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FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

SECOND SESSION

THURSDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2012

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Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK, FRCP	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, GOSK, FRCS	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
Dr. the Hon. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree	Minister of Education and Human Resources
Hon. Satya Veyash Faugoo	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 22 of 2012

Sitting of 15 November 2012

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 11.30 a.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPER LAID

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

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development –

The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Environment Fund for the years ended 30 June 2001, 30 June 2002, 30 June 2003, 30 June 2004, 30 June 2005, 30 June 2006, 30 June 2007, 30 June 2008, 30 June 2009 and for the periods ending 31 December 2010 and 31 December 2011 (In Original).

ANNOUNCEMENT

OBITUARY – DR. KANCHANDRASEEH BUSAWON

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the passing away of Dr. Kanchandraseeh Busawon on 08 November, at the age of 70. Dr. Busawon was born on 28 November 1941.

He attended the Sri Shambhunath Government School at Camp Fouquereaux, and then went to New Eton College, Rose Hill, for his secondary education. Dr. Busawon undertook tertiary education at the Friendship University in Moscow, from where in 1971 he graduated as a Medical Doctor. Upon his return to Mauritius Dr. Busawon took employment at the then Civil Hospital in Port Louis.

A few years later, Dr. Busawon joined the Mauritius Labour Party and stood as a candidate in Constituency No. 9, Flacq/Bon Accueil, under the banner of the Independence Party for the general elections held in 1976. He was returned as Second Member for the said constituency. On 01 March 1977, he was appointed Minister of Power, Fuel and Energy, a post which he occupied until June 1982.

Dr. Busawon was extensively involved in social activities and, as such, he had occupied the post of President of the Mauritius Arya Ravived Pracharini Sabha. People who came to know Dr. Busawon, Mr Speaker, Sir, always cherish his warmth and his down to earth approach; whether he performed as a physician or as a Minister. He was often lauded for being a professional and also a politician imbued with modesty.

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

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): Mr Speaker, Sir, I join with what the hon. Prime Minister just said. Our deceased hon. friend went through very difficult moments in his life, but I am sure that he now rests in peace - well deserved. I would, therefore, join the Prime Minister in requesting you to convey our condolences to his family.

Mr Speaker: I associate myself with the tribute paid to the late Dr. Kanchandraseeh Busawon by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the assurance of our sincere condolences.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

MR ANDREY KOSOLAPOV & MR SERGEY DENISENKO - ALLEGED ARMS TRAFFICKING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the alleged attempt by Mr Andrei Kosolapov and Mr Sergei Denisenko to use Mauritius for arms trafficking, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House -
 - (i) obtain from the Commissioner of Police, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Bank of Mauritius and the Financial Intelligence Unit information as to if they have completed their inquiries, and, if so, the outcome thereof, indicating if Mr Kosolapov and Mr Denisenko have returned to Mauritius, and
 - (ii) obtain information as to where matters stand concerning the case of forgery entered by Mr Kosolapov against Mr Teddy Harrison, and
- (b) state if Ms Kathi Lynn Austin has now been invited to Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the statement I made in the House on 24 July 2012, and to the reply I gave to the Private Notice Question on 27 July 2012, regarding the alleged case of attempt at arms trafficking by foreign nationals, wherein I stated in no uncertain terms that Government is taking a very serious view of this matter, and shall undertake whatever action necessary to prevent Mauritius and its institutions from being used for any illicit purposes. I also stated that Government will spare no effort to unflinchingly maintain the standing of Mauritius as a jurisdiction of sound repute. I further indicated that an enquiry into the matter has been instituted by the Commissioner of Police, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Financial Services Commission and ICAC.

In regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police as follows -

- On 29 July 2011, Mr Andrey Kosolapov, a Russian national, aged 51, Director of Avialinx AASL Africa, an aviation company, residing at No. 7, Gold Coast Complex, Flic en Flac, made a declaration at the Central CID to the effect that in the year 2010, he got acquainted to one Mr Marie Teddy Sergio Harrison, a Mauritian national aged 43, Director of Superfly Aviation (MRU) Ltd, and residing at 62, Sir Virgile Naz Street, Quatre Bornes, through his company engineer, Mr Paul Grazier. The said Mr Harrison, through phone conversation, requested him to purchase 15% shares from Superfly Aviation (MRU) Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the course of the enquiry, Police secured two laptops and five email accounts. Following this, on 10 August 2012, and subsequent to a request from the Police to the Supreme Court, a Judge's Order was issued authorizing all internet service providers duly registered with the Information and Communication Technologies Authority to disclose to the Police the subscribers information on certain IP addresses in order to trace out the identity of the sender of emails apparently exchanged between T. Harrison and A. Kosolapov relating to the Aircraft Operator Certificate. I am informed for technical reasons, the retrieving of such data necessarily take time. While the Police are awaiting all the information requested, the Police are pursuing its enquiry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that ICAC through its Director and very Senior Officers has been actively pursuing contacts and exchange of correspondences with Ms Austin.

- In fact, on 20 July 2012, ICAC, on its own initiative, opened an enquiry following a press article which appeared in *Le Défi* dated 19 July 2012.
- There has been an exchange of e-mails between the Director of Investigations and Ms Austin with a view to obtaining the assistance of Ms Austin in the investigation.
- On 02 August 2012, the Director of Investigations sent an e-mail to Ms Kathi Lynn Austin requesting her assistance to enlighten ICAC in its investigation and her availability;

- On 03 August 2012, Ms AUSTIN replied through e-mail that she can travel to Mauritius as early as the week of 27 August 2012 and any time thereafter;
- On 14 August 2012, the Director of Investigations emailed Ms Austin requesting her to provide her phone numbers on which she may be contacted to ensure collaboration and for security reasons, ICAC wished to liaise with her for alternative arrangements for her interview;
- On 06 September 2012, the Director of Investigations emailed Ms Austin informing the latter that she has not answered to his email dated 14 August 2012;
- Ms Austin replied through email that she had sent a letter on 07 September 2012 to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Regional Cooperation in order to work out the appropriate modalities for Conflict Awareness Project's cooperation regarding enquiries arising from the August 2012 Report;
- On 15 October 2012, the Director of Investigations sent another email to Ms Austin informing her that the media in Mauritius had reported that apparently a junior officer of the ICAC had contacted her and reassured her that he is the highest authority of the said Department. He reiterated his request to have her contact details to assist ICAC in its investigation.
- On 12 November 2012, the Director of Investigations emailed Ms Austin for an early response for ensuring her collaboration.
- On the same day, Ms Austin replied and gave details of her phone number and sought information on the modalities for cooperation with ICAC.

On 14 November 2012, the Director of Investigations fixed an appointment with Ms Austin through phone for today, in fact, 15 November 2012 at 08.00 hrs US time. (9 hours difference, i.e. 17 00 hours Mauritius time).

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards inquiries carried out by the Bank of Mauritius, I am informed as follows -

- In terms of section 43 of the Banking Act 2004, a special examination was conducted at seven banks, to investigate into the accounts held by some individuals/companies in respect of an alleged case of arm trafficking.
- The purpose of the examination was to ascertain adherence with the Guidance Notes on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism and internal procedures/ policies of the banks with regard to some accounts and the following customers, including certain individuals -
 - (i) Island Air Systems Ltd (Mauritius);
 - (ii) Aeron Ltd;
 - (iii) Gibson and Hills Investment Ltd (Mauritius);
 - (iv) Superfly Aviation (Mauritius);
 - (v) Superfly Holidays (MRU) Ltd;
 - (vi) Mr Marie Teddy Sergio Harrison;
 - (vii) Mr Andrey Kosolapov;
 - (viii) Mr Sergey Denisenko, and
 - (ix) Any entity to which the abovenamed persons are connected as beneficial owner, director or authorised signatory.

I should like to inform the House, that investigations have up to now revealed that at least three banks have not complied with prudential norms. The hon. Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that it would not be appropriate, at this stage, to provide details which may cause prejudice to the ongoing investigations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the enquiries carried out by the FIU, I am informed as follows -

- In respect of the alleged case of arms trafficking involving Island Air System Ltd and others, the FIU examined the three Suspicious Transaction Reports that have

been flagged during the period 23 July to 30 July 2012, by three commercial banks duly licensed by the Bank of Mauritius.

- On 24 August 2012, the FIU made a dissemination report to an investigatory authority (ICAC) on the financial information and other leads on suspected proceeds of crime.
- On 27 September 2012, the FIU has been apprised by that investigatory authority, that is, ICAC, that the latter's evidence has not disclosed elements of offences falling under the FIAML Act 2002. (Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act).
- However, later on the same day, the FIU received further information from one commercial bank after the correspondence received from the investigatory authority on 27 September 2012 relating to suspicious transactions.
- The FIU received at 15 49 hrs on 26 October 2012 a telefax from that investigatory authority that the report made by the FIU on 24 August 2012 is still under investigation at its level.
- In the light of this new development, the FIU is pursuing its financial investigative analysis and has requested intelligence from an overseas financial intelligence unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Mr Sergey Denisenko and Dr Andrey Kosolapov left Mauritius for Dubai on 13 April 2012 and 15 July 2012 respectively. I am informed that they have not returned to Mauritius since.

In regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police as follows -

- On 22 February 2012, Mr Marie Teddy Sergio Harrisson, Director of Superfly Aviation (MRU) Ltd was arrested and was provisionally charged for swindling before the District Court of Port Louis. He was admitted to bail, whereby he furnished a surety of Rs25,000/- in cash and paid Rs500/- as costs and entered into a recognizance in the sum of Rs100,000/-. He also has to report to Rose Hill

Police Station every Saturday between 06 00 hours and 18 00 hours. The bail has been enlarged till 06 February 2013.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed as follows -

- On 07 September 2012, the Executive Director of CAP, that is, Ms AUSTIN wrote to my colleague the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and International Trade to offer assistance in the following terms -

“We believe that it will be helpful to both CAP and Mauritius authorities if we preliminarily exchange thoughts on the scope and contour of both the assistance CAP can provide as well as the specific nature of the assistance Mauritius officials might expect. Our having this exchange should ensure that we are fully prepared to meet the needs of the Mauritius Government.

As we are sure you can understand, agreeing to ground rules for an engagement of this significance is essential to its success. For its part, CAP would appreciate learning in advance how your Government feels we can assist.

At the logistical level, we would appreciate knowing if security arrangements need to be put in place for our potential visit, and whether we can expect to be protected from any individuals who felt exposed by our August Report’

- On 22 October 2012, the ICAC has informed that the CAP Report of August 2012 highlights several issues ranging from corruption and money laundering offences allegedly committed by Mauritians and local companies. ICAC finds that the Report is quite vague and it may need to interview her. Since Ms Austin is a foreigner, ICAC intends to liaise with her through phone first so that it may decide on the best course of action, if ever she is needed as a witness in the investigation.
- On 25 October 2012, in a reply to Ms Austin, the hon. Dr. A. Boolell informed her that ICAC will contact her, in the first instance, by e-mail/telephone and that it may decide on the best course of action if ever it feels that Ms Austin will be needed as a witness in the investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have already indicated, ICAC is already in correspondence with Ms Austin and a phone conversation is scheduled with her today. I wish to reiterate that if ever she is to travel to Mauritius, she will be given all the necessary security and protection needed.

Mr Bérenger: If I can start with the Police investigation. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the Police sought the assistance of Interpol to obtain information on the whereabouts of these two and whether, in fact, as provided in the international law, we have requested Interpol to proceed to the arrest of these two persons?

The Prime Minister: I know that the Police are in touch with Interpol. They have been from the very beginning, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I don't know what the exchanges have been.

Mr Bérenger: In a report, Ms Austin wrote about a local bank having failed to report to the local monetary authorities; a fail compliance check. I have just heard the hon. Prime Minister say that not less than three banks have not complied with the laws and regulations in this affair. Can I know whether this investigation into the behaviour of those banks has been completed and what action is intended to be taken?

The Prime Minister: In fact, as I said, three banks appear to be involved in that, and the funds have been going from one bank to the other. I know the Bank of Mauritius is actively pursuing those investigations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Has the enquiry so far established any funny business, as there has been in other cases involving the BOI, residential and work permits?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the list here. The BOI has taken, in fact, a few actions to tighten the procedures that they follow for Occupational Permits. They had requested Ernst & Young to carry out an independent enquiry of the Occupation Permit System. In their findings and recommendations, they have identified some weaknesses in the system that has been in operation since the setting up of the BOI. They have made several recommendations, which are being implemented to enhance the security of the system and to ensure that only *bona fide* investors and applicants for occupational permits would be considered.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister is replying in general terms; the BOI having appointed a consultant to advise and so on. I am asking whether, in that specific case involving these two Russian nationals, any funny business has been found involving BOI.

The Prime Minister: Well, for a start, they have found that they had to send a notice to Mr Kosolapov and Mrs Kozlova on 07 August 2012, giving them notice that their Occupational Permits would be cancelled because he has submitted misleading information about the directorship of Island Air Systems Ltd. I know now that they have not responded to it and that the occupational permits were cancelled.

Mr Bérenger: These two persons are not returning to Mauritius for obvious reasons, and now we hear that their Occupational Permits have been cancelled. Better late than never! Can I know whether any kind of order is in force concerning their property in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: From what we can see, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have no property in Mauritius in their name.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is a lawyer. He knows that before a lawyer accepts the client, he should check on the reputation and credentials of that client. Can we know whether lawyers Y. M. and Z. M. verified the antecedents of these two Russian nationals before they were involved with them as a lawyer and as Chief Executive Officer of Island Air? Have the Police enquired? Is there a deep check on these two persons? Are they still in one case the lawyer of Mr Kosolapov, and in the other case is Z. M. still Chief Executive Officer of Island Air Systems?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot be privy to what a client and a lawyer speaks. From what I know, anybody is entitled to have a defence and to go and see a lawyer. What they have said to each other, what exchange of information they had and what they found out, I cannot say, Mr Speaker, Sir, because this is an information privy between the lawyer and his client.

Mr Bérenger: Last time, the hon. Prime Minister could not give us the date on which Mr Kosolapov left Mauritius. Today, we have been informed, if I heard correctly, that it is 15 July 2012 and, of course, we are all aware that it is in June that Ms Austin interviewed and met that gentleman here in Mauritius. Therefore, the gentleman has left more or less exactly at the same

time Ms Austin was preparing in New York to release her report on all this matter. Can I know why the Police allowed him to leave Mauritius on that date?

The Prime Minister: There was nothing at that time. It was 15 July 2012, just in case the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not hear the date properly. There was nothing against the person at that time when he left Mauritius. There was nothing that could prevent us from asking him not to leave Mauritius at that time.

Mr Bérenger: Are they allowed to return to Mauritius if they so decide - which I am sure they won't do?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am sure they would be allowed to come back to Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir. They would be interviewed if they come back.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard of exchanges of correspondence between ICAC and Ms Austin and between the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ms Austin. I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is aware that on Radio One, on 08 October - this year, of course - Ms Austin was very critical of government. She said that, as far as she can see, the Government of Mauritius is not taking a serious view of the matter, and that she has been in contact with the junior officer. She said that she had written to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. Now, the hon. Prime Minister has quoted parts of the correspondence exchanged. Can I make a request that the copy of the letter from Ms Austin to the hon. Minister and from the hon. Minister to Ms Austin be laid in the Library?

The Prime Minister: I will have to check whether this can be done, but if there is no impediment to that I will certainly lay it on the Table of the Assembly. Mr Speaker, Sir, I said in my answer that it was not a junior officer of ICAC who actually contacted; it was the Director himself. He replied to her after the radio said this. In fact, he is the supreme authority of that institution.

Mr Bérenger: Now we are in a situation where we are dealing with people who have run away from the country and are not coming back. They no longer have a residential permit; the residential permit has been cancelled. Now, we know the truth about these two persons, and this case was entered by this very Mr Kosolapov. My information, as I said earlier on, is that all this was *concocté* by Mr Kosolapov with complicity in the Police to frame that Mr Harrison, to get

rid of him. Are the Police still taking the word of Mr Kosolapov for what it is worth and carrying on with this enquiry, or will there be an enquiry into conspiracy by Mr Kosolapov and accomplices to frame that Mr Harrison?

The Prime Minister: I don't think that is the case, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think I have answered that in the previous PNQ. In fact, the whole thing started after Mr Kosolapov had given his money to Mr Harrison and he could not get the certificate.

(Interruptions)

That was even before the case started. That is why he went and asked, in fact, well before the case started since he wanted to see the aircraft certificate. Since he could not see it - Mr Harrison will not give it to him - he went and enquired with the Civil Aviation Authority. He wanted to see whether he has got the certificate or not. It is this which triggered everything else after that because there was no such certificate; he was not given a certificate. That certificate that Mr Harrison tried to use was, in fact, the certificate that was withdrawn. It was not, at the time, as he was saying, a certificate that could be used for his aircraft. Therefore, he didn't have the certificate. That is why he felt he was swindled and then he put the case in Court.

Mr Bérenger: If there is no problem between business people, but the Police come up with a case for forgery, my question is: are we still relying on the word of that Mr Kosolapov to keep on with this inquiry whereas we should be carrying out an inquiry as to whether there has not been conspiracy?

The Prime Minister: Well, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there doesn't seem to be a conspiracy, at least, from what I see. The certificate that Mr Harrison was trying to use to get Mr Kosolapov to give his money was a false one. It was a fake certificate. It was not a certificate that was legally binding and, therefore, Mr Kosolapov has made a declaration at the Central CID, to say that he has been swindled of money and that there has been forgery in the case. That is why the Police are pursuing the investigation.

Mr Bérenger: The key issue is whether and when Ms Austin will come to Mauritius. It seems clear to me that she is not satisfied that her security will be guaranteed here in Mauritius in spite of the words uttered by the hon. Prime Minister. Can I know what we are going to do pending us having a copy of the letter which the Minister of Foreign Affairs sent to Ms Austin,

pending us knowing what guarantees he gave to Ms Austin? I hope that copies of the exchange of correspondence are laid in the Library. What more can we do to reassure that lady who was threatened when she was here in Mauritius, and who is used to dealing with bandits like Mr Kosolapov and Mr Denisenko?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have given the guarantee. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, for security reasons, they don't want to publicise what is being said. That is why they are having the phone conversation to make arrangements, so that she may be able to come here in full security and say whatever she has to say.

Mr Jugnauth: Replying to a supplementary question as to whether the Minister of Labour has extended pressure in order to further the passage of Island Air System AOC applications, the hon. Prime Minister replied that the hon. Minister did not put pressure as such. He did mention that this is being delayed. Has the hon. Prime Minister tried to find out why the hon. Minister of Labour was so much interested in trying to find out why this application was being delayed, so much so that his portfolio has nothing to do with the application? Has a statement been taken from the Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruption!

Mr Jugnauth: Has a statement been taken from the Minister by any of the authorities?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I do not want any interruption. Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the hon. Minister. It is his brother, who is a lawyer, who complained that there has been a delay, and we did try to see whether there was a delay. Then, I found out that he was not given the certificate because the Civil Aviation Authorities were not satisfied with it. So, in spite of him being a Minister, the certificate was turned down.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to go back to something I don't understand. Given the serious nature of this matter, ramification, given also that time is of the essence in such investigations, I want to know why four months after the Opposition raised this matter in Parliament, Ms Austin has still not been invited and arrangements made for her to come to

Mauritius with all the security measures, whereas from the information imparted to us by the Prime Minister, she has from the start indicated her immediate availability as from, I understand, the end of August - she was available? Why has she not been brought here so that the Police and ICAC can talk to her directly and obtain all relevant information? Instead, four long months after, we are still trying to arrange the very first direct telephone conversation.

The Prime Minister: It is not correct to say what the Member is saying because I explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my answer - it was a long answer on this issue - that there have been several exchanges, e-mails between the Director of Investigations and Ms Austin with a view to obtaining the assistance of Ms Austin in the investigation. I have explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, that on 02 August, an e-mail was sent to her, requesting her to tell ICAC about her availability for the investigation. Then, she replied that she would be available from the end of August. But then, you have to make arrangements. There are security matters, as the Leader of Opposition has raised. We can't just let her come without doing the security arrangements.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said that, on 14 August, the Director of Investigations e-mailed her, asking her to give her phone numbers so that she may be contacted, so that they can decide on the collaboration, and for the security arrangements that have been made. She didn't answer to that e-mail. So, again, the Director of Investigations e-mailed her on 06 September. The first letter was on 14 August, the second one on 06 September of this year, telling her that she has not answered the e-mail of 14 August. On 07 September, one day later, she replied to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, telling about her readiness to cooperate on this report and the findings of the report.

On 15 October, the Director of Investigations sent another e-mail to her; it was him who had contacted her and not a junior officer from ICAC. Again, on 12 November, the Director of Investigations e-mailed her for an early response for ensuring her collaboration. On the same day, that is, 12 November, she then - that is two days ago - gave the details of her phone numbers, and was arranging on the modalities for cooperation with ICAC. They are speaking on this very date in the afternoon, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, the delay was not from our side. She didn't reply. She took a long time, and then replied to the Minister of Foreign Affairs instead of ICAC. Then, ICAC had to write to her again and she replied. Now they are going to have a conversation to make whatever arrangement they are going to make.

Mr Ganoo: I heard the hon. Prime Minister saying that three banks acted in breach of financial regulations. Can he inform the House whether any measures have been taken by the Bank of Mauritius as regards these non-compliant banks?

The Prime Minister: As I said, the Bank of Mauritius is investigating the matter. They have written to the various banks, and the matter is being pursued.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard from the hon. Prime Minister that there have been exchanges of e-mails. Five e-mails have been exchanged between ICAC, according to the hon. Prime Minister, and Ms Austin. And we know what pressure there has been on Ms Austin. I am sure that Ms Austin, by writing to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs on 07 September, was asking for her security and protection. Why is it that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, instead of replying directly to the lady, referred her again to ICAC? Why this matter was not referred to the Prime Minister's Office to reply and tell her what security provisions are being provided?

The Prime Minister: It is not factually correct. The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs did write to her after that letter.

Mr Baloomoody: According to the reply of the hon. Prime Minister, she was referred to ICAC again.

The Prime Minister: It is ICAC which is doing the investigation and not the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: But then, we should abolish all the institutions. The investigation cannot be carried out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Prime Minister: Now, are you really saying that the Minister of Foreign Affairs should do the investigation?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: It should have been referred to your office and you should give the guarantee, and not referring her back to ICAC!

Mr Speaker: Well, I am sorry. This is not a question Leader of the Opposition. Hon. Roopun!

Mr Roopun: We heard the hon. Prime Minister stating that, among others, the Police, ICAC, FSC and FIU are conducting inquiries. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to what extent there is any mechanism for concerted action among those agencies or any type of sharing of information, so that those agencies can be more effective in their quest for the truth?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is asking whether they are sharing information? Yes they are sharing information.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether he has inquired or his office has made an inquiry about which firm and who made the application for the two Russians to register in Mauritius and obtain occupational permit? Has the hon. Prime Minister been made aware that the person who made the application was a direct partner with one of the senior Ministers in government in his accounting practice? Would he make an inquiry into the fact that there had been connivance of that Minister and the BOI at different levels?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a normal procedure for somebody to go and see a lawyer to make the application.

Mr Bhagwan: *Mo pann dir lawyer mwa.*

Mr Speaker: Please allow the Prime Minister to answer.

The Prime Minister: Lawyer or a firm or whoever. But that is how you make the application.

(Interruptions)

Mr Fakeemeeah: Concerning Ms Kathi Lynn Austin, is the Prime Minister aware that she is still being harassed and threatened for her life not to come to Mauritius? Will she be allowed to be accompanied by CIA agents who have genuine reports concerning arm trafficking from our soil?

The Prime Minister: I am really surprised that hon. Member from Hezbollah is asking the CIA to come here to protect this lady. This is really surprising to me. But I have given guarantees. I may go further, Mr Speaker, Sir....

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I don't know, but the hon. Member is inviting the CIA.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether this was a deliberate remark about the CIA, but from what I see you are asking for the CIA to accompany her. That's what I said.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House on which date were the residence and occupation permits granted to the two Russians, and whether this is not against the law because the two Russians cannot exercise their occupation in aviation when the company has still not yet received their air operator licence. Also one of the two Russians is under the watch list of US Visa Viper list while the other one is under the U.S. Specially Designated Nationals List, which should be very much in the knowledge of the Immigration Office.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did explain in the PNQ that was asked to me how the system works; that there was no alert. There is a system of border security; there was no alert which propped up their names on the computer. There was no reason to believe that they had anything to do with anything else. If they had done something that was on the list, Interpol would have put it on the computer; it's not on the computer. That is why it was not revealed at the time. I did say when the occupation permit was received, but, as I told you, this has been withdrawn.

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

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I quote from page 2 of the report of Ms Austin: 'What is disconcerting is how dangerously close the network had come to activating their lethal arms transport business'. In fact, the Civil Aviation was *sur le point de* deliver that permit that they were after to start their trafficking business. If she had not come here, if she had not inquired, if she had not met the Foreign Minister, we would have been involved in a most serious system of international arms trafficking. Mr Speaker, Sir, yesterday when we discussed the

Timol affair, whereas in that case there has been arrest, the Police have arrested people, the inquiry is being completed, the hon. Prime Minister suggested a Commission of Inquiry, and I said this should not apply in that case where there had been arrests and so on. In this case, where we need to see the truth concerning the involvement of two lawyers, one Minister, the Prime Minister's Office, the Police itself, BOI, and in a case where there are international ramifications, does not the hon. Prime Minister - not in the Timol affair, but in this case – think that we should have a Commission of Inquiry?

The Prime Minister: It is factually not correct to say that Ms Austin triggered all this. I did say in my previous answer that the application for the certificate was turned down on 11 July 2012, that is, well before the publication of the preliminary report of Ms Austin, and that was thanks to the vigilance of the Civil Aviation Department. The report was not out; there was no preliminary report when this was turned down. These are the facts.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence please!

The Prime Minister: Look at the facts! If you want to look at the facts, look at the facts! Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, BOI has asked Ernst & Young to look into wherever there might be loopholes. There have been loopholes. If I were to go through it, Mr Speaker, Sir; people who were employed at the BOI at that time and who have now been removed from the BOI were recruited in 2001. Look at the record. I don't want to go into the details, unless I am forced to.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: People who started as receptionists have gone up in the BOI. That is the kind of people that you have actually...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Please, I want some order in this House.

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(12.18 p.m.)

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2013) BILL

(No. XXVII of 2012)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second reading of the Appropriation (2013) Bill (No. XXVII of 2012).

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Agro-Industry & Food Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, allow me to join the previous orators, I mean my colleagues from this side of the House, to congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his Budget Speech.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the present Budget Speech is more than just a Budget Speech; it is more an act of faith in the future of our country. With clarity and precision, backed by unquestionable data, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development remarkably reported on the state of the nation. I note that 92% of the measures announced in the last Budget have been implemented. I hasten to add that, in the agro-industry sector as well, more than 90 % of the measures have been implemented!

Mr Speaker, Sir, international organisations, whose integrity and recognition are acclaimed by the whole world, have congratulated our country for its commendable economic performance despite such difficult times. These congratulations are indeed a tribute to our people, to this government and to the leadership of the Prime Minister, on whose vision our economic and social policies have been charted.

Mr Speaker Sir, before I dwell on the Budget proper, I would wish to say a few words on the Opposition, and more particularly on the Leader of the Opposition.

Our National Assembly is a sacrosanct institution and the most respected constitutional authority of the land. Similarly, the workings and deliberations of this Assembly command the respect of all our institutions and that of the nation at large.

Mr Speaker, Sir, ever since independence the *cursus* has been that the Leader of the Opposition, whoever that may be, intervenes first from the Opposition side on the Budget Speech on behalf of the Opposition. I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it has been the *cursus*. I am not saying it is against the Standing Orders, I am not saying it is against any regulations or Erskine May. What I am saying is that this has been the tradition in Parliament.

The yearly Budget is an exceptionally important exercise for any country, and no doubt this well established *cursus* must be respected for such an important parliamentary debate. This has been so in this august Assembly ever since independence, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 1969, it was hon. Sookdeo Bissoondoyal who rebutted the Budget which was presented in that year.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister. This is a matter for the whips, namely the Government whip and the Opposition whip to decide on the list of orators and when they should speak. If you can refrain from ...

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am saying ...

Mr Speaker: I am still on my feet. I would invite you to carry on with regard to the Budget Speech.

Mr Faugoo: What I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that one can only regret a departure from such *cursus* - I am talking of facts. As I said, from independence, it has always been the Leader of the Opposition who answers. After the Minister of Finance presentation of the Budget, hierarchy of interest has always been shown...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruption! I would advise hon. Members to listen to the Minister.

Mr Faugoo: After the Minister of Finance presentation of the Budget, hierarchy of interest has always been shown; which marks the solemnity of the occasion. This year, we have witnessed that the solemnity which surrounds and which should surround such an important exercise has diminished. A departure from this well established *cursus* can only create the impression of a lack of deference to such an important event. Today, we can assume, whatever arrangement between the two groups, Mr Speaker, Sir, that hon. Li Kwong Wing...

(Interruptions)

Mr Roopun: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. I understand that the Chair has given a ruling, and the Minister should abide by that ruling.

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: Today, we can assume - I agree it may be arrangements between the Chief Whips - that hon. Li Kwong Wing is the most important ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let us have some silence! I have suggested that this is a matter for the respective Whips, the Chief Whip and the Opposition Whip, to decide who will address the House. And then, as per Standing Order 39(11), the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance will be the last ones to talk. So, this is what I have said and I sincerely wish that the hon. Minister listen to what I have said and abide by my guidance.

Mr Faugoo: In abiding by what you have said, I am just only making some remarks of a decision taken by the Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

I am not putting in question the arrangements made, Mr Speaker, Sir. What I am saying is that today there are some arrangements and who has been presented as spokesperson is hon. Li Kwong Wing. So, what happened to the previous Ministers of Finance? Hon. Jugnauth was the Minister of Finance. Hon. Bérenger was Minister of Finance on two occasions. Hon Bérenger himself, on 12 occasions, has intervened first when he was Leader of the Opposition. All I am asking is what has changed now, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Silence, please! The Minister may be allowed to make an observation, but not to make of this issue a point of debate. I hope that my observation is understood.

Mr Faugoo: As I said, it is a fact, it is on record, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am only observing what is happening today, and I am putting questions why this is happening. Is it a political tactic, a cheap tactic? This is what I am questioning. I am allowed to question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, again, I will have to intervene. It would be very simple if the hon. Minister is allowed to make his observation. What I hope is that his observation will not be a speech.

Mr Faugoo: I will come to the debate on the Budget. The observation is as important as my intervention on the Budget debate, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is it a political tactic?

(Interruptions)

Who is the shadow Minister of Finance there?

(Interruptions)

Is it Mr Li or is it Mr Kwong or Mr Wing? We don't know, Mr Speaker, Sir. When listening to Mr Li Kwong Wing, he sounded more as if coming from *Parti Malin*, Mr Speaker, Sir - I heard one of my colleagues saying that.

As I said, this is a solemn occasion where we are debating a national Budget in this august Assembly. So, what we have heard from the first Member of the Opposition, as I said, is as if somebody coming from *Parti Malin*. What he says is: *pani naiba!* In fact, the whole of his intervention suggests that argument '*naiba*', Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are debating a national Budget for next year. It is a serious matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. Even the PNQ - again it is a remark, *en passant* - which was asked last Monday and even today has nothing to do with the budgetary measures, Mr Speaker, Sir. How do we explain this?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole world is undergoing an economic downturn. Our major trade partners and markets are struggling to survive and are hardly registering any economic growth. In some of these countries, people are losing jobs by thousands, Mr Speaker, Sir. Their investments are drying and, unfortunately, some are facing social unrest with poverty lurking in places where we never dreamt of. It is a sad situation, but an economic reality with dire consequences, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mauritians are well aware of these situations, except Members on the other side of the House who pretend not to know the reality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened with much amazement, I must say, to the intervention of hon. Seeruttun, and I must say that his arguments clearly depict his ignorance and lack of objectivity. The first point where he displayed his total bias and irrational judgment relates to economic growth. He questioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, as to why we are comparing our economic growth rate with that of European countries and not with African countries. He went on to add that the average growth rate of African countries stands at 5.5%.

(Interruptions)

True it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, the average growth for Africa is 5.5%, but official statistics on our national accounts are very revealing on this matter. The economic growth rate for Mauritius in the first quarter of 2011, that is last year, stood at 5%, which is comparable to the African average. But what happened thereafter to the growth rate, Mr Speaker, Sir? It went down to 4.8% in the second quarter. Again, it went down to 3.5% in the third quarter, and slumped to a mere 1.8% in the last quarter. I will table an official copy, and maybe my friend, hon. Seeruttun, can go through it and revise his opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir. 1.8% for the last quarter of last year. This is the catastrophic performance of none other than the leader of his own party. The plunge in economic growth happened when hon. Pravind Jugnauth was Minister of Finance. It was following his Budget of 2011 that economic growth plunged.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr Faugoo: Since then, it is remarkable that economic growth rate has recorded an ascending path. The House will appreciate that economic growth rate significantly increased from 1.8% to 3.7% at present, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is due to two main reasons: (i) the bold

measures initiated by this government, and (ii) the marked difference between the former and the actual Minister of Finance.

The second issue raised by hon. Seeruttun confirms once more his ignorance on the issue of MSPA lands. Mr Speaker, Sir, the vesting of lands is a long process and includes identification, suitability assessment, surveying and notary procedures, and also land preparation prior to allocation.

Despite this lengthy process and although the agreement spans over ten years, from 2007 to 2017, it is not something which, following the agreement, we have to do in one year. The agreement stands for ten years, Mr Speaker, Sir; from 2007 to 2017. We have in this short period of four years acquired more than 50% of the lands at seven sites, and these have already been allocated and are already under food crop and livestock production. Mr Speaker, Sir, it surprises me to hear this from the hon. Member who pretends not to be aware of the MSPA lands. He is feigning ignorance in as much as he was present at St. Hubert when a ceremony of handing over of the lease agreements was held some two years ago. Banana and vegetables are already growing up there. I will advise him to go there and have a look!

(Interruptions)

Maybe he does not know his constituency; he is advised to go to St. Hubert and in his constituency more frequently, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The third issue that hon. Seeruttun raised was on the performance of Mauritius on food security compared to Africa. In this context, it is worth looking at what the performance was from 2001 to 2005. I know hon. Seeruttun was not here. He did not form part of the then government, but the facts and figures in the agro-industry sector during the period are more than revealing, and he should take good note of this failure of the MMM/MSM government, Mr Speaker, Sir. The total production of food crops - they are talking of food security, they are talking of Mauritius producing more, of our self-sufficiency – food crop production declined between 2000 and 2005 by 25%, from 129,000 tonnes in 2001 to 96,780 tonnes in 2005. This has never happened! We have never seen a negative growth since we took over in 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a fact, and this can be checked in any statistics officially published.

Two important strategic crops, namely potato and onion, recorded a reduction in production between the same period of 2000 and 2005. Potato production was reduced and went down by 22%, at a time when we should have been producing more. It went down from 16,350 tonnes to 12,780 tonnes, Mr Speaker, Sir! Onions recorded a 49% decrease, from 10,950 tonnes in 2001 to a mere 5,000 tonnes in 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir! The food import bill increased - I hope that my hon. friend is noting down, so that he can countercheck - by 70% from Rs7.6 billion in 2001 to Rs12.9 billion in 2005. They are talking of self-sufficiency, food security, and food production. The level of self sufficiency dropped substantially between 2001 and 2005, and the level of food import increased from 60% in 2001 to 76% in 2005.

These are facts and figures which can be checked, Mr Speaker, Sir. Indeed, that was the dismal performance of the MMM/MSM government on food security. In contrast, we have, over the past four years, attained self-sufficiency in potato, and made remarkable progress in milk, meat and onion, among others, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote what hon. Bodha – unfortunately, he is absent – proposed when he was Minister of Agriculture at one time in their mandate between 2000 and 2005. Allow me to quote what he proposed when he was not Minister of Agriculture, during his speech on the Budget of 2009, as a solution to global food crisis and food security for Mauritius. It is from the Hansard, and it can be checked. This is the answer he proposes to food security problem for Mauritius, and I quote –

“We could make a list of all that we import, and then decide that we are not going to import and we are going to produce locally.”

What he proposed was that we stop altogether our import for food, and then produce locally whatever we consume, Mr Speaker, Sir. Fortunately, we did not follow this model, or else we all can imagine where we would have been today.

Again, on the issue of research at the MSIRI and research in general, hon. Seeruttun seems to be totally unaware of research development programmes at the MSIRI. We can understand this, as he used to be at the MSIRI, but it is quite some time since he left the MSIRI and so he is out of touch of what is happening at the MSIRI. Mr Speaker, Sir, contrary to what the hon. Member stated, namely that the MSIRI has lost its operational autonomy, it has not and still has its operational autonomy under the present legislation, that is, the MCIA Act. Moreover,

an independent Research and Development Committee under the chairmanship of a high calibre scientist from the University of Mauritius has been put in place.

Regarding research and development programmes, all programmes on sugar cane have been maintained. Over and above, the MSIRI is now responsible for research on eight projects which were retained by the European Commission, Mr Speaker, Sir. Out of 13 projects which were submitted to the EU for their approval, eight projects by the MSIRI were retained and are being supervised by the MSIRI for the whole of ACP countries. Contrary to what hon. Seeruttun said, the MSIRI still enjoys the esteem and prestige it used to enjoy in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir. Only last month, the MSIRI hosted the mid-term review of the ACP/EU research programmes in Mauritius, where there were at least 30 countries from the ACP which participated in the review.

He again seems to misunderstand the FORIP project. He put two questions on FORIP. First, how the increase in funds is going to help to boost the scheme under FORIP and, second, how the funds are going to help non-sugar planters.

The field operations, regrouping and irrigation project is a major component of the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy that was started in 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The target set by 2015 is to prepare 12,000 hectares of land belonging to small planters. We have so far covered more than 50% of what we have targeted initially. With the increase in the amount of budgetary provisions, we are projecting to increase the extent covered under the FORIP scheme, Mr Speaker, Sir. Not only to cover the extra cost, but also to increase the area which is going to be put under this scheme. The funds will also cater and allow for the non-sugar planters in respect of upgrading of infrastructure, - to answer him, he seems to be in the dark - land preparation, irrigation and drainage systems of lands belonging to food crop growers. This is a consolidation of measures that we have initiated under the Food Security Fund, and it is already ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these prophets of doom have even sought refuge in national newspapers. When the unholy alliance of the Opposition cannot agree on the nominations of candidates for the municipal elections, these forces of evil dream of rifts between the partners in the government, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Budget presented by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development is a Budget of the whole government, that is, the Labour

Party and its ally the PMSD, Mr Speaker, Sir. I can safely vouch that, on this side of the House, each and every Member supports this national Budget of ours, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me add that, since 1999, the Labour Party and the PMSD are in alliance. They are thus making history as the longest surviving alliance, Mr Speaker, Sir. The reasons underlying this longevity are our common concern for the population at large and the masses. There is no room whatsoever for any iota of divergence between the Labour Party and the PMSD, as our underlying philosophy is the same, namely to work for the betterment of the people. The House will recall that it was the same motivation that brought Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and Sir Gaëtan Duval together to build a better nation, and to set the economic and social foundations of our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main purpose of a Budget exercise is to provide clear fundamentals, that is, provide the right macro-economic framework for economic development and prosperity and to provide for just and equitable social distribution of wealth. It has not only to do with economic growth, but also to ensure proper and equitable distribution of wealth – where no one is left aside!

This Budget, despite the difficult economic climate, comprises of measures that touch all the strata of the population, Mr Speaker, Sir. Not a single category of Mauritians has been forgotten. You name one and there is, at least, one measure for that particular group; be it students, graduates, SMEs, unemployed, investors, disabled, old age pensioners, civil servants, women, borrowers, consumers, sport lovers, children, planters, breeders and fishermen. They are all taken on board. Nobody is excluded; *il n'y pas d'exclusion, M. le président*. This Budget, I must say, is an all inclusive Budget, where the concerns of each and every citizen from all walks of life are addressed.

It is my duty to underline that economic resources are limited during these hard times. We could have chosen the easier path; increase VAT, and then make everybody happy, but this is not what is done by a responsible government, Mr Speaker, Sir.

They took the easiest way when they were in power by increasing VAT by 50%. In sharp contrast, we have evolved and moved from a responsible government to a caring government.

Now government, under the enlightened and able leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, has resolved to become a compassionate government. Several measures have been formulated in this Budget in that regard.

The temptation to downsize the Welfare State was great, but as champions of the poor and the middle classes, this compassionate government resisted. We have succeeded in maintaining all the social measures, and even consolidating some of them. This is what one would expect during difficult days. For us, solidarity is not a vain word. We have moved from a caring government to a compassionate and responsible government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are a socialist nation with a socialist government. We have learnt to fall together and to rise together as a nation. The economic growth is not an achievement of the government, but of the people who are proud of their government. Our job is to interpret their dreams, help them materialise their future, help them build a better tomorrow for their children. That's what we have been doing so far, and this is exactly what we are proposing to do in this Budget.

This Budget lays down the foundations for better opportunities for our youth, it restores prosperity for everybody, it opens the doors for a better tomorrow. Listening to the pessimists, to frustrated minds will lead us nowhere. It can only delay progress, and cause social frustration.

Let us not be misled by those who do not have our common good at heart. Beware of the false promises and those who, without any sense of guilt, promise anything to achieve their sinister motives. Never trust those men and women who survive and thrive as scandal mongers because that's their trade. Never trust those who make unholy alliances to further their petty interests or for their cherished ones. We have no time to lose on such *prophètes de malheur*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is not an isolated accounting exercise. It reflects the philosophy of the Labour Party, and translates into reality the struggle, aspirations and concerns of the Labour Party and its ally. History bears testimony to vouch that our party has always stood for each and every citizen of this country. In this Budget, whose concern has not been addressed? The consumer, the farmer, the unemployed, the student, the investor, the entrepreneur, the artist, the small lessee of land, the industrialist, the senior citizen, the foreign worker, the disabled, our Rodriguan brother and sister, everybody finds his concerns addressed in this Budget. No one has been shunned or neglected.

The fundamental difference between the Labour Party and its ally the PMSD on the one hand and, on the other hand, the parties of the Opposition, is that we stand for the masses, for everybody, for the population, for the anonymous citizen, whereas the Opposition parties stand for their own interests, their empires, their clans, their cherished close ones. While we work for the whole population, they practice sectarian politics, and they work for a few, if not for themselves, Mr Speaker, Sir! No wonder, Labour Party - the oldest party of the land - still survives and is strong, jubilant and resilient.

In certain quarters, some are saying that enough has not been done or that more could have been done. I, for one, totally subscribe to this argument that much more could have been done to meet the rising expectations of each and everyone.

As I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we did not choose the easy way. The easy way would have been to increase VAT - like they did - by 50%, and then give a little more here and there. But this is not what we did, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a recent study carried out by the International Monetary Fund with respect to 31 countries on public expenditure on government employees has revealed that 27 countries out of 31 major countries have decreased their budget on labour costs on public sector employees. This is due to the ongoing economic downturn, and directly impacts on the level of public service to citizens. Mauritius is one of the rare countries where labour costs in the public sector have increased and the level of public service has been improved. We should be proud of this remarkable achievement. On top of that, we shall implement the PRB report *in toto*, and that will cost the treasury a huge amount of Rs4.6 billion, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the budget of the child in Panchavati or Rivière Noire, who finds comfort in the guarantee of the State for free transport to school, for free schooling, and now a free lunch. It gives him hope that his secondary school is waiting to welcome him, to equip him to join one of our universities, and later to serve his country for the good of all. This Budget prepares him to be a global citizen who can access IT in this technology driven world!

- It is the Budget of the farmer who finds comfort in that his government is aware of climate change and the risk of his profession, and the numerous agricultural schemes to support him.

- It is the Budget of the employed who finds comfort in the resilience of his sector when his colleagues in similar sectors in Europe are struggling to keep their jobs.
- This is the Budget of the senior citizen who finds comfort in that his fellow citizens continue to maintain his much valued pension, even when the sea is rough and the going is tough.

Let me, Mr Speaker, Sir, elaborate briefly on the agro-industry sector. As you are aware, we have initiated since 2006 deep and profound reform measures in the sugar sector consequent to the EU Reform Programme, and more specifically the 36% cut in the price of sugar to the EU. The measures have been implemented in a timely manner and all the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were met, thereby enabling disbursement under the Accompanying Measures Support Programme.

We are conscious that the small planters and *métayers* are particularly vulnerable, and yet their contribution is paramount for the sugar sector to remain financially viable and sustainable. Two important measures that have been taken this year to alleviate their financial burden are worth mentioning here, Mr Speaker, Sir -

- (i) Global cess payable by planters has been reduced from Rs650 m. to Rs287 m., that is, it represents an average saving of Rs700 per ton of sugar or Rs2 010 per *arpent*. This measure touches some 20,000 small planters.
- (ii) The insurance premium payable to the SIFB has been reduced by 50% again, and this represents a reduction of up to Rs2,800 per *arpent*. This measure also concerns some 20,000 planters in Mauritius.

This year we witnessed a phenomenal and historic change in the sugar sector landscape with the merger of six cess funded service institutions and the birth of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority. I must say that cess reduction and restructuring of the cess-funded service providing institutions was a long-standing issue. All the functions of the existing Service Providing Institutions are not only being maintained, but strengthened for a more efficient and more cost effective service delivery.

Our Reform Programme has been so successful that Mauritius is often cited as an example for the ACP and even non-ACP countries. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, in his moments of truth, in a public meeting - it was early this year - at Bel Air remarked, in fact, that the umbilical

cord of cane planters remains attached to the Labour Party. He was so right, Mr Speaker, Sir. For so much that the Labour Party has done for the cane planters, the contrary could not have been true!

Mr Speaker, Sir, government is fully aware of the issue of land which has moved out of agriculture. While maintaining the right equilibrium for demand of land for other development sectors, government will implement a strong sensitisation campaign to encourage agricultural land owners to lease their land to agricultural entrepreneurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Seeruttun raised the issue of food security in his intervention. Let me first of all clarify the basic concept of food security. No country, including the developed countries, Mr Speaker, Sir, is capable of producing all the food items that it requires! No single country can assemble all the requisites, be it in terms of climate, land and other resources, to make itself 100% food self sufficient. Countries that are well endowed with land and other resources like Malaysia, Japan and Korea are not 100% self sufficient in food; the latest statistics show that the self sufficiency ratio ranges from 36% to 60% in all the countries.

Also food security does not mean that we have to produce everything that we consume, as was proposed by hon. Bodha, simply because it cannot be physically achieved with limited land resources nor is it economically justified in view of the law of comparative economic advantage. In many instances it is cheaper to import than to produce locally.

Our crusade for food security was neither empty nor meant for the gallery, for another slogan to keep alive a political party. Nonetheless, we can produce adequate amounts of certain strategic crops or commodities. This is what we have done and what we are doing to increase as far as possible what we can economically and strategically produce here, even if the cost of production is comparatively higher than the cost of import, as exemplified with garlic. The price of garlic rose from Rs15,000 to Rs75,000 in a span of three months. So, what we are doing, even if it costs cheaper today to import, I think it is good in our policy for food security to produce to some extent locally that particular product.

This year, Mr Speaker, Sir, the potato sector experienced a bumper crop, so much so that retail prices have dropped for the benefit of the consumer. We are already planning for export of potato and processing into potato products for the next harvest. Similarly, our onion production increased from 4,800 tons last year to 6,500 tons this year, an increase of 33%, whilst they had experienced a decrease of 49%, and we are meeting 40% of our requirement now. The trend is

the same for garlic and other cash crops. This is a direct consequence of the numerous agricultural schemes we have put in place. I am not going to go lengthily on the schemes; we have, at least, 12 schemes which are in place, which have allowed to boost up our local production. We have even published a booklet for the benefit of the planter and the breeder. All these schemes exist, and it has been renewed. Albeit it has not been mentioned because it's only new measures that have been mentioned in the Budget Speech, we have in place, at least, 12 schemes which are boosting, as I have said, our food crop sector, our livestock sector and also our fisheries sector.

With the support of government, the private sector has this year harvested some 2,000 tons of rice; this is something new. This is indeed an achievement, though it stands at 3% of our yearly consumption. The Mauritian rice story shows that it is yet another promising area for the future. My Ministry will redouble its efforts to further increase rice production locally with the mobilisation of the local agricultural community, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister has announced a subsidy of Rs40 m. on locally produced compost. Government is promoting the use of compost, which is more eco-friendly and is an excellent substitute for chemical fertilizers. Its use by vegetable and fruit growers can reduce the use of costly chemical fertilizer by some 30 to 40%. Bio or eco-produce is considered healthier, more nutritive and has a longer shelf life. Moreover, compost is known to improve soil fertility and has a higher soil water holding capacity; its use will enable farmers improve their productivity in a sustained manner.

Our poultry meat production fulfils the national demand and stands at 80,000 tons. The way forward is to export. Our local producers have expressed their wish to export towards Reunion Island and the Comoros Islands. In this respect, with assistance from the EU, we are already implementing the EDES Programme aiming at raising the standards of our slaughter houses and our laboratories to European standards. This is no mean achievement when nearby countries import eggs, while we are self sufficient since long in poultry and poultry products.

Some had lost faith in local meat production and milk production. We are out to prove them wrong. With the help of our support schemes, milk production has now increased and we have increased the self sufficiency in milk from less than 2% in 2000 to 2005 to more than 8% last year, that is, a fourfold increase, Mr Speaker, Sir. The dairy herd population was in the

decline in the period 2000 to 2005; it reached a record low of some 4,400 heads only. Today, the population has gone above 7,000 heads, representing a 55% increase. Again, we have succeeded where others have failed!

For decades, this country has witnessed a gradual decrease in its forest cover. We have been able to reverse the trend, and we are right now increasing the area of both public and private forests. 200,000 trees will be planted during next year to increase our forest cover. I am chairing a Ministerial Committee on afforestation of all bare State lands. All contracts for roads now have a component for tree plantations on road reserves. Even for the smallest private or public project, the policy of my Ministry is for the replacement by two trees or more for each one lost in the name of development. I am happy to report that this measure has received wide support from all quarters of our society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a great leap forward in agriculture to ensure food security needs daring and deeply entrenched reforms. We shall now bring institutional reforms in the non-sugar sector, replicating the success story we brought in the sugar sector. The Tea Board and the Tobacco Board will disappear along with some functions in the Meat Authority to pave the way for the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office within my Ministry. With the assistance of the FAO, the Agricultural Services, including the Division of Veterinary Services of my Ministry, which is principally based at Le Réduit, will be structurally reformed next year to become more responsive to the agricultural community.

The problem of stray dogs, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been a perennial and topical issue for decades. We are aware of its negative impact on human health and tourism. We are in favour of a humane approach to the issue of dog population control. No efforts will be spared to galvanise forces from the civil society to adopt a holistic approach with a strong emphasis on education and responsibilities of dog owners.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development announced the coming of the Preclinical Research Bill.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, will you be long?

Mr Faugoo: Two minutes. The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development announced the coming of the Preclinical Research Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Bill

is being finalised by my Ministry. This legislation will provide the framework for research on animals in favour of the global pharmaceutical sector. This is a promising sector with a bright future, and has the potential to become another pillar of our economy. The Bill is more or less ready. We have finalised the Bill, and this Bill will be introduced in the National Assembly at our next session, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not dream merchants. We do not thrive or survive on organised confusion nor do we spit venom as a result of frustration. We stand for hope, for a brighter tomorrow that would make our children proud of their parents. We never said that life will always be rosy or easy, Mr Speaker, Sir. Our countrymen know that hard work and discipline will be required at all levels if we want to be happy. We have no reason to lose faith in them because we know them; we know Mauritians are hardworking and are capable to meet all challenges.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reiterate that next year we shall pursue with the same zeal, same commitment and the same determination. I am confident that our achievements next year, despite the difficult times, will prove the Opposition wrong. Deep down, I know that the whole nation stands on our side. They know that together we are transforming our country.

Our children will surely be proud of us. We shall win over the economic battle. A glorious and better tomorrow awaits us.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for one hour.

At 1.07 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, la présentation du budget 2013 a été faite sur fond de campagne électorale dans nos villages et nos villes. Ce qui confirme que la plupart des parlementaires qui vont intervenir sur le budget auront l'esprit ailleurs que sur le budget. De toute façon, M. le président, la présentation de ce budget démontre que le ministre des Finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, confirme ce que j'avais dit une année de cela lors de mon intervention sur le discours du budget. Je cite –

« Pour l'honorable ministre des Finances, la présentation du budget reste un exercice comptable. »

C'est-à-dire, un rééquilibrage des recettes et des dépenses de l'Etat mauricien. Et juste après la présentation de ce budget, la presse indépendante est venue confirmer cet état de choses en disant que nous avons affaire à un ministre des Finances qui n'a pas de vision, et qui n'a pas d'ambition pour le pays.

Dans un journal qui a paru dimanche, un ou une journaliste est allé aussi loin pour dire que nous avons affaire à un comptable gris et ennuyeux, M. le président. Et je pense que c'est l'expression appropriée pour l'actuel ministre des Finances, car il a été vraiment ennuyeux dans la présentation de son budget le vendredi 9 novembre.

Budget, M. le président, qui est présenté dans un contexte très spécifique; que ce soit au niveau du gouvernement, que ce soit au niveau de l'opposition, nous savons tous que nous passons par une période extrêmement difficile depuis un certain temps, où l'économie de notre pays est en difficulté. M. le président, tout le monde s'attendait à un budget donnant une indication très précise de l'orientation économique que veut donner ce gouvernement. Le budget de l'année dernière et le budget de cette année-ci démontrent clairement que nous avons affaire à un ministre des Finances qui n'a pas de vision, un gouvernement essoufflé. Il faut le dire. Aujourd'hui, quels sont les secteurs qui vont nous aider à sortir de cette crise? La question qu'il faudra peut-être se poser aujourd'hui, M. le président est: que propose ce gouvernement pour les secteurs qui aujourd'hui sont en difficulté, et qui peuvent nous faire sortir de cette crise? Par exemple, M. le président, les secteurs - il faut le dire et le reconnaître ; je l'ai dit ici dans cette Chambre - comme la technologie informatique et la communication, le *seafood hub* sont des secteurs qui ont pris naissance sous un gouvernement MMM/MSM. Il faut le reconnaître ! Et par la suite, il y a eu des développements qui sont intervenus. Aujourd'hui, ce sont des secteurs qui, quand même, d'une certaine façon, aident l'économie de ce pays à se tenir sur les rails. Je me rappelle bien, M. le président ! Quand on parle du secteur informatique, qu'est-ce qui n'a pas été dit à l'intérieur de cette Chambre concernant ce secteur qui emploie aujourd'hui beaucoup de nos jeunes?

M. le président, en terme de croissance, je pense que ces dernières années il n'y a pas eu beaucoup de choses qui se sont passées afin qu'on augmente la croissance de ce pays. Je vais

retourner sur des nouveaux secteurs qui auraient dû aujourd'hui nous aider à surmonter ces épreuves, mais par manque de vision et par manque de volonté, nous sommes toujours à la case départ.

M. le président, le budget 2013 est une vraie déception pour tout un chacun, parce que nous avons eu pas mal de commentaires venant des gens de la rue, du secteur privé, des syndicalistes. A part quelques mesures électoralistes - il faut le dire dans cette période de campagne - les autres mesures énoncées dans ce budget ne vont pas nous aider pendant l'année à venir à surmonter comme il se doit les épreuves qui nous attendent sur le plan économique, M. le président.

Permettez-moi de prendre certaines mesures budgétaires qui très souvent sont annoncées en grande pompe, mais éventuellement, dans la réalité, après quelque temps, ne se matérialisent pas. Il est vrai, et je suis entièrement d'accord quand l'honorable ministre vient dire au paragraphe 34, *when he starts talking about bridging the digital divide, and I quote –*

“Yet it is easy for a digital divide to emerge and widen, if technology is not accessible to all. Like an education divide, it can exacerbate existing inequalities.”

Et afin de pallier à cette division, il y a une série de mesures qui sont énoncées et, parmi ces mesures au paragraphe 52, il est dit –

“For the very first time in Mauritius, Government will distribute next year, one tablet computer to each and every school boy and girl in Form IV. This entails the purchase of some 20,000 devices.”

Et au niveau de l'opposition, nous avons réagi comme il se doit parce que nous n'avons pas oublié la promesse faite aux élèves de la HSC pendant la campagne de 2010. Une promesse qui n'a pas été respectée, M. le président. Il n'y a pas que cela. Il faudra remonter dans le temps pour voir exactement que, très souvent, ce gouvernement vient de l'avant avec des propositions mais n'arrive pas à les respecter. Dans le budget présenté au pays en 2008-2009 par l'honorable Sithanen, lui aussi nous met sur la voie de la technologie informatique, et voilà ce qu'il avait proposé à l'époque - parce que lui, à l'époque, parlait de *building inclusive Mauritius* - et je cite le paragraphe 198 –

“The National e-Inclusion Foundation will be a joint Public Private Partnership, initially bringing together Government, State Informatics Limited, Microsoft and private companies. The actions of the foundation will include donation of refurbished PCs pre-installed with Microsoft free licenses to 20,000 poor families within the next five years. Donations to NGOs of 10,000 PCs refurbished with Microsoft licences to set up IT classes for the poor in conjunction with the Empowerment Programme.”

Une mesure qui n’a jamais été implémentée, M. le président, et encore une fois des promesses qu’ils n’arrivent pas à réaliser. Je vais y retourner un peu plus tard, parce que le mot ‘*poor*’ figure très souvent dans leurs discours.

Je me rappelle bien avoir entendu l’honorable Premier ministre et d’autres membres du gouvernement très souvent parler de la dignité humaine. Tout le monde se rappelle de ce slogan creux, M. le président, qui était à l’époque ‘*Putting People First*’ et qui, en fin de compte, a été corrigé en ce slogan ‘*Putting Our People First.*’ Quand je parle de pauvreté, en guise d’illustration, M. le président, je vais demander à ceux qui sont à l’intérieur de cette Chambre, ceux qui étaient peut être devant leur télé sur une chaîne étrangère, notamment « Réunion Première » le mardi 6 novembre 2012 de se rappeler de l’émission « Bienvenu au paradis ». Une émission tournée par les Réunionnais à Maurice, dans des endroits que je vais citer : Cité Perdue à Poste Lafayette, Cité Lumière à Grand Baie. Il y a eu des témoignages frappants venant des pères et mères de famille et des enfants de ces endroits. Quand on parle de Maurice comme une passerelle vers le continent Africain, quand on parle de Maurice comme exemple, parce que quelque part dans le discours du budget, l’honorable ministre des Finances vient parler du classement de l’île Maurice parmi certains pays qui sont *leaders* sur le continent Africain ! Mais, pour ceux qui ont regardé cette émission, cela fait honte à notre pays parce que ces personnes sont allées à la rencontre des gens pauvres. *Ces poor families that we talk so often in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir*, des gens qui vivent avec un repas par jour, des gens qui n’arrivent pas à envoyer leurs enfants à l’école, des familles qui sont sans eau et sans électricité depuis pas mal d’années. Quand je dis cela, je suis un homme très en colère, et je vais dire pourquoi quand je prends l’exemple de ces familles.

J’ai eu l’occasion de soulever à maintes reprises, ici, à l’intérieur de cette Chambre, plusieurs cas. Il y a plusieurs familles de ma circonscription qui habitent Cité La Cure, à l’arrière

du complexe de la NHDC, qui sont sans eau et sans électricité depuis 2006. Je l'ai soulevé à travers des questions parlementaires, à travers des *'Matters Raised at Adjournment Time'*, M. le président. 2006 à 2012, 75 enfants de ces familles sont restés sans eau et sans électricité. Pour quelle raison ? La raison a été évoquée et, à un certain moment, j'ai pensé que peut être le gouvernement avait raison en disant cela. La raison évoquée dans le rapport qui a été déposé concernant les inondations dans le pays était - si je me rappelle bien - 'Lola'. A l'époque, il était dit que -

"This region is prone to flooding."

Je me suis dit peut être que oui. Quelques temps de cela, des familles plus près de la berge de cette rivière ont été connectées au réseau électrique. Ces 19 familles qui sont beaucoup plus loin n'ont ni eau ni électricité jusqu'aujourd'hui.

Quel est le point d'être classé parmi les meilleurs pays au monde si on n'arrive même pas à prendre soin de nos familles, de nos frères et de nos sœurs dans ce pays, M. le président ?

(Interruptions)

Quel est le but ? Si c'était une année, peut être que j'aurais compris ; deux ans, trois ans, j'aurais compris. Six ans, M. le président ! Il y a des enfants qui ont grandi - Je l'ai dit une fois à l'intérieur de cette Chambre - et qui ont pris part aux examens de la CPE. Six ans sans électricité, M. le président ! Ces gens habitent dans une situation des plus précaires. Je pense que tous les députés de la circonscription savent, et je ne sais pas pourquoi on n'arrive pas à débloquent cette situation, M. le président.

M. le président, je vais maintenant parler des secteurs qui tombent sous ma responsabilité, c'est-à-dire l'eau, l'électricité, mais je vais aussi faire le point sur un secteur sur lequel je pense on a perdu beaucoup de temps. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de parler du concept Maurice Ile durable ; concept très cher au Premier ministre. En 2008, lors de la présentation du budget, l'ancien ministre Sithanen vient énoncer des mesures et dire à la population au paragraphe 152 -

"We are also introducing a token MID levy, to be paid into the MID Fund, of 15 cents per litre on all petroleum products, 15 cents per kilo on LPG and 15 cents per kilo of

coal. This levy will be used to partially finance the various grants to be provided by the MID Fund.”

Dans ce même contexte, le ministre vient aussi dire aux Mauriciens -

“The increase in Road Tax will be based on both the polluters pay and the ability to pay principles.”

Et là, on a une augmentation sur le *road tax* afin de financer les projets tombant sous le MID.

Le *levy* qu'on avait introduit était à 15 sous à l'époque, et aujourd'hui ce *levy* est à 30 sous. L'ancien directeur du MID a eu ceci à dire dans un journal. Quand on lui pose la question, il vient dire que le MID n'est en réalité qu'une source de revenus pour le gouvernement.

M. le président, vous demandez à la population de faire des efforts afin de protéger notre environnement. Une bonne chose qu'on accepte et, à partir de là, chaque année le gouvernement prélève cette somme d'argent pour des projets liés à la protection de notre environnement. Or, qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Depuis 2008 à ce jour - et on l'a dit - le MID est resté une coquille vide. Rien, M. le président, de concret n'a été fait jusqu'à maintenant. Quand ce concept fut présenté, il y a eu quelques projets, mais rien de concret. Quand ce concept fut présenté à la nation mauricienne, c'était à l'époque où il y avait une flambée au niveau du prix du pétrole sur le marché international. Je me rappelle bien ce qu'on nous avait dit, notamment que nous sommes trop dépendant de l'énergie fossile et qu'il faudrait développer d'autres énergies à Maurice, afin qu'on diminue cette dépendance sur l'énergie fossile et qu'on introduise les énergies renouvelables.

Or, quelques années plus tard, le gouvernement décide de modifier le concept de Maurice Ile Durable et d'introduire d'autres aspects dans ce concept. Le gouvernement mauricien demande à un consultant de soumettre un rapport sur ce nouveau concept que le gouvernement adopte sur le projet Maurice Ile Durable, incluant non seulement l'énergie mais la justice sociale, l'éducation et autres choses. Voilà les cinq E.

M. le président, depuis l'année dernière, il y a eu un travail sur un *White Paper* sur ce projet, et le gouvernement avait recruté la compagnie Mott MacDonald pour faire ce travail. Mott Macdonald, qui est un consultant attiré à Maurice travaillant avec le ministère de l'Environnement, mais aussi avec le CEB, soumet son rapport au mois de juillet. Vous vous

imaginez combien de temps on a déjà perdu. On enclenche ce processus, et le consultant Mott MacDonald soumet son rapport. Quand il soumet son rapport, il y a tous les *stakeholders*, les acteurs de ce secteur qui sont invités à la salle de conférence de Grand' Baie, afin de finaliser le document qui a été soumis pour qu'on ait un document plus concret. Et qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Voilà qu'en pleine séance dans la salle de conférence de Grand' Baie, nous voyons l'actuel directeur du projet MID qui se bagarre avec les consultants Mott MacDonald, M. le président, et le rapport n'est jamais finalisé, ni publié à ce jour. Tout récemment, je suis tombé sur un article qui dit que la concertation déraile, et c'est là que j'apprends les problèmes qu'il y a eu, ce qui fait qu'aujourd'hui rien ne bouge. Vous réalisez que le gouvernement prélève chaque année des millions de roupies pour des projets à être implémentés qui, en fin de compte, ne sont jamais réalisés, M. le président. Or, nous avons tellement besoin de ces projets. Pourquoi ?

Premièrement, pour protéger notre environnement et, deuxièmement, pour réduire notre dépendance sur l'énergie fossile. Vous réalisez, M. le président, qu'on importe en termes de roupies presque deux milliards de roupies de produits pétroliers à Maurice, et que depuis presque cinq ans le gouvernement a évoqué la possibilité d'aller dans la direction de produire de l'énergie à partir de sources renouvelables, et jusqu'à maintenant il n'y a que .2 pourcent d'énergie qui est fabriquée à Maurice à partir de sources renouvelables.

Rodrigues nous a dépassé, M. le président. Il faut prendre l'exemple de Rodrigues. Depuis le temps qu'on parle des fermes éoliennes, depuis le temps qu'on parle de fermes solaires, M. le président, le CEB n'a réalisé aucun projet jusqu'à maintenant. C'est la pure vérité. S'il n'y avait pas le *small scale distribution generators*, M. le président, on n'aurait pas eu un kilowatt de produit par les énergies renouvelables. L'honorable Assirvaden sait très bien de quoi je parle. Je vais revenir sur ce qu'il a dit un peu plus tard parce qu'il y a beaucoup de vérité, mais essayons de voir où se situent les problèmes. Ce qui se passe c'est comme le budget. Je l'ai dit. Nous avons un budget aujourd'hui qui n'a pas d'ambition. Il n'y a pas de vision, et je pense que les Travailleurs le réalisent. Hier je suis tombé sur un article posant la question: est-ce que les membres du gouvernement sont solidaires avec le ministre des Finances sur le budget qu'il a présenté à la nation?

(Interruptions)

Ce qui est intéressant, M. le président, est que ce n'est pas le 'oui' qu'ils disent ici qu'il faut écouter, c'est le 'non' qu'ils disent dans les couloirs qu'il faut écouter. C'est là-bas qu'on entend exactement ce qu'ils disent sur le budget de Xavier-Luc Duval, M. le président. Alors nous constatons - et c'est un fait - qu'il y a une vraie désolidarisation du gouvernement à l'égard du budget qui a été présenté par le ministre des Finances, M. le président.

M. le président, retournons sur cette politique énergétique qui peine à prendre forme à Maurice ; et c'est triste de le dire. Nous savons tous que nous avons - il faut le dire, on l'a décrit ici au parlement - un projet énergétique qui remonte à 2006: le projet de CT Power. Pour réaliser un projet de 50 mégawatt, on a perdu presque six ans. On ne sait toujours pas si ce projet va être réalisé. Or nous avons besoin d'électricité pour le pays, et nous sommes en manque de puissance, M. le président. Le gouvernement parle de projets grandioses qui vont être réalisés. Posons-nous la question: 'est-ce que nous avons suffisamment d'énergie à fournir à ces projets qui vont venir ?'

M. le président, retournons à ce que j'avais dit un peu plus tôt sur l'énergie. L'institution responsable pour tout ce qui concerne l'énergie à Maurice est le CEB. Je n'ai pas critiqué cette institution ; mes amis le font régulièrement. Pourquoi? Quand nous décidons de mettre un agent politique à la tête d'une institution comme le CEB, voilà le résultat que nous avons. Le ministre des Utilités publiques - qui n'est pas là - sait très bien ce que je suis en train de dire. Si nous voyons un membre du gouvernement dire qu'au CEB certains vivent dans un autre monde...

(Interruptions)

Il sait de quoi il parle. Pourquoi? Il sait pourquoi il dit cela parce que le président du conseil d'administration du *Board* du CEB *does not report to his Minister*. C'est ça le problème parce que lui, quand on lui pose des questions, il dit: '*I report directly to the Prime Minister*'. Le représentant du ministère sur le *Board* du CEB ne peut rien faire. Quand vous réalisez que pour célébrer les soixante ans du CEB, on va dépenser six millions de roupies alors qu'il y a quelques familles qui sont sans électricité depuis six ans, M. le président !

(Interruptions)

Depuis six ans, ces familles vivent sans électricité et, pour célébrer les soixante ans du CEB, on va dépenser six millions...

(Interruptions)

Heureusement que ça a été arrêté. M. le président, j'avais posé une question concernant ce monsieur qui, aujourd'hui est le président du CEB, et a empoché des bénéficiaires de R 1.2 millions et une pension de R 25,000 par mois. C'est pourquoi je vous dis '*putting our people first.*'

(Interruptions)

Quittant le secteur énergétique, M. le président, allons vers le secteur eau. Nous nageons en eaux troubles depuis presque trois ans, M. le président. Le peuple mauricien n'arrive plus à comprendre exactement quel est le problème concernant l'eau et la distribution de l'eau à Maurice. On n'arrive plus à expliquer aux gens, M. le président. Non seulement la presse, nous, mais vous-même n'arrivez plus à donner les vraies raisons pourquoi il y a dans certains endroits des pénuries d'eau. Pourtant quand on se réfère à des réponses données par le ministre, nous avons des solutions. Nous avons fait tel ou tel projet. Enfin de compte, M. le président, des millions ont été dépensés sans résultats probants. Quelle va être la situation dans les semaines ou dans les mois à venir? Quelle va être la situation concernant l'eau au mois de décembre et au mois de janvier? Quel est le vrai problème, M. le président? Je ne vais pas évoquer certains problèmes parce qu'ils le seront par d'autres personnes qui vont prendre la parole. Nous avons eu de l'argent du European Investment Bank. Nous avons mal géré les projets, et nous avons perdu cet argent. Hier, alors qu'un membre de l'opposition parlait, j'avais entendu quelqu'un dire *zott monte reservoir*. Le Midlands que vous avez vous commencé on l'a terminé. Vous n'avez même pas...

(Interruptions)

Oui, oui, mais pourquoi vous ne terminez jamais? Vous ne faites que commencer des projets, mais vous n'arrivez jamais à les terminer.

(Interruptions)

Le projet avait été conçu sous Sir Anerood Jugnauth; ça il faut le dire. Vous êtes venus après. Vous étiez supposés terminer ce projet, mais vous n'avez pas pu le terminer.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence please!

(Interruptions)

I would advise the hon. Member to address the Chair.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we come to the water sector - I have said it earlier - there are numerous projects which should have been completed by now and which have not. Lately, I remember the Minister stating 'we are going to have the Singaporeans to help us to bring solutions to our water problems in Mauritius.'

Les Singapouriens sont, allons dire, très performants, et très souvent donnent des résultats. Je ne sais pas ce qui se passe quand il s'agit de notre pays. Depuis une année, nous avons entendu dire que les Singapouriens ont été recrutés afin de venir de l'avant avec un plan de restructuration au niveau de la CWA, et nous aider afin de régler ce problème. Or, une année après, M. le président, rien n'a été fait. Le rapport - ce que je comprends - a été déposé, le gouvernement a mis sur pied un *High-Powered committee* et jusqu'à maintenant, on n'entend rien, M. le président.

Je vais terminer, M. le président, par un sujet sur lequel j'ai posé beaucoup de questions, notamment la *Wastewater Management Authority*. Il y a plusieurs gros projets qui ont été réalisés où il y a eu des dépenses en dehors de la valeur du contrat, M. le président. Dans le cas du *Tombeau Bay Sewerage project*, il y a 61% d'augmentation sur le projet. Le projet initial était de R 464 millions et le projet complété un montant de R 750 millions, c'est-à-dire plus de R 286 millions, M. le président. C'est la même affaire sur le projet de Plaines Wilhems où le projet était évalué à R 886 millions. Le projet est terminé pour un montant de R 1,3 milliard, c'est-à-dire R 446 millions de plus. Le directeur de l'audit, dans son rapport, a fait état de cette situation, et le président de l'Association des consommateurs a fait une déposition à l'*ICAC* concernant ces projets. Nous, ce qu'on a eu comme réponse au Parlement c'est qu'effectivement il y a eu des problèmes, mais deux cadres de cet organisme ont été suspendus. Il y a eu un *Fact Finding Committee* sur ces projets et les dépenses liées à ce projet, M. le président. Et vous allez être surpris, M. le président, de voir ce qu'il y a dans *l'executive summary* de ce rapport pour qu'il y ait une suspension de deux cadres de cet organisme. Je vais citer, M. le président, quelques

paragraphe de ce rapport, que je trouve très appropriés, pour comprendre un peu ce qui se passe dans ce pays. Dans ce cas précis, le rapport qui a été institué par le gouvernement a eu comme *Chairman*, le Dr. Allyboccus, et comme assesseurs, Messieurs Nemchand et Rojous.

Ils viennent dire dans le rapport que le premier fait qu'il faut noter c'est que –

“The WMA, as a result of this, contravened the Public Procurement Act.”

Ils sont allés à l'encontre d'une loi de notre pays, M. le président.

La deuxième chose, quand j'avais posé la question au ministre concerné, il m'avait fait comprendre, M. le président, que c'était au niveau de la WMA. Or, dans le rapport, il est dit –

“The financial issues were identified since May 2008 - that is, those overpayment - and the parent Ministry chaired two meetings to identify the problem and to seek an appropriate solution. Unfortunately, the meeting scheduled by the Ministry to finalise matters never took place. The WMA, for its part, did not pursue matters with the parent Ministry and with the CWA.”

On parle de paiements de l'ordre de R 1,750,000,000. *Unfortunately, the meeting scheduled by the Ministry to finalise matters never took place.*

Ce qui est plus intéressant, M. le président –

“The records further reveal that the General Manager – qui touche son salaire tous les mois, avec tous les bénéfices qui y sont attachés – was simply not in the picture, not by accident but by choice. He simply allowed the Project Manager and the Project Director to have a free hand on the project and he did not consider it important to establish any mechanism to ensure the proper management of the project.”

Où se trouve ce *General Manager* aujourd'hui? Il faut dire son nom ici. Monsieur Soonarane, où il est aujourd'hui? C'est ça qu'il faut savoir. Deux malheureux officiers *have been taken to task and the General Manager of that organisation is working somewhere else, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.* Plus loin, et je termine le dernier paragraphe –

“By virtue of section 11(2)(a) of the Wastewater Management Authority Act, the General Manager, as Chief Executive Officer of the Authority, is responsible for the day to day running of the organisation. Furthermore, all the staff of the Authority has to report to

him. In such circumstances, the committee is of the view that prime responsibility for the breach of the WMA Act and the Public Procurement Act rests with the General Manager.”

On a eu des boucs émissaires dans ce cas, mais *at the end of the day* le résultat c’est que les contribuables doivent payer pour ces R 700 millions de plus, M. le président. Voilà un peu, M. le président, comment ce pays est géré dans des secteurs qui sont extrêmement importants pour le pays.

M. le président, je vais terminer en disant ceci. Depuis un certain temps, ce gouvernement démontre beaucoup de volonté pour aider les pauvres. Mais la question qu’il faut se poser est: est-ce que l’aide que ce gouvernement veut apporter aux pauvres arrive éventuellement à ces pauvres ? On a eu le cas des matériaux de construction tels que des tôles et du bois pour les petites maisons. Est-ce qu’il n’est pas l’heure de se poser la question. Les intermédiaires qui sont des organisations non gouvernementales mais qui ne sont peut-être pas enregistrées ; ceux qui se présentent comme étant proche de ce parti politique. Est-ce qu’il n’y a pas effectivement un détournement de fonds, au lieu que ces fonds aillent exactement là où ils doivent aller...

(Interruptions)

Je ne l’ai pas dit, c’est l’honorable Assirvaden qui l’a dit. Est-ce que cet argent-là ne va pas vers des activistes politiques, M. le président ?

(Interruptions)

Est-ce qu’il ne faudrait pas se poser la question aujourd’hui, M. le président ? Parce qu’on peut avoir toute la volonté du monde. Je retourne vers l’émission que j’ai regardé, et que peut-être d’autres parmi nous ont regardé sur Réunion Première, qui démontre une Ile Maurice où les gens souffrent, où il y a de la misère et où il y a de la peine. M. le président, aujourd’hui, parler de dignité humaine ne veut pas dire grand-chose, M. le président. Est-ce qu’on a les yeux voilés ou fermés au point de ne pas voir ce qui se passe dans notre pays ? Il y a de la misère, M. le président, et je pense que cette misère et cette souffrance, les gens vont l’exprimer dans les jours et dans les mois qui viennent parce qu’ils auront l’occasion – parfois il faut corriger des gens ou il faut corriger un gouvernement pour qu’on arrive à avoir des résultats. Je pense que cette correction viendra éventuellement avec les élections.

Merci.

(2.51 p.m.)

Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I start, I would like to remind my colleague from Constituency No. 4, who just spoke and who was Minister in 2003, that when talking of Cité Perdue - I am wondering, I do not want to go further - we know who got it regularised and, if I am not mistaken, it was done by the same person who spoke just before me.

We come to Constituency No. 4; we talk of squatters. Hon. Lesjongard just mentioned squatters of Cité La Cure who were to be relocated to Batterie Cassée. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we find people coming to parliament buttering up, but, unfortunately, when it comes to *le terrain*, you see people go and manipulate things in the constituency...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Kasenally knows there were 125 squatters from Cité La Cure to be relocated to Batterie Cassée with all the amenities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. More than hundred of those people decided to move to Batterie Cassée. Still, people brought politics in it. Instead of thinking under humanitarian ground as this government did, those people, I can guarantee you - I am from that constituency and we do not want to do politics here, but, we should remember...

(Interruptions)

We should remember that we did not see whether these people were MMM or MSM. Hon. Dr. Kasenally gave them housing and all the facilities required, and they are living peacefully. A group of 25 people remains because hon. Lesjongard manipulated those people...

(Interruptions)

...telling them...

(Interruptions)

...that this was ...

(Interruptions)

But these are facts....

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: On a point of order.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Juggoo: *Mo tour causer là.* No way! Mr Deputy Speaker, when the hon. Member spoke, we listened.

(Interruptions)

Now, when I am replying back, he should listen.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has got a point of order; let us listen to his point of order!

Mr Lesongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Member is imputing motives by saying that I am manipulating people in my constituency.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, actually when we come to...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, make your point, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that the hon. Member in saying that I am manipulating people in my constituency. She is imputing motives. I would wish that the hon. Member withdraws that word 'manipulating'.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Juggoo: I am not going to withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because whatever happened, these are facts.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I will kindly request the hon. Member to withdraw the word 'manipulating'.

Mrs Juggoo: Okay, I withdraw the word ‘manipulated’, but I stick to the fact that the hon...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want complete silence now. I do not want any hon. Member to interrupt the Member who is speaking now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs cannot threaten us like this.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

(Interruptions)

Please carry on hon. Member!

Mrs Juggoo: As I said, I will continue on what I was saying where Batterie Cassée is concerned ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, on a point of order. We cannot accept that we are being threatened by our friend from the other side, and I can mention the name; the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs is threatening us.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I will kindly request the hon. Members to allow the hon. Member to ...

Mr Bhagwan: We are being harassed by them!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: ... intervene without any interruption, please!

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, in Batterie Cassée, 125 people were relocated very easily. Politicians from the constituency influenced 25 of them, and this is what the hon. Member was referring to.

(Interruptions)

And those 25 people were being influenced even to the extent of going very communal, in the state of those people not being relocated to Batterie Cassée, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Secondly, when we are talking of electricity and water, we have to remind my colleague, hon. Lesjongard, that Karo Kalyptis is in Constituency No. 4. In 2000, he was the Minister of Housing, and he had ample time to relocate those people, to make them proprietors of those lands.

(Interruptions)

Today, it is us, this government, who came in and relocated those 65 families. We have to thank hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, the Prime Minister and hon. Dr. Kasenally.

Talking of wastewater...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mrs Juggoo: Taking of wastewater in Terre Rouge, again the Constituency No. 4, we are having a survey being carried out right now. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister knows about it.

(Interruptions)

I would allow...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the first principle economics – I feel sorry to see people behaving like that - teach us that men and women have insatiable wants but the means to satisfy these wants...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, please allow the hon. Member to intervene uninterrupted!

Mrs Juggoo: I said the first principle economics teach us that men and women have insatiable wants but the means to satisfy these wants are woefully limited, and many people do

not understand that. I hear all the Opposition Members talking about this has not been done or that has not been done, on which I will come back later to explain a few things.

Hon. Xavier Duval, against a backdrop of downturn in economic activity leading to 2008-2012 global recession and culminating with the Euro zone sovereign debt crisis, has skilfully managed to strike a balance between social objectives and economic imperatives. We have seen a Minister at his best, maintaining core economic fundamentals by blending macro-economic policies with a laudable set of social inclusive policies that target the most vulnerable citizens of the country in light of the country's constraints, not as hon. Li Kwong Wing was saying yesterday.

The economic crisis still looms large in the near horizon, and many observers predict a trajectory not dissimilar to that of cyclone Carol in the 1960s. Even so, many harbingers of ill-omens continue to lampoon the hon. Minister, criticising – as we have just heard hon. Lesjongard saying – unjustifiably the Budget as a non-event. Some editors even give me the impression of neither having read the Budget in depth or not even having listened carefully to the Minister's speech. The Minister is both a good observer and a fine listener. The measures that he has announced to reduce the perceived abuses in the banking sector and the effort he has deployed to protect the environment, for instance, cannot be ignored. I shall subsequently return to these issues in a few minutes.

In this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Labour/PMSD Social Alliance Government, under the leadership of the able Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, has once more laid a new strong foundation for Mauritius to take a big leap, not as said by hon. Seeruttun – *avancer à reculer*. At every turn of development, opponents of the Labour Party have cooked arguments to oppose progress; you hear them saying “*chiffre statistique inne fausser, magouille*”, stooping down to that level, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Fortunately, the Labour Party Leader is made with a different mettle, and rarely does it despair or abandon the combat. What has not the Opposition invented to accuse the hon. Prime Minister of violating democracy and avoiding political reforms? However, the hon. Prime Minister does not enjoy wasting his time on trivial issues. He thinks. He calculates. He has a vision and operates with mission. This is why he was not in haste. With his enlightened mind, he continues showing the way to progress and real achievements. Take, for instance, the municipal elections!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our opponents had an undisputed majority with ample time, as I have said earlier, when they were in power, but their leadership was weak. They were indecisive and failed to reach a consensus. Eventually, there was a lot of talk – we heard it just now – and they struggled in a stalemate situation, missing the boat, with no action ultimately. They could have performed and done better than that. They could have performed and done a lot actually. But, unfortunately, it is only criticism, criticism and criticism.

In contrast, the Labour Party and its ally took action, brought reforms, ensured women's representation, reduced costs and permitted more people to participate in public affairs, by restricting Members of the National Assembly to participate in local government elections. The Opposition again felt that there will be no election. The hon. Prime Minister, optimally exploiting his constitutional prerogatives, first gave rural elections, and took the Opposition by surprise to give urban elections. The Opposition, which was clamouring on top of every tower, was suddenly in disarray with the first fissures and dissent made public. How can we entrust such people with power?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I earlier mentioned that this government, and in particular the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, is surfing against all odds to maintain growth and ensure fair allocation of resources. While the European countries, including some of much advanced such as Italy are struggling with huge fiscal deficits, debts and high unemployment rates, Mauritius expects a 2.2% fiscal deficit. This is a highly laudable achievement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is thanks to such impressive performance that the World Heritage Foundation ranks Mauritius amongst the top eight economic achievers and, in terms of fiscal policies, we have nothing to envy from countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand or Australia. We are in a transition period, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is what we should understand. The world is picking up. Growth in the UK is positive, but still slow. France too is emerging from the crisis, and the French President, Mr François Hollande, has stated recently that Europe is emerging from the crisis, and soon the Euro currency crisis will be a thing of the past. The US is forecast to grow at a modest rate, but the fiscal cliff with impending tax rises because of a contraction in world economy. Like in the Budget we said that in the East, growth in China, although still high, will slow down while that of India is expected to be below 6%. Japan, however, is stagnating with almost zero economic growth.

We need to be cautious, and the Minister, with reason, is moving with caution. Four per cent growth may be below our potential. However, we have to remind the Opposition that the average annual growth during the years 2000-2005 was only 4.3% when the economic conjuncture was definitely brighter than what it is now. Indeed, had they taken the proper decisions, many of these problems that were legated to us would not have arisen. They had ample opportunities to steer the economy into safer waters, but they led our country to dangerous reefs. I believe they are intelligent people sitting on the other side, and their memory is not short either. The year they left the government, economic growth was a mere 2.2%; one of the lowest of modern Mauritius. No wonder they were booted out! Jobs losses were common, and the trend was rising. This government reversed the trend and has contained further losses, but is very optimistic that it will harness it.

The measures in this Budget will create the climate and prepare the country to ride on the crest of world recovery the moment the economy of our trading partners picks up, and this is not very far. What has the government done to be so optimistic, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The truth is that the Budget presented by hon. Xavier-Luc Duval contains the seeds of a rapid recovery. Let us visit some of them quickly. It is no secret that banks were not in a very strong position vis-à-vis their clients. We heard others talking from the other side, but they have to see to be realistic. Some banks were so unscrupulous, introducing charges as it pleased them that they have been treated as banksters to rhyme with gangsters. With one stroke of the pen, the hon. Minister has triggered a process that will stop bankers from over-exploiting their position of power.

Many critics, including top editorialists, did not find anything positive to create the enabling climate, but cutting banks to size, this government will reduce the cost of banking services, economic operators, and indirectly sharpen their international competitiveness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the SMEs would benefit from this measure to the maximum; so will big firms. The outstanding loans some small operators were unable to honour to DBM will be written off as well, and this is very good. Again, this will liberate them to undertake new economic activities. Internet costs are declining. This will not only improve access, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but will also improve Internet literacy and prepare the nation to rise to a new economy of e-commerce, e-government or e-banking. Any firm can now seize the opportunity to

do business, as government prepares the nation to move to the e-age. This government is diversifying not only its economic base, but also its marketing outlets. The trend in textile exports and in tourism sourcing are clear cases of the progress achieved.

Today, South Africa stands as a big lion waiting to meet the expanding production of Mauritius which Europe cannot absorb. South Africa absorbs almost some 18% of textile, a figure not too far from US imports from Mauritius. The Lions in Africa are waking up from their slumber. The cub needs to establish itself through strategic decision at the opportune time if we are not to rise to the expectation of our people, as hon. Arvin Boolell explained very clearly on this matter yesterday. The Minister has judged it appropriate to open the door wider to Africa. He has not put in place an Africa's strategy. While the private sector is doing its part to the Africa club, the Minister is allocating investment resources to modernise the ports and cater for Africa demands. If efforts will be deployed to explore and set links with African countries, investment will be geared towards strengthening our ports and cargo handling services, enhancing productivity to make us a competitive, innovative and efficient port cannot be over-emphasised Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Government's role is to legislate, create the enabling climate and synergy, build appropriate capacity and infrastructure, and prepare the nation to investment in human capital. That is precisely what this government has done in this Budget.

Many critics expect the government to be a player, but that would betray a poor knowledge of the role of government too much and too direct. Government intervention will crowd out resources and stifle private sector initiatives. The hon. Minister of Finance has skilfully struck the proper balance. Only time can tell how right and appropriate his vision is, but the cherry on the cake remains his social policies.

The hon. Minister has not forgotten his brief transitory time spent at the Ministry of Social Integration. It must have been an enriching and touching experience, judging from the measures he has introduced. He has acted as a caring Minister, with a heart in bold letters, although the heart is not his symbol. His measures will go in the annals of socioeconomic history as one of the most compassionate to ease the destitute and the vulnerable segment of the population. One gets the impression that his short stay at the Ministry of Integration has impregnated him with unparalleled sense of generosity. The outgoing government did introduce the ZEP concept, but its effectiveness has been limited. Now we are providing a hot meal. Few

people can imagine the value of such a measure. Only those who have a close experience with such people can appreciate how positive this measure is. I have anecdotes of children who preferred to while their time because they had no bread to bring as lunch and, therefore, were constantly absent from classes. Now this measure fills in a vacuum, ensures greater effectiveness of the ZEP project, and alleviates poverty at the same time. The hot meal to the 9,200 students in the ZEP project is indeed a very good measure. Few people imagine the impact of such a measure can have on a child, the relief on parents, and impact years later on the health and productivity of the future human resource. We are nurturing for the development of this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Once again, many critics have degenerated into negative tirades. Some have argued that there are also poor students in the non-ZEP schools. The government is aware of this, but has provided child benefits subject to a salary ceiling. It is too easy to criticise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Some critics say that the salary ceiling is too low. What we can say is that the Minister has made the first step; Rome was not built in a day after all! I have no doubt that, as the economy picks up, the government in its wisdom will gradually extend this measure to other beneficiaries, as it makes both economic and social sense. The government is not exalted by money consideration, but by a social welfare approach with a high sense of values. One should understand what is welfare, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I feel this quotation from a great British Philosopher, Bertrand Russell, aptly fits the initiative of this government. I quote –

“The most valuable things in life are not measured in monetary terms. The real important things are not houses and lands, stocks and bonds, automobiles and real estate, but friendship, trust, confidence, empathy, mercy, love and faith”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the youth is the future of this country. We are tenants of this country; we have to ensure that we leave them a legacy that they would be proud of. Youth would remember the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, as one who has cared most for them, unflinchingly forwarding their cause. He has allocated a budget of some Rs330 m., reintroduced inter-college sport, created training facilities to endow working experience to young graduates as well as non-graduates, and provided new opportunities under the MID project in the form of education. This Budget proposes an unprecedented project to promote Internet literacy and prepare youth to enter the technology world. While every student of Form IV will be eligible to receive a computer tablet, considerable resources are being injected to link every school by optical fibre to the telecommunications network. The dimension and magnitude

of this ambitious project needs further comments. Many sceptics have been puzzled by the decision to select Form IV students. The reason is simple, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Given the life of a computer tablet, and taking into account that every student would spend four years in secondary school, it is obvious what we need to start at Form IV to optimise the utilisation of the computer, and ensure the cost effectiveness of the project.

Before concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to throw an idea for this House to reflect upon. I have no doubt that everyone in this august Assembly wishes the best welfare for our citizens. Indeed, the objective of this Budget is to seek to bring happiness to the people of Mauritius, and welfare is the nearest concept to happiness.

My colleague, hon. Nita Deerpalsing, recently raised the issue that because the economic measure of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) does not reflect accurately wealth and welfare, we need to look for an alternative. I share that reflection with my colleague, hon. Nita Deerpalsing. The Kingdom of Bhutan has an interesting measure, which is endorsed by the UN, and on which Academicians from several international Universities such as Australian National University are working. It is called Gross National Happiness; the GNH.

Beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side to complement and reinforce each other. Our society is losing some of its values. The four pillars of GNH are the promotion of sustainable development - like our MID project -

- energy;
- education;
- employment;
- environment;
- equity as core values;
- preservation and promotion of cultural values;
- conservation of the natural environment, and
- establishment of good governance.

The concept of GNH is transcultural. A nation needs not to be religious to value - I repeat, a nation needs not to be religious to value -

- sustainable development;
- cultural integrity;
- ecosystem;
- conservation, and
- good governance.

Our nation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is losing its values. Family traditions are being tossed aside; too often socially deviant behaviour replaces ethical and moral values. Indeed, the world and Mauritius have been confronted with an ethical crisis. Transgression of ethical values led to the financial crisis and global economic recession. Mauritius also had its share of public and private firms' scandal. If we wish to legate to our youth new values, we need to create an index to measure changes and deviation. Inculcating a little of the teachings of the Greek philosophers in our educational system would not be out of tune, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The need for virtues, an intermediate approach, generosity, or utilitarianism is as important as gross national product or inflation.

Let me round up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Short and simple, the 2013 Budget reconciles social imperatives with economic fundamentals, while creating the conditions to boost growth against a backdrop of a hostile international economic environment. It may be fitting to emulate Sir Winston Churchill in the face of challenging times given the importance of the Budget, and say -

“Let us, therefore, brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the Mauritian Nation lasts for thousands of years, men will say: ‘This was their finest hour’.”

Let me, therefore, round up to congratulate the Prime Minister, the Vice-Prime Minister, and all our colleagues who contributed for their masterly stroke.

My speech will not be complete if I do not speak a little bit on my constituency; a two-minute talk. I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister and all colleague Ministers who have contributed to continue progress and development in our Constituency No. 4. Lots have been done compared to what was done before 2005; especially the NDU, hon. Anil Bachoo, and the Minister of Environment, hon. Virahsawmy and, of course, all the hon. Ministers who have contributed as well. I would like to especially thank hon. Bachoo for the Tosca Bridge in Crève

Coeur, the Parampot Bridge and Blackburn Bridge in Congomah, the drains in Long Mountain, the pavements in St. Croix, in Vallée des Prêtres. The drains at Briquetterie had been awaited for 28 years, and no action was taken. We await action to be taken soon.

Thank you. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister, as well as all friends.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, Mr Speaker will take the Chair.

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

(3.25 p.m.)

Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Speaker, Sir, after having listened to my two friends from my former constituency, I am once more appealing to the Deputy Prime Minister - even if I am a MP from Constituency No. 12 - after several PQs regarding the problem at Cité La Cure, *sur une base humanitaire, de trouver une solution pour ces gens qui habitent à Cité La Cure.*

M. le président, vendredi dernier, nous avons assisté à un film, avec comme acteur principal le ministre des Finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, qui a eu l'oscar du meilleur ministre des Finances de l'Afrique.

Après une heure et quarante cinq minutes de projection, l'honorable vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances nous a gratifiés d'un vrai numéro d'acteur lors de sa présentation du budget, et la population a regretté ce film, du déjà vu, qui a été un flop magistral, avec des propositions, mais sans actions. Savez-vous, M. le président, que pendant ce temps, vendredi dernier, quelques figurants du film somnolaient ? *And this is our caring government, where the Prime Minister means business.*

L'attente de la population a été grande, mais le ministre est passé à côté de la plaque. Ce fut une déception totale à tous les niveaux. M. le président, depuis sept ans, le pays connaît un appauvrissement constant. La classe moyenne fait face à d'énormes difficultés, et a rejoint maintenant celle au bas de l'échelle, tombant tous dans la misère noire, creusant ainsi l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres, année après année.

En une phrase, M. le président, comme on dit très bien dans notre jargon mauricien, ce gouvernement '*pé boire di sang le peuple goutte à goutte*'. Le pouvoir d'achat de la classe

moyenne diminue depuis que ce Premier ministre est au pouvoir. C'est ça ce *caring government where the Prime Minister means business*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, if this government pretends that this Budget is meant for the common people, then they are completely wrong. These people are always struggling to earn a decent living and, as you are fully aware, the present situation is very hard for them; it is almost impossible for them to make both ends meet. I believe that a reduction of the VAT on the basic commodities would have been of a great help for them, in the venture of alleviating the daily sufferings. VAT is a major source of revenue for the government, derived mostly from the expenditure effected largely by the consumers for their daily needs. Unfortunately, this money is being thrown down the drain by this government, mostly by the *'politique de petits copains'*. This is supposed to be a caring government with a Prime Minister who means business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a reduction in the FDI and private investment has brought about a situation of unemployment which quite resembles the dark days of the seventies. Unemployment means social unrest, desperation among the youngsters in quest of their first jobs. It is quite normal that we are experiencing aggressions everyday, thefts with unprecedented violence, and crimes up to now unknown in Mauritius.

Security is not assured for the local people as well as for the tourists. The number of old people, mainly females, who are attacked with extreme violence; and these are reported everyday in the press. We will not forget the case of Michaela Harte, which is a glaring example of insecurity not only on the streets but inside our hotels, which are supposed to be highly protected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this aggression on Mrs Harte has thrown discredit on our tourist industry, which is presently struggling to survive in the phase of intense competition and worldwide economic crisis. The number of incoming tourists is diminishing, and the impact of the assassination of Michaela Harte is not good news for this industry. And this is a caring government where the hon. Prime Minister means business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, how can you explain that the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance were all away from the

country, when their presence were highly needed after the official 2013 PRB report was publicised? Is this what we call a caring government, as they always emphasise in this House and in the press?

M. le président, comme annoncé pendant le discours du l'honorable ministre des Finances, tous les élèves des écoles ZEP auront un repas chaud, et là *tu bann membres gouvernement inn tape la table comme d'habitude*. Mais laissez-moi vous rafraichir la mémoire. C'est ce même gouvernement *quand ti rasse dipain dans la bouche zenfan lecol, tous ces mêmes membres du gouvernement ti tape la table comme d'habitude*, and they always pretend to be a caring government. The hon. Prime Minister means business. C'est bien le président du PTr qui à chaque fois dit que l'honorable Premier ministre *means business*. *It's true, he is right !* M. le président, ce gouvernement vient encore une fois promettre des tablettes aux 20,000 étudiants de la Forme IV. Pourrait-on conclure que c'est un *bribe* électoral en cette période d'élections régionales et municipales ? M. le président, où sont les *laptops*, comme promis en fanfare par ce même gouvernement aux étudiants du *Lower VI* ? Ces enfants attendent toujours leurs *laptops* en disant 'Anne ma sœur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir ?' *We can fool somebody for some time, but we cannot fool everybody every time. Forget not that these Form VI pupils are now eligible to vote and will sanction this supposed caring government in the coming regional and municipal elections.*

(Interruptions)

M. le président, l'année dernière ...

(Interruptions)

Nou pe donn zott tous la roue qui nou inn fini servi, alle faire rebuild ! Nou servi la roue neuf, zott servi rebuild.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, l'année dernière, lors de mon discours sur le budget, j'avais mentionné que le budget de l'année 2012 était un budget fade, décousu et sans vision. Je réitère, encore une fois, la même constance de ce présent budget : toujours sans vision, décousu, fade, trafiqué et mensonger. Nous remarquons un manque de rigueur dans ce présent budget, sans vraie réforme fiscale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as we all know, due to world economic crisis, some great European countries like France are taking necessary and adequate measures to tax people with high income earnings. By so doing, this will have two-fold objectives. Firstly, taking money from '*les gros paltos*' and secondly, remove completely taxes imposed on middle class people to enable them to meet the two ends.

Selon l'économiste Chandan Jankee, en raison de la baisse actuelle de la croissance, tant que la classe moyenne s'appauvrira, il sera difficile de relancer l'économie. Il suggère de revoir à la hausse le niveau de salaire de la classe moyenne et de les soulager de leur *income tax deduction*.

M. le président, afin d'accroître nos revenus, il nous faudra un contrôle sévère sur les gaspillages de l'Etat, comme mentionné dans le dernier rapport du Directeur de l'audit. Pourquoi autant de voyages de nos élus à l'étranger, avec des centaines de millions de roupies gaspillées en billets d'avion, hébergement et *stipend* ?

(Interruptions)

Je peux le dire. Cela va faire huit années que je suis là, et je n'ai fait que trois voyages.

(Interruptions)

Quand on compare le nombre de voyages que les membres du gouvernement ont fait ! Plus d'une trentaine ! Je ne suis pas jaloux. Je crois que mon honorable ami, en deux ans, a fait plus de trente voyages.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Mr Jhugroo: Avec des centaines de millions de roupies comme je l'ai dit, gaspillées pour payer les frais des billets d'avion, hébergement et *stipend*.

(Interruptions)

Non, mo pas gros poumon moi ! Mo pas mort pour ça ! Pas couma toi !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruption!

Mr Jhugroo: Nous savons tous qu'avec la modernisation dans le monde, la communication à travers l'internet, et principalement par voie de téléconférence, n'est qu'une simple formalité à moindre frais.

Can we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, how much money has been spent by our hon. Prime Minister and his delegation since the beginning of this year on their foreign trips abroad? The public wants to know the reason why he always stopover in London during all his foreign missions.

(Interruptions)

Tout porte à croire qu'il est notre Premier ministre offshore, car le peuple sait qu'il est un Globe-trotter. L'honorable Premier ministre penserait-il que notre pays peut être dirigé par pilotage automatique ou par *remote control* de Londres? C'est ça ce *caring government where the hon. Prime Minister means business?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last auditor's report on the MBC mentioned the huge amount of money wasted on the purchasing of films at very expensive costs, and same has not been broadcast so far. Let me recall you, Mr Speaker, Sir, that three years ago, I drew the attention of the hon. Prime Minister, through a PNQ, about this money wastage at the MBC on that particular item. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is well aware about my numerous PQs addressed to him regarding the mismanagement, recruitment and other serious issues. We note so far that nothing positive has been entertained by the hon. Prime Minister because the MBC is perceived *comme un outil de propagande pour ce gouvernement*. And this is our caring government, and the Prime Minister means business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *comment le Premier ministre, qui se prétend être un grand défenseur des institutions, peut-il permettre au Directeur de la MBC de faire des recrutements dans plusieurs départements en ignorant totalement les procédures de recrutement ?* It is to be noted that several *petits copains* have been recruited as security officers, *alors que le nouveau bâtiment de la MBC est pourvu de* Police Officers, SMF officers, equipped with CCTV cameras. You have got secured door code lock placed everywhere. And adding insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir, two among the new security recruits have been sacked for having stolen powdered milk.

This is our caring government. Mr Speaker, Sir! Caring for our *petits copains! Et c'est ça qu'on appelle le Premier ministre* means business, *comme le martèle le président à chaque conférence de presse.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is again very sad to note that, despite le *petit peuple* is contributing about Rs360 m. annually from their pocket to the MBC, they have been penalised by having only eight football matches broadcast by the MBC during the Euro 2012. This is a caring government and the Prime Minister means business!

Mr Speaker, Sir, in his Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance announced detaxation on televisions of 32 inches and above which cost approximately Rs41,000. Do you think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the middle and the lower class people *peuvent se permettre un tel luxe* and, if so, for what purpose? To watch le *Premier ministre et ses acolytes défilant tous les jours à la télévision.* This is called a caring government, and where the Prime Minister means business!

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that the STC has lost a huge amount of Rs5.4 billion with the gambling exercise done by this government, having at its head, the chief pilot, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. The hedging exercise was meant for the petroleum products. As we all know, this decision was not approved by the Cabinet Minister prior to this decision. Can we know why no action was taken against the then Minister? The Bhadain report on STC was very damning, and the present Minister of Commerce and Industry informed this House that a sitting Magistrate was supposed to open an enquiry on this matter. Up to now, Mr Speaker, Sir, *zéro plombage. Tout ce qui Premier ministre dire li faire le contraire. Entretemps, le peuple continue à subir ce fardeau de l'incompétence de l'actuel gouvernement.* And this is our caring government where the Prime Minister means business.

At Air Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been another gambling exercise known as hedging, where the amount lost is more than Rs10 billion. Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that with this amount the Air Mauritius Company could have bought two new aircrafts for additional flights on the European and Asian markets? In this case, Mr Speaker, Sir, *zéro l'enquête du gouvernement!* Is this what they call a caring government where the Prime Minister means business? What a big business!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hedging exercise at Air Mauritius indirectly falls under the authority of the Prime Minister. When asked if he knows what has led to the hedging problem, he said that

he was not aware. How is it possible, Mr Speaker, Sir? Where such a big amount of public money is involved to repay a debt, out of flagrant mismanagement, the population has got to bear the huge burden. And these people who form part of the management of Air Mauritius are appointed by whom? The Prime Minister! On this line, the Prime Minister and the government have failed completely. At a time when we are clamouring every day that 7000 families are living in extreme poverty, their conditions of living can hardly be considered humane. This government is squandering large amounts of money on futilities. And the same government is said to be caring for their needy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget looks like it has not made any provision for the creation of new jobs, especially for professionals. Do you know how many qualified doctors, and those fully qualified coming from different universities, are still on the lookout for their first job? Most of these people come from the working class, where their parents have been indebted heavily to invest massively in their studies. Being unemployed, Mr Speaker, Sir, and sitting idle at home is causing them great harm and frustration. What this supposed caring government is doing for them? Nothing!

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, what has the whole nation witnessed? The PPS, hon. Dhirajsingh Khamajeet, in one of the Labour meetings in his constituency, confessed the way of recruiting the Labour people without following the normal procedures, to the detriment of those who are more qualified.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member has just made very serious allegations against a hon. Member of this House. And, for those reasons, I humbly request that he be asked to withdraw those allegations. What he has said here is unacceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir. He can go on with his debate.

Mr Speaker: So, I would advise the hon. Member to make sure that the facts on which he relies and which are contained in his speech are true facts. He takes the responsibility of the facts he is advancing in this House. If he is not sure of the facts that he is advancing in his speech, I would suggest he withdraws them.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that this issue was heard in this Assembly and in the country. People are well aware of what I am saying today.

Mr Speaker: I have made a suggestion. If you withdraw, you proceed.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: May I intervene, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: On a point of order or what?

Mr Jugnauth: On this point of order that has been raised.

Mr Speaker: All right!

Mr Jugnauth: This matter has been reported on the radio. There is a recording. If Mr Speaker would wish, we can provide a recording whereby hon. DSK himself has intervened on the radio.

Mr Mohamed: On this very point, maybe the hon. Member who just intervened, hon. Jugnauth, is not aware of all the facts. This very point about a recording and the whole subject matter of this recording is before the IBA, and this matter has to be thrashed out before the IBA. So, if this matter is before the IBA, nothing has been thrashed out as yet. It is, therefore, necessary for us to show some *retenue* until an institution like the IBA pronounces itself. In the meantime, I humbly request that we allow the IBA institution to sort it out and, in the meantime, we refrain from making any comments whereby he goes as far as to say that the Member confessed. Who knows whether he confessed or not - he never confessed anything. As Mr Speaker said rightly so, let's make sure that we get the facts right, and let's *en respect des institutions* allow institutions to function. That's all.

Mr Jhugroo: So, I withdraw the word 'confess' I heard on radio.

Mr Speaker: That is better.

Mr Jhugroo: Whenever a Labour politician is involved in fraud and corruption, all institutions, be it ICAC and others *inn paralysed*. Do you know why ...

Mr Mohamed: Once again, on a point of order. He is making serious allegations against an institution, and he is not allowed to do so according to the standing orders. This is a serious allegation against an institution. If he wants to do so, he can go by way of motion.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: So, you simply withdraw it. You simply withdraw what you just said, and then you proceed.

Mr Jhugroo: I am still waiting ICAC inquiring into what happened regarding a Councillor at Quatre Bornes and, on this issue, nothing up to now. We have seen other cases where people have been judged...

Mr Speaker: If the matter is before the ICAC and the ICAC has not yet completed its work, I would suggest that we better wait for the outcome before you can comment. So, refrain from commenting on what the ICAC...

Mr Jhugroo: I just mentioned what I had to mention.

Mr Speaker: I am making the suggestion so that no prejudice is caused to any inquiry that is going on. Proceed now!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Office of Public Sector Governance has been set up under the Prime Minister's Office. It will, in priority, assist public enterprises to improve governance, efficiency, services, and get out waste. Quelle est l'utilité de cette mesure, M. le président, après que le pays ait connu d'énormes gaspillages et des dilapidations de fonds publics. Le rapport de l'audit sanctionne ce *mismanagement* du gouvernement actuel. L'octroi du contrat pour le transport des produits pétroliers par voie maritime, connu comme le scandale du siècle, Betamax, est contraire à l'esprit de bonne gouvernance. M. le président, comme nous l'avons tous constaté, ce contrat d'une durée de quinze ans, taillé sur mesure à la faveur du clan Bhunjun et consort, contient beaucoup de zones d'ombre, et tout cela, M. le président, conclu sans l'autorisation du SLO et ni appel d'offres.

Mr Mohamed: Once again on a point of order! Is it serious saying that there is a *contrat taillé sur mesure*? This is making a serious allegation of fraud again. Once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should not take advantage of this position in this House to just throw allegations against a company that is not here to defend itself; a company that is a stranger according to standing orders. That's not allowed.

Mr Speaker: I'll say that the hon. speaker will take full responsibility of the allegations he is making and that he will abide by my point of view.

(Interruptions)

I have said that you will take full responsibility of the allegations that you are making.

Mr Jhugroo: I think that, if it is not *taillé sur mesure*, it's good to table a copy of the contract *pour la transparence*.

Mr Speaker: Please, when you use the words '*taillé sur mesure*', you are insinuating something that is not legal. Proceed!

Mr Jhugroo: So, this is a caring government, where the Prime Minister means business. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House the following historical events: in 1972, the then Labour Government postponed the general election. In 1974, there has been the replacement of all elected Councillors in all Municipalities by nominated Commissions. In year 1981, the Municipal Elections were postponed. Last, but not the least, in year 2010, the Municipal...

Mr Speaker: Well, I'll have to intervene now. Please give way. Look, we are debating on the Budget. What has the Municipal Election got to do with the Budget?

(Interruptions)

Please no cross talking.

Mr Jhugroo: Local authorities form part of my speech on the Budget. What a shame, Mr Speaker, Sir! Despite several PQs addressed to the hon. Minister regarding the misbehaviour of our Councillors, nothing has been done by the hon. Minister Aimée to remedy the situation. How can you believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Minister of Local Government has his brother as adviser in his Ministry, and his daughter is nominated on the Board of LGSC! And this is called a caring government...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please wait! Hon. Member, you should not make this kind of allegation. I have said that if you make unfounded and unjustified allegations, you take the full responsibility of them. Though you can benefit from the privilege, there are limits to your privilege. Therefore, avoid making allegations and proceed with your speech on the Budget.

Mr Jhugroo: Yes. *La vérité blesse. M. le président, après l'épisode de la distribution des tempos à Flacq, et la distribution de l'argent pendant la partielle de Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière, voila que ce gouvernement récidive...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, I am on my feet. Wait! I repeat: as long as you speak on the Budget, you will have all the latitude from the Chair. What has got 'tempo' to do with the Budget of the Vice-Prime Minister? Well, this is not correct; it is irrelevant. So, I would invite the hon. Member to be relevant.

Mr Jhugroo: My point is that, after tempo, money distributed in Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière, we have seen *recrutement des travailleurs* in local authorities recently and *l'asphaltage des routes par la NDU et le ministère à la veille des élections*.

Mr Bachoo: The hon. Member is trying to impute motives on everybody when throughout the year road works are conducted. Why is he specifically hitting at my Ministry on the eve of an election? I find it very strange.

Mr Speaker: Well, I have expressed my views that this debate should be focused on the Budget. This debate has nothing to do with the Municipal Election or the forthcoming Municipal Election or the Village Election. Therefore, don't indulge in irrelevant matters. I would suggest again to the hon. Member to speak on the Budget. There are so many things that one can say on the Budget. This is your right to speak on the Budget, and I'll listen to you. Speak on the Budget, please! Talk of the Budget, and I'll listen to you.

Mr Jhugroo: I am just saying how the money of the last Budget had been used during this year. Regarding the money used by local authorities, I am now going to say what is the *bilan* of the Councillors of different Municipalities and how our money is being spent. A Port Louis, l'achat de bottes est à R 3.9 millions ; R 780 une paire de bottes. A Vacoas/Phoenix, incroyable mais vrai, *you are well aware*, l'ancien maire en exercice a été forcé de *lev paké aller* au beau milieu de son mandat pour divers scandales à son actif, et qui sont du domaine public. Après *khalé pilé*, il avait une folle envie de faire une ballade dans les hauts avec ses collègues conseillers dans un jet privé ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, on the issue of relevance, purely and simply, I do apologise at the outset; I am not asking you, Mr Speaker, Sir, to reiterate what you have just said, but it has been clear to all of us. But one should be relevant. What has this got to do with the Budget? *Khalé, pilé, lève paké*. I don't know what *paké* one is referring to or what *pilé* one is referring to but, again, that has got nothing to do with the Budget.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has made his point.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is regarding expenses in Local Authorities and how our management is at different Local Authorities.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Mr Jhugroo: *Mr Speaker, Sir, the former Mayor has been replaced, and le maire qui l'a remplacé est un danger public, un danger pour les citoyens. L'exemple doit venir d'en haut!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Sorry! Can you speak clearly? I don't get you.

Mr Jhugroo: Yes, for the new Mayor.

(Interruptions)

Let me explain why. Il fait de l'élevage et l'abattage de poules, cabris et boucs à Solférino ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please proceed!

Mr Jhugroo: ... Vacoas, sans permis requis. Sous la protestation de ses voisins il n'a, à aucun moment, hésité à mettre ...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish!

Dr. Hawoldar: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a false and malicious allegation. I can swear that he has the permit. If the hon. Member has the guts, Mr Speaker, Sir,

tell him to go and say it outside. He should not use the immunity that he has as a Parliamentarian to make false allegations against others. This is not fair, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I have already explained to the hon. Member that he should take full responsibility of what he is saying. Better be objective! Speak about the Budget! Don't make allegations!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a PNQ last time in this Assembly.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, no interruption!

Mr Jhugroo: This case has been reported at Quatre Bornes Police station. You know for what? *Il a mis un couteau à la gorge d'un citoyen de la ville.*

(Interruptions)

No, this case has been reported at the Police station of Quatre Bornes. This question was put to the hon. Prime Minister. *Malgré une déposition en bonne et due forme à la station de Quatre Bornes, on n'a rien entendu après* because he is untouchable, because he is a blue-eyed boy of the Labour Party. *C'est ça qu'on appelle* a caring government and the government means business.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Cool down! Order! I say order! Keep cool and proceed!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I always keep cool, and my friends also should keep cool. When I was on the other side, I was always cool. Now I am not cool?

M. le président, où va le sport mauricien ? Le Parti travailliste n'a jamais fait du sport son cheval de bataille.

(Interruptions)

Mo donne toi leçon, vine faire jogging avec moi, to capave blaguer !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said no interruption! I am not going to tolerate interruptions any more. Proceed!

Mr Jhugroo: I challenge everyone over there!

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should address the Chair!

Mr Jhugroo: Yes. A juste titre, je profite de l'occasion pour vous informer, M. le président, des différents ministres qui se sont succédé quand le Parti travailliste était au pouvoir, notamment les ministres Ramchurn, Soonarane, Arouf Parfait, Sylvio Tang, et maintenant l'honorable Ritoo. Tous ces ministres n'ont rien apporté au monde sportif, car c'est l'incompétence au niveau du leadership de ce ministère. La preuve est qu'aujourd'hui le *Sports Act* n'est que le reflet de cette incompétence, et on n'a jamais voulu dépoussiérer ce fameux *Sports Act*.

M. le président, le mouvement sportif, dans son ensemble, est devenu fragile. Une première à Maurice : la Fédération mauricienne de natation est entrée dans l'histoire quand le ministre a décidé, en vertu des pouvoirs qui lui sont conférés par le *Sports Act*, de suspendre le certificat de reconnaissance de la Fédération mauricienne de natation, et cette fédération nage dans l'eau. Une décision lourde de conséquence pour une discipline qui peine à sortir la tête de l'eau. Le ministre n'a jamais voulu prendre le taureau par les cornes. Il a géré cette affaire au petit bonheur jusqu'à l'éclatement de cette fédération. Le ministre, pendant ce temps, a joué au pompier, au lieu d'agir en vrai dirigeant et leader du monde sportif.

Il y a aussi l'explosion de la Fédération mauricienne d'haltérophilie. Il n'y a pas d'assemblée générale tenue par les dirigeants pendant plusieurs années, alors pas de compte à rendre au ministère à propos de l'argent des contribuables versé à cette fédération. Et le ministre voit tout cela d'un bon œil, et c'est son manque de savoir et de l'incompétence qui l'empêchent d'agir.

M. le président, à la MFA, c'est pire encore. Cette association qui est *enba laho* est scindée en deux camps, avec trois dirigeants à la tête. A force de dire '*pas moi ça, li ça*' le mouvement sportif, avec l'honorable ministre Devanand Ritoo comme leader, est en train de se cogner la tête. Ce gouvernement est coupable de la pauvreté du niveau de nos différentes disciplines, même pas sur le plan africain, et même pas dans la région. Et on continue toujours dans la même direction. Alors, soit on est aveugle, soit on ne veut rien faire. Il est impensable que la gestion du sport se fasse sur un *piecemeal solution*, et il est trop tard pour faire son *mea*

culpa car le ministre et ses fédérations coulent comme le Titanic. This is our caring government where the Prime Minister means business!

M. le président, je termine sur une bonne note en disant à mes *caring friends* du gouvernement: *marqué gardé, battu condiré zotte pou gagné dans prochaines élections municipales !*

Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, this is not proper in the Assembly. Next orator!

(4.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr S. Moutia): Mr Speaker, Sir, it was very interesting to listen to my good friend, hon. Jhugroo, who has just spoken. He made us laugh a lot. What has he not said about the Budget! From the very start to the end of his speech, he just used parliamentary immunity to accuse people outside who cannot defend themselves. It depends where he is sitting actually. Fortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, the walls of this House have no ears or mouth, but luckily we have the Hansard. Let me refresh the hon. Member's memory on what he said when he was on this side of the House. He spoke on 27 November 2010, and I quote –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that the world is facing serious economic crisis especially the countries in the Euro zone, and the impacts are more likely to affect smaller countries like ours. No need for me to present statistics to support my views, one just has to surf on the Internet and will discover what is happening over there.”

And he continues –

“Despite the worldwide difficult economic situation, the Minister of Finance has come with a Budget containing series of measures to resist the external shocks. *Seuls les inconscients ne voudront pas voir et comprendre cette dure réalité.*”

This is what the hon. Member said when he was on this side of the House. “Despite this worldwide economic situation, the Minister of Finance has come with a Budget containing series of measures to resist the external shocks”, as I just said. And he continues –

« Cotte ou passer dimoune dire ou éna ène mari budget, sauf l'opposition. »

What he is, in fact, doing. To end, I do not want to read extensively what he said, but just regarding the measures ...

« C'est ça le MMM, M. le président. Zotte la langue change coulère koma couleuvre. »

Just as he did!

(Interruptions)

I prefer to stop here.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I do not want any interruption!

Mr Moutia: I prefer to stop here. I don't want to speak lengthily on that.

Mr Speaker: Silence! Please proceed hon. Minister!

Mr Moutia: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a privilege for me to once again stand before this august Assembly to speak on behalf of all the civil servants and as representative of the people of my constituency. It is also an honour for me to address the House to express my thoughts on my reading of the Budget Speech 2013 and to be the voice of my constituents.

I thank the hon. Prime Minister for entrusting me with the portfolio of looking after the interest of over 80,000 public officers as Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms. I have been assisted in this task by my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, who has once again not failed to put forward the financial support for posts and projects important for the Civil Service. He has once again come up with a formula that keeps the balance between the social and economic most appropriate to the present global economic context.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Members on the other side are either not conscious of the reality or they are elusively fixated. The American nation has just elected its President to office after an electoral campaign carried out with peace and such elegance. On the night of his defeat, Mitt Romney appealed to the US private sector, and I quote –

“We are counting on you to invest, to hire, to step forward. We look to Democrats and Republicans in Government at all levels to put the people before the politics”.

This is a spirit that is lacking on the other side. Ever since the last elections, their only agenda is to ask for general elections. Have patience my friends! Patience is not a word in their dictionary. They should certainly take a lesson of magnanimity from Mitt Romney as on the night of his electoral defeat. On this side, we have a leader who is not obsessed with any remake. Neither does he fear to go back to the people. Our friends need to be patient. We have a leader who is working hard to consolidate the country’s position on the world map despite all the odds, and his leadership has in terms of GDP per capita taken us well ahead of South Africa, China, India and Madagascar. Our inflation rate is effectively under control although we depend too much on imports.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have no control over the regional and international classification mechanism. We do, however, have absolute control over our actions. Thanks to the right decision of the people since 2005, thanks to their good judgment, we have been entrusted with the immense responsibility of driving the affairs of the country safely and surely. We are doing all this amidst international factors on which we have no control. Our achievements are all the logical outcomes of our commitment, dedication and the faith of the people in the vision of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the people and this House that the country is in safe hands. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has produced a bold document, laying down the road map for our country amidst all the turbulences and uncertainties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the first time in the history of the country that the Budget document is accompanied by another important document laying down the implementation schedule of all the provisions in the Budget Speech. We mean business. This government is giving the right signal to the executive arms of the country to set to task immediately to achieve all the targets on a project management basis. We are serious; we want to produce smarter results. This is a call for effectiveness and efficiency with the Medium Term Expenditure Framework. What is more important is that we are providing for interim monitoring and audits by the Director of Audit. We are going towards strict cost efficiency of all the activities and outputs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is not declaring any state of economic emergency. The people of this country have not forgotten the helplessness of the MMM/MSM Government in 2005 when the times were not difficult, when there was no global economic crisis, when our main export markets were not in a bad shape, when the economy in Mauritius could still rely on preferential regimes. Yet, where did the MMM/MSM lead us? Four years of negative growth in the EPZ sector, factories were closing down, 35000 persons lost their jobs, total public debt rose to nearly 70% of the GDP. Budget deficit of 5.3%, growth rate was 2.2% only, and an insignificant growth rate of 2.3% in the tourism sector. The economy was in a state of emergency, and they were even convinced that it should be admitted to the intensive care unit of the IMF. Thank God they are not in power from the time the global economic situation has worsened! Just imagine what would they have done if all the adversities had struck them in the face as today! They should thank this government for coming to the rescue of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not accepted defeat. We have developed resilience. We are standing up to the challenge. On the contrary, the successive Budgets of this government have produced the right mix of policy measures both to protect the most vulnerable segment of the population and to instil the right dose of confidence among the business community in the country and over the region. This Budget further consolidates this approach.

The Budget 2013, while focusing on new technological horizons and the opportunities that lie in Africa, is still not losing sight of our objectives to further protect the vulnerable. Relaxing border controls for nationals of 75 countries, providing consular services in all those countries, providing connectivity by air to Russia, and increasing direct flight to China in a very short term will certainly have very positive impacts on both investment and tourism. We have a government succeeding on all counts although the sky is not so blue over the world, especially where our main market lies. We are also determined to strengthen the public services while taking into consideration our macroeconomic imperatives.

This Budget clearly confirms and addresses our priorities. It is a pity, Mr Speaker, Sir, that those who caused so much hardship to our senior citizens in 2004-2005 with the targeting of the Basic Retirement Pension are today posing as the advocates of the latter. The wolf in the sheep's clothing, I would say. The truth is that this Budget is providing for full compensation to

all pensioners. In addition, the disparity in child allowance that existed between the different schemes has been undone by this Budget.

It is again a pity, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the same persons on the other side who introduced VAT and raised it twice when the economy was not in a bad shape have lamented that the Minister of Finance has not reduced VAT. The same people are talking about growth and unemployment when they had no strategy in 2005. At that time, growth rate was only 2.2% of GDP despite relatively more favourable conditions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world is, in fact, going through continued periods of uncertainties since the end of 2007. The future remains unpredictable for the most brilliant assessment experts. Otherwise, banks would not have had to be bailed out in the developed world. There are multiple contingencies; the medium term remains unpredictable; let alone the long term. The whole world is opting for short term strategies until the sky turns clear. In such circumstances, we are opting for diversifying our markets. We are exploring new avenues. We are maintaining positive growth without reducing investment in major capital projects. Mr Speaker, Sir, this country has the best team to stand the challenges of an uncertain global economic landscape, with Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam as the captain. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is not doing what others would have done. He is not removing the welfare carpet from underneath the feet of the population.

On the contrary, we are doing a lot under social protection. We are maintaining all the subsidies on cooking gas, rice and flour. We maintain free access to education and health. All pensions continue to be paid on a universal basis. Free transport by bus is maintained for senior citizens, physically challenged persons, and students. Grant schemes for casting of slabs, purchase of water tanks and solar water heaters are there for the poor, examination fees and hot meals for ZEP schools, assistance for social integration, support through CSR, assistance through the National Solidarity Fund, stipends and other schemes for job placement, training. The list is too long, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Under the Labour-led government, there is further consideration of welfare. We are already providing nearly 40% of our GDP to protect our people. What is more interesting is that we are committed to implement the report of the Pay Research Bureau to the tune of Rs4.6 billion, while we are paying due attention to anomalies, omissions and errors. Public officers

have not forgotten the piecemeal approach of the implementation of the recommendations of salary increase when Members on the other side were in power. Implementation of the PRB report in 2003 was phased over two financial years. 75% was paid from July 2003 to June 2004. The full salary increase was paid only from July 2004, and that too was paid in terms of leave and not in cash. That was how they proceeded with the PRB report when there was no crisis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a real privilege for me to be a Member of a government which is relentlessly protecting the people. As a Member of this government, I am happy that we have successfully redeployed all the employees of the former cess funded services providing institutions. We shall similarly redeploy all the employees of the Tobacco Board. My Ministry is providing all the necessary support for the effective redeployment in these cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, workers of this country know that Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam has never let them down. His government has realised all the things that the other side promised but never did. It is the same team on this side which has set up the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and the Equal Opportunities Commission. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not all. My Ministry is playing a key role in accelerating reforms of the public sector. This Budget is giving my Ministry the means to do so. Two major projects are underway. The most important being the Civil Service College and the Human Resource Management Information System. Both projects, once completed, will transform the human resource scene, making it an IT enabled HR delivery system manned by officers trained for the task. Every modernisation initiative has to be supported by well-trained resources, a dedicated workforce, and motivated employees.

My Ministry has a crucial role to play in making the modernisation process a success. No Civil Service can be effective without capacity building. Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for being sensitive to the need of civil servants, and providing for the setting up of the Civil Service College as a corporate body. It is a matter of pride that public officers will now have a training institution to cater for their training needs. We are moving from a one-room training unit, which delivers training to around 3,000 officers annually, to a training college which will cater for the projected training needs of some 12,000 public officers as from next year.

The Civil Service College, Mauritius, is being incorporated as a State-owned company by the end of this week. It is going to start its operation as early as possible next year. It will also

include a School of Diplomacy and Foreign Trade. The Civil Service College will play a pivotal role in the provision of training. It will sustain the modernisation process of the public service. We are expecting the college to harmonise training across the public sector, so that public services become more cost effective and give greater satisfaction to users. The College will develop into a regional centre of learning because we have already built a reputation for being a safe and secure country, a knowledge hub in the making. It is destined to develop into an awarding institution in the years to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this government is committed to modernise the Civil Service, and guide the broader public sector towards bold and necessary reforms in the interest of our citizens and the economy. My Ministry has thus put in place programmes to ensure the transformation of the Civil Service. This programme comprises amongst others Total Quality Management, Mystery Shopping, Performance Management System, Human Resource Management Information System, and harmonisation of schemes and conditions of service. Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry provides all the facilities to line Ministries and Departments to adopt practices that would improve their delivery standards. Total Quality Management is being progressively adopted within the Civil Service, and 32 departments have been ISO certified to date. My Ministry will continue in this direction, and we propose to assist some 10 new government organisations to embark on such initiatives in 2013. The Public Service Excellence Award is another effective tool to motivate Ministries and Departments to review the way they operate. The focus is on excellence and innovation. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that it has turned out to be a popular annual event. There is a growing interest among public sector organisations to go the extra mile and create customer delight. The award has even moved us to the regional front with civil service projects receiving recognition at the African Innovation Awards and the United Nations Public Service Awards 2012.

For the Public Service Excellence Award 2012, we have made it mandatory for at least one entity from each Ministry to enter the award. My Ministry also conducts mystery shopping to evaluate the level of service delivery of public service organisations from the customers' viewpoint.

Four service outlets have been visited by our mystery shoppers comprising independent evaluators from the University of Technology, Mauritius. Through this exercise, feedback is

provided to the service outlets, and improvements are made on the services where required. For 2013, we have targeted ten other organisations for such exercises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the support of my Ministry, counter services have been improved at 13 sites. Ministries and Departments now provide uninterrupted service during lunch time and, following the last Budget, some services are even provided on Saturdays.

The waiting areas of such service outlets have been upgraded in view of customer-centric services. Citizens do certainly appreciate the considerable improvement in the service delivery at the Civil Status Office, Registrar General's Department, Companies Division, and Passport and Immigration Office just to name a few. In 2013, my Ministry proposes to support 15 departments to improve the counter services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is furthermore committed to create an ethical culture across the whole public sector. We partner with ICAC and other agencies to promote eight core values, namely integrity, selflessness, impartiality, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and justice. My Ministry has notified the African Charter on Public Service Values, all of which are included in our own Charter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this House and the citizens should know that my Ministry has made sensible progress with regard to the implementation of the Performance Management System. The aim of this reform process is to enhance service provider accountability in view of quality and cost efficient services. The PMS, in fact, links individual performance with organisational performance, so as to bring about an improvement in delivery of services both to our internal and external customers. Measures to be adopted to link PMS with HR functions such as rewards and promotions will be considered once the system has been successfully reviewed and validated.

Progress beyond this milestone will be a big step forward, as it will transform the face of our public service. However, the implications have to be carefully measured and discussed with all stakeholders, including the State Law Office, constitutional bodies like the Public Service Commission as well as the trade unions before such issues can be finalised. This has not prevented my Ministry from moving in that direction by including in all contracts of employment of new recruits that the annual increment is no longer automatic but should be earned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Civil Service welcomes the Public Sector Task Force and all the different measures that aim at strengthening accountability of public services. The Minister of Finance who is Accountant by profession is empowering institutions to address any potential mismanagement of public funds. The strengthening of the Public Accounts Committee is a measure that goes in this direction. All these measures confirm the seriousness of purpose of this Government to transform public services into responsible and efficient services.

As a representative of the citizens in the National Assembly, it makes me rejoice to see that the measures enunciated in the 2013 Budget Speech put a lot of emphasis on bridging the digital divide. On the other hand, as Minister responsible for the Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, I am extremely pleased to note the adoption of e-Government in the delivery of services is again high on government's agenda. These will undoubtedly strengthen the position of our country in the global arena.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this era where modern technology is playing a defining role, no country would achieve success if its civil service is not strong enough to be able to keep pace with developments and respond in a timely manner to the needs and aspiration of its customers and stakeholders. A lot of concrete actions have been taken since the last decade with a view to enhancing the delivery of services through the use of modern technologies. However, in most cases these have been limited to equipping officers with personal computers, laptops and also basic trainings to facilitate the use thereof. We are now, through this Budget creating a new generation of IT savvy citizens and laying the foundations of a high income Mauritius.

The hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development is providing a series of measures to bring modern technology to the fingertips of our population at a very affordable price. Broadband internet access, electronic applications of services and payments of taxes and other fees through mobile phones aim at empowering citizens to transact with government agencies on a 24/7 mode from anywhere. Digitalised signatures will allow the paradigm shift. These measures, as announced, set the basis of an interactive public sector with real time services to citizens without the need for them to absent themselves from work and foregoing their leave. These measures serve to help develop a new culture in the country where the economy will have the means to make optimum use of its human resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is well set to ease human resource management functions for the mass of more than 50,000 employees in the Civil Service. Accordingly, as from this year, my Ministry has embarked on a major computerisation project, which aims at establishing a strong online central database on human resources in the Civil Service. The project known as Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) will start on a pilot basis in five Ministries next year, and is expected to be fully operational in all Ministries/Departments by the end of 2015. This system has the merit of providing access to human resource information on their entitlements anytime from anywhere within a technology enabled environment.

Efficiency gains expected to be achieved will be quite significant both for workers, Human Resource Departments and the organisation.

Another major benefit will include a considerable reduction of paper use in the conduct of human resource related transactions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, times are difficult in many countries where recruitment has been frozen, civil services have been downsized. In Mauritius, we are living a different story and, this, in spite of the fact that we do not possess any natural resource. We have continued to recruit officers in the Civil Service and allow promotions to reward the effort of public officers. Mr Speaker, Sir, the 2013 Budget makes provision for some 1,560 positions by way of promotion to be filled in the year 2013 in various Ministries/Departments, as well as 1,800 posts at entry levels comprising 600 Trainee Police Constables, 160 Trainee Educators, some 200 Nursing staff, 19 Examiners of Accounts and 50 Judicial Assistants to support the reforms in the Judiciary. To facilitate the recruitment process, my Ministry will, from January 2013, specify only the highest qualification in the scheme of service for entry grades. The existing procedures for the prescription of scheme of service have been reviewed. Schemes of service are expected to be finalised within four months. My Ministry is also working on a project of e-platform to help reduce processing time for a scheme of service to even half of this time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another important aspect of the work of my Ministry is safety and health at work. We have conducted 1,000 safety audits in 2012, and the target for 2013 has been set at 1,100. The Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms is duty bound to ensure that public officers operate a safe and healthy working environment. The Occupational Safety and Health Unit of my Ministry has conducted risk assessment at 110 workstations this year, and

projects to cover the whole Civil Service by next year. While we have achieved much in recent years, we have to do more to support Ministries/Departments to ensure workplaces are safer and healthier. Safety and Health Officers from my Ministry have been posted to different Ministries to do this. My Ministry will continue to promote a safety culture within the Civil Service.

In recent years, our key role has essentially been to influence on a reactive basis, but now we are ready to be proactive, particularly given the changing face of work patterns. Public officers, our human assets, deserve a safer and healthier working environment. We have utilised the work environment enhancement programme to do just this; make the work environment safe and healthy to enhance productivity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry believes that workers need to be provided with opportunities to enjoy a work life balance. The Public Officers' Welfare Council is doing a remarkable job with interesting activities throughout the whole year to provide opportunities for leisure and welfare of workers and their families. The most popular event remains the annual Civil Service *kermesse* which was organised on 28 October this year with the participation of more than 100,000 visitors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the cherished wish of every government for public services being delivered to be increasingly responsive to the needs and aspirations of its customers. Our Civil Service exists for decades, and various reform initiatives have been implemented to ensure that the service delivered are, in fact, attaining the target set.

However, the Civil Service often suffers from a perception deficit. All its good works do not get a due reporting in the media. My Ministry has made good this deficit by publishing the first update in August 2012. The second issue is due before the end of December of this year. All service providers need to have an adequate feedback mechanism to regularly evaluate the delivery standards. My Ministry has already set up a help desk which is attentive to the different problems of Public Officers, and establishes the linkage with Departments and schedule officers in view of solution. My Ministry will for the very first time, in a view to improving service delivery, undertake a customer satisfaction survey, starting in 2013, as an independent tool to assess the services provided by public officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would sum up this Budget as innovative and daring. It has upheld the philosophy of this government and the aspirations of the people by being so social oriented and

people focussed. Of course, those who are wearing blinkers would never see the wider picture. The Budget has to be seen in a holistic way.

Before ending, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would, again, like to congratulate the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his remarkable work in the present context. It is a privilege of a lifetime for us, on this side, to work under the enlightening leadership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, who has marked the history of this young Republic through his economic and social policy as well as his effective economic diplomacy that have earned Mauritius great respect in the region and across the world.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for half an hour!

At 4.49 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.22 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, il n'y a pas de doute que le '*budget show*' est l'un des événements les plus importants dans le calendrier de cette Assemblée.

Cela avec raison, car le budget est un document clé qui décide et influence la vie quotidienne des Mauriciens indistinctement.

C'est pourquoi la grande majorité de la population attendait avec une certaine impatience le contenu de ce document.

Quelques minutes après la longue litanie du ministre des Finances, le *Leader* de l'opposition a exprimé ses premières opinions. Ce n'est pas sans raison qu'il l'a qualifié de '*fade, frivole et fizet*'.

Quant à moi, M. le président, outre le sport, trois éléments de ce budget ont d'emblée attiré mon attention -

D'abord, le projet d'offrir des tablettes tactiles aux étudiants de la Forme IV ; ce qui m'a rappelé immédiatement la fameuse promesse '*One laptop one child*' du Programme 2010 de l'Alliance au pouvoir, qui, comme nous le savions au départ, n'a jamais été tenue.

Puis, il y a le repas chaud aux élèves des écoles ZEP qui m'a ramené plusieurs années en arrière, au souvenir d'un tel projet qui avait été suggéré par l'ex-président de la République, Cassam Uteem, après que le gouvernement de 2005-2010 « *ti rasse dipain dans la bouche zenfan* » de la façon la plus injuste.

Le sarcasme de ce gouvernement n'a pas de limite, puisque le ministre des Finances a raté une occasion de corriger une injustice envers les personnes âgées.

La disparité qui existe dans la pension de vieillesse pour ceux qui se trouvent dans la tranche d'âge de 60 à 89 ans, de 90 à 99 ans, et les centenaires saute aux yeux.

M. le président, sur ce point, je dirai qu'il aurait été plus juste envers nos aînés d'accorder une attention financière plus importante à ceux qui se trouvent dans la première tranche d'âge, c'est-à-dire de 60 à 89 ans. Car nous savons tous que leurs besoins financiers et médicaux sont beaucoup plus importants. Il est dommage que le ministre des Finances n'ait pas considéré le fait de mieux équilibrer le système d'allocation de la pension de vieillesse tout en prévoyant une échelle plus graduelle.

Par contre, ce qui ne m'a définitivement pas étonné, c'est l'augmentation des prix avec effet immédiat du tabac et des boissons alcoolisées, qui va rapporter, je le rappelle encore une fois, plusieurs milliards de roupies de revenus dans les caisses de l'Etat.

De ce côté de la Chambre, M. le président, on aimerait bien savoir si le ministre des Finances a fait une étude pour savoir si effectivement la hausse des prix des cigarettes et de l'alcool a eu une incidence négative sur la consommation de ces deux commodités, ou est-ce que la cigarette et l'alcool sont devenus, tout simplement, la poule aux œufs d'or ?

Il serait souhaitable que dorénavant la totalité de ces revenus additionnels soit consacrée à la sécurité alimentaire et à l'éradication de la pauvreté, qui est de plus en plus une réalité dans notre république.

M. le président, au lendemain des propositions budgétaires, les journaux n'ont pas manqué de publier les analyses de plusieurs éminents économistes. Tout en saluant certaines mesures, ils n'ont pu s'empêcher de mettre l'accent sur le manque de profondeur, de clarté, de vision, de stratégie, et l'excès de prudence de ce budget.

M. le président, dans la foulée, un sondage couvrant un échantillon de la population accorde une note moyenne de 5,87 sur 10 au ministre des Finances qui, dans deux cas, ne reçoit que 0 sur 10. Dans les propos des sondés, il y a eu cependant des ‘mais’, des ‘déceptions’, des ‘demi-mesure’, ‘un brin paternaliste’, mais surtout ‘un budget incolore et indolore’. Un sondé a même été catégorique que ce budget ne reflète pas la réalité, et ajoute « je suspecte des choses cachées. »

Un autre se dit « peu convaincant pour les classes moyenne et pauvre. » « Où sont passés l’art et la culture ? », se demande un autre. « Rien pour encourager le MID », soutient un autre sondé.

Des remarques semblables, M. le président, ne cessent de pleuvoir, et je prends la liberté d’en citer quelques-unes -

- Beaucoup de mesures populistes, mais rien d’extraordinaire dans les grandes lignes.
- Des mesures appréciables, mais aussi beaucoup de points flous.
- Les mots et les idées ne suffisent pas, il faudrait aussi un suivi.
- Semi-flop, incapable de trouver de vraies idées ambitieuses.
- Le gouvernement vient reprendre de la main gauche ce qu’il a donné de la main droite par le PRB.
- Le ministre a raté une occasion en or d’instaurer un *minimum socially acceptable salary*.
- Un simple budget de continuité.

M. le président, je n’hésite pas à me joindre à toutes ces observations. Mais, que doit-on en déduire ? Que l’honorable ministre a échoué avec un gros ‘F’ ? Pas comme fade, frivole, *fizet*, flou, demi-flop ou double flop. Non. Gros ‘F’ comme *Fail*.

Mr Speaker Sir, I would like now to share a few comments of some university students on some aspects of the Budget dearest to them, and I quote -

- “Let’s be serious. Tablets for Form IV students? What about university students for whom a laptop and internet is a priority?”

- This government is good at promising free gifts to the population without regard to the financial state of the country.
- While all other countries are belt-tightening in this uncertain time, Mauritius is acting as the ostrich, handing out all kinds of vote-catching gadgets at the cost of massive debts.
- I sincerely hope that these tablet computers will be of help in our education system which is a complete failure. Failure, not only in terms of academic results, but rather to make men and women of a society of tomorrow. I think the problem of school violence bullying does not bother our hon. Minister of Finance.
- The 2013 Budget certainly pays no real attention to social crisis heading towards us. If to a far extent it caters for a single part of the society, unfortunately it leaves those at the lower ladder in great distress.
- People with this Budget would have been lucky, since they shall be shifting from their usual food to eat televisions and motorcycles, because the Minister of Finance has chosen to remove duties on such items. It is unfortunate to note that this government has completely ignored the outcry of the population who are waiting desperately for him to intervene on the price of basic foodstuffs.
- About Youth Employment Programme, these students said: if a certain effort has been made by increasing the contribution to the monthly salary of non graduates from Rs3,000 to Rs4,000, from Rs6,000 to Rs7,500 for graduates, we wonder why once again nothing has been done to address the issue of mismatch of high unemployment and job availability.
- Sustainable development is only achievable through investment in economic, human and environmental capital. Yet, again, nothing has been said to address women's issues on an equitable basis, which is a global concern today.
- Women are considered as a major group in the development of any country. They represent half of the world's capital but, unfortunately, they remain undervalued and unrecognised.”

M. le président, même s'il fallait fabriquer un budget électoraliste le ministre des Finances aurait échoué, tant lui et toute sa horde de conseillers ne sont pas en phase avec la réalité de la population.

Rien que pour citer l'exemple de ce qui est considéré comme la mesure phare de ce budget, les 20,000 tablettes tactiles qui seront offertes aux étudiants de la Forme IV.

Est-ce que le budget a pris en considération, M. le président, que ces tablettes soient connectées par le système Wifi ? Qui assumera les frais d'installation des équipements nécessaires pour que nos étudiants puissent utiliser à bon escient ces tablettes ?

Qui mettra en place les structures de fonctionnement nécessaires pour que ces tablettes soient opérationnelles à 100%, et en même temps prévenir et éviter toute dérive liée à l'utilisation de l'internet ?

C'est ce qu'on appelle, M. le président, mettre la charrue devant les bœufs, un peu comme ces exercices d'asphaltage des rues qui sont actuellement en cours dans les villes et les villages.

M. le président, *pé coltar ziska licien mort*, on pourrait dire !

(Interruptions)

Ce qui veut dire qu'il n'y a aucune étude au préalable sur les besoins réels de la population. Attendons la saison des pluies pour voir le nombre d'inondation qui sera occasionné en raison justement des rues asphaltées à la va vite, à la veille des élections.

Mais les citoyens, M. le président, autant que les villageois, ne sont pas dupes. Ils savent que ce ne sont pas ces rues asphaltées à la veille des élections ou encore ces '*cado bolom noel*' qui vont effacer sept années d'une administration régionale en décrépidité ; une administration qui a *fail* à plus d'un titre.

M. le président, par respect pour cette auguste Assemblée, je ne veux pas utiliser des mots qui hantent aujourd'hui encore l'esprit des habitants de nos villes et villages qui ont eu affaire pendant sept longues années à des conseillers 'manger boire et pigeon voyageurs'.

Ce constat, M. le président, est encore plus grand au sein de la municipalité de Beau Bassin-Rose Hill. L'administration de cette ville est une faillite totale au profit de certains conseillers, mais au détriment de ses habitants. Aujourd'hui, cette ville ne respire plus. Le service de la voirie à Beau Bassin-Rose Hill est irrégulier et inefficace. Il n'y a pas eu de distribution de poubelles dans cette ville depuis sept ans, alors que des millions de roupies ont été dépensées dans les voyages des maires et des conseillers.

N'oublions pas, M. le président, ce fameux voyage du maire de Beau bassin-Rose Hill en France pour assister à un congrès sur la gestion de l'eau, alors que la ville ne contrôle aucun réservoir sur le territoire mauricien.

M. le président, le bâtiment historique du Plaza, autrefois une fierté des villes sœurs et le temple de la culture mauricienne, est dans un état pitoyable, alors que la promesse pour la construction d'un nouveau marché à Rose Hill se fait toujours attendre.

M. le président, allez voir l'état des infrastructures sportives et sociales de cette ville pour constater à quel point les villes sœurs sont dans un état d'abandon. Des jardins familiaux qui sont transformés en dépotoirs dans certaines régions. Absence totale d'un véritable entretien des drains, avec pour conséquence des cours inondées en période de pluie. La prolifération des terrains vagues et abandonnés, avec tous les problèmes sociaux qui s'ensuivent, est devenue un vrai fléau.

Rien que pour citer un autre exemple : le cas du Morcellement Héritage à Coromandel, où l'effondrement d'un mur a mis en danger la vie des habitants de cette région. Désormais, la peur règne en permanence dans ce quartier en attendant le bon vouloir du promoteur pour faire les travaux adéquats sans tarder, pour démolir le mur et rétablir la stabilité de ce terrain.

Aucun projet d'envergure n'a été initié dans ma circonscription ces dernières années. Ce n'est certainement pas les habitants des rues Dr. Reid/Chasteauneuf ou de la région de Canot qui diront le contraire, eux qui attendent leur terrain de football depuis sept ans.

J'en passe également sur les problèmes d'eau et de tout-à-l'égout dans certaines régions, qui sont désormais le quotidien des habitants de ma circonscription.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now move to sports. Lorsque le ministre des Finances a terminé son intervention vendredi dernier, M. le président, j'ai tout de suite remarqué que les priorités du monde sportif local avaient été ignorées.

Cependant, une lecture plus approfondie des dotations budgétaires pour le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports me permet de dire que le monde sportif mauricien a été carrément oublié dans ce budget.

Ignoré et oublié, le mouvement sportif mauricien va, encore une fois, passer une année financière à être le dindon de la farce.

Ce budget, M. le président, n'a qu'un seul objectif : réduire encore plus les fédérations à un statut de mendiant. Car ce budget ne contient absolument rien pour aider les fédérations à être plus autonomes dans le fond comme dans la forme.

On a noté, dans les propos du ministre des Sports dans les medias juste après la présentation du budget, un semblant de satisfaction avec les 7% d'augmentation de son budget, et cela comme une tentative de sa part pour justifier que ce gouvernement a à cœur le bien-être des sportifs.

Il n'y a pas de doute, M. le président, que le ministre des Sports viendra faire les éloges de son collègue des Finances, même s'il n'a pas eu les arguments nécessaires pour convaincre ce dernier sur la pertinence de certains projets. Mais nous savons tous que, dans pas longtemps, il se contredira en venant dire qu'il n'a pas eu les fonds nécessaires pour assurer les demandes des fédérations.

Et d'ailleurs, le mouvement sportif, M. le président, sait très bien que les 31 millions de roupies additionnelles obtenues dans ce présent budget ne serviront qu'à combler l'augmentation des coûts existants de ce ministère. Déjà, avec l'augmentation des allocations des bourses de haut niveau qui, soit dit en passant, est une mesure louable mais qui est *long overdue* à nos sportifs, une bonne partie de ces R 31 millions sera vite engloutie.

Alors, M. le président, que la priorité du gouvernement aurait dû être la préparation pour les 9ème jeux des Iles en 2015 à la Réunion, le mouvement sportif constate, une fois encore, que cette priorité n'existe pas dans les dotations budgétaires.

Rien, absolument rien sur ce dossier n'a été mentionné tant dans les intentions du ministre des Finances que dans les dotations au sport.

Pourtant les fédérations ont été pressées de toute part durant ces dernières semaines par le comité de suivi du MJS pour monter leur projet de préparation pour ces jeux des Iles de l'océan Indien 2015.

Est-ce à dire que le travail de ces fédérations est déjà tombé à l'eau, et qu'elles ont mobilisé autant d'efforts pour rien ?

M. le président, le ministre des Sports est au pied du mur et demandera certainement aux fédérations de puiser dans leur budget de fonctionnement pour commencer la préparation des jeux des Iles de l'océan Indien en 2015.

M. le président, je pèse bien mes mots: le monde sportif local est bel et bien l'oublié de ce budget, puisqu'aujourd'hui Maurice est sur le point de perdre l'organisation du Grand Prix de Judo en 2013 si le gouvernement n'accorde pas son soutien financier à ce projet, qui je dois le rappeler est une compétition qui réunit les meilleurs judokas du monde. Cela, M. le président, justement en raison d'une absence de fonds qui n'ont pas été alloués par le gouvernement au comité d'organisation locale pour que Maurice puisse disposer d'une licence de la Fédération internationale de judo pour organiser cette compétition, privant ainsi toute la population mauricienne d'un rendez-vous de très haut niveau.

Et là, je vais aussi citer, M. le président, avec votre permission. En lisant la presse locale ce matin, j'ai noté que la Fédération mauricienne de boxe est dans le flou. Flou par rapport à sa participation aux prochains mondiaux juniors en Arménie qui vont se tenir du 26 novembre au 06 décembre. Et le titre est 'l'Association mauricienne de boxe est dans le flou'. Je vais rapidement vous lire quelques lignes -

« L'attente se fait longue. Trois semaines déjà depuis que la fédération a fait une requête auprès du ministère pour le déplacement d'une délégation de six personnes, soit quatre boxeurs et deux dirigeants au championnat du monde des juniors. On attend toujours une réponse. La réponse du MJS tarde à venir. Nous sommes dans le flou concernant une éventuelle participation des boxeurs mauriciens à ce tournoi mondial. La fédération attend impatiemment une réponse du ministère pour se fixer sur notre participation, déclare le président de l'AMB, Rajiv Rajcoormar. »

Et, M. le président, le ministre des Finances a osé, dans son discours du budget, parler du sport comme un *outlet for our population to shake off their stress, improve their health and, at the same time, provide many of our young people with rewarding careers.*

Permettez-moi d'en douter sérieusement. Au royaume des aveugles les borgnes sont rois dit l'adage, et sans aucun doute le ministre des Finances a fait preuve d'un manque cruel de vision lorsqu'il a rédigé la partie de son discours consacré aux sports.

M. le président, l'absence de vision crée dans la foulée un vide, et ouvre les voies de l'absurdité. C'est le cas de le dire avec l'annonce du ministre des Finances pour relancer *the famous sports* inter collèges. Et là, nous sommes dans l'absurdité dans son plus mauvais exemple, puisque le ministre des Finances ne semble pas avoir pris en considération l'attrape-nigaud dans lequel il a mis son collègue des Sports. Sans compter les conséquences sur la politique de son gouvernement.

M. le président, pour information, il faudrait que le ministre des Finances sache que ce n'est pas le ministère des Sports qui organise le sport au niveau des collèges, mais bien une association connue comme la Mauritius Sports Secondary Schools Association (MSSSA). La MSSSA est une association reconnue par le Sports Act qui, comme toute fédération à Maurice, dispose d'une forme d'autonomie dans ses décisions techniques et administratives. Dans ces conditions, comment se fait-il qu'un ministre qu'il soit des finances ou pas puisse décider à la place de la MSSSA ? La décision de revenir à l'ancienne formule des jeux inter collèges appartient à seul le comité exécutif de la MSSSA et non au ministre des Finances qui visiblement a outrepassé ses droits en annonçant une telle mesure dans son budget, qui de plus est loin d'être une mesure budgétaire à moins que ce ne soit une habitude au sein du ministère des Sports que de s'ingérer dans les affaires internes des fédérations. Il n'y a pas d'autre adjectif pour qualifier cette décision si ce n'est ridicule, car il est à se demander, M. le président, si cette proposition budgétaire, si on peut dire, comme il l'a annoncée lui-même, n'est pas doublement contraire à la politique de ce gouvernement sur l'éducation et le sport qui prônent la régionalisation.

M. le président, le ridicule semble avoir beaucoup caractérisé le ministre des Sports tout au long de 2012. Nous venons d'être témoins de la légèreté avec laquelle ce ministère a géré l'affaire Allata au Club M, dénoncée par moi-même dans une question parlementaire. Nous nous posons encore la question, M. le président. Comment une personne, qui a un passé trouble, puisse se retrouver comme directeur du Club M, et surtout avoir pour mission de collecter des fonds pour notre équipe nationale ? Nous osons espérer que le ministre des Sports viendra dans cette assemblée pour nous dire toute la vérité sur cette affaire une fois que l'enquête qu'il a soi-disant initié au sein de son ministère sera terminée.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me please. The hon. Minister will be intervening during the course of this session. I think he will get enough time to rebut all the points that are highlighted.

Mr Quirin: Je serai là, M. le président, quand le ministre des Sports interviendra. Je serai à ma place pour l'écouter. Ridicule encore la guerre sournoise dans laquelle s'est lancé le ministre des Sports face au comité olympique mauricien; une guerre inutile et sans fondement qui a eu pour conséquence de priver la Fédération mauricienne de natation de ses droits d'organiser les compétitions, avec la fermeture des piscines. C'est une situation, M. le président, qui a poussé le mouvement olympique jusqu'à boycotter le rassemblement organisé par le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports avant le départ pour les jeux olympiques de Londres.

Un autre affront supplémentaire, qui traduit dans une très large mesure la tension qui existe entre le mouvement sportif et le ministre des Sports dans certains cas. C'est carrément la guerre ouverte. Une guerre qui a fini, M. le président, par pousser le comité international olympique de dépêcher pour la deuxième fois, et cela après Monsieur Mustapha Berraf, un autre de ses représentants à Maurice, en la personne de Jérôme Poivey. M. le président, quelle honte pour le sport mauricien!

Aujourd'hui nous savons que le ministre des Sports a été mis au pied du mur et a eu à prendre des engagements fermes vis-à-vis du CIO pour donner plus d'autonomie aux fédérations - qu'il vienne nous dire le contraire. Reste, M. le président, que le constat d'échec est bien présent au sein du sport mauricien, comme en témoignent les relations exécrales entre le ministère et la grosse majorité des fédérations sportives.

L'échec, M. le président, est aussi présent dans un dossier qui était considéré comme une priorité pour le ministre des Sports ; la relance du football à Maurice. Le Club M est aujourd'hui, M. le président, 203^e sur 207 pays au classement de la FIFA. Dans la région, c'est encore pire puisque les Seychelles sont à la 194^e place, les Comores à la 196^e place, et Madagascar à la 173^e place. Ces trois pays nous devancent. Un classement qui en dit long M. le président, sur l'état de santé de cette discipline à Maurice, et qui traduit aussi l'échec de la politique de ce gouvernement.

Nous constatons aussi l'échec au niveau de la formation. Le centre de formation à Réduit n'est aujourd'hui qu'une illusion, un navire sans capitaine, sans gouvernail, et surtout sans

destination. L'échec se situe aussi chez nos sportifs de haut niveau qui, faute de moyens, n'arrivent pas à se hisser à un niveau supérieur.

M. le président, les résultats ramenés des derniers jeux olympiques de Londres sont la preuve que nous ne sommes plus en position de leader mais de suiveur dans la région. Si cette situation persiste, nous risquons fort bien d'entendre dans pas longtemps le qualificatif 'a aussi participé' pour les sportifs mauriciens.

M. le président, depuis trois ans que je suis membre de cette auguste Assemblée, je constate que le ministre n'est pas un homme pressé, et qu'il avance à pas de tortue. C'est bien le cas de le dire avec les amendements qui doivent être apportés au Sports Act. Où sont ces amendements, M. le président? Trois ans que le mouvement sportif attend ces amendements qui ne viennent toujours pas. Trois ans que le gouvernement continue à dire que le Sports Act est une contrainte, mais sans rien faire. Je prends le pari que, dans son intervention, l'honorable ministre des Sports dira encore une fois '*very soon*' à propos de ces amendements. Comment, dans ces conditions, pensez-vous que le monde sportif mauricien puisse accorder sa confiance à un ministre qui passe le plus clair de son temps à faire des promesses qu'il ne tient pas ou qu'il oublie une fois qu'il les a prononcées ?

M. le président, la lecture des précédents discours du ministre Ritoo est, en effet, un exercice intéressant non pas pour parfaire mes connaissances comme il a cherché à le faire croire l'année dernière, mais pour dénoncer ces incongruités. Je ne voudrais pas perdre le temps de cette auguste Assemblée, M. le président, avec les promesses non tenues du ministre des Sports durant ces trois dernières années, mais je tiens quand même à en dire deux. Une année après la promesse, le stade Georges V n'est toujours pas officiellement ouvert et l'Institut national des sports (INS) que le ministre avait fait, et je cite '*among the most ambitious projects*' de son ministère, n'est toujours pas sorti de terre, et encore moins être mis au stade de projet.

M. le président, pire encore, aujourd'hui la situation est encore plus compliquée. Le projet INS a complètement disparu dans le budget 2013. Doit-on en déduire que le ministre des Sports n'a plus d'ambition pour la jeunesse sportive de Maurice ? A ce chapitre, on constate à quel point il fait de la politique politicaille. Ce ministère s'apprête à dépenser, M. le président, la bagatelle somme de trente cinq millions de roupies durant l'année 2013 pour une infrastructure multi sports à Triolet, dans sa circonscription. Ce n'est pas fini. Soixante sept millions ont été

earmarked pour 2014, et trente sept millions pour 2015 pour la même infrastructure. Au total, cent trente sept millions de roupies seront investies dans une infrastructure, alors que ceux qui sont déjà existantes, sont dans un état lamentable. En passant, il est bon de souligner qu'un projet similaire pour la région de Saint Pierre a été abandonné. Le ministre Dayal, qui malheureusement n'est pas là, appréciera.

M. le président, comment passer sous silence les grands oubliés de ce budget 2013 que sont les sportifs rodriguais ! Une fois de plus, il n'a pas eu ne serait-ce qu'un clin d'œil à leur égard. La rénovation du stade du Camp du Roi fait partie des promesses non tenues. Je cite le ministre: ces projets d'envergure, afin de donner plus de facilité aux sportifs rodriguais. Promesse faite par le ministre en 2011.

La question des infrastructures, M. le président, reste le grand flou de ce budget car depuis la dernière année financière, beaucoup de travaux ont été annoncés comme ceux qui doivent être réalisés aux stades Anjalay et Maryse Justin. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, nous ne pouvons que constater avec tristesse que ces deux stades sont dans un état lamentable, proches de la fermeture dans le cas du stade Anjalay. Les travaux, eux, ne viennent toujours pas.

M. le président, je voudrais dénoncer ce que j'appelle la politique de *copier coller* appliquée par le ministère des Sports concernant les contraintes auxquelles fait face ce même ministère pour attirer plus de monde et d'argent dans le sport. Depuis trois ans, nous entendons la même rengaine. A croire que les années passent et se ressemblent pour le ministère des Sports. A croire que tristement depuis 2010, le temps s'est arrêté dans ce ministère. Après trois longues années, aucune solution n'a été trouvée aux problèmes déjà mentionnés dans les *estimates* de 2010.

Sans aucun doute l'absence d'une politique de sports bien définie explique largement cette absence de solution.

M. le président, on fait dans du *piecemeal solution* et dans de l'à peu près dans ce ministère, rongé par des querelles intestines, et des guerres de pouvoir et de voyages entre les officiers et les conseillers.

M. le président, entre-temps, ce sont les sportifs qui en font les frais, et nous constatons, malgré l'absence des chiffres officiels, une érosion constante des licenciés au sein des fédérations.

Pour situer les attentes et les besoins du mouvement sportif, et aussi dégager un plan consensuel qui placerait le sport mauricien sur une rampe de lancement, je voudrais, M. le président, proposer que se tiennent dans les plus brefs délais les états généraux du sport mauricien.

Cet exercice, je crois, est *long overdue* ; rien que pour savoir où nous allons. L'impression qui se dégage pour l'heure c'est que tout le monde ne va pas dans la même direction, alors que pour réussir dans ce secteur il faut avoir une seule vision.

Je voudrais aussi proposer que le sport au niveau des collectivités locales reprenne vie au niveau de l'Association des autorités urbaines (l'AUA). Ceci dit, le MMM au pouvoir dans les villes fera de cette relance une priorité absolue.

(Interruptions)

Et le MSM, bien sûr ! Voilà, vous êtes content !

M. le président, je ne pourrais terminer sans parler des contraintes financières auxquelles fait face le mouvement sportif. Au risque de me répéter, nous savons tous à quel point l'introduction du CSR prive le sport mauricien de soutien financier du secteur privé pour assurer son développement.

A ce chapitre, l'absence d'action et d'intérêt du *Club Maurice Company* est à déplorer.

Cette compagnie, M. le président, censée récolter des fonds du CSR pour aider le sport mauricien est devenue un éléphant blanc, qui est définitivement à des années lumières des besoins des fédérations.

Donc, je réclame aussi qu'un comité directeur indépendant soit institué pour redonner vie à cette compagnie.

Il est temps, plus que temps même, que nous trouvions une solution afin qu'une partie des fonds du CSR revienne vers le sport. Mettons les bonnes personnes aux bonnes places. Cela ne pourra qu'être bénéfique pour le sport mauricien.

M. le président, après tant de florilège négatif autour de ce budget, je ne peux que partager entièrement les soucis et les craintes de la population quant à l'avenir qui lui est réservé.

Désormais, cette population ne croit plus dans les promesses, surtout lorsqu'elles arrivent à la veille des élections.

M. le président, ces promesses sont arrivées comme par coïncidence, comme par enchantement à quelques semaines des élections villageoises et municipales. Il faut que ces promesses soient traduites en des actions concrètes. L'avenir nous le dira.

“The proof of the budgeting is in the implementing.”

M. le président, je vous remercie.

(5.55 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr M. Choonee): M. le président, une fois n'est pas coutume, je vais commencer mon intervention sur le budget 2013 en rappelant l'opinion experte d'une autorité, Lord Meghnad Desai, formulée durant ce week-end, et je cite –

« Je suis optimiste pour l'avenir économique de ce pays. »

J'aurais aimé féliciter le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour les initiatives prises, et pour le budget présenté dans les circonstances actuelles. Au gouvernement, nous avons déjà jeté les jalons pour assurer la pérennité de notre succès économique dans un monde en transition perpétuelle. Pas plus tard qu'avant-hier, dans son allocution télévisée, le président de la République Française, François Hollande, disait, et je cite –

« Nous vivons bien plus qu'une crise ; nous vivons un changement du monde. »

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make some comments on the intervention of the hon. Member. I understand he has been the Mayor of the *villes-soeurs* for some years. Can I just ask a question? Quel a été son bilan en tant que maire des villes-sœurs ? Quelles a été sa contribution en tant que maire des villes-sœurs ?

(Interruptions)

Alors, au lieu d'être maire, il a été père ; bravo à lui ! Mais, venir ici parler de tant de choses, avoir tant d'arguments pour critiquer ! Je suis d'accord qu'on est dans l'opposition, mais il faut être raisonnable, M. le président. J'ai eu un communiqué du ministre des Finances –

“Dear colleague, I enclose herewith a copy of the budget implementation timetable listing out the 204 budgetary measures announced under various headings.”

Je suis sûr que mon collègue, le ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports, va venir en détail sur tout ce qu’il a accompli, et ce qu’il pense faire à l’avenir. Mais, que sur l’item sports, il y aura 191 bourses additionnelles de perfectionnement *to be implemented at latest by September 2013; expanding sport-études programme by the Ministry of Youth and Sports again by April 2013; increase the monthly allowance for high level athletes by 50%! History! If somebody was getting Rs20,000, he would get Rs30,000; relaunching the famous sports inter-collèges.*

(Interruptions)

Incroyable! Je me demande s’il y a d’autres pays qui font cela! *Increasing funds for Trust Fund for Sports by January 2013.* C’est pour vous dire, M. le président, les initiatives que ce gouvernement prend.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister Ritoo, please allow the hon. Minister to continue his speech!

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it seems debates are getting sporty; we better shift to other issues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget is one more step on the way to achieving fairer, more compassionate and egalitarian welfare state in spite of the setbacks that lie in our way; setbacks that have flown directly from the greatest economic slump since the great depression of the 1920’s. I have to repeat this. People tend to forget, and we have to be honest to admit that the world has still not recovered from this. Even in countries where the waves have subsided, the ripples have continued to create havoc. I shall quote a few figures to illustrate this state of affairs. According to the latest Conference Board Global Economic Outlook released on Tuesday 13 November, world economic growth, which stands as low as 3.2% for 2012, will slow further to 3% in 2013. More importantly, what is more relevant to us is growth in Europe, our major trading partners. Here, annual growth is expected to average 1.2% during 2013 to 2025. Mature economies are all still healing the scars of the 2008-2009 crisis.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I just quoted President Hollande speaking about '*changement*'. I will go even further; we should speak about turmoil, not only economic tsunami. At this very moment, when I am addressing this House, people have taken to the roads, Police is evacuating strikers who are gathered outside Parliament, - of course, not this parliament, Mr Speaker, Sir - in Lisbon, Portugal, where spending cuts and crippling sovereign debts of 107% of GDP have brought the nation to a standstill. This is far from the tunes of '*serre ceinture*' played by the hon. Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister.

Since yesterday, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, workers across the European Union have staged a series of protests and strikes against rising unemployment and austerity measures, leading to halts in transport, closed businesses and schools. Police and protestors clashed in the several rallies that have taken place in 23 countries which include Greece, France and Spain where unemployment has reached a staggering 28%. More than one quarter of the active population in real numbers and this means three to four times the actual population of Mauritius!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, global events have left many countries counting their misfortunes.

It is against this backdrop that we have to compare the performance of this government and the leadership of hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam as opposed to the prophets of doom.

Have we heard about austerity in the Budget? Did the Minister of Finance tell us there is austerity? No! Have we removed free education, free health care and free transport? No, again! Have we raised income and corporate taxes? Has unemployment gone up? No. Has pay been freezed? Again, it is no.

Here, on the contrary, workers are being paid their COLA and are getting real salary increases with the PRB. The Prime Minister has even lent a compassionate ear to the demands of our trade unions to review certain increases.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Members of the Opposition are very limited but, let us imagine for a few seconds what would have been the fate of this country if our hon. friends on the other side of the House were still around, that is, were in government. Let the figures speak for themselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Thus, when world GDP was showing robust growth around 5% and supporting an expansion in world trade of around 8% and no one could have predicted the biggest slump in our history, our economy grew by less than 3.5%, among the lowest in the last decade! There was no petroleum crisis, let alone recession. The unemployment rate rose to 9.5%. Domestic savings as the ratio of GDP fell to 17.5%, one of the lowest savings rate since 1980. The Budget deficit, as a ratio of GDP turned out to be 5.5%. Today, even with the payment of PRB in 2013, forecast Budget deficit will still be half the amount.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coincidence has it that in some part of 2011 the country's quarterly growth rate fell successively to just 1.8%. One may guess who the Minister of Finance was when that happened. Thank God, he left in time!

I cannot stop asking questions, Mr Speaker, Sir, those who gave such poor results when the world had almost erased the term 'great depression' from its dictionary, what would they have done to this country? Once again, thank God that the whole team is back in their rightful place, on the other side of the House whether loyal or not. In the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how has it been possible to turn the tide that seemed to engulf us as a tsunami when they were in Government into one that has not only brought prosperity and widened the circle of opportunities for all Mauritians but, has also put on the world's premier league of achievers, as depicted by the following objective rankings, thus, *inter alia*-

- Moody's has upgraded our sovereign debt from Baa2 to Baa1 for the first time in our history;
- Mauritius has now entered the top twenty in the latest World Bank Doing Business Report;
- We now rank in the top ten economies in both Wall Street Journal Heritage Foundation and the Fraser Institute Indices, when it comes to economic freedom;
- Various prestigious African institutions of repute, Mo Ibrahim and others have recognised our leadership position in Africa in several matters, be it governance, democracy, openness of our economy, etc.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all this has been made possible by the vision and leadership of this Prime Minister and his competent Minister of Finance who has been acclaimed among the best in the region and in the world.

A leadership that saw to it that respect of institutions prevailed when others bargained their presence in the government with interference in judicial matters.

A leadership that ensured that gender equality was for the first time translated into reality in local elections, and I have here to congratulate my colleague the Minister of Local Government for his initiative and for forging ahead, fighting all his way to get the law implemented. Today, we are proud that we are having the elections at the local level whether it is at the Village Councils, District Councils or the Municipalities.

A leadership, again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that ensured political stability all around while others are still governed by moods, a leadership that ensured that the Welfare state was consolidated even though this meant going against the norms of the current thinking. This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, further consolidates this Welfare State by giving added impetus to the main pillars, namely health and social aid and, of course, *MID*. People tend to make believe the perception that *MID* has not been taken into account in this Budget but, the Minister of Finance rightly said it and yesterday I heard my colleague the Minister of Environment putting emphasis on it. What is *MID*? *Maurice Ile Durable!* The five Es: Education, Environment, Energy, Employment and Equity. Where is it that he missed all these 'Es'? All the 'Es' are in. Such a balanced budget, but yet, it is so easy to come and criticise as if nothing is good.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now move on to the subject matter of my Ministry. For too long, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a tendency to look down on culture as something unimportant, something marginal, not to say, nonexistent. Culture, which is a whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterises society, deserves more than that. Now, we realise that anything that is not natural happens to be cultural. Culture includes all creative expressions and practices. Culture offers infinite possibilities and choices. I may even say that it is culture that drives the strategies of the enlargement of the production possibility frontier of a country. Mr Speaker, Sir, there can be no future without culture. Indeed, I boldly state: our culture is our future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at times, we need to state the obvious. This country is witnessing a cultural revival and this fact needs to be acknowledged. Cultural activities are bubbling throughout the year. On top of providing enriching entertainment, these also aim at reinforcing

cultural understanding and fostering national unity towards building a Mauritian identity. A few examples –

- the national drama festivals are being organised in 10 languages with the participation of more than 1,000 participants;
- various activities are being held in the context of the National Day celebrations throughout the country, in all schools, youth clubs, senior citizens associations and women associations;
- the commemoration of historic events that go to the very heart of this nation, namely the abolition of slavery and the arrival of indentured labourers are being done at both national and regional levels;
- Music Day is supposed to be on only day, 21 June, but in Mauritius we have Music days. Music days are celebrated at national and regional levels with the participation of all 9 local authorities as well as in all schools of the Republic;
- Christmas, Divali, Eid and Spring festivals are all celebrated at national and regional levels, by providing opportunities for creating more bridges between the different components of our plural nation, and
- the World Theatre Day and SLAM competitions are being celebrated at schools at regional and national levels.

In line with its mission, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been facilitating the development of artistic creativity through the consolidation of the existing pluralism; with a view to further strengthening national unity. In concrete terms, the following actions have been taken and projects implemented. We have come up with five new Speaking Unions in 2012. This completes a set of six Unions for the preservation and promotion of our linguistic heritage and with the adoption of the French Speaking Union next year, we shall go full circle. We would be having 12 Linguistic Speaking Unions in Mauritius. It is very rare. I wonder whether other countries have so many Speaking Unions or other Governments have dared to have so many speaking unions to serve the people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of those who believe that culture should not be restricted to the elite. I have thus taken steps to ensure that our actions trickle down to the grassroots level. With this in mind, we have continued our policy of opening new *Centre de Lecture et d'Animation*

Culturelle (CLAC) run under the aegis of *Centre De Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle* (CELPAC) of my Ministry. We already have a good network of CLAC centres. As at now, in Mauritius, we have a total of 20 including those in Rodrigues. The four new ones are at Fond du Sac, Flic en Flac, Baie du Cap and one is ready for inauguration at Pailles. The role of these Centres is very important to promote local values through cultural and literary activities. CLAC facilities include *inter alia* reading facilities and rental of books free of charge. Here, I need to point out that our readership in these centres is in excess of 150,000 people. As such, my Ministry partners with different Government institutions and NGOs to promote facilities for the development of the rural community. Various cultural activities such as SLAM, poetry, song, story-telling and dance as well as celebrations of different festivals are held on a regular basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is very well aware of the potential of culture and its impact on society; both economic and social. As such, our policy is also geared towards capacity building and inculcating love of arts. The *Centres de Formation Artistique* are essential in providing non-award courses to persons wishing to learn different art forms for a very nominal payment. Resource persons, who are basically artists in the different fields, are enlisted to provide their expertise to these potential art lovers and future music professionals.

Four *Centres de Formation Artistique* are operating at full swing at Paillotte, Goodlands, Pointe Canon and Plaine des Papayes as decentralised venues.

We are looking for one site in Black River District and soon we will have the fifth *Centre de Formation Artistique* at Bel Ombre. In the past 11 months, Mr Speaker, Sir, some 800 persons have been trained in 11 different art forms, namely dance, guitar, painting violin, flute, pyrography, filmography, photography, light and sound on stage theatre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the *Conservatoire National de Musique François Mitterrand* – often people tend to believe that we have only one Conservatoire and it is just in Quatre Bornes and that's all. It is good that I inform this House that in view of constant growing demands for courses offered by the *Centre Conservatoire François Mitterrand*, five branches have been opened at –

- (i) Grand Baie;
- (ii) Curepipe;
- (iii) Beau Bassin;

- (iv) Bambous, and
- (v) Mahebourg.

One additional branch – at the request of my colleague, the hon. Minister of Fisheries – will be opened in Rodrigues soon. Over 2,500 students are currently following courses in a wide range of disciplines such as violin, guitar, piano, flute and saxophone. More than 2,500 students! These courses range from informal courses for hobby purposes to music. Practical examinations are run by the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music.

Mr Speaker, Sir, training remains the linchpin of any successful venture. My Ministry works closely with the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the Rabindranath Tagore Institute to provide training to improve the artistic skills of their students. In view of the increasing number of students, MGI and RTI have opened regional centres at Rose Belle, Flacq and Vacoas. Furthermore, regular workings are organised by visiting artist under the cultural exchange program and training is provided in instrumental music such as Tabla playing, sitar/flute and classical dance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our cultural values cannot be dissociated from our cultural heritage. Our country is fortunate to have two sites which have been inscribed on the world Heritage list of UNESCO. The preservation and promotion of these two world Heritage sites, namely, the Aapravasi Ghat in Port Louis and Le Morne have gained impetus in terms of visitors and sensitisation on the peopling of Mauritius. The renovation of Beekramsing Ramlalla Interpretation Centre (BRIC) at Aapravasi Ghat has reached an advanced stage while two additional sculptures have been completed at Le Morne.

Furthermore, to enable people, especially the younger generation, understand indenture and how indenture life was, a replica of an indenture village has been set up at the Aapravasi Ghat where numerous Members from this august Assembly attended the function on 02 November and witnessed what all we have rebuilt on site there.

The indenture village has been set up there and it is currently open to visitors. We expect to have *les invités de marque qui vont visiter le site dans les mois qui suivent, M. le président.*

In the same vein, I have the pleasure to inform the House that we propose to carry out a similar project at Le Morne to mark the abolition of slavery next year.

Furthermore, signage for *Le Morne* throughout the island will be completed by the end of the year thus providing full visibility to the site.

Our intangible cultural heritage which is of prime importance needs to be preserved. Actions have been initiated for the listing of *séga typique*, *séga tambour* of Rodrigues, Bhojpuri folk songs and dance and *séga chagos* on the representative list of Intangible Heritage of UNESCO. This will put our heritage on the world map and will be instrumental in the promotion of cultural tourism - another new pillar of our economy which is in the making.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our intangible cultural heritage would be incomplete without the *séga tambour* of Rodrigues and Outer Islands and, of course, when we talk of outer islands, it is Agalega. My Ministry has been actively involved in the preservation and promotion of these values. The first phase of this ground-breaking project has been completed with the launching of the DVD on traditional music and dance of Rodrigues. The cost is almost Rs1 m. I have to be grateful to the Minister of Finance for this. This project involved the participation of the best traditional musicians and dances of Rodrigues.

Furthermore, regular exchanges in all art forms have increased considerably. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget has paid special attention to the well-being of the nation by providing facilities for entertainment. The Government believes that entertainment should be part and parcel of the daily life of every Mauritian citizen. Cinema which formed part of our habits and contributed to the strengthening of family ties yester years faded away over the passage of time. The need to revamp the cinema culture and to meet new aspirations of the nation is felt.

This budget caters for such aspirations. Mauritians are been given the opportunity to go back to their '*ancien amour*', attending cinema shows. It is a meeting place '*par excellence*' for friends, parents and peer groups. Cinema halls are now having state-of-the-art technology and are being opened in strategic parts of the island. In order to make it more accessible and to allow more people to watch films of good quality this Government has abolished VAT on entrance tickets and entertainment tax has been removed. These measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been welcomed not only by cine-goers, but also by the operators of cinema halls and, of course, theatre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not want cinema to be entertainment only, but we also want it to become another pillar of our economy as is the case in many countries. I said it last year and I

say it again, if we can have Hollywood, if we can have Bollywood, how about Mauriwood. It is not a dream, it can be realised. Mauritius the island has the edge, has all the potentials, it is an open natural studio. How many countries offer this facility naturally! God given! Everything is there, we simply have to tap all resources and get things to happen. I have to be thankful to my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having thought seriously about cinema. There were some hurdles, we got them removed and we are going very fast to make of cinema an industry in this country. We are not short of actors, we got more than enough - *ena pa pu gagne place aussi*.

The film industry is a vibrant industry where thousands of people can earn their living. Mauritius, as I said, in itself is a natural studio, has the potential. What we are having is that some producers come here to shoot movies and go away for post production purposes. No due credit is given to our country. I have seen in India as High Commissioner movies shot here, the beaches are of Mauritius, but there, they labelled it Goa, as if it was in Goa. Goa can never become Mauritius, we have the best beaches of the world. Now what we want is not only shooting, but also post production as well. We are encouraging films producers to come and set up studios here and this will enable the new industry to emerge. The current pilot scheme allows for a refund of 25% of Qualified Production Expenditure (QPEs) incurred in Mauritius by a film producer with respect to the shooting of a film. The QPEs include transport accommodation, local manpower, catering and hiring of the equipment and premises in Mauritius.

This budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, provides for an increase in the Qualifying Production Expenditure (QPE) from 25% to 30%. It is also being extended to TV commercials and documentaries that will be produced in Mauritius, be it by foreigners or even by Mauritians.

I shall conclude on this chapter by making two announcements. Thanks to my extensive network in India, I am conducting - with the support of Government and approval of Government - a road show in collaboration with the BOI.

Second – remake: *'Pas remake ici. Pas remake on and off!'* You heard of the movie Souten. Everybody knows it; Souten put Mauritius on the World Map as a touristic destination. I met the producer. We had a working session and, you know what he said, he will go for a remake. Nothing to do with our remake, here, in Mauritius. He will go for Souten II; remake. That is coming. We go through II to III; we can't go for three now.

Anyway, Mr Speaker, Sir, history will bear testimony that it is this Government which has paved the way for cinema industry in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since some years now, my Ministry is providing a range of facilities to organisers of concerts and to our local artists for the staging of quality shows for the benefit of public at large. Under the International Development Grant Scheme, 52 artists including cultural groups such as Menwar, Stephen Bongarçon, Krishna Lutchoomun, Nathalie Perichon, Wassim Sookia have participated in international music and dance and art exhibitions in countries such as Reunion, Seychelles, China, India, Switzerland, France and Madagascar. My Ministry has funded the participation of our local artists to the tune of more than Rs1.5 m. This has enabled these artists to obtain worldwide exposure and to upgrade their artistic skills through exchanges with their counterparts at international level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, artists have always complained, have always expressed concern regarding the high rental costs of venues for holding of concerts.

Since last year, my Ministry has a scheme to subsidise the rental costs for such venues to address this issue. For this year, some 20 show organisers have benefited under this scheme, which means giving them a 50% grant on the hiring of the site where the concert was to be held.

But, the good news is; this year, we have gone further. The hon. Minister of Finance has extended this facility to the Conference Centre at Grand' Baie. The Conference Centre at Grand Baie can accommodate easily 600 people; that will be put at the disposal of artists at nominal cost, and I have to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for this particular measure. Nominal cost! Any artist can go there and perform stage or show and have a concert, and have it. Similarly, the MGI/RTI, Indira Gandhi Centre, Serge Constantin, the Convention Centre at Pailles are all being offered to artists who can afford to, definitely, because the Convention Centre at Pailles is too costly. I think, next year I will be convincing my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, to use it more frequently and to cut down the cost there, but definitely we will find a way to get the best for our artists.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this goes in line with government's policy of democratising arts and culture and bring them to the people. This measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, will allow the holding of concerts with the participation of international artists, stars, and allow the public in general to appreciate high performances. Here, I am talking about the more important, that is again history.

For so many years - the Minister of Youth and Sports is not here - the stadia of Mauritius were never being given to the Ministry of Arts and Culture for the organisation of concerts; big concerts. We could never invite an international artist of name, of fame, to this country because we had no venue to organise concerts. Hats off Minister! He allocated Rs35 m. just to cover the turf at stadia; starting with Anjalay Stadium for us to start the organisation of concerts of international level with artists of international fame, and this is something historic. We can use the cushion in any stadium of the country which means the country will again bubble with cultural activities of even international standard through the support of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a General Assistance Scheme to finance micro cultural projects such as production of CDs and DVDs, publication of books, holding of exhibitions, and there, the grant was Rs15,000. We have increased it to Rs30,000 which is an increase of 100% since June this year, and some 100 artists have already benefited from the scheme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this year we hosted, at least four international conferences. We started with the 3rd World Chinese Conference in September this year where there were more than 500 delegates including 200 foreign nationals. The conference reinforced the special relation between Mauritius and the People's Republic of China, and, of course, the Chinese Diaspora.

During the conference, the Chinese authorities gratefully provided us with a troupe which included handicapped children. The performance of these children inspired the creation of a similar troupe in Mauritius, under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. My Ministry is providing all the necessary support for this to become a reality; a cultural troupe of handicapped children which will perform both in Mauritius and, of course, internationally.

The other conference we had, very recent, is the PBD Mauritius 2012, the Global Indian Conference. Mauritius hosted a conference where Indian Government, Mauritian Government and the GOPIO, altogether, supported the PBD Mauritius Convention with the theme "Shared Roots and Common Destiny". This captured the essence of India's expanding multi-dimensional engagement with its Diaspora. The success of PBD Mauritius was marked by the participation of more than 800 delegates including participants from several countries such as South Africa,

Reunion Island, the US, the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, Fiji's Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, India and Mauritius.

I am happy to underline here, I can see the former Minister, the hon. Member Alan Ganoo here. He was one of the participants. He was the one who contributed in one of the plenary sessions. I have to thank him. Others could not dare to come for reasons known to them, but he was one from the Opposition who came and assisted and presented the paper. We also had very interesting plenary sessions and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, has changed the image of Mauritius in the eyes of the Diaspora; whether its Indian Government or people from Diaspora, from all the countries, they were all convinced that Mauritius is the venue, Mauritius is the island where we can organise MICE. You know about MICE; the tourism project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't be taking long. So, I will be very brief. We also organised the World Telegu Conference. We also organised le 13^{ème} colloque du Comité international des études créoles. The 13th colloquium on the theme '*Langues créoles mondialisation et éducation*' was held from 05 to 09 November in Mauritius in collaboration with the University of Mauritius and the Creole Speaking Union.

This *colloque*, again, had the participation of some 50 high profile academics/researchers from more than 20 countries. We also organised the 110th birth anniversary of Malcolm de Chazal. I will end with some of the parastatal bodies under my Ministry. Our museums are showcases of our rich heritage. These have been valorised and enhanced. To this effect, a Master Plan for museums is being finalised. To give further visibility and promote a convivial environment, two gift shops have been set up at the museums in Port Louis and Mahebourg. These also provide venues for local artists and craftsmen to market their products. To date, 8000 artefacts have been catalogued and restored in the museum. A digital database is being prepared for all exhibits of the respective museums.

We also have a Dodo gallery, which is operational at the National History Museum in Port Louis. An insectarium is being installed to highlight the variety of insects on Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Cultural Exchange Programme with friendly countries provides opportunities to give exposure to our artists in different arts and upgrade their skills, and share common cultural experiences. No less than 20 such cultural exchanges have taken

place. Our cultural commitments with the population also include programmes under regional and international organisations such as UNESCO, IOF, IOR-ARC and others.

Our National Archives, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am glad to inform that government has made it a priority of priorities to shift the Archives from the industrial zone in Coromandel to another site. Land has already been earmarked next to Apollo in Ebène Triangle, and government is providing the funds needed for the Archives to be moved from where it is. We have a project with proposals to have the National Archives and the National Library to be shifted. Some proposals were to have the whole Ministry as a culture house to be there. These are in the pipeline. We are, of course, looking for the support of friendly countries to realise all that.

Parallel to this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all the documents in the custody of the National Archives are being digitised for preservation, and will be made available to the public through the internet.

The first phase of this digitisation process will comprise scanning and uploading of some 500,000 pages, which has been completed and will be launched by the end of this year. This project will continue for years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am running short of time. I have some 30 para-statal bodies.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, carry on with your speech, and address the Chair!

Mr Choonee: I have got more than 30 para-statal bodies at my Ministry which are actively involved in the promotion of arts and culture in their specific fields such as heritage, fine arts, library, concert, promotion of written and spoken languages, promotion of music, and the promotion of reading and writing culture. I am not quoting any of them right now. They have all been providing full support to my Ministry in the organisation of our national festivals throughout the country, and we have so fruitful results. But I have to mention at least one of them, namely the Islamic Cultural Centre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Islamic Cultural Centre is one of the rare institutions under the Ministry that has been carrying out professionally all the activities which fall under its purview. The most important and recent one is this year's Hajj organisation. I have here to

underline the support I got from the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, Dr. Kasenally, and all other colleagues ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, no interruption, please!

Mr Choonee: ... and the Board of Trustees of the ICC, including its Chairman, for the best ever organisation of Hajj for Mauritius. We have to congratulate everybody for their support and for the organisation.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will fail in my duty if I do not highlight the transparent way in which my Ministry operates. The numerous activities organised by the Ministry throughout the year have all been done in full transparency and within all established rules and regulations, and this was not highlighted. Even the Director of Audit has had no comments on my Ministry. I am sorry to say that the press as usual - not of all it ,but certain sections of the press - when the Director of Audit had no comment for the Ministry, somebody audited the Ministry on a newspaper saying what were the flaws of the Ministry, when there was no flaw from the Director of Audit. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at times we feel embarrassed. What is the mindset of some people in this country? So negative! When things are good, appreciate that, at least, they are good. Don't be negative!

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude. This government has an enviable track record. All objective yardsticks testify to our success, and all indicators are flashing green. We have delivered against all odds, despite the lingering recession on the international level and the unpatriotic scare-mongering by the Opposition and its press cronies here.

I understand that the Opposition has to oppose; that's part of the game. But it is very unfortunate that no less than the leader of the Alliance publicly said that he was waiting for things to become sour, in order to get back to power. That will never happen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Fortunately, we have a great leader, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. Under his leadership, we have been able to steer Mauritius to success in turbulent waters. And this

government walks the talk. We do not sell ‘*un budget d’intention avec des effets d’annonce*’. Thus, more than 90% of the budgetary measures of 2012 have already seen the light of the day, and this is set to continue with the present government which is a stable government, a government that is not run by moods of someone unlike the other side.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding arts and culture, we have seen the pivotal roles that they have played in shaping and preserving the fabric of our society. As we are stepping into a new era defined by new values, we need to redefine arts and culture value chain. It is this Budget, along with the novel proposals that have been presented, that will position us in that new sphere.

I once again congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for this loveable, beautiful Budget which has really triggered a lot of activities - at least for my Ministry - in the cultural field in the country.

Thank you for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.49 p.m)

Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member of Savanne & Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened with great attention to the Budget Speech 2013, and nothing strikes me as new. I do not want to dwell on this present Budget manifesto, as we all know that it is conditioned by what was presented year after year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, within his speech, the hon. Minister highlighted the power of technology as an answer to the challenges of the world in transition, and the main entry is about his budgetary support to internet. No later, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, than this morning, two technicians from the Mauritius Telecom were sent to my place to carry out a technical test on my telephone line and home phone set-up to determine my eligibility to My.T. The result, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was negative. With the exception of my neighbour, there is no access to My.T coverage in my area. We may have to use broadband ADSL, which is a more expensive package. And the same phenomenon applies to most areas located on the coastal part of the region of Black River/Savanne.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his speech, the hon. Minister underlines that internet is a fundamental right. He does so a year after – more precisely June 2011 - when the

United Nations voted a Resolution to make access to internet a fundamental human right. My question here is whether the government is really committed to bring to the House a law that will guarantee access to Internet to all citizens.

This said, Mr Speaker, Sir, if I am here, it is to be the voice of those who do not have a say in this 2013 Budget. We all know that in our society there are huge disparities between the haves and the have-nots. The have-nots face lots of constraints living in rural areas, not having electricity, not having access to clean water and sanitation, no drain and sewerage system, no toilet, no decent houses, no jobs, no good education, no public transportation, no technology networking and so on.

In his Budget speech, the hon. Minister of Finance did mention that the answer to existing inequalities in digital access is to make it available to all. This idiom sounds too good to be true. But, how will Internet according to him be equitably distributed to all strata of our population? Allow me to quote from the Budget 2013.

“Government will ensure that on 01 January 2013, the cheapest entry level broadband will go down from Rs349 to Rs200. Distribution of electronic tablets to only Form IV students, on payment of Rs500 to cover insurance against loss or damage.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a big investment from Microsoft, Apple or Google. That said, we should not forget about the Microsoft scandal that was on the news and debates in this House. With regard to insurance, I would like to know to whom it is payable and on which basis, as this is not specified. He goes on -

“To transform Internet in schools, Government will extend high speed fibre optic cables to every secondary school.”

But it is not clear how the hon. Minister will transform Internet in schools. Will government invite tenders or are we to assume that HM Rawat will provide this service to government and government schools? Is this what the government calls technology future, or is it just shifting ownership by investing more in techno infrastructure when the infrastructure for Internet already exists? Who will reap the benefits, Mr Speaker, Sir? Is it our youth or the big players?

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we are to succeed in bridging the gap of digital inequalities, we need to have an integrated planning of how to meet the real need of people living in both rural and

urban areas. Just consider, Mr Speaker, Sir, the priorities of the rural poor living below the poverty line: having to choose between putting food on the table, paying bills, sending children to school, and to support a DSL Internet broadband for their children - not My.T since it does not cover certain areas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Internet and Ipad are important but there should be a fair balance in the distribution. That said, the government should focus more on appropriate priority areas that could bring Internet to every house and schools such as free Wifi, subsidisation of the cost of Internet for poor families, in Mauritius and Rodrigues of course, and figure out the best method that could make the Internet services accessible and available to all people living in rural areas and suburbs in Mauritius and Rodrigues; most importantly, figure out also ways to solve our energy problem and thus eliminate blackout in the long run.

On many occasions, debate on this issue has been initiated in this House by the Leader of Opposition and of the MMM.

Mr Speaker, Sir, other points raised within the Budget speech are the manufacturing, industrial and SMEs policies. My question is: what support and incentives is the Government providing to the people at the bottom rung of the ladder, in other words how do these measures link the local people at the bottom rung of the ladder to industries and SMEs. When will the benefits reach these people instead of so many often going to the industry and banks? In fact, to show progress more money is being invested in industries and SMEs. But, there is no integrated plan to show how and when the people from rural and urban areas will have equal access to both the manufacturing industries and SMEs. There is need to view the training delivered, incentives and support services to encourage more people, including women, youth and local artists to find their way in industries and businesses. For instance, Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to ask if the Minister of Public Infrastructure thought about the transportation facilities, and the Minister of Finance about more jobs to be provided in rural areas and suburbs? We all agree that many industries do not employ people who have to travel long distance because of the cost of transportation. I have not seen this social problem being addressed for the textile sector to employ even more than the 50,000 people referred to.

Mr Speaker, Sir, here again, I could criticise the government for not giving adequate training, incentives and support services to bring more of our people to the manufacturing industry and SMEs, and not just the owners of big industries and foreigners.

I also note that our artists entrepreneurs are not represented in the schemes provided for the SMEs, though there have been much talk on developing art as a creative industry. Yet, consideration is not given to the work of our artist as entrepreneurs in the SMEs policies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all agree that poverty is based on annual income and that many of our youths, especially those with a family to look after, are now living below the national average, struggling day to day to put food on the table, homeless, with no water, electricity, telephone line or Internet services, which is of course increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. The schemes provided for the small farmers and fishing sector *laisse à désirer*. There are not even decent transport facilities offered to the small planters to help them carry out their work. The irony of all this is that there is much talk going on about investing in cleaner and greener Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is evidence of climate change, rising of sea level, landslide, flood and tsunami threat in high-risk region and no budget allocated for the following: tsunami emergency scheme, land slide emergency scheme, torrential rain emergency scheme, or erosion caused by the rising of sea level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once again the real areas of priorities has not been addressed. And I will let my colleagues debate on these issues while I will now refer to the sector of arts and culture. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about the Africa strategy, and none of these schemes allow either the visibility of our artist on the African continent or promote cultural activities as a contribution to our digital economy. However, this Budget talks about open markets and free trade. Yet, there is no strategy that discusses the cultural policies as an important element in our economy and negotiates trade agreement that recognises the work of our artist as our rich cultural goods and services. The inability to develop proper goals to enhance art and culture as a creative industry raises question: why there is no political will to recognise the work of the artists as a tool in driving our digital economy? Do the hon. Ministers of Arts and Culture, Tourism, Foreign Affairs and Finance have an idea of how much GDP on creative industries grow every year and will grow next year? Yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Government Programme 2012-2015, it was

recognised that culture is driving force in nation-building. Government reaffirms its unwavering commitment to artists to help and sustain their creativity and brief arts and culture in the mainstream of the economy. However, the Budget has not given due emphasis to arts and culture in the development of the African economy strategy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, piracy of intellectual property rights is one of the greatest challenges that prevent our local artists to have a viable career and thus our music industry to emerge. The Budget 2013 does not pay attention to the comparative advantage that the pirates have to produce at low cost, and it just fails to address this issue by raising taxes on blank CDs/DVDs. The tax remains heavy on the cultural products such as phonograph records, musical instruments, equipment and tools with exception of budgetary provision to abolish taxes on entertainment facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, culture is part of the socio-economic foundation of this country and our long history in unity and diversity. I would appeal to the Government to revisit the Budget for arts and culture and to give greater consideration to the items:

- Remove the MRA tax on the royalties of artists who obtain less than 180,000 per year as income;
- Increase the budget for the Ministry of Arts and Culture to promote young talents
- Implement the Blank Levy on all devices used for recording music at source by MRA
- Remove tax on music instruments
- Free embarkation for artists' instruments and equipment during overseas touring.

Another point, Mr Speaker, Sir, we praise the young creative talents emerging on Facebook, Google and Apple; however, there are no incentives to encourage them to produce works of arts, music or film and to enrich our national heritage. Rather, the Budget makes provision for only two venues, namely – Grand Bay Conference Centre and Anjalay Stadium for concerts and other events, and a few facilities for international media producers to shoot movies in Mauritius.

Though, in the Government Programme 2012–2015, the government resolves the following -

- To provide school children with the opportunity to develop their musical talents, Government will provide all schools with a range of musical instruments.
- A project entitled '*la ruée vers l'art*' will be introduced direct arts amateurs and tourists to visit workshops and see artists at work during a fortnight every year.
- An 'agora des artistes' will be set up at La Vigie, Curepipe comprising space for the practice of all artistic expressions, including a recording studio and exhibition facilities.
- One stadium will be equipped in accordance with international norms to hold concerts.
- Two additional *Centres de Formation Artistique* will be opened one at La Gaulette and one at Trou d'Eau Douce.
- To preserve our National Archives, Government will proceed with the construction of a modern infrastructure to in Moka to house the archives with works starting in early 2013. Records of the National Archives will be restored and digitalised to make them accessible online to the public.
- The existing Assistance Scheme for Artists will be reviewed in order to give a boost to artistic creativity and excellence in arts.
- A new Copyright Bill, long awaited by our artists, will be introduced to, inter idea, incorporate the provisions of the World Intellectual Property Organisation Copyright Treaty.
- A Film Commission Bill will be introduced to give renewed impetus to the cinema industry and provide incentives to local and foreign film producers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget Speech 2013 is very inconsistent in its proposed support to the cultural policies announced in the Government Programme 2012-2015. Needless to say that such lack of humanistic, cultural and artistic vision will leave the local artists excluded from the economic sector in spite of the huge contribution in the GDP growth of the market economy. We talk about the awakening of Africa, it is high time to consider those artists as another pillar of our economy and bring to the House the White Paper and the Copyright Bill long-awaited by the artists to protect their economic right and promote job creations for our young talents.

To conclude, I would like to raise some matters in regard to my constituency. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said earlier, year after year, the Budget shows more money putting in infrastructure such as roads; we talk about airport development to show progress. However, year after year, the gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening.

I would like to raise issues that I keep raising here, year after year, in regard to Constituency number 14. Mr Speaker, Sir, The public transportation in this region Black Rivier/Savanne runs on erratic timetable and is not even available in areas like Chamarel, Le Morne, Cotteau Raffin, La Gaulette, Case Noyale, Riviere Noire, Petite Riviere Noire, La Preneuse, Tamarin, Cascavelle, Flic en Flac and there is a significant number of unemployed/underemployed families squatting the land with no right to electricity, water, sanitation, telephone line and road infrastructure. In reply to one of my PQs asked to the hon. Minister of Lands and Housing with regard to Constituency number 14, there are 312 squatters over State land in this region: the number of houses made of asbestos that are falling apart and need to be rebuilt; the number of unemployed and underemployed, according to the Minister of Labour, amounted to 2311, and this figure is what is known from the number of job seekers, but what is unknown, Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't know; it is still unknown.

There is actually an acute water problem in these specific regions: Choisy, Le Morne and La Preneuse. The erosion caused by the rising of sea level is posing a threat to road users. The low performance of our primary schools lying along the coastal region compared to the neighbouring schools.

Le Pont du Tamarinier's project of relocation of 38 families has still not been accredited. However, the guideline has changed once again and, according to this new guideline, Le Pont du Tamarinier is required to have a trust without any certification from the government. The government proposes to subsidise the day-care centres with an amount of Rs1500 to support the poor families. Unfortunately, from my information, there are three day-care centres that are complaining for non assistance from the government. I have put questions for the next parliamentary session scheduled this Tuesday 20th November on this issue. This list could go on forever, but I leave it to my other colleagues, especially hon. Ganoo from my constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these are some of the challenges faced by my constituents that require a major priority in this Budget. We should not forget that our country relies on its human resources

and it is important to include all in its transformation to meet the challenges of a world in transition.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.13 p.m.)

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

Mr R. Issack (Fourth Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) : M. le président, c'est la première fois que j'ai l'honneur et le privilège de m'adresser à la Chambre sous votre présidence. Je saisis cette occasion pour vous congratuler à l'occasion de votre intronisation avec la bénédiction de tous les parlementaires. Déjà, nous avons eu un aperçu de la maîtrise dont vous faites preuve et nous sommes sûrs et certains que, comme votre prédécesseur, vous allez mener de manière équitable les débats au sein de cette auguste Assemblée.

M. le président, en écoutant les uns et les autres, j'ai pensé à un professeur au collège, Monsieur Claude Fanchette, qui aimait nous rappeler une phrase de Lamartine. Lamartine disait : « le spectacle est dans le spectateur ». C'est-à-dire que chacun voit une chose à sa manière. Chacun pose son regard sur l'actualité et assimile à sa façon ce qu'il voit. Et en écoutant ceux qui ont pris la parole au sein de l'Assemblée, je suis arrivé, malheureusement, à une conclusion. D'un côté, nous avons un budget, d'un autre côté, nous avons un bide jeu. Il y a un niveau qu'il faut garder. Il faut que nous participions dans les débats en faisant preuve de rationalité et aussi en étant honnête dans nos analyses. Depuis que le ministre des finances a annoncé la baisse du prix du ticket de cinéma, il y a beaucoup qui se donnent en spectacle. Ils font du cinéma pour attirer l'attention... Je n'ai prononcé le nom de personne, mais c'est juste un constat... Alors, que font-ils ? Il y en a qui veulent à tout prix diaboliser le gouvernement, détruire le budget, saper le moral du ministre des finances et faire accroire que rien ne va dans ce pays. Et le pire, c'est que nous avons des experts en tout, des gens qui savent tout, *des missiers comme tout*. Et il existe une espèce de collusion entre certains politiciens et certains *opinion leaders*. Ils conjuguent leurs efforts pour inventer des histoires. Aussi longtemps que vous dites la vérité, ce n'est pas un problème, mais quand on devient mythomane, quand on invente, quand on devient fabulateur, alors là c'est dangereux. Et aussi, ils deviennent pyromanes, les semeurs de zizanie par excellence. Ils veulent électoraliser tout parce qu'il y a des élections, alors on essaye d'en tirer un capital politique. Mais le triste constat c'est que certains sont désespérés. Ils n'arrivent

pas à trouver des arguments, alors ils ont recours à des moyens tout à fait malhonnêtes, tout à fait injustes.

Le ministre des finances a présenté son budget. Certains ont critiqué sa prestation, peut-être pensaient-ils que le ministre des finances était un *showman* et qu'il fallait être dans un décor histrionique. Certains ont qualifié son discours de soporifique. On infantilise les débats, on désintellectualise tout un budget, on paupérise, on ramène tout vers la nullité. Que n'a-t-on pas dit ? On est même allé jusqu'à, pour tenter de honnir le ministre des finances, on est même allé jusqu'à flatter, encenser Parti Malin. Je croyais que ceux qui flattaient Parti Malin allaient effectivement se déchirer la chemise pour exprimer leur état, leur exultation. Et on cherche dans les détails.

M. le président, pour raffiner mon langage, je prendrais une expression créole, mais je vais la raffiner. On est en train de tout faire pour dénigrer le budget, le ministre des finances et le gouvernement. On cherche les poux de Madame Poule dans le postérieur du roi de la basse-cour. On veut tout faire, c'est à désespérer dans l'arrière cour. Alors, on a recours à des arguments incroyables, on arrive même aujourd'hui à traiter ces fidèles d'hier de pneus usés, de roues usées, de ce qui montre un état d'esprit. On utilise les gens, *percé mettre sec*. On les jette comme ça dans la poubelle. Pas de gratitude !

M. le président, à voir l'opposition ainsi désespérée, ayant recours à des arguments farfelus, parfois on a envie de rire puisque c'est le spectacle, c'est le cinéma. Finalement, parfois je me demande si nous n'avons pas devant nous une opposition en goguette. J'ai pesé mes mots pour ne pas faire d'erreur parce que non seulement on parle mal mais on risque d'entendre mal.

M. le président, vous conviendrez qu'un discours d'une heure et 45 minutes, dans un discours pareil, on ne peut pas parler de tout un programme d'une année, on ne voudrait pas répéter ce qu'on a déjà dit l'année dernière. Alors, le ministre des finances a choisi d'écourter son discours. Mais l'Anglais dit « *brevity is the soul of wit* ». Il faut comprendre qu'il y a quand même une intelligence. De ce côté, on parle peu mais on fait comprendre beaucoup. Et, que disent nos adversaires ? Je prendrais notre ami, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing... Il parle de '*old measures*', mais on dit aussi, et on le répète, que ce budget représente un *bribe* électoral. C'est déjà reconnaître que c'est un bon budget, c'est un budget populaire et c'est un budget gagnant. Parfois on a recours à des arguments qui se retournent contre soi. On parle d'un budget pro-gros

capitaliste. On oublie que tout pays doit avoir le capital pour fonctionner. C'est le capital qui mène à la production. Quand on n'a pas d'arguments on tire sur tout ce qui bouge. Comme, aujourd'hui, il y a un ami de l'opposition qui critiquait tout le monde. Il mitraillait tout le monde. Il fusillait n'importe qui, pour blâmer, pour dénigrer, mais, comme je l'ai dit précédemment, il faut garder un niveau. Il faut un niveau intellectuel honnête et appréciable. Malheureusement, l'honorable Lesjongard n'est pas là, mais je crois que notre amie, l'honorable Mme Juggoo, lui a donné la réplique. Il a parlé de certaines personnes qui n'ont pas d'eau ni d'électricité. Mais, où était-il avant ? Qu'a-t-il fait pour ces gens-là ? Quand ils n'avaient ni d'eau ni d'électricité, il était ministre et il n'avait pas alors vu qu'il n'y avait pas d'eau et d'électricité et que des gens vivaient dans l'obscurité et dans la misère ?

Aujourd'hui, c'est tellement facile de dire les choses. A un certain moment, nous avons en face de nous une opposition loyale. Où est-elle cette opposition ? Quand on est ici on tient un langage royalement déloyal ! Quand ils sont avec nous, ils ont un langage, ils martelaient, ils atomisaient l'opposition, le MMM. Que n'a-t-on pas entendu dire ! Diabolisé, satanisé ! Que n'a-t-on pas entendu dire sur le MMM et que n'avons-nous pas entendu du MMM !

Note ami, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing, parlait de surtaxation. Mais, n'importe quelle économie, c'est comme cela et dans le monde c'est comme cela, il faut taxer, car c'est avec la taxe qu'on fait bouger les choses. Il faut qu'il y ait des taxes. Sinon comment financer les projets ? Mais il faut aussi être réaliste et savoir... Il ne faut pas tomber dans la démagogie. Nous savons que personne ne peut tout donner. On ne peut pas tout donner. On ne peut pas satisfaire tout le monde. Il n'y a aucun pays qui est parfait. La perfection n'existe qu'au ciel. Il n'y a que le paradis qui est parfait. Alors, venir dire que tout est imparfait, rien ne va, c'est faire preuve effectivement d'infantilisme. Et on critique, on dit que dans ce budget on n'a pas parlé de Maurice Ile Durable, on n'a pas parlé de métro léger. Mais ce sont des projets et des idées déjà initiés l'année dernière ou l'année d'avant. C'est déjà en cours. Comme je vous ai dit, on ne peut pas en une heure et quarante-cinq minutes parler des choses qu'on a déjà dites auparavant.

Ce budget donc vaut son pesant d'or. Aujourd'hui, je chercherai à m'appesantir sur deux éléments. Dans le discours du budget, l'honorable ministre des finances précise –

« It is a Budget that will embrace technology and reinforce our Africa strategy. »

M. le président, c'est un budget de la jeunesse également. C'est un budget, un gouvernement qui croit dans les jeunes. C'est un budget, un gouvernement qui veut donner à la jeunesse sa chance, qui veut contribuer au plein épanouissement de nos jeunes. C'est un budget qui fait la part belle à la jeunesse, aux étudiants. On investit dans les jeunes. Prenons la tablette tactile ! On l'a tellement critiqué, mais on n'a pas réalisé la portée et l'influence qu'aura cette tablette sur nos élèves de la Forme IV en 2013. Cette ardoise électronique est l'avenir. Mon amie, l'honorable MadameAurore Perraud, me rappelait qu'un jour j'avais dit aux élèves : 'demain commence aujourd'hui'. Cette tablette électronique, c'est demain entre nos mains. Aujourd'hui, c'est demain avec ce gouvernement. L'ardoise électronique est un compagnon idéal pour l'adolescent de la Forme IV. Ce petit outil va régler sa vie, va le responsabiliser. D'abord il aura la notion du temps, l'heure et c'est ce qu'il faut inculquer aux jeunes, la notion du temps, la ponctualité. C'est la responsabilité par rapport à l'heure. C'est aussi l'alarme car il aura à se réveiller. C'est un calendrier, un agenda. Il peut planifier son travail. *That will be his timetable also.* Avec cette tablette il pourra trouver la signification d'un mot en un clin d'œil. C'est un dictionnaire. C'est aussi une encyclopédie, il pourra avoir des idées pour sa rédaction. Il pourra aller à la recherche de l'information.

Tout imperturbable que vous êtes, M. le président, j'imagine un adolescent en Forme IV. On lui pose une question. Parfois l'enfant ne sait pas, il ne sait pas tout. Si on lui demandait : » Qui est Razack Peeroo ? » Il va sur son ardoise et il dira :

« Voilà ce que j'ai vu en allant sur une tablette - *Dates of call 1972, Bar of England and Wales, and 1974 Mauritian Bar.* »

On commence à vous connaître, M. le président. On commence à vous découvrir. Puis –

“Abdool Razack is a member of Lincoln’s Inn and was educated at the Council of Legal Education in London and at King’s College, University of London, where he also studied the French Civil Law.”

Je ne savais pas cela, mais je l'ai appris avec les élèves de la Forme IV. Donc, ce sera un outil de travail qui va accroître la connaissance de l'enfant, de l'étudiant. Il sera donc *knowledgeable*. C'est cela la vision et l'ambition. Et on dit que c'est un budget qui n'a pas de vision et d'ambition !

Ce sera aussi son répertoire. La tablette tactile a aussi son aspect ludique car on peut jouer, on peut passer son temps agréablement et de manière utile. Nous accusons souvent nos élèves parce qu'ils ne lisent pas. Ils ne lisent pas les journaux. Maintenant vous pouvez lire des livres, mais aussi les quotidiens, les journaux locaux et internationaux. Imaginez, l'élève de la Forme IV qui va en Forme V ou en Forme VI. Quel type d'élève ? Il sera formé, il est malléable, donc il pourra apprendre, aller et viser loin. Et puis, évidemment, il y a des réseaux sociaux.

Le deuxième aspect, c'est l'Afrique. Mais avons-nous déjà pensé ce que l'Afrique pourrait représenter pour nous, île Maurice? L'Afrique, c'est un continent qui occupe une grande partie du globe. C'est plus de 30 millions de kilomètres carrés avec plus d'un milliard d'habitants. Un milliard d'habitants, c'est un milliard de consommateurs. Si l'île Maurice arrive intelligemment à se positionner sur l'échiquier Africain, dans l'océan indien, vous n'imaginez pas ce qu'on pourrait être ! Déjà, l'île Maurice *is the gateway to Africa*. Dans le budget, c'est précisé; nous sommes entre l'Asie et l'Afrique. Nous pouvons être le pont entre l'Asie et l'Afrique. Nous pouvons avoir un rôle prépondérant. Nous pouvons avoir une influence extraordinaire, non seulement sur le continent africain, mais sur notre propre pays.

L'Afrique, c'est un grand potentiel. C'est une richesse infinie : le pétrole, l'or, le diamant, l'uranium... il y a des pierres précieuses. L'Afrique est, au fait, victime de ces richesses. Cela, c'est une ancienne ministre du Mali qui l'avait dit. Mais c'est une richesse inexploitée. L'île Maurice est en *pole position*, pour travailler en Afrique, pour collaborer avec l'Afrique. Donc, L'Afrique représente un continent d'opportunités. Nous savons tous - qu'on le veuille ou non - n'en déplaît à certains, que l'Afrique reconnaît la suprématie de l'île Maurice dans le domaine de la bonne gouvernance. L'île Maurice est déjà une référence mondiale, non pas une référence africaine, une référence mondiale. Je crois que l'année dernière ou l'année d'avant, Mme Hilary Clinton, prenait l'île Maurice comme l'exemple au monde, et comme référence, et nous marquons des points sur le plan africain. Je crois que désormais beaucoup de pays africains n'auront pas besoin de visas, ou bien à l'arrivée, les Africains auront le visa pour pouvoir venir à l'île Maurice.

L'île Maurice deviendra un jour ce que Dubaï est déjà ailleurs pour les Européens et les Asiatiques. Nous avons des Comoriens qui viennent faire leurs achats ici. Des Malgaches, des Seychellois, des Réunionnais. Et maintenant il y aura des Africains qui viendront. Déjà dans le

plan du ministre des finances, en quittant le sol mauricien, ils seront remboursés. On va rembourser leur VAT. Ce sera pour encourager, et d'ailleurs il a été précisé qu'on va simplifier cet exercice. Comment est-ce que nous allons bénéficier, nous en tant que Mauriciens, du continent africain autrement? Déjà, nous sommes devenus un *Education Hub*. A Maurice, il y a l'éducation à tous les niveaux. La population bénéficie d'une très bonne éducation à l'île Maurice. Il y a des universités qui poussent sur notre sol. A un moment de notre histoire, il y avait des chômeurs, des diplômés. Aujourd'hui, nous avons des enseignants, des chargés de cours, nous avons des comptables, nous avons des médecins, des infirmiers, des travailleurs manuels, des agriculteurs qui ont leur place en Afrique. Mozambique a mis à notre disposition des hectares de terrains. A nous d'en profiter. Madagascar, c'est une autre terre d'exploitation dans le sens propre du terme. Déjà, des hommes d'affaires Mauriciens opèrent au Kenya. Il y a des Mauriciens qui ont fait fortune à Botswana. L'Afrique a besoin de professeurs, de professionnels et l'île Maurice a des professeurs, des professionnels, des médecins, des infirmiers à fournir à l'Afrique. Le Gabon recrutera bientôt 200 Mauriciens sur son sol. Des investisseurs vont partir pour l'Afrique, pour Gabon, mais il y aura aussi des investisseurs africains qui vont venir à Maurice nos amis savent très bien. Notre ami, l'honorable Roopun, sait très bien tout comme notre ami l'honorable Stéphanie Anquetil, que les Mauriciens sont très appréciés par les Africains. Surtout pour notre bilinguisme !

(Interruptions)

Notre amie l'honorable Stéphanie est un peu plus qu'être appréciée ! Mais ce n'est pas le lieu pour vous parler des demandes en mariage qu'elle reçoit régulièrement. Peut-être un jour ira-t-elle ...

(Interruptions)

Oui, lui aussi. Mais je ne révélerai pas le nom de l'Africaine qui s'intéresse à l'honorable Roopun ici. Mais il y en a. Alors, à un certain moment, il y a certains Mauriciens qui allaient travailler dans le Golfe. C'était à l'époque où Sir Gaëtan Duval avait créé une ouverture. Justement, à un certain moment – vous voyez à l'île Maurice – quand Sir Gaëtan Duval était à la télévision, un jour, il a expliqué avec raison. Il avait prédit que le plombier, l'électricien deviendrait un rare entrepreneur, difficile à en trouver. Alors à cette époque, il avait dit:

‘Solange, amène mo diary’. On se moquait de lui. Maintenant on dira pour le fils : ‘Solange, amène mo Ipad’. On se moque de nous. On nous critique.

(Interruptions)

Il y a tant d’opportunités en Afrique. Dans un passé pas trop lointain, les Africains quittaient l’Afrique pour aller en Europe, pour essayer de gagner leur vie. Maintenant c’est le contraire qui arrive. Des Portugais retournent au Mozambique pour travailler, parce qu’au Portugal on n’est pas bien payé ; on est doublement payé, triplement payé au Mozambique. Donc, l’Afrique c’est l’avenir, et l’île Maurice a d’excellentes relations avec les pays africains. Donc, si demain l’île Maurice fait une percée sur le continent africain, c’est l’île Maurice qui en sortira gagnante.

M. le président, aujourd’hui, où nous passons il y a les empreintes du développement. Il y a une visibilité accrue du développement ; nos routes ! Il y a la modernisation de l’île Maurice. C’est vrai qu’il y a la pauvreté. Le pays le plus riche dans le monde a ses poches de pauvreté. On ne pourra jamais éliminer la pauvreté même si on veut parvenir à le faire, parce que Dieu Lui-même à créé les pauvres, a créé la pauvreté, parce que la pauvreté en elle-même c’est une richesse. Si je ne me trompe pas, dans la Bible Jésus dit : «Heureux sont les pauvres car le royaume des cieux leur appartient ». Et nous, nous essayons de créer ce royaume pour nos pauvres.

(Interruptions)

Il y a des routes, M. le président qu’on construit. Il y a l’île Maurice, l’actuel gouvernement... Vous savez, il y a des marchands de rêves partout, mais, nous, au sein de ce gouvernement, sommes un marchand des réalités ; nous vendons les réalités. Non seulement nous vendons, nous offrons les réalités.

(Interruptions)

Notre aéroport c’est un bijou. Que sera cet aéroport sur le continent africain ? Imaginons le nombre d’avions qui vont se poser, le nombre de touristes qui vont nous visiter, le nombre d’hôtels qui travailleront, le nombre d’emplois qui seront créés.

La vision, c’est ça ; le budget ambitieux, c’est ça ! Et on veut faire accroire que c’est un budget insipide, incolore et inodore. Au contraire, c’est un budget qui fertilise l’imagination... parfumé...

Alors les routes, l'aéroport, le port qui se modernise, la pluralité démocratique, la presse, les journaux, les radios ! Qu'est-ce qui fait de ce pays ce qu'il est? Qui gère ce pays? Qui vous accorde autant de liberté, Messieurs les journalistes? Le droit à la parole, le droit de penser, et le droit de dire ! De critiquer tout le monde, de nous critiquer, de critiquer le ministre de la Santé, de critiquer le vice-premier ministre tous les jours ! Parfois on critique tellement que j'ai demandé au vice-premier ministre, le Dr. Rachid Beebeejaun : « Est-ce qu'il n'y a pas une journaliste qui est tombée amoureuse de vous ? »

(Interruptions)

Non, ce sont quelques petits secrets que je connais.

Les centres commerciaux qui poussent au nord, au sud, au centre, à l'est et à l'ouest. Le budget c'est aussi le tourisme, *and the tourists love shopping*. Tout comme les Mauriciens qui vont à l'étranger, *they love shopping*, c'est une passion. Alors, nous avons des centres commerciaux modernes avec des griffes internationales. Et les gens vont venir ; l'île Maurice va prospérer, l'île Maurice va grandir !

N'oublions pas aussi les subventions, l'éducation gratuite, notre système de santé. On met à la disposition du ministère de la Santé plus de 8 milliards de roupies. On va recruter des médecins, on va recruter des infirmiers. Malgré les critiques, malgré les problèmes, malgré tout ce qu'on entend à la radio et ce qu'on voit dans la presse, nous avons un service médical qui peut-être n'existe pas ailleurs. Dans le bon sens du terme, M. l'honorable Satish Boolell!

Un exemple. Peut-être que là je vais être un peu personnel, mais il y a une goutte que je dois mettre dans mon œil. Je devais en acheter car il n'y en avait plus. Alors je suis allé dans une pharmacie en Afrique du Sud..., et j'en ai parlé à ...mes amis... Il fallait une prescription, et j'ai demandé combien cela coûte ici. Cela coûte plus de R 800, alors que dans nos hôpitaux on a cela gratuitement ! Les médicaments que nous avons ... j'ai dû tomber malade pour connaître la valeur de nos hôpitaux, la valeur de nos médecins et de nos infirmiers. Il y a des critiques, parce que ce n'est pas facile de gérer autant de monde à la fois, et nous sommes aussi impatients. Mais seulement, même en Amérique on est en train de lutter pour pouvoir venir avec ce projet de *Medical Care Obama*. Mais ici, nous avons tout cela gratuit ; nos écoles, nos enfants, nos élèves.

Nous avons un gouvernement *bonhomme Noël*. On offre tout ! Même des subsides ! Riz, gaz, farine ! Mais, nous vivons dans un pays merveilleux ! Le transport !

Avant-hier, François Hollande a donné une conférence de presse. Il a fait un appel à l'opposition pour l'avancement du pays. Il a demandé à ce que l'opposition fasse preuve de patriotisme.

Nous ici, au gouvernement, avons des devoirs et des responsabilités. Nous sommes des gens loyaux, mais il faut que le gouvernement fasse preuve dans la pratique, dans le concret... Il faut que le gouvernement cristallise ses ambitions. Mais, d'autre part, il faut aussi que l'opposition joue le jeu. Il faut que l'opposition critique de manière constructive. Il faut que l'opposition critique, mais il faut aussi qu'elle fasse des propositions. Vous ne faites que critiquer, mais que proposez-vous? D'ailleurs, si vous aviez des propositions à faire, vous ne seriez pas là-bas ; vous seriez ici. Et si nous étions aussi médiocres que vous nous décrivez, nous serions là-bas et pas ici. Alors, il faut que nous soyons très sérieux. Que vous soyez dans l'opposition ou dans le gouvernement, vous avez un devoir, vous avez des responsabilités envers le pays, envers la population. Il faut qu'on travaille, et on travaille dans l'intérêt des gens. Déjà, nous, au gouvernement, on le fait. Mais c'est à vous de ne plus être des démagogues.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for one hour.

At 7.53 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.55 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, after having heard the previous orator, hon. Reza Issack, in his *amateur* theatricals, I can understand why the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development decided to remove the entertainment tax. Maybe, we might even consider introducing the entertainment tax for this wide public which is not in attendance tonight and for those journalists who are missing, and will probably invent something tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not intend to be long, but I think it is my great privilege, as a member of the profession, to comment on the propositions which have been made by the hon.

Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development in a few sectors which are within my purview to comment.

Taking from the Budget directly, there is something which is under item *Improving Health Services*, quoting from his Budget Speech -

“Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government believes Mauritius must also stand apart on social indicators such as the health of our citizens (...)”

And, it comes very soon afterwards -

“In health care we will always make sure that our citizens get the best treatment.”

I was very pleased to learn that my friend, hon. Reza Issack, got an excellent treatment when he was sick in hospital, but then he is Reza Issack. He is a journalist of standing. He was an MP; he is an MP. He was a former Lord Mayor of the City of Port Louis, and he will get the right treatment, but I am talking about the man out there. The man out there, which consisted even of me when I attend hospital and when I am not known, have to wait and wait before being given a certain degree of quality treatment, which is what happened to me about three weeks ago.

I am quite astonished and I see that the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development promises for the next year, a recruitment of 25 specialists, 75 general practitioners and a cohort of nurses. I took the time to go to the Library and check the meaning of the word ‘cohort’. It is quite derogatory in a sense; but where it means anything; it means a number between 300 and 600 pertaining to Roman legions. This is the actual meaning of cohort. Otherwise it is just a band. I personally feel that it is an insult to the nursing profession to be treated as cohort when you are mentioning 25 specialists, 75 general practitioners and another cohort of nurses. I would have been most grateful if the hon. Minister could have been precise and talk about the exact numbers he wishes to take. The nursing profession is a noble one and needs to be treated with respect. In health care quality is important as quantity.

Medical practitioners in Mauritius must keep abreast of latest developments, and it is going to be mandatory for Medical practitioners and Dental surgeons to maintain a continuous degree of continuous medical education, continuous professional development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard that before. What does actually happen at the level of continuous professional development in a hospital? Now, that we employ almost everybody,

that the floodgates have been opened, that everybody has gone abroad to study medicine and come back we have to recognise by the different training countries; we have to standardise medical training. The responsibility of standardising medical training cannot be left to just the specialists or consultants to stay over one Wednesday in a week. This training was introduced to force some doctors to stay in the hospital for the day. It is well-known that our efficient hospital service, as described by my hon. friend, Reza Issack, is not that efficient. One has only got to listen to the radio, either Radio One or Top FM or Radio Plus, to actually understand the number of complaints. And people die also. There are some units in hospitals which carry the death penalty, and there has not been any action taken against doctors who are offenders, or nurses who are offenders or ambulance drivers who are offenders. When you complain about any one case, you are informed that an investigation is being conducted by the Medical Council, and that the Medical Council has no right to investigate any hospital doctor because this is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

I would challenge the hon. Minister to tell me as to how many doctors have been suspended by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, have eventually found a different fate and continued the service and remain a threat to the service. If you don't know someone at the hospital, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is better not to go and here, I think it is the purpose of this Budget to encourage people to go outside. There are tax facilities, medical premium deductions from the budget concerning health care which are actually going encourage people to go to the private sector. We are all equal citizens in this country. We may choose to go to the clinics if we so wish and also to the hospitals if we wish. We may choose to go to the clinics if we have the right insurance. Anyway, let me tell you; a month in intensive care in a private clinic will cost you about Rs1 m. Rs1 m! I am not talking through my hat. It is easy to know how much intensive care is, and if you don't have private insurance, it is better not turn up in any of the private clinics.

But, giving tax exemptions, according to people, according to the rates which have been enounced in the Budget means, supposedly, that you are going encourage people to go to the private clinics and to get them to go to the private clinic. It would be in the interests of some people, of some vested interests, to sabotage the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, to make sure our health service does not improve.

We were talking about the tablets which the hon. Member was talking about, the medication that he bought in South Africa and which is expensive over here. Let me ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he has considered setting up some form of protocol to verify, to assess, the quality of the medication being dished out in our hospitals. What are the systems used to have a quality control of medication being given? I would gamble my 30 years' experience as a doctor to assure you that not all medication which is available in our hospital service is of good quality. It will probably contain the usual flour, etc., but I would assure you, I am talking about health, I am not making a political issue out of it, but I want people to have the best, I want the Minister of Health and Quality of Life to wake up and realise that this system needs an urgent overhauling and that this Budget does not meet the standards that we are required. It is all very nice to say that we have a perfect system. Everything is free. Education is free. Private tuition is not! This health system is as free as our education system, and I would have wished that instead of giving deductions to premium contributions for a health insurance system that most people, most consumers, in this country be allowed to deduct from the income tax, the amount of money they spent on pharmaceutical products. In any one household, there must be a sum of money which is earmarked for pharmaceutical product consumption and maybe following receipts, somebody somewhere in this country should be allowed to have a deduction for the medication they are consuming.

(Interruptions)

It is not a matter of subsidising pharmacies. Already, there is absolutely no control on several pharmaceutical products.

Let me assure you hon. Speaker, that while in the hospital service you do not have any of those cough mixtures containing addictive products, in the private sector it is available. Can somebody explain to me the rationale of addictive products being available privately and not being available in the hospital service? I am actually complimenting the hospital service – I can see that the hon. Minister is realising the issue. There is a Pharmacy Board and the quotas of cough mixture being distributed to many pharmacies but there is absolutely no control. Any person who is sick and who wants to have a cough mixture goes to the pharmacy and will be told that it is out of stock. Why? Because the actual price will be around Rs50 or Rs75 but from the

drug consumer who needs the cough mixture, it will be sold under the counter about Rs300 to Rs400. This fact is well-known. In my constituency of Curepipe I can take you to a few pharmacies where bottles are lying all over the place, just like outside the market in Port Louis. There is no control; we need to improve on the service. We are not saying that the service is bad but the service should be efficient. The number of deaths which is occurring in the hospital service is absolutely alarming.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I take this opportunity to advise the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development to introduce a system to conduct a death conference – I was told that the Opposition proposes nothing. Let the Opposition propose something - in every single hospital of this country every week. The death conference consisting of a fact-finding internal committee to investigate any one death which has occurred in that hospital during the week, and establish and point out the responsibilities. The same should be applied to public clinics. We do not have a coroner system in this country; we rely on the magistrates. But, if we had a coroner system that might have been his responsibility, we have the right as consumers to know what is going on in the health service.

Again, I turn to the recommendations that students wishing to undertake medical studies with a view to practicing in Mauritius should have the appropriate qualifications at HSC or equivalent level. You are bolting the doors of the stables when all the horses have run away. Now you are going to control the future, but those who should never have gone have gone and come back without basic secondary qualifications. So, the problem is actually bizarre. When there was a time to control, nothing was controlled. It is now when these doctors come back that you are going to introduce a pre-registration exam that all medical graduates will have to pass before becoming a registered medical practitioner.

We have to start somewhere, but you are starting nowhere. The last time doctors were recruited for the service, juniors were recruited ahead of seniors who have been waiting. When I asked the hon. Minister, he disclaimed his responsibility on this issue and said that it was the responsibility of the Public Service Commission to recruit, and that his Ministry had no say in the matter even though I always believe that the Ministry of Health always has a representative guiding the interviews at PSC level. But recruitment has become a little bit hazy.

We are going to introduce a shift system in casualty to ensure that doctors do not work round the clock - 'eight-hour shift'. What is the point of introducing a shift system if the doctors who are there are not qualified enough to man a casualty? Casualty care, accident and emergency treatment should be conducted by somebody who is a specialist in the subject. It is too important to allow it to be manned by junior doctors of one year's standing. You may have any roster under the sun, eight hourly rosters, six hourly rosters, two hourly rosters, if the doctor is not qualified he would never be fit to look at anyone. And that applies to us walking some night into a casualty and meeting a doctor without any experience who, like the last case I have heard of, found somebody with a pain in the neck, applied a kind of prosthesis to the neck, and let the patient go away with a blood pressure of 220 over 110. As from the moment we start investigating properly the death in the hospital, doctors will stop considering themselves as 'Gods'. Being a member of the profession, I have had about enough of patients having to go to see the doctor privately to be entitled to public treatment, and what we need is to increase - if I go to the word used - the 'cohort' of nurses; we need to improve the logistic support in hospitals. Increase in the number of doctors without an optimal use of the staff that you have already will never improve anything.

I also note that the price of – not with a great pleasure, with a certain apprehension. I am quite puzzled - soft drinks will go up in January. This is to prevent the consumption of the excess sugar in the soft drinks. I would remind the hon. Minister of Finance that diet coke or diet Pepsi or diet of anything does not contain sugar and, hopefully, that the diet products will not increase.

We need a certain philosophy somewhere. The hon. Minister of Health was talking about diabetes yesterday, especially a day after Divali when the sugar consumption in this country went high up, and most diabetics are today out of control. Even hon. Bhagwan is having his blood checked every two hours - the post-Divali syndrome. This is true!

(Interruptions)

We are getting to the stage while we need more than words, we need more than conferences, we need to act, and we need to have an affirmative action concerning products which diabetics shall be using.

Sugar-free products should be free of tax, should be subsidised even. People should be encouraged to take sugar-free products, as opposed to just being told that we will have to drink

water. And, especially, on this water business, getting the price of the soft drinks up and coming back to the water levy which is being reduced. Government takes away from one hand what it is going to collect from the other. Then there is one bit also which is quite fascinating. In addition to the Clinical Trials Act enacted that year, we will introduce a Pre-Clinical Research Bill. This will ensure that Mauritius can participate in the full range of drug research activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last year we expressed our apprehensions on those Mauritians who were going to be used as 'guinea pigs' for experiments because, at the end of the day, this is what it is all about. We again expressed our apprehension that children under the age of 18, provided they understood the nature of the act that was going to be conducted upon them during the drug research, would have been entitled to participate in research by those drug companies.

We have not had time to evaluate this Clinical Research Act, and now we are coming with a new one. We are going to make it almost a national activity. After the Clinical Trials Act, a Pre-Clinical Research Bill! And again, another dangerous exercise which no doubt shall come out of the budget of health of Rs87 m.

I think I have said enough about health. But I wish to intervene again - I am not going to be too long - on something which is of great interest to me, which is about law and order. Law and order, we always like to gargle ourselves that this country is an epitome of law and order, and that to clean up this country and make it very safe we are going to introduce the CCTV all over the place. CCTV being the miracle cure that we are going to have, we are going to build on these efforts. This Budget provides for 600 additional police officers. There has been no research to find out how many policemen have resigned or retire during the last year. It is in my contention that there are no new policemen being recruited that we are actually just replacing those who have left. I am quite surprised to note that a sum of Rs34 m. will be allocated to the forensic science lab to improve on the quality of DNA finger printing and care. It is my wish that before we start donating money to this lab that we get a director recruited for the lab.

This lab has been a headless chicken over the past four five years, moving on its own and the results have been evident, especially when you have seen the Michaela Harte case. In the lab where you do not have somebody at the helm of it, and you are giving money and you are trying to give cash, and injecting hard earned taxpayers' money without any thing in exchange. There is no doubt that it is a cause for worry.

As far as the Police is concerned, there is something which, I think, should have been mentioned under the heading of law and order: that not only should we recruit policemen, but maybe there should be a Police Examinations Board to ensure that Mauritius is not the only country where policemen write exams and have to wait for two years before the results come out. We have not evaluated the need of our society. If we take 600 policemen, let me guarantee you that about 500 will disappear in some black hole somewhere and will not be seen on the road.

Hon. Bhagwan mentioned once, and I take a leaf from his chapter, that maybe there should have been some form of recommendation to increase the number of bike patrols. This is the type of activity which makes you see the policemen, the safety of our roads, the safety of our people and reduces the number of cases of larceny. The press has a field day concerning law and order and, Mr Speaker, Sir, if we are going to improve on law and order by creating a phone number and asking people to blow the whistle on others, if we reach to the stage where a Police Force can only rely on whistle blowers to be able to achieve its end, then we don't have any vision.

The Coast Guard is purchasing rapid intervention crafts and boats. There is a floating National Coast Guard monument in the harbour which never goes out to the high seas in case it never comes back, and this ship is there as a symbol of the inefficiency of the Coast Guard. Until we get rid of it, we are going now by fast boats, and it is called 'Vigilant'. I think the name is most appropriate; quite vigilant. Mind you, I know it is excellent for holding cocktail parties for the National Coast Guard. We seem to get all our priorities wrong and if we buy those boats, my bet is that these boats will be more patrolling, the high water mark to prevent local boats from getting there, rather than perform the actual duty that they are meant for, preventing drug traffickers to send drugs from boats.

In addition, I find mention is made of the Melrose prison, which is planned to be completed by the end of 2013. This is no doubt to welcome the pirates to Mauritius. We don't have pirates of our own; seemingly we are going to bring pirates to Melrose. I am a bit worried that we have to rely on Melrose prison to improve law and order. Last year, the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned magnetic bracelets, mentioned to reduce an increasing population because many people get sent to prison as they do not have money to pay simple fines. This year, again, I don't know what we are going to do; just that Melrose is going to be the solution.

As part of the justice system and its reforms, I note the recruitment of 50 additional Judicial Assistants, another word, I think, which needs to be defined. As a professional witness, in my daily life, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am still attending as a witness on cases which happened about 10 years ago. I am spending all my retirement life - maybe I will spent all my retirement life - in Court. Obviously, I am paid a very rich salary for a day in Court, which is Rs150, food and transport included. But this is our justice system. It is unfortunate; this is the maximum government has chosen to pay any witness, in a sense less tax to pay, eventually, to promote justice. As I once said, if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys, Mr Speaker, Sir, but this is another issue.

Having gone through that - I am just going by the Budget rather than make a prepared speech - I am talking now about the Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Corporate Social Responsibility has definite protocols which have been well defined. Supposedly, in the past, you needed to have, at least, according to the protocol and to the Act, for an NGO to be in existence for about two years, to be entitled to help from corporations which will be willing to help them. According to my information - and I take full responsibility for it - many NGOs with the right contacts, with less than two years' existence, have been allowed to qualify for CSR.

This time, CSR is going one step further: to maximise the impact of CSR, companies will be allowed to finance the construction and upgrading of Child Day Care Centres. What we want to know is the responsibility of Child Day Care Centres should be that for the Ministry of Gender Equality. The NGOs who shall be entitled to CSR because CSR might be a one-off help, it would not be sustainable, and it would be my humble suggestion to the hon. Minister that funds be allocated to the Ministry of Gender Equality, and that this Ministry embarks on the construction of Child Day Care Centres. We tend to be promised a lot of things in a Budget and whenever I think of the Budget, I think just like all these astrologers who, at the end of the year, seem to make predictions for the next year, predictions which never realise, but we come back to them, and we keep reading what they are going to predict.

This Budget predicts a lot of good for the community, but we do not see the realisation. The CSR is a useful tool and to use the word of the hon. Minister of Finance, it is a tool, which ought to be revamped. It is not a unique experience in the world. I think there he has been wrong

and the CSR if well maintained, if the criteria are well defined, could help to alleviate the suffering of many of our mandates. But there is something in the CSR. The CSR brings help to those people that the institution knows. Organisations tend to protect the same NGO time and time again. There are some NGOs who get a lot of CSR, funding for three or four shelters while those NGOs who do not have perfect project writers end up getting nothing.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir - because I do not wish to intervene on every single issue - I wish to talk about the reduction in the price of the cinema ticket. I think, having taken this matter to the public, especially in these times of Municipal elections, it is a source for laughter, in a world where the elderly is only getting Rs144 as help. It is an insult; it is an insult actually to reduce the price of the ticket, especially when you have new cinemas with 3-D vision where after having had the reduction, you have to pay another Rs50 to get the glasses. So, it is a bit of a farce. I do not know who is investing in cinemas, just like I do not know who is investing in golf courses, to have an exemption from the land conversion.

We all know the land conversion tax, especially when golf courses are dangerous areas for the ecology. I remember when the golf course came up at Ile Aux Cerfs, there was quite a big ecological issue. All those among us who have any form of scientific training will exactly know the amount of water that the golf course would be needed, the amount of fertilizer, the amount of insecticide, the amount of heavy herbicide that we need for that. I do not think that this will repay the initial investment. Mauritius cannot afford too many golf courses. Mauritius has its children to look after and, as hon. Reza Issack is quite proud of some countries looking for our expert help, we would love to stay here and not go anywhere and enjoy our country.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(9.19 p.m)

Mr D. Khamajeet (Second member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, let me congratulate the Minister of Finance for his excellent Budget 2013.

M. le président, le budget 2013 a été présenté quelques jours de cela et on peut dire que ceci a été très bien accueilli par la population dans son ensemble. Les réactions des différentes personnes, les syndicats et les partenaires économiques ont montré que ce budget a franchi le cap de confiance. C'est tout à fait normal que quelques voix vont s'élever contre mais qui ne sont pas

crues par la population. Par contre, la grosse majorité a très bien assimilé le contenu dans sa totalité. Les journaux dominicaux ont aussi accepté ce budget avec des titres flatteurs et cela a évidemment irrité les semeurs de zizanie qui n'ont pas tardé à réagir en inventant des mensonges comme, par exemple, des titres: 'les rouges se dissocient de ce budget' ou 'c'est un budget de Xavier Duval'. Mais, M. le président, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes solidaires avec notre ministre des finances, l'honorable Xavier Duval dont le budget a une portée historique comme cela a été toujours le cas sous la férule ramgoolamienne et c'est un budget du gouvernement du docteur Navin Ramgoolam.

M. le président, cette auguste Assemblée a été témoin de débats intenses avec des intervenants défendant leurs idées bec et ongle et ceci dit, ils ont contribué à l'épanouissement de la démocratie parlementaire.

M. le président, l'opposition a le culot de s'autoproclamer défenseurs de la population, une population qui soutient massivement le docteur Navin Ramgoolam, Premier ministre de la République.

M. le président, pire, dans leur stratégie d'acculer le gouvernement, ils ont failli lamentablement en alliant l'honorable Kee Chong à donner l'assaut aux débats budgétaires, qui a tout fait pour couler l'opposition dans la honte. Il l'a fait magistralement et nous le remercions pour ce cadeau, pour son discours fade et fusette dans son contenu.

I have to confess that I do not have a malicious tongue. I do not have the habit of hitting anyone below the belt. I do not take pride in hurting the feelings of others. One hon. Member, whose name I would prefer not to pronounce, was just wallowing a dirty criticism and that reminds me of Shakespeare and I quote -

'Not even in the legio'ns of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd in evils to top such a nasty fellow.'

I would have loved to see him making the same allegations outside the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Member of Constituency number 12 reminds me of Cassius who has a mean and hungry look was on this side of the House. He was emitting poisonous criticisms against those who were against him. This is his usual habit and habit is a second nature; it cannot be changed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is another milestone in the continuous socio-economic development of the nation coming from an audacious and daring Government under the leadership of the one and only Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam Prime Minister, the mapmaker of the underprivileged and *laissez-pour-compte*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when a voter chooses a Government, there is an ownership in that choice and we have to respect that choice by all means. Unfortunately, that did not happen when six top-level MSM Ministers attempted *un coup d'État déguisé* in the absence of our leader.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is another proof that the Labour Party together with the PMSD without MSM can bring social economic and political stability in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, those deserters wanted to frustrate and sap the energy of the Government. Their political agenda was so clear, but, as a Government, we were able to circumscribe their political manoeuvres to offset the agenda of the Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, history has judged and will always judge those who have raped the will and consent of the population. Mr Speaker, Sir, habit never dies. One week before the Budget, once again, we just saw the same mentality; a bourgeoning of cynics and chronic uninspired, soothsayers (*prophètes de malheurs*) at their best. They will continue with their habitual storytelling that no longer fascinates the man on the streets who is in quest for a decent job to keep his family away from the pangs of poverty and hunger.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition seems to be less focused on issues that matter but more on the means needed to regain and recapture power. They will keep on reiterating the doom and gloom of the Mauritian society which will never happen. Their words and slogans, Mr Speaker, Sir, are boringly dimensional. They will always start: 'dans les jours à venir, dans les semaines à venir, dans les mois à venir, il y aura un tsunami'. What they don't know how close the entertainment quotient of the Vaudeville act since a long-time.

To the MMM/MSM, we can give them the last pleasures of delusion. Mr Speaker, Sir, if they don't get power what next for them? What will happen to the 'parivar principle' they have adopted. Signs of gasping are already evident in the 62:28 formula for the Municipal Election and daily defection....

Mr Speaker: I have not seen that in the Budget, so, therefore, you stick to the Budget.

Mr Khamajeet: Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, who can know better than you Labour Party is too seasoned a party. Next year we shall celebrate our 77th years of political commitment. Together with our close ally, PMSD, we are going to win again magisterially. This is the promise from a strong committed unshakable leadership of our Prime Minister. We shall continue building the nation brick by brick and stone by stone to remove all the inequalities rampant on our society at large.

Let us not forget we are living in an age of breathtaking changes. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are living in a global financial tempest hitting developing and developed countries alike. We are living an age of competition, uncertainty and economic instability. We are living an age of niche markets and protectionism where developed countries no less than United States and Japan having climbed the ladder of development want to knock the ladder away so that others can't follow.

We are living in a world where the average European cow gets a subsidy of 2 dollars per day on one side whilst on the other side 60% of the world population lives on less than two dollars per day. It seems, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is better to be a cow in Europe than to be a poor person in Africa or Asia.

We are living in a world where EU provides 767 million euro to Spanish fishermen to protect their seas, but their ships are fishing in the African coast.

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are living in a world of paradox where, as the Prime Minister puts it -

“Nobody owes us a free lunch”, and we have to fend ourselves to fight the global realities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is imperative to look retrospectively to move forward especially the historical, socio-economic and political contexts of the late sixties.

- (i) Agriculture was at the centre of our economy;
- (ii) There was a pervasiveness of poverty amongst majority of population which was generating unbalanced outcomes in terms of education, income, unemployment and quality of life;

- (iii) These imbalances, Mr Speaker, Sir, were morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable;
- (iv) Those who were benefiting from the system were powerful and resisting change. The whims, fancies, repressions, exploitation and abuses by a narrow elite of colonial masters were suffocating the nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at this critical junction of our history, we were blessed with political stalwarts like the evergreen Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Sir Gaëtan Duval.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on hindsight, we have to recognise in all humility that they have been movers and shakers of our society who had the resolute belief that -

- another Mauritius was possible;
- another Mauritius was necessary;
- another Mauritius was inevitable.

Their political and foundational task was to bring about a colourful crush of mauritianism imbued with a sense of fairness, equality, social justice and equality to all. And by all means, when we look backwards we can say: we succeeded. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is an affirmation that those values will be preserved and cherished for years to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the philosophy of this Budget 2013 is an alignment of the principle and vision of our past leaders. This Government shares with them a –

- (i) Common belief that opens democratic processes can circumscribe the power of special interest group;
- (ii) The common vision, an engaged, educated, informed and disciplined citizenry can open up minds and capabilities of our fellow citizens;
- (iii) A common approach, the belief in the sequencing of changes rather than rushing into major reforms that can undermine our gains.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the philosophy of this budget is crystal clear -

- (a) The poor needs to be served and empowered by development;
- (b) No community should face social and economic exclusion;
- (c) The Welfare State needs constant relooking and reinforcement;

- (d) The Government, through this Budget, will continue to bring about multitude of change in terms of policies, programs and institution for the benefit of all Mauritians;
- (e) To think and plan in a long-term basis to build a strong economy and a strong society;
- (f) Continue attracting investment by providing healthy legislation, a fluid taxation system and a state of the art infrastructure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to ask a raft of questions to protect us from future shocks.

1. Why countries like Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Greece are facing such grim economic forecasts?
2. Why this nation of just over 1 million devoid of any bountiful resources unlike our African counterparts managing its economy during such a worldwide economic slump?
3. Why Mauritius had been proclaimed as one of the best destination for FDI in sub Saharan Africa?
4. Why our GDP has made such a giant leap from 2750 dollars to 11,000 dollars per capita in such a short span of 10 years?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the answers are many –

1. All along, we have shown a strong demonstration of well intentioned committed leadership at the highest level of Government;
2. The Government strongly believes that transforming economy is good, but transforming lives is better;
3. We have been able to fit in the Anglo American liberal model of globalisation;
4. We have been able to bring a balance between Government and market fundamentalism through regulations;
5. We have been able to offer competitive advantages as far as textile, tourism and ICT are concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world recognises, except for those who refuse to see, that our economic performance remains an upbeat exception in the sub Saharan region.

It is by no coincidence that hon. Xavier Duval, Minister of Finance was showered international recognition as the best Minister of Finance in Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius continues to bustle with economic activity. Our Foreign Direct Investment inflows continue to grow since 2005.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a nation, we are proud that even if previous growth rate of 6.2% attained in 2007-2008 will not be easily matched, this year's growth of 3.7% is still highly commendable in spite of a difficult, uncertain global economic situation whereas, Mr Speaker, Sir, this reminds us when the weather was calm during 2000-2005 the MSM/MMM Government offered us a very cold and timid economic growth of only 2.2%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is one thing to sketch out some ideas, words and slogans in which MMM/MSM excels whereas another to elaborate programs and still another to construct a sustainable economic agenda like this government where people at the bottom rung of the ladder can aspire to live a decent and resourceful life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, deep seated structural reform has to be led by an execution team with a real executive leader. We have to constantly remind us that reforms cannot be led from the sidelines of Parliament and Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us remind this – thanks to the intellect, ingenuity and steadfastness of a literate population, the Prime Minister has proclaimed to double the average income per head in purchasing power parity by 2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a doubling of per capita income in a decade had been achieved by Japan in 1960s, South Korea in 1970s and China in 1980s.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we aspire to do the same, we are on the right track nearing that goal, but we need more avenues, new sectors and new markets to offset inequality, insecurity and powerlessness as a small insular State.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget has everything to nickname it as a peoples' Budget -

- (i) creating supportive environment for growth and employment, especially for youth;
- (ii) integrating technology to everyday life of Mauritians;
- (iii) health in all policies protecting the poor and the vulnerable group of our society;
- (iv) doing business with Africa;
- (v) strengthening public policies, and

(vi) ensure sound macroeconomic management.

For example, the figures speak for themselves in the Budget Speech of 15 April 2005, when the then Prime Minister, hon. Bérenger, stated, and I quote from the Hansard –

“We would bring the Budget deficit to around 3%. I have put that word there on purpose ‘to around 3%’. I wish we could have brought it down to 3%.”

Those were the words of the then Prime Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a saying which goes as follows –

“If wishes were horses beggars might ride”.

From this side of the House, we are doubly proud that this government has fulfilled, under the leadership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the wishes of Paul Raymond Bérenger, which he thought unattainable, that is, to bring the Budget deficit to 2.2% in 2012, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me quote Nelson ...

(Interruptions)

Let me quote Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel, UNICEF 2000...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Khamajeet: Let me quote Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel from UNICEF 2000 –

“Each one of us are endowed with rights. You are worthy of respect and dignity...”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruption!

Mr Khamajeet: “Each one of us deserves the best possible start in life to complete a basic education of the highest quality, to be allowed to develop your

full potential and provide the opportunity for meaningful participation in your communities.”

These words of the great freedom fighter are still relevant in 2012. They have triggered and inspired our Finance Minister.

(Interruptions)

At page 32 of the Budget, ‘reinforcing protection for the most vulnerable’, the allocation of Rs130 m. for the provision of hot meal daily for every child at ZEP schools is a vibrant testimony and a fitting tribute to the words of Nelson Mandela and his wife on behalf of UNICEF.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thousand years ago, saint Tiruvalluvar said –

“There are good rulers who observe ethics, commit no crime, and walk the path of honour and courage.”

This is also true for this government. If we continue to bring passion to our governance and walk the path of honour and courage, we can make the future happen. This is our unresolved challenge.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(9.44 p.m.)

Mr A. K. Gungah (First Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget presented on 09 November has been a mere ritual and directionless. The Address has omitted to mention many of burning problems of the country.

(Interruptions)

Ce qui m’oblige à accorder malheureusement quatre ‘F’.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened very carefully to the Members. *Ce qui m’oblige à accorder malheureusement quatre ‘F’ au vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances : ‘Flop, Fusette, Fade and Faillite totale’.* There is much likelihood, Mr Speaker Sir, that this Budget’s address

on which this House is debating upon could be the last address of the government. There is disappointment in every corner of the country. The dimensions of this failure are astounding.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us listen to what we heard minutes after the presentation; I will mention a few. First, we heard ‘c’est un budget peu convaincant pour les classes moyennes et pauvres. Il ne combat pas la pauvreté dans son intégralité. Another one, Mr Speaker, Sir, ‘le gouvernement n’a pas de politique pour la création d’emploi’. Un troisième, ‘c’est un budget décevant fait de demi mesures’. Un quatrième, ‘un budget incolore et indolore, Maurice Ile Durable est inexistant, les chauffe-eau solaires c’est du réchauffé’. Encore un, ‘ce budget est un non-événement, le judiciaire a été négligé car ce n’est pas un *vote catching sector*.’

Je peux continuer M. le président. Ces déclarations viennent des gens qui ne sont pas les nôtres. Ils sont des opérateurs économiques de divers secteurs, ainsi que des observateurs. M. le président, c’est triste de constater qu’en 2012 notre petite île de 1.2 million d’habitants compte 5000 enfants qui ne vont pas à école ou ne reçoivent pas l’éducation adéquate. C’est grave qu’un tel aveu vienne de la bouche d’un ministre des Finances d’un gouvernement qui a été au pouvoir pendant les sept dernières années. Quel manque de vision ! Les vociférateurs habituels du pouvoir osent venir applaudir de telles déclarations du ministre ! *What a shame!* M. le président, en parlant du bien-être de l’enfant, laissez-moi ouvrir une parenthèse. Nous prenons conscience des nombreux cas rapportés d’attouchements sexuels sur les mineurs. C’est écœurant de constater que rien n’a été fait dans ce sens pour renforcer le ministère de la Protection des Enfants.

M. le président, quelques personnes se gargarisent du matin au soir de beaux discours pour nous faire comprendre que l’avenir de ce pays repose sur notre jeunesse. Mais en parcourant ce budget, je n’ai rien vu de sérieux pour assurer un avenir digne de cette jeunesse. On nous annonce avec grande pompe une augmentation de 12% sur le budget alloué au ministère de l’Education. Avec l’augmentation de la masse salariale post-PRB, je suis très curieux de savoir qu’elle a été la hausse réelle du *capital budget* de ce ministère. Que ce gouvernement cesse de berner le peuple !

M. le président, il y a eu beaucoup de tergiversations sur le rapport du PRB qui a été, je le rappelle, avalisé par le Conseil des ministres après deux longues heures d’examen. Avant sa publication, il y a eu une rencontre entre le directeur du PRB et le Premier ministre. Après ce

Conseil des ministres spécial, tous les ministres, sauf l'honorable Dr. Vasant Bunwaree, sont sortis très satisfaits. Le ministre de la Fonction publique, mon ami l'honorable Moutia, avait même tenu une conférence de presse, alors que le Premier ministre est resté silencieux sur le dossier. Le ministre de la Fonction publique avait ainsi affirmé que ce rapport crée toutes les conditions nécessaires pour rendre la fonction publique encore plus performante. La directrice de communication du Parti travailliste avait tenu à justifier les augmentations octroyées aux hauts salariés, sans faire mention des fonctionnaires au bas de l'échelle. Le président du Parti travailliste avait qualifié l'opposition et les syndicats de démagogues, insultant ainsi les fonctionnaires. Mais la réalité est tout autre. L'aval donné par le Conseil des ministres à ce rapport démontre clairement leur vision pour notre pays, c'est-à-dire : *the rich will become richer, the middle income earners will become poor, and the poor will become poorer.*

C'était mal de connaître les syndicalistes du service civil, M. le président. Ils ont tous réclamé le rejet dudit rapport, d'autres l'ont même brûlé. L'honorable Premier ministre s'est auto blâmé allant jusqu'à dire qu'il réalise l'ampleur des injustices contenues dans le rapport, et un Commissaire indépendant n'a été nommé que deux semaines après cette rencontre.

M. le président, cet exercice budgétaire démontre un déficit de vision et de créativité. Rien n'est dit sur la création d'emplois. On nous parle de croissance, mais il serait juste de reconnaître que le secteur qui rapporte gros à l'État, donc l'*ICT*, le *Seafood Hub* et le secteur Offshore ont été tous développés sous le leadership de Sir Anerood Jugnauth et de Paul Bérenger. C'est un secteur qui emploie des dizaines de milliers de jeunes, mais depuis 2005 aucun nouveau secteur n'a émergé. *Nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir!*

On a actuellement plus de 50,000 chômeurs, dont plus de la moitié sont âgés de 16 à 29 ans. Je ne pense pas que ce gouvernement puisse créer un nouveau miracle économique avec ce budget qui est vide de sens. Ce gouvernement travailliste n'est pas celui qui pourra sauver notre pays de ce mal-être.

M. le président, nous sommes conscients du malaise parmi les jeunes ces dernières années du fait qu'il n'y a pas eu de création d'emplois. Officiellement, les ministères ont reçu des directives afin de ne pas recruter à travers la PSC. Mais ce qui a été dit dans le budget est grave et révoltant. 300 jeunes de plus seront recrutés à travers le programme *Service to Mauritius*. Nous savons qui tire les ficelles derrière et comment cette personne avait déclaré que

le service civil ne peut demeurer un chasse-garde. Il y a un agenda machiavélique qui sera très lourd à porter pour le Parti travailliste.

C'est qui est grave, M. le président, c'est que le recrutement sur le programme *Service to Mauritius* se fera sans l'aval de la Public Service Commission. Est-ce que ce gouvernement a une politique pour outrepasser les pouvoirs de la PSC? N'y a-t-il pas un deuxième agenda pour que certains recrutent des protégés venant de certains pays en particulier ? Les étudiants de l'Université de Maurice ont toujours été désavantagés lors du recrutement pour le *Service to Mauritius*.

Je ne suis pas xénophobe, M. le président. Nous avons besoin de l'expertise des étrangers, mais notre pays connaît un sérieux problème de chômage, surtout parmi les jeunes. On doit donner une préférence au recrutement des Mauriciens au risque de connaître un exode. Ce n'est pas surprenant que, d'après les sondages, la majorité des jeunes veulent émigrer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the issue of poverty. Dans le budget, il est dit, et je cite -

"This Budget also goes to the roots of poverty. That is why we will mobilise maximum efforts to face it down."

Le résultat du PMSD est effrayant. La pauvreté a augmenté, et l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres s'agrandit davantage. Le taux de ceux vivant au-dessus du seuil de pauvreté a dépassé les 10% lorsqu'on prend en considération le nombre de 120,000 bénéficiaires de l'*Income Support*. Là, je voudrais saluer les efforts de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth qui, lorsqu'il était ministre des Finances, avait augmenté le montant par 100%. Passant de R 123 à R 246 par personne. Dans ce budget, aucun effort n'a été fait.

M. le président, le pouvoir d'achat est en dégringolade. Deux Mauriciens sur trois, lors d'un sondage effectué récemment, ont révélé que leur situation financière s'est nettement détériorée par rapport à l'année précédente. Les salariés au bas de l'échelle souffrent énormément. Le budget 2011 présenté par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth prévoyait une baisse de prix de 4,000 items, mais le dernier budget fait provision de quelques dizaines de produits dont les prix seront revus à la baisse. Il nous faut un contrôle sur ces baisses. Il n'y a aucun suivi. Cela restera comme la plupart des décisions prises par ce gouvernement, comme un effet d'annonce.

M. le président, qui dit un pays moderne dit aussi un toit pour tous. Certains se vantent d'être des modernistes. J'aurais honte à leur place si on fait un bilan de leur politique de logement. M. le président, sans logement, c'est le déracinement total et l'impossibilité absolue d'une réinsertion sociale durable. En effet, le logement est une étape indispensable pour éviter une exclusion progressive mais profonde de la vie sociale. L'époque des feuilles de tôle et de rondins pour des *cazotes poules* est révolue. Nous vivons dans un monde où on ne peut plus continuer à traiter les êtres humains comme des animaux. Il faut leur accorder des logements décents. Dommage, M. le président, que sous le chapitre du logement, l'honorable ministre des Finances n'a fait mention que de 135 maisons à construire. A un moment donné, je me souviens très bien que ce gouvernement avait promis la construction de 5,000 unités de logement. Aujourd'hui, il ne parle que de 135. L'année prochaine, s'ils sont toujours au pouvoir - ce que je doute fort - ce sera sûrement zéro.

Aucune attention n'a été donnée à ceux qui sont au bas de l'échelle. Des 5,000 maisons promises, on n'a eu qu'une centaine de maisons construites. Je voudrais savoir où en est le projet de logements sociaux tant promis par ce même gouvernement suite à l'accord de 2,000 arpents alloués par la MSPA. Que fait la Commission de la démocratisation de l'économie en ce sens?

M. le président, aucune mention n'a été faite également au sujet du *casting of the Roof Slab Scheme*, le coulage des dalles. Quand l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth était ministre des Finances, il avait fait passer le montant pour couler la dalle de R 50,000 à R 60,000. Aujourd'hui, zéro! Est-ce que les fonds ont été dilapidés? C'est le gouvernement MSM/MMM qui avait lancé les complexes NHDC, et les premières unités furent livrées à la Tour Koenig. S'il n'y avait pas cette décision, on aurait assisté à une grande crise dans ce secteur. Nous avons construit ces complexes, mais ce gouvernement n'arrive pas à investir pour leur maintien. Allez voir dans quel état sont ces appartements!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has announced the distribution of hot meals to school boys and girls in the *Zone d'Éducation Prioritaire (ZEP)*. In fact, it was the need of the hour, but we have to dwell deep to check as to whether it will be a balanced diet. We want to know who is going to prepare the meals, whether the services of dieticians will be required. Also, we want to know how the contract will be allocated, whether the meals will be prepared in the vicinity of the schools, so that the children get them hot. *Je*

souhaite de tout cœur que ce projet réussisse. I will also make an appeal to the government to extend it to other schools where there are lots of school boys and girls who need these hot meals. Par exemple, dans ma propre circonscription, je connais nombre d'enfants qui ne fréquentent pas les écoles ZEP, mais qui mériteraient de bénéficier de ce projet.

Toujours sous l'item d'éducation, pour les élèves de la Forme IV, l'honorable ministre a annoncé la remise d'une tablette électronique contre un paiement de R 500. Mon souhait le plus sincère, M. le président, c'est que cet outil électronique ne reste pas au stade de promesse. Le secondaire a été complètement oublié. Ici, j'aurai aimé entendre le gouvernement dire que tous les *Supply Teachers* seront embauchés sur une base permanente. Ces enseignants travaillent tout le long de l'année et ne reçoivent même pas le 13^{ème} mois. S'agissant de la formation des jeunes, je ne vois aucune mesure incitative. Le taux de chômage s'amplifie et il n'y a aucune action concrète pour permettre à nos jeunes de trouver un emploi, de devenir des entrepreneurs, et le pays se trouvera incessamment assis sur un volcan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come now to the real estate and construction industry. The measures announced in the 2013 Budget are far from what the real estate's professionals were expecting. It is not by converting agricultural land into golf courses that we will be able to bridge the gap for many Mauritians waiting to make a first real estate investment. Mr Speaker, Sir, is it because 40% of FDI comes from direct investment in the construction and real estate industry that we have to strengthen it further at the expense of other avenues that could have helped giving further impetus to the real estate sector?

Mr Speaker, Sir, by giving access to non-citizens to purchase any building with ground plus two, is certainly going to encourage promoters to come with real estate projects targeting foreigners. But we should not forget that the pricing that will be adopted, will definitely be above the average of what a Mauritian would spend.

By so doing, such possibilities will be only for high network Mauritian buyers and foreigners. By contrast, there would be others that would come with projects, not to international norms just jeopardising quality. We strongly believe that such projects must be approved by a special body, and why not having a preset *cahier des charges* from the authorities. We have seen in many regions that pricing policy guidance is not being respected, thus leading to a *développement sauvage*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, by proposing that registration duty with respect to the acquisition of a residential unit by Mauritians and residence under the IRS and RES will be reviewed, the government is doing a favour to high income investors. We should not forget that it is not the average income earners that invest in such projects. If someone can invest in an RES or IRS project, we should be joking to say that they can't pay for the registration duty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced that no land conversion tax will be payable for the development of 18 hole golf course. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, who plays golf in this country? It is certainly not the average income earners. Do you know how much does it cost for a day?

We were expecting exemption of conversion tax to promoters that are willing to convert agricultural land into residential *morcellement*. We should not forget that we have demands not only in primary locations, but also in secondary locations. If we want to have real estate investment solutions for the average income earners, the investment cost in land and infrastructure must be minimised. We need not be holder of a degree in accounting or economics to come to such a conclusion. Furthermore, it is important to know that the majority of the golf courses are loss making entities. We have noted, in the past three years, a constant increase in shopping solutions with various shopping malls around the island. However, this has caused a huge dilution in the market. We cannot expect such malls to be profitable only with our 1.2 million population.

We were expecting more in terms of the air access policy. On top of that, with the policy of the all-inclusive package, tourists will prefer playing golf rather than giving another dimension to our shopping malls.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced that gaming houses and night clubs and similar establishments will be relocated away from residential areas to shopping malls around the country. I fear that shopping malls will start employing bouncers, and we can imagine how dangerous it will be for the safety of the shoppers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will fail in my responsibilities if I don't turn to an important project which I consider to be the bedrock of any modern civil service, especially when we talk of lifelong learning and building learning organisations. I am referring to the project for the setting up of the Civil Service College. The House will recall that the Civil Service College project was

on the Government-Programme 2005-2010 of *l'Alliance sociale*. During their 5-year mandate, no action was taken to move forward this important project for the benefit of public officers and it is worth mentioning that during the period 2005 to 2010 the portfolios of that Ministry was under the aegis of two Ministers of the Labour Party, one was no less than the hon. Prime Minister himself and the other one was hon. Dr. Hookoom who is now PPS. Mr Speaker, Sir, this project was put in the drawer for five long years. Nothing had been done! Nothing for five long years! There was no will and no commitment on such a vital project for the civil service. Mr Speaker, Sir, it was only when I took office as Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms that I took out this project from the drawer. I took this project on top of my agenda. I made it one of my priorities among other projects. Through my personal intervention with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Singaporean Government, a feasibility study was carried out to set the project on track. During the Budget preparation in 2010, I brought this project to the then hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who at once understood the importance of training as a tool for the development of our officers in the civil service. Upon my proposals, he unhesitatingly agreed to include the project in his Budget Speech. The new post of Director of training and training coordinator had been created in the establishment of that Ministry. I have noted that one post of trainer has been created in the Budget 2012. But what has been done to get that Civil Service College become operational?

Mr Speaker, Sir, in his speech during his intervention on the last Budget, the hon. Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms said that the institution will start operations hopefully before mid 2012 and in his replies to questions during the Committee of Supply, he stated that the draft Bill had already been prepared after consultations with stakeholders and the SLO and that he was hoping to present the Bill in the National Assembly before mid- 2012. What have we seen till today? Nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir! And there is no mention of the Civil Service College in this present budget. Is this how we are going to reform the civil service? Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems to me that we have to wait till the next elections when we will be in power to restart the project and get it moving.

Avant de conclure, M. le président, laissez-moi dire quelques mots sur une mesure que je qualifierai de révoltant pour la communauté des pêcheurs et le peuple mauricien.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the blue economy will remain only a concept. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance stated that Government will look for strategic partners for the exploration and exploitation of our mineral resources. Already a lot of interests have been manifested. Given that many exploration firms are now converging to the East African region, there is every reason to believe that the Mascareigne Plateau also holds significant levels of mineral deposits.

M. le président, longtemps avancé comme un projet de grande envergure, nous risquons de perdre notre contrôle sur nos zones territoriales. Je ne suis nullement contre l'expertise des étrangers pour faire avancer cette nouvelle industrie. Mais ce qui est grave, c'est l'autorisation qui sera donnée pour l'exploitation de nos eaux. Nous ne devons pas oublier que les pêcheurs ont une place importante dans l'avancée de notre pays. L'industrie de la pêche se meurt avec ce gouvernement. Une fois de plus les pêcheurs sont des laissés pour compte par ce gouvernement. Je me demande aussi comment les contrats pour l'exploitation de nos eaux seront alloués et si on ne nous balancera pas encore une fois *that it is a confidential and State to State contract*. Cela démontre encore une fois le manque de créativité et de vision de ce gouvernement. Ils ne feront que laisser les étrangers brader nos ressources marines. *Is it politics for our people or for their people?*

Pour conclure, M. le président, j'espère que dans un mois on n'aura pas recours à un Commissaire pour revoir l'exercice budgétaire comme cela a été le cas pour le rapport du PRB. C'est un budget vide de sens, de vision et de créativité. Pendant les 44 ans d'existence en tant que nation, nous n'avons eu qu'un seul Premier ministre qui a produit le miracle économique et favorisé le plein emploi. Il y a eu l'émergence de tout un peuple. M. le président, il y aura un autre miracle économique et ce sera sous un futur gouvernement MSM-MMM.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: The Deputy Speaker will take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(10.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism and Leisure (Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like, first and foremost, to congratulate the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of

Finance and Economic Development for presenting his second budget and the eighth consecutive budget of the Labour Party and PMSD Government.

This Budget lays the foundation for a modern nation, while consolidating social justice and harnessing inclusive development. It aims at -

- i. preparing Mauritius to integrate fully the digital economy and reap its benefits;
- ii. democratising access to ICT, technology, and
- iii. positioning the country as an investment hub for Africa.

In spite of a prolonged economic crisis and global challenges, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has succeeded in this budget to meet the expectations of the various segments of the society. The workers, the elderly, the youth, the students, the business community, women and children have all been given a fair share. In brief, he has presented a Budget that contains various measures to alleviate the hardship of the weaker sections of the population while building a modern economy, capable of responding to the emerging challenges.

The 2013 Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been skilfully crafted to achieve a five-fold objective -

First, pursue the modernisation of the economy through investment of Rs28.6 billion in key infrastructural projects. This will stimulate demand, generate employment and dynamise other economic sectors.

Second, reduce budget deficit to 2.2% and public sector debt to 53.7% of GDP.

Third, combat youth unemployment through the allocation of Rs330 m. to enhance their employability.

Fourth, consolidate the Welfare State through further increase in social benefits for the elderly, needy and vulnerable groups to facilitate their inclusion in society. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget provides Rs45.2 billion for social transfers compared to Rs42.4 billion in 2012, at a time when advanced economies are resorting to severe budget cuts.

Last but not least, accelerate technology transition to improve quality of life of the citizens, enhance competitiveness and improve efficiency of Government. Mr Deputy Speaker,

Sir, we are democratising access to ICT technology in a bid to bridge the digital divide. In this context, the provision of one tablet computer to every student of Form IV will go a long way in narrowing the gap.

M. le président, cette panoplie de mesures, prises dans un contexte internationale extrêmement difficile, démontre clairement la volonté de ce gouvernement de promouvoir l'épanouissement de nos compatriotes tout en assurant une croissance économique durable de même que la consolidation de notre état providence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 2013 Budget is widely acclaimed as a forward-looking one which provides the means for realising our vision of a modern Mauritius where equity and social justice prevail.

The policy measures announced in the 2013 Budget do not only cater for economic efficiency, but also aim at creating an inclusive society. In fact, at a time when the world is hit by the worst economic crisis, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development had no other option than to come up with a Budget that can mitigate the adverse impacts of the Euro zone crisis whilst capitalising on the emerging opportunities in the East and Africa. It also contains measures for harnessing the potential of our youth and transforming Mauritius into an intelligent island, while protecting the vulnerable groups. In short, it is, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Prime Minister : *“C'est un budget innovateur et tourner vers l'avenir.”*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very sad that as usual the hon. Members of the Opposition are sceptical and refuse to accept the truth. Unfortunately, when they were entrusted the responsibility to manage the economic affairs of the country, they could not do better and Mauritius was in an *“Etat D'urgence Economique”*. The economy was in an unprecedented mess. All the macro-economic indicators were in the red. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind the previous speaker, when the MMM/MSM Government left in 2005 -

- public debt was nearly at 70% of GDP;
- budget deficit stood at 8.1%;
- unemployment rose to 9.6%;

- tourism growth declined from 13.6% in 2000 to 0.6% in 2001 to finally stagnate at 2.3%, and yearly tourism receipts remained in the Rs20 billion bracket, corresponding to the half yearly performance of this Government;
- GDP growth declined from 10.2% in 2000 to 2.7%;
- FDI was as low as Rs2.8 billion.
- The EPZ sector registered four years of negative growth. 25,000 jobs were lost. Not one, not one hundred but 25,000, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If we add the 10,000 who lost their jobs and were given early VRS in the sugar industry, it comes up to 35,000 people who had lost their jobs under the MMM/MSM Government.

That was the legacy left to us. Never before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have we had such economic mismanagement in our country. Never before, and God forbid that never, never again I hope shall we have such mismanagement. In fact, the former Prime Minister himself admitted this, four months before the 2005 General Election and said -

« La situation est dramatique et sans précédent. Nous sommes en état d'urgence économique. »

This is an incredible confession, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is an unbelievable admission from the former Prime Minister. They have acted irresponsibly and recklessly in the stewardship of the economy. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, the Members of the Opposition want to give us lessons, but the game is over! One cannot fool all the people all the time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Labour Party and the PMSD Government have succeeded, under the strong leadership of the hon. Prime Minister to steer the country on the road of progress. Of course, he is Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. We took drastic measures in the interest of the country and did not look for popularity. These measures have yielded not only positive results, but also cushioned the economy from the adverse impacts of the worst global economic crisis since 80 years. Today, Mauritius is resilient, globally competitive and on the path of sustained growth. And for that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must be thankful to the hon. Prime Minister who is a man of great vision.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very unfortunate that the hon. Members on the other side of the House failed to admit the fact that the business environment has become highly volatile. The

political uncertainty in the Middle East, budget cuts in advanced economies, increasing unemployment in the Euro zone, sovereign debt concerns in some European countries and reforms undertaken by them have drastically affected consumption and businesses worldwide. These new dynamics are inevitably impacting adversely on our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition, we face resource constraints and the impact of global climate change. With natural disasters, political upheavals and increasing demand in producing countries, the prices of commodities, especially oil and gas have become more volatile. A further rise in oil prices is being speculated with increasing demand from emerging economies like India and China.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure it was not an easy task for the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to strike the right balance when global issues intersect with local issues. However, he has skillfully reconciled the interests of all stakeholders in this Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at a time when European countries like France, Spain, Portugal, Greece and UK are adopting austerity measures, this Government is providing salary compensation above the inflation rate to workers at the lowest rung of the ladder. All social benefits are being increased. The PRB report 2013 amounting to Rs4.6 billion will be implemented in full at one go without raising VAT and without increasing the Budget deficit. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance achieved '*un veritable coup de maître*'.

Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, Government is committed to build an all inclusive society. Over the past years, this Government has initiated various measures to eradicate absolute poverty and to support the vulnerable groups. The creation of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment bears testimony to this Government's commitment to promote social justice and to our philosophy of 'putting people first'. The introduction of the one billion rupees Absolute Poverty Eradication Programme in 2008 to finance integrated development projects in pockets of poverty will remain a landmark in the history of Mauritius. The creation of the CSR Fund to finance empowerment programmes and projects for the poor and vulnerable is yet another unique measure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the measures proposed in the 2013 Budget to consolidate social justice reinforce the commitment of this Government for a more equitable society and ensure that economic growth is characterised by equity, fairness and social justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall now turn to my Ministry. My ministry acts as a catalyst in positioning Mauritius as a leading and sustainable island destination.

The main thrust of Government policy to grow the tourism sector is on more visitors from more countries, more spending per tourist, and more tourism products.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tourism is increasingly being recognised as an engine of economic growth and the driver for economic diversification of many developed and developing countries. In Mauritius, the contribution of the tourism sector has been significant be it in terms of growth, employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, social mobility and women's emancipation. Indeed, the sector has been instrumental in uplifting many people from the shackles of poverty and marginalisation. The sector has had a multiplier effect on the economy as a whole and contributed immensely towards the improvement in the living standard of the population.

In spite of severe recession in our tourism source markets, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our tourism sector has shown considerable resilience. Allow me to mention a few figures -

- Contribution to GDP increased from 2.3% in 2005 to 8.4% in 2011. This year, it is estimated that tourism will account for 8% of GDP.
- Tourism receipts reached Rs42.8 billion in 2011 compared to Rs25.7 billion in 2005. The tourism earnings for 2012 are expected to reach a record figure of Rs44 billion. As at August 2012, tourism receipts stood at Rs29.4 billion, representing an increase of 7.6% over the corresponding period of the year;
- Tourist arrival registered a figure of 964,642 last year as opposed to 761,063 arrivals in 2005.
- The sector provides some 100,000 direct and indirect employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has during the year obtained various awards largely because of the quality of its tourism product and excellent service delivery -

- The World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Competiveness Report 2011 has placed Mauritius as the highest ranked country in the sub-saharan African region.
- In January 2012, the World Travel Awards awarded the World's Best leading Island Destination to Mauritius.
- In March 2012, Mauritius obtained the award of Best Honeymoon Destination in Germany.
- This month, Mauritius has received the award for leading Indian Ocean Diving Destination, leading Indian Ocean Wedding Destination and the long haul destination of the year for spa and wellness from the World Travel Market.
- Over and above, in the course of the year Mauritian hotels have obtained some 21 international awards in different segments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these statistics clearly contradict '*les dires des pessimistes*' and demonstrate that the policy measures adopted by this Government to sustain the tourism sector are paying dividends. But it is obvious that we still need to support the sector to overcome the emerging challenges and resist the external shocks.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today the global tourism environment is in a state of perpetual flux. Tourism source markets and tourist destinations have undergone profound changes. As a matter of fact, the present model of our tourism industry is quickly running out of steam and is being revamped to better cope with the international challenges confronting the destination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our main focus today is on the diversification of our source markets.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the success of our tourism industry has relied excessively on the Euro zone countries, accounting for about 63% of our total tourist arrivals, with France being the leading market. The global economic crisis has demonstrated to what extent the euro-centric strategy is risky and can drag our economy into recession. We imperatively have to diversify our source markets. We have adapted to the global economic shifts with the emergence of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as new economic powers.

In this context, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have revisited our destination promotion strategy by diversifying our market base and penetrating more aggressively the emerging

markets like China, India and Russia, while consolidating the traditional markets with growth potential.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in traditional markets like France and Germany, the MTPA will continue to promote Mauritius as an ideal holiday destination that offers a complete and diversified product offer ranging, from sun and beach to encompass water sports, wellness and eco-tourism. A concept of '*luxe-accessible*' is being promoted through Tour Operators, road shows, e-marketing, celebrity, marketing and joint marketing initiatives with tour operators, travel agents and *hoteliers* to reverse the declining trend and maintain our market share.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry in collaboration with the MTPA, the tour operators and hoteliers, is implementing a robust penetration strategy to better exploit emerging markets like China, India and Russia, which represent important tourist source markets to rebalance tourism growth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the growing outbound Chinese tourists estimated at 78 million people this year with spending over USD 80 billion, Mauritius is well poised to capture specific segments such as family vacations, wedding, honeymoon, golf, MICE and cultural tourism. According to available figures, 29% of the total outbound Chinese tourists have the means to travel upmarket destinations and stay in 5-star hotels for a period of at least one week.

This represents interesting business opportunities for our tour operators and hoteliers to compensate for free fall in our traditional European markets. Last year, tourist arrivals from China reached the figure of 15,133. This year, an increase of over 33% is expected. The operation of direct flights on Mauritius-China route by Air Mauritius as from January 2013 will give a further boost to tourist arrivals from that market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, India is another emerging tourist source market that is booming, and represents an important opportunity for our tourism stakeholders. The strategy to capture a comfortable share of a forecasted 20 million outbound tourists annually consists of penetrating the Tier I and Tier II Cities. Promotional activities of MTPA would target niche segments such as high-profile weddings and honeymooners, especially in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. Last year, Mauritius attracted some 53,000 tourists from India and, this year, tourist arrival from India is forecasted to reach the figure of 55,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Russia is yet another promising market that holds huge potential for our tourism industry. With the 40 million high spenders outbound tourists from the Russian Federation annually, Mauritius can, through the right targeting and marketing strategy, penetrate niche market segments like wedding, kite-surfing, honeymooners and family vacations.

Last year, tourist arrivals from Russia attained the figure of 12,225, and some over 22,000 arrivals are expected by the end of this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regional markets like South Africa, Reunion Island and Kenya are being promoted more aggressively. Promotional campaigns with tour operators, road shows, media trips, and tours are being carried out while focusing on the right market segments such as golf, diving, surfing, MICE and family vacations. This year, tourist arrivals from the regional markets will increase by 14% to reach 263,000 as compared to year 2011. This clearly demonstrates that the regional market holds vast potential that can be tapped by our operators.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning Rodrigues, it is good to note that over and above the promotional campaigns that MTPA undertakes on the international fronts, and where Rodrigues contains visibility, the tourism projects of the Rodrigues Tourism Office are supported by MTPA. The extension of a special holding package to Rodrigues for a further year will undoubtedly give a thrust to tourism development in Rodrigues. Moreover, the minimum number of nights to be spent in Rodrigues under the package being reduced from 4 to 3 will encourage more Mauritians to travel there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is internationally recognised for the quality of its tourist products and excellent service delivery. It is critical that we remain our level of excellence, and reinforce our image as a safe and secure up-market destination.

To this end, my ministry has implemented a series of measures to enhance the attractiveness of the destination. These include -

1. implementation of cleaning and embellishment activities by the tourism authority targeting mostly tourist sites;
2. introduction of an official rating system for hotel classification to strengthen the overall image of the hotel industry, reinforce travellers' confidence, and ensure hotels meet minimum standards;

3. installation of directional and information sign boards around the island to increase visibility of tourist attractions, and provide opportunity for remote areas to benefit from economic gains of tourism. So far, six routes have already been covered, and the project will be completed by 2015;
4. demarcation of swimming zones to ensure the safety of tourists and public at sea, and
5. a new set of security measures have been imposed upon the hotels with a view of reinforcing the security of tourists. The new security measures encompass all aspects of security, ranging from security equipment and access control to watchmanship and night security norms within hotel premises.

To further improve the attractiveness of the destination, my Ministry is envisaging with financial assistance of *Agence Française de Développement* to implement the Blue Flag Scheme, which is an international eco-label given to beaches, boats and marinas that meet prescribed environmental qualities, cleanliness and safety standards. So far, some 3,850 beaches and marinas in 41 countries have been awarded Blue Flag status.

Moreover, the tourism authority will introduce snorkelling zones, ski lanes and speed limit zones to reinforce security at sea. Appropriate regulations will be introduced to regulate these activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the provision of Rs630 m. in the 2013 Budget for the implementation of the cleaner and greener Mauritius project is a step further in our effort to enhance the attractiveness of Mauritius as a sustainable tourist destination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are continuously adapting our tourism offerings and proposing innovative products to cope with the ever-changing international demands, and compete with island destinations in other regions.

We have broaden our classic offer 'sea, sun and sand' to include eco-tourism, medical tourism, business tourism, shopping tourism and MICE, so as to differentiate our product portfolio from those of our direct competitors, namely Seychelles and Maldives.

This is scope for our rich cultures and heritage to be promoted and developed, considering that, according to the World Tourism Organisation, cultural tourism will account for 20% of all travels in the next 20 years. In this context, my Ministry, in collaboration with the

Ministry of Arts And Culture and other stakeholders, has embarked on the development of the Port-Louis Heritage Trail to enhance the visibility of our historical buildings and sites, and provide an authentic experience and ambience to our visitors. This project is expected to be completed by December 2013.

Sports tourism is another fast growing segment within the global travel and tourism industry that offers tremendous opportunities for broadening our tourism product. Sport competitions such as sailing, kite surfing and golf international are being aggressively promoted by MTPA to give a boost to sports tourism. Kite Jam is one of the competitions that is gaining momentum among the Russian tourists. This year, this competition attracted some 500 participants compared to 300 last year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a fully equipped training centre at Le Morne, as announced in the 2013 Budget, will no doubt give a new dimension to kite surfing activities in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, shopping tourism is gradually emerging as a regional tourist attraction, particularly for tourists from Reunion Island and Madagascar. This segment augurs well for short haul tourism during the low season, as demonstrated by the first such event organised this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the simplification of the VAT refund procedures at port and airport announced in the 2013 Budget will no doubt give a further boost to shopping tourism.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today all industry partners are looking in the same direction and are collaborating to achieve our tourism objectives. Over and above the direct flights to China and Russia by the national carrier in 2013, additional flights are being operated by foreign carriers serving Mauritius such as Condor and Emirates airlines. Also, Dubai is being promoted as a gateway to target new markets such as Turkey, Czech Republic and other CIS countries, where Paris is positioned as a hub for tourists from European countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these initiatives do not only connect Mauritius to the major tourist source markets, but also show the willingness and determination of the Government to support the tourism industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by reiterating my congratulations to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his excellent Budget. It is an innovative Budget geared towards the future. It is about supporting growth, stimulating investment, combating

youth unemployment, eliminating inequality gaps and protecting the vulnerable groups. It also prepares Mauritius to face the new challenges looming ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget is sowing the seeds for a more prosperous future for our younger generation where equity, social justice and opportunities for all prevail.

Before I resume my seat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me quote what Swett Marden, American Author and Founder of Success Magazine said, I quote:

‘Don’t wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions and make them great. Weak men wait for opportunities. Strong men made them’.

This is what we are doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this Budget. Thank you.

(10.41 p.m.)

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier Duval, for the good work he has done to come up with such a Budget.

This is a Budget that further consolidates our Welfare State while, at the same time, ensuring resilience not only to the present but for any future economic and financial downturn. This Budget is part of a process, of a vision for the betterment of our economy and our population which is placed very high on the agenda of this government under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, Dr. hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

The positive response and post-budget feel good factor from different quarters of the population, from stakeholders and other constituents of our society are enough proof that this Budget has been able to meet all expectations. The Budget takes into consideration the troubled waters of the global economy and especially the European economic crisis, the adverse effects of which are no doubt putting the economy of small islands as ours at stake.

The recent international turmoil and the continued European economic crisis have put unwanted stress on our economy and so far, we have ably managed the situation. We have been able to steer clear of the troubled waters and to mitigate the negative impact of the international economic downturn.

It is against this background that the measures announced in the Budget Speech 2013 have to be judged. The measures announced will set the scene for high investments, high efficiency, and will, no doubt, go a long way towards balancing the social needs with the exigencies of modernising our economy and improving the business outlook.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, in this government, have always been consistent in our commitment and actions to do what is possible in order to make this country a better place to live in. On the other side of the House, unfortunately, we have those who are also consistent by spending their valuable time doing nothing but criticising without coming up with any proposals and alternatives.

The Leader of the Opposition has qualified this Budget as “*budget fisette, fade et frivole*”. Such statements confirm the irresponsibility of the Opposition. This does not surprise me at all as the MMM always has one language when they are in government and a totally different one when they are in the Opposition.

As patriots, they should have been proud of the performance of Mauritius in many international rankings. As rightly pointed out by the Vice-Prime Minister, Mauritius has upgraded its sovereign debt from Baa2 to Baa1 for the first time in our history. This equates us with our giant neighbour South Africa; Mauritius has gone up five ranks and entered the top twenty in the latest World Bank Doing Business report; Mauritius has, on economic freedom, for the first time ranked among the Top Ten economies in both the Wall Street Journal Heritage Foundation and the Fraser Institute indices.

Furthermore, various African institutions of repute have recognised our leadership position in Africa. This demonstrates effective leadership and a country that is resilient.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite the difficult economic situation resulting from the current international crisis and unlike what is happening in some European countries among others, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and France, we have not resorted to wage cuts or wage freeze, nor have we frozen recruitment or downsized employment in the public sector.

We have not introduced any austerity measures; on the contrary, we have granted salary compensation to all categories of workers. Those at the lower rungs of the ladder will even benefit compensation above the inflation rate. Government has not only accepted the

recommendations made by the PRB *in toto*, but has even accepted the appointment of an independent person to consider errors and omissions and alleged anomalies arising out of the PRB report.

In addition to the host of measures announced in the Budget Speech to boost up employment, especially among the youth, mention is made for additional recruitment in the public service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, laudable measures have been announced in the Budget Speech among which government will provide a tablet computer to every student of form IV as from next year which will surely open opportunities for digital learning. Government will also address youth unemployment through a four-point action plan, namely the Youth Employment Programme, the Skills Working Group, the Service to Mauritius Programme and Industry Placements. We must ensure that our youth find employment with the least delay when they enter the labour market. In addition to these commendable initiatives, my Ministry will also consolidate its existing youth employability programmes such as entrepreneurship training, which will now be decentralised to reach a wider number of young people in our 25 youth centres.

This Budget, in spite of all the odds outside, is another proof of this government's endeavour in toiling hard to safeguard the interests of the underprivileged people

Here, I would wish to once again congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance to come forward in this Budget with various issues among others -

- (i) ZEP School;
- (ii) increase of old age pension;
- (iii) child allowance of Rs750 per child;
- (iv) Internet cost fall by 15%;
- (v) duty remission on motorcycles, and
- (vi) alignment of the cost of rice and flour at the same price as Mauritius for our brothers and sisters of Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened attentively to all hon. Members who expressed their views and opinions on the subject of youth and sports. I thank them for the interest shown and the valuable suggestions of some of them.

Toutefois, M. le président, il est triste de constater que la plupart des critiques émises ne sont pas fondées, surtout celles faites par l'honorable Mahen Jhugroo ou encore par l'honorable Franco Quirin. Ce sont des remarques de personnes qui maîtrisent mal leurs dossiers, en particulier le dossier sportif. Ils sont à l'image de leurs partis respectifs. D'ailleurs, comme le dit si bien ce proverbe: A quoi sert la lumière du soleil si on a les yeux fermés.

M. le président, permettez-moi de revenir sur quelques unes de ces remarques faites par certains membres de l'opposition. A eux, je voudrais rappeler quelques faits historiques qui démontrent clairement la vision sportive du Parti travailliste.

C'est sous le règne du père de la nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, que le ministère des Sports fut créé en 1969. C'est sous ce même Parti travailliste que l'équipe nationale de football a écrit sa plus belle page de l'histoire du football en 1974 en atteignant la phase finale de la Coupe d'Afrique des nations. La première et unique médaille d'or de Maurice aux jeux du Commonwealth a été remportée en 1998 sous le règne du Parti travailliste avec feu Navin Soonarane comme ministre des Sports.

C'est feu Navin Soonarane qui a permis aux différentes fédérations sportives de mieux se prendre en main. C'est lui qui a permis d'avoir leur propre budget, d'être plus autonome et ainsi de ne plus mendier pour atteindre leur objectif. C'est sous le gouvernement travailliste que les mauriciens ont vu le quadricolore flotter haut dans la plus haute compétition sportive au monde des jeux olympiques. Le ministre Sylvio Tang était ministre quand Bruno Julie avait gagné la médaille.

De 2009 à ce jour, Maurice a remporté quatre titres de champion du monde en *kickboxing*. En 2011, nous avons remporté 202 médailles au niveau régional, continental et international. Cette moisson est historique, M. le président.

Pour la première fois de son histoire, Maurice a été présente aux jeux olympiques dans une discipline collective – c'est en Beach Volleyball féminin en août de cette année ci. La bourse de perfectionnement historique porte la griffe du Parti travailliste. Nous avons plusieurs mesures

pour valoriser les athlètes à travers le High Level Sports Unit, le Cash Prize Scheme, le Club Maurice entre autres. Nous avons mis en place le programme Sport-études afin de permettre à nos meilleurs sportifs d'allier performance sportive et excellence académique.

M. le président, même si certains propagandistes diront le contraire ces médailles, ces titres et ces moments intenses ont fait la fierté des Mauriciens, y compris l'honorable Quirin qui se faisait photographe avec tous les athlètes après leur performance aux derniers jeux des îles. Ce ne sont pas les fruits du hasard, M. le président, ce sont les fruits d'une politique cohérente, moderne et réfléchie pour permettre à nos sportifs de briller au plus haut niveau. C'est la somme de l'investissement massif du gouvernement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to highlight on some major achievements of my Ministry during 2012. Remarkable performances have been recorded by our athletes who have participated in major regional and international games. Mauritius has won a total of 41 medals up to now.

Mauritius also topped the medal table in the CJSOI Games held in Comoros Island this year.

Athletes have been rewarded for their performances in major international competitions. An amount of Rs1.8 m. has been awarded under the Cash Prize Scheme.

Presently, 55 high level athletes are benefiting from the high level sports financial assistance. About Rs2.5 m. has been disbursed this year under this project. In the context of the preparation for the Olympic Games, athletes who have qualified have received a special financial assistance from the Ministry for the period May to July 2012.

Under the new Scholarship Scheme announced in Budget 2012, 27 athletes are being given the opportunity to train in high performance sports institutions abroad.

M. le président, à l'heure où je vous parle il y a au moins 27 athlètes qui ont bénéficié des bourses de perfectionnement. Nos meilleurs athlètes, surtout au niveau du sprint sont actuellement à Kingston, Jamaïque, et en France. Notre meilleur joueur de badminton est au Leeds University Training Centre, en Angleterre ; notre meilleur boxeur est en France, notre meilleur cycliste est en France, nos meilleurs judoka sont en France ; nos meilleurs *kickboxers* sont en Thaïlande, nos meilleurs joueurs de tennis sont en Amérique et en Afrique du Sud ; notre

meilleur joueur de tennis de table est en Chine, notre meilleure nageuse est en France et notre meilleur *weight lifter* est en France, et tous les frais payés par l'Etat.

Mr Speaker Sir, under the *Sport-études Programme*, additional funds have been provided to the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports to enable our young athletes to train in optimal conditions as well as to conduct their academic studies in parallel. The number of beneficiaries will increase from 250 to 400.

As provided in the Budget 2012, more and more companies are being encouraged to employ high level athletes under the CSR Scheme which entitled them to deduct 50 percent of the wages of these athletes from their contribution to the CSR Fund.

Mr Speaker Sir, in a view to upgrading the level of our coaches, my Ministry has launched a *Brevet d'Etat Cadre Sportif*, Level 1 Physical preparation Course in 2012. Twenty participants have successfully completed the programme as at date.

With regard to the promotion of sports among women, the *Commission nationale du sport féminin* has been provided with continuous financial, technical and logistics supports to run its activities. More women are now participating in programmes like aerobic, yoga, swimming, tai-chi, step, salsa dance, belly dance, zumba, aqua-zumba, hiking, beach games, omnisports, Beach Volley/fun games, football, brain fitness games, quiz and other interesting games run by the *Commission nationale du sport féminin*.

3,500 young girls and women are directly involved in the activities run by the *Commission nationale du sport féminin*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is making continuous effort to upgrade and maintain our existing sports infrastructures to enable our athletes and the public in general to train and compete in a clean and safe environment.

The training grounds of Germain Commarmond and Anjalay Stadia have been provided with lighting facilities, and 10 additional football grounds have been identified and are due to be equipped with this facility very soon.

Major upgrading works have been undertaken at the New George V, St. François Xavier and Anjalay Stadia.

M. le président, j'ai été choqué par les remarques désobligeantes émises par l'honorable Franco Quirin sur le complexe multi-sport de Triolet. Dois-je comprendre que pour lui il existe deux catégories de Mauriciens ? Dois-je comprendre que ceux qui pratiquent le sport à Triolet ou dans les autres villages avoisinants n'ont pas le droit d'avoir un complexe sportif digne de ce nom ? En tout cas, nous, au gouvernement, nous ne pratiquons pas la politique de deux poids deux mesures. Pour nous, tous les Mauriciens sont égaux et doivent bénéficier des mêmes droits.

Pour nous, l'égalité des chances n'est pas un slogan, mais une réalité et un devoir. C'est pour cela que je le dis haut et fort : nous irons de l'avant avec le projet du complexe multi-sport à Triolet le plus rapidement possible.

With a view to obtaining better results and ensuring optimum preparation of athletes in the 2015 IOIG games in Reunion Island, my Ministry has set up a committee comprising all stakeholders. The committee is closely monitoring the preparation and training of our athletes in the different sports likely to form part of the Games.

As regards preparation for the next Olympic Games in 2016 in Rio, Brazil, I have nominated Eric Milazar for the identification of potential athletes and to eventually monitor their preparation.

This year, and for the first time, Mauritius is presiding the two major sports organisations of our region, namely Mr Philippe Hao Thyn Voon has been elected President of the *Comité International des Jeux des Iles* and myself as President of the *Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l'océan Indien* for the next two years.

Regarding the youth sector, the followings have been achieved -

- Additional youth cadres have been recruited to reinforce the youth section.
- The National Youth Achievement Award programme has been extended to 90% of our State Secondary Schools.
- 7,000 young people have been trained in Youth Leadership.
- 5600 youth followed courses in Life Skills Education.
- 4,000 youngsters were trained in Peer Education and Counselling.
- 400 young people participated in workshops on Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

- More than 10,000 young people participated in “*Special Vacances*” activities.
- 8,000 young people participated in the National Youth Achievement Award.
- Major upgrading works are now being carried out at Pointe Jérôme Training Centre, Flic en Flac Outdoor Training Centre and several youth centres have been identified.

M. le président, le budget de R 484 millions alloué à mon ministère pour la prochaine année financière démontre encore une fois l’intérêt et toute la considération que ce présent gouvernement a pour le mouvement sportif mauricien, et pour l’épanouissement sain et continu de nos jeunes.

Cette somme et les mesures annoncées permettront à mon ministère d’atteindre ses objectifs, et permettront d’envisager l’avenir avec plus de sérénité. Dans ce sens, permettez-moi de remercier une nouvelle fois le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, ainsi que le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances, Xavier-Luc Duval, pour cette confiance, et ce en dépit d’un contexte économique mondial extrêmement difficile.

C’est une preuve que l’État croit en nous. C’est surtout un signe fort envoyé par l’État mauricien pour dire qu’il ne renoncera pas au rôle qui est le sien vis-à-vis des jeunes et de la communauté sportive. D’ailleurs, je me dois de rappeler à la Chambre que le ministère des Sports est né d’une volonté politique travailliste et s’ancre dans une tradition de l’État mauricien.

M. le président, parallèlement aux actions déjà entreprises et aux mesures annoncées dans le programme gouvernemental 2012-2015, le budget 2013 offre encore plus d’opportunités et de moyens pour accomplir nos différentes missions.

Les mesures nous permettront d’avancer, de progresser et d’améliorer davantage le statut du sportif. Elles inciteront encore plus les jeunes à s’investir. Elles permettront aux parents de voir qu’il existe réellement un avenir dans le sport, et que le sport peut désormais nourrir son homme pendant et après sa carrière.

C’est notre objectif, car pour que le sport mauricien puisse atteindre d’autres sommets, il est impératif que nous retenions nos meilleurs talents.

Depuis ma prise de fonction, je me suis engagé à défendre un modèle humaniste du sport de haut niveau visant à parfaire, dans le cadre d'un double projet, non seulement l'athlète mais aussi le citoyen.

Ce double projet est un filet de sécurité indispensable pour donner l'occasion aux jeunes sportifs de se lancer dans une aventure que l'on sait risquée et parfois éphémère. Mon but est d'offrir à chaque jeune la possibilité de poursuivre sa carrière sportive tout en s'engageant dans un projet conduisant à une réussite professionnelle et personnelle.

C'est pour cela que durant ces sept dernières années, nous avons créé un environnement propice où le sportif peut évoluer sereinement. Nous avons réuni tous les éléments pour mieux l'encadrer, le suivre, le soutenir et le valoriser.

A titre d'exemple et hormis la nouvelle orientation donnée à notre mode de détection, l'État peut désormais prendre en charge un sportif dès l'âge de 12 ans, l'accompagner de manière professionnelle tout au long de sa carrière, et même l'aider à mieux envisager sa vie après sa retraite sportive. Ainsi, à travers le *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports* ou les structures fédérales nationales, nous détectons les meilleurs talents. Les plus prometteurs intègrent le programme sport-études. Nous leur offrons dans nos pole-jeunes ou pole-espoirs un suivi sportif, académique ou même vocationnel.

D'ailleurs, le travail abattu et les résultats enregistrés ces dernières années sont plus que positifs. Dans ce sens, je me dois de saluer l'annonce du ministre des Finances d'augmenter le nombre de bénéficiaires du programme sport-études, de 250 à 400, ainsi que le budget destiné au *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports*, en hausse de 16%. Entretemps, le sportif, s'il est performant, intègre aussi la *High Level Sports Unit* de mon ministère. Il percevra une allocation financière mensuelle variant désormais entre R 3 000 et R 30 000, au lieu de R 2 000 ou R 20, 000.

Vous serez certainement d'accord avec moi pour dire que cette augmentation de 50% ne pourra qu'encourager nos athlètes à rester performant et à se donner encore plus à fond, surtout dans l'optique des grands rendez-vous régionaux et internationaux. De plus, en cas de succès sur le plan régional, continental ou mondial, il est récompensé à travers le *Cash Prize Scheme*. Ce barème a connu une hausse substantielle l'année dernière.

M. le président, ajouté à cela, le sportif bénéficie d'autres conditions favorables comme -

- les bourses de perfectionnement dans les meilleurs centres sportifs mondiaux comme souligné auparavant – donc, tous les frais payés par l'État ;
- nous aidons les sportifs à participer dans les compétitions majeures telles que les Jeux Olympiques, les Championnats du Monde, les Championnats d'Afrique, les Jeux d'Afrique, les Jeux du *Commonwealth*, les Jeux de la Francophonie, les Jeux des îles et les Jeux de la CJSOI entre autres ;
- nous les aidons pour les suivis médicaux ;
- des équipements spécifiques;
- les moyens de transport, et
- les facilités à trouver du travail au sein des entreprises du privé selon un organigramme adapté aux exigences de leur discipline.

M. Le président, ce ne sont là que quelques facilités, et nous ne comptons pas nous arrêter en si bon chemin pour valoriser le statut du sportif de haut niveau.

Oui, Maurice veut des médailles et des titres mondiaux. Mais je veux que ceux et celles qui se battent pour le pays soient mieux respectés par la nation, une fois que le parfum de la gloire s'est dissipé. J'ai connu la détresse du champion quand il se trouve livré à lui-même sans aucune ressource financière. J'ai vécu ces moments-là, et je ne veux pas que d'autres sportifs de notre République subissent le même sort.

Les sportifs de haut niveau sont, en matière de retraite ou de couverture sociale, dans une situation désavantagée par rapport au reste de la population. Il s'agit d'une dette que je souhaite réparer avec le soutien du gouvernement. Le but ultime est de renforcer la protection sociale de ces athlètes.

M. le président, l'autre point fort du budget 2013 au niveau des sports est sans conteste la décision de revoir et de remettre au goût du jour les sports inter collèges. Des jeux, qui dans un passé récent, ont suscité beaucoup d'émotions et qui ont déchainé tant de passions. Étant moi-même un pur produit de ces jeux, je ne peux qu'approuver cette annonce car même si les autorités organisatrices ont fait un bon travail, nous sommes encore loin des buts fixés,

notamment au niveau de l'engouement et de la participation. J'espère désormais que tous les partenaires, y compris le ministère de l'Education, pourront s'asseoir autour d'une même table afin de trouver la meilleure formule possible pour redonner à ces jeux son éclat d'antan. C'est désormais un devoir national. Certes, la tâche sera délicate, mais connaissant le sérieux et la bonne foi des parties concernées, je n'ai pas de doute que nous relèverons ensemble ce nouveau défi.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to major sports events during the year 2013 -

- (i) Mauritius will host the World FIFA Congress from 30 to 31 May 2013. Delegates from over two hundred countries are expected to participate in the congress;
- (ii) Mauritius will host the 28th CJSOI Ministerial Meeting from 8 to 10 August 2013;
- (iii) Mauritius will participate in the 7th edition of the *Francophonie* Games to be held in Nice, France from 6 to 15 September 2013.

Regarding the youth sector, the followings are being contemplated for the year 2013 –

- setting up of a Youth Parliament to provide a platform to young people in decision-making and to debate over issues of national interest;
- our life skills programme will be adapted to various segments of the youth population *viz* the disabled, outreach youth etc.
- more youth exchanges programmes at regional levels, and
- to involve our youth in activities and projects geared towards preservation of our national and cultural heritage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning Rodrigues, my Ministry extends facilities and assists the Commission for Health and Sports to attain its objectives. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also taking all necessary measures to ensure that all athletes from Rodrigues are given an equal chance to be part of the national selections in their respective sports. That is why members of the Committee responsible for the preparation of the 2015 Games are having consultations with each Regional Sports Committee in Rodrigues. Side by side my Ministry, through the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, has set up "*Pole Espoir*" and "*Pole Jeune*" training centres in several sports in Rodrigues. These training centres will enable potential athletes to undergo adequate training in their respective sports.

My Ministry assisted the Commission for Sports in Rodrigues in providing services of a swimming coach, running of a course leading to a *Brevet d'Etat des cadres sportifs*, the organisation of Inter Colleges Saturday Football League, the Mini Soccer Games, the FIFA Grassroots Games and football for health in Rodrigues. My Ministry will continue to extend facilities in terms of equipment, training of cadres and in the participation of athletes from Rodrigues attending local, regional and international competitions. All support will be given to Rodrigues to attain its objectives as regards organisation of competitions, resurfacing of *Camp du Roi* Stadium, conduct of training and provision of sports equipment.

M. Le président, je n'oublie pas non plus les instances sportives, les fédérations, les présidents, les encadreurs techniques, les bénévoles et les salariés, celles et ceux que l'on ne voit jamais, qui sont pour beaucoup dans nos différentes réussites. Cette collaboration joue énormément dans la réussite de nos champions. J'aimerais profiter de cette tribune pour réaffirmer mon engagement total et celui de mon ministère envers le mouvement sportif. Comme vous, je pense que c'est une absolue nécessité de travailler main dans la main. Cette complémentarité est notre tradition, notre modèle et notre fierté. Notre modèle c'est l'équilibre entre le monde associatif et l'État, garant de l'intérêt général. Cette complémentarité doit être harmonieuse, dans une sincérité totale, dans un respect mutuel, et dont l'unique objet doit être le progrès du sport. Certainement, de par nos paramètres, nous aurons quelquefois des divergences, mais le plus important c'est d'avoir un dialogue permanent et d'avoir l'humilité de se réunir autour d'une même table pour trouver la meilleure solution.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned it earlier that this Budget forms part of a process that has been started by this government since July last year. In this context, my Ministry has, as one of its main objectives, to equip youngsters of this country with the appropriate skills and knowledge to become responsible citizens, while at the same time forging their character to help them build a successful professional career and personal life.

The National Youth Achievement Award is an international programme for young people, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The Award is one of individual challenge. It presents to young people a balanced, non-competitive programme of voluntary activities which encourages personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, perseverance,

responsibility to themselves and service to their community. In 2012, some 8000 young people participated in the Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of the National Youth Achievement Award.

We will organise intensive media campaigns and PR Events to create awareness and increase youth participation in our programmes. In this regard, the 1st Edition of the “*Salon Jeunesse et Sport*” will be organised in April next year. We will also promote School Based Programmes such as the National Youth Achievement Award and the Youth Excellence Award so as to reach as many students as possible.

Next year, my Ministry is expecting to reach some 70,000 young people for all its programmes compared to about 60,000 this year. Our youth cadres and “*Animateurs Polyvalents*” will motivate students as well as out-of-school youths to participate massively in our programmes. Here I would like to place on record the vital and fruitful collaboration of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, particularly with regard to access to schools and other cross-cutting issues.

I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, for such invaluable support.

Besides, the National Youth Council, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, will be called upon to play a more important role in motivating and winning the support of young Mauritians to shape their destiny while contributing to the socioeconomic and cultural advancement of the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry on its own cannot win the battle of Youth Empowerment because we also depend on the collaboration of other stakeholders. In this endeavour, we need the support of partners such as schools, student councils, NGOs and parents amongst others since empowerment occurs as a result of the education and grooming process.

M. le président, même s’il y a encore beaucoup de choses à dire concernant la jeunesse et le sport, je ne me permettrai pas d’abuser davantage de la patience de cette noble Assemblée.

J’aimerais, juste avant de conclure, réaffirmer avec humilité et sans présomption ma ferme conviction à relever les défis qui se dresseront sur la route de mon ministère.

Bien sûr, je n'ai pas la prétention de le faire seul. Le soutien et la coopération des membres de cette Chambre, ainsi que ceux des différents partenaires du monde sportif seront décisifs.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Virahsawmy rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 16 November 2012 at 3.30 p.m.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

(11.12 p.m.)

MATTERS RAISED

DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL – SMOKE EMISSION

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a matter which I would like to raise with the hon. Minister of Health. It is a matter which I have raised, at least, three times already before this Assembly, and still nothing has been done.

This relates to the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and the emission of dark smoke, which is causing a lot of embarrassment not only for visitors, inhabitants, but also for taxi drivers and anyone who goes to the hospital. With the increase of operation, now the smoke is getting thicker, and a lot of people are concerned about whether the smoke is toxic; and there is a cancer and other long-term diseases.

I have spoken to the Minister before. There was a proposal to even raise the height of the chimney, and also a plan to centralise the burning of these toxic and non-toxic wastes.

I would request the hon. Minister if he could look into the matter because this is causing a lot of distress to the people in the surrounding of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital.

Thank You.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for having raised this issue.

First, I would like to assure him that we are aware of the situation. We are at the moment in time - since 15 days back - looking at the possibilities of using the incinerator at the Port area temporarily for the burning of medical and other wastes - which is burnable.

Secondly, we are also looking whether there is spare capacity at the SSR Hospital in order to transfer the waste there for the burning. We have also written to the World Health Organisation, and we have set up a committee with the Ministry of Environment to look into the whole issue of medical waste and others with regard to hospitals and private clinics.

Let me recap. We are looking at the Port in order to transfer the waste for incinerating in the Port, and to see whether SSRN Hospital has spare capacity to do that.

Secondly, we are also looking at the construction of one central incinerator for medical waste for all five hospitals, including private clinics, which is in line with the idea of making Mauritius a medical hub.

Thirdly, we are going to see what can be done because we have already written the World Health Organisation for advice, and also what can be done at the present circumstances to at least reduce to maximum the dark smoke emanating from the chimney of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital.

(11.15 p.m)

MAGON STREET, PORT LOUIS - FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my problem is addressed to the hon. Minister of Local Government, but he is not here; if any Minister can take note and direct the message.

It concerns a small football playground at *la Rue Magon*, Port Louis. It is next to the ADSU station. The problem is that there is no grass on the playground, and this is creating a lot of dust. This has been here for a very long time. The dust is affecting all the surroundings. Even yesterday it came to my knowledge that there has been a public protest there. I would urge the hon. Minister if he can look into the matter and see how to remedy the situation.

Thank you.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that hon. Minister Mr Hervé Aimée has left Parliament earlier because there is a funeral in the family; a very close relative. I assure the hon. Member that we shall pass on his request to the hon. Minister, and we will ask him to speak to the hon. Member tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 11.20 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 16 November 2012 at 3.30 p.m.