrow the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate organises examinations all over the African continent. We have the expertise, we need the experience, we will need some training, but we can always turn to the other countries of the world, we can benchmark, we have the Great India which runs à *notre secours de temps en temps, M. le président*. We've got to knock at doors and

we've got to get away with this Cambridge mess, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am sorry as I went back to that particular point, but I considered it to be very important. Though these may seem to be minor, trivial incidents to some people as they had taken it very coolly when Cambridge came to say that students won't be penalised. Teachers, parents, Mauritius Examinations Syndicate have all taken it very coolly; I find it very strange, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Through this event, we have shown our students that they can err even if you have given your word, vous avez pris des engagements que ce genre de problèmes won't recur. Nous sommes en train de revivre ces mêmes situations et c'est pour cela qu'il est important de revoir notre système, de s'assurer que nos enfants, en grandissant dans nos collèges, n'apprennent pas que des sujets, ne deviennent pas que de grands académiques. J'irai même plus loin, ce n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir tous les talents du monde mais la première des choses c'est to know that we have to do our duty properly. This is one of the first values that we have to inculcate in children, implicitly or explicitly, by teachers or by rectors or even by higher decision-makers in the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I leave this sector and before I resume my seat, I would like to talk about only one more issue very quickly because I know I am running out of time. In an answer to a Parliamentary Question, the hon. Minister of Environment mentioned that in Mont Ida, the National Development Unit had paid up to Rs8 m for erecting a wall around a football ground and that subsequently another contract was given to another company, but in the meantime, recommendations were made to get that wall pulled down in spite of the fact that it cost the State around Rs8 m. and there were engineers from the NDU, from Gibb Consultancy who had, in fact, recommended the payment of Rs8 m to that company. It is not a trivial matter, Sir. You cannot spend public funds in such a

manner. We cannot allow people to squander taxpayers' money in this way. Rs8 m. to put up a wall and then Rs12 m. to pull down the wall and to start off again a new contract! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this might seem to be *un incident anodin*, but it shows how ill the system is, how there is no accountability at all and I think the Minister should have known. He mentioned that he is no expert, fine, I agree, but he should have found out who are those responsible for such wastage and he should have been taken sanctions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am stopping here because I know that I am running out of time. I would like to say that values should be passed on implicitly; people are listening to what is happening in this august Assembly, people follow the steps of the decision makers in this country, so we have to be careful for these are the values that we are passing on to the younger generation.

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

(14.25 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the fifth and ultimate Budget of the hon. Minister of Finance and the last Budget of this Government. We have clearly reached the end of the road and as we all agree, it is time for drawing up the balance sheet of the Government.

L'heure des bilans est arrivé, M. le président, in its form, this Budget is a typical hon. Sithanen Budget. It is a produit maison du ministre, un budget préparé dans le même moule que celui utilisé les années précédentes, je dis bien dans sa forme et dans le fond. We recognise the same method, the same formula, a lot of verbiage, a rerun of the same show of the past years announcing projects that have already been announced, forecasting projects which will take place in 2011, 2012, sometimes even announcing the same project twice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance is certainly an intelligent person. When we left Government in 2005, when we lost the elections and the hon. Minister was a spokesman of economic and finance affairs for the Opposition and he became the Minister of Finance, we had listened to him when we were in Government, when we left Government and I personally paid a lot of attention to speeches, to what he was saying. At one time, he even created doubt in my mind personally. In 1991 he was the Minister of Finance, I was the Attorney-General, we were in the same Government. I have known him as Minister, as colleague, he was certainly a bright young man at that time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at one time, when listening to him, after our defeat in 2005, there was still doubt in my mind personally, I thought perhaps we had lost the elections rightly so. He had talked of a new programme of social justice, of revamping the economy and so on, I said to myself: here is a Minister of Finance of promise, but unfortunately in the course of his four to five years, this is a frank and honest criticism, the Minister of Finance has, in fact, disappointed us and me personally in the whole country. In fact, he was not a man of promise, he was a man of promises, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. All this talk about social justice and robust growth and so on, I will come to the Budget today to scrutinising some of the measures and proposals. In fact, I have read his Budget several times, his passed Budgets and so on and at the end of the Budget debates, he gave us also some advantages of having listed to most Members of the this House, to have been able to read all the criticisms, all the economists who have commented on the Budget and so on. I have gone deeply into the Budget and what remains at the end of the day, I say it with *no gaieté de coeur*, in fact, the Opposition has been right from the announcement of the first Budget when we have been criticising the ultra liberal policies of the hon. Minister and of this Government. Very quickly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it became clear to us of this ultra liberalism - this rightist path

that they have chosen to follow and their harmful impact on the social front and the consequences which had ensued in fact, destabilising socially the country and enhancing poverty in this country. The string of measures that had been announced and implemented since 2005, confirm this path, trajectory chosen by the hon. Minister and Government. We all know about these measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will just pass very quickly on them. Subsidies on SC and HSC examination fees were removed as were the subsidies on basic foodstuffs only to be reinstated following popular and Opposition pressure. Salary compensation has always been lower than inflation. Tripartite negotiations abolished and replaced by subservient NPC, labour laws amended, workers basic rights withdrawn, income distribution became more secured as pointed out by official CSO figures through a deterioration of the Gini coefficient. The NRPT tax and the tax on saving interest which had been abundantly commented upon by this side of the House. Poverty on the increase, a new class of poverty, absolute poverty was detected and defined. Small planters practically abandoning their lands due to plantation cost, mainly fertiliser and transport. Subsidies on foodstuffs were financed by unfair charges included in fuel prices, which prices are now further enhanced by charges to finance hedging losses incurred by an incompetent STC management, corporate tax reduced from 22% to 15%, all these measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Et ce n'est pas tout*. This is not the end of the story and all this was ushered in, were introduced in a context of dishing out so many *cadeaux* to the corporate sector and, the other day, I was listening to hon. Ms Deerpalsing having a go at the MMM and, particularly, at its leader and reminding the House, how it was fatal for the country and the working class of its population, if MMM had returned to power and so on, but when we remember also these measures which have just been referring to, were introduced on top of all these measures what did we have also during those four and a half years, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir? The word 'handouts' which she herself used, dishing out handouts to the private sector and we remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what had happened also in terms of gifts and *cadeaux* given to the private sector. The depreciation of the rupee which allowed economic operators and corporate sector, especially export oriented and tourism operator to cash now more than Rs10 billion as a result of the depreciation of the rupee. Billions of rupees reaped by the corporate sector thanks to the setting up of the National Pay Council and the payment of a salary compensation much lesser than the inflation rate. Billions of rupees harvested by the corporate sector with the lowering of the corporate tax. Rs5 billion generously dished out to the sugar industry to finance VRS2 and centralisation from the EU. Rs11 billion to the sugar sector with the rise in the price of sugar on the local market and the billions of profit accruing to the sugar industry in terms of fiscal concession for the *morcellement* projects following the VRS2. This is where we are in terms of belonging, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I am very sorry also and with due respect to the Minister, when one now looks at the present Budget, we are compelled at the very outset to underpin the real difficult economic situation our nation is facing today and the failure of the Government to reckon with the true challenges we face and to deal with them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, one is taken aback by Government's propaganda, euphoria and mastery over public relations and, in fact, one must be very concerned about the country's development and progress today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In fact, our growth and progress have been frozen, I must say, and I will draw the majority of my conclusions by analysing official CSO, Bank of Mauritius and Minister of Finance statistics. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I remember some years back, the hon. Minister of Finance - who knows what he is talking about - gave us those lengthy discourses about vital economic statistics in the House,

inflation rate, unemployment rate, balance of payment parameters, investment rate and growth rate. These are the indicators and indeed they are that need to be strong for sound economic progress. The Minister told us also of his foresight to create new pillars of the economy since he, himself, said future growth and resilience could not hinge on the few existing traditional sectors and, obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we were castigating the previous Government for having left everything in the red and for having failed to create any new pillars. Then came the first Budget of the hon. Minister of Finance and this first Budget clarified the intentions of Government. He set the tone, *il montra les couleurs*, the policies of this Government would be ultraliberal, concentrating on business facilitation, yes, SMEs would be an important engine for growth and employment creation and a major tool to democratise the economy. Arsenals of promises were made, never to be even half achieved. The same promises were repeated on and on, Budget after Budget, through successive branding and re-branding, harvest have been early, far too early to bear the fruit of this Government's policy and crops naively bumped up. Then came the volte-face, which came abruptly, with a slap right in our face from a massive financial crisis reckoned with far too late and yielding a stimulus package which was in fact too little. And today again, we are still, I mean this Government is still speaking of roses when the thorns are far from being swept aside.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the point I am making is, how can we pretend that things are rosy when even the most developed nations are still struggling with their real economies? Why should we not honestly face the situation when official figures are pointing to worsening of all our imported mould essential economic parameters?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the truth of the matter is that, this Government has surfed on structures created by the MSM/MMM Government and has failed to

prepare our country for the challenges ahead. A quick view of statistics is quite telling, growth rate is down as to 2.7% regrettably too low to sustain full employment which circumstantially translate into an upward unemployment trend forecasted at 8.1% this year. Inflation rate adds up to a cumulative 36.5% over the past five years contrasting with an average compensation of only around 16% and I will come back to this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The majority of Mauritian is being pauperised and compelled to consume out of their past savings which incidentally and because of the tax on savings results in a savings rate of only 12.8% down from 16.7% in 2008. Luckily for us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, inflation rate this year is low at 3% and this is mostly attributable to the depressed prices abroad resulting in lower imported inflation. The balance of our visible trade shows a staggering deficit of Rs50 billion for the financial year 2008/2009 and a current account deficit of Rs25.5 billion. This is far from being sustainable and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, public sector debt now stands at an alarming Rs159.5 billion, with borrowing to be conducted in Chinese Yen, a currency that is most poised to appreciate in the near future. Investment rate is now stagnating with a sharp 2.2 decline in private investment, which is only just compensated by the very late - electorally motivated - investment of public funds in certain infrastructure projects.

With regard to FDI, which is claimed to be the explicit achievement of this Government, I have seen more than 90% injection in just certain sectors of the economy like hotels and restaurants, financial intermediation and real estate, renting and business activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that it is our Government which instituted the various tourism schemes, like Bel Ombre, St. Felix, which created space for the construction of new hotels, adding much needed rooms to the

hotel park. The House will also recall the cautious approach of the previous Government with regard to the opening of our air routes, which contrasts sharply with the present uncalculated, aggressive opening that has certainly contributed to the weakening of Air Mauritius.

The Securities Act, the Financial Intelligence and Anti Money Laundering Act have been decisive Acts enacted for the success of our services sector. I need not mention the success of the IRS in securing FDI into real estate in Mauritius. The fact is that sectors hosting FDI were all existing sectors, wherein projects like the IRS, hotel developments and offshore operations had already been launched during our time, and even structured to receive FDI. *Le bateau était déjà arrivé à bon port. Il ne restait qu'à l'amarrer et le préparer pour le prochain port.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I say it again. I cannot understand why Government should be so euphoric. *Il n'y a pas lieu de pavoiser*, when all indicators are turning red. Maybe, when we succeed to *noyer le poisson dans l'eau* in a plethora of expert-rhetoric and percentages, what is bad becomes less bad. This is the theory of the ostrich, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When one sticks his head deep in the sand, it does not weather away the storm. My concern is amplified when I look at the state of the real economy, and the failure of this Government to create a real sound economic environment. For instance, how can the Minister talk about the number of jobs created when the unemployment rate is rising? Mind you! He admits that many of these jobs are being created in the ICT sector launched by the previous Government. My reading of official figures confirms my amazement as to how one can be optimist. This year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tourism will contract by 8.8%; textile by 4%; export oriented enterprises by 0.8%; growth will slow down from 3.2% to 0.9% in manufacturing; from 2.4% to 1% in other manufacturing; from 11.1% to 2.1% in construction;

from 10.1% to 5.9% in financial intermediation, and from 10.8% to 8% in business activities. Only sugar will grow notably by 18.2%, from 3.7%. But, this is due only to good weather conditions that has raised cane production from 452,062 tonnes to 490,000 tonnes, and the launching of a highly capital intensive refined sugar project. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, sugar now contributes only 2% of our GDP, and the contribution of its growth to employment is negligible. Therefore, how do we expect to reverse the unemployment tendency and correct our balance of payment position? The more so, that the export oriented enterprises output is declining.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister has spoken of the balance of payment surplus, which is a fact. There is no denial here, but he should mention that this surplus has been fuelled by borrowings and FDI, and borrowings carry interests that need to be reimbursed, as we all know. Now that the sectors launched before 2005 have absorbed their share of FDI, where will the new FDI be channelled? I am afraid there has never been any foresight on this matter, and the statistics on the FDI are, once more, very telling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2009, according to the official statistics, we are expecting a 45% drop in FDI. This is why we have the duty to criticise Government for its failure to launch new sectors that could maintain our economy's propensity for growth and for attracting FDI. I say it again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the end of the story. The Minister is an intelligent economist; he certainly knows the figures and more specifically the trends they indicate, and I suspect that the Minister, deep down, knows that the situation is very difficult. Public debt is getting out of proportion, our resources cannot produce sufficiently, the pressures on our current account are unsustainable, FDI has taken a downward trend, borrowings are already too high, infrastructure works,

which have been retained for too long, are only now being launched because of elections, all the key sectors of the economy are either declining or growing lesser, and there are no new sectors, no new pillars in the economy. Therefore, all this is worrying. Our debt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may be exceeding our capacity to generate comfortable funds, out of economic activities, for repayment. Given our unpreparedness to generate future growth in the face of these challenges, we may be on the brink of more financial difficulties.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all what I have said, in fact, explains why this Government could not be lavish in this Budget, despite nearing the elections. The Minister, therefore, could not *donner des cadeaux à droite et à gauche* ; Christmas is coming, and he must have certainly been thinking how he will manage the economy and, therefore, *petit Papa Noël a oublié nos petits souliers*. This is the truth of the matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He must be worrying, because the economic model that he has proposed to the nation has not worked.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *ce n'est pas moi qui le dis*. All the statistics I have just quoted are coming from the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Mauritius, and the CSO. We had time to read what other people said about this Budget. I have with me the comments of one economist who is very close to Government, namely Mr Eric Ng. A few days after the Budget, "*L'Express*" published one of his commentaries, which was on the same day of the *sondage*. The article was entitled '*Est-ce durable?*' Mr Eric Ng, we all know, is not an opponent, an adversary of Government. But, when you read this article, many things that I have just mentioned are in there. I will not trouble the House, but I will just quote a few –

'Le déficit public s'accroît, le taux d'épargne se réduit, les deux phénomènes sont liés par un déficit accru impliquant un recours plus élevé à l'emprunt, donc, à l'épargne des ménages.'

On n'a pas eu l'impression que le ministre des finances s'inquiète outre mesure de la faiblesse de l'épargne. Dans son discours budgétaire, il fait ressortir que les dépôts bancaires ont accru plus vite que le PIB.'

I am not going to quote what Mr Li Kwong Wing or Mr Jagatsingh said. Perhaps, hon. Members on the other side might not agree with these two gentlemen. But, they also, as credible economists, have made more or less the same comments I just made on this Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I come to one or two proposals in the Budget. I will comment on the Empowerment Foundation, a little on democratisation and the CRS. Again, I can still hear hon. Members of the Government boasting about their vision to strengthen the economy through empowerment. As a theory, empowerment of the people through democratisation and the SMEs is very prodigious. Government has, indeed, made this process one of the pillars of its strategy to bring forth a formidable array of measures, including the Empowerment Foundation, the facilitation of the SMEs, and so on. This is a legitimate idea, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is to set up a framework that will enhance job related training and job placement, encourage small and medium private entrepreneurship and democratise shareholding in existing and upcoming industries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we recall the long hours of boasting about the prowess of the National Empowerment Programme, previously known as the Empowerment Programme. This was supposed to be the *potion magique*, which would have solved all the problems in the country, be it unemployment, housing, alleviation of poverty or entrepreneurship. The NEF was expected to have attended to all these issues. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, *l'heure est au bilan*; these have just been tag lines, an impressive illusion which has, in fact, lured us. To my

mind, the National Empowerment Foundation has spread its tentacles over too many sectors, and does not have effective control, since it has too much on its plate. It overlaps with SEHDA, with the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, the Tourism Authority, Human Resources; it is a Jack of all trades. It is a clog to the good running of other Ministries. It is a parallel Government but, worse, without any accountability.

What are the procurement norms guiding these programmes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I said that it is too ambitious; I will give one example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In this Budget that has just been presented to the House, there is an Integrated Social Housing Programme for some 5,000 families. Can the NEF manage it, or is it the task of either the hon. Minister or the Ministry of Housing to manage such a programme, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This is one example. In fact, in the past years, billions have been poured in the abyss of the National Empowerment Foundation. And what has come out of it? The NEF was expected to take entrepreneurs to new heights, but, from my information, instead of that, it has contributed in the closing down of some businesses. A huge chunk of the money has been poured in and directed to private consultants. The sectors that it was supposed to look after are suffering. The printing sector is about to crash, the plastic sector has been admitted in ICU, the light engineering sector is inexistent, the three much publicised projects, namely furniture, jewellery and tourist products are still in difficulties, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I let you imagine the danger of having no accountability, as far as this Fund is concerned.

As a result, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our exports to the SADC and COMESA are struggling, and we have failed to prepare the export readiness of the SMEs and to match countries far less competitive. Let me give you a few examples, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. During his first Budget, the hon. Minister of

Finance had elaborated on the benefits of trading houses in the region. In several successive Budgets, he has talked about this project. But where are the trading houses? I will give you another example. With the biggest event in the world at our doorsteps, namely the World Cup 2010, and with the huge potential of the South African market, the Ministry of Finance and the NEF were expected to provide support to operators in different sectors, and make the best possible use of this unique opportunity. What is the share that our operators have obtained? Nothing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. No Mauritian operator has secured a FIFA Suppliers Licence from FIFA, despite being competitive. Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although there has been a two-year quota restriction on imports from China, Mauritius has failed to increase its market share in this most spotted market of the region. Our exports to the COMESA have crumbled down so drastically, that operators are losing faith. One possible reason for this failure is the fact that there is an incredible duplication and wastage of resources. National Empowerment Foundation, Enterprise Mauritius, Ministry of Industry, SEHDA, MTSP, MASMED and so on are absorbing a yearly cost of over Rs2 billion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have tried to understand the functions of all these set-ups, and I have been told that it is difficult. Perhaps the hon. Minister will enlighten us by providing an explanation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from my information, consultants have been appointed without respecting the procedures – hundred, two hundred million rupees. Even operators have voiced out their critics regarding obscure appointment of consultants, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will not mention any name, but the hon. Minister who said ‘give example’, should know, since he wants to know, that there is one consultant who is being highly paid to represent the interest of Mauritian operators in the US. Operators have voiced their disagreement.

Let us take the case of Infinity BPO, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This stands as a blatant case of conflict of interests, whereby the Chairman of Enterprise Mauritius, who is also the Chairman of MTSP, is being called upon to decide on providing support of Rs45 m. to his colleague, who is a Board member of Enterprise Mauritius. The gentleman is also a member of Enterprise Mauritius. I repeat it again: the Chairman of Enterprise Mauritius, who is also the Chairman of MTSP, is being called to decide on providing support to his colleague, who is a Board member of Enterprise Mauritius. But that is not all, Mr Deputy Speaker. The other day, a Parliamentary Question was asked about this case. Of course, within 30 minutes, we do not have time to query the Minister about certain features of the issue. This happened on Monday, when the Parliamentary Question was asked about MTSP and Infinity. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have with me a copy of the ‘Guidelines to understanding the mechanism for transitional support to private sector under the Additional Stimulus Package’, and the first line reads as follows –

“As a means to support vulnerable manufacturing and export sector oriented enterprises, the Government has put in place the mechanism for transitional support for the private sector under the Additional Stimulus Package, to help firms facing financial difficulty in the context of the world economic crisis.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the guidelines. Even when we read the Additional Stimulus Package - I don't want to go into that - this is the spirit in it. The MTSP was a means to support vulnerable manufacturing and export sector oriented enterprises.

Even in the Budget Speech 2010, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at page 13, paragraph 85, this is what the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said, I quote –

“We are therefore maintaining our Additional Stimulus Measures until December 2010, including the funds committed for a stimulus package for Rodrigues. This means we will -

- (i) continue to give direct support to SMEs and large enterprises facing temporary difficulties due to the crisis so as to protect jobs and enterprises;”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is therefore where we are. And I say it again: both the National Empowerment Foundation and the CSR need a framework for accountability, transparency and perception of transparency. Because it is important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CSR is wielding Rs1 billion, the National Empowerment Foundation, Rs5 billion, and I don't think the hon. Minister will find any difficulty to agree that we need a stronger framework for not only *transparence*, but also *la perception de la transparence*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll say a few words about democratisation. Although it is more rarely used these days, I'll remind the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, that during the course of the debates I had a go about this question of democratisation and take a lot of praise for having seemingly or allegedly issued, or ushered in this new concept in our political parlance and vocabulary. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know the process of this demoratisation is not new in Mauritius. In fact, it was in 1994 and we all remember the Sugar Investment Trust and the hon. Minister of Finance says – and we don't have any reason to disbelieve him – that it was his brainchild. In 1994, the SIT was set up to own 20% of all sugar mills, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Illovo Deal - to which I will unashamedly come back to - was followed with all this sickening and communal bashing which was levelled against it, but its delivery was and is still formidable, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: 7,000 acres of good agricultural land which are still being parceled by the SIT Land Holdings in favour

of the 35,000 or so shareholders of the SIT; land for the Ebene Cibercity, land at Bagatelle. And above all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a 35% stake to the SIT in the BBHM, the then New Holding Company of the MTMD as established by the Illovo deal. This shareholding, together with its direct 20% shareholding in all sugar milling companies, then gave the SIT an effective holding of about 29.5% in *Société Usinière du Sud (SUDs)*, now called Omnicane (Owner of Milling Operations in the South). The deal together with the 15% direct shareholding of the SIT in the two Bagasses and Coal Power Plants in the south further gave a trust in 19.5% effective holding in those two power plants. And to complete the reminder, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, - as I mentioned earlier - the SIE Act was introduced in 2001 to instigate the 1st VRS. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is as far as the Budget is concern and as the confusion concerning this Empowerment Foundation and a few remarks I made about empowerment and democratisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few words on poverty reduction and the fight against poverty and a few comments on compensation before I resume my seat. Sir, I had the opportunity in this House myself when I stood up to talk on the two previous Budgets, to congratulate the Minister for the Programme of Eradication of Absolute Poverty. It was a step and it is still a step in the good direction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The fight to make poverty recede is as old as humanity, Mr Speaker, Sir. I always thought that it was the Communists who were the first to fight for eradication of poverty, but somebody told me that long before the Communists came into existence, the spiritual masters, Jesus and so had started this fight. In fact, one of his apostles had said: "I am in love with poverty". But somebody also said: "What did the MSM/MMM Government do to fight poverty?" Now, they are criticising our programme and so on but, needless, to remind the House of the different programmes, the multiplicity of measures that we took during those four and a half years that we were in power. Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir, as far as alleviation of poverty is concerned, Budget after Budget, whether under the first Minister of Finance, hon. P. Bérenger, or the second Minister of Finance, hon. P. Jugnauth, so many projects proposals were made, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We set up the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups. We spilled so many schools for poor people whose children were going to attend all these 42 or 45 secondary schools. All these houses that were build by the NHDC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about some 7,000 as far as I remember; 4,000 squatters were regularised; the Dockers' Flat and all these projects. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't want to come back to what hon. Barbier was saying, to remind the House of all these projects. But, I think it is unfair to pretend that our Government had nothing to do with the alleviation of poverty. This is unjust, unfair and, perhaps dishonest, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

My criticism as far as this chapter is concerned is perhaps, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are not going fast enough. This is not *un méchant* criticism; it is fair. When we look at the figures in the Estimates given to us by the hon. Minister, we can assess at what pace this programme is taking place and how long it will take, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to reasonably rid the country of absolute poverty. At the pace we are going, it will take many, many years, perhaps decades. But the most important thing is the process has been triggered and, hopefully, the Minister who is an intelligent person will see to it with the positive, constructive criticisms that we are making to make amends and to take the necessary remedial measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 229 pockets of poverty - according to the findings of the hon. Minister's experts. 7,157 families, 5,000 children from 3 to 5 years not going to school. And when we look at last year's Budget and this year's Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we see that the progress is very, very slow. But this is not a criticism again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the only *souci* is how faster can we go.

For example, in the case of these families, it took one year to help 100 families. Perhaps it is because we are still *en rodage* that this is taking a bit more time but certainly, the pace has to be accelerated. The fight against poverty today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns all countries. I was reading an article the other day, 'Fighting Poverty in Emerging Markets', and the lessons to be drawn from Brazil, China and India. And this article commended Brazil for its success in reducing poverty and an assessment of poverty reduction was made in these three countries. These three countries, namely Brazil, China and India, account for half of the world's poorest population. Brazil had more success among these three countries. Brazil cut poverty over 1% a year, more than India and China in spite of the fact that there were much lower growth than in India and China. Government's policy, according to this article, plays a big role in reducing inequality and Brazil was praised for its exceptional performance. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the solution has been identified by the hon. Minister in his Budget. It is a question of capacity-building, of setting up a more structured and formal framework. I will not trouble the House with all the details found at page 34 of the Budget Speech, but there are laudable plans and intentions which have been made/suggested, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. One which I thought personally and which I saw in the Budget is, in fact, the strengthening of the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups. The Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups should have been empowered to look after this question EAP Programme. The intentions are there – I suppose the money is there - but what is lacking is the implementation capacity. At page 34 of the Budget Speech, the hon. Minister has rightly highlighted the difficulties and solutions; it is a question of implementation capacity, of empowering an organisation. I do not know whether it is the cadres of the Ministry who are the experts/technicians, but I think it should be a formal,

structured organisation/institution like, for example, the Trust Fund, which should have as its sole mission the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now talk about poverty. I see that social measures have been initiated in the Budget Speech and this is one chapter where I have to salute the hon. Minister as some good measures have been proposed, the social security measures and so on. However, all these good measures have been outweighed by the other measures which we do not agree with. There are some areas where Government should intervene. These are areas where we, as MPs, come across *sur les terrains*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. These are humble suggestions which I am personally making and I think Government should try to look into them. I am sure that all MPs in this House come across the same problems which I am going to refer to.

Fire Victims. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how often do we not hear about a poor family whose house has been burnt down? - Accidentally, of course. How does this family do to construct a new house? He goes to make a declaration to the Police, he gets his official declaration and he then goes to the Social Security where he gets Rs8,000 or less than Rs10,000, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, he goes with his begging bowl in front of his MPs, business people around - depending where he lives and so on - and he goes now on a begging spree to try to get money to build his house. When these *sinistres* are genuine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think there should be a fund somewhere because these people are really poor. They will not be able to borrow; they will not get any loan from any bank. The best they can get is a few *feuilles tôles*. But, very often, houses in concrete also take fire, *les murs se craquent, sont lézardés*. I have even seen houses in concrete - *cité* houses - burning down completely and had to be pulled down, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We should have a look at that type of situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I now come to pensions. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how many times have we not heard of people coming to see us and complaining - genuine cases - that their pensions have been *coupées* as they say. The other day, I asked the hon. Minister about this Basic Invalidity Pension, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister is not here, but I will reiterate my appeal, my plea to her to look into these cases where patients who have more than 60% incapacity are not granted the Basic Invalidity Pension. I have with me a document which I promised to hand over to the hon. Minister of Social Security and National Solidarity and Senior Citizens. This is a document of the Ministry of Social Security where – it is about this lady whom I referred to in my PQ - the Doctor signed the form concerning the resulting capacity, he said, yes, 100% - as you can see, I am sure, from where you are sitting, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This lady was deprived of any basic invalidity pension. This is not making politics, but we should find a way. The ceiling is 60%. We cannot interfere with independent bodies, Medical Boards, Medical Tribunals and so on. I agree with that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We should let the independent institution work, but how can we explain this? Yes, 100%, said the Doctor. Yet, this is a certificate of a private Doctor who says: totally incapacitated as there is no effective treatment. These are poverty cases, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Thirdly, I'll come to medical treatment abroad. I am sure hon. Dr. Babajee must know about that. In Residence Kennedy, there is a young boy who has a disease which cannot be cured in Mauritius. He must have medical treatment abroad. I know the Ministry in these cases helps these patients who have to go abroad, but sometimes I think these Rs200,000 are not sufficient - I do not know whether it has been increased now. Do you know what this family is doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? - Looking for sponsors, organising football matches, fairs or whatever to raise money, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This boy I think has a very

delicate and serious problem in the brain. People know about it in the area and they are asked to contribute. This boy needs Rs1 m. in order to be sent abroad for his operation. Many times we get cases like this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Even the Chairman for the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups was there; I saw him. Everybody is giving a hand but I did not see my friend, hon. Dr. Babajee.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Babajee is reminding me that there is a Bring & Buy for a few weeks to help this poor boy. Can't we find a solution to this type of problem? There are not many I would have thought, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Fourthly, mention was made about the ZEP schools. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I asked a few questions in this House. But is this *une liste bloquée*? Le Morne Government School is not within the ZEP. I asked a few questions a few times, but I was told it is not possible to include new schools although Le Morne *est un lointain village* in the west coast. I think the authorities should have *une ouverture d'esprit* in order to accommodate schools which are not on the list, but which deserve support, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I now come to fishermen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately, Minister Faugoo is not here. He has replied graciously to a few questions. Why can't we, once for all, decide what to do with these fishermen who have reached 50 or 55? They have to go out at this age to look for a living everyday *contre vent et marée*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There are not many of them. But, can't we take back their fishermen cards and give them a compensation and some sort of pension, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Lastly, I come again to another housing problem. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a few of the CHA estates, there are to be found still some houses made of asbestos and corrugated iron sheets. Even the partitions are made with that type of asbestos partition *avec des tôles CIS*. I have seen a few of these houses which are mostly of

old couples. They bought these houses 40 or 50 years ago. They have grown old in these houses. *Les tôles sont percées*, when it rains, it leaks and they are living in a very difficult situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is it not possible to identify that category of citizens, old couples, old people living in CIS houses made of asbestos, old houses, decrepit, which have to be pulled down because they don't have the means to pull down like all other people? Young couples have made beautiful houses out of their *cité* houses, with *profilage* and so on, but this old generation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are a few still around. I think the poverty programme should also look for these types of cases.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have finished with poverty and I'll come to my last point. The last comment I'll make on another subject, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about salary compensation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the announcement of the hon. Minister about the decision of Government to pay salary compensation has dealt the death blow to the National Pay Council. It has swept away totally whatever little credibility was left as far as the NPC was concerned and, rightly so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this announcement of salary compensation by the hon. Minister was tantamount to an *enterrement de première classe de la NPC*. It has rendered *caduc* and redundant the NPC. But we must appreciate the fact that the hon. Minister has now agreed that the criteria that determines the quantum of the compensation should be reviewed and this in conformity with the request to the unions since the setting up of the infamous NPC. *Je salue bien bas la décision du ministre* at long last. *Mieux vaut tard que jamais, M. le président.*

In fact, since the Government took office and implemented its decision of doing away with the tripartite and replacing it by the NPC, year in and year out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the unions and the Opposition tried to bring Government to

reason to review this decision which had raised so much opprobrium from the unions and had created so much tension in the social front. Government did not listen to the voice of reason all these years, Government instead used this as a weapon to divide the trade unions and destabilise the trade union movement. I had myself personally asked several Parliamentary Questions and made several interventions on this issue. We had pleaded to Government and tried to convince the hon. Members of Government not to do away with the formula that had guaranteed social stability in the country since the days of old Labour Government and which had, in fact, been set up before 1982 by the then Labour Minister of Finance. We renewed our attempts even after the implementation of the sad decision of Government.

Ten days before the Budget was presented, you will remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a Private Notice Question put by the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the hon. Minister of Finance asking whether salary compensation would be granted. In fact, two supplementary questions were asked, one by hon. P. Jugnauth and one by myself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My question was: Doesn't the hon. Minister think that by introducing these new criteria, now that the NPC has been with us for a few years, the end result is that the salary compensation paid to workers has been lesser than it should have been and had not the NPC taken into consideration these new criteria like productivity, capacity to pay and so on, the compensation would have been fairer? Of course, the hon. Minister said: Not true. All right, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but be that as it may, the decision is now taken, but, I think, the country still wants to know why the hon. Minister did not call all the different trade union federations and inform them about his decision to grant a compensation as from the beginning of January, as was announced. Why did he have to make a secret of it? Why did he have to pick and choose? As he himself said in his interview, he called a few trade unionists at his office and secretly consulted them about

the grant of the salary compensation which he would announce in his Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

What had the hon. Minister hoped to achieve by this *effet de surprise*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The Minister could have announced publicly to the trade unions and the country at large of his commendable decision and intention to review the criteria and the terms of reference which had guided so far the NPC. He could have suspended temporarily the NPC and could have met all the trade unions *dans un esprit de tripartisme* and announced publicly his decision to grant a salary compensation to the workers of this country as from January next year. This could not only have been in tune with a genuine spirit of *tripartisme*, it would have won the Government political mileages, but it would have also avoided the hon. Minister of Finance the need to hide from the National Assembly Government decision to grant the salary compensation when the Leader of the Opposition queried him in the House. Since he has, himself, said, in his interview, that the decision to grant compensation was taken about a month prior to the Budget presentation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2006 the workers of this country - when I talked about compensation, I have to say that again - have been hit with a double blow, blasted twice in terms of an inadequate salary compensation compounded with the depreciation of the rupee so much so, that even this last announcement of the Minister, about the 3.5%, has certainly not helped the workers to catch up. In other words, when one computes the average rate of salary compensation and the inflation over the past five years, the conclusion reveals about 18% loss in purchasing power.

But, more sadly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this unfair treatment meted out to the workers of this country, represents several billions of rupees of savings for the employers and the State also as employer. It, in fact, represents a transfer of about Rs11

m. which had not, in fact, shifted to *l'ensemble de la classe des travailleurs* by refusing to pay adequate compensation. Inflation is a tax on the poor, but the inflation rate for basic necessities like food and clothing is even higher than the overall inflation rate. We all know that. Mr Eric Ng also said in an article that inflation for basic necessities like food and clothing is even higher than the official inflation rate. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this explains today the pauperisation that has grown in this country, the level of indebtedness of the Mauritian households.

According to official statistics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, between 2005 and 2008, personal loans, including housing loans, have increased in the amount of 60% for the population. According to the CSO, in spite of the rise in the GDP for the last three years, the share in terms of salary ratio to GDP has decreased from 2005 to 2009. I have with me the statistics. For the year 2005, the ratio salary to GDP was 42.5; in 2006, it decreased to 41.0; in 2007, it decreased further to 40.5; in 2008, it went up to 41.1 and in 2009 to 41.3. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we retain from this is that from 2005 to 2007, the ratio salary to GDP decreased by 2.5. The ratio went up again in 2008 to 41.1 due to the implementation of the PRB.

But it is still lower than the ratio of 2005 which is 42.5, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, more importantly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since workers of the private sector did not benefit from any PRB, it is evident that in terms of *répartition de la richesse*, this segment of the workforce, private sector workers who are, in fact, creating *la richesse de notre pays*, they have suffered still more losses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me, I will end, very briefly, on a few comments on "*Ile Maurice Durable*", Green Mauritius and *le climat social dans le pays*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, I will congratulate the Minister on this chapter of Green Mauritius and développement durable. Certaines mesures sont

louables, mais, par contre, M. le président, il faut souligner que l'absence d'une stratégie nationale de développement durable se fait durablement sentir. Pour élaborer une telle stratégie, il fallait mettre l'emphase sur un processus d'élaboration de qualité afin de dégager un plus large consensus possible pour évidemment intégrer toutes les préoccupations écologiques, économiques, sociales de la société civile, les opérateurs économiques, les ONG, les politiques, l'opposition inclut, M. le président.

Il nous faut réfléchir en terme de la création d'un conseil national de développement durable afin de pérenniser la stratégie de développement durables au-delà des mandats électoraux, M. le président. C'est vrai que le gouvernement fait de même. Il y les campagnes de sensibilisation. Mais ces campagnes de sensibilisation, M. le président, ne sont que des feux de pailles s'il n'y a pas d'approche globale des décisions cohérentes et consistantes et des indicateurs fiables pour évaluer le progrès. L'État doit donner l'exemple, M. le président. Il faut arrêter les pratiques non-durables, comme ce fût le cas de l'introduction de l'extraction du sable dans nos lagons et l'introduction de l'essence sans plomb. Il faut, M. le président, cesser ou ralentir la sur-urbanisation du littoral, les extractions des concombres de mer, le pillage de nos îlots, de nos réserves et surveiller scrupuleusement, M. le président, qu'il y ait des *EIA* pour des projets comme des centrales à charbon ou des projets comme le projet de Jinfei.

M. le président, la gestion de toutes les ressources, y compris financière d'une façon durable est aussi un élément essentiel de la stratégie de développement durable. *What do I mean by that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?* Le ministre des finances, très souvent, nous parle des recettes de l'État, mais il faut aussi, M. le président, réfléchir sur les dépenses inutiles, l'inefficience des corps parapublics, la *NTC*, la *STC*, la *CWA* - je ne vais pas revenir sur tout cela - les scandales, la réforme du service civil se fait attendre, le *low motivation*, M. le président, tout ce

capital humain gaspillé, la gestion approximative des services de l'État, le pillage dans les collectivités locales, remplacement du rond point de Caudan par les feux, etc. Nous avons entendu de tout cela, M. le président.

Finalement, M. le président, il faut ensemble, dans cette Chambre, réfléchir sur la dimension sociale du développement durable. Dans le contexte du développement durable, le social n'est pas une option. Elle est la finalité du développement économique. En effet, l'amélioration de la qualité de la vie de la population est l'objectif premier du développement économique. Mais a-t-on entendu jusqu'à présent des allusions, des références qui sont faites par le gouvernement à ce pilier social dans le discours sur le développement durable? Rien, malheureusement, M. le président ! Et en faisant cela, on fausse tout le concept et toute la notion du développement durable.

Alors, île Maurice sociale aujourd'hui, M. le président, quel constat? Accroissement de la pauvreté, la paupérisation de la classe moyenne, un mal vivre profond, violences domestiques, crimes atroces et barbares, petites délinquances, M. le président, délinquances juvéniles, violences passives des mauriciens...

(Interruptions)

Ce n'est pas le gouvernement que je blâme, mais nous savons tous, aujourd'hui, dans quel climat nous vivons. Vous arrêtez sur un parking, il faut faire attention, M. le président. On s'emporte pour n'importe quoi, aujourd'hui, à l'île Maurice. L'attrait de l'argent facile, le 'zougadérisme', le 'triangage' et le 'traficotage', M. le président, on dévalue l'effort, le travail et la persévérance, la prostitution, *trace-tracé*, la drogue et le Subutex. *Five years lost!* Et pourtant on est tous d'accord sur la finalité du développement économique. Il faut améliorer la qualité de la vie de nos citoyens. Il faut que notre population s'épanouisse. Il faut l'utilisation judicieuse de notre capital lui-même.

M. le président, je pose la question finale : quel a été le mode d'opération du gouvernement depuis 2005 ? Quel a été le message central? Quelle a été sa stratégie privilégiée ? Quand nous regardons le budget, il n'y a que deux citations de l'honorable ministre, celle de Madame Hilary Clinton à la page 5 et Monsieur Fabiano Bastos à la page 8. On n'entend plus parler de Joël de Rosnay, le pilote du MID. Les deux seules références de l'honorable ministre Sithanen sont des aveux en soi. Toute la stratégie du gouvernement s'est améliorée, le climat des affaires, le *business facilitation*, sans se soucier du climat social, la profitabilité des entreprises sans se soucier de la précarisation des travailleurs, de l'emploi. Je fais référence à la nouvelle loi du travail. M. le président, sur le front social, je dirai, des années perdues, malheureusement. Avant de conclure, je...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Thank you.

Mr Ganoo: Je conclus sur une note plus positive, M. le président. Je salue le Premier ministre parce que je fais une dernière intervention sur nos institutions. Le budget, c'est le volet économique. Mais, M. le président, l'économie c'est le concentré de la politique, n'est-ce pas? La politique ce sont les institutions. Je salue le Premier ministre d'avoir circulé une motion concernant cette proposition de *live telecasting of our debates*. M. le président, *I think before the motion is going to be debated, we have to saluer très bas cette decision*, c'est un bel exemple du jeu de la démocratie. M. le président, l'honorable Bhagwan, moi-même, tout le monde ici, les amis du MSM aussi, nous avons plusieurs fois posé des questions sur cette possibilité de téléviser les débats. C'est un bel exemple du jeu de la démocratie, M. le président. Nous saluons le Premier ministre pour son ouverture d'esprit dans ce sens là. Mais c'est un pas, il y a encore quatre pas à faire dans la même direction *as far as the institutions are concerned*. M. le président, en ce qui concerne la réforme électorale, on est tous d'accord, il faut trouver la solution ; le

financement des partis politiques, M. le président. L'île Maurice moderne a besoin d'un projet de loi consensuel qui fait l'unanimité sur le financement des parties politiques. Les *electoral reforms*. Nous avons soumis nos propositions, vous avez vu dans les journaux, M. le président. Le ballon est dans le camp de la Commission Électorale, sur les réformes électorales, M. le président. Le quatrième pas, peut-être le plus difficile, c'est ce problème de *Best Loser* et de communalisme. Cela aussi, maintenant avec le jugement du Comité des Droits des Nations Unies, je crois que le débat va revenir sur le tapis et il faut que les têtes pensantes de tous les grands et petits partis aussi trouvent la solution, M. le président.

Est-ce qu'on peut trouver une solution finalement pour qu'un candidat ne déclare pas sa communauté ? M. le président, la balle est partie. Maintenant, je crois qu'on ne peut pas jouer à l'autruche, il faut trouver une solution à ce problème.

M. le président, pour conclure, dans le cadre du jeu démocratique, dans l'esprit qui anime une démocratie digne de ce nom, dans le respect de nos traditions démocratiques, nous avons fait, de ce côté de la Chambre, des commentaires, des critiques, *but there was nothing personal about it*. Au pouvoir, nous avons dirigé dans l'unité, nous avons essayé de promouvoir la justice sociale, nous avons dirigé dans la stabilité, nous avons dirigé dans le respect de nos institutions. Nous avons perdu les élections, M. le président, nous avons respecté...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! I would like to hear hon. Ganoo. Thank you!

Mr Ganoo: Nous avons perdu par quelques milliers de votes, nous avons respecté le verdict des urnes, nous sommes sortis par la grande porte, M. le

président. En politique, comme vous le savez, il ne suffit pas d'avoir raison. Aujourd'hui, le MMM est prêt, nous avons le programme, la compétence, l'expérience, le *leadership*, nous sommes au seuil des élections générales, le peuple sera appelé à trancher de nouveau, nos *leaders* politiques s'appêtent à lancer leur campagne et je prie qu'ils le fassent en privilégiant les intérêts du pays et non pas à leur égo respectif mais, *the Almighty showers his grace on little Mauritius*.

Merci, M. le président.

(3.44 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr J. Valayden): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to the majority of orators and the very few that I have not listened to I have read what they have said.

I have been here listening to the hon. friends from the Opposition. Sometimes I am as a firebrand compared to my friend who just spoke before me who has been very mild. It is very difficult to follow because of different characters. Today, I really feel that the body language of my friend was not really in it, he was not saying things with the conviction as last year or the year before. Maybe he...

(Interruptions)

I have noticed also that the colour of his tie is green. But I have listened to my friends. There is one thing that we can *synthétiser*. We have two Oppositions. From one side, we have heard some proposals.

(Interruptions)

No, hon. Guimbeau is neither here nor there, he wants to be everywhere and ends up in the sea without something on his head! But from this side of the Opposition, we have heard proposals. We may agree or we may not agree, but

things have been proposed, figures have been mentioned. Therefore, I have heard that there is a *force de proposition* after touring the island. I have listened to my friends, hon. Bodha, hon. Dowarkasing, the ladies from the other side. I was congratulated by the hon. ladies from this side of the Opposition; I feel very proud. I don't know if from this side they are bereft of ideas or are now bankrupt or demoralised, but it seems that they oppose on all fronts and propose nothing. I thought, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, honestly, there would have been at least some proposals from our friend, hon. Alan Ganoo. But, unfortunately, I tried to listen to him, I forced myself to try to read between the lines, and nothing! One thing he has said during his intervention is that the present Government has surfed on the structures set up by the MSM/MMM Government. Sometimes we have to pitch to listen to the speech of hon. Ganoo. But this one was not a joke, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Is it a joke when we know very well the phrase that has been coined: '*état d'urgence économique*'? How can we have surfed on the structures set up by the other side? What are the structures? I would have thought for one second that my hon. friend will give us a list of the ex-structures they have set up and on which we have surfed. They have left so many surfs for Dr. Sithanen to surf on. But where are the surfs? If they have set up the structures that we have surfed upon, it means that the criticisms against the Minister of Finance, hon. Dr. Sithanen, do not hold water. If he has surfed on the structures, it means that he has only cut and paste what they have been doing. How can he go wrong? They are criticising him that he is wrong, he has been ultraliberal but, at the same time, they are saying: *pile je gagne et face tu perds*. This is the sort of thing that they want to tell us.

Secondly, on the FDI, up to 2005, the average has been Rs1 billion, and for us, it is R8 billion - eight hundred times more FDI than the Government of MSM has been investing in the country. And yet, they are saying to us that we have surfed on their structures. Have we surfed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on Jinfei

where we have an investment of Rs25 billion that will create 40,000 jobs up to a period of five years? I repeat: Rs25 billion and 40,000 jobs.

(Interruptions)

In fact, even ginseng, we have to replant it every eight years! I asked myself if the Opposition from this side will not have to be replanted in 100 years' time! I have listened to all these things, and nothing!

Good measures have been outweighed by others that are wrong. In fact, from hon. Ganoo, we would get a lot of truth, but we would have to look for it. There have been a lot of good measures.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a phrase from Aragon who was the communist thinker. My friend, hon. Ganoo, knows a lot about *La Révolution Permanente d'Aragon, un membre du parti communiste Français à un certain moment, dont la femme était Elsa Triolet*. Aragon dit –

« *Quand on ne comprend pas, on accuse.* »

This is the only conclusion, the only surmise I am led, is that there has not been any understanding of what we are proposing. This is why they are accusing us. They are not accusing us in the style of Emile Zola - *J'accuse dans l'affaire Dreyfus*. They are accusing us meekly, trying to say 'je t'accuse', but they are running at the same time because they know what they are saying does not hold water. If any Member of the Opposition has said to us that today this is what is happening. Let us ask any member of the public what is happening to Dubai, to Greece, to Denmark of all countries. Let us ask how many countries have gone to the doldrums. Even "The Guardian" of today is having four pages on Dubai. Has hon. Ganoo for once said to us that there have been seven main challenges to this Government? The *démantèlement de l'accord multi-fibre*; the 33% decrease of the price of sugar, the soaring price of oil, the surging price of food, as has been

said by hon. Dr. Sithanen, the Chikungunya, N1H1, the swine fever and the sudden floods.

Chikungunya has been there against the Opposition! The backdrops have been the financial crisis, the biggest recession of all. We have been living at a period with all these things. Were these seven factors made within the Republic of Mauritius? They were made outside there. They have experienced all that, yet they do not have the experience to look at these seven factors. They are the razor factors of recession, financial crisis and Chikungunya. *L'effet du rasoir à tous les niveaux!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is why we can't continue like this. In fact, the Budget before us is about "shaping recovery to accelerate job creation". My friend said that we have been surfing on the structures. Have they done something for the SMEs? Out of the 40,000 jobs created, 24,000 have been created by SMEs because we have invested a lot in SMEs. My friend, hon. Dr. Jeetah, has more than quadrupled the number of SMEs in Mauritius. My good friend, hon. Gowressoo, has been doing a lot, and today, 24,000 out of 40,000 jobs created in Mauritius have been from the SMEs. Has there been a word on that subject? Structures! What structures! I hope that the next orator from this side of the Opposition will come and tell us what are the structures they have put into place that are helping us now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that it is not necessary to go further. There was something that was said during the Clinton campaign about 12 years ago. It was said that the Opposition there wished that the economy went really bad, that every indicator would turn red for them to come to power. This is what some from the Opposition side are praying at. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the Opposition has such a nightmare, the only time that the economy will go bad is when they

will return to power. I don't think I will have to dwell more on the Opposition because I have not heard a lot, but I will try to stick myself to some of the big proposals in the Budget.

What is the aim of this Budget? It is about “shaping recovery to accelerate job creation”. Is there here a word saying that everything is smooth? Is there a word, among these six words, which says that the economy is already rosy? “Shaping the recovery” - this is what the hon. Minister of Finance has been proposing in this Budget, to the country. The proposals are that we must shape the recovery. This means that we have a lot of hard work to do, we have to be cagey and cautious and we have to continue to pursue the path that we have taken. Recovery for what? Is it recovery to do certain things for the few? It is the recovery to make sure that every person in this country has a job. Because in the *l'Alliance sociale*, we believe that *la dignité de l'homme est d'abord et avant tout le travail*. This is what this Government thinks and this is what this Government believes. It believes in creating jobs because those who don't work don't have dignity. Therefore, ‘shaping recovery’ to accelerate job creation.

The second one is “consolidating social progress to embed inclusive growth”. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are very important words. ‘Consolidating’ because we know that the situation is volatile. ‘social progress’ means that *l'Alliance Sociale* puts social progress as one of its objectives. It is important. “to embed inclusive growth” means that we have to nail down everything that we do, everything that we are planning to do, we want to do and we wish to do has to be inclusive and not for a minority.

The third one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is something that goes with the tie of our friend: sustaining Green Mauritius to mitigate the impact of climate change. “Sustaining Green Mauritius” is not a project that we are talking now, but I will come to that later.

Coming to the Budget, I would like to talk on culture. What I have said is only to respond to what the Opposition has said. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let's be fair! I might even be unfair to the first Government of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. But, on this Budget, under the leadership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, has there been one Government that has invested so much in culture? The answer is "no". Let's go and read all the Budgets previous to this Government. This is the first time that we have invested so much in culture and for that we must thank the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, hon. Dr. Sithanen and also my friend, the Minister of Education, hon. Dr. Bunwaree. Let's stop for one second! I was part of the team – it is important to know it - for Aapravasi Ghat. Aapravasi Ghat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is as if giving you the wrong syllabus - the syllabus of Greek - and asking you to sit for Chemistry examinations. The dossier for Aapravasi Ghat was really in a mess when we took over. When I went there, with my friend, hon. Gowressoo, I told him that I am going there to get a resit. There was nothing in the dossier. It was as if a student has photocopied from everywhere to try to tell his parents that he is reading when, in fact, he is reading an erotic book. This is what was happening to the dossier of Aapravasi Ghat.

(Interruptions)

We have not only to pay for the resit, but we have to bear the consequences of people who have been amateurish in preparing a dossier of the history of our forebears. We went to UNESCO and we won, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It was my finest time. I have been Barrister, I have won at the Assizes, at the special Assizes; I won the case of Azy when the whole country was telling me that the person was guilty. The whole country was against me. But when you speak for your country, you have the weight of history on top of your head. After speaking in front of UNESCO, more than 1,000 people rose up to applaud and cried together with me. This was the day I knew that we have made it because we have made history and

we have made a place - Aapravasi Ghat - which will tell the sufferings of our forebears. That was enough. The Prime Minister gave me the opportunity again in the case of Le Morne. We won again. It is not a symbol for slavery, it is the single symbol for resistance, for those who have resisted. Mauritians are resistant - *la résistance, la résilience forment partie de notre ADN*. Today, when I read that this Government is investing massively to have a corridor between Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne, how can one not feel proud? A corridor of humanity; a corridor that will tell this blue planet: 'In the middle of the Indian Ocean, on an island of 720 square miles, we will have a corridor from resistance to liberty; a corridor where cultures will meet; a corridor that will tell that the sufferings of men and women don't have caste, race in it, don't have whatever racism in it, it is a question of the fighting of men. How can we not be proud? We are not only investing in the culture. Do you know the granary? The granary has been there for many years. Nobody had any inkling of what to do with it. Suddenly, this Government, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister came with the idea to make it a museum; not a dormant museum, but a museum that will make you feel it is true, a museum not only with photos, but with all the modern facilities and, at the same time, it will make you feel what we are doing for our country, what our culture is about and also the other cultures because there is no superior and no inferior culture. At the granary, it is about history, culture, languages. It is an immense place. So, children will learn. There will be interaction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of people was telling me: what are we going at the District Court of Port Louis? They said that I am mad, I am going to have another Court at the District Court which was abandoned because the roof was falling apart, the floor, the water supply, the toilets were not good. With less than Rs4 m., we refurbished the District Court and today the District Court is the place

where the Privy Council has sat and today it is the place where we have the Commercial Court and where we have the statue of Anjalay.

The same thing will happen to culture. We have the example of Plaza. I was born in Stanley. I am a son of Stanley. I am proud to be a son of Stanley and an orphan from Stanley. There were people who were at the helm of power here. The roof of Plaza was leaking. Nobody saw what was happening to Plaza. People who went to Plaza for wedding party have to leave at 8 or 9 o'clock. If they want to dance, they have to stop at 8 or 9 o'clock. Plaza was in a bad state. Not a single cent was spent under the MMM Government in Plaza. Nothing!

(Interruptions)

Plaza culture! Is culture not important? If we are here today, if we are resistant today, if we know our history today, if we know our languages today, it's because we have culture. It's culture that makes us what we are - new Mauritians. It's culture that will bring the new man - *l'homme nouveau*, as Che Guevara said in the 1960s and in Mauritius we are building *l'homme nouveau*. When things were difficult, money was put by the Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, and hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen in the Plaza. But now, when things are getting rosy, what is happening? We are completely renovating Plaza in order to make Plaza a *place pour l'opéra*. I can hear already what they will be saying: *l'opéra est pour les bourgeois, l'opéra est pour certains*. But it is those who don't know what music is about. It is those who don't know what plays are about. It is those who think that it is not something that has to be done. If we have culture, if we open the minds of Mauritians, we will no longer have frontiers and we are building *l'homme nouveau*. But not only Plaza, *nous aurons l'orchestre national*. This country is a country of musicians. One of the first statues that we erected in Mauritius is the

statue of Paul et Virginie from the author Bernardin de St. Pierre, the statue of love representing a character who sacrificed himself and swam in the rough seas. It is not only renovating Plaza, but also the Theatre of Port Louis. The Theatre was built by people from South India.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only Plaza...

(Interruptions)

Paul et Virginie is the history behind it. But we also have the Theatre of Port Louis. We are now doing something extraordinary. Before it was a pleasure to go to *les grandes fêtes du MMM, il y avait tous les chanteurs engagés*. What are we doing now? Now, we are doing something for the artists. There is no place in Mauritius to have a *festival de musique pendant 24 heures*. It is very difficult. You cannot go in a stadium. If you go in a stadium, you are going to damage *la pelouse*. If you go to *stade de Rose Hill*, you are going to damage *la piste synthétique*.

(Interruptions)

Le stade de Sir Gaëtan Duval! I thank hon. Allet for saying it.

What are we doing now, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that with my friends, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, hon. Dr. Sithanen and the hon. Prime Minister, we are going to have a place around the Anjalay Stadium in the open air where there would be a podium. *La sonorisation sera là* where we can have festivals for 24 hours of music and this will not hinder the life of the neighbourhood. What is the difference between us and them? It is not a question that we are more intelligent. It is a question that we care for the music lovers, for the artists, for the people. That is why we come with bright ideas because we are honest in our endeavour. We have values. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even the history of Anjalay, we have music in it.

La culture again will be at the centre of everything. I am not talking about the different slams, the marathon *des mots* that my friend is introducing. I am not talking about the different CDs, I am not talking about the help that has been given. I am not talking about the different Cultural Centres, about the Speaking Unions that we are bringing and among them, there will be the Tamil Speaking Union, the Creole Speaking Union, the Telegu Speaking Union, the Marathi Speaking Union, the Bhojpuri Speaking Union. This is the Government that is investing in these languages; Bhojpuri, Creole - two national languages of the country - and there are other ancestral languages. Of course, we have Mandarin and all of them!

This is the first time in the history of Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are investing so much in culture. When you see a Government investing so much in culture, it is a Government which is planning for the future. This is a Government which is planning for tolerance, for civilisation and setting new values for the Mauritius of tomorrow. The new values for the Mauritius of tomorrow are being planted now in culture by the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. I must thank the Prime Minister and I am sure that the nation will recall in 20, 25 or 50 years time and will thank the whole Cabinet, and particularly hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, hon. Dr. Sithanen and Dr. Bunwaree. I have finished with part one of my speech.

(Interruptions)

Let me come to Sports. Don't worry, there are only three more parts! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *demain aura lieu le tirage au sort pour la coupe du monde*, England will be one of the seeding group whereas France will not be. What have we done? It is for the first time that we are going to invest in Sir Gaëtan Duval Stadium; we are going to invest in the Anjalay Stadium, Latour Adrien Stadium, Ram Ruhee Stadium, St François Xavier Stadium. This Government is going to

invest Rs14 m. only to do one thing, put light everywhere *et les floodlights* at the international norms *qui fonctionnent comme-ci vous êtes à l'Emirates ou au Old Trafford*. It is not only because of the World Cup, these Rs12 m. that we are putting there are to say to our youngsters: “You have to practise sports, you are going to practise sports. We are going to help you”. We are going to help 24 different clubs of the MFA. We are again investing in sports massively for the first time. We are going to build a stadium in the South of the country. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us look at what the Government is doing for Sports and the moment, *l'investissement* not only in Mauritius but *l'investissement* in Rodrigues for sports as well. Therefore only when you take sports apart and when you look about what has been going on with the cash rewards in sports, you must say that this Government is investing a lot and the money spent will be there to trigger *l'enthousiasme des jeunes*. Once you have *l'enthousiasme des jeunes*, it is only then and there that you will have results. What did the hon. Prime Minister say? He said that we must aim to qualify for the World Cup. The hon. Prime Minister tells us that we must qualify for the World Cup. It is not a dream. We have the capacity to do it and we are investing the money in sports today. It is not only in football, we are investing in other areas and I am sure that the Minister will be very happy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the third point is about fight against poverty. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you might not agree with hon. Dr. Sithanen. You might say that you do not like Dr. Sithanen. It might not be a question of his policies, it might be that you do not like him and the easiest way to say that you do not like him is to say that he is an ultra-liberal. But, name me the ultra-liberal who fights for the poor! Name me the ultra-liberal who will try to do what this Government has done for the poor! Give me only one area!

Everybody tells us that you must do a lot for housing. This is true, without education and housing you cannot fight poverty. But, what kind of housing? We

have been building houses in Mauritius for a long period of time, but what has been the result? I know the NHDC of Camp Levieux very well, I know the NHDC of Beau Vallon and that of La Tour Koenig also. I have been organising demonstrations in all these NHDCs. I know them very well. But, can we only have cosmetic changes in these NHDCs and we say that we will help the poor? Hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen proposed us something different. We start with *le projet de Bambous*. The Bambous project is very good and it is called La Valette, but I prefer the Bambous project because *le bambou est flexible et ce n'est pas comme les arbres qui sont résilients*. In the case of Bambous project, Government has made Bambous as a model in order to learn from it and replicate it elsewhere. In Bambous you have a social contract. There you are not only giving them housing, but also education. In Bambous you are not only giving them education, but also employment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You are following them, fighting all the other things and empowering the women there. You are empowering the mothers; you are following if their children are going to school or they are failing to go to school and if it is so then why are they not going to school? You are giving them food, copybooks, textbooks, computers for those who are at higher levels. So, this is an integrated project because this Government has invested in the NHDC. This Government has given people the land for the houses of the CHA. But, in the Bambous project, we are planting the seed about what Mauritius of tomorrow will be. What are we doing? When you give somebody a house, you are also investing in education so that that person might master his own destiny. Paolo Freire said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - "*We must not be the shadow of other people*". The only way of not to be the shadow of other people is through education and this is what this Government is doing. What is education about? What do we want to do with our system of education? What do we want to do with education? We want education to become the greatest equaliser of all. This is the greatest equaliser! We

may have laws, but if you do not use education as a tool to equalise people and to broaden the circle of opportunities, then you fail. This is why, again for education, I must say: “thank you”. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the first time we are now increasing the number of people who will go for tertiary education. We are going to get 11,000, which means that 8,000 more will join the tertiary education. I listened to hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, 8,000 more means that we will reach 65% of student population who will go into tertiary education. This is very high, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

What Chacha Ramgoolam did in 1976 was to give a chance to students like me to go to college. Today, this Government is giving the chance to those who have never gone for the tertiary education to do so. But this Government is not stopping here. One may ask the question to hon. Dr. Bunwaree about what are we doing. There will be E-Education, the E-Project, with this project hundreds of thousands of people will get a second opportunity for education. It is in the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not travelling outside the Budget. These are the things that we intend to do. With the Open University, what have I not heard! The law that we have cut and paste! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must be serious, we are planning and coming with the Open University and it will start to work in a question of months. While with them it was a question of “we are going to have an Open University, but it will be opened when the skies open”. So, there was nothing at all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again on education, it is the same ambition: to equalise people and giving them the chance because you will not have all the people equal, but we are giving them the chances.

Now on Environment briefly...

The Deputy Speaker: Before the Minister goes on environment, how long is that part likely to be?

Mr Valayden: I am going to have 30 minutes more.

The Deputy Speaker: Then I will break for half an hour for tea and we will resume in 30 minutes.

At 4.20 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.56 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was referring to the subject of environment - Green Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we perhaps forget sometimes that we are one of the rare countries in the world that has lost 90% of our forest. Today what remains is only 10% of our forest. The deforestation programme has been done first and foremost by the Dutch and then has continued on. Today, when we see sugar cane everywhere, we are happy, but it's at the expense of a forest. And, therefore, when the Prime Minister, Dr Navin Ramgoolam, comes with the project of Green Mauritius, l'Ile Durable, we were ahead of many countries, of many conventions on that subject. And today I want briefly to dwell on what we are doing concerning Green Mauritius. At the moment, with my friend, the Minister of Agriculture, we are planting trees. The project is to plant one million trees and we have been planting 10,000 trees. We have given 10,000 trees - jackfruit trees, citrus trees, and breadfruits - to households and we have also given ornamental plants to people living in the towns. What is the reason behind it? The reason is to change the mindset, is to force people to think about nature – I spoke earlier about culture – a sort of culture of nurturing, culture of nature. If you want to protect the planet, if you want to have some hope for Copenhagen in the days to come, it is not a small country like ours that can say that we will cut our carbon emission, we may

promise it but, in proof, what are we doing as a small country, what are we doing as a person, as a household? This is why the Government comes with the idea that everybody must plant something and we are going to change the mindset and perhaps in ten or twenty years' time, we will have a new Green Mauritius.

In the Budget, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have a plethora of ideas, for example, five wind turbines for Rodrigues. Perhaps we have forgotten already the one million bulbs changing to low cost energy saving that is now costing the country a saving of Rs52 m. and we are going further with that change. We have not stopped there. We have gone with something which perhaps has gone unnoticed – the energy audits. We have started energy audits in 27 manufacturing plants. 15 have already been completed. It might be cosmetics. It might be routine. But what are we doing with it? We are asking that industry to question itself.

Why is it using X amount of energy? It will help the nation. Are we stopping there? No, we are not stopping there! We are going now to have a Climate Changing Unit. I have gone through the Internet to try to see which country has inspired us to have this unit. No country has it. Surprisingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, no country has set up a Climate Unit. We are witnessing it. Have we seen a month of October as rainy as the last one? We have not yet passed the cap of 30° C. In November, we are having *les lauriers qui fleurissent*. In September last, in the yard of *Notre Dame de Lourdes* à Rose-Hill, *les flamboyants étaient en fleur*. There is a change in climate. My good friend, the hon. Minister of Tourism, is looking at the sky from his office. Why is he looking at the sky? If one starts to gauge how many rainy days we are having in Mauritius, I am wondering whether we are not having more rainy days than sunny days. There is a change.

We are witnessing a change in Mauritius. Two days ago, there was an earthquake at 120 kms North-East of Rodrigues. There are a series of things on the questions of solar energy. Let's say, for one second, that there have been expenditure, expenses that were not guaranteed, there has been some *largesse* from some people that have done some tricks, using malevolent ways to get some money out of the solar water system. The casualty might be 10%, 20%, but, at the end of the day, you have changed Mauritius. Everybody is talking about installing a solar energy panel in his home. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is changing things. In five years, we are going to change all the street lights in the country, and replacing them with low energy consuming ones. We are changing things. We are going to change the old 800 buses; we are changing the street lights; we are changing the way we are consuming electricity; we are having audits. We are also going to have *le degré de salaison, le type de pollution pour nos eaux marines*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to be serious. In fact, my good friend, hon. Dowarkasing – I know his credentials - will tell us that we are not doing enough. Maybe! But we are, at least, doing certain things that were not done before. We must accept that fact. They are asking us where is Professor de Rosnay. It is like an agenda. We have an agenda, when you have already completed what is on the agenda, we move on. We are moving. The country is moving on many fronts. So, we must not play politics on that issue. On the issue of environment, solar energy, green issue, I believe that we must all join hands, because it is above politics. Some are playing politics with that. We can't play politics. I remember, in 1996, how I have been called all sorts of names when I started to speak about the subject. But, now, it's now or never. Do you know what the Chinese say? There is an old proverb from China, in the times of Confucius: "the best time to plant a tree was 20

years' time, and the next best time to plant a tree is now". This is what this Government is doing. Mr Speaker, Sir, last year, the Budget itself was green. My friend, hon. Rama Sithanen, knew that I was going to talk about green issues today and he has a green tie like hon. Ganoo and my friend, hon. Dowarkasing.

With regard to tourism, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Environment has played his role; the hon. Prime Minister has been the driving force as well as the hon. Minister of Tourism. What are we going to have now? We will no longer have hotels with all sorts of buildings in concrete. No. They must pass another sort of test now: *le test vert, le test environnemental*. Tourists will come to Mauritius - 80% of our tourists come from European countries – and they will judge us as to whether we are green enough. In England, for example, 35% of the under 30s are vegetarians. Therefore, the hotels will start to cater in the coming years for vegetarians, because those who are green conscious like Paul McCartney - the majority of great artists are vegetarians - when they come to Mauritius, there will be a change in the mindset; people will start to go green. Perhaps, they will not be vegetarians all year round, but they will become choosy. They will not eat anything. So, again, we must be careful and, that's why, when, I heard my friend, hon. Varma, talked on certain issues concerning animal rights, he rang a bell, because I am also for many of these green issues.

Let's come to another thing, if not, I can go on and on on green issues, and I know that my friend, hon. Soodhun, will speak after me and will come to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It is *le 'Coup de Sithanen et de Ramgoolam'* – CSR! It is Rs1 billion that will be used for projects by NGOs. They call my friend ultra-liberal. He is not from the school of Friedman! Friedman said that it is not for the businesses to invest in Corporate Social Responsibility. They have to invest and get returns for their shareholders. But,

here, this Government is using 2% which will be used to invest in a lot of important, interesting things for the country. I will not name them. What is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, is - we are one year from the election - if really this Government was a Government meaning only to do politics and wanted to use that fund for political reason, it would never have put in place an independent committee to monitor the money we are going to get from the private sector in order to do certain things for the people of this country. Rs1 billion and, yet, there will be independent people like Mr Dadjee, who is the Chairperson, if I am not mistaken. There will be criteria, and if they pass the criteria, that money will be used.

Therefore, the Opposition cannot accuse the Government that this money will be used for electoral purposes. If it was so, we would have made a list for 20 constituencies, and that's it! There would have been Rs15 m. per constituency. This is a Government that is trying to tell the private sector that they are going to invest 2% and Rs1 billion will be invested into projects that will be well meaning for the society. Well meaning in the sense of fighting poverty; Rs1 billion to fight for green issues; Rs1 billion to fight illiteracy. Therefore, CSR, *le 'Coup de Sithanen et de Ramgoolam'*, will be in the interest of the nation. Therefore, hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen and hon. Dr. Ramgoolam have to be proud of that *coup*. I believe they really need our applause for what they have done on that issue.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, are you aware of *une école de football à Camp Le Vieux?* *Une école de foot par la Mauritius Commercial Bank. L'argent de Rogers a été utilisé pour la lutte contre le sida. Nous avons le projet 'Hope' de Beachcomber.* Perhaps, I am not someone who is pro-private sector. When people are doing certain right things, we must appreciate and ask them to continue. That 2% is the

minimum. Some of them might do more. Therefore, the Corporate Social Responsibility is in the Budget, and I believe it is a concept that will stay with us forever.

Concerning law and order, Mr Speaker Sir, I have with me the Digest of Crime, Justice and Security Statistics 2007. My friend, hon. Dr. Sithamen, knows there was none before. We had a meeting and we said that we must have the figures. We must not speak lightly, without knowing the facts and we came out with the first one. This will be a tool for all sociologists, criminologists, the Law Reform Commission, Government and Opposition. Mr Speaker, Sir, had this Government not been a clean and honest Government, would it have come forward and give figures that they can use against us? This is the only honest Government that can do it, that of Dr. Ramgoolam, and this will be used as a tool in order to bring law and order in this country.

Secondly, has there been a Government before which had asked the Mauritius Research Council to inquire into the causes of violence and crimes? There has not been any research before, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the first time we are going to have a research done and from that research we will be able to implement what have to be implemented, what have to be corrected and to do what have to be done in order to combat law and order. I have gone through the figures. Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we are winning the battle against crime because we are tough on the causes of crime. We are winning that battle. For example, cases of crime against tourists, we just have to ask the Minister of Tourism, or the Commissioner of Police about the number of cases we had before. In 2009, there has been a reduction of 33% and the great cases have reduced drastically. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has invested in CCTV. We have CCTV in Flic-en-Flac and now in Quatre Bornes. This Government has invested into the forensic

also. *Il n'y avait pas d'ordinateur pour le portrait robot avant 2009, M. le président.* The concept of *portrait robot* has been introduced following the meeting which our Prime Minister had with Mr Sarkozy. We are investing a lot. Now, we are replenishing the fleet of cars for the Police. We brought laws on DNA. Do you know that we did not even have a proper system to keep all the photos of criminals? We did not even have a proper system to keep the thumbprints of criminals. It was very difficult before, because we had to *feuilleter un par un pour connaître la signature du criminel, que se soit son ADN ou son fingerprint.* Therefore, in terms of fighting crimes we are introducing new methods. How many crimes have gone undetected between 2000 to 2005? Here also it is a non-political issue. How many crimes under this Government have been detected? We are above 95% in terms of detection rate now. Mr Speaker, Sir, criminals will continue to commit crimes if they are not going to be detected. This is where there will be the deterrent effect. They will not be able to run away from us. Some people will still come on that issue and say that we need to reintroduce death penalty. I would ask them to please go through the figures, then we may have a proper debate on that issue.

Now, briefly, I will come to what I am doing at my office. Mr Speaker, Sir, we must be serious. How many Governments have said that they will separate the DPP office from the office of the Attorney General? The Mackay Report proposed it. My friend from the Opposition side sat on it for five years and it is this Government that we have independent office, independent staff, independent Budget and, today, one can read the Budget. There is not a single country in Africa where the Director of the Public Prosecutions or another office is independent completely, with its own budget, its own staff and everything. Of course, it is going through its teething period at the moment, but by next year *ils auront leur vitesse de croisière.* This is the first point.

Second, we have the Law Reform Commission. This is a full-time Law Commission with reports after reports explaining and enlightening the Government, conducting inquiries and interviews, meeting people, listening to proposals. Again under this Government, the Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance, hon. Dr. Sithanen, and the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Rammgoolam, have given more money for the Law Reform Commission.

Let me speak briefly on the issue of Certificate of Morality. I have the figures in front of me. It used to take some 16 weeks to have such a certificate. I told my colleague Ministers in Cabinet that I will try to bring it to 6 weeks and everybody agreed it was worth trying. Now, it is 4 weeks. You can even get it within three days if the person is going to study abroad, if the person has got a proposal for a job or if it is a question of urgency for medication. I have cleared the backlog and now it is under the DPP. Soon, we will have other reforms also.

Concerning the legal aid, we have Professeur Torul who is working on it and we are coming with a new formula because we do not want to commit the same mistake as England, putting more money in. What we want is to have a Pro Bono System so as to have solicitors, notaries, barristers, and people from the University of Mauritius. We will pool our force, our energy, our competence and we will work together from the different Citizens Advice Bureaux and help people. Some barristers will be on call on Saturdays and Sundays in order to help people. This will be a big reform.

Another reform that we are bringing concerns children who are sexually assaulted. These children are getting psychological help from the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development & Family Welfare, but they don't get a lawyer as from day one. We are working on a scheme so that as from January, once a complaint is lodged, they will get the service of a barrister who will be coordinated by my office.

Concerning *notariat*, in fact, I am proud today to have received the visit of *le président de la Chambre des Notaires en France* and I was given a medal just before coming here. In fact, I received this medal because of the changes we are bringing within the Judiciary, and by the laws that we are bringing we are making Mauritius an example. Mr Ferran came to my office accompanied by his officers from France and said that Mauritius is an example. In fact, we asked that Mauritius be affiliated to the *Union Internationale du Notariat Latin*. According to the *président de la Chambre des Notaires de France*, *c'est la première fois qu'un pays est accepté à l'unanimité*. Why now and not before? This is why the hon. ladies from the Opposition congratulated me on certain things, because we have a sense of fairness. Despite being the first country, I can't hear clappings from my friend, hon. A. Ganoo. We have opened the profession; I have the figures, but I will not waste the time of the House, but I will just lay the figures in the Library. We have opened the profession and law firms are coming to Mauritius. This will increase the opportunity for our youngsters to be employed. We want to have reforms in the Council of Legal Education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was a student of the Council of Legal Education. I came very late to join the examination in January. When I came in January to pay for the examination, the Secretary of the Chief Justice asked me: 'are you paying for the next examinations.' I said: 'no, I am going to pay for the examination which is taking placed.'" I won the scholarship despite coming late. In fact, this is the only examination – I was telling that to my friend, hon. Bodha – which I still dream about. I have sat for many examinations.

(Interruptions)

It was a nightmarish exam. It was as if an examination *où j'étais lessivé*. We must reform it. We must not try there also to play politics. This is why – to reply to the question of my friend, hon. Bodha - there was no politics in it, we must

reform it. It does not depend on me. The Council of Legal Education depends on the Judiciary. Therefore, we must do things very cautiously, in a way that it will not rock any boat. For 25 years, one way or another, it has helped us. Now, if we want really to become the judicial hub of the region, we must set up something different, we must learn from the lessons. What are we proposing? Very briefly, I will not come to the Council of Legal Education as such, because the proposals will be before Cabinet first. But, for example, the solicitor, Mr Speaker, Sir, you know it very well. If you are a barrister, you come from England, you can practise directly. If you are a solicitor, you cannot practise. We all know that a solicitor is first and foremost about drafting. In England, the drafting test is more stringent than here. Mr Speaker, Sir, there are good universities in India, for example, Jawarhalal Nehru University and St. François Xavier University which are the best. You must have five As in order to get a place there. How is it that if you come from England you can come directly, but if you come from St. François Xavier University, from Jawaharlal Nehru University or from the great universities of Australia or the great universities of South Africa, it is very difficult? So, we are changing it without attacking any person. We have to change these things. Of course, we must change the *pupillage*. We must have a monitored pupillage, but we must change it. We must have new courses, we must have a syllabus. We must have other people that will judge so that if a person is not satisfied with his/her results, he/she might then appeal to another body. So, we must not try to play politics in this. We are coming with reforms, but unfortunately, reforms are for the future, not for the past.

Let me come to another thing - I will end on that subject, Mr Speaker, Sir – that is, the e-judiciary. What is e-judiciary? Again, it is thanks to hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, to my friend, hon. Dr. Sithanen. I will only say what is the e-judiciary. The immediate end results and benefits: Rs300 m. investment from this

Government; the e-judiciary aims at improving case management, electronic initiation of cases; filing of documents in courts and exchange of documents between Attorneys; speedy dispute settings - the aim being to have a fast track for commercial and civil cases heard and disposed within hundred days; improving investment climate and country image as an attractive destination to do business; increasing investor confidence; enhancing delivery of services within defined time limits; providing quick access to information; producing more accurate statistics; decreasing the backlog of cases; decreasing the cost of claims associated with disputes and enhancing the efficiency of the judicial system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are going to introduce the mediation and we are going to amend the Courts Act through the Finance Bill in order to bring the mediation and it will start as from January. Are we only saying it? We have made provisions within the Budget for four more Judges. Tell me, Mr Speaker, Sir, am I wrong in saying that that is the first Government that has doubled the amount of Judges within a span of five years? Tell me if I am wrong? Tell me if we have had an Attorney General who has proposed so many laws in a limited amount of time? Tell me if we have an Attorney General who has brought changes to the *Certificat de Moralité*, who has brought changes to the *Curatelle*, who has brought the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Mauritius and which is willing to come whenever we have a number of cases to Mauritius? Mr Speaker, Sir, I have started discussions with the tardy declaration. We have reduced the tardy declaration. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have begun to speak with *le représentant de l'Union Européenne à Maurice, parce que j'avais commencé à parler avec madame Dadi pour mettre sur pied à Maurice l'École de la Magistrature. Maintenant on va plus loin. L'Union Européenne – parce qu'on est en train de travailler sur le projet - est prête à financer, à faire de l'île Maurice l'Ecole de la Magistrature, a school of law, for Africa in Mauritius. How do you get it? If you don't work, you don't get*

it. If you don't have the vision of the Prime Minister, you don't have it. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are doing it. I started to talk to Mrs Dadi, now we are with the *Union Européenne* and within one year we will be getting results. Therefore, I hope that whoever is there believes that we have started certain things. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not continue on that subject, I will do it in another forum.

Let me conclude on only two things. The first is my dream - dream of a country where we will be united...

(Interruptions)

...or we will be united more than we are now. United in order to fight the real problems. The real problems, Mr Speaker, Sir, are not within our Republic, the real problems come from outside. The real problem is how to get a place within the Indian Ocean, how to forge a name for the Republic of Mauritius, how to do things with pleasure, *avec plaisir*, how to do things in order to make Mauritius a country that will be respected. I believe we have to concur with the hon. Prime Minister to make Mauritius again the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.27 p.m.)

Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, I think many people are patient to listen to me. First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank you. I can say I have been very proud working under your guidance since nearly more than four and a half years, thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. I pray that you will continue to remain in the same post as Speaker. I have been here for nearly more than 20 years. I have worked with many Speakers; we had former Speakers in the Assembly and I do not mean that others were not good, but I have the pleasure working with you and your Deputy Speaker for a while.

First thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, today is a very sad day, really very sad day. All the hon. Members will agree with me because we had lost two police officers yesterday, it is really a pity.

(Interruptions)

In fact, we lost two police officers in the circumstances that we all know and the one, who I personally met last week, talked to me. When I heard that he passed away in such a dramatic situation, the fact that he was working here in the premises, I think that we have to realise what is happening in the Police Department for a police officer to face such a situation and who represents discipline in this country, there is a problem somewhere.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Member of the Opposition, on this side of the House, this is our policy and we have always kept the same principle, the same mode, whether we are inside or outside the House. This is really consistent, as my hon. friend just mentioned. This is why we say that we are a loyal Opposition. We believe, as our leader, hon. Pravind Jugnauth used to mention.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, four and a half years have elapsed, this is the fifth Budget and we can't say that all ideas are negatives. I am the first one to admit that we do have some good proposals in this Budget. I was shocked when I heard the hon. Members from the other side congratulating the hon. Prime Minister first. This Budget represents the philosophy of the Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

Protocol is another thing! It is the hon. Minister of Finance who presented the Budget. But when I listened to the statement of the hon. Prime Minister, then I agree with the hon. Members. After the Budget, the Prime Minister said in his statement: "I thank the Minister of Finance for having worked hard every day, during one month, in his office." - but he does not congratulate him, maybe he is

going to do it afterwards. Every day he met the Minister of Finance in his office and they worked on the Budget. Then, I realized that all the hon. Members are right. I have to congratulate them. This is the truth. In fact, when I go deeper on the Budget, I can see measures which do not come from the heart of the Minister of Finance. He might have good intentions, but sometimes *li rater*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this afternoon, my speech on the Budget will be based on two most important issues, first, the fate of the working class, and, second, the future of the nation. A lot have been said and I am not going to repeat. As we all know, the Appropriation Bill is a very important Bill which can change the life of all our fellow citizens and help to shape the destiny of our nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am talking of the working class. Everybody knows that I am the most senior MP in the MSM – I have been a Trade Union leader and I have been very close to the working class. I have been in prison many times. When I was in prison in 1985, the first person who came to see me was late Sir Satcam Boolell. He was my legal adviser. I have gone through the struggle of the workers nearly half of my life. I had been a Minister and, thanks God, I have been the Minister of Labour. As Minister of Labour, I got the opportunity to put into practice what I have learnt as a Trade Union leader. I am not going to say that my good friend, the hon. Minister of Labour, is not doing well. Personally, I am very happy with him. He is a good Minister, he never hesitates to spend his time helping the working class and, recently, he has been working very hard to stop the strike in the sugar industry. I congratulate him for that. He has done well.

When I was Minister of Labour, I can say I was not lucky because the situation was completely different. I can say that we have witnessed a lot of textile industries closing down. I am the first person to agree, and as everybody knows, the situation was not the same as today. I had to deal with the Hong Kong people, I had worked nights and days, I even had to negotiate at midnight with the pioneer

of the textile industry in Mauritius, Mr K. C. Chaw. I beg these people to stay in Mauritius for a few years more, but they refused. There were Industries like Crystal Textile Industry, Novel Industry and the industry at Ile D'Ambre. Why were these people leaving? We had the problem of derogation and the grass is greener elsewhere. The fate and future of the working class was in complete darkness.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have witnessed two or three factories closing down nearly every month and thousands of workers were laid-off. It was a pity. We can't say that the factories were closed down because of X, Y or Z. The reality was different. Every hon. Member here pretends to defend the rights of workers. In your heart, you will also say that you are going to defend the workers. There is no doubt about it. Because you also, you have been the famous Minister, and as the former President of France mentioned, Excellency always remains Excellency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we never realized that today, in this country, more than half million of the population represent the working class, that is, workers working in the private and public sectors. In fact, this is the truth whether we like it or not. The truth is that today the ultraliberal economic policy of the hon. Minister of Finance, over these four and a half years, has made the working class, that is, hundreds of thousands of family, poorer and having a purchasing power which has fallen every year and they all fear for their jobs with the new law. Sir, this is no secret. The Government has brought a new labour law which represents a danger for the workers today. The job security does not exist now, especially in the private sector. Nobody can say today that there is job security in the private sector. You can be fired at any time, any reason can be given for that. This is the truth. But allow me, Sir, to go through the history to see where the working class is today and how much hundreds of families are earning. You know, Sir, the years of 1970 and 1980 were the difficult years. The Government Chief Whip might know about it.

Many people like me have been to India. At that time in the 1970s, Chandigarh was the Mauritian city. Most of the Mauritian students have studied in Chandigarh. At that time, a lot of people were going abroad. Do you remember? When someone in the North was going abroad, ten buses went to the airport to see him off. We know that. But what happened afterwards? There was as if a boom in education; everybody was going to India. Many MPs do not know about it.

(Interruptions)

This is the country where we have trade unions for the working class, but we also had *l'union des gradués chômeurs*. I participated, we were sitting in front of this House at the time when Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was Prime Minister. I was the secretary of *l'union des gradués chômeurs*. Mr Ram Baghi who today is the General Manager of the Sugar Industry, was the president of the *l'union des gradués chômeurs*. On those days we have witnessed a real economic crisis. This is the time when people were working for four days – *quatre jours à Paris*. This is the time when people were not issued salary at the end of the week, they were issued *carte ration*. It hurts me, Sir. I do respect the Father of the nation. Today we are proud to say that we are independent. I am proud of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. There is no doubt. We must have courage to recognise who came forward in 1983 to solve the problem of *gradués chômeurs*. It is Anerood Jugnauth. It hurts me because I consider him as my father. I know that we have witnessed 80,000 of unemployed and, at that time, GNP *per capita* was 200 dollars - a mono crop economy, a bleak period of our fellow workers. When we say that nothing has been done for the poor, it is not correct.

(Interruptions)

I will come to it, don't worry! It is thanks to the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth in 1983, we witnessed the stability and prosperity. I heard the hon.

Attorney General saying: we must, we must, we must. Who fought against the drug barons? Who wore *gilet pare-balles*? This is history and we have to recognise it. *On ne peut pas effacer la réalité, la vérité. Les paroles s'envolent mais les écrits restent.* Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody has brought his contribution. The Prime Minister today has become mature, I am very happy; he is doing well even at the international level. This morning, I congratulated him. Mr Speaker, Sir, the years 2000-2005 were difficult. I am not going to give a detailed account of what hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen said to the management of the finance and the economy of Mr Bheenick and hon. Dr. Bunwaree. I am not in a mood to say that. In 2000-2005, we did our best to revamp the economy and to start new pillars which are giving good results today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot has been said of Cybercity. I would give a picture of what happens. Once there was a gentleman, he met a girl and wanted to get married. But unfortunately he has not been able to get married. Another person came and got married to the same girl and they had children. Once he met the girl and said that he had the intention to get married to her, but the reality is that she got married with another man and had children. This is what he said, that the intention of having the Cybercity was there. I agree.

(Interruptions)

Who set up the Cybercity? They should agree. They had the good intention. I don't say that the actual Prime Minister did not have the good intention. Who brought all this development? That's important and not come to say that "*oh, c'est Cybercity*", why are you now declaring the paternity which you should not do?

Mr Speaker, Sir, my friend, hon. Ganoo, has mentioned about the IRS in his speech. Concerning the hotel industries, in 1982 we had only two hotels, namely

La Pirogue and Le Touessrok and in 2003 when Sir Anerood Jugnauth left the portfolio of Prime Minister and became the President of the Republic, we had more than 100 hotels. These are the realities.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance also mentioned about the jobs created. They have a false and bad conception, I do not know where they got it, but we must agree that the Minister of Finance is a very intelligent man and he should have been a doctor in mathematics because he can manage the Chinese mathematics.

(Interruptions)

I can say that we do not have many intelligent economists like him, but he is not a good politician and this is the problem. He is a very good friend of mine and I can criticise him. He is a good technician, but he is not a good politician. This is the problem that we have. -+

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the figures given by the CSO, the number of Mauritians employed in the manufacturing sector has decreased. This is the reality. There has been a decrease from 50,000 to 48,000, while the number of foreign workers has increased from 16,100 to 18,400. A simple mathematics of Dr. Sithanen, 30,000 local workers are working today. This is according to the CSO in the EPZ sector. A lot has been said about a loss of 10,000 jobs in the Free Zone at that particular time. As we all know the reason is due to the closure of the EPZ factories.

Let me now come to 2006 and 2009 - an utter disaster for the working class as they lost their acquired rights. I myself have struggled for around 25 years. New laws came in this House and it was not from Dr. Bunwaree as the Minister of

Labour, but it was under the pressure of the hon. Minister of Finance because he also was under the pressure of the World Bank and the IMF, they were in a hurry.

(Interruptions)

I think that you have been here for longer than me. I brought 30 amendments and it was for the first time that a MP from the Opposition brought 30 Amendments on a Bill.

(Interruptions)

It does not matter as one day you or your children will say that hon. Soodhun had brought 30 amendments and I will be happy.

(Interruptions)

After the proclamation of the Labour laws, my good friend, the hon. Minister of Labour brought 28 amendments; why do I say that it is because they brought it in a hurry? They were under pressure. How come that you just brought a law and after one month you bring 28 amendments? So, there is something fishy. As we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has the tendency to forget that 6,000 VRS workers are no longer working in the Sugar industry. What has been done? You know the policy of the Minister and what has been done for the workers and for the private sector. Billions have been given to the private sector, corporate tax from 25% to 15%, rating for doing business going up and back to the workers because of new legislation; billions in terms of saving from the payment of salary compensation; billions in terms of Additional Stimulus Package; workers made to contribute for their retirement. This is the first time that the workers are being asked to contribute for their redundancy. Never before, Sir!

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, these people have the tendency to forget what had happened in the 1970s and 1980s. I think that it is my duty to remind these people and there has been the contribution of many people, namely Mrs

Bappoo who was Minister at that time, and also Sir Anerood Jugnauth. What we implemented is very important for the most important infrastructural development.

(Interruptions)

This is the way that the Minister Bachoo has been able to get money from the Minister of Finance. How come, there has not been a single development of infrastructural works for more than three years when the Deputy Prime Minister was the Minister of the Public Infrastructure. With due respect to him as I have a lot of respect for him. Not a single...

(Interruptions)

Come and prove it to me and to the House. Not a single penny was spent. I do not know what the reason is as there may be many reasons for that. But this is the truth. People should not forget what we did. You know for how many years he has been the Minister of Public Infrastructure? It is not for two years, but for seven years. Seven years since he started from the time of Sir Anerood Jugnauth till now with hon. Dr Navin Ramgoolam Government. He thinks that we can forget, but we know because we take note and that is important for us. We keep our records.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we implemented some most important infrastructural development. Who did the construction of a new airport and a modern port?

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: We did it, in the MSM Government. Who set up primary health care centre for the first time? It is Mr Goburdhun, the former Minister. What about community health centres, area health centres, construction of primary and secondary schools, which were continued between 2001-2005?

(Interruptions)

Yes. I know! Construction of the motorway extension to the North and the airport.

(Interruptions)

Yes! They say that we have done nothing!

(Interruptions)

Who created the stock Exchange of Mauritius, the Offshore Business Centre, the Mauritius Freeport and the International Financial Services Centre?

Concerning sports, there are the Anjalay Stadium, Comarmond Stadium, Marie Lise Justin Stadium, and the new youth centres. This is what we have done. What we have witnessed between 1983 and 2000, is that the GDP growth rate increased - and this is very important - from 0.4 in 1983 to 5.8 in 2001.

With regard to tourist arrivals, there was an increase from 123,000 to 660,000, and unemployment decreased from 19.7% to 9%. The number of telephone lines increased from 45,000 to 306,000. The number of television – that was the time when MSM was in power - sets increased from 90,000 to 235,000. People did not forget. Who changed the life of Mauritians? Hon. Rucktooa knows for how long a house was situated at a particular point and the toilet as if one mile away; near the sugarcane. Who changed it? Who brought it *attendant*? This is why I say that they should not say that we have not done anything.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to one very important thing. I am not going to tell you that the hon. Minister of Finance is not doing anything. He has done a lot. But, for whom has he done? This is very important. A concrete example - this is a very good example- is for your friend, from England, London; Emerald Heights, which is situated at Bassin Blanc. This is the good friend of my good friend, the hon. Minister of Finance. They got a problem of drinking water. They decided to

construct a lot of bungalows, about 38 villas. *Des grandes villes; des capitales!* People in Nouvelle Découverte, Moka are complaining about water problems for, maybe, 50 years. He should go and see! He does not know anything! I am just raising this point under the correction of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, who is the Minister concerned.

There are lots of places in the country where there is no water supply. These people, within one month, got the water, and CWA spent Rs30 m. When they asked the Central Water Authority to provide water, they said that they don't have enough fund. The Minister of Finance said 'why worry about money? Just give a call to the bank. I am going to guarantee the loan from the bank. Take Rs30 m.' In one month, they obtained Rs30 m., and due to the prompt intervention of the Minister of Finance the water problem was solved. This is the reality. This is why I said that this is a common practice of the Minister, but he is not going to do it for the poor people; he will do it for the *bons amis*.

On the other hand, this Government has been generous, big hearted and open-handed to the private sector. They have been given tax exemption, concession on land purchase and registration duty. It is a pity, Mr Speaker, Sir. The first time buyers work hard and dream to have a piece of land to build a house. This is a dream for all couples as well as new ones. I think that the first thing that should have been done for the first buyer is to help and encourage them. We are working to put people first. We are putting this type of people first. I think that the hon. Minister has to think again. What he has introduced? The hon. Minister of Finance has introduced for the common people many unfair and unjust measures. For example, the introduction of the NRPT. They have blamed the former Government and my good friend, the former Minister of Social Security, to have targeted the old age pensioner. This is what they said. What are they doing

here by introducing the NRPT? According to hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, nearly 33,000 people are paying. They say that it's a little number of people. But if it is a little number of people, abolish it! Why not? When we targeted old age pension, they said that we were targeting the 22,000 people! But, when they target 33,000 people, they say no!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, people are being made to pay tax on interests on savings. Even for them, when they are going to retire, where are they going to put their money? In their coffer? They are going to put in the bank.

(Interruptions)

What will happen to him? Is he going to put the money in the bank? What is happening to retired public officers? They are putting their money in the bank. For what purpose? They get the interest and they are going to spend it every month, they are going to survive with this money.

(Interruptions)

These people are rich. Yes, put Rs30 m., Rs50 m., Rs60 m., if you want to target it. But, these are poor people. Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe you will be in this situation one day, we don't know. I am going to defend your interest also. It is about your interest too that I am talking....

(Interruptions)

What we are telling the Minister of Finance is that these are cases that we should think of; we have to revisit it. The hon. Member talked about the VAT. If we really want to help poor middle class people ...

(Interruptions)

Don't tell me that the Minister of Finance is going to say that he doesn't have money. This is ridiculous. If he badly needs money from VAT for the Budget...

(Interruptions)

Alright, there is one Minister or one Government who increased VAT but, this does not mean that you cannot lower it by 1%, 2%. Not for five years, put it for 6 months. This is important. Put it for 6 months not for one year. At least, people can have *une bouffée d'air*, they can benefit from that as we are very close to the general election. Put it for six months! This is what you should do. I give you some good ideas, some good proposals. But, seriously, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that if the Minister wants, if the Minister believes, yes, on interests and savings, he can help these people, *la classe moyenne*, and just lower to 1% or 2% for six months, not one year, it would be a good thing. You should have seen how many people were at the filling station yesterday. I too went there. If people know that the price will go up, they go to the filling station. People are expecting the Government to lower the VAT. I would like to come to a very important issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed, it was a cruel event. The Minister of Finance should have talked about what the Government has been doing to promote economic development of women. We all witnessed the case of Milazar. I think, we can't tolerate such a situation anymore. Many criminals say: *mo touye li mo alle prison, prison ine faire pou zom*. But, nobody will say: *mo touye li mo alle pendi*. We should stop such crimes and the only solution is to introduce the death penalty.

(Interruptions)

If this were to happen to your family then you would have a different opinion maybe. I think this is the only solution, but this is my personal view, not my party's view. I was an MP when I voted for that law and we got results. It is

not new. We are taking examples from big countries, like China and America. We should not be afraid to take such a decision.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one more issue concerning the Sugar Industry Labourers' Union. There has been a request. I don't know if it is for the first time, but it is very rare that employers declare trade dispute. There was a PNQ by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and my good friend, the hon. Minister of Labour answered that trade dispute was not declared by the trade union. This is the contrary that is happening in the country. Mr Speaker, Sir, what was the trade dispute? The trade dispute was that the Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association was not agreeable to sign a contract with all the trade unions of the sugar industry workers. Why? - Because they are not agreeable to pay a yearly bonus on total earnings and an increase of 40%. They have suggested that they are going to pay a yearly bonus on basic salary. I make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance - who is very close to these people - to talk to these people. I have to thank my good friend, the hon. Minister of Labour who did very well. He stopped the strike taking place as this is not in the interest of the country. In 2004, the same employers employed 21,000 agricultural and non-agricultural workers. Today, they have 5,600 workers only and they have got nearly Rs3 billion saving. They have nothing to pay, no pension, no sick leave, no yearly bonus, nothing. No wages because these people are seasonal workers. The employers refuse systematically to pay. *Ce sont des dominères, des barons!* Mr Speaker, Sir, if I were the Minister of Labour, there would be no misery. I am not saying that the present Minister is not doing his best, but the character is different. He is a lawyer and I was a trade union leader that is the difference. Our temperament is different. These employers just got Rs3 billion savings. In 1999, they agreed to pay 1/12 of total earnings and you agreed to pay a 14% of increase. Today, 13% of increase and a yearly bonus on 1/12 on basic salary. How come? Everybody knows that

the workers, labourers, artisans, work hard during the crop season, nearly 4 or 5 months. Are they going to *travail kado*? This is what is happening: *bef travay* and finally they eat the *bef*.

(Interruptions)

Bef travay dernier lère nou manze bef la même. This is what they are doing. Sir, this is not acceptable. I make an appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to see to it carefully, because this is a very, very important issue. It is not a question of trade unions' views and so on, *triyer dimoune* or what not. It might not agree with all the trade unions' views, but I make an appeal to the Prime Minister to see to it that the workers of the sugar industries are not

(Interruptions)

Let me end. With your permission, I take this opportunity to thank all the voters, all the electorate of No. 8, first that they have elected our Leader in spite of lot of obstacles, for God's sake and with God's blessings, he has been able and with the voters of No. 8.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all politicians, we all defend our principle. Since we are in the MSM, since MSM was in power, we have always the same principle, we have always fought for the country and we have always contributed to the welfare of this country. We have just recently gone nearly everywhere in the country and we have come out with 200 suggestions.

(Interruptions)

Yes. Because we do politics *autrement*, not just to stand up on a *caisse savon* and just criticise right and left. We come forward with a proposal. Let me tell you, Sir, that there is a *notalgie* in the country that MSM has to come to power. What I say, Inch Allah, we are coming to power. I say that we can and we will

come. Wait, we will come! The population can also trust us and we will bring the true changes.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.23 p.m.)

Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): M. le président, c'est officiel maintenant qu'à la fin de la présente législature, je vais me retirer de la politique. Donc, c'est en principe ma dernière intervention sur un discours du budget. Je vais éviter autant que possible d'être conflictuel. Je ne vais pas être trop complaisant non plus. Je suis toujours président de mon parti. Cinq ans, dernier budget, c'est un peu l'heure du bilan!

J'ai jeté un coup d'œil sur le *President's Address*. J'ai parcouru aussi les différents discours des années précédentes. J'ai relevé, sans méchanceté, quelques promesses non tenues et je vais aussi faire quelques propositions à la fin. Je sais que certains membres, certains ministres ont dit qu'il n'y a pas eu assez de propositions venant de ce côté de la Chambre, surtout du MMM. En fait, il y a eu pas mal de propositions, mais je vais en faire surtout par rapport à la question de la lutte contre la pauvreté, *EAP* surtout.

Dans le discours de 2006/2007 à la page 4 au paragraphe 21, sur le *caption* : *Controlling Wastage and Securing Efficiency in the Public Sector*, on peut lire –

“We will combat abuse, clamp down on wastage and improve service delivery.”

A la page 20, paragraphe 127, il est dit –

“Every rupee of taxpayers' money will be spent responsibly and judiciously or it will not be spent at all.”

Or, il faut le reconnaître, on ne peut pas remettre en question le rapport de l'audit. Le dernier rapport de l'audit parle de R 5.5 milliards gaspillées.

Le discours de 2008/2009, paragraphe 103, parle de *ring road* et du 775 mètres de tunnel. Dans le document, on parle d'un coin nommé Coin Bluff et cela a été un bluff, parce que rien n'a été fait après cinq ans. *Le President's Address, Mr Speaker, Sir, at page 4, paragraph 28 on the issue of Fight Against Substance Abuse - as everybody knows this is very close to my heart*, la lutte contre la toxicomanie - il était dit que –

“Government will appoint a drug tsar.”

Nous savons que le mot ‘*tsar*’ est associé aux empereurs de la Russie. Cinq ans après, malheureusement, il n’y a pas eu de ‘*drug tsar*’. Au contraire, on peut dire que c’est le Subutex qui règne en empereur au pays avec des importateurs qui sont proches de certains membres du gouvernement - je ne vais pas m’appesantir là-dessus parce que j’ai dit que je vais éviter d’être méchant.

Dans le domaine de la fraude et corruption, *President's Address, again, at page 4, paragraph 30, we can read –*

«My Government will leave no stone unturned to show its strong and unflinching commitment to fight fraud and corruption and leave no doubt in the minds of all concerned about this determination to fight fraud and corruption.»

Plus loin on peut lire –

« My Ministers will adhere to a code of ethics and integrity and will invite senior public officials and managers of the private sector to do the same. »

Je ne vais pas venir sur des allégations ou des cas surtout au niveau des municipalités, des cas de fraude et corruption. Ce que je demande tout simplement, à l’occasion de ce dernier discours, que quelque soit le gouvernement

qui revienne après les élections, qu'on fasse attention aux nominés politiques, les *parastatal bodies*, les gens qu'on nomme comme candidats, surtout dans les différentes mairies, on a eu tellement de cas de personnes corrompues.

Au niveau de la démocratie à la page 15, paragraphe 125, le gouvernement parlait de *setting up private television channels to enhance pluralism of media*. Là aussi, le gouvernement a manqué de courage pour aller de l'avant, pour mettre en place la télévision privée. Or, nous savons que la radio privée, qui a été introduite sous l'ancien gouvernement, qui rend service au pays, aux personnes en difficulté et même aux ministères en attirant leur attention sur les manquements, sur le *red tapism*. Une télévision privée rendrait encore plus service au pays, au moins ne serait-ce que pour le besoin de la démocratie et comme il est dit dans le programme, de pluralisme médiatique.

*Regarding the NGO community at page 22, paragraph 183, it is said that –
“Government will promote national solidarity through a number of measures, including the setting up of an NGO academy.”*

On n'a pas trouvé le *NGO academy*. Je souligne ce point là parce que j'ai toujours milité à l'intérieur des ONG. Je vais continuer à travailler pleinement avec les ONG.

En ce qui concerne le *Sales by Levy*, on a voté une somme de R 100 millions avec beaucoup d'années de retard. Là, également, sur R 100 millions, seulement R 9 millions ont été dépensées tandis que chaque jour qui passe il y a des personnes qui perdent leur propriété.

Je vais dire deux mots sur la *NHDC*. Ce sont des foyers à problèmes. Je ne stigmatise pas des gens qui y habitent, mais nous savons qu'il y a beaucoup de problèmes. Il y avait une PNQ et des débats sur la question des syndicats. *Even*

though they live in some of these high-rise units, people in the neighbourhood look down upon them. Il y a toujours des conflits. On dit que ce sont des gens de la *NHDC*, comme si ce sont des citoyens de deuxième catégorie. Il y a un sentiment de *mistrust*, d'isolation et d'exclusion. Je pense qu'au moment où on est en train de réfléchir sur la réorganisation des syndicats, il ne faudrait pas se contenter de donner aux syndicats les responsabilités de *cleaning*, *scavenging* ou *maintenance* seulement. Il faudrait trouver des personnes qui ont l'âme des travailleurs sociaux qui puissent faire le pont entre les habitants de la *NHDC*, des cités et des quartiers avoisinants. Il faut intégrer ces habitants de la *NHDC* avec les voisins qui habitent à côté.

Concernant les *hawkers*, je regrette que le dossier a été *mishandled*. Il y a eu, malheureusement, de la démagogie. Le gouvernement n'est pas allé de l'avant avec le projet de *Hawkers' Palace* et au moment où on a eu l'*Additional Stimulus Package* pour les grosses boîtes, les petits marchands ambulants ont eu beaucoup de difficultés en ce qui concerne leurs activités économiques. On a mis la charrue devant les bœufs parce qu'on les a chassés là où ils étaient. C'est vrai que cela a causé beaucoup de problèmes, je reconnais, mais le public aussi a tort. Il y a des gens qui s'arrêtent à la rue Desforges et placent leurs commandes en restant dans la voiture. C'est là qu'on a des problèmes. Ils ne veulent même pas descendre, ils passent leurs commandes et ils attendent. J'espère qu'à l'approche des fêtes de fin d'année, le gouvernement et la mairie, vont montrer un peu plus de flexibilité sans créer de chaos vis-à-vis de ces personnes qui profitent de cette fin d'année pour se faire quelques sous.

A cette occasion, je voudrais aussi dire qu'on a remarqué, malheureusement, dans un bon nombre de cas, une fâcheuse habitude de mettre de côté des rapports commencés par un ancien gouvernement. Je le dis pour tous les gouvernements. Il faut faire attention. Mais surtout avec le gouvernement actuel, on a vu qu'il y a eu

repackaging, on a changé la nature ou on a retouché un peu certains projets pour le rebaptiser et, dans d'autres cas, on a mis carrément de côté des projets valables qui auraient bénéficié la nation toute entière. Je pense, par exemple, au *National Master Plan* sur la question de lutte contre la toxicomanie. Malheureusement, c'était un plan qui a été travaillé avec beaucoup de soin. Beaucoup d'experts sont venus et j'avais mis mon cœur et toute mon expérience dans ce projet. Je le dis, aujourd'hui, dans ma dernière intervention, que j'ai eu l'occasion de collaborer avec beaucoup d'instances internationales. J'ai eu l'occasion d'écrire un manuel pour le BIT qui, jusqu'aujourd'hui, est utilisé dans six pays de l'Afrique de l'Est. Lorsque nous avons préparé un programme pour notre propre pays, et les résultats des élections leur avaient mis au pouvoir, on n'est pas allé de l'avant avec un plan aussi multidisciplinaire. C'est un des regrets que j'aurais en quittant ce parlement.

Il y a aussi le projet des *street educators*. On voit les conséquences aujourd'hui. Malheureusement, on a fait l'économie de bouts de chandelle. J'étais vraiment triste d'apprendre qu'on donnait à ces éducateurs de rue R 6,000. Nous donnions R 9,000 plus R 1,000 pour attirer ces jeunes avec des bonbons, des chocolats, des boissons gazeuses, etc, parce qu'ils vivent renfermés sur eux-mêmes. Ils vivent dans un monde clos. Ils sont suspicieux de tout le monde. Je fais un appel au gouvernement de revoir tout cela. Dans le cas de CSR, ce n'est pas difficile de trouver une ou deux grosses boîtes pour relancer ce projet d'éducateurs des rues.

Concernant un autre projet dans ma circonscription, l'ancien gouvernement avait dépensé R 55 millions, M. le président, pour mettre sous terre ces fils à haute tension. L'ancien gouvernement voulait faire une école pour filles dans la région, le nouveau gouvernement a dit qu'il allait construire des maisons. *No problem!* Jusqu'aujourd'hui, on a dépensé R 55 millions et rien n'a été fait. Je crois que l'honorable Dr. Hawoldar disait, l'autre jour, que nous ne sommes pas qualifiés

pour parler de la lutte contre la pauvreté parce que nous n'avions rien prévu et nous n'avions même pas un plan d'action. Or, il y a eu un plan d'action, le premier du genre, *Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation*, où l'ancien gouvernement avait invité tous les partenaires sociaux et les ministères à collaborer. Ce qui est intéressant, c'est qu'il y a les objectifs et les activités à entreprendre pour combattre la pauvreté. On a fait circuler une circulaire pour demander à chaque ministère et aussi aux ONG d'identifier les créneaux où ils pourraient aider, dépendant de la nature de ces ministères et les ONG. Malheureusement, on n'est pas allé de l'avant. N'empêche qu'il faut mettre toutes les chances du côté du CSR et de EAP pour qu'on réussisse. Je vais faire quelques suggestions plus tard.

Dans le budget 2007-2008, à la page 32, paragraphe 184, sur la question du CSR, le ministre disait - il l'admet et je le félicite pour être franc au moins -

« Most companies, though sensitive to the issue of CSR do not have structured programmes of support. With the exception of a few companies, CSR is being carried out on an ad hoc basis. »

Je comprends parce que c'est quelque chose de nouveau. Ce n'était pas très structuré. Maintenant, il s'agit de vraiment structurer ce projet. Je vais faire quelques propositions. J'ai beaucoup lu comment différents pays sont parvenus à combattre la pauvreté, surtout l'*absolute poverty*. Au niveau du *data collection*, par exemple, il faudrait une approche vraiment professionnelle et il faudrait préparer le projet et définir les objectifs. On ne peut pas demander aux firmes et au gouvernement de donner de l'argent s'il n'y a pas un document solide, bien préparé, avec les objectifs, et définir les activités que différents partenaires doivent entreprendre pour atteindre ces objectifs. Il faut faire un *close monitoring*. On ne peut pas *monitor* s'il n'y a pas un plan d'action défini. C'est à partir de ces activités définies qu'on peut *monitor* et procéder à l'évaluation, *mid-term and full-term and in terms of outcome and impact*. Ce n'est qu'à partir des activités

définies qu'on peut *monitor* et aussi procéder à l'évaluation *mid-term and full-term*; faire des évaluations *in terms of outcome and impact on the target group*. Je voulais poser la question – le ministre n'est pas là - dans combien de cas de CSR, EAP, ils ont procédé à ce que nous appelons dans le jargon social cet exercice de SWOT analysis, c'est à dire, pour chaque projet social, on analyse the Strength of the project, the Weakness of the project, the Opportunities et quelles sont les *Threats*, les barrières? Quels sont les *hurdles* qui pourraient venir entraver le projet? Il faudrait aussi une approche intégrée et holistique. On ne peut pas demander à une firme de donner de l'argent à un ONG pour mener une campagne contre la toxicomanie en isolation ou bien pour donner à manger aux pauvres en isolation ou bien un programme contre HIV. Non. Il faudrait que chaque famille – on a ciblé, on a déjà identifié ces familles là. Il faut absolument une approche intégrée et holistique. Par exemple, nous savons que c'est difficile et très complexe d'aider une famille, de sortir une famille de la pauvreté et encore plus de *absolute poverty*. C'est difficile. C'est complexe mais à tout problème complexe il faut une solution complexe, M. le président. Le gouvernement seulement ne pourrait faire une différence, le *private sector* non plus, même les ONG, même si toutes les ONG se rassemblent, à elles seules elles ne pourront pas faire une différence. Il faut qu'il y ait un strong partnership, a strong coalition of all the stakeholders parce que l'allégement de la pauvreté n'est pas une question de donner de l'argent seulement, ce n'est pas une question d'aider une famille avec quelques achats, avec l'aide d'artisanats ou n'importe quoi. Ça c'est une partie infime de la solution. On ne peut pas aider la famille économiquement s'il y a, par exemple, dans la famille un ivrogne ou bien un *addict* ou bien quelqu'un qui souffre d'une maladie qui coûte cher. Donc, il faut une approche qui va *target* aussi cette question. Je donne quelques exemples rapidement, M. le président, avec votre permission. We an income revenue activity alone and overlook any cases of addiction, alcoholism,

health problem or gambling. Le CSR, la firme privée et le gouvernement ne peuvent pas mettre de l'argent s'il y a quelqu'un -malheureusement cela devient plus difficile avec le Loto - qui est *addicted to gambling we shall be throwing the money down the drain* si on n'attaque pas ce problème d'addiction to gambling. We must also avoid wastage and duplication of human financial and material resources. Il ne faut pas que différents ministères ou la mairie ou bien les ONG font des choses *haphazardly*, il faut que ce soit une action coordonnée. We cannot support the parents if we do not expose their teenage children to the real plight and difficult conditions of their parents. Ce sont des enfants issus des familles pauvres. Les parents se plaignent mais les enfants ne paraissent pas conscients de la souffrance, ils ne sont pas conscients des difficultés que rencontrent les parents pour faire joindre les deux bouts. Ils mènent une vie au-dessus de leurs moyens. Il faudrait quand même qu'à travers des travailleurs sociaux, amener ces jeunes-là à s'asseoir à la même table que leurs parents, avec des intervenants complètement impartiaux pour faire réfléchir ces enfants. *We must absolutely shift from a spoon-feeding attitude* c'est-à-dire donner de l'argent seulement to an empowerment and autonomisation de la famille pour qu'elle puisse finalement se mettre debout. Last, but not least, we must prevent isolation and exclusion, comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, by enlisting and taking on board the larger community around these *poches de pauvreté*. Il faut les intégrer sinon il y a une barrière invisible, mais qui est presque palpable. Ils se renferment sur eux-mêmes; ils se cantonnent dans les cités ou bien dans ces quartiers pauvres et puis les autres ont une certaine méfiance vis-à-vis d'eux. *I am making a plea not to forget people living in absolute poverty, outside les poches de pauvreté* Je l'ai dit plusieurs fois ici. Il y a des régions – le ministre même une fois avait mentionné sa circonscription – Quatre Bornes. Mais même à Quatre Bornes, il y a des pauvres, il y a des familles, des cas isolés de pauvres, très pauvres qui ont peut-être hérité d'une portion de terre, d'une maison

de leurs ancêtres mais qui n'ont pas de moyens, n'ont pas de revenus et ces maisons tombent en décrépitude, *on the point of crumbling down*. Donc, on doit pouvoir cibler au lieu de dire ici c'est poche area, ici c'est quartier pauvre, il faut éviter de faire l'amalgame.

Je ferai un appel aussi, M. le président, pour qu'on jette un coup d'œil sérieux à la situation dans les prisons. Il y a un gros problème, il y a beaucoup de tension, je ne vais pas m'étendre là-dessus. Je fais appel aussi au *plight* des gardiens de prison. On voit que quelqu'un a été agressé encore en dehors ; il y a des gens qui, de l'intérieur contrôlent ce qui se passe à l'extérieur, des gens qui ont leurs hommes qui agressent les *prison officers* à l'extérieur. Il y a un *severe understaffing* qu'on doit régler.

En ce qui concerne le prevoc également. J'en avais parlé au ministre l'honorable Dr. Bunwaree, malheureusement il y a une institution, l'ancien *BAT* qu'on a transformé en centre de l'*IVTB* mais les enfants de la première promotion sont arrivés au niveau du *Diploma* passant le niveau de certificate mais il n'y a pas de place pour une nouvelle promotion, pour un nouveau *batch* pour le certificat de base. Toutes les places sont occupées par ceux qui font le *Diploma*. Donc il y a un problème.

Je souligne fortement, M. le président, que la famille mauricienne est devenue dysfonctionnelle. J'ai été aux informations, j'ai été *flabbergasted*, étonné, surpris, sans le souffle de constater auprès des *probation officers* qu'il y a 350 cas de demandes de divorce chaque semaine, M. le président, dans notre pays, ce beau pays, ce pays où des personnes de toutes religions se côtoient. 350 demandes par semaine, ce qui nous fait 50 demandes par jour, M. le président. C'est inacceptable. Cela veut dire que l'institution de la famille ne fonctionne plus. Si la famille ne fonctionne plus, la société ne fonctionne plus. Donc, c'est une priorité. Je vais continuer, j'ai donné beaucoup de mon temps dans ce domaine-là. Je ne

serais plus là pour attirer l'attention du gouvernement mais je fais un appel à qui que ce soit, n'importe quel parti qui sera là, d'accorder une priorité à la famille. Et cela ne doit pas être seulement l'affaire du ministère de la femme, mais de tous les autres ministères qui, de par la nature de leurs activités, peuvent donner un coup de main : jeunesse et sports ; sécurité sociale ; la santé, la culture. Tous les ministères concernés devraient pouvoir aider à ce que les familles redeviennent fonctionnelles. Parents et responsables religieux: malheureusement je le dis en toute franchise, cela vient de mon cœur. Peut-être que certains ne vont pas aimer mais les parents et les chefs religieux sont dépassés tout simplement par les événements; ils sont dépassés par le développement révolutionnaire de la technologie informatique. Or, les enfants sont exposés et ont des comportements déviants mais les parents ne sont pas au courant. Les chefs religieux restant sur leur chaire dans leurs institutions ne sont pas assez au courant de ce qui se passe. Ce sera un peu une des principales raisons et je le dis sans hésitation, la principale raison de mon départ de la politique. Je veux être auprès de ces parents; je veux être auprès de ces jeunes.

M. le président, il y a des cas qui nous interpellent. Il y a eu le cas de Marie Ange Milazar mais il y a aussi le cas de ce jeune homme qui, pour les besoins d'une voiture pour aller en discothèque, arrive à tuer un homme de 81 ans et qui trouve normal qu'il puisse passer le reste de la soirée dans une discothèque. There is something rotten in the country, Mr Speaker, Sir. Je n'agirai pas comme mon collègue, l'honorable Soodhun, pour parler de la peine de mort, mais quelque part ce garçon est malade. Il n'est pas le seul, car il y a beaucoup d'autres cas. Il a tué quelqu'un à qui il n'est pas apparenté, mais nous avons eu des cas où des jeunes ont tué leurs propres parents. Ces deux cas sont des *eye-openers*. Je crois que c'est l'honorable Madame Dookun-Luchoomun qui vient de parler de *eye-opener*. Donc, il faut aussi vraiment qu'on s'attaque à ces problèmes sociaux très graves.

As I said in my last intervention on the Budget to this House, I have made an honest and sincere suggestion coming deep down from my heart. I hope that it will be taken on board. In the future, when I shall have left this august Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall make my voice heard, maybe from the streets. I am not threatening anybody. I have always been and I will continue to be positive, even in my criticisms. In the meantime, my plea is that we forget about petty politics on these dramatic human problems. Let us honestly, sincerely and genuinely put our efforts together, *afin de mettre un frein à la dégénérescence de ces jeunes et faire en sorte que la famille mauricienne puisse redevenir fonctionnelle et, par conséquent, on aura une société plus saine et fonctionnelle.*

Je vous remercie. M. le président.

Mr Speaker: As the hon. Member has officially announced his retirement from public life at the end of this mandate, I take this opportunity to thank him for his contribution to this House, and wish him well in future.

Mr Lauthan: *I shall have the opportunity to intervene on other projets de loi, et j'aurais certainement l'occasion de vous remercier et de remercier tout le monde dans cette Chambre.*

(18.52)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Speaker, Sir, I join you to wish hon. Lauthan well in all his new endeavours. He obviously has served well and has set good examples which, of course, many others are following and need to follow. We wish him well, and whether he is going to be in the streets or elsewhere, he can rest assured of our collaboration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my intervention rests on two pillars -

- (i) I will make comments of a general nature on some of the budgetary measures, and
- (ii) I will highlight the salient features of our foreign policy and economic diplomacy which, of course, are intertwined, and without whose support it would be difficult to implement any of the measures spelt out in the Budget.

This is indeed a landmark Budget, because it safeguards two things: our political and economic sovereignty. I think it is fair to say that we need to look at things as they are, since the writings are on the wall. The days of free lunch are over, Mr Speaker, Sir; we are moving from an era of preferences to competitiveness and, as the Prime Minister has the habit of saying: ‘No one owes us a living.’ I recall when we came to power and we were sworn in, we made pledges during the electoral campaign, which had to be honoured. But little did we know that we were going to face unexpected externalities, as we call them. I don’t have to highlight issues, which have been spelt out in no uncertain terms in this House. But, suffice to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we were bold to take decisions to redress the economic situation. Without leadership, determination and commitment, the task would have been insurmountable.

I will refer to what George Bernard Shaw said in respect of leadership. He stated that -

“Some people see things as they are and ask why some see things as they are not and ask why not.”

This is what leadership is all about; challenging status quo. And it is a fact that, had we maintained the same economic model, we would have been in an

economic doldrums. What does it mean in simple terms, Mr Speaker, Sir? It would have meant a descent into social chaos, massive layoff of people, and we know that when we have the twin beasts of first, unemployment and second, of inflation, it spells disaster. What have we inherited? And these are facts. We have inherited liabilities, and liabilities breed liabilities. What has been bequeathed to us? Mortgage, Mr Speaker, Sir. The figures speak for themselves, and we are told that the budget deficit, which we inherited, was 8.2%.

Over and above the externalities, which we are all only too familiar and which are on the agenda in all international forums, little did we know, but, as I stated, we made promises and pledges.

First, we were going to give free transport to the elderly and to the students. My good friend, hon. Rajesh Jeetah likes to remind us of the promises made during the by-elections, when the Prime Minister made a door-to-door canvassing in Panchavati. We had to honour those promises.

We had inherited liability, to the extent that there was no provision to pay the pension of ex-DWC workers or those who joined the MRA. These are facts.

Second, we also stated that we were going to remove people with a certain income from the tax bracket. So, you can understand what the Government had to go through. We had to take decisions, and walk on the untrodden path and, sometimes, there were miles to go. The risks were very high, and it was not a question of high risk-high reward. But we did take the decision, and we delivered on the promises made to our people. We were constantly reminded by our people of what the Prime Minister stated in a speech which he delivered in this very House on 25 June 2007. He spoke lengthily for two hours, saying that we had a contract with the people to empower them and to democratise the economy. True, the agenda is never an unfinished one.

It is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to address issues as we are doing in a very forceful manner. I recall when we brought the changes, we ushered in changes and when we challenged *status quo*, even our friends within our rank and file, found it difficult to accept these new challenges which were daunting to the extent that Government had no choice, but with the support of World Bank to invite four eminent speakers -

- (1) Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald, Leader of the Irish Government in 1981 to 1982;
- (2) Ruth Richardson, former Minister of Finance of New Zealand;
- (3) San Diego Al-Ghazi, former Deputy Finance Minister of Mexico, and
- (4) Nicolas Guzmàn, former Finance Minister of Chile.

Many of our friends had the opportunity to interact and exchange information. At times, emotion ran pitched high and it was difficult to impress upon our friends that we needed to think out of the box, that there was a new paradigm and we had to shift the paradigm. At times, we had to make sure that the mind overrides the mindset because sometimes mindsets are sunk into dogmas and doctrines. We had to live with the harsh realities, as I have stated the writings were on the walls. The days of preferences were over and there was no such thing as a free lunch, Mr Speaker, Sir. We had to put our case across in all international forums. First and foremost, we had to convince our traditional partners, our European friends. We had to tell them right from the outset that we were going to adopt sound macro-economic policies, that we are going to have a prudent approach in respect of those macro-economic policies. But we had to learn from others. We had to emulate the success of the Celtic tiger, the Republic of Ireland, Mr Speaker, Sir. What did they do? They had a uniform tax system; they revised taxes downwards, Mr Speaker,

Sir. They facilitated the ease of doing business and they went on a roadshow to attract investment.

When we looked at indices in respect of Mauritius being a success story, let me refer first to Mo Ibrahim Index on good governance. First, in Sub Saharan Africa. Let me refer to the ease of doing business policy which was introduced and implemented by the then Minister of Industry and Commerce, my colleague, hon. Dr. Jeetah. Let me look at the indices in respect of competitiveness. Let me refer to the key performance indicators, Mr Speaker, Sir. I just came back from Trinidad. While we were there, the farmers staged a protest and they wanted to hand a letter to the Queen and to the Prime Minister of UK, Gordon Brown. What was the complaint? Forget about MPs like Nita Deerpalsing fighting for their cause. They do not exist over there, Mr Speaker, Sir. Forget about the action plan which we submitted in time or the Standing Cane Agreement, of which planters are proud today because without a Standing Cane Agreement, they cannot acquire shares in the sugarcane industry, which the hon. Prime Minister has rightly fought for. They did not get any accompanying measures, Mr Speaker, Sir. They were left stranded, because the authorities are more concerned with social engineering and jerrymandering. It is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, let me make it quite clear that in this great little country of ours, we have a leader who instills the values, not only of leadership but of nationhood. And this is a fact. It can rally all the communities together and, today, if Mauritius is cited as a showcase of success, it is largely due because of our leadership, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said, we had first and foremost to convince our own people as to the merits of the reform and, today, we are reaping the fruits of the reform. Had it not been for this world crisis, we would have been a long way. But then, Mr Speaker, Sir, unlike the United States of America, Mauritius does not export recession. Who would love to have a gift for Christmas,

delivered by DHL, with recession well-wrapped, Mr Speaker, Sir? I do not think that anybody would love to have such a gift.

I was privileged to have a working lunch with Joseph Stiglitz, author of the “Roaring Nineties”, and we had the privilege to exchange information. The message that he was conveying to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago: “make sure that you use your proceeds from the sale of petrochemicals to widen your economic base”. Otherwise, these resources may become a curse and they would not last forever. But what did we do in this country? People are talking of the Father of Democracy, so and so the Father of the Democracy. Let us look at facts, Mr Speaker, Sir, where would we have been without the sugar protocol. Proceeds which have been used to widen the economic base and to reconcile social and economic factors, Mr Speaker, Sir. What would have happened, if the price of sugar had stayed very high on the World Market for the then next two years? They would have lynched Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Sir Satcam Boolell, Mr Speaker, Sir. These are facts. Because of the sinister campaign being waged by some, I am simply highlighting facts, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Then we were told that seafood hub is their doing. Let me refer to the rights that were granted to the Japanese Fishing Companies, to the incentives and facilities granted to Mauritian entrepreneurs to contract strategic partnership. Just go and find out when Mauritius Tuna Canning Factory was set up, but without market access, Mr Speaker, Sir! What will you do with your product? You will seek *Amar, Ackbar, Anthony* to sell you products or you will seek market elsewhere, where there is remunerative revenue, where there is the element of predictability and reliability.

Life is such, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the only factor in life that remains constant is change. This is precisely what this Government promised; it is precisely in the face of adversity that we are going to improve the quality of life of

our people. As I said today in the States, and this is what Joseph Stiglitz was saying. The unemployment rate is 12.5% and if they compute those who are willing to get a job, their unemployment rate would reach more than 15%. The Budget deficit, Mr Speaker, Sir, is more than 12.5%. Young people are going back home to seek shelter with their parents because there are no jobs, Mr Speaker, Sir. These are facts. Greece, a member of the Euro Zone, is in the grips of the IMF and this is a fact. The total public debt as a percentage of GDP is more than 135% and Budget deficit higher than 12.5%, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is true that as a member of the Euro Zone, European Central Bank would probably do what is called upon but Greece are in the grips of IMF. The IMF does not have money to disburse in spite of pledges made and they'll have to rely upon France for money to be disbursed; these are facts, Mr Speaker, Sir. My friend, the hon. Attorney General spoke of Dubai World. We do not know who is going to bail out Dubai World. Dubai world is the flagship, Mr Speaker, Sir, of city state Dubai.

These are the harsh realities and, as I said, the writings on the wall, we should not be seen to sell dreams because we do not want to bequeath a legacy of falsehood to present and future generations. As I have stated, liabilities breed liabilities, Mr Speaker, Sir. When we look at facts, during the four and a half years that we have been in power, not only this Government was not for u-turn, but we have turned the economic situation round and we have created employment, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have waged war on inflation and you tell me what inflation is if it is not a tax upon the poor. These are facts, Mr Speaker, Sir and I don't have to highlight the host of measures and incentives taken by this Government to improve the quality of life of our people. This is why this Government has a mandate which is going to be renewed by the electorate, Mr Speaker, Sir and I am speaking with authority because all my friends here are in touch day in day out with our constituents. These are facts. We don't live in a dream world nor do we look in

the rear mirror, walk down memory lane just to enjoy armchair comfortability. We get off the cushion, the bench and the armchair of comfortability to be close to our people. That's a fact! Out there, they want this Government to come back, Mr Speaker, Sir, and there is no going back on this.

(Interruptions)

I know our friends are desperate. I can understand, Mr Speaker, Sir. They are going downhill, I can understand, but, they have brought it upon themselves. These are facts. Why did they bring it upon themselves? If I have to refer to projects with cost overrun, inflated projects, then one would understand why they were booted out. I am not going to talk of skeletons in the cupboard, Mr Speaker, Sir. If I do, we are going to stay here for a long time, but sometimes we have to make the difference between repetition and reinforcing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius today is sought after and our Minister of Finance is sought after, precisely, because Mauritius has become an economic showcase. He is being invited to be the guest speaker in many international forums. I had the opportunity to address the Commonwealth Business Council and they all wanted to know: how did you do it? Is there a secret to your recipe? We said: no, but we bully the pulpit and make sure that we take the necessary measures to uplift our people, even, at times, if you had to act like angels with a clenched fist because our policy is a hands up policy and not a hands out policy, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

This is what empowerment is all about. And when we talk of empowerment, we need to widen the circle of opportunities, but look at the level of preparedness of our people and what better way to prepare our people than to invest in education. And in no less than two years, 60% of those who leave secondary schools will attend university. This is what empowerment is all about. If we want to democratise, we need to look at the level of preparedness of our people so that

when market access is available, they don't use technical barriers to say that our people are not prepared. These are facts, Mr Speaker, Sir. We live it day in day out. We don't want to survive, but we want to thrive and to thrive you have to be equipped. We need the intellectual prowess. We need the diplomatic prowess and on that score, the Prime Minister deserves all our congratulations because in Trinidad and Tobago, he saved the Commonwealth from a wide division. If it were not for the Prime Minister who hammered a proposal to pave the way through a compromise, things could have got sour in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr Speaker, Sir and you should have seen it. Whether they like the Prime Minister or not, they would have been proud of him to see people walking towards him, leaders like Prime Minister Gordon Brown coming to congratulate our Prime Minister or Kevin Rudd congratulating our Prime Minister for his able leadership and for bringing the Small Island Developing States together on an issue which is sensitive, which we call climate change and what measures need to be taken to mitigate the impact. The Prime Minister was at the centre of the debates and the proposals which he made were welcomed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that no less than 10% of the funds to be released for financing measures which would impact on climate change to be released upfront to help Small Island Developing States. And when we go to Copenhagen, a fund would be launched known as the Copenhagen Launch Fund meant for Small Island Developing States. We are talking of 10 billions initially for 3 consecutive years, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mauritius should be proud of the Prime Minister that it has elected. He commands respect not only in his office, but he is in power, he is at the command and control, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what leadership is all about and when we talk of leadership, the leadership which Mauritius plays within the international and regional forums and we are monitoring the situation very closely. In respect of events unfolding in Geneva, we have impressed upon them that the July framework agreement which provides the

security we need in respect of our market access should not be unravelled. But, we are worried because countries like Costa Rica is mounting a challenge in respect of our special and differential treatment and the reduction in tariff in respect of sugar, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have to be mindful and be on the offensive in respect of the interest in the export of tuna, because we know what a drastic cut in tariff meant for those who are working in those factories, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are not dream merchants, we live with the harsh realities, but we need to get everybody on board. This is the call of leadership, the holy call of Ganges, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a call that comes from deep within and when you have a Prime Minister appealing to the nation to address issues as they are, look at the harsh realities, be bold and be competitive since no one owes us a living. The reason as to why we are investing in science, in technology and we want to inculcate the value of innovation in our people. What is the point if you have an idea, if you allow that idea through mature in research and development and if you do not add a commercial dimension to it? It becomes worthless. But then we need to protect the interests of those who are investing in research and development, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to an issue which is sensitive. Some time back, some entrepreneurs came to see us; they are worried in the light of a judgement pronounced by the court on national exhaustion, in respect of Patent Industrial Trade Act, or PITA as we call it. Why? There is a Government which has introduced the Competition Bill.

There is a Government which is keen to widen the circle of opportunities, but because an amendment that needs to be brought in the legislation, today, people importing genuine products, Mr Speaker, Sir, irrespective where they are manufactured because of delocalisation, are prevented from doing so, because of an agreement entered by a specific group with the mother company. But we need

to refer to legislation which exists elsewhere and we are going to bring the necessary amendment to protect those who ekk out a living from import of genuine products, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are dead against monopoly in this country and if we want to fight for the interests of small entrepreneurs, we need to do it as we normally do, in respect of what we did to bring down corporate tax for small and medium size entrepreneurs, tax which was more than 30% when they were in Government, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have to put, as they say, Mr Speaker, Sir, the money where the mouth is. It is a fact, we have to act - act diligently, act prudently, but act in the interests of consumers and small and medium size entrepreneurs.

On this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to the Intellectual Property Rights. I stated that we are making Non Tariff Barriers and Intellectual Property Rights compatible to trade. We have set up a Joint Public-Private Sector Standing Committee on Non-Tariff Barriers to ensure that decisions concerning regulations and their implementation were made on an informed basis and in an open and transparent manner representing the best international practices, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we want to inculcate the values and the culture of innovation and creativity. We want our nation to become a nation of innovative and creative entrepreneurs and the Intellectual Property Rights can be instrumental in enhancing competitiveness of our enterprises, create a corporate identity through a trademark and branding strategy as well as acquiring venture capital and enhancing access to finance.

Efforts are being made to develop a National Intellectual Property Policy for Mauritius to strengthen Intellectual Property enforcement and regulation as well use Intellectual Property Rights for development which will enable our enterprises to benefit from the wealth of technological, commercial information available in patent and trademark databases, identifying potential business partners and be

informed of the innovative activities of competitors. Moreover, IPR enables effective monitoring and enforcement of activities throughout the supply and distribution chains, giving both innovators and distributors an incentive to invest in marketing, services and quality guarantees.

My Ministry has been very much active in policy formulation with regard to IPR issues and seeking technical assistance with a view to enhancing understanding of IPR within the business community. Government officials as well as the public at large, Mr Speaker, Sir, are party to it. The World Intellectual Property Organisation has in collaboration with my Ministry, prepared an Intellectual Property Development Plan for Mauritius. The strategic goals are mainly to –

- update and strengthening IPR policy and legal framework;
- modernise Intellectual Property Rights administration infrastructure and build institutional capacity;
- strengthen the IP enforcement and regulation as well IPR for development, and
- promote innovation, creativity and technology dissemination.

A National Intellectual Property forum was scheduled on 25 November 2009 where a brochure highlighting the importance of IP for small and medium enterprises was launched. The brochure also aims at raising awareness on the importance of protecting IPR amongst students, the business community and the public at large. Such a regime would enable Mauritius to obtain products from a wider range of sources, bringing more competition and, as a result, lower prices. It would also contribute to ensuring a level playing field for all businessmen and to further democratising our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also make a pledge to Circular Migration. We pledge to Circular Migration as an opportunity for our daring citizens to acquire more professionalism, more life skills and more business possibilities. As you are all aware, Mauritius signed a Circular Migration Agreement with France in September 2008. The Agreement provides for the granting of visas to a certain number of workers, young professionals and people having skills in the scientific, economic, cultural, and humanitarian or sports fields. It is expected to enter into force shortly and will enable many Mauritians to take advantage of wide openings overseas and contribute to the development of the country.

While awaiting the ratification of this Agreement, we are already looking into the modalities for quick implementation under the terms and conditions that would be satisfactory to all parties concerned. Hence, we are in the process of working out bilateral Social Security Agreement with a view to ensuring that our temporary migrants have adequate protection.

Let me recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, that one of the priorities of this Government is to empower, in particular, our low-skilled and semi-skilled co-citizens to participate more effectively in the economic activities and development of the country and take advantage of the opportunities that result from economic growth. To this effect, we have introduced the concept of Circular Migration so as to enable them to work overseas temporarily and acquire new skills, make savings and return home to use these skills, *inter alia*, through their own entrepreneurship.

Our initiative, Mr Speaker, Sir, to develop Circular Migration also aims at empowering migrants to start a small business or invest in other productive sectors of the economy upon their return through the Matched Savings Scheme. Under the Small and Medium Enterprise Partnership Fund, the Government of Mauritius matches every one rupee of the SME entrepreneur for investment in SMEs on a one-to-one basis.

My Ministry will continue to work towards the establishment of other Circular Migration Agreements and related initiatives such as Maple Leaf, Lucy Pork and Lakeside Packers projects. Allow me to underscore that as at September 2009, some 200 Mauritian workers have left for Canada under these three schemes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is an issue which is quite sensitive that I want to highlight. It relates to the services sector, Mr Speaker, Sir. As has been stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a sector which is constantly growing, but we have to make sure that we take all the necessary measures, the more so since we want to turn the financial centres into a centre of international repute. I must highlight, Mr Speaker, Sir, the host of measures taken by this Government. The financial sector, as I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, is growing at an annual average rate of some 7.6% between 2006 and 2009. Starting out modestly in this field, today Mauritius has positioned itself, as I have stated, as an International Financial Centre.

Global Business remains a key element of this sector. We are confident that Global Business can grow further. It is in this spirit that we welcome the decision to enact, in line with international norms, legislation on Private Foundation with a view to promoting Mauritius as a platform for wealth management, services, succession, and estate planning as well as pension funds. The study being undertaken on the appropriate fiscal regime to improve the competitiveness of Mauritius as a business centre for Funds also goes in this direction.

Let me affirm that Mauritius diplomacy, under my tenure, will continue to support the key policy goal of promoting Mauritius as an International Financial Centre and as a jurisdiction of sound repute. Mauritius must be seen to be a jurisdiction which is compliant with international norms, which is transparent and cooperative while retaining its competitiveness and efficiency.

I would like to recall that Mauritius has regularly modernised its legal framework to incorporate norms and standards prescribed by international standard setters. We have in particular adopted the Anti-Money Laundering Act and then the 'fight against terrorism' norms, to make sure that our jurisdiction remains a clean and sound one. In the same vein, Mauritius has accepted and subscribed to the ongoing assessment programme by the IMF/World Bank, and has satisfactorily completed two assessments under the Financial Sector Assessment Programme. Mauritius underwent a first Financial Sector Assessment Programme in 2002/2003. In their report, the IMF/World Bank Financial Sector Assessment Programme team commended the rigorous standards of financial sector regulation practised by Mauritius, in keeping with international best practices. An update of the FSAP was carried out in 2007, as well as a detailed assessment of the country's Anti-Money Laundering and the Combat of Financing of Terrorism framework. The IMF/World Bank Financial Sector Assessment Programme team this time noted that several measures had been taken by Mauritius since 2003 in policy making and legislation, and these have supported the further development of the financial sector. The mission team also reported that significant steps had been taken by the Mauritian authorities in the recent years, to enhance the anti-money laundering framework.

As a jurisdiction of substance, we have also taken steps to subject Global Business Companies to a number of requirements relating to resident directors, board meetings, banking transactions, and management and control. Both the measures adopted to ensure the soundness of the jurisdiction and substance in the jurisdiction have distinguished Mauritius from many other offshore financial centres.

I also wish to emphasise that Mauritius has always been fully committed to exchange information with foreign authorities and we have, though we are not a member of the OECD, participated in OECD initiatives to widen the scope of exchange of information. On our initiative, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have put in place mechanisms to allow access to information on beneficial ownerships and operations of entities, as well as banking information and their sharing with other local and foreign agencies.

We are currently engaged in the process of signing or negotiating Tax Information Exchange Agreements with countries with which we do not have Double Taxation Agreements. Mauritius has also adopted legislation which empowers public sector agencies to exchange information with overseas regulators and investigating authorities, as we have the appropriate legal framework for mutual judicial assistance in criminal matters.

The strong regulatory and fiscal framework of Mauritius, its commitment to supporting exchange of information, and all other efforts being made in the direction of optimising the transparency of the Mauritius jurisdiction has not gone unnoticed.

Our placement on the OECD White List of cooperative jurisdictions is testimony to the good reputation of the Mauritius jurisdiction.

We will pursue further initiatives to ensure that Mauritius retains its reputation as a jurisdiction of substance, one which is sound, compliant, transparent and cooperative.

It is in this spirit that Mauritius has agreed to participate, at an early stage, in the Peer Review Process agreed upon by the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information at its meeting held in Mexico last year.

It is necessary to acknowledge the continued efforts of our colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, regulators like the Bank of Mauritius and the Financial Services Commission, as well as institutions like the Financial Intelligence Unit to ensure that the global business sector continues to advance in line with international requirements. My Ministry and our missions abroad, for their part, will give a new impetus to diplomatic efforts to promote the Mauritius International Financial Centre, and to protect the good repute of our jurisdiction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is precisely because Mauritius enjoys a level of confidence that, today, Mauritius, a non-Islamic member, has become a member of the Islamic Financial Services Board. The only country besides Mauritius, which is a non-Islamic member of that Board, is Singapore. I am also glad to report that the Governor of the Bank had a meeting with the Minister of Qatar, because we need to see where the alternative markets which can be tapped are, knowing perfectly well that Dubai is running into difficulties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will just highlight one issue, which is sensitive. Of course, with India, there are discussions, which are ongoing and, of course, we solicited the support from India to turn Mauritius into a reputable, financial services sector. The Prime Minister interacted, and had excellent discussions with the Prime Minister of India, who always reminds us of the special bonds between the two countries. In that vein, let me also remind the House that, on the issue of offshore patrol vessel, which Mauritius is going to acquire through the Indian line of credit, to exercise proper monitoring and control of our exclusive economic zone, that offshore patrol vessel will be given to Mauritius probably in a year or two years' time. When I talk of proper monitoring in our exclusive economic zone, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot stay silent on the issue of piracy. We are working

very closely with countries like France, India and the USA, and we are collaborating with regional organisations like EU and the IOC, under the Atlanta operations. We also support the vigorous efforts of the United Nation entities, such as International Maritime Organisation, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, the Interpol, as well as the UN Security Council and contact group on piracy of the coast of Somalia.

We further support the role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes and its effort to provide targeted support and capacity building to regional countries, which agree to undertake piracy prosecutions. We are considering signing the International Maritime Organisation Memorandum of Understanding concerning the repression of piracy and arm robbery against ships in the West Indian Ocean.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very often, we talk of Mauritius as becoming a city State, but Mauritius is well on its way to become a vast ocean State. For generations to come, we are securing a new heritage, that of replacing the small island paradigm into a vast ocean State, with the vision of the open ocean space with infinite possibilities of resources and challenges. The Mauritius Oceanography Institute, together with the relevant stakeholders, is considering a proposal for Multi-Sectoral Ocean Expedition, which would allow us to have a better knowledge of the ocean around us, its effect on our climate, as well as the potential resources available.

Mauritius has made so far two submissions on the limit of our continental shelf to the UN commissions. First, the joint Mauritius/Seychelles was presented to the commission on 26 March 2009, and I led the Mauritian delegation on that occasion.

The area claimed jointly is almost the size of Germany, Mr Speaker, Sir; 587 square kilometres. It was, indeed, recognised as the first African submission and the first collaborative initiative between two mid ocean small island States. A sub commission is expected to be set up in March 2010 to examine the joint submission by Mauritius and Seychelles.

Mauritius also submitted a unilateral submission in respect of the extended continental shelf in the region of Rodrigues Island on 06 May 2009. The area claimed is 123,000 square kilometres.

Mauritius also deposited a preliminary information concerning the extended continental shelf in the Chagos Archipelago region on the same day. The area claimed is 387,000 square metres. The issue, of course, will be discussed at the forthcoming third round of the discussions between Mauritius and UK at the beginning of next year. The area referred to in the submissions once the recommendation of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf is made, will give us access to a significantly larger area of ocean in which we will be able to manage the resources of the sea-bed and subsoil of our maritime resources. Mr Speaker, Sir, the generation to come will not only live on an island, but they are going to be citizen of a vast ocean state.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I earlier mentioned economic and political sovereignty. Our sovereignty is our daily concern and we shall ever show our strong will and commitment to press for the early and unconditional return of Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius. When the hon. Prime Minister had bilateral talks with the Prime Minister of UK, of course the issue was raised and discussed very forcefully. Let me state very clearly that we express our dissatisfaction in respect of the consultation paper which was circulated. It goes against the very spirit and letter of having a bilateral negotiating team which was set up after there was an

agreement between the two Prime Ministers. The Government considers that a Marine Protected Area in the Chagos Archipelago should not be incompatible with the sovereignty of the Republic of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago and should address the issues of resettlement, sovereignty Mr Speaker, Sir, access to the fisheries and the economic development of the island in a manner which would not prejudice an eventual enjoyment of sovereignty. A total ban on fisheries exploitation and omission of those issues from any Marine Protected Area project would not be compatible with the long-term resolution of, or progress in the talks, on sovereignty issue. Of course, we make it a point to solicit the support of all friendly countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and the international community for our sovereignty claims. We are also pressing for an early resolution of the sovereignty dispute over Tromelin while pursuing the bilateral dialogue with France.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not dwell lengthily on bilateral, but let me state one thing, if today we are cited as I have stated an economic showcase by people no lesser than the US Secretary of State or by the US Trade Secretary Ambassador Ron Kirk or for that matter her Deputy Ambassador. It is precisely Mr Speaker, Sir, because they want other African states to emulate the success of Mauritius and that was stated in no uncertain terms by Hillary Clinton when she stated that Mauritius may be a small country, but it has the potential to make a big impact, both by contributing to Africa's overall prosperity and by showing the way, and that was said when we attended the Africa Growth Opportunities conference which was held in Nairobi and in that conference we made a strong plea in favour of the Malagasy Republic. We took the stand. and as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I made a plea in favour of Malagasy republic, to highlight the plight of those who are working in factories and what the consequences would be if ever the Malagasy Republic is delisted from the list of AGOA beneficiaries Mr Speaker, Sir. We

know what the conditionalities are and under the circumstances our American friends acknowledged, but of course they did not express a favourable response outright. Ever since we have constantly canvassed the issue because we know what it means for regional integration. Fabric which we send to Malagasy and products which are exported to South Africa or to the US market Mr Speaker, Sir, and we have to be mindful of events unfolding before the US Senate because the AGOA may be at risk and we know what the consequences are. Competition is coming from countries like Bangladesh, from least developing countries. China, which adopted a voluntary restraint policy no longer does so, but we have to put across the case of our friends in the Malagasy Republic. And what did we say Mr Speaker, Sir, we are also impressing upon them to form that inclusive Government which is long overdue because we know what are the consequences. They cannot make pledges, and when it comes to forming a Government they are waiting for ages. The hon. Prime Minister has done his fair share, we have a legal representative who is a member of the mediation team chaired by former President Chissano and our contribution has always been very forceful, but we expect our friend in the Malagasy Republic to show more respect for their people, to see to it that this Government is set up, to honour the commitments for elections to be held within an agreed time Mr Speaker, Sir, because the consequences are far reaching and certainly it may have ripples upon Mauritius. SADC is doing its fair share, the international community is pushing the case across very forcefully, but unfortunately as we say you can take the mule to the fountain, but we need to make sure that they do drink the water, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me now highlight an opportunity which is knocking. I am not going to refer to all the benefits which we have obtained from the People's Republic of China, of course we know what are the opportunities which are knocking in respect of the Jinfei project, but let me highlight one event which is forthcoming. For the

first time, Mauritius will be participating in a World Expo organised by the *Bureau International des Expositions* in China, the Shanghai World Expo 2010, from 01 May to 30 October 2010. With more than 70 million people expected and more than 200 countries and international organisations participating, the Shanghai World Expo is set to have a significant positive local, regional and world impact and will bring more immediate and tangible benefits to both the host and the participants. The participation of Mauritius represents a unique opportunity to promote and showcase Mauritius strategic location; no one can miss our stand Mr Speaker, Sir. Its economic vibrancy, the modernity and environmental consciousness, the harmonious blend of cultures, artistic and cultural heritage and natural beauty of Mauritius, the Theme Statement of Mauritius for the Shanghai World Expo is built around the concept of Mauritius: a City State. Planning and preparation in Mauritius have been underway for two years now. A National Organising Committee set up under the Chairmanship of my Ministry has met on 12 occasions for that purpose. In parallel, an Implementing Committee has been actively involved on that matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish here to place on record our appreciation to the Chinese Government for having provided us with the possibility of participating to such a grand event.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since I have been talking of culture, let me highlight the support in respect of enculturating diplomacy. Performing arts have been given a vibrant component in the Budget. My Ministry will fully support the implementation of cultural projects which demand foreign assistance. For example, we just received a request from the Mauritius Association Society of Authors and the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture to enlist the contribution of foreign expertise to set up a laboratory of traditional music and dance in view of enriching the choreography, the costume design, musicology, music therapy, and other

techniques. We are exploring the possibility of using our observer membership of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP) to obtain inputs from Brazil, Portugal and Mozambique.

Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, I would wish to talk lengthily on the many achievements of my Ministry, but it is good to remind the House that we are putting training and skilled development at the heart of diplomatic performance. In fact, the idea of an institute of diplomacy and foreign trade was mooted in October 2005 during the State visit to India by the hon. Prime Minister. Since then the institute which remains virtual in nature has made progress throughout its activities. This year, the institute launched the 2009 Training Programme and Lecture series. Courses conducted so far, include Introduction to Protocol, Ceremonials, Writing and Reporting Skills, Course on Anti-Dumping. Two more courses are scheduled for this year, namely an Advance Training Course on Writing and Reporting Skill, and a training course on Negotiating Skills.

Lectures pertaining to the joints of mission made by Mauritius and Seychelles on the extension of their Continental shelf on Bilateral and Multi-lateral Negotiations against the backdrop of the global recession have been held. A further lecture is expected to be held after the World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference, but let me say that there was no outcome at the Ministerial Conference.

The planning for the 2010 Training Programme and 2010 lecture series is currently underway. I can already indicate that we are planning courses and lectures on political trade and economic issues as well as on regional integration. These courses and lectures are aimed at enhancing both the skills and knowledge of our diplomats and technicians on issues such as Human Rights, Competition Act, and Trade Remedies Bill amongst others.

These courses are essentially aimed at sharpening knowledge and skills of our diplomats and technical staff on a wide spectrum of issues that are relevant to their work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I end, let me state an issue which is relevant to all of us, the signing of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement which gives us the security of tenure in respect of export because, Mauritius exports more than 70% of its products to the EU.

Sir, we have travelled a long way. We are going for election next year. Of course, only the Prime Minister will decide as to the date of the elections, but when we look at our *bilan*, we can say without fear or prejudice that we have delivered, we have delivered to empower the people because we have a contract which we signed with the people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not the only ones who are saying that we have been successful. Independent authorities, be they rating agencies or financial institutions, are saying that Mauritius is indeed a showcase. It is so because of astute leadership and, today, Mauritius has grown in stature, whether on the regional or international front, but then it is all the doing of a dedicated team. We have travelled miles and I recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, there were times when we were in Opposition, we used to hold meetings with only three or four persons. Hon. Dr. James Burty David can avow for this and you too, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have travelled a long way, at times on the untrodden path but we need to look in the rear mirror and say, loud and clear, that as a responsible party, as responsible Members of a political party we should never take things for granted, because we have to honour our commitments *vis-à-vis* the nation and the nation is looking up to us for leadership.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have indeed delivered and we look forward, when the Prime Minister so decides to dissolve Parliament, to be back with new vigour, new strength and new zeal.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr P. Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debates.

Mr Soodhun rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Monday 07 December 2009, at 10.30 a.m.

Dr. David rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTER RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

(7.56 p.m.)

NPF BUILDING – NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD UNIT – SHORTCOMINGS

Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll be brief. There is a problem addressed to the hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions, hon. Mrs Bappoo. The National Identity Card Unit which has moved from the NPF Building to the Pope Hennessy Street two weeks ago. The office is located on the first floor and it seems that there are problems of staffing, lack of equipment and there is a long queue – I think it has moved to the Prime Minister's office. There is a long queue; people are queuing up to the bus stop. This is causing a lot of frustration to the public.

May I just request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to pass on the message concerning the question of staffing and failure of equipment in service delivery for the National Identity Card Unit. There is a lot of problems and if they could be looked into.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed there has been problem, but it is being solved. The main problem has been the transfer to the new site and certain equipment were not functioning. They have been put right and two measures are being taken. There is going to be supplementary hours to provide a better service and quickened the activity.

At 7.57 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 07 December 2009, at 10.30 a.m.