



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
WEDNESDAY 01 DECEMBER 2010**

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(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK,
FRCP

*Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs
and External Communications*

Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK,
FRCP

*Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and
Public Utilities*

Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	<i>Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment</i>
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	<i>Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development</i>
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo	<i>Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping</i>
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell	<i>Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade</i>
Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, FRCS	<i>Minister of Housing and Lands</i>
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	<i>Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare</i>
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	<i>Minister of Tourism and Leisure</i>
Dr. the Hon. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree	<i>Minister of Education and Human Resources</i>
Hon. Satya Veryash Faugoo	<i>Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security</i>
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	<i>Minister of Industry and Commerce</i>
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	<i>Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development</i>
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	<i>Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology</i>
Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	<i>Minister of Youth and Sports</i>
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	<i>Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions</i>
Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	<i>Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands</i>
Hon. Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee	<i>Minister of Health and Quality of Life</i>

Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	<i>Minister of Arts and Culture</i>
Hon. Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum	<i>Minister of Information and Communication Technology</i>
Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	<i>Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues</i>
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	<i>Minister of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms</i>
Hon Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	<i>Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment</i>
Hon Yatindra Nath Varma	<i>Attorney General</i>
Hon John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	<i>Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection</i>

Members

Members

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<i>Mr Speaker</i>	Purryag, Hon. Rajkeswur, GCSK, GOSK
<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Roopun, Hon. Prithvirajsing
<i>Deputy Chairman of Committees</i>	Hossen, Hon. Abdullah Hafeez
<i>Clerk of the National Assembly</i>	Dowlutta, Mr R. Ranjit
<i>Deputy Clerk</i>	Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena
<i>Clerk Assistant</i>	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
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<i>Serjeant-at-Arms</i>	Munroop, Mr Kishore

MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 22 of 2010

Sitting of Wednesday 01 December 2010

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

Ministry of Health and Quality of Life –

- (a) The Financial Statement of the Mauritius Institute of Health for the year ended 30 June 1996 (In Original).
- (b) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Institute of Health for the years ended 30 June 1997 to 2008 (In Original).

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

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

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2011) BILL

(NO. XVII OF 2010)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2011) Bill (No. XVII of 2010).

Question again proposed.

(11.43 a.m).

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): M. le président, compte tenu de la pire récession que la planète ait connue en 50 ans, le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances nous a présenté le 19 novembre dernier, le budget pour l'exercice 2011, adapté dans un contexte socio-économique international exceptionnel. Il s'agit, en effet, d'un budget responsable, juste et efficace qui accompagne un début de reprise économique, ayant pour objectif d'améliorer la vie quotidienne des mauriciens, d'aider les plus fragiles de notre société,

et de préparer l'avenir de notre pays à faire face aux nouveaux défis. Le budget 2011 assure avant tout un équilibre entre l'économie et le social tout en évitant un dérapage des finances publiques. Il faut reconnaître que le défi est grand mais pas insurmontable et nous sommes condamnés à être ambitieux.

Pour l'Alliance de l'Avenir, il n'y a pas une île Maurice du public face à une île Maurice du privé. Il y a une seule et unique l'île Maurice et l'État est la vitrine de la République de notre île.

Notre premier ministre, le docteur Navinchandra Ramgoolam, a dit ceci et je cite –

‘Le budget vise à améliorer la qualité de vie des citoyens, en particulier des jeunes.’

M. le président, ce matin j'ai choisi de démontrer comment ce budget va bénéficier grandement aux jeunes de notre pays. Il y a un adage qui dit que si une société n'investit plus ou investit peu dans l'avenir des jeunes générations, cette société a toujours tort car elle tourne le dos à son avenir et orchestre son propre déclin.

L'île Maurice a besoin de sa jeunesse pour comprendre et pour construire son avenir avec ses jeunes et pour ses jeunes. Dans cette optique, dans le budget prononcé il y a un effort sans précédent pour l'avenir des jeunes mauriciennes et mauriciens qui représentent le futur et la richesse de la République.

Le gouvernement veut un avenir meilleur pour ces jeunes et s'engage à leur garantir le droit à une vie digne, et leur faire bénéficier des potentialités et des moyens de développement de manière durable et équilibrée dans le présent et à l'avenir, dans un environnement naturel, social et culturel sain.

M. le président, c'est connu, les jeunes aiment rêver. Nos jeunes rêvent de vivre dans un pays moderne, un pays propre, un pays libre et démocratique et un pays prospère qui offre une bonne qualité de vie. Bref, un pays où il fait bon vivre. Un pays où toutes les conditions sont réunies pour leur épanouissement. Nous vivons une époque de l'immédiateté et vous connaissez bien les jeunes, M. le président, ils veulent tout, tout de suite et sans trop d'efforts.

Il est donc impératif pour nous, les élus, de mener des actions concrètes pour ouvrir les voies et répondre aux besoins qui s'expriment avec force. Dans cette optique, il est utile de rappeler que le Parti Travailleiste depuis sa création a beaucoup œuvré pour l'avancement de la

jeunesse mauricienne. Si les jeunes ont obtenu le droit de vote, dès l'âge de 18 ans, c'est grâce au Parti Travailleiste. Si l'éducation est gratuite à Maurice, c'est grâce au Parti Travailleiste. Si le transport des élèves est gratuit à Maurice, c'est toujours grâce au Parti Travailleiste et j'en passe. Le Parti Travailleiste a façonné notre pays et a laissé ses empreintes partout. Depuis la présentation du budget, pour ne rien changer et fidèle à son habitude, l'opposition fait du tapage, elle ne fait que critiquer, critiquer et critiquer, sans rien apporter de concret. Je voudrais reprendre une phrase très célèbre du *Leader* de l'opposition, l'honorable Paul Raymond Bérenger, quand il était ministre des finances. Je cite -

'Quand ou trape la manche poelon ki ou kone so chaleur.'

Etant aujourd'hui le *Leader* de l'opposition, je me pose la question de savoir s'il ne serait pas en train de faire semblant de critiquer. Ceci dit, M. le président, nous saluons les mesures et initiatives intéressantes annoncées pour aider d'avantage la jeunesse, notamment les investissements accordés à la lutte au décrochage scolaire, à la formation, au logement, à la culture, et aux loisirs.

Les jeunes et l'éducation – oui, le gouvernement du docteur Navinchandra Ramgoolam est résolu à aider les jeunes mauriciens à acquérir les compétences dont ils ont besoin pour atteindre leurs buts, et surtout pour réussir dans la vie. L'effort commence à partir de l'école pre-primaire.

Le gouvernement veut s'assurer de la réussite scolaire de tous ses enfants indistinctement. Si la progression scolaire d'un enfant est un long escalier qu'il convient de monter, il y a des marches plus difficiles pour certains.

Désormais, tous les parents dont le salaire ne dépasse pas R 14,500 ne paieront pas les frais d'examen du *School Certificate* et du *Higher School Certificate* pour un enfant et aussi pour le deuxième enfant si les salaires des parents ne dépassent pas Rs11,000. Les familles qui touchent entre R 14,500 et R 20,000 seront subventionnées à hauteur de 50% des frais d'examens.

Aujourd'hui, pour la première fois, un gouvernement augmente considérablement les bourses d'études qui passent à 50 dont presque la moitié d'entre elles seront réservées aux étudiants défavorisés pour réaliser leurs rêves.

M. le président, la mise sur pied d'un ministère pour l'enseignement supérieur est un signal fort que le gouvernement veut faire de l'industrie du savoir un des piliers de notre

économie. Le pays va prochainement attirer des institutions d'enseignement supérieur ainsi qu'un nombre grandissant d'étudiants étrangers. L'objectif d'avoir un diplômé universitaire dans chaque famille mauricienne dans un proche avenir est très ambitieux et tout à fait réalisable.

Très prochainement, plusieurs écoles vont ouvrir leurs portes après les cours afin de permettre aux élèves de profiter des complexes polyvalents et les terrains de jeux qui y seront aménagés. Déjà les écoles dites ZIS sont ouvertes jusqu'à 17 00 heures pour des activités extra scolaires. Tout ceci dans le but de favoriser la réussite scolaire car il faut un bon équilibre entre les études, le développement social et l'épanouissement individuel des élèves ; ainsi, 120 millions de roupies seront investies pour financer ces aménités qui seront également mises à la disposition des habitants de l'endroit en dehors des heures de classe.

Le budget fait également la part belle à la formation et à l'emploi des jeunes. En effet, il rappelle que les jeunes issus de familles modestes sont davantage victimes du chômage et nombreux d'entre eux quittent sans diplôme l'école. Cela représente une main d'œuvre inactive que la République ne peut se permettre de perdre. L'économie mauricienne ne veut pas prendre le risque de se retrouver en manque d'actifs qualifiés. Il est donc important que la République « mise sur ces jeunes ».

Le gouvernement s'engage donc à mettre en place un système plus juste et davantage tourné vers ceux qui en ont le plus besoin et faire de la formation professionnelle un outil au service du retour à l'emploi.

La formation professionnelle, c'est comme une garantie offerte à chacun de pouvoir rebondir vers un nouveau métier ou d'acquérir de nouvelles compétences pour évoluer dans sa carrière. C'est un moteur de l'ascenseur social, et c'est aussi un vrai atout pour la compétitivité des entreprises, qui bénéficient de salariés mieux formés et plus performants.

M. le président, l'annonce de baisse des tarifs de connexion d'ADSL pour tous types d'abonnements existants et la mise en place d'un second câble sous marin sont des décisions très bien accueillies dans la communauté des jeunes qui utilisent intensivement ce support de communication.

M. le président, les jeunes couples rêvent souvent de ce premier appartement. Offrir à tous les citoyens de notre pays les conditions de se loger décentement, tel est l'objectif de la politique du logement social du gouvernement de l'Alliance de l'Avenir. L'accès au logement est

l'un des socles de la solidarité nationale, de la cohésion sociale et de la lutte contre les exclusions.

C'est vrai que la demande en logement a explosé. Beaucoup de ménages sont en attente d'un logement social. Le gouvernement veut permettre aux populations les plus fragilisés de réaliser ce grand rêve d'accéder à la propriété d'une maison. De ce fait, le gouvernement va mobiliser 18,5 milliards de roupies pour la mise en œuvre d'un programme étalé sur 10 ans pour la production de logements sociaux. Une aubaine pour les foyers à revenu très modeste ne dépassant pas les R 5,000 mensuellement. Le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances fait un effort remarquable avec la mise en place d'un prêt spécial dont le remboursement s'étalera sur une longue période de 40 ans. En effet, en allongeant la durée du prêt, le montant de l'échéance de remboursement est réduit sensiblement et ceci donne donc la possibilité aux plus démunis de s'offrir une habitation. De plus, ces aménagements seront soucieux du respect de l'environnement et permettront d'importantes économies d'énergie grâce justement au système solaire dans les maisons.

L'aide aux familles dont les revenus sont inférieurs à R 10,000 pour l'achat des réservoirs domestiques devraient en outre permettre un stockage d'eau plus structuré à travers le pays.

En ce qui concerne les jeunes, l'intérêt est de les sensibiliser davantage à la culture. Elle leur permet d'aiguiser leurs esprits critiques, et contribue à ouvrir leurs esprits à l'intégration, la tolérance et la citoyenneté. La culture revêt un rôle plus qu'éducatif, elle aide les jeunes à s'insérer dans la société.

M. le président, au chapitre de l'épanouissement de la culture, rien n'a été négligé. C'est intéressant de noter que le budget accordé à ce ministère est en hausse. Il va y avoir beaucoup de projets et c'est essentiel.

M. le président, parce que notre pays possède un patrimoine riche et varié, le gouvernement est déterminé à favoriser sa préservation, sa valorisation ainsi que sa diffusion pour la transmission de la mémoire.

Il est très important pour chaque pays de respecter ses propres valeurs et cultures, de même que leurs pratiques traditionnelles pour renforcer notre identité culturelle.

Ayant été la présidente du *Morne Heritage Trust Fund* de 2006 jusqu'à tout récemment, je sais combien notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, est très sensible et soutient à tout ce qui touche au domaine du patrimoine mauricien. Il y a une volonté très forte de la part du

gouvernement de conserver notre patrimoine. M. le président, je voudrais ici rappeler à la Chambre que le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, a donné tout le support nécessaire à la préparation de l'inscription de *l'Aapravasit Ghat* et du *Morne Cultural Landscape* pour leur classification respective sur la liste du Patrimoine Mondial. C'est une très grande fierté pour notre pays d'offrir au monde entier ces deux sites exceptionnels.

Pendant longtemps les musées étaient en difficulté. Nous saluons le gouvernement qui vient dans son budget financer leur rénovation et réhabilitation afin de préserver tous les trésors littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques qui s'y trouvent. Je profite de cette occasion qui m'est donné aujourd'hui pour faire un appel au ministre des arts et de la culture pour l'ouverture des musées durant les weekends. Le ministre connaît bien les pratiques culturelles des jeunes. Sachant que les loisirs représentent la première activité des jeunes, l'accès aux musées les weekends pour les sorties en famille serait la bienvenue.

Aussi nous saluons la mise en place de la création de l'industrie du cinéma, d'une galerie d'art national et un festival international du film.

Les documents aux Archives Nationales sont des trésors inestimables. Les archives sont la mémoire de la nation et la vitrine historique de l'identité nationale. On ne peut que se réjouir de la décision du gouvernement de mobiliser R 100 millions pour la digitalisation de nos archives. Je fais un autre appel au ministre de tutelle, l'honorable Mokesswur Choonee, pour la préservation des archives nationales, cela comporte aussi un bâtiment approprié pour le stockage des documents.

Il faudrait aussi mettre en place un programme de préservation pour les documents originaux. Je rappelle à la Chambre que les plus anciens documents aux archives datent du dix-huitième siècle, ils sont dans un état très fragile et il faut impérativement les sauver.

Enfin, l'implémentation d'une école de conservation avec l'aide des pays étrangers pour former nos conservateurs, ceci bénéficiera non seulement aux archives mais aussi à la Librairie Nationale, la Mauritius Museum Council, l'Aapravasi Ghat et le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.

Aussi, le 02 Novembre dernier, à l'Aapravasi Ghat, le Premier ministre a annoncé son intention de prescrire l'inscription de nos archives concernant la mémoire des immigrants engagés dans le programme de L'UNESCO Mémoire du Monde.

Un fonds a été créé par la Société des Auteurs Mauriciens, la MASA, en août 2010 pour offrir une pension mensuelle aux artistes âgés de plus de 60 ans. Par ailleurs, des espaces dans

certaines stades sont mis à la disposition des artistes pour la tenue des concerts et une chaîne culturelle est opérationnelle pour promouvoir nos artistes locaux.

Le ministère des arts et de la culture va aussi contribuer à hauteur de 50% du prix de location du lieu de spectacles culturels organisés par nos artistes. Tout cela démontre l'importance qu'accorde le gouvernement à la promotion de la culture à Maurice. C'est bien d'avoir de beaux slogans qui soulignent l'importance de la culture dans l'enrichissement d'une nation mais le soutien financier pour véhiculer les projets et encourager les artistes restent un élément crucial.

M. le président, l'environnement est l'affaire de tous et des jeunes en particulier. Devenir acteur du développement durable, c'est possible dès le plus jeune âge. La vision Maurice Ile Durable du Premier ministre a fait des progrès significatifs. Les mauriciens sont conscients qu'il nous faut protéger la planète et commencent déjà à trier les déchets et aussi les piles et portables usagés. Des parcs éoliens sont lancés, la production de biogaz est en marche, les *Small Independent Power Producers* vont prochainement vendre leur électricité à la CEB. Nous devons impérativement continuer sur cette voie.

L'accent mis sur la recherche surtout dans les domaines comme les énergies renouvelables apportera de l'eau au moulin du projet Maurice Ile Durable.

En ce qui concerne l'approvisionnement en eau, j'apprends avec satisfaction que le budget 2011 comprend une série de mesures visant à optimiser la distribution de l'eau à Maurice. Tout d'abord la refonte de la CWA et la création de la *Water Authority*, une enveloppe de R 454 millions pour trois ans est consacrée à d'importants travaux de réhabilitation sur le réseau de distribution. N'oublions pas que les canalisations défectueuses responsables du coûteux problème des fuites ont occasionné en 2009 une perte de 50% de l'eau assainie et traitée par la CWA, soit 110 millions de mètres cubes pour cette seule année!

Je vais terminer là-dessus. La drogue, le tabagisme et l'alcool sont parmi les maux de la société. Le gouvernement accorde beaucoup d'attention à cela et veut protéger la santé de ses jeunes. Pour cette raison, nous ne pouvons que nous réjouir de l'augmentation de *l'excise duty* sur la cigarette et l'alcool.

Il y a un autre problème social sur lequel nous devons impérativement prendre une décision ferme, c'est le jeu compulsif qui est dû à la prolifération des maisons de jeux dans le

pays. La hausse du prix de permis d'opération qui est passé de R 500,000 à R 3.5 millions est un signal dans la bonne direction.

Avant de conclure, je profite de l'occasion pour faire un appel aux jeunes à s'engager dans le volontariat visant le développement économique et humanitaire sur le plan national. Aussi, je demande aux jeunes de donner un coup de main pour réaffirmer les valeurs familiales, culturelles et religieuses dans notre société.

M. le président, l'Alliance de l'Avenir a obtenu des Mauriciennes et des Mauriciens un mandat clair pour cinq ans. Le gouvernement sous le leadership du docteur Navinchandra Ramgoolam est déterminé à poursuivre sa politique qui a pour objectif d'apporter plus de croissance, plus d'emplois et plus de cohésion sociale. Le budget 2011 soutient la relance.

Le gouvernement de l'Alliance de l'Avenir dispose d'un programme ciblé et responsable pour transformer notre République en une île Maurice meilleure. Le budget 2011 propose les mesures nécessaires pour donner suite à l'engagement du gouvernement envers tous les Mauriciens afin de mettre en œuvre ses priorités clés et les engagements qu'il a pris dans son programme électoral.

Notre pays connaîtra des transformations sans précédent dans les années à venir. L'avenir appartient aux jeunes et le gouvernement va investir dans l'avenir. Oui, les préoccupations des jeunes et les plus démunis sont prises en compte par ce gouvernement.

Donc, je lance un appel à la jeunesse mauricienne pour travailler et soutenir le gouvernement. Ensemble nous allons engager la modernisation de notre pays. Allons de l'avant, avec plein d'espoir et de confiance, pour réaliser cet avenir ensemble.

Je remercie la Chambre.

(12.06 p. m.)

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): M. le président, je ne dirais jamais que la préparation d'un budget est chose facile, à la portée de tout le monde. Comme tous les budgets, il y a l'essentiel et l'accessoire. Pour déceler l'essentiel, c'est souvent une tâche très ardue, tellement l'accessoire scintille aux yeux, tel qu'un emballage avec des motifs colorés. Est-ce que les budgets se succèdent et se ressemblent? A quelques nuances près, on peut dire l'un ne démarque pas trop de l'autre. C'est pourquoi il est impérieux qu'une étude comparative soit faite pour voir si toutes les mesures énoncées - accompagnées souvent d'applaudissements délirants - ont été concrétisées ou pas. Une telle étude pourrait être édifiante car elle établirait combien de mesures sont restées lettres mortes, des déclarations d'intention, des vœux pieux.

L'ancien ministre des finances, en introduisant le *National Residential Property Tax*, croyait bien faire. Il a été chaudement applaudi par ses pairs en qui il avait une grande confiance. Le Premier ministre l'avait soutenu bec et ongles, en s'associant ouvertement à lui, comme pour faire taire ses détracteurs. Aujourd'hui, Rama Sithanen est vilipendé, traité de tous les noms, attaqué par ses propres pairs, y compris son ancien colistier.

Pendant ce temps, M. le président, l'actuel ministre des finances était d'un de ceux qui s'en prenait à lui méthodiquement et systématiquement. On peut dire que durant le dernier quinquennat, une des choses qui avait marqué les esprits, c'était les sorties à bout de champ, les unes plus virulentes que les autres, de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth contre la politique fiscale et monétaire de Sithanen. Tant et si bien que j'avais fini par croire qu'il détenait un bâton magique ou des remèdes miracles, propres à lui, susceptibles de rendre la vie de nos concitoyens plus agréable, dans une île Maurice hors taxe. Il est parvenu à créer un *crisis of expectation*. Tout le monde, la population, les travailleurs, syndicats, attendaient avec impatience. Voyons voir ce qu'il en est de son premier budget.

Je vais commencer par parler du jeu du hasard. A mon humble avis, le Premier ministre n'aurait pas dû être présent à l'inauguration du lancement de Loto. Idem, pour le jeu 'Millionnaire' avec la complicité de notre station nationale. Vous imaginez que 479 permis ont

été délivrés aux maisons des jeux. Ce qui m'amène à poser la question : est-ce qu'on a fait une étude sur l'impact social que cela aura sur notre société avant de délivrer tous ces permis ? Mais quand même là-dessus je suis d'accord avec la majorité, qu'il y a une vraie démocratisation.

Je dois dire que nos deux honorables membres de la commission de démocratisation de l'économie n'ont pas chômé, parce que 479 permis ont été délivrés à tout le monde. Le premier ministre aurait dû exprimer des réserves au nom de la moralité. Maintenant, des personnes de toutes les couches sociales et économiques se sont lancées tête baissée dans l'espoir de devenir riche. Il ne faut pas aller chercher loin, comment les mauriciens sont devenus 'zougadère'. Il faut être fou à lier pour croire que cela va améliorer la situation des gens. Heureusement que les rêves ne sont pas taxables.

Maintenant, on annonce que les bourses d'études vont être financées par de l'argent provenant des jeux. C'est très grave. Cela soulève une question d'ordre d'éthique et morale. Nombreux sont les parents de différentes confessions religieuses qui sont venus me voir, pour dire qu'ils ne sont pas d'accord avec une telle chose. Comme père de famille, moi aussi je me suis interrogé, et je me range de leur côté.

M. le président, pour y remédier et pour qu'il n'y ait pas toute cette confusion et toute cette agitation, c'est simple. On n'a juste qu'à ne pas mentionner les sources de financement des bourses d'études. Point à la ligne ! L'augmentation des revenus, par rapport au coût additionnel appliqué aux maisons de jeu, rentre dans les caisses de l'Etat. Et il n'y a pas lieu de spécifier ce qu'on va faire avec, et on n'est pas obligé de le faire. Et là, je donne l'exemple des années précédentes. Auparavant, lorsqu'on donnait des bourses d'études à des lauréats, disait-on qu'on les finançait par des jeux ? Il n'y avait aucune explication par rapport à ça. On donnait seulement des bourses d'études. Donc, M. le président, pourquoi venir dire maintenant qu'on va financer les bourses d'études avec l'argent qu'on a eu des maisons de jeu ? Donc, mon appel au ministre des finances, c'est d'enlever la source de financement et que tout redevienne comme avant. Le gouvernement donne tant de bourses ; point à la ligne. Il n'y a pas lieu de faire toute une *sega* avec ça.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is too much noise in the House. Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: Pour combattre les méfaits de l'alcoolisme et du tabagisme, on va augmenter le prix des boissons alcoolisées et les cigarettes. Trop simpliste comme solution ! De tels fléaux requièrent un travail en profondeur, une campagne de sensibilisation et d'optimisation des services des ONG, des organisations citoyennes, et des ressources humaines disponibles. Si de telles mesures budgétaires sont censées diminuer la consommation, comment explique-t-on que l'Etat s'attend à une augmentation de deux milliards comme taxe indirecte ? Un vice est un vice. On ne s'en débarrasse pas du jour au lendemain. Pour se payer des boissons alcoolisées et des cigarettes, on va inéluctablement puiser ailleurs, au détriment des enfants et de la famille, que ce soit sur la nourriture ou l'éducation.

Maintenant, M. le président, laissez-moi dire quelques mots sur la drogue. La toxicomanie persiste et, là-dessus, j'aurais bien aimé dire - et je le dis - que la drogue c'est un fléau qui doit être placé *above party politics*. La drogue doit être un fléau qui n'est pas sujet à une politique partisane. Nos travailleurs sociaux engagés semblent prêcher dans le désert. Pire que l'indifférence, il y a de la complaisance. Le mouvement anti-drogue mène une croisade, et ne bénéficie d'aucun soutien digne de ce nom de l'Etat. Le court métrage '*Paradis an Dey*' a failli ne pas être projeté. Quel calvaire c'était pour Jameel Peerally et ses amis !

Nous croyions que le gouvernement allait se ressaisir et tenterait de reprendre du poil de la bête avec de nouveaux textes de lois très musclés, pour casser les reins aux magnats de la drogue. Silence radio ! Après vingt cinq ans, il est plus que nécessaire d'instituer une nouvelle commission d'enquête - le dernier qu'on a eue était la commission Rault en juillet 1986 - juste pour pouvoir réactualiser toutes les données par rapport au fléau de la drogue. Je ne vais pas apprendre quelque chose de nouveau à tous les membres ici présents, notamment que la drogue mène beaucoup vers le SIDA. En passant, je souligne, à l'attention de la Chambre, qu'aujourd'hui c'est la journée internationale du SIDA. Et, comme je le disais, au lieu d'utiliser la MBC/TV à des fins de propagande, on aurait dû la mettre au service de ceux qui militent, au péril de leur vie, contre tous ces fléaux qui gangrènent notre société, tels que le fléau de la drogue et le SIDA.

Maintenant, M. le président, laissez-moi parler un peu de notre système de pension. Selon une étude menée par un actuaire étranger quelque dix ans de cela, les fonds de pension de vieillesse ne tiendront pas le coup d'ici 15 à 20 ans. L'ancien ministre Samiollah Lauthan avait

tiré la sonnette d'alarme. Nous avons une société vieillissante. Bientôt, notre *working force* devra travailler comme des forcenés pour renflouer ces fonds. Vu que rien n'a été prévu dans le budget, j'aimerais demander au ministre des finances, au train où vont les choses, s'il peut me dire si les fonds sont *sufficiently sustainable* pour assurer les pensions aux personnes âgées dans un avenir pas trop lointain.

Concernant l'aéroport, il n'est un secret pour personne que les services à l'aéroport Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam laissent beaucoup à désirer. Les plaintes sont fréquentes ; le public n'a pas moyen de s'asseoir ; les passagers sont souvent rudoyés. Il y a un manque d'égards. Sans proposer des mesures pour améliorer la situation, on vient avec un *passenger service fee*. C'est grotesque et indécent. Même les personnes âgées et handicapées n'ont pas été épargnées. Les étrangers entrent et payent la somme de R 1,400, et les mauriciens qui partent payent la somme de R 1,000. Est-ce qu'on a tenu compte de la parité de nos devises ? Il y a de l'injustice, M. le président.

Hier, concernant le pétrole, on a appris par l'honorable Soodhun que le *hedging loss* nous a coûté la somme de trois milliards. Il y a encore 1.7 milliard à payer jusqu'en 2012. Et la, encore, M. le président, c'est le consommateur qui paye les frais. Pendant combien de temps allons-nous supporter l'irresponsabilité et l'incompétence des gens qui ont pris cette décision ? R 4.7 milliards ! C'est vraiment un scandale.

Le combat contre la pollution pour une île Maurice durable passe, selon une certaine logique, par un nouveau coup de tondeuse aux conducteurs. A-t-on songé à l'effet domino d'une telle augmentation sur les prix ? Il y aura une flambée de prix, et les consommateurs vont se trouver plus appauvris que jamais. La maigre compensation salariale va être engloutie en un rien.

Quant à la PSC, en ce qu'il s'agit de transférer l'exercice de recrutement de la Public Service Commission aux chefs de départements, tout a été dit dans la presse. Il y a unanimité pour condamner une telle démarche. Un chef de département est lui-même *accountable* au ministre ; donc, il ne peut agir en toute autonomie et indépendance. Je suis persuadé qu'on va faire marche en arrière là-dessus.

M. le président, laissez-moi dire quelque chose sur ma circonscription ; la circonscription numéro trois. Dans mon *maiden speech*, et en intervenant sur le discours-programme, j'ai dit que, sous le gouvernement MMM/MSM de 2000-2005, il y a une longue liste de tous les projets

dont la circonscription numéro trois a bénéficié, et qui a coûté à l'Etat, pendant ces cinq ans, plus d'un milliard de roupie. Je ne veux pas revenir là-dessus, en nommant tous ces projets. Mais, quand même, je note qu'il n'y a pas eu de projets d'envergure que les habitants de la circonscription numéro trois ont bénéficié de 2005 à 2010. J'avais aussi dit que j'ose espérer que le gouvernement va rectifier le tir, et changer la donne en faisant mieux que ce que le gouvernement MMM/MSM a fait de 2000 à 2005. Encore une fois, je constate qu'il n'y a aucun développement majeur en termes d'infrastructure, de projets ou complexe sportif dans la circonscription No. 3. Peut-être tout à l'heure l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed va nous dire qu'il y aura la construction de trente-six maisonnettes à la Route Militaire dont, hier, on a su, à travers une réponse parlementaire du ministre Kasenally, que ça va coûter la somme de R 200,000 à R250,000 l'unité. Je suis septique là-dessus. Trente-six maisonnettes par R250,000, cela vous fait la somme de R 9 millions. Tout cela m'amène à réfléchir et je ne sais pas si aujourd'hui, nous, les habitants de la circonscription No. 3, faisons les frais du commentaire du ministre Mohamed par rapport au parti du grand argentier, que son parti est un *very small party*, même pas *small* mais *very small*. Donc, voilà où l'arrogance d'un ministre nous a amené et pour tout cela ce sont les habitants de la circonscription No. 3 qui paient les pots cassés.

M. le président, je ne veux pas être méchant. Laissez-moi vous dire que quand même j'accorde le bénéfice du doute au ministre des finances et qu'il n'a pas agi ainsi. J'ose espérer que ce sera meilleur dans les prochains budgets.

Dans un communiqué, placardé dans toutes les mosquées de la Plaine Verte, le ministre Mohamed informe les habitants de la circonscription No. 3 qu'il allait placer des remorques ça et là pour les déchets du Qurbani. C'est un communiqué placé dans toutes les mosquées de la Plaine Verte. Il est allé un peu loin, M. le président. Où est donc passé la Mairie de Port Louis ? Pourtant ça fait vingt-cinq ans depuis que le Jamiatul Ulama adresse une requête, à travers son secrétaire, à la Mairie de Port Louis et la Mairie accepte volontairement. Parmi, il y a trois anciens lord-maires - je parle sous leur correction. Cela a été tout le temps le cas de mettre des remorques à Port Louis pour y mettre des déchets à l'occasion du Qurbani. Voilà qu'on voit un

ministre tirer un communiqué pour dire qu'il va mettre des remorques pour ramasser tous ces déchets ! Dois-je comprendre que les remorques municipales sont passées sous le contrôle du ministère du travail ? C'est vraiment déplorable et honteux qu'un ministre se serve de la religion pour faire de la politique.

(Interruptions)

Ça a été placardé dans les mosquées de Port Louis.

Mr Speaker: I think the hon. Member is imputing motive on the Minister. He can criticise the act of the Minister, but he cannot impute motive on him.

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, je vais maintenant parler du problématique marchands ambulants. Là aussi, rien n'est mentionné dans le budget par rapport à ce problème. Il n'y a aucune provision pour l'extension du grand bazar de Port Louis, c'est à dire le bazar central. On a également entendu parler de la création d'une structure à la Gare Victoria. Encore une fois, rien n'a été prévu. On a souvent entendu parler – c'est dommage que le ministre des administrations locales ne soit pas là – des marchands qui se trouvent à la Rue La Reine et la Rue Farquhar et qu'on allait ériger une structure à la Gare du Nord. Là aussi, c'est le néant dans le budget. Rien du tout ! Pas une seule ligne par rapport aux marchands ambulants. Et comment ne pas oublier le *Hawkers' Palace* ! Ce projet a été torpillé par fanatisme politique et aujourd'hui ce bâtiment, qui aurait servi à abriter bon nombre de marchands ambulants, pas la totalité, est en fait un éléphant blanc. Cinq bonnes années se sont succédé et le problème de marchands ambulants reste entier. Quel drame! Hier, j'ai entendu l'honorable ministre Yeung Sik Yuen critiquer les lois des administrations locales – les lois de 2003. Il disait que son collègue, l'honorable ministre Aimée *will correct soon*. Mais je suis obligé de poser la question: qu'avez-vous fait de 2005 à 2010? Si

les lois de 2003 n'étaient pas bonnes, qu'est-ce que vous avez fait? N'y avait-il pas eu de ministre des administrations régionales de 2005 à 2010?

(Interruptions)

M. le président, nous savons très bien pourquoi ils viennent avec une réforme. Nous savons très bien pourquoi les élections municipales n'auront pas lieu cette année-ci. Nous le savons très bien ; eux-aussi, ils le savent. Une défaite les attend aux élections municipales ! A la municipalité de Port Louis, il y a une corruption ambiante. L'adjoint au Lord-maire a été condamné par la Cour pour corruption. Il a dû démissionner pour cela. Il y a eu beaucoup d'allégations, d'enquêtes à l'ICAC, par rapport aux étaux du Marché Central, à la foire Cité Martial. Tout cela c'est de la mauvaise gestion. Enfin, la liste est longue. Nous attendons patiemment les élections municipales et nous allons revenir là-dessus.

M. le président, les discours qu'on prononce ces temps-ci sont des discours post-budgétaires. Le gouvernement vante les décisions prises par le ministre des finances et, nous, l'Opposition, nous critiquons les mesures annoncées. *Mr Speaker, Sir, it is part of the democratic game.* C'est ça la démocratie parlementaire.

M. le président, souvent dans cette auguste assemblée, des questions, des interpellations et d'autres réponses données par des ministres, même par le Premier ministre, soulèvent des passions. Je comprends parfaitement que c'est une question d'opinion. C'est une question d'appréciation et chacun fait son travail et, encore une fois, c'est cela la démocratie parlementaire.

M. le président, ce qu'on a assisté hier, tard dans la soirée, est vraiment déplorable et honteux. Le dernier orateur qui a pris la parole a fait un discours rempli de haine, ne commentant presque rien ou très peu sur le discours du ministre des finances, comme-ci on était toujours en

campagne électorale faisant des attaques viles et personnelles à l'encontre de l'honorable Reza Uteem, tout en attaquant le MMM, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker : Order now ! Let the hon. Member speak !

Mr Ameer Meea: le parti où il a séjourné, le parti qu'il a adulé pendant vingt-cinq ans, tout en jouissant de tous les privilèges qui viennent avec. Il a été maire, lord-maire, *chairman* de la Banque de Développement avec ce parti ! C'est vraiment honteux ! C'est vraiment honteux et déplorable ! M. le président, ce qu'on vit en campagne électorale....

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, you can criticise the content of the speech of the hon. Member, but not his conduct in the House.

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, ce qu'on vit en campagne électorale ne peut être répliqué au Parlement. M. le président, nous n'avons pas de leçon à recevoir d'un tel personnage. Laissez-moi rafraichir la mémoire de tous ceux présents ici, d'une interpellation parlementaire datant de mars 2007 de l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing.

M. le président, je cite le *Hansard*:

'Ms Deerpalsing asked the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence whether, he will for the benefit of the House obtain from the Commissioner of Police information as to whether one, Mr A. H. was arrested in 2006 at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport for alleged smuggling and any other offence, and, if so, will he give details thereof.'

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: I will now quote the reply of the Prime Minister.

“Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director of Customs that on 03 November 2006, one Mr A. H., a Mauritian national arrived at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport from Johannesburg after having a business trip. While he was passing through the green channel, nothing to declare, he was randomly sent by a Customs officer into the red channel for inspection of his luggage. The Customs officers found in his luggage a box containing 150 pairs of sunglasses, having a commercial value of about Rs200,000. The sunglasses were secured by the Customs officers.”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said order, please!

Mr Ameer Meea:

“A case for the offence of failing to declare commercial goods was registered against him. Mr A. H. was requested by the Mauritius Revenue Authority...

(Interruptions)

... to pay VAT amounting to Rs50,583 and a penalty of Rs441,000 on the goods seized. He accepted to pay the total amount which is settled on 06 December 2006.”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said order, please! Order, now! It's over! The cyclone is over!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am afraid there is a second cyclone coming.

Encore ce même personnage a été interrogé par l'ICAC quand il était *Chairman* de la DBM pour allégation de corruption et c'est ce même personnage qui vient nous donner des leçons de moralité aujourd'hui. M. le président, que Dieu nous garde d'une telle chose ! Ce n'était pas prévu pour moi de m'attarder là-dessus, mais ce qui s'est passé hier, je suis obligé de venir pour dire toute la vérité, pour dénoncer toute cette démagogie. D'ailleurs, j'ai dû modifier mon discours pour cela.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, je vais bientôt terminer mon discours, je sais que cela a fait très mal.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Alright, the hon. Member is going to conclude. Order, Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: Je voudrais aussi m'attarder sur quelque chose qui se passe au Parlement ces derniers temps. Souvent j'entends les membres de la majorité dire, avec une certaine arrogance, qu'ils sont au gouvernement et qu'ils sont supérieurs et démontrent un mépris pour la démocratie.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, Order! After the hon. Member finishes his speech, hon. Mohamed will speak and I hope he will speak on behalf of the Government and put the record right. Carry on!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, je n'ai pas encore terminé ma phrase. Ils sont supérieurs en nombre. Je n'ai pas encore terminé ma phrase.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member must practise some sprinting in his speech!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Ils sont supérieurs et démontrent un mépris pour la démocratie parlementaire et l'opposition, à moins qu'ils ne comprennent pas le fonctionnement d'une démocratie. L'opposition constitue ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Member talk!

Mr Ameer Meea: L'opposition constitue un contre pouvoir et permet d'éviter que la majorité n'ait la tentation de mener une politique portant atteinte aux droits et à la liberté.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! The hon. Member doesn't have the monopoly.

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, laissez-moi rappeler tout le monde ici présent que le MMM a connu la gloire, le MMM a connu deux fois 60-0, le MMM n'a jamais été battu à plate couture, c'est-à-dire, 60-0. Deux fois le score fleuve 54-6 et 57-3. Plusieurs fois 126-0 aux élections municipales et à chaque fois que le MMM était au pouvoir, on a eu la majorité absolue que vous n'avez pas.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: Et mettez cela bien dans votre tête que vous n'avez pas les trois-quarts du Parlement.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Hossen, Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: Et n'y songez pas à toucher la Constitution. M. le président, le peuple n'apprécie guère l'arrogance. La politique est une roue qui tourne en permanence. Je vais venir là-dessus.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, laissez-moi suggérer à l'honorable Bunwaree de ne pas généraliser le cas de l'honorable Abdullah Hossen. Il dit que je veux être de l'autre côté, il ne faut pas généraliser le cas.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I don't want any comment or provocative remark to be made. All right! Yes, carry on!

Mr Ameer Meea: La politique est une roue qui tourne en permanence. Je ne sais pas quelle sera la configuration du prochain gouvernement quoique j'ai ma petite idée là-dessus.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! You are disturbing the speech of the hon. Member. Please keep quiet now!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mais je sais que le MMM en fera parti. Cela c'est mon intime conviction.

Merci, M. le président.

(12.36 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr S. Mohamed): Mr Speaker, Sir, having listened to the hon. Members of this House and having listened to the hon. first Member for constituency No. 3, I have come to this question: what in God's name are

we doing here? Some call it democracy to criticise. The hon. First Member for Constituency No. 3 talks about democracy, the rules of the game. This is exactly what he says. It is to criticise. I do not ascribe to this philosophy. The rule of the game is not for the Opposition to start just by criticising because what they have done, Mr Speaker, Sir, is nothing else, but criticise. And what is important here is to underline that part which is nothing, but criticise.

In order to really crown our country as being an example of democracy in this region of the world; when organisations such as Mo Ibrahim talks about governance in Mauritius and places us on top of the ranking of all those African countries, when other countries in the world have respect for our democracy, it is sad, in fact, that the Opposition here present do not understand what a responsible Opposition means. A responsible Opposition would, at least, have tried to come up with some suggestions of what they would have done had they been here, but then, again, it is not a dream that they will be one day here because it is such a far away dream in their minds that they cannot even contemplate the possibility of making constructive suggestions.

Not a day has passed since I have been sitting in this august Assembly listening to this budgetary debate when at least one Member of the Opposition has suggested an alternative! They have put themselves forward as an alternative, but behind that alternative, there is nothing in terms of substance. This is an Opposition devoid of substance.

What I believe a responsible Opposition should do is to recognise that in 2005 Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam became Prime Minister. And why did he become Prime Minister? It is because the people of this country voted for him to be the leader of the Alliance to lead us forward. Why did the people of this country vote in 2005? Not for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to become Prime Minister, but the leader of the Labour Party to be Prime Minister. Why? It is because they did not believe that from 2000-2005, hon. Bérenger did a good job. Let me simplify it. That is simple. Why is it? That is democracy!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, I have been watching you three times. You are constantly talking to hon. Jhugroo and subsequent to your talking there is a *bagarre* in the House. I will ask you to keep quiet, please and listen to the debate. You have always been behaving very well in this House.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure that those interesting brotherly and sisterly conversations could go on later on without the *bagarre*. What I would like to say here is the reason why, once again, the people of the Republic of Mauritius decided to vote for *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* and to bring to power the leader of the Labour Party and the leader *de L'Alliance de l'Avenir* as Prime Minister. It is because they were happy and satisfied in the great majority of the work of this leader.

(Interruptions)

It is only when the Opposition recognises that, that we can start moving forward as a democracy with a responsible constructive Opposition. As long as they fail to recognise it and they turn away their faces and hide from the obvious, they are lying to themselves and it is showing disrespect to the voice of the people - *vox populi vox dei*. This is *suffrage universel* that our forefathers fought for. Our forefathers have brought elections to this country, have created a situation where we are free as a nation. But the essence of democracy is for us to have respect for the voice of the people and to go to them and say: "yes, we agree that we were wrong somewhere." The Leader of the Opposition has to, at least, say: "yes, I agree I was wrong, I made mistakes and I bow to your decision". Then, they would have made amends with the people. But, what have we heard here? We have heard the hon. First Member for Constituency No. 3 come up at the outset of his speech and say the following - I am not quoting him but, in some words which he pronounced were that: we come up with Budgets after Budgets and he wonders whether everything that is mentioned in the Budget is ever realised and the answer to that was no. The youth of this country recognises that there is truth in what he says, but the problem is when the hon. Member says that not all measures mentioned in a Budget are realised, '*il y a certains qui sont restés lettre morte*' - the words he used - unfortunately, once again, he is not facing reality. I would not here say that not all measures can be implemented because of constraints or whatever, I am not saying that. When one belongs to a party, one must know one's history. When one says that not all measures are implemented, let me say the following: it is important to know the historical background of the Leader of the Opposition. When he is the Leader of the Opposition, he always has one language; when he shifts to Government, the language changes. I will describe how.

In 1982 and the years preceding 1982, what did the MMM not do to bring this country to its knees? What did the MMM not do to paralyse the Port? What did the MMM not do to

paralyse this country, the airport, the sugar sector, the transport sector? Every single sector of this country was paralysed by the MMM who were antipatriotic in their moves. That was the MMM. Why do they forget that part of history? Why are they so oblivious to history? Do they forget what the MMM did? At the same time while the MMM was doing that, what did the now Leader of the Opposition do? He was standing up and saying to the workers of the country: “You deserve 30 percent salary compensation.” 30 percent is what he was screaming at the top of all roofs of this country! Then the concept of *rattrapage* was in his mind. 30 percent! What was the inflation rate? He saw it in front of him when he became the Minister of Finance in 1982, after the general elections of June. What did he do? He saw that the inflation was not more than 13 percent or so. Did he give more than 13 percent? Did he, at any time, give more than 13 percent? No! What he did was simply to give 7 or so percent and nothing more. Then, at least, let me say that he is consistent in his ways. Once again when he fell into the Opposition, he started screaming from rooftops: “We have to give more”. He talked about *rattrapage*, he goes on and on, the same *disque rayé*. When he became the Minister of Finance again, after the new century had started, in 2001, in his Budget, did he talk about *rattrapage*? Did he talk about *rattrapage* in 2002 or 2003? No, he did not talk about it! When the Second Member for Constituency No.2 was making his maiden speech, approximately 35 years ago his father, Cassam Uteem was making his maiden speech and around that time or more it was Yousuf Mohamed who was Minister of Labour. When I go through the Hansard of that time, hon. Bérenger was saying that it was important to have widest consultations with the trade union movement to discuss salary compensation. It was important and it was criminal if we did not have it. Those were the words when he was in the Opposition. What did he not say from a sitting position? What did he not say which is insulting? What did the members of the MMM not say to the then Minister of Labour? Today, a generation later, when I am now Minister of Labour, that same Leader of the Opposition forgets that when he was the Minister of Finance, he did everything possible to avoid having tripartite negotiations with the trade union movement.

(Interruptions)

That is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

Mr Speaker: I will request the hon. Minister to be very careful of what he is saying. He has to assume his responsibility because I do not want him to be caught in any other problem. He has to be sure of what he is saying because he is saying very serious matters.

Mr Mohamed: I can assure every Member of the House and, most importantly, you, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I do not speak up before having verified. I do not only base myself on what was said in the press, I also go to records to verify before I come here and I take my responsibility. However, I duly accept Mr Speaker's remarks.

What was important for tripartism? How was it important in 1976 when he was in the Opposition, but when he became Minister of Finance, it was good enough to send the then hon. Kushiram and hon. Soodhun to negotiate? How does one reconcile the language of the Opposition and then he changes his tone when he is in Government? It does not make sense, it shows that there is no consistency. But, at least, it shows that there is consistency somehow that he changes whenever the wave goes and keeps on moving like a dry piece of leaf on the ocean, he does not have any direction. There is no vision in the MMM. There is only: "let us satisfy the people and say what they would like to hear; we are not concerned about leading this country forward". Let us have a plan – no, they do not have it! That is why the people voted against them in 2005; that is why, once again, the people voted against them and for this Government in 2010. When one talks about Budget, let us look at 2001 Budget.

The 2001 Budget talks about the construction of social housing all over Mauritius and the words "Plaine Verte" and "Roche Bois" are used. Let me say it very clearly. The MMM Government, whenever they have been in power - the few times - and again let me remind hon. Ameer Meea that whenever the MMM won 60-0, they were never alone. They were once with the Labour party and they were also with the PSM. In 1983, they were also with MSM. So, I am sorry. Alone they will never even manage anything close to it. That is why I understand the remark of the hon. Member at the end. He feels he will be in Government at the end at the next mandate. Because without that, they will be in history and forgotten, that is the truth. True it is that in politics the wheel turns, and the wheel has already turned with regard to the MMM, against them and not only that as the food also turns, it goes rotten. That is also what happens, they have turned and curdled away.

What I would like to say is that when Plaine Verte and Roche Bois were mentioned in the 2001 Budget, what should the hon. Member of Constituency No.3 ask himself? Was anything constructed in Plaine Verte and Roche Bois? Was anything constructed by the Government when the Minister of Finance was hon. Paul Bérenger? Was any house constructed in Constituency No.3 by the MMM in its history? Never! He should know history before he

talked. The only Government that has ever built anything in Constituency No.3 has been the Labour Party Government. The only Minister of Housing and Lands that has built most houses in Constituency No.3 - not the last generation, but the generation before - was Sir Abdul Razak Mohammed as he was the then Minister of Housing and Lands with the Labour party in Alliance. No other party! Not a single other party has ever built any house like this plan that the then Labour Government had in Constituency No.3 and in other areas of Mauritius!

We talked about the Budget; we talked about the need for infrastructure. The hon. Member talks about Rs1 billion having been spent by the previous Government in infrastructure, that they built the Islamic Cultural Centre with money coming from abroad and he said that I use religion to do politics. Money came from abroad for the Islamic Cultural Centre, from donor countries, and he credits it as an accountant to his asset. When that money came from abroad - hon. Minister Soodhun was there, he knows it well - we built it, we did a good job there. The hon. Member was talking about economy, he was at the radio and talked about *fung pow*, when his own Government went to get help from abroad, from friendly countries, that is what Mauritius is about, being friendly with everyone. They helped us because they recognised that we are a people that must be helped. Talking about *fung pow*? That was not *fung pow* then? What does he want to say? What have they constructed? *La piscine Municipale!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, ever since the previous Labour party Government, before 1992, has this constituency ever seen any social housing being constructed? The answer is no. I speak the truth and not even in 2005/2010. At least, I can admit it whereas the hon. Member cannot even admit the faults of his party because he is unaware of it; he is oblivious of it, just like his Leader. As the hon. Member was first elected as the first member there, just like he is the first child, let us put it that way, we owe a duty and responsibility to our Constituency. Consider me as a second child and there is no discrimination between first and second! I am Minister in this Government and I will see to it that houses will be built in that constituency. Judge me in five years and then he would come! What the hon. Member wanted is that this Budget should have basically done exactly the same thing as his leader, the then Minister of Finance: “We will construct in Roche Bois, we will construct in Plaine Verte. Those are the billions and millions we are going to put forward, but we are not going to do it! In fact, I am joking.” That is basically what he was saying.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order please!

Mr Mohamed: To add the insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

I'll talk about that in a minute.

(Interruptions)

If I go there again, I can get elected again, unlike him.

To add insult to injury, this morning, I was listening to the radio and I was so shocked and saddened to hear that "*le représentant des dossiers économiques du MMM a décidé de prendre un congé.*" *Je me dis que la raison pour laquelle il a décidé de prendre ce congé est : ou il a été congédié ou il a prit un congé. Mais il a sûrement été congédié par le peuple, parce qu'il a dit à la radio, viva voce, que la raison pour laquelle il prend congé, M. le président, c'est parce que le peuple ne l'écoute pas.*

The heart of the economic policy of the MMM is saying, and he is conceding and admitting, that whatever he is saying represents the philosophy of the party with regards to the economy: "The people are not even listening to us and I am going away." Let me say that that same Mr Luchmeenaraidoo today talks ..

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I allow myself to say that, as a young Member of this august Assembly - even though I am above 40 years and thank you for all of you who think that I look younger - *le porte-parole économique du MMM, ce représentant qui a prit la porte de sortie volontairement*, did something, which is very good. At least, he has been intelligent enough to stop talking because people don't listen to him. Had the content been interesting and worth listening to, he would have stayed.

This is why I say it always: "Listen to the people." If the people of the Republic of Mauritius have decided that they do not want to listen to them, take leave, go and they have accepted; at least, accept! Now, I gather that those who sit behind him in press conferences, as he is the representative, will follow suit and that would be a good decision.

What I am saying here is that I am crediting the Opposition of the possibility of one day or someday possibly doing something good because they have not done anything good. That same Mr Luchmeenaraidoo in 1983 became Minister of Finance. Today they swear by him, but that person ran away now. In 1983, when there was election, he came on TV and in that debate,

vis-à-vis him, there was hon. Bérenger and he said: “Bérenger misled the people because he promised 30% compensation and he only gave less than 10 or 7% compensation.” That same person today is basically together with the MMM and now he has left. I don’t know what they are going to do to celebrate this departure, God knows!

What I am saying here is to reply to the hon. First Member for Constituency No. 3: “When we do politics, I ascribe to a responsible Opposition.” I do not ascribe to *la démagogie pure et simple par clientélisme politique, simplement pour récolter des votes et de la sympathie, mais quand on analyse le fond, il n’a rien et c’est pire que d’être superficiel. C’est cela le problème*, and now having talked about politics, as such Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to address other issues.

At 12.59 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.31 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have started my speech on the issues that I hold close to my heart and I believe that the gong a *sonné* at the right moment because I have the impression that the Opposition Members were getting weak on their legs and, at least, it has been the right time for them to go and eat some food because the onslaught will now continue.

With regard to important issues which I still have to address, I think we are going to be blessed actually by a united front of the Opposition by following the economic *porte-parole* of the MMM by keeping quiet and that would be more intelligent than keeping quiet and not talking because people don’t listen, but unfortunately there is even division amongst them. Disarray, total disarray! *Disparate* actually!

However, let me continue where I left off. The hon. First Member for Constituency No. 3, today in his intervention, decided to show a letter that I, as Minister of Labour, sent to every single Mosque and Association in my Constituency. Why did I send that? It is because on the occasion of ‘Bakr Eid’ as usual - I agree with him - there are vehicles that are placed there not only by the Municipal Council of Port Louis, but also by the Ministry of Environment, and the Central Water Authority is also involved on that particular day. Why? Because if ever there are problems of water supply, it is important for the inhabitants to know which numbers to contact as there is a special service that has been set up to provide water; and those numbers do not stay the same every single year. What people should remember is that before they make statements simply to score cheap political points and be cheap in the same way, is that I am also a Member

of Parliament, *le député de la circonscription No. 3* and I am not only that, but I am also Minister. Since I am also Member of Parliament of that constituency, it is my duty and responsibility to see to it that the inhabitants of my constituency for whatever festival for whatever community that they have my help in order to, at least, let them know where they will be placed, what numbers to call, and that letter shows the intellectual dishonesty of the MMM. I am not surprised, as I have said, in history they have shown that they are the same consistent and dishonest intellectual people.

He failed to read the letters; there were phone numbers when he showed the phone numbers in public he should have said at least I am doing my job and now someone is going to come and use this august Assembly to come and criticise. If no other Minister has done it before, let me remind him that there was a Minister who did it before and it was *feu* Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed and I am continuing his good work.

(Interruptions)

At least learn from your elders! Respect your elders! But he cannot do that just like the MMM showed disrespect when Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed passed away, in front of his house, walked with a coffin written: '*ici repose* Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed'; the day of reckoning has come and it is today. I will not tolerate, and we cannot tolerate in an august Assembly, people not to at least realise that when you have a responsibility, when you have a duty towards those who have elected you, your duty is not only limited to those who have voted next to your name, it goes to all people of the constituency, whether they are from the MMM, from the FSM, whether they are independent candidates, the Labour Party, the MSM, the *Parti Mauricien*, every single party. All those people who belong to those parties, who live in the constituency, I owe a duty to every single one of them. That is the philosophy of the Labour Party and this is the party I belong to, but then again, as I have said, consistency in the methodology of the MMM, that is why it attracts, in its bosom, people who practise the same type of politics of attacking people personally because they are lacking arguments. What have they not done against me also?

In the last general elections, we have heard in this House what was done in Constituency No. 2 - hon. Hossen referred to it yesterday. You know what was done Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We talk about new politics, about a younger generation having to serve this country and take us forward to the next century, what did they not do? We have the First Member for Constituency No. 3. In the last general elections, he publicly said: 'do not vote for Shakeel Mohamed because

he is the lawyer of Sada Carpen, a drug trafficker' The same hon. Member said it. *Il récidive comme le Leader de l'Opposition*. La Constitution où il a prêté serment states very clearly that when an accused party comes to see you, you have no other right than to be obliged to defend him. That is the Constitution of this country and he swears to this Constitution and he has the goal to come to this House and pretends to be an hon. Member. That is what you call an hon. Member!

The Deputy Speaker: Please don't pass the limit! The hon. Member knows what I mean.

Mr Mohamed: That is the truth and, unfortunately, it hurts, but thank God, in this country, at least, in the MMM, you have people who realise that a Constitution is important, you have people who realise that the Constitution is the *colonne vertébrale de ce pays qui relie le peuple de l'île Maurice*. That is why I pay heed here and I pay respect, at least, to another colleague lawyer, who is hon. Uteem. At least, he realises that you should not flout the Constitution. Unfortunately, there are other youngsters who can't follow his good example. Now, what I would like to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

The Deputy Speaker: Cool down, now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I am cool! What I would like to say here is also of utmost importance. The hon. Member for Constituency No. 3 talks about the false promises and the budget measures that are not implemented. But then, again, when you point a finger at someone, and when you are not being intellectually honest, what happens is that you have many more fingers pointing at yourself! And the fingers which are pointing at him: the MMM. Let us not forget that when the Minister of Finance of 2001, hon. Paul Bérenger, came with the Budget, he said that he would create a revolution in our country. He would create employment; he would sort out the problem of *chômage*; he would sort out all problems. He had solutions for *tous les maux de l'île Maurice* ! What happened? More than 50,000 people lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Why is it that the hon. Members of the Opposition have amnesia when it comes to that? Selective amnesia? Why don't they comment on the fact that, when their leader was in the chair of the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, he, at the helm of the economy of this country, more than 50,000 ladies mostly and young men lost their jobs? At that time, *est-ce qu'il y avait un filet de Protection ? Au moment où le MMM était au commande des finances de ce*

pays, est-ce qu'il y avait un filet de protection sociale ? No. What did they do about it? They had the chance, they were in power. He could have suggested: 'let us put up a *filet de protection sociale* for those people who are losing their jobs'. No! The highest record in history for registered unemployed in Port Louis - and hon. Ameer Meea says that he wants to take the Municipal Council of Port Louis! - is basically during the time when hon. Paul Bérenger was Minister of Finance. Let me show the figures: in 2001: 2,268 unemployed people registered in Port Louis.

(Interruptions)

Oh! Cinq ans de règne Travailliste ! Mais, pour l'honorable membre, M. le président, le mandat de l'honorable Bérenger était simplement pour un an ! Mais laissez-moi continuer, it will get worse. In 2003: 2,095; in 2004: 2,197; in 2005, when they finally were kicked out of power, it was 2,810. Do you know when it started going down? At the time when the Labour Party was at the head of *l'Alliance sociale*, then it started going down. Then, we came up with a new piece of legislation, the Employment Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act, which created a new *filet de protection*. Why didn't they think about it then? Why is it that we have to have all the good ideas? We thought about it. Our Government thought about it. And the person who presented the Bill in the National Assembly was no other than hon. Vasant Bunwaree himself as Minister of Labour. What was it? It was the Workfare Programme. It was created specially to take care of those people who lost their jobs.

As soon as we came to power, not only we created this *filet de protection pour ceux qui allaient perdre leur travail*, but, all of a sudden, with the measures that this Government put into place, what happened? *Le chômage* was going down and, today, let me quote the figures of what I think is important for all hon. Members of the House, who honestly feel that they are here to contribute to this country's progress, to pay heed to, because those are important facts. If ever we are to ignore those figures, by simply turning our cheek away and looking away, as though it's not important, we are not real patriots. That is what I am saying.

Here I am quoting from the Employment Service Monthly Bulletin of September 2010. Registered job seekers unemployed, 26,922; that is the figure as at September 2010. But registered job seekers in employment, 20,324. The total is 47,246. In other words, and I read from this report –

“In addition to registered unemployed, 20,324, though already in employment, were registered at the Employment Information Centre in search of a better job.”

Today, we are talking about a country where there was the global financial crisis; where there was the Euro crisis; where there was the price of petroleum that skyrocketed; where you had the price of sugar that slumped; when the preferential regime for our textile products had disappeared. In spite of all those things, which the Opposition so selectively forget - out of choice, knowingly they chose to forget and ignore it - we have avoided double digit unemployment. In spite of that, we have managed to contain unemployment, and bring it down and, today, it is at 7.5% taking into consideration even those who are already employed, but in search of a better job. In actual fact, the figure of unemployment is much less than 7.5%. If this is not in actual fact giving proof that this Government from 2005 to 2010 - and now continuing - has done a marvellous job, as opposed to other countries! Let us not forget Spain, Greece, Ireland, and Singapore. Even next door to us, we have Reunion Island which has got 27% unemployment rate; a country that has the might of the French Republic next to it and, we, as a small Mauritius, without any natural resources - the only natural resource is our people - we have worked and striven together in order to maintain a single digit low unemployment. That is a fact which they cannot ignore and if - I say it again - they ignore it, it shows bad faith on the part of the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am of the belief that this Budget that has been brought by the hon. vice-Prime Minister has managed to identify what this country really needs; this country and the youth of this country really need. When you go through what is provided for in the Budget for employment measures, contrary to what is happening, as I have said, in the world, we, in Mauritius, are not only protecting jobs, but we are also creating jobs. Let me quote some figures, and I think that is of utmost importance, once again, to realise where we are situated. The unemployment rate has seen a continuous fall from 9.6%, when they left power. That is the legacy they left this country with. In spite of the big speeches of the Leader of the Opposition, saying that he was going to correct unemployment problems, 9.6% in 2005, today, it is 7.5%.

When they were in power, they did not have the problem of the global economic crisis. When they were in power, they did not have the problem of petroleum skyrocketing. They did not have the problem of the price of sugar going down, they did not have the Euro crisis, but we

are a pro-active Government. Look at the measures that the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance had voted about the ERCP! Together, as one unit in this Government, we are addressing the real issues, how not only to save jobs, but to create jobs. In actual fact, we have been unable to contain unemployment to one digit figure.

Let me also state another important figure. Before the first quarter to the second quarter, the figures show that we have been able to create some 17,500 jobs. We are talking about year 2010 only.

(Interruptions)

Who was in power? Who was the Prime Minister? Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, the Leader of the Labour Party, the leader of the Alliance! Through his leadership, we have been able to create some 17,500 additional jobs.

Let me also announce something. Even the MMM never organised it in Constituency No 3. There are more than 4,000 vacancies presently existing in various sectors of the economy: the manufacturing sector, tourism, hotels, construction industry, IT and others. In this regard, I have taken it upon myself, as Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, to call for the organisation of a job fair and we are organising the first job fair. There will be a series of many others in other constituencies. All the hon. Members from all the constituencies will see a job fair. Why? Because I believe we have to go everywhere to bring the good news, that there are vacancies that need to be filled. We are starting the first job fair on 11 December. We are organising one in Constituency No. 3 at the MITD building - the ex-BAT building.

One question which I have to ask: why is it that no job fair was ever organised when the MMM was in power in constituencies? They wanted to sort out the problems of unemployment, but why is it that they did not organise anything? As Minister of Labour, together with my good friends, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, the Minister of Tourism, with my good friend, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, we have joined together to create a special scheme whereby, we, as a responsible Government, are going forward to see to it that at least 500 jobs are given on crew ships. For next year, there will be 1,500 more; in 2012, there will be 1,500 more.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when I come to announce the good news, I announce it to the people but, first of all, I announce it to the Members of my Constituency. And what does the hon. First Member for Constituency No. 3 say? That people in No. 3 will only be given jobs in the private sector, but what about the public sector? Let me say it here, it has never been in the habit of this

Government, nor any Minister for that matter, to interfere for people to get jobs through the PSC and the LGSC. We don't do that. Maybe they are used to do that, that's why he said so.

(Interruptions)

I don't do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, don't interrupt!

Mr Mohamed: But then, is not it a good job? Rs24,700 - is not this a good job? The fact that we are creating a minimum Rs24,700. Unemployment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not limited only to people who voted for the Labour Party. Unemployment is not limited only to the people of FSM, MSM or MMM. Everyone is affected by unemployment.

Just like someone gets ill, everyone can be affected by illness. Here, instead of saying, yes, we have created those jobs, instead of only sending people whom you know, at least, take those jobs, avail themselves of those jobs. What we do instead? We discourage them. Why? For cheap political game! Where is the greater picture?

Let us sort out the problem of unemployment, let us together work united. Here, let me, maybe, surprise a lot of people. At least, when I say 'irresponsible Opposition', there is one Member from my constituency, hon. Cehl Fakeemeeah of the FSM - he is not here - who will be addressing this House today. I am sure that, at least, he will not show the irresponsibility of the MMM and he will be constructive in his proposals. I am sure about it. Why? Because, at least, we realise that people of good faith, people who have the interest of all at heart, they don't play party politics. Those jobs are there. I still open my arms; in Government we open our arms to even those who have been irresponsible and unfair. If hon. Ameer Meea knows of people who need jobs, I will gladly help. This is my promise, this is my pledge because I will not play party politics with unemployment.

(Interruptions)

I hope that he does not stop anyone from coming to the job fair, because that will be even worse. It will be criminal then.

With regard to figures from my Ministry, from January to October 2010, the 1,262 workers who have been laid-off have joined the Workfare Programme. Out of whom, 1,011 have been referred for job placement; 124 to the National Empowerment Foundation and some 127 to SMEDA. The work fair programme is working.

In the Budget, we have a Support Unit for Re-employment of Employees. The creation of that Support Unit, under the ERCP, will help to monitor retrenchment. Focus actions will be taken to support enterprises in difficulties and to redeploy laid-off workers. At least, here, we are proactive, not like 50,000 people losing their jobs when he was Minister of Finance! This is the wrong part, but then they forget about it.

Coming to the Phoning Jobseeker Registration System, it is expected that an enhanced version of the Labour Management Information System (LMIS) would better meet the needs of the unemployed and employers. A phoning Jobseeker Registration System will be put in place. Both employers and jobseekers will be able to register rapidly. The system will run automatically on a 24/7 basis matching people with jobs. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, when matching is detected, employers and jobseekers will be automatically notified by e-mail and SMS.

In addition, a Call Centre Operator will ring up employers and jobseekers to notify them of the matching. If this is not personal attention being given to each and every jobseeker, what is it? Why is it that we are coming up with such a measure and they did not?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the employment creation through Training and Placement Programme, the collaboration of the private sector is crucial in our quest to achieve social integration – the big enterprises, particularly those having recourse to foreign labour. We will have to give on-the-job training to people placed by the NEF under the Training and Placement Programme so as to remove them from the assisted mode to an employable mode. This is our philosophy: to remove them from the assisted mode to the employable mode.

We are also reviewing and modernising our work permit system and we are also increasing employability to training.

(Interruptions)

Just like the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not believe in tripartism! Well, at least, he believes in it when he is in the Opposition. I have to correct myself. It is this Government that has created the National Tripartite Forum. It was a collective Cabinet's decision.

The cheap attacks using small party or what not, what I said in an interview was taken out of context, once again for cheap political gain, it is something that *passé tellement inaperçu* but, at least, I must set the record straight. The National Tripartite Forum is a forum that is being created by this Government for a permanent discussion between all stakeholders, the trade

unionist, the employers and Government. As opposed to the Leader of the Opposition, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance met with the trade unionist. He negotiated with them.

When the time came – in history sometimes you have the opportunity of proving your work, they have the opportunity of doing what you say, what you really feel - they run away, they have missed your meeting with history. They have missed the point. When he was Minister of Finance, I said it earlier on, he refused to meet the trade union movement for tripartite negotiations, for salary compensation, *précisément*. That is the difference between this vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Leader of the Opposition. That is the difference. What I would also like to say is that it is unfortunate – I'll say it very clearly; I am not someone who says something here and something outside – that the trade union movement is concentrating only on salary compensation. Is this the only thing that is important in the life of a worker – salary compensation? I am saying it is important, but there are other issues also that are of utmost importance and that is what this Government is addressing in this Budget.

All the other facilities that my hon. friend, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, has brought in this Budget also address the life of the worker, the life of the Mauritians in order to take them away from difficult times. I would also like to say that what I would like to call upon the trade union movement is to let us realise that there are other issues like occupational safety and health, job creation, amendments to the Employment Rights Act and Employment Relations Act. Those issues are also of importance with regard to the life of a worker in general. They should not limit themselves only to salary compensation, that does not make sense. There should be a constant constructive debate. At least, the trade union movement, I am sure, will do a better job than the Opposition with regard to constructive elements in a debate.

I would like also to come to the issue of my constituency specifically. I would like to talk about good news. There is confirmation that I have obtained that the tender has been already approved. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping – I would like to thank the hon. Minister – has already informed the company that they have obtained the tender for the upgrading, fencing and turfing of football ground at Jean Lebrun Government school in my Constituency No. 3. That contract has been awarded for Rs7,650,950 only. That is for one football pitch – upgrading and fencing. That is the Ministry of

Public Infrastructure. Then again through inexperience, some believe it's the Municipal Council. Again, with time, they will learn to know that this is Central Government that is doing this job.

With regard to work that has been completed, several roads have been completed by the National Development Unit in the Constituency No. 3. Several have been retarred. What I would like to announce is that very soon – I am not talking about next year, I am talking about next week – Military Road, not only will it be done in terms of tarring, but it will go down with the drains and the pavements on both sides. Everything will be done going down towards la rue Gorah Issac. I, personally, have got involved as Member of Parliament of that Constituency. I will like to pay homage here to a great person who has lost his life recently after having served this nation. I will like to pay homage to Mamade Elahee who has served this country as a very proud son of Mauritius and a proud son of Plaine Verte. A legend when he was living and a stadium bears his name. Concerning that stadium, I am happy to state that the Mauritius Turf club is coming to invest CSR to upgrade the turf so that this will be opened. I am also happy to announce with regard to sports infrastructure that *les gradins du stade* St. François are in the process of being constructed. I am also happy to announce that the Roche Bois market fair will be constructed, that the Military Road houses will be constructed. I am also happy to announce that the houses that the MMM could not even build ever since they were created – I am not talking since they were in Government. You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, what thing is worse?

Ever ever since the inception of the MMM, depuis qu'ils ont vu le jour - peut-être qu'ils sont encore dans le noir, ils n'ont même pas vu la lumière - ils n'ont pas pu construire une seule maison dans la circonscription No. 3 à Plaine Verte, en particulier. Rien ! Mais ce que j'aimerais annoncer ici, M. le président, c'est cela. Je me corrige. Quand j'ai dit tout à l'heure là que l'honorable membre avait raison, que rien n'a été construit en 2005 et 2010, je m'excuse. J'ai fait une erreur. Il y a dix-sept maisons qui ont été construites à Roche Bois.

(Interruptions)

Ils viennent dire à l'Assemblée qu'en cinq ans on n'a rien construit. Laissez- moi aussi dire clairement que Asraf Dulull *as Minister of Housing and Land*, what was not said against him, that he didn't build this and that. I was wrong, because when I came to Government, I find out that 17 houses are soon going to be delivered in Roche Bois and they are nearing completion stage. I will not say it was I who built it. I will not say that I instigated the project, it was Asraf Dulull, whom I pay homage to, who started that project and which Government did he belong to?

The one leading this party, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Why is it that 17 houses could be built in Roche Bois by our Government? But I would like someone else to answer me from the opposing side. How is it that since the 1970s when they saw the light of day, they couldn't even build one house in Constituency No. 3. Zero! Say it out there! Have the courage of standing in public and admitting that *il y a des défaillances à l'intérieur du MMM, qu'on n'était même pas intéressé à venir en aide aux gens de la circonscription No. 3! On parle de ghetto. C'est le MMM qui a mis Plaine Verte et Roche Bois dans un ghetto. Comment est-ce qu'ils l'ont fait? Quand ils étaient à la municipalité, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait pour la circonscription? Rien! Ils n'ont rien fait. Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils ont été mis à la porte? L'honorable membre de la circonscription No. 3 doit au moins— s'il ne le sait pas, peut-être que je le référerais à la bibliothèque de l'Assemblée Nationale – apprendre avant de venir 'déblatérer' ici en ce qui concerne l'histoire....*

The Deputy Speaker: Please, the hon. Member should not...

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw the word 'déblatérer'. At least, he should not come and talk about history when, in fact, his history must be made perfect. What is most important?

(Interruptions)

At least, I am motivating them, otherwise they were sleeping! I believe in competition, they were sleeping otherwise. What I would like to say here is very important. I challenge any one on the other side to come and tell me. They like to say *que Shakeel Mohamed aime se servir du nom de son grand-père mais* if he is my grandfather, *pas jaloux, papa!* How is it my fault that I bear the name Mohamed? How is it my fault? I am proud to be one. Is it my fault that he made my father and my father made me? How is it my fault if I am not going to talk about that? At least, I'll like some decency when the MMM broke the heart and insulted late Sir Abdul Razack Mohamed for not doing nothing. Decency – come and admit that they have never even been able to achieve one-tenth of what he has done for that constituency even in twenty-five years at Plaine Verte! Come and show me one house they have built and then they can talk! In the meantime they talk, they can't even show me one house. That's justice, that's honesty and I would like to say something else in conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

I would like to say something else in conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, please, hon. Hossen! Hon. Hossen, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I would like to say something else.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please! Hon. Hossen!

Mr Hossen: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member have something to say?

(Interruptions)

Is it over now?

(Interruptions)

Please!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I raise a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, of course, the hon. Member can.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in an institution. This is a debating ...

The Deputy Speaker: What is the point of order?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is the Deputy Chairman of Committees. I am asking for your ruling. We are not depriving him of his rights of making comments. I want a ruling from you that he will be called upon to preside over the debates ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, it is not a point of order.

Mr Bhagwan: ... at Committee of Supply. I think we should respect the decorum and the functions of the Deputy Chairman of Committees.

The Deputy Speaker: It is not a point of order. The hon. Minister may continue!

Mr Mohamed: Once again, I am not surprised, le MMM *veut censurer le travail du tribun. C'est tout!* What I would like to say in conclusion is that the MMM, ever since that they have come into the Opposition in 2005 and until today...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, as Government Opposition Whip also, you have a duty towards the Chair to help in maintaining order in this House.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry. It is the duty of each and every Member to assist the Chair to maintain order and decorum in the House. This duty applies to everybody.

Mr Mohamed: I would like to finally try to conclude after all this. Obviously, it gives me more energy to say what I am saying because the truth makes me live. What I would like to say here is that there are two issues I would like to conclude on and it is the following. As a Member of the National Assembly, representing Constituency No. 3, one thing which very much I hold close to my heart, it is *le sort de ces sans-abris qui dorment dans les rues de Port Louis* and those *sans-abris* live in very bad conditions and they are the victims of our society in some way. I am happy to state here today that this concern of mine, I have expressed it to hon. Xavier Duval as though destiny wanted it that he came just at that moment when I was going to mention his name. I also expressed it to hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. There is a building which we have located that belongs to Government and we have a project. For the first time, Government will have to take its responsibility to have a *centre pour les sans-abris*, that all those people who sleep under the bridges and the streets of Port Louis will find a shelter where they can shower, eat and sleep and keep in a locker that belongs to them and this is basically what we are working upon. It is a building found on Rue Abattoir.

The second issue which I would like to also address in conclusion concerns Roche Bois. In Roche Bois, I am happy, as I have said earlier on, that *la foire de Roche Bois qui a été promise dans deux budgets précédents*, will finally see the light of the day. It is something which we are working very seriously upon. What is also important is that the football field in Roche Bois will be upgraded. The big canal that is next to the Roche Bois football field, la Plaine Kaya, will also be covered and there will also be a *crèche* built there because we need to have women who need

to find employment, to find a place where people can take care of their children. This is the social element and the heart that we have in this Government.

Finally, what I would like to say is that I do not expect many changes with regard to the way the Opposition works. But there is one thing that is of utmost importance, that I am the only Member of that Constituency that represents that constituency in Government. I would have welcomed constructive criticisms and suggestions because that would have helped me in my work and I would have recognised that this suggestion comes, at least, from someone even though in the Opposition because, at the end of the day, the object is that the people have a good life. But, unfortunately, I am there alone and I, as Minister of this Government, have the collaboration of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the unflinching support of the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the unflinching support of each and every Cabinet Member of this Government and the unflinching support of every single backbencher of this Government for us to, finally, bring Constituency No. 3 to a level of dignity and happiness that it used to enjoy at the time when Labour Party and the CAM were there. This is my pledge and, I, as Minister of this Government, I am the only one who will be able to do it because in the Opposition, apart from having empty criticisms, they can sell nothing else and people are not going to buy empty promises any more. They are here for results and the only person that can bring results to that constituency is me, and I am standing here.

Thank you very much.

(3.16 p.m.)

Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, je dois reconnaître que faire mon discours juste après la prestation de l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed, ministre du travail, relève d'un défi.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de rendre un vibrant hommage à toutes les personnes victimes du fléau du VIH/SIDA en ce jour où nous observons la journée internationale de la lutte contre le VIH/SIDA. Le premier cas fut découvert à Maurice en septembre 1987. Treize ans se sont écoulés et aujourd'hui plus de 4,000 personnes en sont atteintes. Je me permets d'en parler non seulement parce que je compte des personnes atteintes de ce virus dans ma circonscription, mais surtout parce que c'est une situation inquiétante face à laquelle nul ne peut rester insensible. J'ai une pensée spéciale pour toutes ces ONG qui, avec détermination,

courage, patriotisme et un sens d'engagement très prononcé se battent pour remporter la victoire sur cette maladie qui ronge notre société. J'ai aussi une pensée particulière pour toutes les familles qui ont un proche atteint de ce virus. J'ai personnellement visité quelques familles de ma circonscription et je peux témoigner de la détresse humaine que j'ai vue. Qu'en ce 01 décembre 2010, que tout un chacun fasse un effort pour faire reculer le VIH/SIDA à Maurice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as all Mauritians, I have apprehensions. Witnessing the international economic turmoil, the consequences of a euro crisis on big economies, I wondered how the hon. Minister of Finance would protect our economy from this international economic threat resulting from being in a global village. The hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development did it.

I would like to congratulate the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for this *coustique mathématique* which enables him to produce successfully a budget which aims at rebalancing growth, consolidating social justice and, in the same vein, my warmest congratulations go to the hon. Prime Minister and leader of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*, hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. *Dans les moments difficiles, on se serre les coudes*. This is what this Government is doing.

We all know that this Budget would not have been successful without the contribution and guidance of the Prime Minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is a Budget? It is an estimate or plan of expenditure in relation to income.

Un gouvernement responsable ne peut donner que ce qu'il peut donner dépendant du contexte économique et social dans lequel il se trouve. M. le président, assis dans cette auguste Assemblée se trouvent députés des deux côtés de la Chambre, le *Leader* de l'opposition, PPS, ministres, vice-premier ministres, *Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister*. Nous sommes tous assignés à un rôle, une responsabilité, un devoir envers nos mandants et le pays. Chacun d'entre nous nous jouons notre rôle, nous remplissons notre devoir. J'ose dire que l'opposition ne déroge pas à la règle, celle de critiquer et de disséquer les décisions et mesures prises par le gouvernement. Le mot opposition n'est-t-il pas formé du verbe s'opposer? Que l'opposition cherche la petite bête, c'est ce qu'elle fait, trouve que ce n'est pas assez, qu'on peut mieux faire, qu'un mot dans le discours du budget n'a pas été assez élaboré, que c'est vague. Soit. La démocratie se porte bien. Si l'opposition avait acclamé le budget et avait été sur la même

longueur d'onde que le gouvernement, cela aurait été trop beau pour être vrai. Il est impossible de satisfaire tout un chacun, de plaire à tout le monde, par exemple, les mesures prises visant à réduire le tabagisme, l'alcoolisme et le jeu font le bonheur de beaucoup de familles. Par contre, les disciples de Bacchus peuvent dire «*mo mari en colère*».

(Interruptions)

M. le président, après avoir brossé un tableau permettant de mieux comprendre le contexte dans lequel nous débattons le budget, je souhaiterais m'appesantir sur les excellentes mesures prises dans trois secteurs de l'économie, notamment – l'éducation, le logement et l'éradication de la pauvreté. J'aurais aimé discourir sur toutes les mesures du budget, mais je vais me garder d'infliger cela aux honorables membres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all Mauritians today are thankful to the Government *de L'Alliance de l'Avenir* for measures taken in the Budget regarding the education sector. The Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a Government which is full of humility and which is attentive to the needs of its people. It is a caring and responsible Government. *Nous, députés et ministres, sommes toujours sur le terrain, à l'écoute de nos mandants et certaines mesures prises dans le budget répondent aux attentes de la population.* Everybody and all responsible Governments know that it is only through education that people can come out of the vicious circle of poverty. This is why Government massively invests in the education sector. Government invests in the youth of this country because the youth is our future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are many families who earn more than Rs8,500 and who still have difficulties to pay the exam fees for their child or children. Many students have to resolve to do *Form V préparatoire* because their parents cannot afford to pay the exam fees. As the hon. Minister of Finance underlines it, the objective is, I quote –

“...to use education as a ladder to enable students from poor families to climb out of poverty.”

This is why Mauritians welcome the different measures taken regarding the exam fees. To benefit from the SC and HSC examination fees scheme, the monthly income threshold has increased from Rs8,500 to Rs14,500 and for families earning Rs14,500 to Rs20,000, they benefit from 50 percent SC and HSC examination fees. *Le gouvernement fait encore mieux.* For families whose monthly income threshold is less than Rs11,000, they were entitled to 50 percent of the examination fees for a second child taking the exams, but now, *le gouvernement a décidé*

de soulager ces familles. Henceforth, they will benefit from 100 percent payment of fees. It is important to underline that 19,000 students will benefit from these new schemes, compared to 8,000 before.

Le gouvernement ne s'est pas arrêté en si bon chemin, une fois que plus de familles reçoivent l'aide de l'Etat en termes de subventions aux examens de SC et HSC, the Government increases the number of laureates so that once again, more students can have access to scholarships. *Le nombre de lauréats a augmenté de 12 à 50 et le gouvernement fait encore mieux.* Among the 38 additional laureates, 24 will be reserved for students from families with modest income. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has not only increased the number of laureates, but it has also improved the State of Mauritius Scholarships and the Additional Scholarships Scheme. The laureates can either choose the current scheme or opt for a new one with interesting packages. It is important to underline that these measures will cost Rs1 m. to Rs1.5 m. for each laureate. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government does not cater only for laureates, for those who succeed brilliantly in their studies, it also provides help to those who are less lucky. In the Budget, the Minister of Finance announced that the interest on loan from the Employee Welfare Fund is reduced from 7.5 percent to 5 percent for loans up to Rs500,000. Furthermore, the interest rate has decreased to 5 percent for loans more than Rs500,000.

Today, we see that there is a democratisation in tertiary education. The Government is doing a great effort in this sector. In this Budget, we see incentives for more and more people to have access to tertiary education for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. *Le gouvernement et la société dans son ensemble ont compris que c'est l'éducation qui permet la mobilité sociale. Une des raisons qui explique la présence de 61 institutions tertiaires à Maurice, dont 11 institutions publiques.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a very good thing to democratise tertiary education. However, we should not forget those pupils who fail CPE each year. These children will never benefit from exemption of exam fees nor will they be able to do university studies. There is a risk that our society creates two categories of people. In my constituency, there are many ZEP schools and I can tell you that this problem is alarming. I am personally worried about the future of those children.

Lorsque ces enfants ne réussissent pas, ce n'est pas seulement la famille qui souffre, mais, c'est l'Etat, puisque c'est l'Etat qui aura à encourir les frais que cette situation va engendrer à l'avenir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Education to continue his efforts, pour que la situation change dans le secteur de l'éducation. Nous avons eu le plaisir d'entendre la réponse du ministre de l'éducation à une question parlementaire sur le département des pre-voc. Nous croyons fortement que le ministre de l'éducation fera le nécessaire pour rétablir la situation concernant l'échec grandissant au CPE.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second set of measures, which is welcomed by the population, is measures concerning housing. 40,000 families will benefit from these five housing schemes, which amount to Rs18.5 billion. As the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance underlined it in the Budget, at paragraph 344, I quote -

“Housing is the area where we can make the deepest inroads in eradicating absolute poverty and improving the living standards of families with modest income.”

M. le président, toutes les classes sociales de la société peuvent se retrouver dans ces cinq *housing schemes*, ceux au bas de l'échelle jusqu'à ceux qui touchent R 50,000 par mois. Nous nous accordons tous à dire que chacun trouve chaussure à son pied avec ces différents *housing schemes*. Mais, le ministre des finances et le gouvernement dit '*can still do better*'. On peut lire au paragraphe 358, *I quote* -

“*An adult first-time buyer of the house or a bare residential land will not have to bear registration duty if his total annual income is below Rs2 million.*”

Cette mesure vient soulager les jeunes couples qui veulent construire une maison. Cette mesure vient enlever un grand obstacle, devant auquel butaient bon nombre de mauriciens. Encore une autre mesure qui vient alléger le fardeau des mauriciens ; auparavant, ceux qui voulaient refaire leur toiture bénéficiaient d'une subvention de R 60,000. Maintenant, avec ce budget, cette subvention passe à R 65,000. Avec toutes ces mesures concernant le logement, le gouvernement démontre sa volonté de lutter contre la pauvreté, *and that it means business*. La construction de 7,000 maisons pour les mauriciens au bas de l'échelle, avec un revenu de moins R 5,000, va aider à apporter une solution au problème de promiscuité dans les familles. La

promiscuité engendre beaucoup de problèmes sociaux, et elle fait des victimes tous les jours. Ce gouvernement vient donner un logement décent aux mauriciens. Une maison est synonyme de sécurité, de stabilité. Quelqu'un qui possède une maison peut faire des projets, peut se projeter dans l'avenir.

M. le président, pour le gouvernement, notre cheval de bataille est l'éradication de la pauvreté, d'où la mise sur pied du ministère de *Social Integration and Economic Empowerment*, et, à la tête de ce ministère, le vice- premier ministre, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to show the commitment of the Government, Rs1.2 billion have been budgeted for the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment. I would like to quote the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance at paragraph 332, I quote –

“ Government will continue and with even more resolve, commitment and compassion, its mission (...)”

M. le président, nous voyons que le gouvernement, a, à cœur, l'intérêt des personnes qui sont au bas de l'échelle. Je peux témoigner que déjà, dans ma circonscription, au numéro 4, le gouvernement de l'intégration sociale a beaucoup œuvré. Nous pouvons dire, toutes les trois députées de la circonscription, que beaucoup de travaux ont été faits par le ministère de l'intégration social au numéro 4. Pour citer quelques exemples, *45 families were connected to CEB, and 42 families were connected to CWA* à Robertscott, Cité La Cure. Je peux aussi mentionner le projet de construire une crèche. Il y a aussi l'aide que les mauriciens reçoivent concernant les matériels scolaires, le transport des enfants. Donc, moi, en tant que députée de la circonscription numéro 4, je peux dire que le ministère de l'intégration sociale vient répondre aux attentes de la population.

Laissez-moi maintenant parler un peu de ma circonscription, par rapport à ce qui est présenté dans le budget. Quant je vois que les mesures, telles que les mesures dissuasives concernant l'alcool, la cigarette et les jeux, en temps que députée responsable, j'accueille ces mesures, parce que je suis consciente du ravage que l'alcoolisme, le tabagisme et le jeu fait dans ma circonscription et à l'île Maurice entière. Quand, dans le budget, je vois qu'on va cesser d'octroyer des permis pour la vente des produits spiritueux, c'est une des mesures aussi que j'accueille en tant de députée responsable. Les mesures concernant les travaux pour alléger le

fardeau des personnes qui sont pénalisées à cause des coupures d'eau, et je cite à la paragraphe 269 -

“Government will continue to support the CWA Programme for the replacement of old and defectives pipes around the island to ensure an improvement in the water supply.”

sont des mesures que j'accueille, parce que, dans ma circonscription, par exemple à Crève Coeur, les habitants souffrent du manque d'eau.

Je vais terminer par cette question, M. le président. L'économie mondiale va mal. Faisant partie du village global, nous nageons en eaux troubles. Saurons-nous garder la tête hors de l'eau avec ce gouvernement ? La réponse est: *yes we can*.

Thank you.

(3.37 p.m.)

Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, looking at the debate and policy of the 2011 Budget, even if some priorities may have been addressed, the Budget is indisputably a long redundant replica of previous budgets. As I kept hearing, from the other side of the House, the endless repetition of the catchword '*continuité*', I put the question: *continuité* for whom? For whose special interest?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my immediate reflection turns to the social goals of the Budget, and I quote on page 3 -

“(...) to advance social and cultural integration, social justice, inclusion, and equity & diversity.”

Here, as it is clearly indicated, the challenge is to apply justice and equity for every citizen. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issues of social and cultural integration, social justice, inclusion, and equity and diversity are of personal interest to me, as a Member of this National Assembly, for a couple of reasons.

First, not only because I come from a family that has allowed me to build strong commitment to social justice and fairness, but also it reflects the values and principles of the MMM.

Second, as a Member of Parliament, representing the voice of our people, I feel committed to voice the concern of the people I represent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all agree that there is a global financial crisis and that many countries have experienced great recessions. Mauritius, on the contrary, has undergone rapid economic growth, as compared to other countries on the Africa Continent. It is extremely important that the 2011 Budget gives us, citizens of Mauritius, a sense of security in our economic future.

This said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I strongly believe that the so-called continuity is just an antidote for lack of strong political will and resources. We clearly recognize that land and marine resources, as well as human resources are important to rebalance the economy, as mentioned on page 28 of the Budget 2011. Under each of these resources there are some good intentions. But, again, I ask the question: for whose special interest?

Let us consider our land resources; every acres of Mauritius is precious considering the size of our island. But, in reality who acquires the land, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? How is the land being exploited?

This is one among many examples that I am sure we have all experienced, of business using land for development and also as a dumping ground. I am laying copies of photos on the Table.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us consider our marine resources. The sea land is crowded with resorts and is sometimes causes of ambiguity when it comes to protect our marine resources. Let me cite an example, again in my constituency, l'Ile aux Bénitiers in the village of Le Morne. How is l'Ile aux Bénitiers being protected? There have been many ongoing petitions on this issue. This makes me ponder how people have to fight in this country, and to lose battle. Why? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let's say that the one who is at the upper rung of the ladder needs some acres of land for development; it will be given to him at the expense of the one who is at the bottom rung of the ladder.

As hon. Minister Faugoo voiced out, if Government needs land for development, they can dislodge those who are squatting the land without compensating them. And we call it a fair Mauritius, the Mauritian Dream! For whom? For whose special interest, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Finally, let us consider our human resources. We are providing different schemes to expand production potential. The term 'expand production' - from page 33 - is very good.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to another issue. If our children do not know their culture, their creativity, an identity to co-exist in peace and harmony, how can we talk about culture as an economic value?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to expand the agenda of the primary schools with classes to students' creativity, music, arts and culture. We need to have more public libraries; mobile libraries need to be provided in areas where acute poverty exists. These libraries should also have access to internet services.

Another fresh initiative of the Government is the '*Akademi Kreol Morisien*'. Its creation is most welcome, but no provision is made in the 2011 Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not my intention to put down or belittle the land, marine and human resources reform, but indicating problems that often hinder its economic impact. In this illustration, it is obvious that those who are small planters, small fishermen, and small entrepreneurs are not part of the wider world economy. Of course, this situation exacerbates the social inequality and social iniquity between the rich and the poor of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me turn to Art and Culture, which is one of my responsibilities as Member of the MMM and the Parliament. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is clear to all of us that there has been ongoing dialogue on culture as unity, catalyst for change, development, peace building, coexistence, harmony, *avenir*, etc. Nevertheless, there are some forms of discrimination based on race and ethnicity, gender, and age, in the recruitment of jobs or promotion of opportunities.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, how can we talk about "social and cultural integration, social justice, inclusion, and equity and diversity" without mentioning the Copyright Act? If Government is truly convinced that art and culture can be used as an economic value, why then is there no firm commitment to take appropriate measures to protect the rights of the author? The local artists are not exempted from taxes. They have not received any duty-free facilities to purchase their equipment.

Another point which I would like to raise concerns MASA. Why has MASA not been paid its grant for the financial year July to December 2009 and January to December 2010? Why has MASA, which is responsible for the Copyright Act, received a grant of only Rs950,000,

which, as mentioned in the 2011 Budget, will remain stable over the years? However, in the past years, MASA was entitled to a grant of Rs1 m. Why has this amount been reduced? Again, we are talking about the promotion of artists – arts and culture.

Another crucial point is the need to review the procedures for local artists to obtain the grant of Rs15,000. Mr Speaker Deputy Sir, local artists are freelancers. Some of them aspire to become small entrepreneurs, but they have limited resources to make good use of their talents. I believe that a well-balanced economy to sustain growth should reform the bureaucracy. I will cite only a few examples. One concerns a woman who lives in Baie du Cap, constituency No. 14. Because of *la lourdeur* of the bureaucracy, she was not encouraged to pursue her dream of becoming an artist. The same goes for a man who lives in Bambous, constituency No. 14. The last example is another young woman who lives in Rivière Noire, she is still struggling to obtain financial assistance for her first production.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, as a citizen of this multicultural society, I would like to make an appeal to the Government so that justice be done to artists. Fair enough, there is a long laundry list under the ‘creativity industry’. Only one in this list is non-repetitive. Mention is also made in the Budget about local artists who will be receiving 50% subsidy on the cost of rental venues for cultural shows and concerts.

The welfare of artist proposed in the Government Programme 2010-2015 is not included on the list. Why? Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the local artists are those who contribute to the wealth and income of this country. Yet, who benefits the most?

Our national heritage is another point I want to raise. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, twice, I have asked the hon. Minister to have a signpost fixed so as to indicate the exact location of ‘*Le Morne Heritage Site*’. The action is still in progress. Will it take a year, two years, three years or more? We don’t know.

My last observation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the reference to ‘*Sega typique Ilois*’ is most welcome. But has any action been taken? The elders of the native Chagossians are disappearing one by one. Out of the 2,500 or so of those who were deported, less than 700 are still alive. Their memories and traditions have to be collected and preserved. A more serious omission is the total absence of even a token budget for Government proposed actions at international level to recuperate Chagos. Only words!

“Cabinet has taken note that, in line with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, a National Repository of Intangible Cultural Heritage would be set up at the National Heritage Fund. The objective of the National Repository would be to compile a National Register of all intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional *sega*, *bhojpuri* music and dance, *sega tambour* of Rodrigues and ‘*Sega Typique Ilois*’ with a view to safeguarding the traditions. It would also help protect, promote and disseminate our rich intangible heritage for the coming generations and promote cultural tourism.”

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe it is important to look and understand the day-to-day realities of our people. These realities are facts and they are specific to our country. What works in another country, may not necessarily work in this country. Each country has its own historical antecedents.

The equal opportunity that could foot more people on equal footing is not yet amended. How can we talk about a level playing field with the economy? Even if we achieve a desirable growth with the economy, who will benefit the most? The ‘*marchand doll pourri*’ at the corner of the street, the small planters, the fishermen or the local artists? I am not sure; none of these people mentioned will be on the same level playing field among themselves or within the country. The rules of law that apply to these ‘*Ti dimounn*’ are not the same that apply to everybody. Who regulates the market, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? How much you can buy or sell? Who facilitates the market? A local artist receives a grant or loan upon completion of his work. A fisherman obtains a loan for his boat, he works for four months and the rest of the four months he sits at home because of the weather condition. How does he repay his loan? What happens next is that the interest keeps increasing up to 12% or 15%. He takes another loan to repay the loan and here he goes into debts. For the country to enhance the economy, should not we also think about the household saving? In this case, how many of us can save more money? Just a few percent, those who are at the bottom rung of the ladder!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to define a specific agenda to re-balance and maintain all our resources through visionary and determined leadership. We need to look beyond the macroeconomic goals to the realities on ground. The ‘Mauritian Dream’ does not only lie in success of the macroeconomic goals, it also lies within the people. It is the Government’s responsibility to take on board practical realities to effect positive changes in the right direction.

If not, the Budget 2011 will remain in a long list of wishful thinking. We also have to bear in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the level playing field needs to consider the changing in the demographic structure of this country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that the problem of today is a world problem and it is the concern of everyone.

Let me now turn to some specific examples in my Constituency number 14. There are major problems of water. In the whole of Mauritius, we have problems of water. Let me table the picture of somebody who has been dislodged from where he was living in Port Louis and just arrived to Bambous. He could not have water even when he has been paying his bills and everything. I will table this; you will see how he is getting water for his family to survive.

There is a problem of sewerage in the NHDC. There have been many questions on that. There is another problem of sewerage in front of Saint Sauveur Church that has now come in the public domain. It would be appreciated if something could be done about that.

There are also many problems of housing in my constituency which I have raised during my speech on the Government Programme 2010-2015. I hope the Budget will also help my constituents. They are all environmental issues. I have tabled photos on the environmental problems that we are facing.

The other thing that I would like to mention is about the bridge which has just been built at Chamouny. The bridge is built, but many works need to be done.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Radegonde: I will also table it. It is an incomplete work. So, I would wish that the contractor goes there and does the rest of the work because it is a burden for students to go to school. Look at what happens when it rains! I will also table these photos. I will table photos to show when the contractor came to work on the sewerage in my constituency, they leave the work undone. What I want to say is that the institution takes more responsibility to complete the work that they have to do it in any constituency. I wish that there is more coordination among institutions because we have also the project at *Morcellement Capitaine* which has been going on for years. Rs8 m. have been put in that project. It is still in progress. I have a question on that and I hope we will find a solution to that also.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(3.58 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr M. Choonee): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, first of all, to pay tribute to Mr Norbert Benoit, a well-known author and historian who passed away early this week. Mr Norbert Benoit has worked very closely with my Ministry. At a point in time, he served as Adviser as well. He was deeply involved in the “Slave Route Project”. He has authored several books on Mauritian history and several of his papers on local history have been published.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to start by something very interesting. It has nothing to do with culture immediately; I will come to culture later. I would like to tell you about our trade partners. Our trade partners - hon. Dr. A. Boolell will agree with me - if we start with UK, when the United Kingdom is facing one of its worst housing and unemployment crises; when the students have gone down to the streets to protest against tuition fees; when France is facing a lot of uproar because of the reforms in the pension; when President Obama just announced a two-year pay freeze for civil servants; when US unemployment surged to 28% this year, when it was only 9.6% last year; when Americans are now dreaming of restoring the ‘American dream’ and the ‘Can-do’ country is losing the confidence that it ‘Can’.

When the Republic of Ireland, a flagship, a hallmark of success in Europe, has just received 85 billion Euros of bail-out from the EU and the IMF; when Spain, is in pain and reeling under the unemployment rate of 17%; when tens of thousands of Italians are marching in Rome to protest bleak job prospects, reduced welfare and education funding; when the Minister of Labour and Social Security of Greece speaks of widening unemployment and social exclusion; when the Euro continues to go down; when unemployment has risen sharply across the European Union, affecting 22 million people, as the financial crisis has bitten deeper into those economies; when stock exchanges are sliding across the world, economies collapsing, and drastic measures are being taken and, nearer to us, the SIDS, when nation in Africa are facing famine and malnutrition; when others are still fighting to topple dictatorships and install democracy, Mr Speaker, Sir, for a minute, just think about it. If it was not we in Government - luckily it has not happened - had they been in Government - some of our colleagues confirm that it will never happen - *poëlon mari chaud*, let me tell you, they would have come, telling us that we have the triple external shocks, 36% less on sugar, our textiles export, because of the Euro crisis, will be limited, we will have tourists less from Europe. They would have come and

groomed the population. Hon. Dr. Satish Boolell will agree with me, they would have either hypnotised or anaesthetised the population through their cronies in the media, to come and convince the whole country that *nu dan difé poëlon mari chaud*, nothing can be done. They would have come with measures telling us VAT has to be increased, that the taxes have to be increased.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody! Please! You are not allowed to read newspapers in the House.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo please don't get excited!

Mr Choonee: They would have come, telling us that the rupee has to be devalued or they would have gone to the IMF with begging bowls, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We know their mindset. We know what happens when they govern. They have the culture of Opposition. But when they governed, I know what the mindset was. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has accommodated - we have to congratulate the Minister of Finance for that - electoral promises...

The Deputy Speaker: No interruption, please!

Mr Choonee: All electoral promises have been accommodated; we have encouraged industrial development; we are promoting tourism; we are having job creation, and we are boosting labour shortage in several sectors. My colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, just said it. We are expanding educational opportunities, scholarships and all that. We are addressing all social issues whether it is the Welfare State or guarantying the old age pension.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo! Please!

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these things have been taken for granted in this country. Just imagine how difficult a task it was for the hon. Minister of Finance to generate revenue when he had to say: "I will get rid of the NRPT, that I will not take taxes on interest." It was a very tough time, a very difficult decision, Mr Speaker, Sir. Yet, he managed and all the facilities that the nation was getting, they have all been reinstated; none of them has been disturbed. On the contrary, many more incentives have come up just because we know that this population needs our commitment.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody! Please.

Mr Choonee: We have a commitment to propel our country and people.

The Deputy Speaker: I am addressing specially to Members of the Opposition side. The previous orator had got all latitude to talk and she managed to talk in silence. I expect also that all Members are able to intervene in the same atmosphere.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget underscores our commitment to propel our country and people towards peace, prosperity and mutual understanding. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a very audacious Budget which is geared toward equality, social justice and the quest for excellence in the management of the affairs of our beloved country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before independence or when we got independence, we were classified as a resource poor country, isolated without close international allies, a monocrop economy, we were a net food importing country, a small country highly vulnerable to unstable tropical climate storms, cyclone, drought. A country with so much debt. We did not sail smoothly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and the economic chaos that some was expecting after independence did not materialise.

Looking back, we are convinced that we were blessed with good leaders and they started down the path towards progress and prosperity. Here, I would like to mention good leaders of those days who brought in independence: Sir Seewoogar Ramgoolam and the grandfather of hon. Shakeel Mohamed for whom we have a lot of praise and appreciation, Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed and, of course, the Bissoondoyal brothers of the IFB party. They are the ones who insisted, fought and brought in independence and definitely the good news is that, after independence, some remarkable men - the father of hon. Xaxier Duval, Gaëtan Duval - joined in. They came together in joint effort to overcome challenges. This is where the history of Mauritius changed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Today development strategy marries relatively high employment, export-led manufacturing, tourism, cyber industries, financial services and we have a broad base of social benefits.

Mr Deputy Speaker: No cross talking, please!

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the country scores particularly well on cross national measures of good policies and institutional quality, whether it is the business climate, protection of civil and political rights, we overshadow so many other countries. Our institutions are relatively effective and responsible. They are rated as some of the most favourable in the

developing world. Our multiple measures, growth, State democracy, social welfare, equity, have earned Mauritius the status of development 'superstar', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have managed the process of globalisation successfully for decades.

I would like to say all international institutions, without any exception, whether it is the Indian Ocean Commission, the regional ones, IOR/ARC, SADC, COMESA, ACP, African Development Bank, Commonwealth, Francophonie, EU, UNESCO and all UN branches, NAM, SAARC, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, the World Food Program, any international fora, today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the whole world over, will have only praise for this country. They acclaim us. They congratulate us. They find our achievements a miracle. They can't believe their eyes and ears and they say: '*nou mem meilleur*'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but the problem is with our Opposition. I am sorry to say that some Members of our Opposition are trained to look only at the negative side of things. Maybe - I say maybe - sitting too long on the Opposition bench, they do not have anything worthwhile to say or maybe they have run out of ideas. The fault, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does not lie in the Budget, but in the Opposition's outlook and attitude. They have to change their mindsets, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. One of their spokesmen, Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo, yesterday, on a private radio, vented his frustration to the non-reaction of the people to MMM's rhetoric. His frustration is understandable, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The people have understood and appreciate the good faith of Government. They know that the Opposition is bent only in fault finding and witch-hunting. If our Budget is bad, then what are the alternatives proposed by the Opposition? Empty! Up to now nothing has been said! Nothing concrete has come up as proposals and yet along with us, just like we are paid, they are also paid by the State, by taxpayer's money. We feel there is a shortage of concrete proposals for national unity, national interest that should have come from them, which we could consider because they are also part of Parliament and they are paid from public funds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have to show and prove that they are moved by patriotism. Anyhow, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have their say and we have our way. That's their culture.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I very often hear some comments. Well, there is a supreme power in there, don't worry!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please! Don't get distracted.

Mr Choonee: Yes! Now I'll come to my Ministry's activities. It's again about culture, but different this time. It is arts and culture and not their culture!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can't express any doubt about all that has been given to the Ministry of Arts and Culture. I have, once again, to congratulate the vice-Prime Minister and definitely the Prime Minister on this issue because they have come to know what is the real value of culture and how cultural development goes hand in hand with economic development. We never knew that such an emphasis would be given to culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Culture has got its share and in no way should I come and say that we are not having enough. Culture has got its full share definitely. We understand the circumstances in which we are living and the problems that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are facing. Whatever we have got we agree; we are happy with what we have got as budget from the Minister of Finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been informed of the setting up of a film industry. It is something very dear to me, to my Ministry, because previously films were not with the Ministry of Arts and Culture. It was with the Ministry of Industry and it has been shifted to the Ministry of Arts and Culture. I believe that this industry is the pillar of the future. The economic pillar of the future will be the creative arts industry, creativity and film is one of them because Mauritians have talents. Mauritians are artists. Mauritians have the skill. What they need is some additional training and, of course, the exposure and they want to be made visible. They are not visible, they do so well. Dr Bunwaree and I discovered a very young talented boy of twelve years old. When he was present on the scene, when he was there at Aapravasi Ghat, everybody, the whole country, congratulated us for that because we identified the boy and we made him visible. The problem is that our artists are not made visible enough and I would like hon. Mrs Radegonde to understand that there is no communalism in artists. I am sorry the lady is not here. We look after each and every artist and give to each and every artist his or her due. It never happens that we select. The Prime Minister has said that he is here for all Mauritians. The Minister of Finance presented the Budget for all Mauritians, all Rodriguans, everybody in the Republic of Mauritius. Nobody is missed. So, a budget is presented for the whole country, facilities are being extended to everybody and coming here in Parliament to say.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming here to say some artists are not getting the same privilege is a wrong interpretation of what a Ministry does. Since I came in, there is a desk just to

welcome artists everyday. I have met more than 300 artists myself. Just imagine. Hon. Alan Ganoo referred to me the case of an artist, but she didn't turn up, unfortunately. So, that should not be interpreted as being a case where we didn't consider the artist.

(Interruptions)

She has made the application, that's good news.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming back to the artists, my good friends, hon. Vasant Bunwaree and hon. Jeetah, said that there should be one graduate per family. I feel tempted to say that there must be two artists per family because there is no need to have a qualification, just basic things to become an artist - one actor and one actress. Let me say that every Member of the Opposition is most welcome. Come and act! We'll welcome you and we'll have a good show. Come and act!

(Interruptions)

We have to train them. The first thing is training and once you are trained, once you become an artist, not professional, but the trained one, then definitely you will have the possibility to perform well at the tourism and culture channel of the MBC. This is a new channel. We can broadcast you and you'll be made visible. The whole country, the whole world, may have access to that channel and you will be made visible. This is what we want to do. We want to make our children and our artists visible.

(Interruptions)

They will be specialised; we are giving training; even they can go to those schools. Hon. Dr. Bunwaree can give them the address of those schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as films are concerned, we are also thinking seriously of having what we call international studios in Mauritius. The hon. Minister of Finance has given us a budget of Rs2 m. to work out the film framework which would mean having international studios in this lovely country. Very often, people tend to forget how beautiful our country is because we are here and we take it for granted. Those who come from outside will tell you that Mauritius has all that it needs to become a studio: the natural panorama, the scenic views, the different colours in the sea, our sand and our mountains. They say that when they come to our country, there is a natural studio available for us to do the shooting.

(Interruptions)

Yes! Everything is available for any shooting to take place. I would like to inform the hon. Members that I had a courtesy call from one of those who produce that excellent movie: 'Avatar'. One of them came to visit Mauritius and they said we never knew that our country is so beautiful. We could have done that here. Everything is being done. Hopefully, we succeed in having those producers to come and open a studio to start with. Once there is an international studio in this country for the production of films which will mean again employment for our girls and boys.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said this on films, let me now come to something related to Arts. The National Art Gallery is so badly needed. I know and everybody knows that we badly need a National Art Gallery in this country. I am very happy that this time the hon. Minister of Finance has made provisions for us to put up a National Art Gallery in this country. I hope everybody is aware that next to Aapravasi Ghat where the DWC was previously, there is a wooden building which dates back to 1740. It is very near to the granary. They call it the hospital. We are working in very close collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office so that we can convert that building into a National Art Gallery of international standard, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Further to that, I am not talking about the international BRIC which would be Brazil, Russia, India and China, I am talking about the local BRIC which is Bickramsingh Ramlallah Interpretation Centre. Again, next to the steps that we have at Aapravasi Ghat, at a point in time, some people were complaining. What is it that we have there? Just the steps! No, Mr Speaker, Sir, it will be much more than that. It will be the Bickramsingh Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and just by the side of that building, we will have the National Art Gallery which would be a sort of *l'espace culturelle dans la région de Port Louis, tout près de l'Aapravasi Ghat*. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget has also made provision for *un espace culturel et artistique au Château Mon Plaisir*. I thank the hon. Minister of Finance for earmarking Rs50 m. for that. Hon. Mrs Radegonde complained about not having enough libraries. I can't understand because all Municipalities have a library. We have already got 16 CLACS - the new appellation is CELPAC - Centre de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle. *Il y a déjà 16, trois à Rodrigues et 13 à Maurice.*

The hon. Minister of Finance made the announcement that five more CLACS are coming in five different regions of the country. When I talk about CELPAC, it's not just books; it is the

computer, musical instruments or you can call it by so many names. Everything is available plus training facilities.

(Interruptions)

That's it! That's the beauty of Mauritius. We just celebrated *la commémoration du bicentenaire de la bataille de Grand Port*. You won't believe it. We had eight museums; we are having one more museum which will be in Grand Port as usual.

(Interruptions)

It is good! The name of that museum will be *le musée du peuplement*, the museum of the peopling of Mauritius. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what was interesting is when hon. Dr. Bunwaree took the initiative of having that activity, *la commémoration de la bataille de Grand Port*, what people did not say about it? So many negative issues were raised unnecessarily. So many intellectuals got trapped. It is as if we are celebrating a battle. But no, we are celebrating our history. This is Mauritian history. This is *notre richesse culturelle, notre héritage! Alors, on oublie cela. Autrement, comment nos jeunes vont savoir ?* The most important thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we had 400,000 visitors going to that site. It has never happened. Just tell me in 2010, where such an activity has been organised and such a big mass of people went and witnessed? Everybody came with positive comments on whatever we organised. The museum was closed temporarily, we are opening it with some more facilities being added to it. We have had consultations and we will soon be opening that museum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the National Archives, most of us have been there and we know about the state of affairs in which the archives is these days. For more than 25 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the archives has been at Coromandel, in a place which is not really safe because it is in an industrial area. We cannot continue like that. The best thing we thought was to digitalise all that we have, that is, the richness of the country. And you won't believe it, the hon. Minister of Finance knowing the importance of history and of our archives which is the oldest in this part of the world, has voted Rs100 m. to save all what we have inherited as archives in this country. Thank you very much for that again!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we were talking of museums, and I referred to the only museum, which is *le musée du peuplement*. Anyway, the Minister of Finance has earmarked Rs7.8 m. for us to improve all our museums, because we know that these places of history have to be preserved, and we need a good support from Government to maintain and upgrade them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say something about culture. I mentioned five new CLACs coming up, five new Speaking Unions coming up; we already have five cultural centres, and there is some pressure to have more cultural centres. Sitting in the chair of the Minister of Arts and Culture, I know that it is not an easy job. It is so sensitive; we come across all types of people from all walks of life. It is so sensitive and, yet, we are managing everything in the best possible manner, Mr Deputy Speaker. It was a small Ministry in those days, but today it has become a very big one. Just imagine! 30 para-statal! Nobody knew about it. The Ministry of Culture means 30 para-statal! Everywhere, we meet up a chairman, an officer-in-charge or a director, and most of the time they don't agree on issues. But we are working and helping them.

I just want to say that, in all these, ultimately, to get everybody on board, we will have to create another unit that will be a sort of apex organisation, which we will call *le conseil national de la culture*. They will all sit together and we will talk in terms of *inter-culturalité*, which is so dear to us. We cannot continue with people in different compartments, and say we are united in diversity! That served its purpose. Today, we say that there should be sharing of the values of the best part of each culture, there should be mutual understanding and mutual trust, there should be more of interaction, and that is where we are coming up with what we call as *inter-culturalité*.

To close the chapter on culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will just tell you what Gandhiji said about culture. I quote -

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides, and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.”

This is what Gandhiji said. *Gandhiji ki jai ho*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government understands that arts and culture are catalysts of peace and stability, and for the consolidation of national unity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just one more point to raise before concluding. The destiny of our country is presided by our Prime Minister and he is not any ordinary Prime Minister. I wonder whether we have a Prime Minister in the region or in the African Region, comprising 53 countries, who has the access to talk to President Sarkozy, to talk to the President

of China, to the Prime Minister or President or any top-notch of the Indian Government, any other Prime Minister or President or to the British Government directly. I wonder whether we have any other Prime Minister or President in any of those countries which have those accesses. I wonder, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The proximity of our Prime Minister to the Heads of Governments and Heads of States of our major economic partners is not only a sign of respect that our Prime Minister commands, but shows how our economic interests are safeguarded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our country has been blessed by the presence, struggle and enlightened leadership of many statesmen, but there are four who are the most important: Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Sir Gaëtan Duval, and now Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. All of them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, had teams working with them. Sir Satcam Boolell cannot be forgotten; they were all part of the team altogether. The miracle...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Mr Choonee:...of our survival and these achievements lie in their struggle, farsightedness and self-sacrifice. We owe them respect, and we are thankful to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will conclude. Our country has become a model for the world, not because of its proverbial cultural diversity, functional democracy and the free press, but also because of its political and economic leadership. It is a microcosm of the United Nations, and the whole world envies Mauritius. We are not focussing on the next election, but on the next generation. That's why the vice-Prime Minister presented a Budget for the decade. This is how the Government works; a decade. As 2000-2010 is over and 2011-2020 is coming, the Budget was also for ten years. This is where he expressed our vision - that is a very daring one. I wonder whether other Ministers of Finance in other countries would dare say so: that he expresses his vision to have USD 20,000 per capita income by 2020. This is something that everybody cannot say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. By 2020, we want to secure a dream for all, and move the country forward in the future. Our Prime Minister, as Head of Government, knows how to govern. He is applauded in all fora internationally, and he takes into account the local context and realities. He always sends the right signal and the right message, as a true patriot, to all other patriots of the Mauritian Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is rightly said that achievers, successful performers, winners, leaders do not do different things; they do things differently, and this is what makes the difference between us on this side and our friends in the Opposition. At times, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is important to state the obvious, and the obvious thing is that all Labour governments or Labour led governments and Alliances have, at least, one merit: they deliver, and they deliver on promises.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 4.38 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.16 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): M. le président, permettez-moi, dans un premier temps, de féliciter le ministre des finances, qui, grâce à ses efforts, a su préparer un budget qui répond aux attentes économiques et sociales du peuple mauricien, malgré la crise financière mondiale que nous connaissons.

M. le président, je vous félicite, ainsi que le vice-président de l'Assemblée, pour le tact et la dextérité avec lesquels vous menez ces débats.

M. le président, à mes yeux, ce budget représente la première étape de l'accomplissement des engagements que nous avons pris auprès de nos citoyens lors des dernières élections générales, ainsi que la continuité du travail commencé en 2005 par ce même gouvernement.

Même si les membres de l'opposition ne l'entendront certainement pas, nous avons parcouru un long chemin et nombreux sont des projets qui ont été accomplis, avec succès, dans le respect de nos engagements.

Depuis 2008, l'économie mondiale s'est détériorée, et le système financier global fait maintenant l'objet d'un examen très minutieux et sévère. L'île Maurice a été affectée, certes, mais grâce à la résilience de notre économie, nous parviendrons à sortir de cette impasse.

Cette résilience économique, que nous envie bon nombre de pays, et n'en déplaise à nos amis de l'opposition, résulte des combinaisons intelligentes de principes de base et courageuses réformes que nous menons, malgré les critiques incessantes. *Criticism is easy, and for the Opposition comfortably seated in armchairs, it is still easy.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, sometimes we do not realise how lucky we are to be living in this country. At a time when the whole world is still going through the after-effects of the global

economic crisis, Mauritius has shown possible growth, a drop in unemployment, healthy cash reserves and even an acceptable rate of inflation.

When I say healthy cash reserves, cela me fait penser que nous avons passé des époques, M. le président, où il n’y avait même pas l’argent pour payer les fonctionnaires. On avait dû faire appel aux compagnies privées. Vous vous rappelez, M. le président, qu’à cette époque il y avait Monsieur Paturau qui était à la Chambre de Commerce. C’était par ces moyens-là qu’on avait payé les officiers du gouvernement.

While countries in the developed world such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Iceland are all facing major financial disasters, yet Mauritius has been able to survive difficult days and keep its head above water and we know that things have not always been easy since hon. Dr. Ramgoolam came to power in 2005.

First of all, there was a massive increase in fuel prices followed by a worldwide food crisis. Further, the long-term guaranteed price of sugar cane came to an end. Though all this, the Prime Minister was able to lead the country ...

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister. I think the hon. Minister said that I will remember that at some time in the history of this country we had to borrow money from the private companies to pay civil servants. That was not the case as far as I know. From 1976 to 1982, I was in Government and I knew that we had economic difficulties, we had to go to the IMF, but money was never borrowed from the private sector to pay. I am sorry; I just wanted to put that on record because my name was cited.

Mr Aimée: Yes, this was long before that, Mr Speaker, Sir. On the contrary, more emphasis was put on the social programme including free transport for the young and old members of our society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition, before and after the presentation of the Budget, put major emphasis on that, that there should be *rattrapage* with regard to the annual compensation. Yet, once again, this Government has given a salary rise over and above the rate of inflation to the lowest paid workers, and has even increased the number of beneficiaries.

In fact, there has not been a single year while Dr. Navin Ramgoolam has been Prime Minister when this has not been the practice. We can compare this Government policy of guaranteeing index-linked pay rises for those at the bottom of the ladder to the recent situation in the United Kingdom where pay increases have been frozen and reduced, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, in

Mauritius we have been able to avoid that. This illustrates our commitment to those who need the most help from Government.

You may be aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a recent study has shown that the average family income in the United States of America has fallen by over 7% in the past decade. The Leader of the Opposition talked about *rattrapage*, may I remind him that in 1982, he promised a 30% pay increase to the population before the general election and then, as Minister of Finance, delivered only 8%.

Ceci étant dit, je voudrais me tourner sur ce qui me préoccupe le plus, c'est-à-dire la gestion des collectivités locales. M. le président, la réforme de nos collectivités locales est plus que nécessaire. Le projet est né suite aux constats suivants.

Il faut ramener la politique de gestion des collectivités locales à un niveau supérieur, vers une réforme de démocratie régionale. Cette dernière requiert la participation de l'électeur dans le processus de prise de décision.

M. le président, comme je l'avais annoncé précédemment, je présenterai dans un futur très proche, le nouveau *Local Government Act*. Il faut avouer que le *Local Government Act* de 2003 introduit par l'honorable Lesjongard, en plus d'être en conflit avec la loi de 1989, est loin d'être le *superb piece of legislation* qu'avait décrit le *Leader* de l'opposition dans un discours à l'Assemblée Nationale en 2004. Elle n'a donc plus lieu d'être. Cette loi ne reflète ni la réalité de nos collectivités locales, ni les attentes de la population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget makes provision for the costs involved in the Local Government election across the island in 2011. I will soon be presenting an amendment to postpone the election for the next year. I have finalised a new draft Local Government Bill which I have mentioned a few of the major points in the public. The delaying of the Local Government election will give Government, the public in general and the stakeholders the chance to have ample time to take cognizance of the new Bill and to ensure that all voices are heard before a final version is presented in Parliament, unlike what happened in 2003. I expect to carry out the next Local Government election under the new Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there may be remarks that no provision has been made in this Budget for the setting-up of new local authorities as proposed in the new Local Government Act. There is nothing strange about this, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 2003, when the last Local Government Bill was presented, no provision was made in the Budget at that time. In fact, even after the Bill was

passed, the previous régime never bothered to make any provision for the implementation of that Act.

Once Parliament passes the Local Government Bill, all necessary steps will be taken, including financial provisions in the 2012 Budget. This will not delay the implementation of any reforms that will be coming, and I reiterate that, whatever be the case, provision has been made for the Local Government election to be held next year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to say a few words about my Ministry and the LIF projects. The Local Infrastructure Fund was set up in June 2008 to fund the key infrastructure projects of local authorities. With a budget of almost Rs1.2 billion, over 150 projects are being financing. The Local Infrastructure Fund has been the leading agency for the implementation of infrastructure projects with a view to bridging the gap of quality infrastructure deficit between urban and rural areas. These projects aim to build a modern Mauritius where the quality of life is continuously being improved by uplifting the living environment and alleviating the hardships of the local community.

Basic amenities such as markets, fairs, roads and drains will continue to be constructed and other amenities will also be provided for the promotion of sport, leisure, welfare and cultural activities, to all age groups of the population. Some of the projects have already been completed such as –

- (i) market fair at Rose Belle, Pailles, Vacoas, reroofing of Curepipe beef market;
- (ii) multi-purpose complexes at Residence Vallijee, St. Pierre, Terre Rouge, Mare d'Albert and Sodnac;

By the way, I want to remind my colleague from the other side of the House, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie, that we are doing quite a lot even in Constituency No. 1. It is not good to say that we are looking only at Constituencies that are represented by Government Members.

(iii) sports amenities which include -

- construction of football ground at Ebene;
- multi sports complex at Paillote;
- lighting of football ground at St. Martin in Constituency No. 14, la Gaulette, Petite Rivière Noire, Cascavelle and Petite Rivière;
- fencing of Highlands football ground;
- tennis court at Plaisance, in Constituency No. 19, and

- tartan track at Sir Gaëtan Duval Stadium in Rose Hill.

By next year, major projects will be completed and these include new market fairs at Flacq, Abercrombie, Surinam and Rivière des Anguilles; Multi-storey Complex at Vacoas, Multipurpose Complexes at Bon Accueil, Pamplemousses, Rivière des Creoles, Glen Park and Souillac; Ecole de Boxe at Plaisance, once more in Constituency No. 19; Multisport Complex at Edgar Hugues at Curepipe; Football Ground at Henrietta; Social Welfare Centre at Caroline, and roads and drains construction in various parts of the island.

Under the LIF, 63 kms of roads as well as 11 kms of drains, which have already started, will be completed by mid 2011.

M. le président, le besoin de doter nos villes et villages d'infrastructures, va de pair avec l'exigence écologique de mon ministère. 50,000 ampoules de basse-consommation seront installées sur les routes urbaines et rurales de l'île. Cette installation sera complétée fin décembre 2010 – mi-janvier 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the Waste department, my Ministry is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes on Solid Waste Management, including hazardous wastes, and electronic wastes. The country generates about 420,000 tonnes of wastes annually and the total yearly expenditure on Solid Waste Management amounts to approximately Rs1 billion, broken down as follows –

- transportation/refuse collection costs (for both my Ministry and Local Authorities): Rs876 m.;
- Operation of transfer stations: Rs42 m., and
- landfilling costs: Rs164 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the past years, my Ministry and the Local Authorities have been rather successful in providing the services and facilities that have enabled waste to be collected over practically the whole inhabited areas of the island and their disposal at the landfill in an undisrupted manner. In so doing, the objective of protecting human health and the environment has been met throughout. The system has, however, been mainly dependent on massive landfilling of waste with recycling of waste being carried out on a low scale and in an informal, uncoordinated and unregulated manner.

The challenge for coming years is to integrate new measures with a view to devising and implementing a coordinated and integrated solid waste management programme, in line with the concept of sustainable development, as underpinned by Government's policy of '*Maurice Ile Durable*'.

Already, a composting plant of an annual capacity of 100,000 tonnes of waste is being set up at La Chaumière by a private promoter in accordance with a model which is at no cost to Government (except for carting away of rejects) and which would additionally bring savings to the tune of Rs25 m. annually on transport costs. The facility is expected to become operational early next year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, my Ministry is working on the feasibility of setting up another composting plant of capacity 120,000 tonnes at Forbach Hill, Cottage, where land is already available. Request for proposals from developers will be sought for the financing, design, construction and operation of the facility on a PPP basis.

In the medium to long term, my Ministry proposes to set up two other composting units in the eastern and southern parts of the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a compost plant will reduce the generation of green house gases associated with landfilling and will have the advantage of producing natural organic fertilizers, thus reducing reliance on imported fertilizers. An added benefit would be overall savings to the tune of Rs150 m. annually to Government on avoided landfill disposal and transportation costs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is also looking into ways and means to manage our hazardous wastes which have so far been carried out in a haphazard and unregulated manner. Since the ratification in 1992 of the BASEL Convention on transboundary movement and sound management of hazardous wastes, my Ministry has been working in close collaboration with the authorities in Reunion Island namely, DRIRE (*Direction Régionale de l'Industrie, de la Recherche et de l'Environnement*) for the exportation of hazardous waste to other countries for treatment, having appropriate disposal facilities there. I have to remind the House that we have started with the collection and exportation of some 5,000 kilos of obsolete chemicals which have been lying in our secondary schools for decades. The handling and movement of hazardous wastes is effected under strict safety and security conditions in collaboration with various stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Environment and

Sustainable Development, the Mauritius Port Authority, the Police Department, and the Government Fire Services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to bring to the attention of the House that at present we have no treatment and disposal facility for hazardous wastes and we have to rely on exportation and treatment abroad through authorities such as DRIRE.

Accordingly, my Ministry is envisaging to construct an Interim Hazardous Waste Storage Facility, that has been mentioned in the Budget Speech, which would cost in the region of Rs150 m. to have a better and proper management of the dangerous substances.

My Ministry is also proposing to enhance its manpower capacity to better handle the whole issue of management of hazardous wastes. Mr Speaker, Sir, hazardous waste is difficult to manipulate. The various different chemical components that you have may cause hazard to people that handle with that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to deal with the problem of E-waste which is growing in importance as a consequence of modern life and increase reliance in technology, my Ministry has solicited the collaboration of stakeholders for the recycling of E-waste. A first initiative started some weeks ago with the collection of cellular phones and batteries and here, Mr Speaker Sir, I have to commend the efforts of the Mauritius Telecoms which has sponsored and organised sensitisation campaigns in this context.

On its part, my Ministry launched some two weeks ago its first sensitisation campaign for good practices in solid waste disposal, including disposal of E-waste such as computers and other electronic equipment. There are currently a few companies which have shown interest to recycle E-waste and my Ministry intends to launch a request for proposals for the collection, dismantling and possible exportation of E-waste, starting with obsolete computers and peripherals from Ministries and parastatal bodies.

Mr Speaker Sir, my mandate gives me the opportunity to formulate policies and advise Government on solid waste management. I need to emphasise that solid waste management costs the country around Rs 1 billion annually. One tonne of solid waste, Mr Speaker, Sir, to send abroad cost us Rs 1 billion., this would not be sustainable in the long run, especially in the context of receding world economy. The total volume of waste generated is actually being disposed only at the Mare Chicose landfill, set up in 1997 and land for waste disposal is being consumed at an unsustainable rate. To date, approximately 32 hectares of land have been used

for landfilling covering six cells. The landfill is almost saturated. Furthermore, it is well known that reliance on landfill should be reduced and this should become the home of last resort for waste.

Today, we have three options: that is 3R's, that is, reduce, re-use and recycle; the waste to energy project and continued landfilling.

Government is carrying out an in-depth analysis of the above mentioned three options and a decision will be taken in the best interest of the country.

However, on environmental and economic grounds, the 3 R's option appears to have the best comparative advantage. Projects related to the 3R's would include the segregation of waste at source and/or magnetic sorting, waste to compost facilities, anaerobic digestion which generates energy and recycling of non-compostable waste.

M. le président tout aussi important et tombant sous la responsabilité du ministère des collectivités locales est le *Government Fire Service*. Mon ministère va poursuivre ses efforts dans la consolidation de ces infrastructures dont dispose le *Government Fire Service*.

Dans ce contexte certains projets sont déjà en cours de réalisation, notamment : la construction d'une caserne à Tamarin et plusieurs endroits sont identifiés, M. le président, pour qu'on ait le *mobile king that can easily be on any fire problem almost immediately*. L'achat de matériel approprié, telle qu'une plateforme d'échelle aérienne.

M. le président, notre pays se développe avec une rapidité inimaginable. Des IRS font surface, des bâtiments jusqu'au 25 étages. Il faut que j'informe cette Assemblée qu'on a une échelle qui ne monte qu'au sixième étage. Alors vous vous rendez compte M. le président, il nous faut certains équipements qui vont nous protéger en cas de risque d'incendie.

En outre, le ministère procédera au recrutement de 40 pompiers et pourvoira à leur formation. Tout ceci permettra au *Government Fire Service* de répondre aux exigences d'une société qui se modernise année en année.

M. le président, je suis aussi responsable de la *Beach Authority*. Puis-je dire quelque mots sur les plages publiques. Mon ministère poursuivra ses efforts dans l'amélioration des plages publiques ainsi que leur gestion. La démocratisation d'accès aux plages publiques sera maintenue et des mesures seront prises pour assurer la sécurité sur les plages entre autres, par le biais de cameras de surveillance.

En outre des mesures seront poursuivies pour doter les plages publiques de facilités telles que des aires de stationnement, des lieux de loisir, et des aménités de base. Ceci permettra aux plages publiques de contribuer au plan global de loisir pour les mauriciens.

M. le président, le prochain item que je vais en parler concerne la O IDC et Agalega. En passant, M. le président, je dois dire ces derniers 15 ans, on a eu des députés qui sont élus et il y en a plusieurs. Je n'ai jamais entendu parler, parmi un de ces députés, durant les derniers 15 ans à propos d'Agalega et tout le monde sait ici qu'*Agalega is part and parcel of Mauritius* et jamais personne n'a daigné aller visiter ces gens pour voir dans quelles conditions ils vivent. Je parle de ceux qui sont élus au numéro trois parceque Agalega y fait partie.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also responsible for the outer islands Development Corporation, more commonly referred to as the O IDC. The policy of my Ministry continues to be the social economic integration of all inhabitants of the Republic of Mauritius, including Agalega. Those who are living outside mainland Mauritius, such as Agalega and islets Cargados Carajos Archipelago, that is, St Brandon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Agalega and St. Brandon became part and parcel of mainland Mauritius in 1976. If my memory is good, it is Mr Burrenchobay who was dealing with that. There are some 300 inhabitants on the twin islands of Agalega, the North and the South Islands. Agalega is situated at about 1,000 km north of Mauritius. The only practical communication to Agalega is by ship.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me give you an overview of that period up to now. First of all, the island depends totally on central government. There is a coconut plantation of 40,000 trees, which can produce about 30,000 litres of coconut oil for exportation to Mauritius. The O IDC is sole employer of the inhabitants of Agalega.

During my tenure of office, as Chairman of the O IDC, I have had the possibility to look deeply into matters pertaining to the Agaleans. Many actions have been taken for them to have better living conditions. First of all, the coconut plantation dated back 50 to 60 years old. I have replaced more than 40% with new plants. The oil mill, which dated back 70 years ago, has been replaced by a new one, equipped with a 60 horsepower engine, modernising the archaic way of extracting oil.

Another major development occurred when I introduced that concept of using oil as an alternative fuel source to power generators and vehicles. This project has been expanded by the Mauritius Research Council with very promising results.

In the few months at the beginning of this year, my portfolio also included Rodrigues. I made a proposal to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and my colleague, Nicolas Von-Mally, Minister for Rodrigues, to import a million coconut plants from Agaléga to Rodrigues, and I am pleased to see that this project is now ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1997, the then and actual Prime Minister started a project for construction of decent housing for the Agaleans. 59 houses have been constructed. On an ongoing process, four duplexes are also being constructed every year. There are two primary schools on the island and, as of 2008, the Prime Minister has given his recommendation for one secondary school, which caters up to form III. Before then, all students, after their primary education, had to travel to Mauritius to study.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all Agaleans, since 2008, have their lease for the land, and for those particular houses that I mentioned before, they are paying only Rs1,000 every year. In Mauritius, we don't even have that.

During my chairmanship, taking into account the climate change, I advised Government of the risk of different calamities that can affect the island, being given that Agalega is only seven metres above sea level. As a result, government gave me the opportunity to construct a building of a height of about ten metres from the ground level, and made provision for safety equipment and non-perishable dry food permanently stored to cater for any eventuality. That came in 2004 after the tsunami hit this part of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 1976, Agaleans, employed by the O IDC, were on a contractual basis. Under my chairmanship, once more, I looked into our labour laws, and made a proposal to Government to transfer them *in toto* on the establishment, with all benefits, as extended to Mauritian civil servants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, although while doing all of this, there was a lot of criticisms from the Members on the other side of the House. Nevertheless, when looking back over the past few

years, it appears that the only Government that had cared for the Agaleans is the Government under the chairmanship of Dr. Ramgoolam, Prime Minister.

This is not unusual, Mr Speaker, Sir. Our friends on the other side of the House always criticise for the sake of criticism, probably to always be in the limelight. Today, being the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, I am proud to say that we have done a lot instead of lot of criticisms - without using another word for that - that we always hear on the other side of the House. I invite the media in general to understand our position in Government. Upon the matter of shifting Agalega to India, who can believe that, after all the decisions just mentioned, the Prime Minister and this Government would have the intention to give up Agalega even if it is a friendly country? I must say that, as Minister, I am opposed to that decision.

I am also proud to inform the House that, before being Chairman of the OIDC, there was only one telephone cabin for the Agaleans to make phone calls and then, again, only one way, from Agalega to Mauritius, to be in contact with their relatives. Yet again, I have been able to convince EMTel Mauritius to connect Agalega not only with Mauritius, but to the whole world. Even now, there is work done on the network to have easy connection of Internet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after discussion with my colleague, hon. Maya Hanoomanjee, we proposed to the Minister of Finance to have a proper healthcare made available to the Agaleans. As mentioned in the Budget speech, paragraph 113, Government is providing within the Rs8 billion for health care in Mauritius, a maternity unit in the Area Health Centre of Agalega. I wish to inform the House that, in the past, when a lady was five months pregnant, she could only get neonatal treatment in Mauritius and had to travel and remain during her period of pregnancy in Mauritius. This cost Government more than Rs3 m. travelling on Dornier plane, only on an exceptional basis, in emergency cases.

Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, in case there is any complication during the course of pregnancy of one member of our family living there, the problems to have the first-aid? Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, somebody who would be on leave from her place of work for the remaining period of her pregnancy, without her family, without a means of transport to get back to Agalega? If this is not a caring Government, I would like to know what it is! The improvement in health care will also benefit those who have an injury or any other medical emergency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance has also made provision for the rehabilitation of the airstrip of Agalega. It is mentioned in the Budget Speech that Rs120 m. have been earmarked. Tender documents are being prepared and at the beginning of next year construction will start.

Last, but not least, a large percentage of Agaleans are overweight. In this respect, after consultations with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry, we have started a project to have 30 tonnes of fresh vegetables to be produced on the island. The project has already started and now it is very successful. I have also made a preliminary enquiry with some doctors to understand the causes of obesity, premature births and physical handicap and they have come to the conclusion that it is probably due to the problem of *consanguinité*. With the open access by plane, my Ministry will have the opportunity to remedy the situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few words with regard to a few major social problems that concern my constituency of Savanne and Black River.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, it is not the practice in this House for Ministers, when addressing the House, to speak about their constituencies. This is a privilege for backbenchers and Members of the Opposition. You can address the problem of your constituency in Cabinet, and among your colleagues.

Mr Aimée: Yes, but then, Mr Speaker, Sir, I only want to enumerate a few of the projects that have been mentioned.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: My ruling must be clear to you.

Mr Aimée: This is in the Budget.

Mr Speaker: That is not my point. My point is that you are going to speak on your constituency. That is not correct. I have told you that this is a privilege for the backbenchers and Members of the Opposition. You will have an opportunity to talk to your colleagues and solve the problems of your constituency.

Mr Aimée: But then, Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to tell my friends, on the other side of the House, that I am in that Government with the son of the late Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I came from a family of nine children, two sisters and six brothers. And I still remember that during my young age, even at primary school, it has been a difficult time; sometimes we had only one meal. Today, I was looking at the Budget; although large amounts of money have been earmarked, I waited to see what the hon. Minister of Finance would say about our reserve. He said we still have a reserve of food for 48 weeks. This brings me back to my younger age, when at a certain time that was the difficult period. I still remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, that when we were going to school, toddlers could not even be able to learn on the blackboard. Why? It is because they had problems with their eyes, teeth and ears. They had big bellies and *'la jaunisse'*. All these have been treated, irrespective of community. The hospitals in Mauritius do not ask you - like in elections - whether you are a Creole, Hindu or Muslim. You go there and you have treatment. You don't have to pay one cent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, people working on their own and not having contributed anything, when they reach the age of 60, they have a pension; the pension is there, free transport is there. In fact, free transport is not meant for any specific community. But then, let me tell our friends from the other side of the House, I am an elected Member and a Minister for the whole Mauritius. I am doing my job and I don't think anybody can say *qu'il y a parti pris*. *Je fais mon travail et beaucoup d'entre vous peuvent le confirmer.*

(Interruptions)

Ils sont libres de le faire. Mr Speaker, Sir, with these words, I have finished my speech.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.08 p.m.)

Dr. B. Hookoom (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Speaker, Sir, people vote for leaders who have vision for our country. After the last general elections, *l'Alliance de l'Avenir est au pouvoir. Et à la tête du pays, nous avons le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, le Premier ministre qui est aussi leader de l'Alliance de l'Avenir.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is indeed with a deep sense of satisfaction that I am addressing this House today in the context of the 2011 Budget.

Allow me, right at the beginning, to congratulate the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the presentation of such an excellent financial exercise, which caters for both the economic and the social imperatives, and also keeping an eye on both the long-term and short-term issues.

I delved into the philosophy underlying the Budget and I clearly discern the guidelines that have dictated the course of actions. My congratulations also go to the Leader of the House, the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, without whose blessings and vision this Budget would not have been possible. Suffice it to say that the imprint of the founding fathers of the Labour Party finds a place of honour in this Budget.

This present budgetary exercise proves, if need be, that thanks to Dr. Navin Ramgoolam's bold decisions, his sense of strong leadership and his qualities as a time visionary, Mauritius is able to stand up to the global challenges and threats and look at the future with confidence.

Le premier budget de l'Alliance de l'Avenir est vraiment un budget de l'avenir pour le pays. It sets up the basement for our country to become a significant global player in the radically changing world. Of course, the needs keep changing. To be in tune with such rapid changes, we need to grasp the essential elements and prescribe the right measures at the right time. This is what is required and this Budget has struck the right balance.

The unanimous acclamation received by this Budget, inside as well as outside the House, is a reassurance to the population that they have rightly placed their faith in the right team with the will and determination to lead the country further towards progress even in the face of adversity, particularly when we see what is happening to some of the once flourishing economies of the developed world like Ireland, Greece and Portugal. Almost anybody can steer a ship nicely in calm waters, but the real test of a captain comes when economic floods are striking hard, when the world situation is uncertain and when economic visibility is blurred. At each and every such situation, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam has proved his mettle and has always prescribed the right cure.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2011 is quite daring. Only a few years from the situation of *état d'urgence économique* and the global financial crisis, this Government has come forward with such a strategic document. Stronger economies are still trying to grapple with the odds of

the crisis. We, an island economy, very dependent on others, export-oriented, we have dared to clearly state our road map, not for the short term only, but also for a longer term. We are taking this country and the people towards national objectives of a higher order. We have the privilege, with the blessing of the population, to spearhead the realisation of the vision 2020. This Government is, in fact, walking the talk. We are confirming our commitments to the country and the citizens. We are consistent with the promises we made during the electoral campaign and in the Government Programme. We are providing the means to the promises and the people will judge us not for the talks but rather, for the walks, for our actions – our actions at national level; our actions in towns and villages; our actions in pockets of poverty; our actions in the interest of women, the disabled, the senior citizens; our actions for the community of pig-breeders, fishermen and small planters; our actions for the youths of this country and our actions for the students.

May I say God has saved this country when the people decided to confirm their trust in the leadership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam and in the men and women on this side of the House! This *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* is already focusing on the future for the next decade and even beyond 2020.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't see the future on the other side of the House. Name the problems, we have the solutions ready. Just name any of the five ills of society. When many developing countries are fighting illiteracy, we are making massive investment to provide an extraordinary opportunity structure to the younger generation that will generate both literate and desirable competencies that would create the right mix of intelligence and skills necessary for the country. We are preparing the labour force to adapt to the imperatives of the global economy and global workplace.

Looking back on each and every Budget presented under the Prime Ministership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, it is more than evident that we have created landmarks in the social and economic development of Mauritius. The student population has access to free education, free bus transport, Government paid examination fees and even myriad opportunities for higher studies. Never in the history of the country had a Government gone so far in the promotion of education by putting up means and providing the necessary funds and assistance to encourage and to promote education at all levels. The re-introduction of full payment of SC and HSC

examination fees for students for families earning Rs8,500 has been extended to families earning up to Rs14,500. This full payment of fees is extended to a second child if the family income is less than Rs11,000. These measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, will double the number of benefiting students.

The march towards making tertiary education within the reach of one and all is becoming a reality. The student just needs to make some effort and the rest is taken care of by this Government. In order to allow a large number of deserving children to pursue higher education, the scholarship scheme has undergone major reforms. The most important of which probably being a substantial increase in the number of laureates – passing from 12 to 50; an increase by 38 out of which 24 are reserved for low and modest income groups.

Name any major landmark in the development of Mauritius; it bears the imprint of the Labour Government and a labour philosophy. To the Opposition, I would say: do you want to join the band wagon of progress, or success? Simple - come and sit on the benches of the school of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*. They will be transformed from being an Opposition without any concrete suggestion into a responsible Opposition.

(Interruptions)

To address unemployment, we are working hand in hand with the different actors of the economy to generate adequate employment and self employment opportunities for our people. In this small country, we have so many vacancies when many developed countries are unable to create jobs. We are even creating opportunities for circular migration on the basis of a very effective economic diplomacy.

Another ill is squalor and we have the answer in the form of a bold housing programme not only for those in absolute poverty, but also for our citizens in relative poverty. This Budget dedicates a large part to consolidating social integration. Thus, 50% of the CSR resources will be used for social housing, welfare of children from vulnerable groups and eradication of absolute poverty. Rs400 m. have been earmarked for construction of 700 housing units for families earning less than Rs5,000 monthly. Since proper housing is also becoming a problem for higher income groups, several financing schemes have been developed to assist them in the construction of their own house.

We have major advances in the health sector in terms of infrastructure and services and we are even setting the base for a medical hub with improved health facilities. I welcome with great satisfaction the measures contained in this Budget for this sector.

The hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has struck the right mix between putting the country on the road towards excellence, while offering and improving the quality of service and care to the patients having recourse to public care centres. This Budget is providing the framework for the promotion of research and development. The clinical training framework is being revisited and extended to health care professionals in all regions.

Mauritius is slowly becoming a reference for the region in terms of quality medical care. Only this year, more than 10,000 foreign patients have been treated locally. However, the local population is not being left behind. A provision of Rs8.6 billion is being provided in this Budget to cater for the health of the population. A healthy population means a better Mauritius. Good health is not only about adequate treatment, but concerns primarily the promotion of a healthy mode of living and healthy habits. Thus provision is being made for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to work hand in hand in the development of awareness programmes for schools and the population at large.

For the poorer segment of the population, we have a very comprehensive social security system that this Budget is reinforcing with additional provisions. As rightly pointed out by the hon. Prime Minister, any endeavour to promote a resilient, sound and prospering economy, is meaningless without an equitable sharing of the fruits of success and integration of the more vulnerable. To this end, *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* has created a Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment in addition to the existing Ministry of Social Security. A whole arsenal has been set up in the fight against poverty. The whole objective is to see that nobody is left out in the march towards success and prosperity. I do believe that after the advent of free education, free health services, free transport and the creation of a Ministry of Social Integration further consolidates the Welfare State, which has been the basis of political stability in our country. We are witnessing one more landmark in the holistic development of the Mauritian Welfare State. This is a winning formula of development.

With the ageing population, the proportion of elderly people to that of the active population is increasing. Needful is being done to provide our elders with a good and pleasant

quality of life, hence the proposed construction of additional recreational centres in the North at Pointe aux Piments and at Riambel in the South. Similarly, young children, especially those who need special care and attention, as well as those who are victims of forms of violence are being catered for and a new shelter is being set up at Cap Malheureux. Additional funds are being provided for the residential drop-in centre at Grand River North West. Severely, handicapped children have not been forgotten. They will be beneficiating from domiciliary visits by doctors.

My hon. colleague, the Minister of Environment & Sustainable Development, has already spoken at large at the determination of this Government, under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, to stand up to the global environmental shift by setting up a *Maurice Ile Durable* concept. Much has been done already and we must continue our efforts.

In that context, I am well pleased to note that Rs30 m. will be allocated for the development of 3 eco-villages, to be followed by other localities in the near future. This follows from a Cabinet decision on 04 November 2010. I am sure that no effort will be spared to rope in the village of Panchavati, as an eco-village in the near future. Panchavati has, in fact, inspired Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam to provide free transport to students. During the by-election, where the hon. Rajesh Jeetah won the election, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, who was Leader of the Opposition at that time, was appalled by the state of poverty, so much so that the children were unable to benefit from free education as they did not have the means to bear the transport cost to attend school.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister rightly likes to remind us that no one owes us a living, the more so, in this changing world. We are at the dawn of a new economic era. The recent global recession should not be buried too soon. We are witnessing these days, what is termed as the Euro zone crisis. Everybody in this House, even the Opposition Members know that there is Euro zone crisis. As a result of globalisation, world trade liberalisation is putting an end to our trade preferences. Furthermore, several factors are impacting severely on the world environment, resulting in strains like climate change, more ruthless trade practices.

We, therefore, need more than ever, to act in a responsible manner by putting up the necessary framework to turn threats into opportunities. This is exactly what the three main thrusts of this Budget is all about -

- (i) rebalancing growth;
- (ii) making a great leap forward on productivity, and

(iii) consolidating social justice.

We are setting the trend not only for our friends on the other side of the House, but also for many economies over the African continent. It is a tragedy, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Opposition is unable to understand what economic analysts, policy specialists, specialised institutions and even major political observers across the world are able to understand. They are not to blame as they are like *Idée Fixe*. They cannot think beyond *la politique partisane*. It was good to listen to some hon. Members on the Opposition, who said that they are a constructive Opposition. However, it remains to be proved.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this endeavour to constantly upgrade the quality of life of Mauritian citizens, the National Development Unit has been a major driving force in bringing infrastructural development to them. Not only has it assumed a more integrated and holistic approach, but has established a working mechanism with development stakeholders, including the local authorities.

We must reckon the outstanding contribution of the National Development Unit as Government's technical arm to execute its policy and improving the quality of life of our fellow citizens.

I seize this opportunity to thank hon. Anil Bachoo, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, for his unflinching support and encouragement to enable us, Parliamentary Private Secretaries, to accomplish our tasks.

During the financial year 2010, many projects have been completed in my constituency.

Major drains projects at Amaury and Petite Julie are nearing completion. The drain at Amitié is being constructed and will be completed soon. The existing Railway Road at Rivière du Rempart is being developed to provide an alternative outlet that would certainly relieve the traffic along Schoenfeld Road.

The implementation of these projects amongst many others clearly indicates this Government's commitment by encouraging development in all sectors. Many more projects are in the pipeline.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can state with firm conviction that the voice of the population has been heard, understood and duly considered by this Government as evidenced by the comprehensive provisions in the Budget 2011. The different Action Plans reflect that this country is set for its "*marche vers un brilliant avenir*".

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to borrow an expression from an old adage –

“When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people, those who let it happen, those who make it happen and those who wonder how it happened.”

The people of this country know who are the first two categories and those who wonder how it happened. They have made their choice by placing their absolute trust, once again, in Dr Navin Ramgoolam’s team. This Government will stand up to the challenge.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, sir.

(6.32 p.m)

Mr J. F. Francois (Third Member for Rodrigues): Mr Speaker, Sir, before starting my speech on the budget debate, allow me to associate myself with hon. Choonee to extend my deep sympathy to the family of late Norbert Benoit, a historian who spent a lot of his time to search and write on the history of Rodrigues, especially on those Rodriguans who went to the 1945 World War, from which my grand-father, an ex-service man, is one of the personality of his writings on Rodriguan soldiers. Having said so, let me now move to the Budget debate.

M. le président, merci de cette opportunité pour participer pour la première fois aux débats budgétaires. Permettez-moi de féliciter le ministre des finances pour la présentation de ce budget de surprise, le *leader* de l’opposition pour sa réplique qui certainement a apporté des réflexions valables et aux autres honorables membres, qui m’ont précédé, tous dans une logique de progrès de notre république.

Notre république a droit à un choix de responsabilité et de bonne gestion financière contre une gouvernance irresponsable et imprudente. C’est-à-dire de la capacité à définir les priorités politiques sur lesquelles notre république attend des résultats de court et de long terme tout en maîtrisant les dépenses publiques, et en réduisant le déficit et l’endettement. Et disant cela, je partage mes sentiments aux deux côtés de la chambre avec une pensée spéciale pour mon île Rodrigues autonome que je parlerai en profondeur un peu plus loin.

Un exercice budgétaire aura toujours des commentaires positifs, négatifs et jamais exacts. Toutefois, ce qui reste important, c’est que la responsabilité de chacun prime et que tout le

monde se met au travail pour apporter sa contribution au développement du pays et au bien-être de la population.

Je réitère mon engagement, et je dois dire qu'au cœur de ma politique, je place les valeurs de notre société dans une lutte commune pour plus de justice sociale, de solidarité, d'égalité, de moralité et de liberté, mais non pas seulement une question de chercher du pouvoir. Je m'associe aussi à Martin Luther King Junior qui dit -

“Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political and economic change”.

M. le président, ce présent budget a pour thème : « *Rééquilibrer la croissance et consolider la justice sociale* » dans un contexte international difficile. Le ministre des finances a annoncé que le gouvernement aller pouvoir financer son plan grâce à une croissance de 4.2 % et un taux d'inflation de 2.7% en 2011. Sincèrement, j'espère que cela marchera comme prévu! Je souligne la baisse conséquente du pouvoir d'achat des citoyens. C'est clair que la crise mondiale a induit une fragilisation sans précédent de nos fondamentaux économiques. La République de Maurice devait faire face à ce défi et le gouvernement fait appel à la solidarité de tous pour soutenir ses décisions et actions pour les prochaines années.

Mr Speaker Sir, facing the challenges ahead, we as politicians in this House, have to think and act not only for the coming elections, be it for national or regional or local, but should be on behalf of the next generation to rebalance, ignite, sustain economic growth and create a true social life and the economy of tomorrow.

This stimulates me to ask the following questions: are the actions taken by the Government over the years working? Are the Stimulus measures, Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness programme, maintaining and creating sustainable jobs and securing our economy?

Mr Speaker, Sir, what remains to be seen and done for this Budget, is its full implementation through real action and get it working. *M. le Président, concernant les mesures proposées dans le budget, je note -*

- que certaines mesures préconisées seront bénéfiques pour les plus démunis de notre société et a un regard vers l'avenir ;
- que le ministre des finances a mis l'accent sur une utilisation judicieuse des ressources financières et naturelles, dont la terre et la mer ;
- des manquements d'ordre humanitaire, économique et de justice sociale par rapport à Rodrigues pour un vrai développement et ce n'est pas qu'une question d'argent seulement!
- l'investissement de plus de ressources dans l'éducation pour offrir plus d'opportunité à nos jeunes. Pour les frais d'examens au niveau de la SC et HSC, environs 90% des familles Rodriguaises bénéficieront de cette mesure.

J'apprécie les encouragements, mais il faut une révolution dans notre système éducatif afin de créer un nouveau type d'éducation et de génération.

Concernant les bourses d'étude, M. le président, nos enfants aspirent à recevoir une bonne éducation. L'augmentation des bourses est un encouragement. Est-ce là, la solution pour l'avenir ? Pourquoi ne pas attribuer des bourses au niveau des régions pour donner plus de chances égales aux enfants de tous les coins de l'île? Il faut cesser avec une éducation sur la base de «*paper-chase*». Nous avons besoin des hommes et des femmes bien formés sur tous les plans, humain, social, culturel afin de devenir des citoyens responsables.

Le concept de police de service a du mérite. Les policiers dans leur profession doivent être des éducateurs. J'ai déjà demandé, ici même, que davantage de recrutement des *Trainee Police Constable* soit fait de Rodrigues.

M. le président, mes propositions pour la police sont les suivantes -

- La police doit être présente dans les écoles, les collèges, les villages pour donner une formation à la sécurité routière, éducation civique, et les droits des citoyens. A Rodrigues, il faut impérativement aller de l'avant avec la *Training School* de Jean Tac, pour des formations continues qui comprennent des cours de recyclages ainsi que des cours spécialisés.

- Il faut impérativement instituer deux nouvelles unités à Rodrigues -une Brigade des Mineurs et une Police des Jeux.
- Le combat contre la drogue doit continuer sans relâche avec un renforcement d'effectif et d'autres facilités, pour faire de Rodrigues une île sans drogue.

M. le président, au passage, où en est-on avec le projet de construction des postes de police à Grande Montagne et à Petit Gabriel?

La vision de l'OPR est de faire de Rodrigues une île écologique. Des règlements devraient être votés à l'Assemblée Régionale pour que les sacs plastiques soit bannis à Rodrigues, afin d'encourager les gens à utiliser les '*tente-vacoas*' fabriqués localement.

Concernant l'intégration sociale et le combat contre la pauvreté, il faut revoir l'application de ce concept pour favoriser la débrouillardise des personnes vulnérables et combattre l'assistanat.

L'honorable vice-Premier ministre Duval sait de quoi je parle. A Rodrigues, le *National Empowerment Fund* donne un signe positif. Par contre, le *Trust Fund* est devenu un outil politique entre les mains de ceux au pouvoir pour enfoncer des gens vulnérables davantage dans l'assistanat. Un politicien au pouvoir à Rodrigues disait, « *pli nou donne zotte bagage, pli zot vine roder* »

Concernant la compensation salariale, M. le président, la proposition de 3.2% est insuffisante. Un pensionnaire à Rodrigues avec une allocation mensuelle de R 3,048, la compensation, ne lui donne même pas la possibilité d'acheter un sachet de lait d'une livre. Ça c'est la réalité!

Le projet Land Administration, Valuation, Information and Management System (LAVIMS) semble progresser ici à Maurice, alors qu'à Rodrigues, le projet de cadastre de l'OPR au coût de R 22 millions est terminé et est devenu un « *squelette dans l'armoire* ».

M. le président, je vais maintenant parler et m'attarder sur la situation inquiétante de l'île Rodrigues autonome.

Permettez-moi, d'abord d'exprimer ma fraternité, la plus sincère à ce peuple qui souffre, et à tous ceux et celles qui militent pour le progrès de l'île dans le respect, la dignité et l'intégrité. Je me dissocie de l'arrogance, du manque de civilité et du manque de dialogue de certains.

Par rapport à ce budget surprise, je me situe d'abord comme un vrai Rodriguais, un patriote et un défenseur de la cause Rodriguaise et de l'autonomie de Rodrigues au sein de la république.

Hier, les réponses au *Private Notice Question* ont révélé certaines explications additionnelles sur Rodrigues.

M. le président, je ne suis pas venu ici, pour simplement venir dire que la somme allouée à Rodrigues est bonne ou pas bonne. Rodrigues a un parti au pouvoir, avec un conseil exécutif avec le plein pouvoir qui devait assumer ses responsabilités dans le sérieux, le respect et le dialogue et de plus, un ministre, *leader* du même parti, pour défendre leur budget au sein du conseil des ministres.

M. le président, pour mieux comprendre la situation de Rodrigues, je vais poser les questions suivantes qui méritent de sérieuses réflexions -

1. Y a-t-il aujourd'hui dans la République de Maurice une île Rodrigues autonome?
2. Qui a mené la lutte pour l'autonomie dans le respect, le dialogue et sans conflits?
3. Qui est en train de tuer l'autonomie de Rodrigues aujourd'hui?
4. Qui devient riche à Rodrigues, au détriment des autres pour leur intérêt personnel?
5. Pourquoi des nombreuses familles sont déchirées; et nos jeunes qui quittent le pays en masse?
6. Pourquoi tant de drogues et surtout du *gandia* depuis 2006, avec des saisies record d'une valeur marchande autour de R 11 millions? Du jamais vu à Rodrigues !
7. Pourquoi le parti au pouvoir n'arrive-t-il pas à gérer les infrastructures modernes, construites par l'OPR, dont un centre de loisir et de culture, une piscine aux normes internationales, une maternité moderne, deux écoles communautaires,

concept révolutionnaire de l'OPR dans l'éducation? Allez voir la piscine de Maréchal, l'honorable Ritoo ! L'honorable Bunwaree - il n'est pas là, je crois - allez voir l'école communautaire de Mont Charlot qui pourrit depuis 2006! Les enfants de ce village qui éprouvent un problème de transport, doivent payer le transport ou marcher de longues distances pour aller à l'école de Port Mathurin. C'est une honte! J'ai mal au cœur pour ces enfants, M. le président!

8. Comment est-ce que, seulement après trois ans et demi, dans la gestion de l'autonomie, l'OPR a pu réaliser beaucoup de grands projets avec peu d'argent?
9. Qu'ont-ils fait des comblages de Port Mathurin et Baie aux Huitres, sans planification, avec des baux distribués aux agents politiques et petits copains, et les constructions des bâtiments en béton sans architecture au style, comme on dit en Créole « *ene néné deux lizié* ».
10. Pourquoi tant de misères pour nos patients qui viennent se soigner à Maurice?
11. Pourquoi *Air Mauritius* a refusé de donner à crédit des billets d'avion, à la commission de la santé pour le transfert des malades à Maurice?
12. Pourquoi les ambulances et les véhicules du gouvernement ont été refusés de faire le plein de carburant?
13. Où sont passés le budget de R 1.6 milliards, alloué à Rodrigues de 2006 à 2010, pour les projets de développement, plus particulièrement les R 274 millions du budget 2006/2007, laissé par l'OPR après l'épisode du transfugisme?
14. Pourquoi, certains fonctionnaires touchent des *overtimes* 2 à 3 fois leurs salaires, et d'autres dans le même département ne touche rien, M. le président?
15. Pourquoi, la route de Port-Mathurin – Le Chou passant par Mont Charlot n'a jamais été commencé pourtant des provisions budgétaires étaient faites sur le budget 2006/2007?
16. Qui est responsable des gaspillages à outrance et une utilisation non-judicieuse des fonds publics?
17. Y a-t-il vraiment de la transparence dans les dépenses publiques à Rodrigues, M. le président?
18. Qui contrôle les transferts des millions de roupies des fonds publics dans des compagnies privées d'Etat?

19. Qui sont ces personnes sur les *Boards* des compagnies mis en place et critiqués par l'audit?
20. Quelle est la marche à suivre concernant le rapport accablant de l'audit sur des dossiers douteux soulevés, les millions transférés dans des compagnies et l'absence de *Financial Return Report*?
21. Pourquoi un bon nombre de petits contracteurs crient au scandale dans l'octroi des contrats?
22. Que préconise le ministère des finances pour la consolidation de la finance publique à Rodrigues?
23. Quel intérêt derrière les 34 projets touristiques approuvés dont la superficie des terres déjà hypothéquées est de presque 1,000,000 mètres carrés soit 240 arpents en seulement quatre ans? Combien de projets sont sortis de terre? Zéro, M. le président!

(Interruptions)

24. Qui est responsable de la braderie des terres aujourd'hui et qui en profite? On parle même d'une mafia des terres à Rodrigues!
25. Pourquoi, cette politique de « *nou travail juste pou nou dimoune, to pas nou dimoune toi* », alors qu'accès à un emploi, accès à l'eau, pension sociale et l'argent de dalles est un droit à tous?
26. Pourquoi le Label Rodriguais initié par l'OPR n'a pas vu le jour depuis 2006, alors que les femmes entrepreneurs font face à des difficultés pour écouler leurs produits?
27. Pourquoi, le *Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Company*, devient le compétiteur direct, faisant gros profit sur la tête de nos entrepreneurs et agriculteurs au lieu de faciliter l'écoulement de leurs produits ?
28. Pourquoi la commission de l'agriculture achète les oignons des planteurs à R 9.00 la livre pour les revendre à R 18 à R 20 la livre, un profit de 100% sur la tête de nos planteurs, M. le président!
29. Pourquoi, la distribution de l'eau s'est détériorée avec une distribution d'une fois tous les deux mois, alors que ces mêmes personnes recevaient de l'eau au moins tous les 15 jours au temps de l'OPR ? Où est le fameux « *de l'eau 24 lor 24* ».

Qui est ce politicien qui a fait creuser un puits dans sa cour sur la terre de l'Etat, alors que les gens autour de lui ne reçoivent pas d'eau ? M. le Président, les questions sont nombreuses, mais je vais m'arrêter là. Je dois dire à toute la Chambre qu'il faut savoir en profondeur ce qui se passe vraiment à Rodrigues.

Rodrigues traverse une période d'instabilité sans précédent, de manque de transparence et d'honnêteté, ainsi que de la mauvaise gouvernance. Rodrigues va mal, et les problèmes épineux de Rodrigues se trouvent d'abord et surtout à Rodrigues.

C'est pourquoi, M. le président, avec un sentiment de révolte, un de mes principaux messages aujourd'hui - et c'est urgent - est que je demande au Premier ministre de mettre en place une commission d'enquête approfondie sur Rodrigues, et je dirais même une enquête policière, concernant les dépenses publiques, le fonctionnement de l'Assemblée régionale, les braderies des terres, ainsi que sur la *mafia* de blanchiments d'argents, afin que la République de Maurice puisse savoir comment Rodrigues est dirigée aujourd'hui, et pourquoi ce peuple souffre autant.

Y aurait-il des dossiers à l'ICAC, en ce qui concerne Rodrigues sur les trafics d'influence et de la corruption ?

Jean Charest disait ceci « Tout le monde est à l'abri dans une commission d'enquête, mais personne n'est à l'abri avec des enquêtes policières. » *And no one is above the law in our Republic, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

Rodrigues a besoin d'un redressement contre la mauvaise gouvernance. M. le président, certainement - j'ai entendu des picotements de l'autre côté - les autres honorables membres de Rodrigues vont venir faire croire et vanter certains projets en l'occurrence sur le dossier de l'agriculture, avec, comme à l'accoutumé, des gonflements de chiffres pour influencer l'honorable ministre de l'agriculture, pour avoir plus d'argent ; les règlements sur l'aménagement du territoire, dont l'ébauche de base a été travaillée par l'OPR, alors qu'eux ont causé des dégâts irréparables ; installation des bureaux régionaux, avec un politicien à la tête pour diriger directement les fonctionnaires, qui est contraire au fonctionnement de la fonction publique ; le nettoyage des petits barrages qui coulent, dont le *life span* de certains est terminé ; avec des contrats juteux, *tailor made*, pour les petits copains, principaux agents politiques du parti ; et le dossier de la pêche, dont les pêcheurs n'ont plus confiance en eux, et leur slogan

répétitif ‘25 ans panne faire narien’. L’honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, the President, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, l’honorable *Leader* de l’opposition ont été tous ministres de Rodrigues pendant toutes ces périodes. *No comments* !

M. le président, je viens à la situation de mauvaise gouvernance à Rodrigues. Le débat sur le budget concernant Rodrigues ne doit pas être qu’une question de somme d’argent allouée, mais bien plus en profondeur de la situation qui règne actuellement à Rodrigues.

M. le président, Rodrigues a besoin de voir bâtir un nouveau pacte de confiance avec le peuple, dans un esprit de responsabilisation.

Quand un parti politique n’a pas vraiment de vision, la solution est de berner le peuple avec l’utilisation constante des armes comme le chantage, le mensonge et l’exploitation de l’ignorance des gens.

Qui ne se souvient de la fameuse évocation de la sécession de Rodrigues par le *leader* du MR en 1994?

Par ailleurs, je cite la déclaration de l’honorable ministre de Rodrigues dans un hebdomadaire local de Rodrigues, du vendredi 16 avril 2010, juste avant les élections générale -

« Cette joute électorale servira de réflexion pour nous, pour savoir si Rodrigues a sa place ou non dans la république de Maurice, et nous aidera éventuellement à prendre une décision sur l’avenir de notre île »

Et il ajoute –

« Qu’on veuille ou non, Rodrigues n’est pas la cinquième roue de la voiture de la république de Maurice »

Ce même langage continu avec le Chef commissaire de Rodrigues, comme il déclarait dans un quotidien, en date du samedi 20 novembre 2010, je cite –

« C’est à se demander si nous devons continuer de faire partie de la république de Maurice, ou faut-il engager une réflexion sur son statut au sein de cette même république ? »

Qui n’est pas consterné encore de la déclaration de l’honorable membre du gouvernement, qui trahit la solidarité collective en déclarant -

« Pourquoi réclamer Diego, alors que nos îles sont laissées-pour-compte ? »

Le Premier ministre lui-même, dans son intervention sur le discours-programme gouvernemental, a souligné l'importance d'une seule voix pour la nation mauricienne concernant le dossier Chagos.

A l'OPR, nous sommes solidaires avec nos amis chagossiens dans leur lutte.

Une autre déclaration qui fait des débats stériles, est le mécontentement du Chef commissaire, je cite –

« On ne peut pas faire cadeau de deux députés au gouvernement sans poser nos conditions. Donc, je demande au parti de renégocier sa présence au sein de la majorité, parce qu'on ne peut pas s'associer à un gouvernement qui ne reconnaît pas les besoins des Rodriguais. »

M. le président, quelle négociation ? Aujourd'hui, on assiste à une scène de ménage politique! Moi, je croyais regarder un épisode des 'Simpsons' à la télé!

Pourtant, dans la presse ici, l'honorable ministre parlait d'un bon *budget*, alors qu'à Mourouck, à Rodrigues, il a déclaré le samedi 20 novembre que 'le budget n'est pas bon, avec quelque maquillage, couronné toujours avec des pluies de mensonges, dans l'irresponsabilité comme à l'accoutumé'.

Le ministre des finances hier déclarait que le ministre de Rodrigues avait accepté le *quantum* proposé, *with regard to the quantum proposed in this 2011 Budget. Which is which, Mr Speaker Sir?*

M. le président, ce parti au pouvoir à Rodrigues mérite tout simplement un carton rouge, par manque de cohérence politique et trop de double langage qui insulte l'intelligence du peuple de Rodrigues. C'est pourquoi, la Plateforme *Sov Nu Société* - et non pas la Plateforme citoyenne du politicien - qui regroupe une trentaine de groupes de la société civile a, au cours d'une conférence de presse, le lundi 29 novembre 2010, réclamé la démission du ministre de Rodrigues et celle du conseil exécutif de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues pour la libération du peuple de Rodrigues.

Rodrigues est aujourd'hui dans la spirale infernale de la mauvaise gouvernance. Le Chef commissaire de Rodrigues a pris l'initiative pour lancer sa propre plateforme citoyenne, pour

intervenir auprès du gouvernement, afin de sauver la face, étant donné son échec et ses promesses non tenues. Cette plateforme citoyenne n'est pas la voix représentative de la société civile de Rodrigues. C'est tout simplement un groupe politique attaché au gouvernement régional.

Le slogan de l'indépendance économique et du décollage économique du parti au pouvoir à Rodrigues s'est transformé en décadence et plongée économique. Rodrigues s'enfoncé davantage dans un trou sans fond ; à voir ce qui se passe depuis 2006.

M. le président, contrairement à ce fonctionnement, l'OPR croit dans une vraie démocratie participative et de sociocratie.

A l'issue de ce débat d'orientation budgétaire, je suis certain que nos concitoyens de Rodrigues attendent de l'OPR que nous nous adressions à eux et à la nation mauricienne avec franchise et lucidité, de la vraie situation politique et sociale actuelle de Rodrigues.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, avant de commenter sur les mesures budgétaires spécifiques pour Rodrigues, de référer au discours du budget présenté à l'Assemblée régionale le 24 septembre 2010.

Il est très important que la Chambre sache ce qui s'est passé. In article 183, the Chief Commissioner tried to justify his budget proposals. I quote -

« (...) the new way of presenting this budget for 2011, by simply adopting the procedures as stipulated in sections 44 and 46 of RRA Act 2001, which reads as follows: 'The Commissioner submits draft estimates to Regional Assembly, debates, approves, then transmits to Minister for Rodrigues for Cabinet approval' »

Fair enough! The conclusion of his speech was even more doubtful. I quote:

"I therefore make a special appeal to the hon. Prime Minister and to Cabinet to give a special consideration to our requests for the proposed quantum of Rs608 m. of investment (...)."

In article 187, he continues -

"I would urge Cabinet to give a special attention to this year's requests (...)."

Mr Speaker, Sir, my question again: Could the Executive Council of Rodrigues fully justify the expenses of the Rs1.6 billion allocated to Rodrigues for capital projects, since July 2006 to 01 December 2010?

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2002, when OPR Government was in power in Rodrigues, my leader, Mr Serge Clair, as the then Chief Commissioner, the Executive Council, the Ministry of Finance, the Island Chief Executive and the Finance Officers of the Regional Assembly, had prior discussions for a quantum principle agreement.

This procedure is not written in the law, but is adopted as a convention principle, to avoid duplication and any conflicts, and it worked. It worked!

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that, what the Chief Commissioner said with regard to the quantum, is simply a violation against the newly adopted Programme-Based Budget (PBB) principles. This is what he said in his summing up, I quote -

“Pourquoi on doit définir les montants du budget avant et sur 2 ou 3 ans en avance?”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly acts on behalf of the Government of Mauritius. There are principles that need to be respected between the Ministry of Finance and the Financial Secretary with regard to Finance, and the advice of the authorities.

The Finance and Audit Act applies to Rodrigues, certainly bearing in mind the specificity and special needs of Rodrigues. This is why I put questions here to the Minister of Finance with regard to public funds in private companies in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the OPR party at the Regional Assembly, through the respected Regional Member, hon. Nicolson Lisette, on Tuesday 27 September 2010, did anticipate clearly the present deteriorating scenarios.

Allow me for the benefit of the House to quote what hon. Lisette pointed out in reply to the Chief Commissioner’s speech, I quote –

“Last year, the curse was on hon. Sithanen, this year no mention was even made of the Ministry for Finance. We may thus conclude that the main principle of Public-Based Budgeting has been violated. The indicative estimates for financial year 2011 by the same Executive Council in the 2010 Budget was Rs360 m. for Capital Expenditures. An estimated amount of Rs608 m. has been proposed with provision of Rs165 m. for the Chief Commissioner’s Office; Rs305.5 m. for

Public Infrastructure and the poor other five Commissions only in the tune of Rs25 m. each on average.”

Listen to what hon. Lisette, rightly said, I quote again –

“We believe that this is pure exaggeration and a political strategy for shifting the blame. The whole population is expecting the Minister for Rodrigues to succeed in his convincing endeavour in Cabinet. He is condemned to succeed; otherwise he will show that he is of no great use in Cabinet.”

This morning, I think, everyone heard on a private radio what happened – I won't comment. Hon. Lisette continued and questioned, I quote -

“Imagine that the Cabinet stands by the Rs360 m. forecasted. This means that there will be a reduction of Rs248 m., almost half of what are about to be voted in this Assembly (...). If there is need to come up with a motion in this House for the presentation of a new budget by the Chief Commissioner, we (OPR party) are going to do it”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I, myself, questioned -

‘Would it be right for Cabinet to allow any (I repeat: any) Chief Commissioner to end up with presenting a budget in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, with whatever quantum he thinks fit for him?’

I questioned him -

“Has the Chief Commissioner flouted the Regional Assembly which is the supreme institution of the autonomy of Rodrigues? Has he purposely acted *in limine litis*, with regard to 2011 Budget estimates for Rodrigues? Will Cabinet allow any Chief Commissioner to make precedence in that line, without accepting the prior discussed quantum with the Ministry of Finance, Financial Secretary and the others for an Indicative Quantum for Rodrigues for debates in the Regional Assembly and final approval by cabinet?”

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire ceci: «quand un âne se trouve dans un trou, il faut se demander comment et pourquoi l'âne se trouve dans ce trou».

M. le président, l'arrogance du pouvoir et du chantage, that's not the way to make progress for our island. Mr Speaker, Sir. In his summing-up in the Regional Assembly on Tuesday 28 September 2010, the Chief Commissioner said, I quote -

« *Le Premier ministre, n'est-il pas le Premier ministre de Rodrigues aussi selon la loi ? Il faut avoir de l'argent. Si le montant n'est pas approuvé, on prendra les décisions nécessaires* ».

On prendra les décisions nécessaires ! Voilà ce qu'il a dit! Mr Speaker, Sir, he should have already taken the decision. What is he waiting for? The episode of *chantage et encore du chantage* continues as a dangerous game and this needs to be stopped once for all, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, good Government is built on a mutual understanding of the role of politician, and the professional role of public servants, whose advice, with respect and without fear or favour, and politicians making decisions consistent with their political mandate and to take responsibility for those decisions. I value the professionalism of the public services when telling Government what it doesn't want to hear. In Rodrigues, the party in power has a leading hidden agenda to dismantling the public sector for absolute political control.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a continual persecution against the Platform '*Nou Sov Nou Sosyete*'. I quote: "*ils représentent qu'eux mêmes*", and treating them as « *anarchistes, paternalistes et démagogues qui écrivent au Premier ministre* ». This is in response to the Platform's resistance against the privatisation of water sector and State land in Rodrigues, two sensible issues.

M. le président, dans la pratique de l'ingérence politique dans la fonction publique à Rodrigues créant une ambiance de frayeur, d'intimidation et d'insécurité, peut-on être rassuré de la décision que le *Public Service Commission* va déléguer à l'autorité locale pour plus de pouvoirs pour le recrutement et la promotion? Que va-t-il se passer en ce qui concerne Rodrigues?

A Rodrigues, voilà ce que cela va donner, je cite: « *mo ine elu pou travay zis pou mo dimounn, ek dimounn kinn fer nou lekip confiance kinn vote moi* », déclarait un politicien dans un journal local.

M. le président, vu la situation dégradante de Rodrigues, qui était déjà prévisible en avril 2010, les syndicats avaient déjà alerté la situation à travers une marche pacifique de protestation dans la rue de Port Mathurin contre « l'arrogance du pouvoir, le démantèlement du service public en place, l'ingérence des politiciens dans la gestion quotidienne du service public, les attaques répétées contre les syndicalistes et les fonctionnaires, etc.

M. le président, la nouvelle entreprise rodriguaise dans la situation catastrophique de gestion du pays, c'est la culture du cannabis, du gandia. Je répète, le Premier ministre a avancé le chiffre de plus de R 10 millions comme valeur marchande des drogues saisies. C'est inquiétant, M. le président!

La crise de l'emploi à Rodrigues est le résultat de la mauvaise stratégie politique. « *Nou pou employ 1000 dimounn dans gouvernman kan nou vinn au pouvoir* », une logique qui a réduit le sens de l'initiative et de la débrouillardise chez nos jeunes. De plus, avec leur dicton: «*To pas nou dimounn toi, pena travail pou toi*».

Concerning Food Security Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot of public money is being invested in Rodrigues through the Food Security Fund, but there is no thorough control and monitoring of projects.

The hon. Minister of Finance was himself present at an inauguration at Baladirou, the so-called village *Tipiments*. Can he tell us how many chilly plants did he see there? A dozen will be a good number, Mr Speaker, Sir, despite over Rs1 m. were invested for fencing. The amount of money invested does not show any proportionate return on investment.

What about the quality of the masonry retaining wall at Baie Malgache done without the supervision of qualified technicians? What a waste of public funds! Now, they pretend to create so many new villages, village limon, village haricots, village ceci, village cela. They are simply playing with words and “*gonfler chiffre pour faire croire*”.

Three mini laboratories were supposed to be operational since long; their doors are still closed, with hundreds and thousands of rupees invested. At Mt Croupier, it is the same with money invested for fencing of 92 hectares for rehabilitation of degraded land and pastures, co-financed by DCP, which is today being occupied by only two political agents for cultivation, which is purely political and discriminatory. Mr Speaker, Sir, what is needed is that the Ministry of Agro-Industry monitors closely any single cent being disbursed with a proper control mechanism and regular site visits.

M. le président, il y a urgence à Rodrigues sur tous les plans, mais comment y apporter des réponses avec un gouvernement régional qui n'inspire plus de confiance.

Je fais un appel au nom du peuple de Rodrigues, un peuple qui, actuellement, aspire à la stabilité et à une vie paisible, car il sait qu'avec la situation dégradante de Rodrigues, leurs vies sont affectées et ils souffrent énormément avec la mauvaise politique sociale et économique en

cours dans l'île. M. le président, permettez-moi d'exprimer mon regret que certaines mesures spécifiques pour Rodrigues ne figurent pas dans ce présent budget.

Mon deuxième appel concerne le coût de la vie à Rodrigues. Rodrigues a un faible pouvoir d'achat et un coût de la vie très élevé. Ne serait-il pas mieux que le ministère des finances regarde de plus près la situation de coût de la vie à Rodrigues et apporte un soulagement au peuple de Rodrigues?

Il y a trop de taxes sur les coûts du billet d'avion entre Rodrigues et Maurice. Sur un billet qui coûte R 7,000 aller/retour, il y a environ R 3,000 de taxe, M. le président.

En ce qui concerne la taxe sur le fuel, ne faut-il pas revoir et ajuster le *cross-subsidy* existant? Est-ce que le ministère des finances ne pourrait pas appliquer le '*passenger service charge*' sur la route Rodrigues-Maurice mentionné dans le budget? Nous sommes dans la même république.

Ne serait-il pas aussi une bonne chose de standardiser le prix du billet d'avion pour que les Rodriguais voyageant par avion profitent des mêmes avantages que nos amis de l'île Maurice qui viennent à Rodrigues.

Concernant le Corporate Social Responsibility Fund, M. le président, est-ce que le CSR ne devrait-il pas voir comment apporter sa contribution dans le domaine de la formation, l'éducation, la santé et aussi dans le combat contre la pauvreté à travers la formation et l'éducation entre autres.

En ce qui concerne la santé, les Rodriguais qui accompagnent des parents malades à Maurice, ne savent pas parfois où aller habiter. Puis-je faire un appel pressant au ministre des finances pour qu'un centre d'accueil soit construit, provenant du fonds CSR. Un tel projet avait été initié par l'OPR en 2006.

En ce qui concerne l'éducation, des enfants de Rodrigues viennent souvent à Maurice pour des '*Educational Tours*' en préparation pour les examens du CPE. Malheureusement, les enfants pauvres ne profitent pas de ce déplacement. Ne pourrait-il pas que le CSR apporte sa contribution au PTAs des écoles pour que les enfants des parents pauvres puissent se déplacer.

L'échange des jeunes, surtout de la MITD (l'ex-IVTB) qui doivent venir à Maurice vu que Rodrigues n'offre pas énormément de possibilités de stages pratiques pour eux, alors qu'à l'île Maurice les opportunités sont nombreuses. Je souhaite que l'État jette un regard beaucoup plus régional au niveau de Rodrigues dans l'attribution des bourses. Il serait bon d'augmenter le quota pour Rodrigues. M. le président.

Pour terminer, M. le président, je réitère ma position que oui, Rodrigues a besoin de l'aide du gouvernement central et que les ressources disposées pour Rodrigues soient judicieusement utilisées dans la transparence et la responsabilité. Que les mesures budgétaires préconisées soient aux bénéfiques et aux intérêts de la population et que Rodrigues ne continue pas sur les pas de l'arrogance du pouvoir. Que le gouvernement central aille vite de l'avant sur une commission d'enquête approfondie sur Rodrigues.

J'espère que l'exercice budgétaire du présent gouvernement régional qui n'inspire plus de confiance dans la population de Rodrigues est le dernier car les prochaines élections régionales auront lieu l'année prochaine en 2011. And in that case, to lead Rodrigues forward, we, the OPR party, will come up with a bold plan and ushering in a new era with ethical good governance. What is going on today Rodrigues can't be allowed going further. A country with no good governance is simply no good Government and that's the case for Rodrigues. Le peuple de Rodrigues a besoin de respirer et de s'aspirer à des rêves meilleurs dans la stabilité et la prospérité.

Je termine sur une citation de mon *leader* Serge Clair qui dit toujours –

«Il faut savoir utiliser les fonds publics et de faire bien avec le peu qu'on a pour le bien de tous. »

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(7.17 p.m.)

Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to take the floor. In fact, it had been some time since my reelection after the general election. Allow me to take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for reconvening in the Chair and also the Deputy Speaker and all the newly elected Members.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset of my intervention, I would like, with your permission, to speak, firstly, on the Budget and as a newly elected Member of Constituency No. 6, I am going to dwell for some time on the impact and the contribution of the Budget with regard to Constituency No. 6.

I would also like, Mr Speaker, Sir, to thank the hon. Prime Minister and, of course, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the Budget that was presented last Friday, and, most importantly, the Government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, who has acted intelligently and responsibly towards its citizens adopting the adage of 'better safe than sorry'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are presenting the Budget on the eve of the 75th birthday of the Labour party. This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, is on track with the manifesto, loyalty of the Labour party principle of "Putting People First", building an inclusive society where there is recognition of rights, values, independence and integration.

As I have mentioned earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, next year, some time during the month of February, we shall be celebrating 75 years of existence of the Mauritius Labour Party, 75 years of the struggle of the Labour party, 75 years whereby the Labour party has shaped the destiny of this country and every single citizen of this country. 75 years whereby the Labour party has stuck to its slogan and basic principle of "Putting People First", Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Budget, under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, goes a step further in consolidating our basic and fundamental principle, as I said earlier, 'Putting People First'. Mauritius, as we are all aware, is unique in so many ways and our future action will stand guided by our philosophy to maintain this uniqueness and create a nation where we will live meaningful lives. Given the state of affairs of the world economy, the nation has concurred with Government in adopting the measures taken in the Budget as being realistic, pragmatic and, above all, acceptable. This is reflected, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the respond in the local press, the radios and across all the media almost. Even this morning, Mr Speaker, Sir, in an economic survey conducted by '*L'Express*', the percentage of people who have expressed their opinion of satisfactory on the Budget is very large and it is tantamount to how this Budget has been properly accepted by the population at large.

The current economic climate has not and cannot give the team, especially the Minister of Finance, all the luxury he wishes to prepare this Budget because of what is happening around

the world. However, the Budget has addressed pertinent issues that the majority of citizens welcome and cannot wait to take part in the development that lies ahead of us. Transport, infrastructure, health, alleviation of poverty and the environment are key issues of this country and a lot of emphasis has been made on those issues in this Budget to positively uplift each and every sector that affects the population whether directly or indirectly.

Creation of a Ministry to implement the vision of the Prime Minister, that is, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment is unique. It is the first time in the history of Government. Here, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has diligently made provisions of sufficient Budget allocation to this new Ministry in order to alleviate poverty. Having laid the foundation with the last five years, we are again, Mr Speaker, Sir, sending a strong signal to the population and the business community that we, as a nation, should work hand in hand, use our only assets, our human resources more intelligently and effectively. The vision of Government is to instill the philosophy of 'working smarter rather than harder'. That's why again, the Prime Minister has set up a specific Ministry to implement his vision. No wonder hon. Jeetah has taken the front row, that is, 'shaping the academic destiny of the future generation', the Ministry being that of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology. Provision for additional scholarship has been made in this Budget. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a tradition and a way of life with the Labour Party to make the whole population understand that education is the key to success. We have successfully avoided all the prophecies of Titmus and Meade, on the overcrowded barracoons, all these prophecies, because we have given free education. Every single Government that has come successively, has built upon the foundation that we have laid.

The 2010-2011 Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, sets the tone for policy changes that will bring a positive impact in the lives of each and everybody in our country. It contents touch the everyday concerns of the citizens of this country and rightly so. Policy changes are bound to be brought to create a better social, economical and environmental structure where everyone of us flourishes and achieves our objectives.

Before embarking on the intricacies of this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must certainly highlight the fact that though this Budget is about creating wealth for its citizens from whichever standpoint one might hold, it is also about values - values that have been safeguarded and

cherished by previous generation and which are inbuilt in us the men and women of this nation, values which this Government would never trade for anything else.

Mr Speaker, Sir, first and foremost, this Government has fulfilled its electoral promises. It is reinforcing basic principles of thrift, that is, savings and hard work, through various strategies for start-up businesses and both small and medium size enterprises.

Having talked about creating values, the logical step the Budget has taken also advocates the reform to the bureaucratic system that exists within the biggest employer of the land, that is, Government. I am here proud that my colleague in Constituency No. 6, hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah, has been given the mammoth task of preparing and channelling through these changes in the Civil Service. The Budget is determined to review the structure, the process and outcome of the Civil Service so as to ensure better service delivery to its population. We all know that this is a mammoth job that needs the participation of Government, employees and the union for a positive outcome. Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to remind the House against a criticism that has been laid with regard to this particular strategy of Government. Allow me to remind the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister Dr. Navin Ramgoolam that we have established an Appeal Tribunal for Civil Servants who find themselves aggrieved by any decision of the Public Service Commission to appeal. On one hand we are being accused of delegating powers but, on the other hand, some of the Members of the Opposition failed to acknowledge that it is this Government and this Prime Minister who have established a Tribunal of Appeal for Civil Service in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

While creating values is important, human values have a critical role in the development and emancipation of society. Needless to highlight the relentlessness of the global village we live in. No single day goes by where the media does not report atrocities perpetrated by fellow human beings to vulnerable ones. Social unrest is a worldly phenomenon and has not remained offshore. While this Government advocates the discipline and hard work, this Budget has taken several measures to ensure that the root causes of societal problems are addressed. Alcohol, drugs, domestic violence and gambling are those issues that this Budget has identified as deep threat to our way forward. While the corrective measures have been positively welcomed by the population at large, the Government via its different Ministries has to ensure that the implementation of these measures are carried out properly and are closely monitored.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, since the advent of free education that was introduced by late Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, this country has seen that most Budgets presented in the past have made provisions for providing additional financial support for our youngsters in quest for education. Customary to our philosophy of helping the most vulnerable, measures have been introduced in the 1997 Budget under Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam for the payment of examination fees, SC and HSC. This Budget has revisited this principle in order to send a strong signal to the population that we are very committed to have a well educated nation that will, in turn, be an integral part in our future development. That is why the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has enlarged the base whereby permitting more and more students to benefit from this facility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, being an island, we depend on the outer world for its very survival. Given its specificity, it also shares special relationship with major developed countries. Successive Governments, under the leadership of visionary leaders, have maintained harmony across the island. More importantly, Mauritius is renowned for this and is also seen as a safe economic business environment to invest. This Budget has rightly focused on the economic diplomacy, to ensure that both internal and external impediments are eliminated and developed a new paradigm of aggressive targeting and attracting foreign direct investment.

Only recently and last week, through our foreign policy and personal contact of our Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, we have successfully managed, Mr Speaker, Sir, to secure Rs6 billion contribution to our sugar sector from the European Community.

Other commendable measures that need to be highlighted are the Solidarity Tax that has been maintained for another two years. Furthermore, despite massive capital expenditures in productive sectors and generous social measures, responsible fiscal stewardship has been adopted. This will work towards containing the Budget deficit at reasonable levels during current turbulent times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister and the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance have delivered a strategy for the country to balance the need for social security and to address the challenges of economic development. The Budget presented is neither a mere fulfillment of electoral promises nor a gimmick of financial strategies. It is about people, not politics. Looking through the different measures adopted by the Minister of Finance, one can clearly see how this Government has the interests of its citizens at heart. Ranging from taxes,

health, environment, education, economic policy and environment, it is crystal clear that this Budget has made a great ‘balancing act’ - balancing act simply because the global economic context is both unfavourable and uncertain.

Recent media coverage about developed countries like Ireland, Portugal and Iceland gave the world a glimpse of how things can turn sour in such a short period of time. But, here, we are a small island country, without any major resources, except our leader, hon. Dr. Ramgoolam; we have shown resilience and is still doing good. Over the last couple of years, we have not allowed uncertainty to influence our long-term vision for the nation. This has been translated in the Mauritian Dream. Unprecedented infrastructural development, tenacious fiscal and economic policies, social and environmental strategies have been the backbone of our success so far.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mention earlier, allow me to make a few comments and observations, which regard the Constituency Grand’Baie/Poudre d’Or. Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to thank the electorate of the Constituency No.6, who have returned me for a first time in No.6, but for a third time in Parliament. I am also grateful for the electorate of No.6, Grand Baie/Poudre d’or, to have in a short time, given us an electorate victory *sans appel, comme on dit en français*.

You, yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the past, have been a candidate in this constituency and people still have very good memories. I must say so, Mr Speaker, Sir. You will surely appreciate what I am trying to say for this constituency. Someone is telling me, Mr Speaker, Sir, you can always go back, time will tell us. Like the Muslims will say, God willing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start with the Poudre d’Or Village. I am sure that all of us will agree that Poudre d’Or is a historical village where there is the statue of Paul and Virginie. Hon. Choonee, hon Gungah and myself, in all our endeavours, manage only to see Paul, but we believe that one day we will also see Virginie. We are keeping our hopes very high, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Poudre D’Or Village, if I may say so, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a *laissé-pour-compte*. It has been quite neglected for some reasons and I am not going to blame anybody for that. My predecessor has served the Constituency for many years, but I am not going to dwell upon that, he is not in the House. I must thank the hon. Deva Virahsawmy and I am sure that hon. Mookhesswur Choonee and hon. Ashit Gungah will join me into that.

When I was Minister of Environment, in the then Budget, the then Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister came up with an idea of an eco-village. At that time, for reasons known

to myself, I did not include Poudre d'Or Village as one of the village to turn into an eco-village. But, hon. Deva Virahsawmy, in this Budget, has taken the pain of rebalancing the act and has introduced Poudre D'Or Village, an important tourist spot in our constituency, as an eco-village, just giving us an opportunity for further development to this village. I am sure that hon. Deva Virahsawmy, at a point in time, will explain to the House and to the population at large, what is an eco-village and why it is important for us to develop the concept of an eco-village.

The erosion problem at the public beach surrounding the statue of Paul and Virginie has been addressed by the private sector and by hon. Choonee, hon. Gungah and me with the help of the ADD. I would like it to go on record; we will place our thanks and gratitude to *Agence de Développement Durable*, which has spent Rs2.5 m., in order to address some of the problems of erosion in Poudre d'Or Village.

Negotiation is still on the way with regard to secure a reasonable plot of land in order to construct a football ground at the Poudre d'Or Village. My colleagues, hon. Ashit Gungah, hon. Choonee and I have successfully discussed it and hon. Anil Bachoo has already earmarked and issue a contract for the construction of a lay-by i.e bus stop near the main school at the Poudre d'Or Village.

I have also here to thank hon. Bachoo, who has just asphalted the main road leading from No.7 Cottage coming to Poudre D'Or. Therefore, we are making efforts to bring Poudre D'Or to the mainstream of development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you are fully aware of the importance of Goodlands. Goodlands, Mr Speaker, Sir, has four electoral schools with also 17,000 electorates and a population of some 25,000. It is in the very heart, the centre of the Constituency. I have to thank hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. He is not somebody who looks only for himself. He has done the Triolet by-pass in order to alleviate the problems of Triolet and he has also looked at Goodlands. A sum of Rs300 m. has been spent for 7 kilometres of road under the leadership of hon. Anil Bachoo to construct the Triolet by-pass. Only a few weeks ago, hon. Ashit Gungah, hon. Choonee and myself visited the place and hon. Minister Anil Bachoo has agreed to create an additional stretch of road, which is going to be called a service road annex to the by-pass and will cost Rs22 m.

I have every reason to believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Rs300 m. spent is money well spent. In order to alleviate the traffic congestion at Goodlands and also to create a direct link

from Poudre d'Or and other villages and this will act as some form of extension to create a semi-ring road around Goodlands. Once the by-pass is operational, we shall need to address problems related to Goodlands main road, which is totally overcrowded and it is an important transit place during the week-end and especially on Sundays and Saturdays and after school hours.

Hon. Bachoo here again has agreed that once the bypass is open,; we are going to address with a Master Plan the main shopping road of Goodlands. We shall address the problem of pavement, drain, lighting, pedestrian security, road safety and many other related issues. Goodlands again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would imagine it is probably in the North after Flacq, the second most important market fair which attracts a lot of tourists being given where it is located. It is Mr Speaker, Sir, in a very deplorable state and here I must thank hon. Guttee, the previous PPS, and hon. Rucktooa, the previous Member of Parliament of this constituency. They have made indulgence, they have negotiated with the St Antoine Sugar Estate and two and half acres of land have been earmarked near the Farmers Service Centre. Hon. Gungah, hon. Choonee myself have already spoken to Mr Bernard Mayer and shortly, hopefully, we should be able to finalise things with regard to this. With regard to new school Mr Speaker, Sir, you would remember the Ramlagun Moosun school, it was leaking and again here I must thank hon. Dr. Bunwaree, the Prime Minister and hon. Bachoo through the Ministry of MPI, this school is being brought to ground zero, it has been pulled down totally. A contract of Rs60 m. has been awarded in August 2010 and the expected date of completion is December 2010. This will include amenities such as IT Lab, Library and Asian Language rooms and at present while I am speaking in the House, 15% of the work for the construction of the school has already been completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Goodlands, as I said earlier, with almost 25,000 people has a very small box room which is used as a health centre and on top is in a deplorable state and worse it is open on Sundays because it is the only health centre that is open to serve the surrounding village on Sundays. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, one acre of land has already been earmarked, papers are yet to be finalised and I hope hon. Minister Mrs Hanoomanjee would liaise with the vice-Prime Minister and even during the course of this Budget fund could be made available for the construction of a Medi-Clinic to serve the inhabitants of Goodlands. It is good here that we are not fighting for the purpose of having a Medi-Clinic just for the fact of it. The Medi-Clinic is very important because it helps to alleviate the pressure on the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam

Hospital, as much as it is possible to make people have primary care locally in a health care or in a Medi-Clinic this will help to alleviate the pressure on the main hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I would continue a little bit with Grand'Baie, Poudre d'Or, and Goodlands. I am not going to dwell on the volley ball pitch sports complex, tennis court and all these things...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, how long are you taking?

Mr Bundhoo: Seven minutes maximum, Sir! I am already in Petit Raffray, the third village. Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, a few minutes to bring you down memory lane because you have been there and have served this place and people have expressed good affection for you, Sir. Concerning Petit Raffray, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken up the matter with hon. Bachoo, hon. Gungah and hon. Choonee and we've visited it. We are there regularly. I have a strange feeling, Mr Speaker, Sir, that No. 6 is a constituency whereby we have *développement à trois vitesses*. Why, Mr Speaker, Sir? Goodlands, Vale and Fond du Sac have got some kind of infrastructure surrounding them. Grand'Baie, Péreybère and Choisy which are the coastline villages have their own development and they have got their own specificities and problems whereas Petit Raffray, Roche Terre, Grand Gaube, Cap Malheureux *représentent l'île Maurice profonde, l'île Maurice* that is totally different. I said that to hon. Bachoo last time, there is not a single pavement in Petit Raffray, not a single pavement in Roche Terre, even the road is narrow we can sit down and work out a plan in order to make it safe for the inhabitants of Roche Terre and Petit Raffray, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the asphalting of some ten roads has been approved and it is already on the way. Recently we have earmarked 15 new roads for resurfacing and we have already installed a traffic light at one of the junctions going towards the Shivala and Cap Malheureux. We have already acquired land at the junctions at Trois Bras. We are going to have a pavement, a traffic light there in order to ensure the maximum security for the inhabitants of Petit Raffray.

Now, allow me to turn to the regions of Vale and Fond du Sac region. With regard to Vale, again I must thank the Minister of Education and the Minister Bachoo for having issued a contract for the construction of a cloakroom at the football ground only last week for the sum of Rs2.7 m. and works will start shortly. Concerning Fond du Sac, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already completed the fencing and the rehabilitation of the football ground, shortly it is going to

be handed over to the village and the district council and we hope that soon we will be able to put lighting facilities to enable the inhabitants to play football there.

With regard to Vale Government School, Mr Speaker, Sir, during the last Budget 2009-2010, a sum of Rs9.6 m. was spent to renovate and to create a new block football ground and ramp has been completed. This financial year, hon. Ashit Gungah, hon. Choonee and myself after discussions and a visit of the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Beebeejaun, we spoke to hon. Bachoo and a sum of Rs2.5 m. has already been allocated for the drain system, renovation of gutters and resurfacing of the yard for the school at Vale.

Concerning the Fond du Sac Government school, I have to thank the hon. Minister Choonee, who surely as the Minister of Arts and Culture wanted to do something quite special in his own constituency and for this Budget the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has made provision for the creation of a national library in the village of Fond du Sac.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have also very recently tarred the road that is linking Fond du Sac, which is called the Triolet Branch Road, linking it to the Triolet bypass which is, in a manner of speaking, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have linked Fond du Sac with the Triolet by-pass with another way coming through Pamplemousses and shortly the dual carriage way is going from Forbach Street to Fond du Sac.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to turn to Cap Malheureux, Grand Gaube and Roche Terre. These three localities are facing almost the same problems ...

The Speaker: This will take another fifteen minutes.

Mr Bundhoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I promise, a few minutes more. I just want to finish it. The problem is the same; social amenities, football ground at Roche Terre, and lack of bus stops and other facilities. A pressing appeal to my hon. friend Mr Von-Mally. I am sure he is aware that representations have been made to him, Hon. Gungah, hon. Choonee also and myself have spoken to him. Now that we have to renovate the fish landing station at Grand Gaube, I hope he would do something about this, Mr Speaker, Sir. One of the good news also is that I would like to thank hon. Mrs Bappoo who has generously accepted to convert the ex-DWC building at Cap Malheureux into a Children in Distress Centre to the cost of Rs5 m. and works have already started and are expected to be completed some time next year. The Minister of Environment has already done the work together with the Public Infrastructure.

Now, I come to the last part of my speech, Mr Speaker, Sir. Grand' Baie, the jewel in the crown, is often described as the Côte d'Azur of Mauritius. Only recently - 15 days ago - I had a meeting with hon. Bodha. I must say he has a vision for Grand' Baie and he has promised me that the next time we meet, we are going to bring along all the stakeholders, including Minister Gungah and Minister Choonee. What did we discuss with regard to Grand' Baie? We want -

- (i) to re-engineer the seafront of Grand' Baie to make it a showcase;
- (ii) to attract revenue through tourism and leisure;
- (iii) to revitalise the backstreet of Grand' Baie, to ensure the improvement to the local population well-being; ensure that there is no development *à deux vitesses*;
- (iv) to provide animation and generate economic activities for the local population, so as to be in line with democratisation of the economic principle, as laid down by hon. Ms Deerpalsing and hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen;
- (v) to make a showcase of Grand' Baie to promote cultural tourism, thereby upgrading present religious and historical sites that could be used to promote the cultural diversity of Mauritius;
- (vi) to incorporate the principle of an eco-village;
- (vii) ensure involvement of all stakeholders -
 1. Member of Parliament;
 2. Local Government;
 3. Ministry of Tourism;
 4. Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment;
 5. Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development;
 6. Ministry of Public Infrastructure;
 7. the private operators, and, of course,
 8. the local inhabitants.
- (viii) to overview the coastal protection and rehabilitation works.

I must here, Mr Speaker, Sir, with my colleague, hon. Choonee and hon. Gungah, thank hon. Virahsawmy who had already earmarked Rs15 m., and the contract is about to be issued and awarded by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, including the construction of a jetty in Grand' Baie in order to re-engineer the Côte d'Azur of Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We also, Mr Speaker, Sir, discussed issues related to security of local inhabitants, business operators and tourists, that is, provision of street lightings, drains, pavements, taxis stands, fish landing station, etc.

Mr Speaker: Don't dwell lengthily on all these points, please!

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, a couple of things before I conclude.

Mr Speaker: About what?

Mr Bundhoo: Wastewater Management. People seem to forget that Grand' Baie village itself, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: No. Although the hon. Member is never irrelevant when he speaks on the Budget, he has dwelt lengthily on the problems of his constituency. He should please conclude the speech now.

Mr Bundhoo: One second, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: I am asking the hon. Member to conclude.

Mr Bundhoo: ...for the actions taken with regard to the Wastewater Authority and also the work done there, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure one would not wish Mauritius to face the problem of Greece, Portugal, Ireland and other European countries are going through. This Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, has a team that understands the challenges and can muster the courage, and has got the clout to deliver through this difficult phase in history. It is incumbent upon us in this House, and beyond the change agents of the new world, to turn around this situation with the view to have a more just, equitable and inclusive society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am fully aware that this Budget will not bring solutions to all the problems, but I am very confident that the groundwork for creating of a national momentum between Government and all stakeholders has been gathered to take on the challenges that lie ahead of us.

It is a challenge, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government is determined to meet.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 7.53 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.08 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr J. C. Leopold (First Member for Rodrigues): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the floor tonight. I want, from the very beginning, to set the records right.

M. le président, je ne vais pas répondre point pour point ce qui a été dit par l'honorable membre de Rodrigues tout à l'heure. C'était du cinéma et du mauvais cinéma, et surtout que cela devient une habitude. Il est comme un *sniper* ; il tire un coup, ensuite il disparaît de la Chambre. Je trouve que c'est un manque de respect. Il n'assume pas sa responsabilité parce que pour moi la vérité n'a qu'une version. Si on dit des choses il faut avoir le courage d'assumer et de rester dans cette Chambre comme nous. C'est ça la démocratie. Je trouve que c'est vraiment inélégant de sa part – peut-être parce que son *leader* et gourou était dans la galerie, mais c'est vraiment dommage.

M. le président, l'image qu'il a donnée de Rodrigues n'est pas celle que je connais et que j'ai quittée il y a deux jours.

(Interruptions)

Ce n'est pas Rodrigues. Pour moi, il était vraiment sur une autre planète. Pourtant on était sur le même vol. Je ne comprends pas. A écouter l'honorable François, c'est comme une île Rodrigues qu'on ne connaît pas. Il pense que, dans cette Chambre, personne ne connaît Rodrigues, personne n'a été à Rodrigues. Mais c'est faux, M. le président. Même en démagogie, il y a une limite à toute chose, surtout que son absence nous donne raison. Son absence parle d'elle-même, ce qu'il a dit n'était rien que pour épater la galerie.

Donc, moi, je ne vais pas gâcher mon discours avec ça, si ce n'est que pour dire que, s'ils disent qu'ils ont tellement travaillé, ils ont la confiance du peuple, pourquoi après vingt-cinq ans ont-ils été boudés du pouvoir ? M. le président, quelques semaines de cela ils ont fêté leurs trente-quatre ans d'existence. Il y avait trente-quatre personnes. Vingt-huit médailles pour trente-quatre personnes ! Mais nous, on vient de fêter nos dix huit ans ; il faut comparer. Moi je dis que, *action speaks louder than words*.

M. le président, nous sommes dans un contexte, où les attentes et les aspirations sont grandes, des fois légitimes, des fois démesurées selon le point de vue. Cependant, bien qu'il soit difficile de satisfaire tout le monde, il est de l'esprit d'un exercice budgétaire de tendre la main

vers les plus faibles et les plus vulnérables de notre société, tout en garantissant une croissance raisonnable de notre économie. *We have, therefore, to strike the right balance between social and economic.*

M. le président, le budget présenté, le vendredi 19 novembre dernier, a été suivi avec beaucoup d'intérêt par tout un chacun. Personne ne peut dire le contraire. C'est un signe que cet exercice n'est plus le point focal uniquement des politiciens, des syndicats et des acteurs économiques et sociaux mais de toutes les composantes de la République. Qu'il en soit ainsi !

A Rodrigues l'exercice budgétaire revêtait d'un intérêt particulier pour quatre raisons principales.

Il y a d'abord le fait que l'île traverse une période difficile, tant sur le plan économique et social. Personne ne peut être insensible à l'hémorragie des jeunes rodriguais vers Maurice, en quête d'un lendemain plus brillant.

Deuxièmement, cela fait plus de 10 ans que nous n'avions pas de compatriote au sein du Cabinet. Que cela déplaie à certains ou pas, c'est une reconnaissance indélébile de ce présent gouvernement au peuple de Rodrigues, et pour lequel je remercie vivement le Premier ministre, le docteur Navin Ramgoolam. Et je maintiens tout ce que j'ai dit à ce propos, il y a quelques mois, lorsque j'ai pris part aux débats sur le discours programme.

Troisièmement, c'est la première fois dans l'histoire de l'île que les grands projets capitaux, dont le peuple attendait depuis des lustres, ont été énoncés *in toto* dans le discours programme gouvernemental. C'est la première fois que le peuple s'est dit : enfin on a été compris et, les causes pour lesquelles on militait année après année, ont finalement été entendues et considérées. C'était comme une bouffée d'air frais et l'espoir d'une Rodrigues meilleure s'était vite installée chez nous.

Quatrièmement, l'intérêt était d'autant plus aiguisé du fait que le ministre des finances avait choisi Rodrigues comme son premier déplacement officiel. Ce fut une grande première et beaucoup de discussions ont été entamées, notamment avec la société civile et les acteurs économiques, sociaux et politiques, à cet effet.

Il convient, M. le président, de comprendre le contexte local actuel pour ne pas se laisser emporter d'un extrême à l'autre. Les besoins de l'île sont grands et réels.

Actuellement, M. le président, nous assistons à une crise sociale et économique aigue à Rodrigues. Il ne faut pas minimiser le départ des Rodriguais vers Maurice, car il ne s'agit ni

d'une visite touristique et encore moins d'une migration circulatoire. C'est un véritable signal de désespoir.

Vous imaginez, M. le président, ses conséquences sur la vie sociale et familiale de l'île ? Qu'en est-il de la vie économique ? Les jeunes s'en vont, laissant dans la plupart des cas, femmes, enfants et grands-parents. Quel avenir pour ces enfants, ces petits bouts de choux qui grandissent sans l'affection de maman et papa ? Nous assistons quotidiennement à l'éclatement des cellules familiales qui devraient être les piliers d'une société solide et durable. Donc, la main-d'œuvre part et la population statistiquement vieillisse à la vitesse grand V.

Mr Deputy Speaker, sir, most surveys have shown that 40% of the population of Rodrigues live below poverty level and the situation is prone to worsen, if adequate measures are not taken immediately to redress the present chaos in Rodrigues. For instance, we are some 36,000 inhabitants in Rodrigues. It is estimated that in Mauritius there are more than 40,000 Rodriguans. This cannot continue going on like this. Mr Deputy Speaker, sir, if the question is asked, every Rodriguan here would say that he would like to go back home. But the very question is: once there, what to do?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the high level of unemployment prevailing down there, some prefer to stay in mainland Mauritius despite all the consequences that are exposed at length in the press. It is the duty of one and all in this House to lend a helping hand to these fellow citizens of Mauritius living in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at October 2010, 2,015 people in Rodrigues are having social aid and unemployment hardship relief. Out of a total population of 36,000! For most of them, it is their sole revenue. The Budget earmarked therefore has increased from Rs37 m. to Rs43m. in one year for social aids. This is the naked truth. This is putting much pressure on the social security sector. This clearly indicates the state of our economic situation. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we still rely mostly on primary sectors such as handicraft, substantive agriculture such as farming; animal rearing on small scales. Recently much hope is placed on the tourism sector which is bound to develop in an income generating sector. Therefore, not only job opportunities are very low, but most of the time people have to strive *pour joindre les deux bouts*. Et comme on le dit si bien : "travay gramatin pou manzé tanto"

Ainsi, chacun avait son attente, grande ou petite, et tout le monde était suspendu au contenu du budget de l'honorable ministre des finances. Avec la situation actuelle au pays, et

surtout quand la presse s'y met de la partie pour faire monter les enchères, même pour moi d'intervenir ici, cette fois, se révèle être une tâche délicate et nécessite une bonne dose de sagesse et de clairvoyance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Republic of Mauritius is one and indivisible. Rodrigues is, and will be an integral part, as is the case for Agalega and others.

At a point in time in 2001, Government decided to grant more powers to Rodriguan citizens in the management of the local affairs. Fair enough! It happened at a time when we, in Rodrigues, were inspired for greater responsibility in decision-making on the island. Whenever powers are conferred to RRA, in line with the Act voted in 2001, this Body had to act and take all steps to the betterment of the island, without prejudice to provisions of Chapter VI of the Constitution, as stipulated in Paragraph 26 of the Act. This is why, as I said in my previous speech, it is high time to amend the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, which, after eight years of putting in practice, we see that there are many points that have to be fine-tuned, namely concerning the setting up of a Dispute Resolution Tribunal.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there needs also that the treatments to citizens in Rodrigues to be seen, as far as possible, in tune with that on mainland Mauritius. Therefore, justice and fairness not only have to be done, but most importantly must be seen to be done. This is the ultimate secret for consolidation of the bonding within the Republic at large. What happens, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that on many occasions things were such that the perception of negligence and *laissés-pour-compte* has been established. To write this off, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, you will agree with me, it is not an easy task *et ce n'est pas gagné d'avance*. This is why, one and all should be very cautious in what we say and do. In fact, even our body language, our sayings and so on have to be adjusted in such a way that we move towards this dream of a prosperous Republic as Mauritius as spelt out in paragraph 13 by the hon. Minister of Finance, I quote –

‘To put our country on a modern development path and build a better future for all’.

For all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! I am convinced that this better future can only and precisely be achieved together when we are in unity. *Chacun de part sa capacité se doit d'apporter sa pierre à l'édifice de cette république forte, saine et où il fait bon vivre, tout en assumant sa responsabilité.*

True it is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that most of the major infrastructural projects for Rodrigues have been spelt out for the first time in the Government programme 2010-2015, but true it is again that the island needs a very special attention as far as raising the standard of living of the local population and to create the conducive environment for social and economic prosperity.

Being given the present social and economic situation, I am of the opinion that more efforts have to be done if we want these 104 km square or so of firm land, some 600 km away from the mainland to be in the light of modernity. We all know *aux grands maux, les grands remèdes*. This is precisely what is expected there. No more no less! How can we refrain youngsters from coming to mainland Mauritius if jobs are not available locally? No one is to be blamed as we are engaged in the same battle; the difference is the means available!

Le problème d'eau est réel, tout comme le chômage, la misère et le manque d'emploi et ce n'est un secret pour personne dans cette Chambre. Ce que je ne comprends pas c'est pourquoi, pour une fois, on ne vient pas injecter les fonds nécessaires, quid à les étaler sur trois ou quatre ans de façon à donner un signal fort que ce présent gouvernement a la volonté, le courage nécessaire pour aider Rodrigues. Bien que la situation économique soit difficile, un signal fort serait fort louable. Ainsi, le peuple ne se sentirait plus seul dans son combat. J'ai toujours dit que le problème de Rodrigues est un problème national non uniquement celui de l'Assemblée Régionale. Ce serait absurde, M. le président.

How many of the school leavers with SC, HSC and degrees waiting to be enrolled in whatever job to live decently? The smallest of the island happens to make that even the 'whatever' job is not available. This situation has resulted in a brain drain from the island, as never seen before. Government has a duty to help, to remedy same, for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, either we like it or not, acts on behalf of Government, as stipulated in paragraph 3, section 2 of the RRA Act, I quote –

‘The Regional Assembly shall be a body corporate and the exercise of its functions shall be regarded as done on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Mauritius’.

Indeed, the need to have a close monitoring of the affairs while leaving enough space for the autonomous body to function properly. However there is an urgent need to create a conducive environment to allow proper communication between the two partners. This is the whole spirit behind the autonomous Rodrigues.

One of the economic locomotive of Rodrigues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the tourism sector. We are expecting some 50,000 tourists up to the end of this year as recent figures show constant increase on arrival on an average of 14% throughout the year. Being given that new hotels and bungalows are under construction and that many youngsters can find a job in this sector, rapid efforts should be engaged for the construction of the new runway, once the feasibility study is completed. I hope the hon. Minister of Finance will stick to what he said whilst answering the PNQ yesterday.

Cependant, je trouve que le ton et le qualificatif déraisonnable vis-à-vis du Chef Commissaire *for whatever reasons* est un peu trop sévère. Nous avons fait le calcul qu'avec le *retention money* que nous devons payer pour les projets en cours tels que le marché et l'abattoir, avec ce présent budget, il va être difficile de nous permettre de faire des projets d'infrastructure d'envergure nécessaire pour le pays. Savez-vous, M. le président, qu'un kilomètre de route coûte plus de R 35 millions à l'asphaltage à Rodrigues alors qu'à Maurice c'est presque la moitié? Nous avons aussi le problème du fait que le fret ne cesse d'augmenter de jour en jour. D'ailleurs il a été calculé que le fret entre Rodrigues et Maurice serait le plus cher du monde. De plus il vient d'augmenter de 30% il y a un mois ! Il convient de souligner que par le relief de l'île la construction est très chère. C'est pourquoi je ne suis pas d'accord qu'on ramène ce qu'on donne à Rodrigues par tête d'habitant quand cela donne l'impression que Rodrigues fait de la charité. Il est clair à la section 46 du RRA Act 2001 que je cite –

“Cabinet shall give consideration to a series of criteria to ensure a fair allocation of budgetary resources to Rodrigues’.

With a quite open mind, ce critère par tête d'habitant pourrait être dénigrant. Il faut simplement voir la réalité en face parce que, M. le président, quand on voit au paragraphe 71, que provision est faite pour un deuxième câble optique pour Maurice, ça fait mal au cœur, croyez-moi, alors qu'une telle opportunité ferait le bonheur de beaucoup de familles à Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget, however, contains a series of very positive measures that I cannot miss to underline and for which I thank warmly the hon. Minister of Finance. Firstly, there is the 25% grant to fishers on purchase of semi-industrial fishing boats; the raising of income threshold from 8500 rupees to 14,500 rupees for payment of exam fees and the 50% payment for those deriving a salary between 14,500 rupees and 20,000 rupees; the cutting of interest rate on loans from EWF; the 98 million rupees for woman's empowerment and gender streaming; the introduction of IT in most services; the setting up of an ecological village at Rivière Coco in Rodrigues; the fight against poverty by mobilising funds from CSR; the construction of social houses and the increasing grant for casting of slabs. However, nothing was said as to whether the eligibility threshold for salary has increased or not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, basing myself on past and very recent past experience, I am of the opinion that if needful is not done seriously for national measures that applies also to Rodrigues to be materialised, the risk of zero implementation is high, in fact, very high. I am basing myself on facts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, la prudence est de mise quand il s'agit de voir les implications budgétaires nationales pour Rodrigues car 'chat échaudé craint l'eau froide'. Très souvent, M. le président, les grandes mesures énoncées ne sont pas appliquées comme il se doit à Rodrigues ou le sont avec beaucoup de retard par rapport à ce qui est fait à Maurice. Bien évidemment, cela n'arrange pas les choses et donne un sentiment de laissés-pour-compte. Les exemples ne manquent pas. Je prend d'abord le cas du chauffe-eau solaire. On a pris deux à trois mois de retard par rapport à Maurice. Dans un premier temps, la branche de DBM locale n'avait pas encore le feu vert de l'institution mère de Maurice ; ensuite ce sont les formulaires qui ont pris du temps pour être acheminés dans l'île.

On a vécu la même chose pour les ampoules économiques. Alors que nos confrères de Maurice en faisaient déjà l'acquisition, à Rodrigues, il a fallu attendre deux ou trois mois pour des raisons jusqu'ici peu claires. Ce sont des manquements par inadvertance ou délibérés, mais des manquements quand même, alors que l'île n'est qu'à 600 kms d'ici soit une heure trente par avion et vingt quatre heures par bateau. Y a-t-il un manque d'intérêt, de considération? Je ne saurais me prononcer. On en a tellement parlé là-dessus. L'avenir nous le dira peut-être ! C'est pareil pour le MID Fund et les fonds pour l'éducation. D'ailleurs il y avait une question là-dessus la semaine dernière.

Je crains que de ce qui est énoncé aux paragraphes 272 et 345, Rodrigues ne gagnera que des miettes dans ce qui est prévu dans les mesures nationales si rien de nouveau - je dis si rien de nouveau - n'est fait pour rendre ces opportunités plus accessibles aux Rodriguais. C'est pourquoi il est difficile de comptabiliser ce qui est doté sur le plan national sur ce qui va se passer au niveau régional car dans la plupart des cas, nous avons été les derniers à être servis. Qui peut nous garantir de la transparence dans le *first come first served basis* pour les bassins ? Etant donné que Rodrigues est à valeur du jour la région la plus touchée par le problème d'eau, pourquoi ne pas octroyer, par exemple, un quota spécifique à l'île ? Je dirais 5000 sur le total de 40,000 prévus. Je crois que ce ne serait que justice pour nous d'autant que ce n'est pas un hasard que dans le budget régional il y avait le même item.

Ceci dit, les mêmes constats ont été faits de part et d'autre. Je demanderais donc au ministre des finances d'aller dans le même sens pour qu'il y ait des maisons destinées aux personnes de faible revenu avec aux alentours de 2000 unités pour l'île. Encore une fois ce ne sera que justice envers Rodrigues. Ce sera une formule juste et morale pour compenser de manière concrète le budget capital de l'île. Ainsi les intentions budgétaires pour Rodrigues auront plus de chance d'être traduites en action et acceptées par la population. Je suis convaincu que dans l'état actuel des choses, un quota spécifique pour l'île serait l'idéal.

Une autre remarque, M. le président, au paragraphe 236, mention est faite pour transformer le CSO en '*Office to that of Statistics Mauritius*'. J'espère que dans cet élan de réforme, l'on prendra soin d'en faire provision pour que les statistiques sur Rodrigues soient disponibles séparément et non pas uniquement englobés dans les statistiques nationales alors que les *surveys* sont aussi effectués dans l'île.

Valeur du jour, il est très difficile d'en avoir. A en croire le CSO, Rodrigues n'existe pas. Maintenant que la DBM aussi est appelée à se réorienter et même de changer d'appellation, j'espère que les choses vont s'accélérer dans l'île.

M. le président, nous parlons aujourd'hui du développement durable, mais je suis désolé. Pour y parvenir, il nous faut donner des moyens et mettre le paquet. A ce stade, on peut se demander combien l'île a profité du fonds MID. C'est vrai qu'il y a eu des ampoules économiques, les chauffe-eau solaires et que nous avons eu trois éoliennes à Grenade pour une contribution de 8% seulement de la consommation locale en énergie propre, alors qu'on peut facilement monter jusqu'à 25%. Pourquoi tant de '*hisser-pousser*'? Cela me fait penser à ce

projet entre l'ARER, Agence Réunionnaise pour l'Energie Renouvelable, concernant un transfert de technologie en matière de photovoltaïque. En effet, suite à des échanges entre Rodrigues et la Réunion, surtout que l'île est jumelée avec la commune du Tampon, un MoU devait être signé pour que Rodrigues en profite. Mais cela devrait se faire entre les États. Malheureusement, c'est resté en souffrance depuis 2008. On attend toujours, M. le président.

Avec le changement climatique, Rodrigues fait face aujourd'hui à des nouveaux défis tels que les tremblements de terre fréquents et les risques des tsunamis. Nous avons aussi des radiers qui sont submergés surtout de décembre à février. Je cite comme exemple le cas de Mourouk, Grand' Baie, Baie Diamant et Baie Malgache. On peut se demander pourquoi on avait construit des radiers dans une île au relief aussi en pente et accidenté. La raison est simple : les budgets obtenus pour la construction de routes d'année en année étaient tellement minces qu'ils s'appliquaient uniquement à l'asphaltage et l'installation de quelques murs de rétention mais pas pour des ponts. Le résultat est qu'en temps de pluie et cyclones, ces villages sont coupés du reste du pays. Je n'ose pas penser à ce qui va se passer si quelqu'un devait se rendre à l'hôpital en raison d'une blessure ou d'un accouchement. C'est pourquoi des *track roads* ont été construits pour aider à désenclaver ces villages en temps de pluie. Autrement, c'est l'enfer. C'est pour vous dire que des fois nous vivons des réalités différentes.

Concernant les morcellements, M. le président – pour vous donner un autre exemple - à Maurice c'est fait avec un cahier des charges. La personne obtient donc un lopin de terre avec les infrastructures de base comme l'eau et l'électricité. Or chez nous, tel n'est pas le cas, faute de moyen. C'est pour vous dire qu'il y a bien des aspects de choses à Rodrigues qui sont différents de ce qu'on a l'habitude de côtoyer ici à Maurice. C'est pourquoi je dis qu'il nous faut davantage de moyens pour améliorer la vie des gens vivant à Rodrigues.

M. le président, je vais terminer avec un mot sur le sport. Rodrigues est considérée comme la pépinière de la République. C'est une vérité parce que dans les différents jeux de l'avenir, avec une équipe réduite, l'île est toujours sortie en tête de liste. J'attends à ce que les efforts, pour la piste synthétique de Camp du Roi, s'accélère avec les R 16 millions prévues dans ce présent budget. Surtout avec les jeux des îles de l'Océan Indien à l'horizon d'août 2011 aux Seychelles et que l'île compte déjà 16 athlètes présélectionnés. Actuellement, les athlètes s'entraînent à même le béton, du moins ce qui reste de l'ex-piste synthétique. Pourquoi il faut

aller vite à Rodrigues ? Contrairement à Maurice, il y a des alternatives. Si un stade est en mauvais état, on peut bouger vers un autre en attendant qu'il soit réparé. Mais à Rodrigues, nous n'avons qu'une seule et unique option. Ceci peut être là une source de malentendu. Quand il n'y a pas à Rodrigues, c'est qu'il n'y a rien.

Une autre difficulté majeure que font face les athlètes concerne l'hébergement lorsqu'ils viennent à Maurice pour les compétitions ou autres. Actuellement, nous avons hérité une vieille maison à Vacoas, le fameux *quarter* N25, mais son état laisse à désirer. Je voudrais saisir cette occasion, ne serait-ce que *to pay respect* aux athlètes Rodriguais pour leurs efforts pour faire une proposition au ministre des sports, c'est d'entamer la rénovation complète de ce bâtiment en délabrement en le transformant en un vrai dortoir digne de ce nom. Ceci aura deux effets majeurs. Premièrement, les récipiendaires se sentiront valoriser et considérer et deuxièmement, on aura une réduction sans précédent dans les dépenses énormes encourues par l'Assemblée Régionale à cet effet. On connaît l'adage « un corps sain dans un environnement sain. » En voilà un simple exemple pour raffermir l'esprit d'appartenance entre Rodrigues et Maurice.

Pour conclure, M. le président, je voudrais faire un appel au ministre des finances pour revoir, dans le calme, des dotations budgétaires de Rodrigues. Il est encore temps de rectifier les tirs. Au-delà des clivages et divergences idéologiques et personnelles, l'avancement et le progrès de l'île doivent être au centre de nos préoccupations et devraient être la priorité des priorités. Ainsi, l'île étant dans un tourment, les états d'âmes et les émotions ne vont qu'infliger davantage de souffrance et de désespoir. Ils n'ont pas leur place. Le peuple de Rodrigues croit fermement et attend beaucoup de ce présent gouvernement, du Premier ministre et de son ministre des finances en particulier, pour tout faire pour nous sortir de ce gouffre. Nous avons du pain sur la planche.

Cependant, M. le président, depuis ces 10 ans passés dans cette Chambre, je n'ai fait qu'une chose, défendre au mieux de mes capacités les intérêts de Rodrigues, mon pays bien aimé et ceux de la République. Bien sûr, chacun a son style et chacun a sa façon de le faire. Je suis parfaitement conscient que comme tout un chacun je ne suis pas parfait et je ne veux pas l'être, mais je fais de mon mieux avec mon cœur dans tout ce que j'entreprends.

Sur ce, je vous laisse avec cette citation de Frédéric Dard –

« Si on ne dit pas ce qu'on pense au moment où on le pense, on ne pensera plus ce qu'on dit au moment où on le dira. »

Merci, M. le président.

(9.35 p.m.)

Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

Praises and thanks be to Almighty God from whom all of us, in this House, sought the help in our initial oath when we said: 'So, help me God'. Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, God will help our Government in this current Budget. We have only to be sincere and honest. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you and the House for giving me the opportunity to address *en ce qui concerne le budget courant*.

I have to mention the courage, the steadfastness and the determination of our hon. Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, in the face of new challenges amidst the ongoing, global, economic turmoil in presenting this current Budget with all its measures focusing on the three main thrusts –

- (i) rebalancing growth;
- (ii) making a great leap forward on productivity, and
- (iii) consolidating social justice.

I believe firmly that the general appreciation of the House must be met. We have to be objective and positive looking to reality in its truth and stop party politics and traditional criticism. But instead, let's start suggesting to allow the country to move forward and to free our people while alleviating poverty, that is, staring at not us only, but worldwide. I feel really happy and do appreciate that Government, more specifically, the hon. Minister of Finance, has taken in a lot of the points I raised in my maiden speech. I thank the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance in the name of God and in the name of the people of our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to make some remarks on the pre-budget preparation before presenting it to this House. The Government has had to deliver on two critical tasks simultaneously: to prop up short-term demand and to build long-term supply. Obviously, this has been a very painstaking exercise with as much at stake. Job creation with Government support is vital amidst a dampened global economic outlook. But Government cannot afford any

fiscal slippery. We have to understand it and we have to appreciate the great job that has been done.

The Mauritian economy is directly exposed to the European zone and the United Kingdom where fiscal austerity is the order of the day. Consumer demand is weakening as the State tightens the belt. As unemployment stays on the high side, more austerity back home can do more harm to the local economy if timing is wrong. Here also, the Government has proved to be efficient. Government had to act to rebalance the books over the lifetime of this Parliament. The budget deficit is projected at 4.5 percent of GDP for 2010. This had to be lowered in the next fiscal years. The structural fiscal deficit had to be dealt with over the medium terms horizon and the Government did it. This had to be achieved through a thorough revisiting of the size of the Government. Some long standing commitments had to be reassessed in the light of the new economic realities: a sustainable fiscal policy had to include a National Health Insurance Programme; a series of ambitious Public Sector reforms and a workable Private Public Partnership (PPP) Programme. The Government stood firmly with it. Public Sector reforms must cease to be a mere political slogan. Sub standard design and delivery of public services exacerbate existing weaknesses of the economy and prevent the country to attain a higher growth tragedy. The Government has proved to be at the level.

Government could have raised revenues through higher user fees and charges for water, electricity and wastewater. There was plenty of scope for increasing, for instance, water tariffs which are low to the point that they encourage wastage. The introduction of user fees could have also been explored in public hospitals for some services. This could have also helped alleviate the pressure on regional hospitals through redirecting the patients flow to the community health centres. Here also, the Government came with measures to alleviate poverty.

The PPP policy had also to supply to existing Government infrastructures. Sale and lease back opportunities can be explored to free cash from Government assets and relieve the public debts burden. Similarly, innovative financing models should be devised to help mobilise resources for the Public Sector Investment Programme. Key areas for infrastructure development include water storage facilities, port and airport logistics, energy generation with emphasis on green sources of energy, road development and transport system modernisation and local as well as international telecommunication. Here also, at the FSM, we appreciate the measures taken by the Government.

Whilst all the sectors are still showing positive growth, the economic machinery is slowing down dangerously. The Minister of Finance had to avoid at all cost a deceleration spiral to take hold. The Budget is enshrined with the Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Programme (ERCP): supporting business activities; help business restructure; develop new capacities; new markets and new products. Therefore, fiscal tightening had not to be at the expense of growth. Here also, the Government was at the level.

The Public Sector Investment Programme should aim at strengthening the physical fabric of our country. Government has adopted a sound course of action by reviewing the maturity profile of its debt. Regular servicing of short term borrowings put a lot of pressure on the exchequers' cash flow. By smoothing the maturity profile of the domestic debt portfolio, Government minimises rollover and refinancing debt risk. We have to appreciate, amidst all this turmoil, what the Minister did and the country has to pray for him for all that he did.

I will, in my capacity, try at the best to comment on the three main thrusts of this Budget 2011 according to the vice-Prime Minister –

- (i) rebalancing growth, and
- (ii) making a great leap forward on productivity, and consolidating social justice.

I will not go through all the lines that the hon. Minister of Finance has mentioned in his Budget Speech. Reform of the laureate system, the SC and HSC examination fees are all my concern because I committed myself in this House when I said last time that I have one mission in my life: to alleviate poverty. I must appreciate all that the hon. Minister did to complete the job and I will pray that we will do it together and we will achieve the goal.

I have some comments on education. This is a major step in restoring social justice in the education system as the current laureate system has always tend to favour young people who predominantly come from well-off families. Whilst the reform of the laureate system and the wider opportunities to access tertiary education are extremely positive, inclusive policies, the fundamental bottleneck of the CPE remains unaddressed. I would like to call the attention of the Minister of Education to it. I will not say that it is my fears, I am the director of a private school, the *Dar Ul Maarif* and I am concerned with education. We have to put shoulders together to clear the way. I would like to say that unless measures and resources are brought in to foster the academic knowledge and overall development of children at primary level and ease their mobility to secondary schooling, the whole system will remain at odds with the social justice

objectives. An ill-designed schooling system will continue to keep a large number of poor children out of mainstream education and help exacerbate poverty in the hard pressed communities and - I would like that the hon. Minister listens to it - this could create social tension that can in turn put the socio-ethnic stability of our country at risk.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Take your time!

Mr Fakeemeeah: This concerns the hon. Minister of Education. I would like to bring to the attention of the hon. Members of this Assembly, a destructive and annihilating wind that is blowing over the youths of our country and which has been witnessed in all its horrible forms, in some primary and secondary schools as well.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! No interruptions!

Mr Fakeemeeah: I am referring to the sub-cultures that are insidiously, but surely finding their way in the daily life of our youths, thereby, undermining the basic principles and values cherished by all God fearing people. The emotional side, Gothicism, the Satanism, cigarettes and alcoholism. The first three once eventually lead us to self-mutilation of their adherents and rebellion against parental advice and establish social values, which are necessary to keep the fabric of our society stable, peaceful and in harmony. Many such cases have been identified at primary as well as secondary level. We are coming with suggestions shortly.

There are three main thrusts of this Budget according to our hon. Minister of Finance and I'll comment the housing sector. It is said that the affordable accommodation is a key component of the social integration strategy. We have to appreciate it. The people of my Constituency followed it with a great attention and I have a few positive comments to put forward. These measures improve on the low-cost housing programme for the poor and make significant inroads to targeting the lower and the middle layers of the mid-income groups. The price of land is making investment in housing extremely difficult to the mid-income people, to buy themselves a good accommodation. Moreover, access to finance to these groups is quite tricky. Thanks to the 2011 measures, commercial banks will have a greater role in the provision of housing, mortgage to the middle class as they will be provided with guarantees by the MHC. However, many poor and mid-income people are already in debt and their capacity to secure financing to invest in a new accommodation...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please!

Mr Fakeemeeah:...is extremely constrained. Many families are in deep debt and have fallen into the debt trap, because of the rising cost of living and squeezing real incomes. Debt servicing takes a large share of household incomes, leaving little resources for children's education. A study on poverty by the CSO indicates that in 2006/2007, the percentage of indebted household, that is, household having made, at least, one loan repayment, is estimated at 46%, that is, Rs155,500 for all households against 20%, that is, Rs5,300 for poor household. On the average, poor indebted household disbursed Rs100,401 per month on loan repayment against Rs4,353 for all households. The highest loan repayment for the poor households was housing Rs2,491 whereas for all households, the highest loan repayment was on motor vehicles Rs4,036. It must be stressed that, in 2006/2007, the average monthly household income of poor household stood at Rs7,055 compared to Rs22,242 for all households. Income for all households was thrice as high as for poor families. Average monthly income for the under-privileged people grew by 38.9% between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007. Adjusting for inflation, the income of the poor grew by 3.5% over the five years period.

I must also congratulate you, hon. Minister of Finance...

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should address the hon. Minister with the normal dignity.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Yes, I understand. I am sorry that I have forgotten to mention that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a representative and spokesman of the general public, I am not here to criticise only for the sake of criticism. The Budget contains many measures that will lighten the heavy burden being carried by the general public, especially that of the lower income earners. A developed country, however, must be ready to feed its population and this is what the hon. Minister has been proving in his Budget. The goodwill is there.

Self-sufficiency in food production must be achieved and to attain this level, many facilities should be provided to the agricultural sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I congratulate the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, for protecting the small farmers or planters from going out of business. This section of the population has toiled very hard to make the country what it is today.

The outgoing Minister of Finance took away all the facilities his predecessor gave to the small planters. The re-establishing of duty-free for their 4x4 is not a favour done to them, but to help them to increase their production. This will be positive for the country. It is a very important tool for them to carry their workers, farm inputs, water, supply for irrigation and applying either fertilisers or carrying their finish products.

The cooperative sector also has benefitted many corrective measures in this Budget. Co-operators were not taking loans to boost up their production because of the registration fee barrier. The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, has removed this barrier and loans are made easily accessible to the co-operators. In this way, many foods can be produced and the import bill will be reduced. The grouping of small planters should continue and more facilities should be provided to them.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I expect the hon. Member also to understand. Thank you and please do continue.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Allow me to speak my mind – this is the highest institution of our democracy. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I call the attention of all the hon. Ministers present here. I believe in the trust the people put in them and I believe they are really gentlemen because I call them honourable.

Some people are tolerating the rot, and are cohabiting with political agents who are looting public funds. They are turning a blind eye to such corrupt practices. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, year in year out the Director of Audit denounces wastage of public funds. Let us be honest to ourselves and to our God. He denounces corruption, duplication, *the laisser-aller, laisser-passer, laisser-faire et laisser-jouir*. All these seem to have become a culture and, yet, we are spending some Rs50 m. every year on the Office of the Director of Audit.

I have the right to ask a question, and I believe hon. Minister of Finance will look into it. Why don't we debate the report every year here in this august Assembly? Why don't we act against those who are dilapidating public funds? Why don't we refer each case of corruption to the police for immediate action, to give the right signal of our goodwill for our country?

Allow me to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I feel. It is a feeling; let me speak my mind. It is the same for the Public Accounts Committee. It is all like '*lion en papier mâché*'; it cannot bite; it is harmless. It is like real toy and laughingstock. But the question arises: do we have the willpower to give the office of the Director of Audit its '*lettres de noblesse*?' Do we have the willpower? So, help me God, to call upon the attention of goodwill that we have in this House. I am afraid, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the answer may be no. The truth is that money is just being spent without the necessary control, without any accountability and, in my maiden speech, I have said that there should be accountability. We will have to account to the people; we will have to account to God. This country will only prosper, will rise on its own feet when the decision makers, when the accounting officers, when the heads of department will be God conscious and God fearing people. I am not judging anyone here; I am not here to judge, but I have the duty to recall and to remind ourselves that we have been made responsible by God over the people.

For, indeed, there are too many political predators, political sharks, and political thugs. I am not accusing anyone, but look around us. In short, I will say political '*carapate*'. If we eliminate all these, believe me, we will do a very good job for the country. There are many people of goodwill in this House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let us make no mistake. It seems that their law is prevailing in our country, not our law. It seems also that it is not the law of Almighty God. There should be strong deterrents to scare away the corrupt gang out of our country. I believe in all those present here, even those absent also. I will time and again remind us that millions of rupees, nay hundreds of millions, are being spent on social activities to help the downtrodden. Some people are thumping their chest, crowing on housetops and boasting.

Take the case of free transport for students. It is a very good measure and we very much appreciate it. The whole country appreciates it, but control over expenses is almost nil. I have always dealt with the land saga. We have spent hundreds of millions on the Jin Fei project, and that, just to help foreigners. I will explain. Has the money been well spent there? I doubt, and I am just voicing my doubt. The authorities will look into it. We still remember that one of the advisers of the Prime Minister had to resign; we still remember that Mr Siddick Chady was forced to resign.

Even with regard to the Police Welfare Fund at Line Barracks, police officers swear and fight their own. Maybe, there is one solution. Let's have a national accountability body. They are the authorities, and we are with them; let's have a national accountability body, which control expenses and which will hold responsible all the heads of department, and will refer to the police all cases of malpractices. We should then be the pride of the African nation.

Our country was self-sufficient in many domains in the 1950's and 1960's. Just recall to our mind; we know the history of our country. Now, we are importing food, which we were producing here and in Rodrigues. In other words, we are subsidising foreign farmers at the expense of our own people. More so, little by little, people have turned third grade citizens, driving away from land farming and cattle rearing. We have not adopted a good and practical down to earth land, cattle food, and fruit and fish policy. It is time to reconsider all our strategies. Experts have forecast difficult times to come ahead in the field of food. Our Ministers are well aware of it. Some sceptics are even talking about famine. By the way, the essential food commodities are becoming expensive day by day.

Let me give information I gathered from the Central Statistical Office. In 2008, we imported milk of all kinds for some Rs2.230 billion. There was a time when almost every house had some cattle. Do we remember? It is time to go for large scale industrialisation, and also to encourage people to rear cattle. My father is a Rodriguan, and I was myself in Rodrigues. The hon. Minister Von-Mally knows, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and he met my father. We had 50 acres of land in Rodrigues...

(Interruption)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Also, to encourage people to rear cattle. Now, we can find very few cattle rearers. We can subsidise the farmers here and in Rodrigues. In 2008, we imported meat, sheep and lamb for Rs434 m.; we imported goat meat for Rs4 m.; chicken for some Rs8 m.; beef for some Rs520 m. There was a time when we were self-sufficient. It's time to have a five-year policy and attain self-sufficiency. We can do it - not like we wrote on each electric *colonne*; '12-0 we can!'

(Interruptions)

They cannot without the FSM! I maintain, they cannot without the FSM and I am ready to help to achieve it. We can bring the capital in their hand; we want to do it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We want to be positive for the country, but don't cheat the people! They cannot do it without the FSM. Even, the Opposition also, they know about it, but they insist on their pride. There was a time when we were self-sufficient. Now it's time for a five-year policy to attain self-sufficiency. I repeat, difficult times, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are ahead. We cannot continue just playing politics; we have to join shoulders together to save our country and to save our people. Difficult times are ahead, let's take the bull by the horns now, and we can do it.

In 2008, we imported rice for some Rs1 billion – Rs1.96 m. We were producing quite a huge amount in the 1940s and 1950s. It's time to wake up from our deep sleep. Why not negotiate with Madagascar? We are here to propose. We are not like the MMM, we are very different.

(Interruptions)

Why not negotiate with Madagascar for us to plant rice there? It will benefit us and them. We will refer their problems to our Foreign Minister; he will help. He mentioned Madagascar. In 2008, we imported groundnuts for some Rs56 m. Why not encourage our farmers here? We were 100% self-sufficient in 1960s.

(Interruptions)

Groundnuts! I should not ask the question then.

In 2008, we imported maize and maize products for the staggering sum of Rs877 m. Rodrigues was our granary up to 1970. Why not encourage them now?

Let us be positive for our country, let us work together. I am ready, with a group of people, to go there and plant maize. This is the demographic space I ask for.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: In 2008, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we imported coriander seeds for some Rs60 m.; potatoes for some Rs199 m.; chillies for some Rs28 m. Should we even import chillies in our country? Rs28 m. for chillies! We are importing tamarind. *Finalemment nou bizin nec importe tout!*

(Interruptions)

We are importing tamarind and saffron to the tune of millions of rupees. Should I not say the truth to hon. Ministers: what a shame for our country! Why not encourage the hydroponic system on an industrial scale? Small planters could be grouped in cooperative societies, even dry areas like Roche Bois, Plaine Verte and Tranquebar can have their own hydroponics. It is in the Budget. I appreciate it and congratulate our hon. Minister of Finance.

(Interruptions)

The irony is that we have stopped producing our basic needs. The paradox is that we are subsidising foreign nationals. Worse, we have imported lies, corruption, wastage and other vices from the same foreigners. That is the irony.

What about our maritime resources and economic zone? Seas all around Mauritius could be bigger than the size of Europe if we include the regions around Diego Garcia and Tromelin. Their importance is now felt more than ever. Our salvation, believe me, lies in our seas. Should we import fish in this country when we are surrounded by seas, with fresh water rivers everywhere? What a shame! In 2008, we imported 149,000 tonnes of fish for some Rs8 billion. Can we believe it! Rs8 billion!

(Interruptions)

Go and check it at the Statistics Office! Our fish policy has been a failure and a total flop, but they were not here. Now we have hopes. We should learn from Kerala, Japan and China, in fish farming. We should learn from our neighbours, the Seychelles. All our islands should be explored and exploited to the maximum. We should stop foreigners from looting our fish resources. Fishing should be on a national and industrialised way.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this world economic crisis, should we spend Rs3 billion plus in four years? If we think about it deeply, we should feel really ashamed of it. Believe me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will just quote some figures. In 2005, we imported 1,141 motor vehicles between 1,600 cc and 3,000 cc for a total sum of Rs654 m. In 2006, we imported 1,032 motor vehicles between 1,600 cc and 3,000 cc for some Rs750 m. In 2007, we imported 1,120 motor vehicles between 1,600 cc and 3,000 cc for some Rs795 m. In 2008, we imported 1,079 motor vehicles between 16,300 cc for some Rs899 m. I don't have the figures for 2009. I gathered all the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the Central Statistics Bureau. In only four years,

2005 to 2008, we have spent a total sum of 3,098,000,000 foreign currencies. Let me tell you one thing!

(Interruptions)

This is so easy in our mouth, but we are not looking to the future with open mind! Now, should we, in this world economic crisis, spend Rs3 billion plus in four years, they cost a hell amount of foreign currencies in petrol, car repairs and spare parts. Are we not subsidising and enriching some notorious Mauritians known for their special relation with the Government? It is a question. You answer it and you will have to answer it in the divine court! It is time for the hon. Minister of Finance to tax them heavily, discourage people from buying such limousines. It will decrease traffic jam, but the source of inspiration should be our own Ministers. That's why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I came with a question to that effect and I believe in the goodwill of our Ministers. They will give a good signal to the country.

What about fruits? We are importing all types of fruits in this country.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all of us here present in this House, we know that cigarette kills and raising its price by imposing more taxes will not reduce its consumption. Smoking in public places is banned. Very good! It is a first step and I put it to the hon. Ministers that cigarettes should be banned in our country in the coming future. It is a very reasonable demand from our part for it is killing our people. It puts a very heavy burden in the health care system with the development of lung cancers and chronic lung diseases.

In addition, it adds to more poverty as the smokers will use their little income to buy cigarettes instead of milk for their babies. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for some of us, we are not allowed to consume alcohol; it is another *fléau du peuple* for the same reason given above for cigarettes. We should stop people from drinking themselves to death. I hope that the proposal to raise taxes is not to fill the coffers of the State. I hope and I believe it is like that. However, if it is aimed at reducing alcohol consumption, we all know that this will not happen. It will only add to more miseries, particularly to the poor. I am cutting short.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have tabled a question on the PSC and this concerns the MMM. You know why? I am against that the PSC gives its powers to others because we witness, at first hand, the abuse of power given. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have seen how one

of the ex-Ministers exploited the delegated powers to recruit staff with the consequences that followed. We know about it. I am not going to mention, but we are all aware.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order! Let the hon. Member make his point, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: I am sure that you are all aware that our forefathers have fought for the independence of the PSC, to be free from any pressures from the Government and the politicians. This independence is vital to ensure that all citizens in our country have equal rights to be recruited on meritocracy basis and not on political allegiance and apurtenance.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: We hear too much, we have heard before: '*nou montagne*', '*nou dimoun*', protection and we are not too well aware how successive Governments have been abusing the recruiting system *pour casse les reins zotte banne les autres agents*'. We are fed up with all these. We need new mindset and new types of people to rule this country. We believe in the present Government. We will give all support and the mentality - as the hon. Minister just mentioned - will change. We need the willpower and God will give us. Help us God!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, alcohol, cigarettes and gambling are condemned in not only my religion. I have and I can mention quotations in the Veda and in the Bible that alcohol and gambling are condemned in all main religions. We complained hard against gambling in our election campaign, its introduction by the last Government - not by this Government - and its effect on the young, the families and poverty it brings along. I will not elaborate, but we are all here present in this House, we know that gambling is a *fléau* of our society. Not only does it destroy families, it impoverishes them, leads them to separation and divorce and theft, petty crimes and to suicide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand how and why did the Government promote and develop a '*zougadère*' culture. I am just asking questions so that in the coming years we look to it as we have been made responsible for a nation. Let us do it fairly and justly!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is it not criminal to turn us into a gambling nation just to raise funds for uncontrolled expenditures with doubtful returns? My presence here is proof, if required, that my electorate supported our campaign to abolish gambling. I am glad that the

Government, and thanks to the Minister of Finance, who has adopted many of our demands such as banning gambling near religious places. It is a very good step and we hope and we pray that other steps will follow.

I appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance, we have a sensible social tissue; I am not talking in the name of the community that I form part, I am talking on the name of the nation. I say it clearly, the hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has a duty to ensure and inform all the components of our society of all schemes and plans which affect, directly or indirectly, the way of funding where money comes from either taxation on alcoholism or gambling. Where all these are involved, we have to respect others and respect other religions just as our Chacha Ramgoolam said: "we should not touch religion." We have to inform them. I would appeal to the hon. Minister's good sense. I know he is a very humble and simple person, just get it out of the way because should I not voice my belief - this is our democracy - maybe somewhere some people have misled our hon. Minister of Finance and let a *cadeau empoisonné* goes on. I believe he will be the future Prime Minister of this country. I will be proud of it.

(Interruptions)

I am not that type, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! I am voicing what I feel. I say to look at it. They suffered from 1982. I will not raise it like 'L'Express' and 'Le Mauricien'. Let us just leave them. They are not looking to the future of our country when they raised the issue of - every time you will hear them - the killing of Gorah Issac. They do not look forward to the impact on our tourism industry. I will not recall what happened in 1982 and what the Muslim community thought. They lived with this suffering all throughout. Today, I am telling him one thing: the Muslim community will never accept that their future be financed by gambling money. The Minister is very humble and he will take it out. He knows what I am telling him. It is for the future. We are all in the country as one people, as one nation. The whole Mauritian community will applaud his courage to take this out. I will come with funds from genuine sources to help for scholarships. It will be a consolidated one without mentioning what has been mentioned. It will be for the general good.

To end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, time has come for us to understand that money alone can never bring happiness to man. Why don't we recognise the value of health? Is there no value for health? Who would agree to give up their sight for a hundred thousand dollars or part of their

nose for the richness of a millionaire? Who would agree to do it? Gold and money can never give life and happiness to every person. Why then should we insist in seeking gold so anxiously? Though we possess ample gold, is it as precious as life? Health and time and human mind are not all these treasures? Why don't we make the best of our time? Why don't we recognise the value of life? Why don't we make the best use of our minds? Health, time and intellect are invaluable sources of wealth that may lead people to happiness if they use them correctly. This is where I will constantly insist that the Budget should make provision to inculcate such moral values to the present generation that God entrusted us with. This will certainly help to alleviate poverty.

Let us consider the crimes and the evil of modern societies - murders, suicides, rapes, drug abuse, robberies, thefts not to mention sexual, neurological, psychological abnormalities and disorders. The existence of such social ills in our society on such a large scale indicates that many people are suffering of the absence of true happiness, the happiness that springs from the human nature and does not conflict with logic, reason and established facts of science. Let us in this Budget vow and pledge to render our people happier.

There are sufferings because of lack of awareness of the real aim behind man's existence in this universe which is to build and establish an ideal and sound society and free man from destructive inclination and the world from injustice and tyranny. We should commit ourselves to these. But what is the right way of achieving the goal which has been pursued by mankind throughout history? Truly this is the one question we must find an answer to it, if we are committed to the progress of our young Mauritian republic as one people and as one nation. This is the democratic space within which I, as the leader of the FSM, wish to embark together with all those who dare to recognise our historical emergence, constancy, patience, perseverance and finally our historical election to this august Assembly.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(10.37 p.m.)

The Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues (Mr J. Von-Mally): M. le président, beaucoup a été dit sur ce budget 2011 présenté par le vice Premier ministre et le ministre des finances, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. Mais s'il y a une chose qui fait l'unanimité dans ce budget, c'est que lors de sa préparation - tout le monde l'a dit - ce budget a été préparé dans un contexte international non seulement difficile, mais très difficile, surtout quand on sait qu'un pays comme la Grèce a été forcé de vendre...

The Deputy Speaker : Hon. Dayal, please !

Mr Von-Mally: ... littéralement une ville, un port au gouvernement chinois pour pouvoir payer ses dettes entre autres. M. le président, je suis sûr que tous les ministres ici auraient aimé avoir plus d'argent pour faire plus de développement. Même l'honorable vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances aurait aimé avoir plus de moyens, plus d'argent, pour donner plus aux ministres pour plus de développement, mais force est de constater que l'honorable ministre des finances est comme un tailleur qui doit coudre des vêtements pour ses enfants. Il ne peut confectionner des vêtements que dépendant de la toile qu'il a à sa disposition. Je suis sûr que quand les conditions économiques vont s'améliorer il va nous donner plus, y compris Rodrigues, du moins, je l'espère.

M. le président, permettez-moi de commencer à parler du secteur de la pêche avant de venir sur Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for presenting a Budget with a strategy crafted on consolidating growth, enhancing revenue and providing safety nets for the vulnerable groups in our society. The fisheries sector has always been and will remain an important source of livelihood and a major contributor to healthy nutrition, food security and foreign exchange earnings. Beside reducing poverty alleviation both in rural and urban areas, it provides employment to some 11,000 persons involved in fishing, fish processing, distribution and marketing, fish trade and services. The turnover for the fisheries sector amounted in 2009 to some Rs18 billion with exports accounting for Rs9 billion contributing to about 1% of the GDP and 14.7% of national exports. Local production amounted to 9,500 tonnes with a per capita consumption of fish of 21 kg in 2009.

The key challenges ahead are the sustainable development of the fisheries resources and accelerating the growth of aquaculture and increasing benefits from trade and markets. The seafood sector is mainly geared towards processing for the export market with focus on the European market. Fish resources are renewable, but definitely not unlimited. To ensure sustainability, there must be a good balance between what the sea can sustain and the level of the resources exploited.

I would like here to underline certain achievements in the fisheries sector during this year and the activities planned for the near future. I think the hon. Member who spoke before me will be pleased to hear that.

(Interruptions)

Yes, he is a cousin from Rodrigues!

- (i) In September last, under our bilateral agreement with Norway, an Exploratory Demersal Fishery Resources Survey was carried out on the slopes of the banks to assess the abundance and distribution of the fish stocks around St Brandon and the South of the Nazareth Bank using the research vessel Fridtjof Nansen provided through the FAO. As a result, new fishing resources were identified and the bathymetry of the banks updated.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are plenty of fish there that are not fished at all. *C'est pourquoi j'ai parlé de poissons qui meurent de vieillesse dans cette zone de notre république.*

- (ii) 22 skippers have completed training at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy for boats less than 24 metres.
- (iii) 284 fishmongers have been trained in good fish handling, preservation and marketing practices.
- (iv) Three fishing boats to the tune of Rs11 m. for the benefits of fishermen are being constructed by the fishermen Investment Trust.
- (v) Training is presently being given to 32 fishermen from Mauritius and Rodrigues to enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in

navigation off lagoon. A new fishing techniques and maintenance of boat engines.

- (vi) An assessment of the lagoon fisheries of Mauritius and Rodrigues has been carried out to the development of management plans for these fisheries to ensure their sustainability.
- (vii) Some 54,000 tonnes of processed fish and fish products have been exported;
- (viii) 212 foreign fishing licences and 29 local fishing licences have been issued. We are looking forward to have more Mauritian vessels fishing in our 1.9 million kilometre square of EEZ.
- (ix) 598 inspections were carried out as part of the Port State Control measures on fishing vessels calling at Port Louis.
- (x) Some 4,124 metres of nets used for illegal fishing have been seized under the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act.
- (xi) The Fisheries Training and Extension Centre has been ISO Certified.
- (xii) Infrastructural projects undertaken to facilitate the activities of fishermen include -
 - (i) the construction of new fisheries post at Trou aux Biches scheduled to be completed by December 2010, and
 - (ii) the construction of a fish landing station at Bain des Dames.
- (xiii) other planned infrastructural projects comprise dredging and reopening of a boat passage to facilitate movement of boats in and out of the lagoon, construction of jetties and slipways and new fish landing stations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that economic growth is essential for poverty alleviation provided that socially acceptable resource redistribution mechanisms are put in place to combat poverty. As long as large numbers of people remain in poverty, the quest for social wellbeing of the people will remain illusory.

This Government believes in empowering people so that they take their destiny in their own hands. It is in this context that -

- (a) Fish Aggregating Devices (FADS), *les radeaux*, are placed and maintained at sea for the benefit of fishermen;

- (b) training is given to fishermen at the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre in different aspects of fishing;
- (c) a project for the construction of a semi-industrial fishing boat to the tune of Rs8 m. is being funded under the Food Security Fund through a grant Rs6 m. and a loan of Rs2 m.

Furthermore, scholarships are offered annually to children of the fishing community by the Fishermen Welfare Fund for post CPE, SC and HSC. At present, a total of 107 scholarships are awarded. As at date, an amount of Rs1,719, 750 have been paid to 324 beneficiaries in 2010. During the same period, for the betterment of the fishermen community, the Fishermen Welfare Fund has disbursed the sum of some Rs500,000 to 119 beneficiaries to cater for sickness allowance, financial assistance for the repairs of damaged boats and outboard motors, financial assistance to families in distress and winter allowance to bank fishermen.

To reduce fishing in the heavily exploited lagoon, Government is encouraging fishing in off lagoon areas, particularly around Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD), besides providing the back-up training. Training of fishermen in offshore fishing coupled with that provided to fishmongers and skippers, aims at building up the resources needed to support the semi-industrial fishery.

I am pleased to note that provision has been made in the Budget for a 25% grant for the purchase of semi-industrial fishing boats which no doubt is in line with the philosophy of empowering our fishermen and giving a boost to the small scale fishing sector.

Government, upon taking office in May 2010, pledged to develop a Fisheries Master Plan for Mauritius and Rodrigues. I can announce that the project shall be executed by a team of international experts under the ACP Fish II Programme to the tune of around 174,000 euros. I will see to it that views of the stakeholders in the industry are taken on board through consultation. To that end, I am organising a specific event which will be called *les assises de la pêche* early next year where I will invite all the stakeholders to come along with their proposals so that this can be included in the Master Plan, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The construction of a fish auction market to provide support to the development of the seafood hub by establishing a conducive environment for the marketing of fish in a more transparent manner started in May 2010 and is nearing completion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, fisheries development cannot be achieved in isolation. Market tendencies dictate the need to produce value-added products. In this regard, massive investment has been made in the Mauritius seafood hub for the development of value-added products geared towards exports with focus for the European market. In addition, trade of fish and fish products need to be compliant with market exigencies, amongst others, health and sanitary requirements and fish from non-IUU origin. Mauritius has stepped up its capacity in these areas, besides implementing all requirements pertaining to European Union regulations on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Consumers today are increasingly concerned about whether the fish on their plates have come from sustainable fisheries. Hence, eco-labelling and eco-certification is becoming indispensable in the marketing of fish and fish products. The fisheries stakeholders are very keen to move ahead in this endeavour with the participation of my Ministry.

We are all very aware of the tremendous damage that illegal fishing inflicts on fish stocks, marine biodiversity and fragile ecosystems and, as a result, on the fishermen and the coastal communities who earn their livelihood honestly. In this context, the FAO has called on all States to develop plans to combat illegal fishing based on the International Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In line with this resolution, Mauritius has already developed its National Plan of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and which I launched in September last.

My Ministry also participates in the Regional Fisheries Surveillance project, under the aegis of the *Commission de l'Océan Indien*. Mauritius took part in six surveillance patrol missions in our EEZ in 2010, where one fishing vessel involved in IUU fishing was arrested and legal action has been initiated accordingly. In addition, during port inspection, another vessel has been arrested for fishing without a licence and legal action has been initiated. The combat against illegal fishing is relentless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The House is aware that piracy is occurring not far from our maritime zone. Unfortunately, this region is not only a fishing zone, but also the sea route of carriers bringing raw materials for our tuna processing factories in the seafood hub. Government is deploying all the means at its disposal to counteract any act of piracy in our waters. However, the task is a daunting one and needs the cooperation of all friendly countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that an offshore patrol vessel, to improve the surveillance of our EEZ and territorial waters is expected to be delivered in 2011 and this will further reinforce our capacity to deter IUU fishing in our EEZ. In addition, the procurement of a coastal surveillance radar system for surveillance off Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega and St. Brandon will consolidate our capacity to police our waters.

Mauritius has been consistent in raising concerns regarding the proposed erosion of preferences in the Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA), negotiations of the World Trade Organisation and has positively contributed in the ACP position paper on the EU Trade Strategy. Given the similarity in our needs and aspirations, we are having concerted efforts with our partners in the SADC, COMESA, Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the ACP and the Eastern and Southern Africa to take a common stand to achieve our goal of sustainable development for our fishing industry and to ensure that our interests are adequately safeguarded. Besides, we are leaving no stone unturned to take advantage of market access under the COMESA and SADC in particular. We are working hand in hand with the fishing industry to strengthen our export market under AGOA. We are strengthening our cooperation with Japan and Norway to further develop our seafood hub insofar as new value-added processing techniques are concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the pleasure to inform the House that my Ministry has further consolidated its seafood hub. In this respect, Mauritius has ratified the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). This agreement will enhance the image of Mauritius as a country responsible for the management of the deep sea resources along with increasing its credibility vis-à-vis the International Fisheries Organisation and fishing nations, including the WTO. Cooperation among States within the SIOFA will bring added value to our seafood hub in as much as it will increase landings, transshipment and the use of our port facilities. Mauritius is now seriously considering the hosting of the Secretariat of the SIOFA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, fish production from aquaculture is set to grow substantially in the coming years according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Marine aquaculture is a new sector that my Ministry is presently promoting very actively. Mauritius is, in fact, in a favourable position in this regard with one marine fish farm already in operation. Pursuant to the submission of the Aquaculture Master Plan in 2007, eight sites in the lagoon were prescribed to develop for marine aquaculture. Potential investors have already signified their intention to participate in this venture. Therefore, the proposal made by the hon. vice-Prime

Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development to increase the number of potential sites for marine aquaculture development goes in the right direction. This will enable promoters to develop marine aquaculture through the production of high value species mainly: sea cucumber, seaweeds, shrimps, etc.

In line with Government *Maurice Iles Durables* concept, my Ministry is strongly committed to ensure the overall strategy for sustainable management of fisheries resources whilst fostering growth and development of the fisheries sector. We are very much aware that climate change is the world's greatest environmental challenge. One of the ways to increase resilience of marine ecosystem to the effect of climate change is through the establishment of marine protected areas. There are two marine parks which have been proclaimed – one at Blue Bay and another one at Balaclava with the aim of controlling the activities being carried out therein and the conservation of their biodiversity. In view of further consolidating control on these parks, a marine park centre will be constructed at Blue Bay and funds have been made available for this in the 2011 Budget. I am also proposing to have the Balaclava marine park demarcated soon for the better management of the fishing and recreational activities being carried out in the park.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the development of the fisheries sector and for market access for our seafood hub, my Ministry spares no effort into consolidating our bilateral, regional and international ties. In this perspective, I recently visited Mozambique and have secured an exchange programme, for example, Mauritian artisanal fishermen would shortly visit Sofala to learn from the Mozambican experience in auto-saving and credit. In addition, my Ministry will transmit its technical expertise to our Mozambican counterpart in the deployment of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), among others.

For over 20 years now, Japan through its various agencies such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF), and Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperation have been assisting Mauritius in the development of its fisheries sector in terms of the rehabilitation of existing fisheries infrastructure, training of the fishermen community and also trained officers of my Ministry in the new fishing techniques and ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

I am pleased to inform the House that, thanks to our privileged relations with Japan, for the first time ever, operators in the seafood hub will travel to Japan, to acquire skills and knowledge in value addition techniques, for the production of high value seafood for the local

and export markets. Such an endeavour is being fully sponsored by the Japanese Authorities. I would like to add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that when I went to Brisbane in Australia, I met with Mr Nakamura, a Japanese investor, who has got many fishing vessels, as many as 170 vessels in South Africa, and he is proposing to bring them to Mauritius, because of the port facilities that we have here. This will bring some more money to our country.

The Budget could not have been possible without the strength of a team, headed by our Prime Minister, who demonstrated vision, commitment, clarity of thoughts and action in directing and leading the process forward to meet the big challenges ahead. My Ministry will give all its support to sustain the development of the fisheries and the seafood hub sectors, as part of the overall Government strategy for economic and social development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, much have been said concerning Rodrigues. Some are saying that the Budget is good; others are saying that there is lack of funds for Rodrigues, but I will say that we have a lot to do in Rodrigues. On a beaucoup à faire à Rodrigues. Comme je l'ai dit, on aurait tous aimé avoir plus d'argent pour développer davantage notre circonscription et le pays. C'est normal. Quel est le politicien qui n'aurait pas aimé avoir le maximum de fonds, pour développer son pays ? Mais, de l'autre côté, je sais que la conjoncture économique internationale est extrêmement difficile. On est en train de naviguer dans une tempête ; on doit essayer de s'en sortir, et c'est ce qu'on est en train de faire. J'espère que la tempête ne va pas durer, M. le président.

Concernant Rodrigues, je ne voudrais pas répondre à l'honorable membre de l'opposition de Rodrigues qui est parti. Comme l'a si bien dit mon ami, l'honorable Leopold, a chaque fois, on a le courage de l'écouter parler, mais il n'a jamais eu le courage d'écouter les réponses qu'on a. Donc, quelque part, on préfère ne pas trop en parler, parce qu'il n'est pas là. Je ne sais pas s'il croit en la démocratie ou pas. Mais, force est de constater qu'il a parlé de beaucoup de choses qui sont loin de la vérité. Je voudrais attirer son attention sur un point. Il a dit que tout va mal à Rodrigues. En fait, c'est son parti qui va mal, et l'honorable Leopold l'a si bien dit. Allez à Rodrigues et vous verrez que les gens à Rodrigues essayent de s'en sortir ! Les Rodriguais ne sont pas des mendiants. Ils essayent de travailler avec le peu qu'on a ; on essaye de faire le maximum. Depuis qu'on est arrivé au pouvoir, qu'est-ce qu'on a fait ? On a mis le paquet sur la

production, et, cela, l'honorable membre ne peut pas le démentir. C'est pourquoi il a dit 'on va parler de l'agriculture' etc. Il essaye de s'excuser, mais qui s'excuse s'accuse.

L'agriculture à Rodrigues a été presque abandonnée avant notre arrivée au pouvoir. C'est maintenant qu'il y a une petite révolution qui s'opère à Rodrigues. C'est maintenant qu'il y a de plus en plus de Rodriguais qui retournent à la terre. M. le président, est-ce par hasard, qu'à peine une année depuis notre arrivée au pouvoir, la production de maïs qui était environ de 300 à 350 tonnes, a grimpé en une année à 1,000 tonnes. L'honorable Fakeemeeah peut prendre note. Cette année, c'est arrivé à quelque 3,000 tonnes. Savez-vous quelle superficie on doit planter pour avoir une tonne de haricots ? Et cette année, on a pu arriver à 192 tonnes de haricots. Pour ce qui est du miel, cela augmente.

Il a parlé du village de Limon. C'est vrai qu'on a mis en place des villages de Limon. C'est pourquoi j'en ai parlé à mon ami, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, quand il est venu à Rodrigues. Je lui ai dit qu'on ne demande pas du poisson ; on demande la canne à pêche, les *gears* qu'il faut pour pêcher. C'est tout ce qu'on demande, et après on fera le nécessaire. Si on a de l'argent pour nettoyer les petits barrages et pour acheter des tracteurs, vous allez voir ! On va faire de Rodrigues le grenier qu'elle était avant, comme l'a si bien dit, mon ami, l'honorable Fakeemeeah.

Maintenant, si vous allez à Rodrigues, vous verrez que les gens recommencent à cultiver les terres qui étaient restées à l'abandon. On est en train de réhabiliter les terrasses. Et on va plus loin ! L'honorable Hervé Aimée en a parlé. Il a initié un projet, qui est un très bon projet, et je continue sur la lancée de faire de Rodrigues une île à huile. Si, à Agalega, on a quelques milliers de cocotiers, à Rodrigues on peut planter des millions de cocotiers. Quand on sait que, dans quelques années, d'ici 40 ans, il n'y aura presque plus de pétrole dans les puits. Alors on aura besoin du biodiesel, et l'huile de coco est tout indiquée.

À Rodrigues, on a voulu faire d'une pierre plusieurs coups. Rétablir les terrasses ; on a acheté une broyeur pour broyer la matière organique ; faire le ramassage sélectif d'ordures ; mettre cette matière organique dans les terrasses, et planter des cocotiers. Entre les cocotiers, on peut planter les oignons, l'ail etc. Les Rodriguais ont pris bonne note de cela, et ils attendent avec impatience. Il y en a qui ont commencé à planter des cocotiers. On a pensé, dans un premier temps, de planter un million de cocotiers ; demain, on pourra exporter notre huile de coco. On en

aura besoin pour l'industrie automobile à Maurice ou ailleurs. Donc, c'est cela avoir de la vision, M. le président. En même temps, les cocotiers vont aider à réduire l'érosion et embellir l'île. Sur les versants sud de l'île, on peut planter plus d'un million de cocotiers, et c'est ce qu'on veut faire, M. le président.

Donc, côté agriculture, on est en train de nettoyer les petits barrages, et là je dois remercier l'honorable ministre des finances, qui a mis à notre disposition R 50 millions. On aurait aimé avoir plus, mais on verra si on peut grappiller davantage des autres ministères, parce que cela va dans le sens de la production. Avec R 50 millions, on va pouvoir nettoyer les petits barrages, parce qu'il y a à peu près une centaine de petits barrages et de points d'eau à Rodrigues qui sont restés remplis de terre et de cailloux pendant plus de 25 ans. C'est maintenant qu'on est en train de nettoyer. Depuis notre arrivée au pouvoir à Rodrigues, on a nettoyé dix-huit de ces petits barrages avec le peu de moyens qu'on a eu.

Pour les éleveurs, on a pensé mettre en place un abattoir moderne. Je suis heureux qu'il y ait des fonds de l'ordre de R 10 millions qui ont été mis à notre disposition, et on va essayer de terminer cela. Je crois qu'on aura plus de fonds - il y a le *Food Security Fund* - pour terminer l'abattoir moderne à Rodrigues. Pourquoi, M. le président? Et comment cela va aider la population rodriguaise et la population mauricienne? Je sais que la population mauricienne devient de plus en plus *health conscious*. Il y a beaucoup qui préfèrent acheter la viande venant de Rodrigues qu'ailleurs. Voilà, c'est une occasion pour nous, avec le label Rodriguais, d'envoyer des produits finis ici, au lieu d'envoyer des animaux sur pattes. Donc, cela va nous aider à vous fournir en viande parce que Maurice restera toujours un importateur de viande et d'agrumes.

En ce qu'il s'agit des fruits, j'en ai parlé à plusieurs reprises. On peut fournir Maurice en fruits de qualité, en fruits bio. On a parlé, M. le président, de l'aéroport et j'en suis heureux. On a un peu tardé, certes, mais déjà une étude de faisabilité est en passe d'être faite et dès que c'est terminée, je suis sûr qu'on va aller de l'avant avec la construction de cet aéroport car il faut le dire, ce sera à l'avantage de Maurice. Ce serait navrant qu'un pays comme Maurice, qui fait 1.9 millions de kilomètres carrés, de n'avoir qu'un seul aéroport à Plaisance alors qu'à Rodrigues et à Agaléga on pourrait en avoir aussi. Cela pourrait être des aéroports d'appoint pour Plaisance.

Même chose pour le port. C'est de cette façon qu'on pourrait faire une utilisation optimale de notre territoire, M. le président. C'est se tirer une balle dans le pied que de ne pas le faire.

M. le président, à plusieurs reprises, j'ai dit que quand il y a un cyclone à Maurice les avions vont ailleurs. Donc, ces avions là pourraient aller à Rodrigues. Ainsi, on pourrait vendre Maurice et Rodrigues comme un Archipel, comme un *package*, parce que les touristes préféreraient venir dans un archipel plutôt que dans une petite île. Sinon, ils iront aux Caraïbes ou dans d'autres pays. Pourquoi ne pas les attirer ici, parce qu'il ne faut pas oublier qu'à Singapour on a à peu près 8 millions de touristes par an ; il y a à peu près 12 à 15 millions de touristes qui vont en Malaisie. A Maurice on est à peine arrivé à un million. Donc, on peut faire le nécessaire, mais il faut donner la possibilité aux touristes de visiter aussi les autres îles formant partie de notre République Archipel. Il faut leur donner la possibilité d'aller visiter ces îles.

M. le président, concernant la pêche, Rodrigues n'a pas été oubliée. L'honorable Léopold en a parlé et j'ai le plaisir d'annoncer que, très bientôt, il y aura un navire usine qui sera posté à Rodrigues pour aider les pêcheurs, parce qu'on veut pousser les pêcheurs à aller pêcher en haute mer. Ce navire usine va les aider pour le '*processing*' du poisson. C'est un navire usine qui vient de France mais c'est une compagnie mauricienne en partenariat avec une compagnie française qui va opérer cela. Ce sera un *win-win* situation. Au lieu de laisser les autres venir pêcher dans notre territoire, ce serait mieux pour nous d'aller pêcher. Donc, il faut ouvrir les possibilités.

(*Interruptions*)

C'est ce qu'on est en train de faire. En encourageant les gens à aller pêcher vers la haute mer, on réduit la pression sur les lagons. Même à Maurice, je me suis dit que, quand nous allons travailler sur les assises de la pêche, on va voir comment réduire le nombre de sennes dans le lagon mauricien. Ce n'est pas possible, M. le président, qu'à Maurice il y encore 16 sennes dans le lagon qui sont toujours en opération, alors qu'à Rodrigues le lagon est plus grand mais il n'y a que sept sennes. Pas plus tard que le mois dernier, les pêcheurs de Rodrigues ont rendu une senne et ils ont reçu leur compensation. On va voir comment faire avec la compensation pour inciter les mauriciens à rendre leurs sennes parce qu'il n'y a presque rien à pêcher dans le lagon mauricien. Il faut dire les choses telles qu'elles sont. Il faut appeler un chat un chat. Si on veut protéger le lagon mauricien, je suis disposé à le faire ...

(*Interruptions*)

Nous sommes tous mauriciens. C'est ce que j'ai dit. Je suis en train de parler de Maurice. Il y a seize sennes à Maurice. Si cela ne tenait qu'à moi, je les interdiquais.

(Interruptions)

Oui, 'doucement doucement', mais on ne va pas imposer. On va leur donner des *incentives* pour qu'ils rendent ces sennes volontairement. En même temps, on organise les pêcheurs en coopérative, on les aide à avoir des gros bateaux. Le fait d'offrir 25% de *grant* aux pêcheurs pour les inciter à se regrouper en coopérative de pêche sera un bon accompagnement pour les aider à acheter des bateaux semi-industriels. C'est une bonne initiative, mais il nous faudrait organiser ces pêcheurs. Les membres de l'Assemblée sont un peu partout à Maurice, ils pourraient aider dans ce sens là aussi. Ils peuvent aider les pêcheurs à se regrouper pour qu'ils puissent en prendre avantage. On va aller dans cette direction.

Je ne vais pas aller plus loin parce que mon ami a déjà parlé des '*incentives*' figurant dans le budget et les Rodriguais pourront y prendre avantage.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, dans le budget comme dans la vie, il y a des choses qui se ressemblent. Quand on regarde le budget c'est comme si on est en train de regarder les nénuphars pousser dans un étang. Il y a deux façons de voir les choses. Soit on regarde le nénuphar, la fleur du lotus, qui flotte sur l'eau, soit on regarde la vase qui est dans le fond. C'est une question de choix, M. le président. Moi, je choisis de regarder la fleur flotter sur l'eau.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Bodha: Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. Bunwaree rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 03 December 2010, at 3.30 p.m.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 11.16 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 03 December 2010 at 3.30 p.m.