



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

**FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY**

**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**SECOND SESSION**

**THURSDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2012**

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**THE CABINET****(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)**

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues
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
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology
Hon. Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum	Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	Minister of Fisheries
Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands

Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment
Hon. Yatindra Nath Varma	Attorney General
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Tourism and Leisure
Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Sayyad Abd-Al-Cader Sayed-Hossen	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Surendra Dayal	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Jangbahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola Roopchand Seetaram	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

Members

Members

## PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

*Mr Speaker*Peeroo, Hon. Abdool Razack M.A., SC,  
GOSK*Deputy Speaker*

Peetumber, Hon. Maneswar

*Deputy Chairperson of Committees*

Deerpalsing, Hon. Ms Kumaree Rajeshree

*Clerk of the National Assembly*

Dowlutta, Mr R. Ranjit

*Deputy Clerk*

Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena

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Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi

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**MAURITIUS**

**Fifth National Assembly**

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**SECOND SESSION**

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**Debate No. 27 of 2012**

**Sitting of 22 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)*

**ANNOUNCEMENT****H.E. MR CHRISTIAN MEUWLY - AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND - VISIT**

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, before we proceed I have an announcement to make. On behalf of the House, and in my own name, I wish to welcome in our midst today, His Excellency Mr Christian Meuwly, Ambassador of Switzerland to Mauritius, based in Pretoria.

His Excellency, who is attending the Global Forum on Migration and Development currently being held in Mauritius, has expressed the wish to attend to the proceedings of the House today.

I would like to thank His Excellency for showing an interest in our parliamentary practice.

Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**PAPERS LAID**

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

**A. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –**

- (a) The Value Added Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2012  
(Government Notice No. 202 of 2012).

- (b) The Value Added Tax (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 203 of 2012).
- (c) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 204 of 2012).
- (d) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 205 of 2012).
- (e) The Excise (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 206 of 2012).

**B. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –**

The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (Street Naming) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 207 of 2012).

**C. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life –**

The Public Health (Removal of Dead Bodies) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 200 of 2012).

**D. Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection –**

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No.14) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 201 of 2012).

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**

**TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR &**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the Tertiary Education Commission, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to –
  - (i) the composition of the Board thereof, indicating the dates on which the Chairperson and Members were respectively appointed;



- (ii) if the Executive Director thereof has been administered a warning by the Independent Commission Against Corruption with regard to a complaint of conflict of interest or *trafic d'influence*;
  - (iii) the main decisions taken by the Board at its meeting in October last;
  - (iv) the present terms and conditions of employment of the Executive Director thereof, and
- (b) state if the Professor Torul Report on industrial relations thereat will be made public.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the composition of the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission is as follows –

- |       |   |                            |
|-------|---|----------------------------|
| (i)   | Professor Donald Ah Chuen   | Appointed in 2005          |
| (ii)  | The Permanent Secretary of my Ministry  | Appointed in February 2012 |
| (iii) | Mr K. B. Cathan, Head Centre for Distance Learning, MIE   | Appointed in December 2005 |
| (iv)  | Hon. Justice Dr. S. B. Domah, Puisne Judge, Supreme Court   | Appointed in December 2005 |
| (v)   | Mr D. R. Makoond, Director, Joint Economic Council  | Appointed in December 2005 |
| (vi)  | Mrs S. Ajaheb-Jahangeer, Instructional Designer, Centre for Professional Development & Lifelong Learning, University of Mauritius | Appointed in December 2005 |
| (vii) | Mr V. A. Ramchurn, Manager, Quality Assurance, Mauritius Qualifications Authority   | Appointed in December 2005 |
- Mr Anil Currimjee has resigned.

With regard to part (ii), following Parliamentary Question No. B/645, which was withdrawn, I was informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that ICAC had warned the Executive Director not to chair committees where he had interest. I am tabling the letter from TEC.

With regard to part (iii), I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that two Board meetings were held in October 2012. At the meeting on 12 October 2012, main decisions taken were on –

- (i) the budget;
- (ii) follow-up of the Torul Report on industrial relations;
- (iii) grant of research sponsorship, and
- (iv) regulatory matters.

A second meeting was held on 25 October 2012, and the Board decided that a review of the organisational structure of TEC is necessary and that the report of the panel of experts will be a helpful document for its exercise. Board, therefore, decided that the review be carried out as soon as possible.

It was also decided –

- (i) not to renew the contract of the Executive Director;
- (ii) to revert him to his post of Deputy Executive Director;
- (iii) to assign him duties of Executive Director until a substantive Director is appointed;
- (iv) to review the profile of the post, based on the recommendations of the report of a team of experts on the regulatory framework. The team consisted of –

1. Dr. Jagannath Patil – President of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), and also the Deputy Adviser of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
2. Mr Franz Gertze – Chief Executive Officer of the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA).
3. Dr. Sudhanshu Bhushan – Professor and Head of the Department of Higher and Professional Education in the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

At its meeting held on 16 November 2012, the Board agreed to have a special meeting of the TEC Board on Friday 23 November 2012 to examine the report of the experts and the job profile of the post, with a view to advertise the post. I am tabling an invitation letter to the special Board meeting, and the agenda which includes a motion from one of the Board members to obtain all information relating to the allegations that the Executive Director has, in the past, received a warning by ICAC and, if so, when, and in what circumstances. I am tabling a copy of the letter, and invitation for the Board meeting of tomorrow

Board approved that, in the meantime, as the appointment of the Executive Director will come to an end on 04 November 2012, Dr. Mohadeb be assigned the duties of Executive Director pending the completion of the review.

The Board agreed that a communiqué should be published in newspapers as follows, and I quote –

“The Board of the Tertiary Education Commission met on 25 October 2012, and agreed that the organised structure of TEC should be reviewed.”

Furthermore, as the contract of the present Executive Director will come to an end on 04 November 2012, the Board has also decided that Dr. Mohadeb be assigned the duties of Executive Director pending the completion of the review.

The terms and conditions of the Executive Director are: salary of Rs80,000 as Deputy Executive Director, and an allowance for assignment of duties as Executive Director, and other terms and conditions as prescribed by the PRB.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

- (i) The Ministry had drawn the attention of the TEC Board of a legal advice obtained from State Law Office that the employment on contract of the Executive Director, while he holds a substantive post, is legally not in order. I gave personal instructions that the Board should comply with all legal advice, and appointment of the Executive Director be reviewed as from the date of his initial appointment.
- (ii) The Board decided to replace the contractual appointment by assignment of duties since 2009. Board also agreed that adjustments be made in respect of his past salaries and benefits such as allowances, pension and gratuities.

With regard to part (b), Prof. Torul was appointed in September 2011 by the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission to investigate, enquire and make recommendations on remedial actions, and to submit its report and recommendations into the source of leakage of strategic and confidential information to the press with regard to –

- (i) the appointment of staff at the Tertiary Education Commission,
- (ii) the open distance learning policies, and
- (iii) the advertisement concerning the post of Head, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Division.

The report was submitted to the Chairperson of the Board on 16 February 2012. This document is a confidential internal document meant for the Board of the Commission. The report of Prof Torul contains names of nine officers who deponed, and Prof. Torul gave them the undertaking not to disclose the names cited in the report. It is, therefore, not proper to make public the report, as it might be prejudicial to the staff concerned. However, I shall consult Prof Torul on whether the report may be rendered public by deleting all the names of deponents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I view with very great concern the fact that the Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission, which is an apex institution that, *inter alia*, should ensure that our institutions of higher learning are operating at standards commensurate with our vision to make of Mauritius a knowledge centre of excellence, has withheld information, and has provided inaccurate facts that may have led to decisions contrary to the best interest of the institution. I am, in these circumstances, inviting the Board to convene an urgent meeting to determine whether the Board has been misled and, if so, to take immediate steps to relieve him of all his responsibilities at TEC.

Furthermore, I would also request the Board to consider the advisability of referring the matter back to ICAC and to the DPP for a possible reconsideration of the decision to administer the warning.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only wish that hon. Dr. Bunwaree, as Minister of Education, would have replied in the same way as the hon. Minister replied, and I congratulate him for that even if it's three years late. On the first part of my question, the Board is appointed for three years, including the Chairperson. After three years, the Chairperson and the members of the Board are either reappointed or they leave. They were appointed in 2005, three years bring us to 2008. Can I know what is happening? The hon. Minister rightly call that the Centre of Excellence, an apex body, very important, indeed, controlling universities and everything. Are we to understand that the Chairperson and the members are going on an *ad hoc* basis, monthly basis?

**Dr. Jeetah:** There are three things, Mr Speaker, Sir. First, three years, yes, but it only today that I have the information and we are taking action.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, nobody here is responsible for a person who has withheld information. Secondly, with regard to the Board, I did mention in my main reply that it is in the process of

being restructured, and decisions will be taken in due time. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is well-known that by Section 31 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act – I do not wish to read it – but where a Chairperson has been reconsidered in that position, they can continue to work until such time there is a new Board.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on the main issue, the hon. Minister has acknowledged that the Head of the Tertiary Education which is described as an apex body, an important institution, has been warned by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). Will he care to check whether the facts are not that? Having received the complaint, the Independent Commission Against Corruption carried out an enquiry on the gentleman concerned, reported to the DPP, advising prosecution and that the DPP, in his wisdom, decided instead of prosecution to offer to the gentleman concerned that he acknowledged a warning not to repeat the kind of fault that he was guilty of, and, in fact, he signed the warning. The original is with the ICAC, a copy is with the gentleman concerned. I take it that what is being tabled is that letter of warning, that letter which he acknowledged, which he signed.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a letter that comes from the Tertiary Education Commission and I have a letter that has been addressed to Dr. Mohadeb and I am tabling these documents here.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I, on my part, table something? If the hon. Prime Minister cares, I put the questions to him.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Bérenger:** *Pas terrorise li pou enn fois qui linn réponn!* Does he want to reply in his place?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry, please give way! The hon. Leader of the Opposition is going to table this document? Please, do so.

**Mr Bérenger:** Yes, I am going to do, but it is not in order for the hon. Prime Minister to turn round and ‘crack’ the Minister.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** What the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying - I have not seen any gesture from the hon. Prime Minister. He may table the document, please.

**Mr Bérenger:** Clearly, you could not see the face of the Prime Minister the way I saw it from here. From your angle you could not see. Well, can I table a document from the Dental Council of Mauritius, addressed to the Chairperson of the Tertiary Education Commission where very serious allegations are made against the gentleman concerned saying that it was unethical and inappropriate on the part of Dr. Mohadeb to have chaired the present and also the previous International Monitoring Committee, serious concern, conflict of interest – I am tabling - dated 10 April 2008. Will the hon. Minister, if he has the information, confirm that the Chairperson never inform the Board of this issue?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention earlier on that these information were withheld. I did make a statement as to my recommendations to the Board and action is going to be taken. I will have to repeat this again. Dr. Mohadeb did withhold the information and I consider this as very serious. I did say that, initially.

**Mr Bérenger:** Now, it has been acknowledged that he has been warned, he has signed a warning from the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The hon. Minister has provided information that he is referring the gentleman back to the ICAC. Does not the hon. Minister find it indecent that this gentleman should not stay one day more at the Head of the Tertiary Education Commission?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a system, there are structures in place. I have given my clear instructions as to what my Ministry feels about the behaviour of this gentleman. There is a Board tomorrow. I did say that I was going to table the invitation for the Board tomorrow and we will have to let the structure work. It is the Board that will have to take the decision. I have recommended to take actions - he has misled which seems to be the case.

**Mr Bérenger:** Will the hon. Minister agree with me that, in fact, the Chairperson who will chair this meeting tomorrow is as guilty as this gentleman? He has hidden the facts from the Board, he has misled the Board. He should not be at the head of this Tertiary Education Commission one day more also?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would not want to cast any aspersion on the Chairperson because I do not know whether he had the information or not but, at least, the information is here, in my presence this morning, and we are taking actions.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am just asking the Minister to clarify. I missed the point that did the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission decide that there will be *appel international de candidatures* for filling that very important post?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I think I have to go back to my main answer. I did suggest that it would be appropriate to ensure that we call for new applications.

**Mr Bérenger:** I still didn't catch what the Minister is saying. Did the Board decide to have *un appel international de candidatures*?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I do not have the information whether it is going to be international or local, but I can check and provide the information. I do not get into the affairs of the Board; it is up to them to decide.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** I hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in the meantime, that Chairperson would have gone by himself. But can I request the hon. Minister to see to it that when the time comes to appoint a real Head of the Tertiary Education Commission, there will be a Committee of Appointment *digne de ce nom* and not the kind of messing about that there has been in the past?

**Dr. Jeetah:** There has been a structure that has served us. I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is a process of restructuring. Initially, if I might go a bit in the past, we only used to have one public university with about 2,000 students. Today, we have the main university which has about 12,000 students and we have a number of other institutions. So, the whole scene has changed and they are well aware. That's why this structuring process has started and I am sure these experts that I mentioned earlier on will take all these matters into consideration.

**Mr Bérenger:** Is the hon. Minister, in fact, telling us that when legal opinion from the State Law Office was received to the effect that what took place there was not legal, this was not communicated to the Minister, either by the Chairperson or by the Head of the Tertiary Education Commission?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Could the hon. Leader of the Opposition tell me what he is referring to? I am talking about this letter by ICAC. Is this what he is referring to?

**Mr Bérenger:** I am referring to what the hon. Minister said, about the legal advice which was received to the effect of what took place there on the acting capacity, on contract and all this was not legal.

**Dr. Jeetah:** In fact, yes, I am in the presence of a communication from the State Law Office and I did say in my reply that I did request my Permanent Secretary to make sure that we abide by the provisions of the law as per State Law Office's recommendation.

**Mr Bérenger:** So, we understand that being given all this mess, on the one hand the whole organisational structure of the Commission is being reviewed, I take it, with the required international and local experts, and also the terms of employment of the Head to be appointed are being reviewed. There is suspicion that in fact all this is a subterfuge to play for time. Will the hon. Minister tell us that action will be taken rapidly concerning the present Head, action concerning the ICAC and even the Police because there has been advice that what took place was not legal and that we will not waste time in doing both exercises: restructuring the Commission and working out new conditions of employment for the Head?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that action is going to be taken, but we will have to let the Board sit and look at all the documents that would be in their presence. I can take an undertaking to this House here because I am not going to preside over a regulator such as TEC to be messing about with the laws of this land.

**Mr Jugnauth:** The hon. Minister is saying that now he knows that information has been withheld from him. Right from 06 December 2011, his attention was drawn and this letter has been tabled in this Assembly that the University Grants Commission had written an official letter addressed to Mr Mohadeb saying that the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, Sikkim, is not included in the list of universities being maintained under section so and so, meaning...

**Mr Speaker:** What is the question of the hon. Member?

**Mr Jugnauth:** My question is: the fact that TEC has acted illegally, the hon. Minister is aware of this, has he enquired into it and what is the outcome of this?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, I did bring documents relative to the application of that institution. If the hon. Member wants to make it a personal issue, we can go out and thrash this out.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I did give all the information....

*(Interruptions)*

I do not want to give way.



*(Interruptions)*

I do not want to give way. If the hon. Member wishes to have further information, I gave documents; I am inviting the hon. Member to go to whatever authorities he wishes to go if he has proof about some misdoing with regard to this institution.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jugnauth:** I, as a Member of this Parliament, am entitled to put questions. I am not making any personal issue. It is the hon. Minister who is making a personal issue out of this. I just want to have clarification for the benefit of all those students who are going to undertake their education and, obviously, we do not know what they are going to end up with in terms of qualifications, whether it will be recognised or not.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, I have understood the point made by the hon. Member.

**Dr. Sorefan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether accreditation to Mauras Dental College was issued for five years on the first year of operation by the Executive Director, whose daughter was admitted in the same institution when accreditation should have been on a yearly basis, following recommendations from various institutions on a yearly basis?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I suspect that there would be some information that would have to be presented to the Board tomorrow and that might have to do something with the case suggested by the hon. Member.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister recall that from 2009, hon. Ganoo, in this House, had raised the issue of ICAC conducting an inquiry? Does the hon. Minister recall that in 2011 already hon. Mrs Labelle raised the issue of vested interest and there was this inquiry led by Professor Torul? Since the hon. Minister, in the last instance, is himself accountable for the proper running or improprieties in the higher education sector, since this whole affair...

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt. The hon. Member has a right to put a question, so he must put the question. No statement but questions!

*(Interruptions)*

No, I said questions!

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Since it is three years, will the hon. Minister not agree that the problem in fact lies at the Ministry and in the person of the hon. Minister himself?

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jeetah:** Well, I will have to refresh the hon. Member's memory. He does not even seem to know when this Ministry was created!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ganoo:** The hon. Minister has indicated to the House that a warning has been administered to the Director. Is he aware and can he tell the House that, according to law, a warning can only be administered when the offender did not seriously dispute his guilt when confronted with or made aware of the offence? This is the situation where according to the Criminal Procedure Act a warning can be administered in lieu of prosecution. So ...

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. I have said the other day that when a question is put the purpose is to seek information but, I am sorry to say that the hon. Member is giving information. This is not in order!

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Member must put his question, please!

**Mr Ganoo:** Therefore, I am asking the hon. Minister in view of these provisions in our law, did the gentleman admit his guilt?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will have to make it clear once again. There has been information which has been withheld to me as a Minister and to my Ministry and we are taking action.

With regard to the provisions of the law, I can state what the Director of Public Prosecution has as his powers and so on, which the hon. Member is well aware of. But the crux of the matter is that once we came to know - and I find something strange and I have to say this, here, in the House, there was a question asked by hon. Gungah and he had withdrawn the question. Had he continued and had the question stayed, maybe we would have had further information.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he receives regular feedback from his Permanent Secretary after each and every meeting of the Board?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not go into all the details. I give directives as to the direction in which we would like to go. But with regard to the nomination, I will have to bring to

the attention of the hon. Member that the members act in their personal capacity, not even as ex-officio members. Maybe the hon. Member could well check in the provisions of the law.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, after what we have heard about this mess at the TEC and the Executive Director, can the hon. Minister at least inform the House, the country and the nation that when Government took the decision to appoint him, very competent and respected persons like Professor Bunwaree and Professor Amina Gurib-Fakim were left aside and this *petit copain* was appointed and today we have this mess?

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jeetah:** This *petit copain* was appointed ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**Dr. Jeetah:** This *petit copain* that the hon. Member...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jeetah:** ...is referring to was appointed when Sir Anerood Jugnauth was the Prime Minister of this country.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I said, silence!

*(Interruptions)*

Next question!

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I got the hon. Minister right, he has mentioned several times that information has not reached him. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has a representative and whether the person acts there as a representative of the Ministry and whether it is the policy that representatives of Ministries act in their personal names?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I think the hon. Member must look at the provisions of the law. They are there in their personal capacity and not as ex-officio members. The hon. Member must go through the provisions and she will find it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I can put my last question, the Chairperson is appointed by the Prime Minister. I am very disturbed that, of all people, he is going to chair that meeting tomorrow. As I have said, he is as guilty as the Head all along. Secondly, there will be no Head - clearly, will be stuck at the ICAC or somewhere. Can I appeal to the hon. Minister to discuss with the hon. Prime Minister - because he appoints the Chairperson - to appoint somebody credible, fresh at the Head of the Tertiary Education Commission, to appoint as Acting Head somebody who really deserves it – qualified - and secondly, to come out with the *appel de candidatures international et local* as soon as possible?

**Dr. Jeetah:** This is being looked at, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I have to remind the Leader of the Opposition again that we have Professor Donald Ah-Chuen, who is the Chairperson; Mr K. Cathan whom the Leader of the Opposition probably knows very well; hon. Justice Domah, who sits on the Board; Mr Raj Makoond, Miss S. Ajaheb, my Permanent Secretary and Mr V. Ramchurn. All these persons have proved themselves in their respective fields. What is important here, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that information has been withheld to me and to my Ministry. What is important here is that I have given clear directives that actions be taken, and actions, we will take.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over!

### **MOTION**

#### **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.*

(12.12 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 Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr S. Dayal):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to join the previous orators by congratulating the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, for presenting this 2013 Budget to the House. I also wish to pay tribute to the hon. Prime Minister for his guidance and insight in the preparation of the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main thrust of this Budget is to construct and consolidate an inclusive society in which every Mauritian, irrespective of his colour, caste, or creed, has the opportunity to live well. It means, Mr Speaker, Sir, enabling our population from all walks of life to find their strength and make the best of their full potential so that they all become part of the progress of our country while sharing its fruits. Mr Speaker, Sir, creating an inclusive society implies building more opportunities ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Let's have some silence!

**Mr Dayal:** ... for that component of our people who, by sheer accident of birth, find themselves at the lowest rungs of the ladder by focusing on the social dimension of our development.

This Budget has indeed set the signal that if we were to sustain a dynamic economy and increase the national pie, then it necessarily follows, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the vulnerable ones obtain a fair share of that pie. This 2013 Budget therefore, adds a new impetus and gives an added dimension to the ongoing effort of Government to transform our economy in order to broaden pathways to greater and continued prosperity for our people. As highlighted by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in his speech, this Budget was prepared against the background of international economic challenges, more particularly, the persistent economic turmoil in the Euro zone, our main trading partners. This fact seems to have been forgotten by those who intervened from the other side of the House. They have made an abstraction of this important fact.

Yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has been able to maintain the Budget deficit at less than 2.6%. Is this not a remarkable feat? Is this not a remarkable achievement, especially at a time when all the odds are against us? On this side of the House, we have every reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be proud of this Budget.

This Budget, in fact, translates the vision of the hon. Prime Minister which is to ensure that no citizen of the Republic is left out of the mainstream of development of this country. Mr Speaker, Sir, the UN Secretary General recently said, and I quote –

“Poverty is easy to denounce, but difficult to combat”.

Hon. Mrs Labelle said the other day, and I quote –

*«Je suis de ceux qui pensent et qui affirment qu'on peut détruire la misère.»*

She goes on to add -

*« Remarquez-le bien, je ne dis pas de diminuer, amoindrir, limiter, circonscrire, je dis détruire.*

*La misère est une maladie du corps social comme la lèpre était une maladie du corps humain; la misère peut disparaître.*

*Détruire la misère, oui, c'est possible!»*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am in fact, fascinated by what hon. Mrs Labelle said in her intervention. But I am just wondering whether she realises that the MMM, together with their newly found political bed partner, were in Government in 1991 to 1995, 2000 to 2005 and the MMM were in Government in 1982. My question is, Mr Speaker, Sir: what have they done? *Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait pour détruire la misère? Encore moins, pour diminuer, amoindrir, limiter, circonscrire la misère.* They were in power on several occasions, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Mrs Labelle was an MP. Did it ever occur to her then that there was poverty in this country?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Don't interrupt!

**Mr Dayal:** No, Speaker, Sir! You know why, Mr Speaker, Sir? The fruits of power were probably too sweet. The privileges were too enjoyable. So, why care for the poor people! When they were enjoying all the privileges, the poor never existed for them.

In a speech, hon. Mrs Labelle quoted from a statement made by Victor Hugo on 09 July 1849, a little more than a century and a half ago. That's great! Very great! But can she name a single measure taken by the MMM Government of 1982, MMM/MSM Government of 1991, MSM/MMM Government of 2000 and 2005, to better the lot of the poor. No, Mr Speaker, Sir! *Rien! Absolument rien!* They did not do anything for the poor of this country. They were busy enjoying the privileges and comfort of power. The poor were never their priority. This is

common knowledge. The population, and especially the vulnerable people have seen their true face.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know in this House that there is no point in hiding our face, that poverty is as old as humanity and some even said, as old as the market. Of course, we are all sensitive to the plight of the poor people. However, it would be over-pretentious to say that poverty can be eradicated overnight, in a nick of time, still less destroyed. No country in this world, even the richest of the richest, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been able to eradicate poverty entirely. I would challenge hon. Mrs Labelle to name me a single country – yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, a single country – that has been able to eliminate the violence of poverty.

There are varying levels of poverty, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, poverty is complex, multidimensional, and multifaceted. It has many facets with the result that it is very difficult to define it. Different countries have ascribed different meanings to poverty. In the affluent societies, it may mean one thing and in the poor countries, developing countries, it has an altogether different meaning. Be that as it may, poverty is an issue that we cannot condone or tolerate. We should combat it in all its forms and manifestations and this is precisely what the 2013 Budget is aiming at.

This Government has made the fight against poverty its topmost priority. In fact, when we peruse the various Budgets that have been presented in this House by this Government, led by the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, we will see that they all encompass the whole panoply of policy measures designed to improve the lot of the needy population. The people of Mauritius have the legitimate right to ask the Opposition what is their *bilan* as regards poverty alleviation. What have they done to alleviate the sufferings of the poor when they were at the helm of power? On this side of the House, we can make bold, to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, and loud and clear, that fighting poverty has always underpinned the vision and commitment of the founding Fathers of the Mauritius Labour Party because the pillars of the Labour Party are constructed on the sacrosanct principal of the emancipation and upliftment of the poor people of this country, starting as far back as 1936.

The history of the Labour Party is intrinsically associated, linked with the upliftment of the plight of the working masses and nobody has the moral right to distort history. When we go down memory lane - *n'en déplaise à certains de l'autre côté de la Chambre*, and I can't help it if it hurts because that is the plain truth, and truth hurts. Who created the Welfare State? The

MMM? The MSM? The Medpoint Alliance Government? Who introduced free education at secondary level, national pensions, universal pensions, subsidies on basic commodities such as rice and flour, free transportation for the elderly and the school children? Just to mention a few pillars of our Welfare State.

I don't want to repeat what I have said previously in this august Assembly, but when we listened to some interventions of some Members of the Opposition, we have the impression that they are reinventing Mauritius. It seems that they come from a different planet and that they are cut off from many realities. This is called intellectual dishonesty, and it is criminal to distort the facts of history.

I will therefore seek your indulgence, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the indulgence of the House because we need to set the record right otherwise the truth will go unfolded and that would be a great injustice to our new generation. I don't want to dwell on the foundations of our Welfare State. In my previous intervention I have sufficiently spoken on them and many other orators on this side of the House also have highlighted them. It is unfortunate that the Opposition is trying to draw a political mileage on the back of our poor people and this is most unfair.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said the Welfare State was introduced by SSR, the Father of the Nation and this Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, has perfected it and taken it one step further. One among the many achievements, Mr Speaker, Sir, of this Government is indeed the creation of a dedicated Ministry spearhead the social integration and economic empowerment of the vulnerable people of this country. This, by itself, Mr Speaker, Sir, demonstrates the vision and commitment of the hon. Prime Minister to ensure that absolute poverty is eradicated in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

This Government does not believe in rhetoric, but in actions. We mean business and we walk the talk, and yet, some in the Opposition have the guts to say that this Government lacks vision. Hon. Mrs Labelle has stated in the course of her intervention, and I quote –

*“Au départ du présent ministre des finances du ministère de l'intégration sociale, il y avait un projet de logements sociaux à Gros Cailloux qui était fin prêt mais, pour une raison quelconque, ce projet a été mis de côté pendant plusieurs mois».*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry that hon. Mrs Labelle is not alive to the reality on the grounds. If she had taken the pain to check her information, she would certainly have found that she has been misled. She has not been fed with the right information, with the correct



information. Let me reassure the House that the project was never set aside, even temporarily. Let me go chronologically with regard to this project. In fact, the contract was awarded on 12 September 2011. The foundation stone was laid on 17 October 2011, on the occasion of International Poverty Day, just some weeks after I had assumed office as Minister. Construction works of the housing units started on 15 November 2011, and are expected to be completed on 15 December 2012. Tender notices for sites and services which comprise an essential component of the housing project were published in October, and the closing date for the submission of bids was on 19 November 2012. The sites and services works are scheduled to be completed by April next year. So, at no point in time, this project was set aside Mr Speaker, Sir. She has simply been misled. Had she taken the pain to check her information, she would have seen that her information is not correct, is totally incorrect.

Hon. Mrs Labelle also mentioned that the creation of a dedicated Ministry *est une plaisanterie*. I was shocked, appalled coming from Hon. Labelle. I think this is an insult to the vulnerable, to the poor people, to those who are in need, the needy people of this country.

Let me just enumerate on what has been done by the Ministry of Social Integration and the National Empowerment Foundation. I am going to just enumerate a few: 16,000 children of vulnerable families including 6,877 in Rodrigues were provided with school materials, eight day care centres – *crèches*, operational in deprived regions to enhance employability of parents, 300 vulnerable women trained to secure employment as household workers, 640 beneficiaries provided with life skills training and *accompagnement* social in the regions of Sottise, Dubreuil, La Valette, Tombeau Bay, Ste Croix, Résidence Kennedy, Beau Bassin prison, Richelieu prison. 22 vulnerable families of the locality of ex-Dubreuil Tea Factory relocated, 475 vulnerable families urgently requiring shelters provided with corrugated iron sheets, 262 concrete CIS housing units constructed to house vulnerable families, 2,500 unemployed people placed and trained in ICT, BPO, construction, tourism and other services sector, 304 water tanks provided to needy families in Rodrigues. I am just enumerating a few, Mr Speaker, Sir, and yet, Hon. Labelle said the creation of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment: '*C'est une plaisanterie*'. I hope that the population has taken good note of it of how the Opposition is serious about the fate of our poor people.

On this side of the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't do things by making a lot of fuss and this is the pure labour tradition and culture. We do things that create a glimmer of hope in

the hearts of the people by bringing Government to their doorstep. There is no point in creating publicity around the fate of poor people. We are a silent force and we put our heart in what we do. The 2013 Budget contains a series of measures that are designed to create hope among the poorest segment of our population.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish to enumerate a few of these measures, especially for the update of hon. Mrs Radegonde because right at the beginning of her intervention, she said that there is nothing new in this Budget that strikes her. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a French adage that says -

*« Il n'y a pas pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir. »*

I believe that this adage suits hon. Mrs Radegonde. The measures announced by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister of Finance and Economic Development in his Budget with regard to the new projects, include, amongst other things, the distribution, as from next year, of one tablet computer to each and every schoolboy and girl in Form IV; the provision of a one-off grant of up to Rs200,000 to existing Child Day Care Centres, *crèches*, in deprived areas to enable them to upgrade their levels and standards; the introduction of low-cost loans up to Rs100,000 per annum at preferential rate to students to finance their university studies; the provision of a scholarship for students from vulnerable families who cannot secure a student loan; the provision of an amount of Rs300 m. to facilitate youth employment; review of salary compensation for graduates and non graduates undergoing placement and training; the provision of hot meal to the vulnerable, to the poor students, to each and every child in the ZEP schools in Mauritius; the provision of a minimum support of Rs750 per child per month for a maximum of three children from vulnerable families. Is this is not a new measure? Review of the housing specifications, as well as the cost of housing units intended for vulnerable families. Mr Speaker, Sir, formerly, it was 23.5 m<sup>2</sup>, and now it will be 31.5 m<sup>2</sup>. The cost was Rs165,000, and now it goes to the tune of Rs240,000. Is this not a measure? I have just enumerated a few of them only, just to prove my point that, perhaps, this is selective amnesia because this is what hon. Mrs Radegonde was trying to prove.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all these measures that I have enumerated are revolutionary in scope and dimension. They are meant to sustain our effort to support the vulnerable people. The 2013 Budget has, indeed, gone a long way to further consolidate the foundation of our Welfare State. When so many affluent countries in Asia, in Europe are in the process of revamping their

Welfare State, we, in Mauritius, are taking it one step further by extending its coverage. Here, in Mauritius, we really have a very extensive Welfare State. This is what we call a responsible and caring government. It is a shame, Mr Speaker, Sir, for hon. Members of the Opposition like hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, to come and say in this august Assembly that *ce budget est une chance ratée; que nous avons agrandi le creux; qu'on a creusé le fossé entre les pauvres et les riches; que les pauvres ont été repoussés encore plus dans ce qu'on appelle* absolute poverty.

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, Mr Speaker, Sir...

*(Interruptions)*

*To pe gagne di mal! To pou gagne beaucoup di mal la,...*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I say silence!

**Mr Dayal:** *...to pou gagne di mal même toi!*

*(Interruptions)*

*MSM zamais ti existé sans Travailleurs ou MMM ta! Zot bann parasite!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Please, don't interrupt the hon. Minister! Proceed!

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that an empty bag does not stand on its own. They are simply parasites!

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I suppose she knows better than many hon. Members in this House to what extent this government has been toiling hard to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. She was Minister of Social Security quite recently, unless she has run short of ideas or she just said it for the sake of criticising. There is no doubt that her memory is failing her, or should I say she is suffering from selective amnesia.

**Mr Speaker:** No! I am sorry. Withdraw!

**Mr Dayal:** Okay. I withdraw.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence, hon. Jhugroo!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Dayal:** *To pe gagne di mal ta! To enn parasite!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister!

**Mr Dayal:** The hon. Member is disturbing me, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I took the pain of listening to each and every...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you may proceed.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I took the pain of listening to each and every speaker from the other side without interrupting. I know it is hurting them because they were worthless. They are nothing, politically speaking.

*(Interruptions)*

*'To ene drum vide!' Le 9, toi to pou conner!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, in her intervention, Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun has made certain insinuations that are, the least to say, baseless. For example, she has said that, in La Laura, there are apparently some people who have been asking for corrugated iron sheets, that is, CIS, and wooden poles for over 12 months. She has even levelled some cheap accusation, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these people were being threatened. Threatened by whom? She does not say it. It is so easy to involve in mudslinging, and this is what they are doing here.

Although I did not believe in what she said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I took the pain to go and check her cheap insinuations. I can affirm in this House that they are unfounded, that there is nothing true in what she said. I would never have imagined that hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun would stoop so low by engaging in petty and cheap politics on the back of the poor.

Mr Speaker, Sir, poverty is a call for action. A call to change the world, so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities. Poverty hurts every one of us. No one can afford to be indifferent to poverty. The poor of this country are not ready to follow demagogues because they know how to discern between people who are really caring for them and those who only promise salvation but, in effect, are selling them dreams; dreams without hope of future. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a famous Japanese proverb that says -

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”

Unlike the Opposition, this government has both vision and action. The people of Mauritius have created this government to serve them, to serve the common good. We will not, therefore, falter on our pledge. We will not abdicate. We will never abdicate like certain have done for their simple personal, selfish interest. This approach involves, Mr Speaker, Sir, the profiling of individual vulnerable families and their members, as well as assessing their needs, linking them to the appropriate services, monitoring progress, motivating and mentoring them towards their empowerment. The programme at the National Empowerment Foundation has also been consolidated and reorganised to better meet the needs of target groups by, *inter alia*, fostering integrated community development, enabling re-skilling of unemployed, and promoting development of income generating activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to reach out to the vulnerable, to the poor, to the needy, the island of Mauritius has been divided into three regions, and each region is under the responsibility of a Programme Manager. The main thrust of regionalisation strategy is to ensure that our limited resources are put to maximum use, that is, they are optimised and the impacts of our actions are fully measurable. Also, it will elicit greater accountability from the Programme Managers assigned to each region. In certain quarters, Mr Speaker, Sir, some people out of mischief have taken a malicious pleasure to say that –

*“Le ministère de l’intégration sociale est en panne.”*

I want to tell these birds of ill-omen that they are blatantly wrong. I don’t want to take the time of the House to enumerate all the achievements of my Ministry. Consequently, I am coming up with the publication of a booklet that will highlight all the achievements of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment since its creation in May 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the course of my intervention on the debates on the Government Programme 2012-2015, I stated that we are a country with a little over 1.2 million population. We have an extensive Welfare State, and yet, we still have some 7,000 families living below the poverty line. We have free education, free health care and so many other types of benefits which even the affluent societies cannot afford. Then, why do we have so many poor? Somewhere, it is the responsibility of those people who find themselves in difficult conditions to help themselves, because no amount of assistance will eradicate absolute poverty if the poor do not make an effort. We, at the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Mr Speaker, Sir, *on ne veut pas perpétuer l’assistanat*. We are not perpetuating dependency. We

are helping the people to come out of their poverty. We are inculcating the spirit of trying to help themselves and believe in themselves first, to stand on their feet. We, in no way, want to perpetuate what we call dependency or *assistanat*.

Before ending, Mr Speaker, Sir, I should like to tell just one thing. In a country, Mr Speaker, Sir, where education is free, transport is free, examination fee is free, school materials are provided *et il y a un accompagnement scolaire*. It was announced in this Budget that, if a child goes to school and is present for a maximum of 90% or above, that family will be given a cash grant. All these are provided: free education, free transport, free books, hot meals, *accompagnement scolaire*, school materials, and yet, when the child goes to school, Mr Speaker, Sir, the family gets a cash grant. This summarises the philosophy of this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir. Nowhere in the world will you find all these facilities being extended, and yet, we are given to hear from hon. Mrs Labelle that the creation of this Ministry is a *plaisanterie*.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me quote what Melinda Gates said -

“We imagine a society in which the random chance of where the child is born does not determine his odds of being happy and successful. We envision a different society in which suffering is not automatically the lot of thousands of our people.”

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(12.48 p.m.)

**Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East):**

M. le président, un budget est une occasion pour fixer un nouveau cap. Le ministre des Finances pouvait donner l'élan nécessaire pour relancer l'économie mauricienne mais il a raté l'occasion. Tout le monde est sorti de l'exercice du vendredi 09 novembre avec une drôle impression, celle d'avoir rater quelque chose.

M. le président, s'il est vrai qu'on n'attend plus rien du budget, celui de 2013 intervient dans un contexte économique incertain et tourmenté, est tout sauf rassurant pour l'avenir. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a à l'horizon ? Pas grand-chose qui embrigade la nation. En 2012, c'était le '*growth for a greater good*' mais le *growth* de 4% que l'on annonçait, s'est finalement chiffré à 3 %. Un budget c'est surtout une occasion pour insuffler un nouveau dynamisme à l'économie.

Dans les années 2000 à 2005, le gouvernement avait créé, à partir de rien, un nouveau pilier de l'économie : le TIC. Le budget, à cette époque, annonçait un gros investissement dans

le cyber cité, marquant un tournant important dans la vie économique du pays. Le résultat est visible aujourd'hui. L'industrie de TIC a contribué pour 6.7% du PIB en 2012.

Un budget qui a du mérite est un budget qui jette le fondement d'un édifice nouveau. Ce n'est pas celui qu'on nous a présenté le 09 novembre. Depuis 2005, ils n'ont rien inventé ou réinventé. Rien de nouveau sous le soleil! On nous avait annoncé une *Land-Based Oceanic Industry* il y a six ans. Rien de probant depuis !

Dans le discours-programme du 16 avril 2012, le projet a été remaquillé sous le titre ronflant, d'or bleu, que, 'Le pays devait prendre davantage de sa vaste zone économique exclusive'. Mais toujours rien ! Quand on continue à rouler sur les acquis de ceux qu'on avait déjà dénoncé avec véhémence - il y eu plusieurs portées symboliques, mais pas de vision pour l'avenir ni de solution aux grands problèmes de l'heure. Par exemple, l'honorable ministre annonce que les bolides de 200 cc coûteront moins chers, mais rien n'est dit dans le budget sur le métro léger.

Une autre indication par rapport au manque d'ambition du budget 2013 et lors de son point de presse post budgétaire, même l'honorable Premier ministre a mentionné les mérites de l'action de Rama Sithanen durant la période 2005-2010. Le lendemain, l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing redécouvre subitement son amour pour l'ex-ministre des Finances pour avoir permis la résilience de l'économie mauricienne.

*(Interruptions)*

A l'époque de Sithanen on parlait de *early harvest*. On parlait de *bumper crop*. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, le ministre des Finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval - on n'entend plus parler de *bumper crop*. Donc, il n'y aura pas de *harvest*.

M. le président, une dernière indication par rapport au niveau satisfaction sur le budget de 2013. Cela ne vient pas de moi, ni de l'Opposition, cela vient plutôt de la population elle-même. C'est ce sondage publié dans 'L'Express Dimanche'. Ce sondage a été fait par une firme connue de la capitale et a été basé sur un échantillon national représentatif de la population. Et quel a été le résultat ? Le résultat était éloquent. Plus de 50% d'insatisfaits, 34% de satisfaits et la différence pas d'opinion. Ce sondage n'a pas été fait par l'Opposition. Cela a été fait par une firme prenant en compte la réalité de la population sur une base d'échantillon comme je l'ai expliqué.

*(Interruptions)*

Voilà qu'a été le résultat de ce sondage ! Donc, après tout ce qui a été dit, nous pensons que le budget a été un coup d'épée dans l'eau. Il a été un *non-event*, un budget *fizet*.

M. le président, passons aux choses sérieuses. Il est impératif qu'une étude comparative soit faite pour voir si toutes les mesures énoncées d'un budget à un autre - accompagnées souvent d'applaudissements délirants - ont été concrétisées ou pas. Une telle étude comparative pourrait être édifiante quand elle établirait combien de mesures sont restées lettre morte, des déclarations d'intentions, de vœux pieux et pour ceci laissez-moi énumérer les mesures annoncées dans le budget 2011/2012. Pour commencer, je vais prendre l'item concernant logements sociaux.

Les budgets 2005 à ce jour contiennent tous des chapelets d'intention concernant le logement. Mais en réalité toutes ces intentions sont restées lettre morte ; toutes ces intentions n'ont jamais été réalisées. Laissez-moi énumérer les différentes propositions qu'ont été faites par rapport aux logements sociaux sous ce même gouvernement Parti travailliste, sous ce même Premier ministre. On n'a rien entendu jusqu'à l'heure par rapport aux différents *schemes* qui ont été proposés en 2011. Il a été question de *good living programme that includes five schemes*.

Il y a le *Scheme 1*, où les gens qui ont des revenus moins de R 5,000 allaient bénéficier des facilités et, sous ce *scheme*, il était prévu que plusieurs milliers de familles allaient bénéficier de ces facilités-là. Mais à ce jour on n'a rien entendu de ce qui s'est passé par rapport à ça. *And let me quote from the Budget 2011 -*

“Out of the 2,000 *arpents* of land that were successfully negotiated by the Prime Minister, 1,000 *arpents* will be used for the housing programme. This will enable the construction of about one third of the 40,000 houses on a mixed basis over the next 10 years.”

Et là nous avons eu, comme je vous ai dit, plusieurs *schemes*. Le *Scheme 1* était pour le *social housing, for the absolute poor, 7,000 units will be constructed*. Plus de deux ans après, qu'est-ce qu'on a vu et entendu par rapport à ce *Scheme 1* ?

En ce qui concerne le *Scheme 2 - some, 1,700 units will be constructed under that scheme*. *Scheme 3 - some 9,000 service plots will be provided for the construction of houses*. Bien sûr, cela a été étalé sur dix ans, je ne vais pas être malhonnête là-dessus. Cela a été étalé sur 10 ans, mais cela fait plus de deux ans que cela a été annoncé. J'aurais aimé savoir quel a été le progrès qui a été fait par rapport au *scheme* qui a été proposé.



*Under Scheme 4, some 15,000 service plots will be provided and under Scheme 5, Government will support 6,500 first-time buyers to purchase. Et laissez-moi citer le dernier paragraphe dans le budget 2011 -*

“Mr Speaker, Sir, the total contribution of Government to support 40,000 families who will benefit from these five schemes amount to *R 18.5 milliards – pas millions, R 18.5 milliards ; cela a été annoncé deux ans de cela -* of which *deux milliards seraient du CSR money*”.

Mais aujourd’hui qu’a-t-on vu ? L’honorable ministre nous a présenté les *achievements* de son ministère. Je reviendrais là-dessus car cela a été publié dans le budget.

M. le président, laissez-moi aller au Budget 2012 encore une fois par rapport aux logements sociaux. Beaucoup a été dit, beaucoup a été entendu mais encore une fois par rapport aux réalités, par rapport aux *achievements*, la réalité est tout autre. Et là, laissez-moi *quote* du Budget 2012 -

“Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, the NHDC has identified 160 *arpents* under the Prime Minister’s deal with the sugar industry.”

*Dans le budget 2011, c’était 1,000 arpents; maintenant c’est devenu 160 arpents.*

“This will enable the NHDC to accelerate its own programme to construct 1,000 units. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to announce that we are now committing 1.5 milliards for the Social Housing Development Fund.”

*C’était dans le dernier budget 2012. Combien de ces 1.5 milliards de roupies ont été dépensées? Je vais prendre une centaine de millions de roupies.* In our housing policy, we are not forgetting the *sans domiciles fixes*. For them, NEF will create a shelter at Abattoir Road, Port Louis qui est dans ma circonscription. Les sans domiciles fixes, M. le président, ils courent toujours. Cela a été annoncé mais c’est resté un effet d’annonce, comme d’habitude.

Maintenant, M. le président, laissez-moi venir au budget 2013 par rapport au *social housing* où beaucoup a été annoncé mais encore une fois beaucoup d’effets d’annonces, mais dans le concret, nous avons vu le bilan et je peux vous dire que la réalité est autre chose. Donc, M. le président, là encore dans l’exercice du dernier budget...

**Mr Speaker:** I’ll have to interrupt the hon. Member. I suspend for one hour.

*At 1.01 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.06 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Ameer Meea :** M. le président, je continue là où je m'étais arrêté par rapport aux logements sociaux. Dans l'exercice du dernier budget 2012, il était prévu de dépenser plus de 1.5 milliards de roupies. Mais combien a été dépensé par rapport aux logements sociaux ? Je crois que cela se chiffre dans les centaines de millions de roupies. Donc, j'ose espérer que cette fois-ci la donne sera changée. L'argent est là pour le dépenser dans les projets de logements sociaux mais il faut une volonté politique. Laissez-moi venir au paragraphe 152 du dernier budget :

*“152. The loss of agricultural land is a concern that we must attend to - for it can undermine the viability of the sector and the source of income for thousands of families.”*

Donc, d'une part, il y a une volonté – je ne sais pas si c'est réelle - pour essayer de préserver nos terres agricoles mais, d'autre part, je vais faire un paradoxe sur le paragraphe 137:

*“137. To encourage more productive use of our land resources, Government is exempting the Land Conversion Tax for the following purposes (...).”*

Il y a une volonté de préserver nos terres agricoles mais, d'autre part, il y a une *incentive* pour convertir les terres agricoles et parmi il y a quatre mesures phares. Le quatrième se lit comme suit :

*“Government is exempting the Land Conversion Tax for the following purposes (...) golf courses.”*

M. le président, soit on garde nos terres agricoles à des soins productifs mais dans un premier temps on dit cela pour garder nos terres mais, d'autre part, on nous encourage à faire des *golf courses*. On sait qu'à Maurice il y a environ, si je ne me trompe, huit à neuf *golf courses*. Un *golf course* est un gouffre financier. Déjà dans le pays, à travers les hôtels, à travers des groupes, il y a plusieurs *golf courses* mais pourquoi avoir permis dans ce dernier budget d'encourager des gens qui ont des terres productives, des planteurs qui font une activité économique à vendre ces terres là à des gens qui veulent faire des *golf courses* quand on sait que cela ne forme pas partie d'une activité économique. Cela ne rapporte rien. On sait quel est le résultat des *golf courses* aujourd'hui. Quel est le bilan? Combien de gens cela emploie? Voilà un peu par rapport au *golf courses*.

Comme je suis sur l'item terre et logement, laissez-moi parler du scandale de Neotown. Tout le monde se souvient de ce scandale mais je dois dire que le ministre n'est nullement

impliqué dedans; on sait que le poisson est beaucoup plus gros que cela et il n’y avait pas d’appel d’offres. Comment peut-on oublier les conditions du bail, l’évaluation du terrain qui a été faite par le *notorious guy* – le *Chief Government Evaluation Officer*, Monsieur Bissessur? C’est un projet d’envergure. Le *EIA* a été fait dans deux semaines avec un investissement étranger de seize milliards. Aujourd’hui où sont ces investissements? Où sont ces investisseurs aujourd’hui, sans parler de la crédibilité de la compagnie en question? Que n’a-t-on pas dit par rapport au Neotown? On avait parlé de la démocratisation de l’économie. M. le président. La démocratisation de l’économie se fait par des mauriciens et pour des mauriciens. La démocratisation de l’économie n’est pas faite par des étrangers.

*(Interruptions)*

Vous êtes en train de parler du *deal* Illovo. Le *deal* Illovo était fait par les mauriciens et non pas les étrangers. Vous faites erreur. Donc, l’affaire Neotown - les dépenses pour les infrastructures, tels que l’eau, l’électricité, le *sewerage*, la route, les drains qui va payer tout cela? Ce sont les contribuables qui vont payer tout cela ! Aujourd’hui, je réitère mes propos. Où sont les seize milliards d’investissement que le gouvernement avait promis? Où est Patel Engineering Ltd aujourd’hui après deux ans de l’affaire Neotown? Tout cela a été fait à la veille des élections de 2010, dans une opacité totale. Pour cela, M. le président, nous sommes en droit d’avoir des éclaircissements et aujourd’hui encore c’est une culture de secrets.

Là, je dirai comment ne pas oublier l’autre scandale immobilier qu’est le Jin Fei ? Encore une fois, le Jin Fei est une culture de secrets. Combien de fois n’avons-nous pas demandé que les contrats soient rendus publics ? Précédemment, le Jin Fei s’appelait Tian Li et je ne sais pas dans les années à venir comment cela va être appelé. Là, je vais citer le paragraphe 154 du budget :

*“154. Moreover, no land should lie idle in a country that needs to achieve greater food security.”*

M. le président, vraiment c’est un *joke* de mauvais goût. Les terres qui étaient à Riche Terre étaient des terres productives dont les petits planteurs se servaient pour pouvoir gagner leur vie. Aujourd’hui, que s’est-il passé? Plus de 500 arpents de terre ont été donnés à bail à des étrangers pour un loyer moyennant huit millions de roupies par an ! M. le président, on est en train de parler de la démocratisation de l’économie. Ces terres, dont disposaient des gens pauvres qui contribuaient à l’activité économique leur ont été arrachées. Plus de R 563 millions de roupies ont déjà été dépensées en termes d’infrastructure pour le projet Jin Fei. Aujourd’hui, Jin

Fei est une ville fantôme et les petits planteurs sont restés sur leur faim. Aujourd'hui, ils sont en train de galérer parce que là-bas ils travaillaient, ils produisaient quelque chose. Tout comme le Neotown, Jin Fei est un autre scandale. Le gouvernement doit assumer ses responsabilités. Voilà un peu, M. le président, ce que j'avais à dire par rapport au dossier terre et logement.

M. le président, laissez-moi parler du projet Maurice Ile Durable (MID). M. le président, le MID a brillé par son absence dans le dernier budget. Pour la première fois depuis le lancement du projet Maurice Ile Durable par le Premier ministre en 2008, le budget n'en a fait aucune mention. Du coup, tous ceux qui souhaitaient savoir comment les centaines de millions de roupies prélevées par le biais de la MID tax, depuis sa création, sont restés sur leur faim. Le volet vert du budget se limite à une série de mesures disparates. A titre d'exemple, le montant destiné au plan de subvention de chauffe-eau solaire sera doublé pour arriver à deux cents millions. Attendons voir comment seront distribuées les deux cents millions pour les chauffe-solaires par la DBM. Est-ce que c'est une action qui s'insère dans le cadre du projet Maurice Ile Durable ou une action électoraliste? Il n'y a pas mal de projets électoralistes dans le budget et c'est mauvais pour le pays. La création des fermes éoliennes au large de Rodrigues sera-t-elle envisagée? Voilà ce qu'on a dans le budget. La question qui se pose désormais: le projet MID est-il mort? Si oui, à quoi sert la MID tax - de trente sous - prélevée sur chaque litre de carburant? Voilà où on en est par rapport au MID. Comme je l'ai dit précédemment, il n'y a aucune mention dans le budget par rapport au MID mais on est en train de payer une taxe de trente sous là-dessus.

M. le président, laissez-moi venir sur un dossier qui me tient à cœur parce que cela affecte toute l'île Maurice mais surtout ma circonscription, notamment Plaine Verte et Roche Bois. C'est le dossier de la drogue. M. le président, il n'y a rien de sérieux dans le budget pour donner un nouveau souffle au combat contre la drogue. La toxicomanie persiste et je le redis: la drogue est un fléau qui doit être placé *above party politics* parce que cela affecte tout le monde. C'est une politique qu'on doit adopter au niveau national pour essayer d'enrayer ce mal qui est là depuis trop longtemps. Qu'est-ce qui se passe? Nos travailleurs sociaux engagés semblent prêcher dans le désert. Pire que l'indifférence, il y a de la complaisance. Le mouvement anti-drogue mène une croisade et ne bénéficie d'aucun soutien digne de ce nom de l'État. Nous croyons que le gouvernement allait se ressaisir et tenterait de reprendre du poil de la bête avec de nouveaux textes de loi très musclés pour casser les reins aux magnats de la drogue, mais silence

radio. Après vingt-six ans, il est plus que nécessaire d'instituer une nouvelle commission d'enquête. La dernière qu'on ait eue était la Commission Rault en juillet 1986. Donc, plus de vingt-six ans après, pourquoi demande-t-on une nouvelle commission d'enquête? C'est pour réactualiser toutes les données par rapport au fléau de la drogue. Laissez-moi vous dire que je suis très déçu quand j'ai moi-même posé la question au Premier ministre par rapport à une commission d'enquête sur la drogue et là, M. le président, je vais *quote from Hansard* :

*“For the reasons, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not, at this stage, propose to set up a Commission of Inquiry in regard to the drug problem. This being said, it should not be understood, Mr Speaker, Sir, to imply that I am against the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry, but whenever then need arises, we would set up a Commission of Inquiry.”*

*When the need arises* – comme qui dirait, la première place qu'on occupe en matière de consommation de drogue sur le continent noir, sur toute l'Afrique, cela ne suffit pas. On occupe la première place d'après le rapport des Nations Unies. Que dit le Premier ministre: *whenever the need arises*. C'est comme-ci il n'y a pas de *need*, cela ne suffit pas. Je suis vraiment déçu qu'on ne nomme pas une commission d'enquête sur la drogue. Qu'est-ce qui est plus urgent et qui mérite une commission d'enquête ? Est-ce le scandale immobilier ou bien le trafic de drogue?

*(Interruptions)*

Je ne vais pas apprendre quelque chose de nouveau. C'est bon. On est en train de parler de quelque chose qui nous concerne tous, la drogue. Je ne vais pas apprendre quelque chose de nouveau aux membres ici présents, notamment que la drogue mène vers le sida. Au lieu d'utiliser la MBC/TV à des fins de propagande, on aurait dû la mettre au service de ceux qui militent au péril de leur vie contre tous ces fléaux qui gangrènent notre société, tels que les fléaux de la drogue et le sida. Là, M. le président, comment ne pas citer l'affaire Gros Derek? Cinq ans avec des signes extérieurs de richesse et finalement quand l'affaire a éclaté, on a vu l'étendu du réseau de Gros Derek avec des ramifications politiques. C'est pour cela que j'insiste. Il faut qu'il y ait une commission d'enquête et tout remonterait à la surface. Je ne comprends pas vraiment l'entêtement du Premier ministre de ne pas nommer une commission d'enquête. Puisque je suis sur le sujet d'argent sale qui a été accumulé, il y a aussi une autre mesure dans le budget...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence, please!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** J'aurais aimé avoir une clarification du ministre des finances parce qu'on a attiré mon attention là-dessus. Vous serez étonné – c'est par rapport à un item du budget, au paragraphe 337, le *vintage car*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this could be a new method, an indirect way of laundering black money. I will explain how it can be done. Vintage cars are very expensive cars and the fact that there will be no excise duty on the cars when entering Mauritius means that there is no need to declare how much has been paid for the cars. It will not be compulsory for you to declare because there won't be any excise duty. So, it implies that you don't have to put the amount on it. A l'étranger, il y a une mafia autour de *ces vintage cars*. Ils achètent des voitures de collection à des millions de roupies mais, en ce faisant, ils blanchissent leur argent. Aujourd'hui on achète ces voitures de l'étranger et on les amène à Maurice ; ces *vintage cars* auront de la valeur, à coup de millions de roupies et à travers ce réseau on pourra blanchir de l'argent. J'aurais aimé avoir un éclaircissement du ministre des finances quand il fera son *summing-up*. Quel mécanisme sera mis en place pour essayer d'empêcher cela si jamais il y a un cas sérieux de blanchiment d'argent.

M. le président, laissez-moi venir sur la problématique des marchands ambulants. S'il y a un dossier qui symbolise l'incompétence, la mauvaise administration c'est bien le dossier de marchands ambulants. Là aussi, rien n'est mentionné dans le budget par rapport à ce problème ; rien n'est prévu. Il n'y a aucune provision pour l'extension du grand bazar de Port Louis, c'est-à-dire le Marché Central, encore une fois rien n'a été prévu. On a souvent entendu parler des marchands qui se trouvent à la rue La Reine, à la rue Farquhar et qu'on allait ériger des structures par-ci, par-là, mais tout cela après sept ans. Il faut que la Cour Suprême donne un jugement pour que finalement on décide d'aller d'ériger des structures. Gouverner, c'est prévoir ! On aurait dû savoir que tout cela allait venir. On aurait dû prévoir tout cela. Là encore une fois, c'est le néant dans le budget, rien du tout, pas une seule ligne par rapport aux marchands ambulants.

Et comment ne pas oublier le *Hawkers' Palace* ! Moi-même, j'ai été étonné de lire dans 'Le Défi' ce que l'honorable Abdullah Hossen a dit, que c'est regrettable que le projet *Hawkers' Palace* est mort. Cela m'écœure quand je pense à cela. On a torpillé ce projet par fanatisme politique. Aujourd'hui ce bâtiment aurait servi à abriter bon nombre de marchands ambulants - pas la totalité, mais bon nombre. Cela aurait été un début et aujourd'hui on a torpillé ce projet et

sept bonnes années se sont succédé et le problème des marchands ambulants reste entier. Quel drame ! Est-ce cela *'Putting People First'* ?

Comment ne pas oublier cette déclaration honteuse et dégoûtante même du Lord-maire de la capital à l'effet qu'un tsunami va traverser sur les marchands ambulants ? Aujourd'hui même j'ai vu un document déposé à la bibliothèque. Il a été Lord-maire, il a été nommé médecin dans le port, il a été nommé à la MHC et là, aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce que j'ai vu durant son mandat ? Il a voyagé aux frais des contribuables quinze fois et il dit qu'un tsunami va traverser sur ces pauvres gens-là !

M. le président, il faut vraiment être un bourreau pour pouvoir dire de tels propos, et moi, je condamne cela. Le problème des marchands ambulants est un problème humain et il faut trouver une solution humaine à cela. M. le président, dans cette même logique, je dirais que les élections municipales sont enfin organisées après plus de deux ans d'entrave à la démocratie. Si les lois de 2003 n'étaient pas bonnes...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I have already ruled that the Municipal elections have nothing to do with the Budget. Therefore, the hon. Member should speak on the Budget.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** M. le président, nous savons très bien pourquoi ils sont venus avec une réforme et dans cette réforme, des collectivités locales...

**Mr Speaker:** I have said the hon. Member has to abide by the ruling.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** M. le président, sauf votre respect, ...

**Mr Speaker:** I have said the hon. Member has to abide by my ruling. The hon. Member should speak on the Budget. I do not want to repeat myself anymore.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would refer you to hon. Ms Deerpalsing's speech. She spoke on Municipal elections...

*(Interruptions)*

She spoke on what has been said in Quatre Bornes.

**Mr Speaker:** Silence! I am on my feet!

*(Interruptions)*

Silence, please! Hon. Member, you may proceed with your speech on the Budget!

*(Interruptions)*

Silence! I say, silence!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** M. le président, laissez-moi parler du *Local Gouvernement*. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé dans les collectivités locales ? En référence au budget, rien n'est prévu en référence aux collectivités locales. A Port Louis, M. le président - parce que l'exemple a été fait par rapport à Quatre Bornes - qu'est-ce qui a été fait, qu'est-ce qui a été dit, j'aurais aimé faire référence à Port Louis. Donc, à Port Louis, qu'est-ce qu'on a vu ? A Port Louis, il y a eu une corruption ambiante. L'adjoint au Lord-maire a été condamné par la Cour pour corruption. Il a dû démissionner pour cela. Il y a eu plusieurs enquêtes par l'ICAC par rapport aux étals du Marché Central, à la foire Cité Martial. Les dizaines des millions payés en termes des frais légaux à des proches du pouvoir, les dizaines de millions payés à des frais légaux...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I say, order!

*(Interruptions)*

I have said, order! Please!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** M. le président, je sais que cela leur fait beaucoup de mal.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence! The hon. Member may proceed.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Donc, M. le président, il est clair qu'aujourd'hui il y a une volonté de changement et là une question a été posée, ici-même, en 2010, concernant la rénovation du théâtre de Port Louis. Le théâtre de Port Louis est fermé depuis plusieurs années. Même le ministre a concédé dans ce même *PQ* qu'il est difficile de dire quand le théâtre sera rouvert. M. le président, on est en train de tuer à petit feu le théâtre, l'art et la culture. Le bilan de cette alliance...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I do not want any interruption.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Donc, M. le président, je dirais que le bilan de cette alliance encombre l'actualité jusqu'à l'écœurement. Le passage de cette alliance incarne une stupeur des fracas de nos villes pendant sept ans. La gestion bancaire et catastrophique des hommes du Premier ministre dans nos collectivités locales est derrière nous, après les dérives et les gabegies des conseillers PTr/PMSD qui ont abouti à la chute des valeurs, la faillite du sens des choses, le triomphe de l'égoïsme forcené, la prolifération de la corruption et des abus. Ayons les yeux rivés sur l'avenir pour redresser les torts immenses causés à ces collectivités locales. La droiture



et le sens du devoir et d'éthique sont des facteurs qui devront accompagner le changement et l'intégrer les plus harmonieusement possible. Les critères sont connus, la gestion sans reproche du MMM dans nos municipalités est un atout. Les élections arrivent à temps pour changer le cours dramatique des choses. La population n'a pas besoin d'un grand effort pour comprendre les enjeux et mettre un terme au règne de ceux qui ont causé de la misère. Plus de deux ans après l'expiration du dernier mandat municipal, les citoyens sont enfin appelés aux urnes. Jamais au cours de leur histoire, pourtant mouvementée, les municipalités n'auront atteint un tel niveau de mauvaise gestion. Les qualificatifs des écuries d'Augias qui leur furent donnés au cours des années 70 du siècle dernier, étaient un compliment en comparaison à ce qui s'est passé dans les conseils municipaux de 2005 à ce jour et pendant leur prolongation artificielle. Donc, M. le président, vivement un changement.

J'ai presque terminé mon discours, mais laissez-moi quand même faire référence à une ou deux choses qui ont été dites par des précédents orateurs. Ce n'était pas prévu que je m'attarde là-dessus, mais je suis obligé de *set the record right*. C'est par rapport à la dernière organisation du Hajj. M. le président, vous allez être étonné de par l'énormité de la chose. Qu'a dit le ministre Choonee dans son discours ? Il a dit -

*« I have here to underline the support I got from the hon. Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands and all other colleagues, and the Board of Trustees of the ICC, including its Chairman, for the best ever organisation of Hajj for Mauritius. »*

M. le président, je ne sais pas si le ministre vit sur la lune. Mais comment est-ce qu'il peut faire abstraction de ce qui s'est passé cette année? 700 personnes n'ont pas eu de visa. Cela a été sans précédent. Jamais on n'a eu une telle situation.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order !

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Et il a le culot de nous dire ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, please! Please, I want some order! The hon. Member may proceed, but he should not be provocative.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Donc, je n'arrive pas à comprendre comment le ministre peut faire abstraction totale de ce qui s'est passé cette année. Il y a une mère de famille qui n'a pas pu se

déplacer à cause d'une erreur monumentale qui a été faite par le Centre Culturel Islamique. Son époux est parti, son beau-père est parti, son fils est parti et elle n'a pas pu faire le déplacement à cause d'une erreur administrative. Qu'est-ce que le ministre vient nous dire ? *The best ever organisation of Hajj !* Je ne sais pas s'il vit toujours à Maurice, ou sur la lune. Et il va plus loin dans l'offense. Il dit –

« *We have to congratulate everybody for the support of the organisation. We have to congratulate for what happened this year.* »

Et sans oublier le rapport qui a été déposé par l'honorable Issack. Je ne vais pas entrer là-dessus pour ne pas polémiquer. Mais ça a été dans la presse et ça a déjà été rendu public. Donc, encore une fois, je condamne ce propos du ministre Choonee à l'effet que *'this year has been the best organisation of Hajj'*. Un tel propos est vraiment honteux et déplorable.

M. le président, laissez-moi venir sur un autre item *which has been canvassed by hon. Ms Deerpalsing* à l'effet qu'on a fermé le *Ti Vegas*. Elle se targue et indique que c'est à propos de ses démarches que cela a été fermé. Mais, M. le président, laissez-moi rappeler à la Chambre, qui a délivré le permis à *Ti Vegas* ? C'est ce même gouvernement qui a délivré ce permis et aujourd'hui on est en train de dire : voilà on a fermé le *Ti Vegas*. M. le président, l'histoire retiendra que c'est sous ce gouvernement que plus de 500 permis ont été délivrés pour la prolifération des maisons de jeux. C'est sous ce gouvernement que 500 permis ont été livrés et sans aucune étude au préalable sur l'impact social que cela aurait sur notre société. Et tout le monde sait ce qui gravite autour des maisons de jeux. Il y a la prostitution, la drogue et tout cela a été fait sous ce gouvernement et l'histoire retiendra cela. De 2005 à ce jour...

*(Interruptions)*

C'est Rama Sithanen qui a donné ça ! Vous faites erreur !

**Mr Speaker:** Order! I say, order! I have said, order! I have heard someone saying *'menteur'*. I have heard it. Who has said it? He stands up and withdraws it.

**Mr Henry:** I withdraw.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you very much. The hon. Member may proceed, and I have said, don't be provocative.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I am not provocative. I am just stating the facts and I am trying to set the record straight.

M. le président, aujourd'hui, je peux dire qu'au moins sur une chose on est d'accord, qu'il y a vraiment eu une démocratisation par rapport aux jeux du hasard. Cela a été vraiment démocratisé. Au moins on est d'accord sur une chose. Parce qu'aujourd'hui tout le monde peut avoir un permis de maisons de jeux. On voit cela partout à travers l'île. Ça a été fait dans des endroits résidentiels et partout. Il y a au moins un secteur qui a été vraiment démocratisé. C'est le *gambling sector*, M. le président.

Voilà un peu, M. le président, où nous en sommes et je suis ravi d'être intervenu aujourd'hui dans la Chambre et d'avoir *set the record right*.

J'ai terminé, M. le président. Merci.

(2.36 p.m.)

**Mr P. Assirvaden (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix):** M. le président, je suis honoré de m'adresser cet après-midi devant vous dans cette Chambre. Je voudrais d'abord féliciter et le Premier ministre et le ministre des finances pour la présentation de ce budget.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de revenir sur quelques points élaborés par l'honorable orateur qui a parlé juste avant moi. Je voudrais simplement, M. le président, rappeler à l'honorable Ameer Meea qui parlait sur les marchands ambulants, de regarder un peu en arrière pour écouter et pour visionner ce que son nouveau *Leader* pense actuellement sur les marchands ambulants. Son nouveau guru, qui l'accompagne un peu partout, ne veut absolument pas voir ou entendre parler de marchands ambulants. Il veut à tout prix - et il l'a dit en direct à la télévision et à la radio - que les marchands ambulants de ce pays doivent disparaître. Et aujourd'hui, l'honorable Ameer Meea veut être le défenseur des marchands ambulants. Il frappe, malheureusement, à la mauvaise porte. En ce qui concerne, M. le président, ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No interruptions, please ! The hon. Member may proceed!

**Mr Assirvaden:** M. le président, en ce qui concerne l'affaire de *Hawkers' Palace*, c'est malheureux, encore une fois, de voir comment les membres de l'Opposition agissent. Le *Hawkers' Palace* - tout le monde est au courant - ne peut contenir que 400 places. C'est connu depuis très longtemps. Et pourquoi on a arrêté ce projet ? C'est bien de le dire ici, dans cette Chambre. Non seulement parce que la place est limitée, mais deuxièmement la personne qui allait construire et gérer le *Hawkers' Palace*, Monsieur René Seeyave, est un actionnaire et consultant du même projet. C'est pour cette raison qu'on a dû, pour la transparence, pour la

bonne gouvernance, faire arrêter ce projet. Ne parlons pas des conseillers ou Municipalités, mes amis m'ont rafraîchi la mémoire en ce qui concerne l'affaire Tirat Moosun.

L'honorable Ameer Meea et les membres de l'Opposition sont mal placés pour nous donner des leçons. Il fut un temps, M. le président, - et le scandale – on était dans l'Opposition, on demandait une enquête sur les vols de papier toilette à la municipalité. Du papier toilette volé à la municipalité de Port Louis et aujourd'hui ils osent venir nous pointer du doigt. L'honorable Ameer Meea et d'autres orateurs ont parlé du projet de Jin Fei. Ils ont parlé du projet de la carte d'identité, et pourquoi les contrats n'ont pas été déposés au parlement. M. le président, en 2003, le contrat de la Centrale Thermique du Sud (CTDS) n'a jamais ...

*(Interruptions)*

Quelques points ! Mais le contrat en béton signé par le gouvernement MSM/MMM n'a jamais été déposé au Parlement ! Où sont les contrats concernant le projet de Mauritius Telecom/France Telecom, le *deal* Illovo ? Vous parlez de scandale ?

*(Interruptions)*

Vous parlez de scandale....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence !

**Mr Assirvaden:** J'étais étonné, M. le président. Après la PNQ du *Leader* de l'opposition dans le courant de la semaine sur l'affaire de bois de rose, je m'attendais à qu'on entende les suites de cette affaire après. Vous parlez de scandale. Personne n'a osé ou personne n'a trouvé utile de demander à qui que ce soit, aux personnes concernées de préciser certaines choses, d'éclairer la population sur certaines choses, ou de dire certaines choses par rapport à l'appel téléphonique du 21 mai 2011. Vous parlez de scandale ?

L'honorable Meea parlait de drogue juste avant moi, M. le président, - je terminerai là-dessus et je reprendrai le budget.

**Mr Speaker:** Il faut faire la différence entre l'honorable Ameer Meea et l'honorable Fakeemeeah.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Assirvaden:** Merci, M. le président, pour cette nuance. Cela valait la peine, c'est sûr.

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, l'honorable Ameer Meea parlait de drogue. Qui ne se souvient des années 1983-1985 ? Qui ne se souvient de ce slogan « *Gouvernement dan nou la main !* » On peut tout faire ! Qui ne se souvient quand, au Réduit, on sonnait des pétards en présence des trafiquants de drogue ?

*(Interruptions)*

Qui ne se souvient de ce triste temps de notre histoire, où on prenait de l'argent dans des *tentes bazar* ?

*(Interruptions)*

Ou au *Government House*, ici, M. le président, quand les allées et venues étaient assurées par les trafiquants de drogue !

M. le président, encore une fois, permettez-moi de féliciter le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances pour ce budget.

Mais, avant de développer les points sur le budget, M. le président, je crois que toute personne saine d'esprit, si vous me le permettez, suivant l'actualité du monde et de ce pays, est unanime à dire que le monde passe par des moments difficiles. La situation mondiale est en crise. On entend tous les jours à la radio les mots 'licenciement, crise, écroulement, récession'. L'Europe vit en temps de crise ; même l'Inde, La Chine, des pays puissants, des géants, sont aujourd'hui inquiets avec ce qui se passe dans le monde. Notre petit pays, pris en charge par ce gouvernement depuis 2005, des réformes entreprises par le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, des réformes en termes d'économie dans le pays en général, des développements du pays aujourd'hui nous permettent d'envisager l'avenir avec sérénité, de voir l'avenir avec espoir. Les membres de l'opposition ont jusqu'ici vu un pays mal géré, surtout l'honorable Li Kwong Wing ; un pays en faillite ; un pays qui se dirige directement vers le précipice ; un pays, selon certains, selon que celui que je considère 'le dépassé', qui va directement à la faillite. Si nous restons au pouvoir jusqu'à 2015, selon certains, selon 'le dépassé', le pays ira vers la faillite. Et pourtant, après l'annonce du budget, j'ai été étonné d'entendre, ici, dans cette Chambre, à la radio et à l'extérieur, ces mêmes membres de l'opposition disant que nous avons beaucoup d'argent pour distribuer à la population ! Que ce pays regorge de fonds, de centaines et de centaines de millions de roupies ! Ils reprochent au ministre des Finances, au Premier ministre et au gouvernement de ne pas donner davantage, alors que ces mêmes personnes, quelques mois, quelques semaines plus tôt disaient que ce pays va directement vers la faillite.

Avec ce budget, M. le président, nous faisons deux choses : nous modernisons ce pays. Nous allons un pas en avant avec la modernisation du pays et, en deuxième lieu, nous avons une attention particulière pour les plus faibles, les plus démunis de cette société.

J'ai été très vite sur des points sociaux pour la modernisation du pays et sur la jeunesse ; des points émis par ce gouvernement, par ce budget, M. le président. J'ai écouté les gens de l'opposition dire que soi-disant ce budget est un budget '*flop, fizet*', et même certains membres de l'opposition ridiculisant cette mesure de donner un repas chaud à 9,200 enfants de ce pays ! Les tablettes pour les élèves de la Forme IV, aux jeunes qui veulent avancer dans la vie, qui veulent réussir dans la vie ! Avec cette mesure, on va permettre à ces jeunes, ces gens qui n'ont pas les moyens de rattraper leur retard. Les R 330 millions incluses dans le budget pour la formation des jeunes et l'emploi des jeunes nous permettent d'envisager l'avenir avec sérénité et espoir, M. le président.

M. le président, l'honorable Ameer Meea avant moi faisait référence au secteur des TIC. Savez-vous que nous sommes l'un des rares pays en Afrique où presque toutes les municipalités sont pourvues du projet Wifi ? Aujourd'hui, avec la baisse de ligne Internet, avec le projet de l'*Ipad*, nous permettons à notre pays de se moderniser. Nous permettons à notre pays d'avancer. Nous misons sur cette jeunesse aujourd'hui. C'est un pari sur l'avenir de ce pays. Citez-moi une chose, une décision prise entre 2000 et 2005 qui fût un pari sur l'avenir de ce pays. Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont donné ? Le *deal* Illovo ! Passons ! Vous vous rappelez encore sûrement, M. le président, de l'affaire 'biberon SMF'...

*(Interruptions)*

...où des malheureux de Pointe aux Sables ou de la Tour Koenig manifestaient ! Des mères de familles, des jeunes filles qui se battaient pour leur avenir et pour leur quotidien ...

*(Interruptions)*

Les ouvrières ! Qu'est-ce qu'elles ont eu comme réponse ? '*SMF pas là pou donne biberon !*' Vous vous rappelez encore sûrement, M. le président, quand on voulait cibler nos pensionnés, des gens qui ont donné corps et vie pendant des années pour le développement de ce pays. Quand il n'y avait pas de crise, quand autour du monde tout se développait bien, le gouvernement MSM/MMM décidait de supprimer la pension de nos aînés; le fameux ciblage. M. le président, aujourd'hui, ils osent nous critiquer. Quelle est la croissance quand ce même gouvernement MSM/MMM, avec à leur tête, le dépassait ? Quelle est le taux de la croissance ? 1.6%, 1.7% où

1.8% ? Même pas ! Pour vous dire la différence de gestion entre ce gouvernement et le gouvernement MSM/MMM ! Aujourd'hui dans ce budget, M. le président, il ne suffit pas de se battre. Faisons un tour à travers ce pays, M. le président, et vous verrez ce qui se passe en termes de développements dans ce pays. Je ne parle pas de l'hôpital Jeetoo qui vient juste d'être rénové, je ne parle pas de nos routes, je ne parle pas de l'aéroport dernier cri ; je ne parle pas du port, je ne parle pas des infrastructures du pays. Je ne parlerai pas du *Sun Trust*. On a eu des développements dans ce pays, M. le président.

*(Interruptions)*

Ce ne sont pas seulement les gens du gouvernement qui ventent les mérites de ces développements. Un député de l'Opposition, l'honorable Obeegadoo, s'est mis debout au Parlement pour dire qu'il n'y a jamais eu autant de développements dans ce pays depuis l'indépendance. C'est un député de l'Opposition qui est venu dire cela au Parlement, M. le président.

*(Interruptions)*

Donc, vous pour dire, M. le président, si certains qualifient ces mesures que nous préconisons '*de flop, de fizet*', si donner à 9,200 enfants un repas chaud c'est du *flop*, je suis d'accord. *Okay!* Si donner des tablettes à des enfants de la Forme IV avec un pari sur l'avenir, *c'est 'fizet', okay!* Mais ce que ce gouvernement veut et ce que le Premier ministre veut, c'est d'abord faire avancer ce pays, faire développer cette petite île Maurice, sans ressources, sans pétrole, sans diamant, sans charbon.

Nous arrivons à faire ce que nous faisons aujourd'hui, M. le président, parce que nous avons un gouvernement et un Premier ministre qui a su faire les reformes qu'il fallait au bon moment.

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur le secteur énergétique. J'ai écouté l'honorable Lesjongard l'autre jour, et j'ai été étonné, surpris, sidéré de voir qu'il a changé de langage. L'honorable Lesjongard et l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition, depuis 2005, martèlent que ce pays va manquer de l'électricité dans les semaines à venir, qu'il nous faut à tout prix une centrale, et on est en 2012, M. le président. Je l'ai dit et ceux au gouvernement l'ont précisé à plusieurs reprises, que les déclarations du *Leader* de l'Opposition font peur aux investisseurs. Ce n'est pas correct de dire des choses pareilles quand un investisseur veut investir dans votre pays. Aujourd'hui, nous le voyons. Nous avons des centrales en

construction. Nous avons installé dans ce pays suffisamment pour nous permettre d'aller au-delà de 2014. Depuis longtemps on le savait. Aujourd'hui avec le discours de l'honorable Lesjongard sur le fameux projet de *CT Power*, je me demande comment ils peuvent du jour au lendemain changer de langage. Qui avait construit la centrale de CTDS dans le sud à St Aubin, la centrale 100% *coal fired*? Alors qu'on avait le moyen en 2003 de faire une centrale cogénération, on avait l'occasion de construire une centrale ...

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, permettez-moi, je m'adresse à vous pas à un canard laqué.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de préciser qu'en 2003, ils avaient l'occasion de construire une centrale cogénération. Ils ne l'ont pas fait. Ils ont fait une centrale à 100% charbon et aujourd'hui quand la demande est telle, vous êtes obligés de produire en *base load* and en *semi-base load* - c'est un peu technique, M. le président. Donc, vous n'avez pas d'autre choix que de prendre, soit le charbon, soit l'huile lourde pour le *base load* où le *semi-base load*. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, nous assurons le secteur énergétique du pays. L'honorable Lesjongard parlait malheureusement du nouveau *Chairman* du *CEB*. Je ne suis pas un défenseur du nouveau *Chairman*, mais c'est bien de rétablir certaines choses. Le nouveau *chairman* du *CEB* a travaillé pendant plus de 30 ans au *CEB*, M. le président. Et, c'est normal, après 30 ans, qu'il ait droit à une pension. Mais ce que l'honorable Lesjongard ne dit pas, c'est que juste avant qu'on prenne le pouvoir en 2005, il y avait un certain Mons. Jean-Mée Desveaux au *CEB*. Mons. Desveaux n'était pas le *Chairman* du *CEB*, mais agissait comme tel entre 2000 à 2005, il siégeait sur au moins douze *Board* et avait un salaire combiné autour de R 300,000 par mois.

*(Interruptions)*

Ce n'est pas l'argent du contribuable? Ce n'est pas l'argent du peuple? Qui avait nommé ces gens là-bas?

M. le président, je terminerai en disant que des fois on se pose des questions. Est-ce que les gens de l'Opposition, les honorables membres qui s'adressent à cette Chambre - à ma droite - vivent dans ce pays, M. le président? Est-ce qu'ils sont conscients du développement qui se passe dans ce pays? Est-ce qu'ils se posent des questions combien de fois ils ont renvoyé les élections?

*(Interruptions)*

Combien de fois? Trois fois!



**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should follow my ruling. No question about the Municipal elections!

**Mr Assirvaden:** M. le président, quoi qu'il en soit, c'est la vérité que j'ai dit. M. le président, je crois que nous avons la responsabilité de continuer d'amener le développement dans tous les secteurs de ce pays. Nous avons la responsabilité non seulement parce que nous avons un mandat clair, un mandat pour diriger ce pays, mais nous avons la responsabilité d'aller vers le développement parce que nous avons la confiance du peuple.

M. le président, ces vendeurs de rêve qui promettent aux gens qui sont dépassés par les événements partout - malheureusement je dois le dire ainsi, M. le président, je n'ai pas envie d'être méchant mais ces vendeurs de rêve essayent par tous les moyens de faire bloquer les développements du pays.

On a vu, M. le président, le mot à la mode : scandale. C'est un mot qui est utilisé aujourd'hui simplement pour essayer de vendre aux gens une conception mauvaise des choses. Mais quand les vrais scandales éclatent, ici, dans cette auguste Assemblée, devant vous, M. le président, des choses troubles, des choses terribles remontent à la surface, pas simplement sur l'affaire de bois de rose, pas simplement sur l'affaire de Medpoint, pas simplement sur l'affaire de CTDS mais sur beaucoup d'autres et cette campagne des membres de l'Opposition pour faire croire que rien ne va dans ce pays, que rien ne va dans cette petite île Maurice alors que le peuple voit le développement au quotidien, alors que le peuple voit ce qui se passe dans ce pays. M. le président, le MMM et le MSM paieront très cher cette campagne le 09 décembre.

Merci, M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** The Deputy Speaker will take the Chair.

*At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*

(3.05 p.m.)

**Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):** M. le président, il y a des années de cela alors que je n'étais qu'un avocat fraîchement débarqué de Londres, un ténor du barreau mauricien me parla de ces gens qui parlent pour ne rien dire, de ces gens qui, pour être sûr d'avoir tout dit, se contredisent, ces gens remplis de paradoxe. Cet homme était Sir Gaëtan Duval et j'étais loin de me douter qu'un jour ces propos s'appliqueraient à son fils, le ministre des finances. En effet, M. le président, le budget que vient de nous présenter le ministre des finances est rempli de contradictions. Il se veut de relance mais ne contient aucune

mesure qui augure des jours meilleurs. Il se veut social, mais une fois de plus ce sont les consommateurs qui financeront en grande partie les dépenses budgétaires. Il se veut équitable mais en vérité il contribuera à agrandir le fossé entre riches et pauvres.

Et, aujourd'hui, le ministre des finances est un homme bien seul. L'expert comptable qu'il est, sait, au fond de lui, qu'il a raté son grand oral. Il n'a qu'à lire les articles de presse et je précise, toutes presses confondues, indépendantes et partisans. Même le très conservateur '*Mauritius Times*' dans son édition de vendredi dernier titrait '*Budget 2013 : Thinking Small*'. '*Mauritius Times*', on ne peut pas dire que ce n'est pas un journal pro-travailliste. '*Mauritius Times*', '*Budget 2013 : Thinking Small*'. Rejoignant ainsi l'édition spécial Budget 2013 de '*L'Express*' qui titrait lui : '*Budget sans grandes ambitions*'. Quant à '*L'Express Dimanche*', il a compilé tout un dossier sur le thème – '*Pourquoi Xavier Duval déçoit-il tant*'.

Et que dire de ses amis du secteur privé ! Malgré les cadeaux qu'il leur a fait, comme à son accoutumée, et j'y reviendrai plus tard au cours de mon discours, ils se plaignent d'un budget sans vision, sans mordant, sans lustre. Un budget terne et ennuyeux. Tant et si bien qu'on parle déjà de remaniement ministériel dans certains milieux. Les noms de certains prétendants sont cités avec insistance dans les couloirs du pouvoir.

Le ministre sait pertinemment qu'il doit son portefeuille de ministre des finances au seul fait qu'il y a aujourd'hui quatre élus du PMSD au Parlement. Il peut faire chuter ce gouvernement à n'importe quel moment. Mais les données vont bientôt changer avec la raclée que ce gouvernement obtiendra lors des prochaines élections municipales.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, expectations were high. Having failed to use most of the funds set aside in last year's budget for capital projects, the Minister had sufficient leeway to ease the daily suffering of the population and stimulate the economy. He did neither.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people are suffering in this country; they are struggling to make ends meet. In these difficult times, a caring Government would have afforded sufficient protection to the most vulnerable members of the society against the inordinate rise in the cost of living and we all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the inflation rate applicable to the household budget and, in particular, to the budget of pensioners and disabled people who need special care and attention is much more than the national 4.3% increase that is being proposed.

A poor Rs144 increase per year; *R 144, même pas R 4 par jour*. They can't even buy a pair of *doll puri* with this and I am shocked - and the word is not too strong – to see how

passionately hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing was defending the decision not to increase this meagre pension. What is wrong with what hon. Li Kwong Wing said? He was only making the point that these *malheureux R 4* will not be enough because by the time all these pensioners receive this meagre increase of Rs4 a day, the price will have gone even higher and therefore they needed to be compensated more. Why did he say so? He said so because we, on this side of the House, care. We care about old people; we care about pensioners; we care about the handicapped and people suffering from disabilities and we know because we hear it every day, when we meet people this *malheureux R 4* is not sufficient. Instead, what did hon. Ms Deerpalsing say? She said, I quote -

“What kind of dishonesty is this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, never ever in this country or anywhere else has any Government given compensation based on next year’s figures.”

She is not only an expert in Mauritius, but worldwide!

She continues -

“Mr Speaker, Sir, what kind of dishonesty is this? Total dishonesty! This is totally false. Ce qui m’inquiète, M. le président, c’est qu’un tel discours - comme je vous l’ai dit tout à l’heure - a une répercussion sur la population; mais oubliez la population, internationalement *it is completely misleading* ».

This is what this hon. Member said: total dishonesty, totally misleading; making personal attack on hon. Li Kwong Wing, challenging his capacity, his competence as an Economist. The very same Li Kwong Wing, he is a laureate, graduated from LSE, was Adviser to Ministers of Finance in the 80’s, someone who no one in this House has the qualifications. And she dares attack hon. Li Kwong Wing! And now let me remind the hon. Member what the Government has done in the past in this country. I am not talking about Canada; I am talking about Mauritius. In 1988, there was the Chesworth Report, just like today we have the PRB Report and the Errors and Omissions Report. In 1988, the inflation rate was 1.5% for the financial year 1987/88. However, following tripartite discussions, it was agreed that the rate of inflation for the following year, that is, financial year 1988/89 would be in the region of 15%. And what did the Government then do? It granted a salary compensation of 15% to the lowest group! And this is what the then hon. Minister of Finance had said –

“This time the Government has decided to sanction the payment of salary compensation in advance in order to provide adequate protection to the workers in the face of this inordinate rise in the cost of living”.

Now, who has been talking nonsense? Now, who should go and apologise for having misled this House, for having used words like ‘dishonesty’? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as goes the saying, sometimes it’s better to stay quiet and look dumb than open your mouth and confirm it: ‘A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.’

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would not use the words ‘dishonesty’, ‘intellectual dishonesty’ or any other remarks which were levelled against hon. Member Li Kwong Wing when I am going to refer to what hon. Xavier-Luc Duval said. What did he say in his Budget, at paragraph 354? I quote -

“Today, I am pleased to report that we have implemented 91 percent of the measures and policies announced last year.”

91%! I am going to use only one example. He is an expert Accountant; I am not. He knows figures better than me. Maybe he can explain to me how is it that, in his own Budget, at Appendix C, Special and Extra Budgetary Funds, he sets out all the Special and Extra Budgetary Funds which he has created or which he has inherited, then indicates how much money he has received in those funds and how much he has spent? The result is quite surprising. Out of a total of over Rs23 billion of receipt only Rs10 billion have been spent. Less than 45%! And he is talking about 91% of measures which have been implemented! In his figures for capital special funds, he has not even been able to use 50%. When you look at, for example, Food Security Fund where the budget was for Rs1.1 billion, only a sum of Rs118 m. was used. Only 10% and not 91%; the rest was not used. The same thing - and this is the most shocking - for Social Housing Development Fund, Rs2.3 billion was set aside for this Fund to create houses for those who need it. Out of it, how much has been used? Rs35 m. only - 1.5% only - and the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is talking about 91%. Forget about social housing, they don’t care about the poor; they don’t care about the homeless.

Let’s talk about what they care: Resilience Fund to help SMEs and the private sector. Even there, they had budgeted Rs9.8 billion in the National Resilience Fund. How much did they spend? Only Rs2.8 billion, less than 30%, and this hon. Minister of Finance comes to this

House and tells you that 91% of the measures he had intended to take has been completed! Then, why do a budget? Why budget for Rs23 billion and only spend Rs10 billion?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the big problems of this country is that the Government is completely cut off from the plight of the general population. We were talking about unemployment rates. We know it is a problem, especially among the youth of this country. On the day when hon. Ganoo obtained the reply to his question about the number of people who lost their jobs since the introduction of the Employment Rights Act, it was announced that more than 18,000 jobs had been lost. Instead of the Minister of Finance coming and saying that this is alarming and that he will take measures and finally implemented what he had been saying for weeks and months he was going to change the law, instead of saying that, what did he say? "*Rien de dramatique.*" Nothing dramatic! 18,000 people lose their jobs, this is not dramatic! What is it that this Government has as solution to the problem of unemployment? Nothing!

I remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I was a young boy, in the late seventies and early eighties, when the then Labour Government was desperately clinging to power, thanks to some *transfuges*, very much like what we have today, there was a widespread *engouement* to migrate. People wanted to leave Mauritius. Our elites were leaving for Australia and Europe. How many young men and women, people we know, people who are relatives of ours, went to migrate to Europe, to France, to England, took up jobs as nurses, stayed there, and did not come back? How many people we know, left for the Middle East to work as manual workers and as maids? That was back in the late seventies and early eighties.

Then came 1982, then came the MMM/PSM Government. The Labour Government was kicked out of power by the population and then followed an era of prosperity. It started with the bold and daunting measures taken by the then Minister of Finance, hon. Paul Bérenger, and continued under the Prime Ministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. The brain drain was contained. Our youth came back after their studies and worked. The country prospered. There was a feel good factor. Who has forgotten about the famous phrase coined by Sir Gaëtan Duval '*Solange, amène mo diary*', referring to how busy stonemasons were in Mauritius? That was the era of prosperity in the eighties. What do we have today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Solange does not even have the means to buy a diary!

This Government has brought us back to where we were three decades ago and it will take the leadership of hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger and Sir Anerood Jugnauth to bring back

this country to prosperity. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the truth hurts. According to a survey carried out by the well-respected Moriscopie, the majority of Mauritians wants to migrate. 84% of people interviewed in the age group of 18 to 24 thought that they would be better off elsewhere. 84% of our children think that they would be better off out of Mauritius. Commenting on the survey, the Director of Moriscopie, Brigitte Mason stated, and I quote -

*«Ces chiffres sont alarmants parce qu'ils montrent une désolidarisation à l'égard de l'avenir de son pays, une sorte de sauve-qui-peut qui laisse croire que quoiqu'il arrive, on sera de toute façon mieux ailleurs. Ce qui n'est pas tout à fait faux quand on pense aux difficultés qu'ont les jeunes couples pour démarrer dans la vie. Les loyers sont hors de prix et les prix de vente de l'immobilier à atteint des sommets hors de portée du Mauricien moyen, et même des jeunes cadres.»*

This is not MMM. This is not MSM. This is not the Opposition. This is objectivity: Brigitte Mason from the firm of Moriscopie commenting why our youth do not have a feel good factor, why they want to migrate.

Will this Budget remedy the situation? I very much doubt it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The truth is that this Government's main policy to fight unemployment among the youth is simply to encourage them to migrate. The rest is cosmetics. The Budget is providing funds to train our unemployed youngsters. Yes, I concede this. This is good. We have to train them, but for what? To work in Mauritius? No! To get a job in Mauritius? No! Because if it wanted to get jobs created in Mauritius, this Budget should have come up with measures to stimulate growth, to create jobs, which it did not do.

The plan is to train our youth so that they can find a job elsewhere.

Some Ministers are even taking pride in this policy. A few months ago, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - unfortunately, my friend, hon. Minister Mohamed is not in the House - I was flabbergasted to come across an advert on Facebook. It had a picture of hon. Shakeel Mohamed, the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment and it read -

“Anyone interested in finding a job in Canada. Click “Like” and send me your contact details.”

When you click “Like”, what do you get? You go onto the website of the hon. Minister on Facebook. Now in order to get a job in Canada, you need to like the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment! At least, hon. Khamajeet only required you to be a

member of the Labour Party to get a job! He did not require you to 'Like' him first! *Folie des grandeurs!* In the meantime, parents watch helplessly as their children start migrating. Families are broken. Wives and children are left behind. Is this the kind of Mauritius that we want? Is this the kind of Mauritius we fought for during independence? We wanted to be the Singapore of Africa. This Government is turning us into the Philippines of Africa. We wanted to roar like lions and tigers. This Government is turning us into *oiseaux migrants*. But mother Mauritius is generous. Mother Mauritius is resourceful. Mother Mauritius is able to feed her children. If only this Government would believe in our *fils du sol*. If only this Government could get rid of its complex of inferiority vis-à-vis other nations. If only this Government could start trusting our own local competence and we do have the competence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mauritians shine everywhere in the world! All we want is just to be given a fair chance in our own country to put our skills to serve our nation. Why do we need to enlist the services of foreign lawyers to advise and represent Government when the Commonwealth Secretariat - and I see the hon. Attorney General, here, he can confirm it - in England regularly seeks assistance from our local lawyers who are very competent, who are senior counsels? Why do we need each time to go after English lawyers to represent us and to get advice on everything, on anything? Aren't we capable of appearing before the Privy Council? Why such complex of inferiority? Aren't we capable ourselves of determining what type of electoral system we want? Why do we need experts all around? Why give Singaporean big juicy contracts to do everything and nothing? Don't we have qualified engineers in this country? Do we really need Singapore expertise to tell us how to conduct survey for the purpose of national ID card?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having lost its elites not, those not coming home after their studies, after watching helplessly the brain drain of its intellectuals and working class, now this Government is encouraging our children to migrate. Soon, we won't have mechanics in this country. We won't have nurses. They will all be migrating to Canada and other horizons where the grass looks greener, where they feel that they could get a better chance. I hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Government will get a wake-up call and start thinking about our youths.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now turn to food security which the hon. Minister referred to, *en passant*, when he was dealing with agriculture. In fact, I am appalled to see the lightness with which such an important and vital issue has been dealt with. I mentioned earlier that out of Rs1.1billion received by the Food Security Fund, only Rs118 m. has been spent. Only 10%!

The amount of money, in terms of foreign currency, spent on the import of consumable goods: meat, fish, vegetables, the rising cost of imported basic commodities, the huge trade deficit, the insecurity of markets, all point towards the seriousness and urgency of the situation. But for the hon. Minister of Finance to ensure food security one only has to ensure that the land in Mauritius is used properly, distributed. For the hon. Minister, food security is limited to providing reduction in cost of fertilisers, to distribute some sums of money to farmers here and there. I will not talk about fishing industry or aquaculture. Our lagoon is still waiting to be replenished.

We were expecting, instead, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the hon. Minister would come and tell us what measures he was proposing in order to prevent land speculation; the conversion of arable agricultural land into residential land. What additional incentives he will be providing to those who wish to keep the land for food production? Pulses, vegetables, tax incentives! How is he going to ensure that adequate and affordable water is made available for the purpose of land irrigation for production? How much money is being invested into research and development that is relevant to farmers? How is he envisaging the soil and water management, the marketing of the produce of the small planters and its storage in cases of overproduction or for later use or to regulate local markets, the mechanisation that can be introduced? None of these questions, however, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have been considered important enough to be addressed by the hon. Minister in his Budget speech.

A couple of years ago, in the context of regional integration, land were made available to Mauritian farmers in Mozambique. It was considered to be one of the biggest opportunities afforded to us for food production in particular to ensure food security, not only for us in Mauritius, but also for some of the neighbouring African countries. No reference to this project has been made in this Budget or in this House recently. In the context of food security, the Budget too is silent on any land which Africa can offer to us so that we can be secured. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is the use of talking about food security, about pretending that we are doing things to address the problem of food security, to encourage people to use agricultural land when, at the same time, you go and introduce a measure to waive the Land Conversion Tax? Another gift to the fat cats! Unfortunately, hon. Dr. A. Boolell is not in the House. I would very much want to know what he feels about this, having been a Minister of Agriculture and having spent time with the small planters. The hon. Minister is going now to encourage huge agricultural land owners to convert arable land into golf courses. And, we know in this country,



to maintain golf courses, how much water you need! We are talking about food security and then, we are asking people not to plant, but to use their land for the construction of golf courses. Is this how we are going to promote the cane industry? Is this how we will create ethanol as a substitute to fossil fuel? Hon. Assirvaden was just talking about energy security. We need cane to get bagasse. We need cane, we need to plant it. To plant it, we need agricultural land. If we don't have agricultural land, if our lands are being converted into grass, how are we going to get the bagasse? How does this Government intend to achieve energy security when it is itself encouraging owners of agricultural land to convert it by waiving the land conversion tax?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in respect to gambling, this Government has encouraged us to become a nation of gamblers. We spend our time and our hard-earned money scratching - *résultat lor résultat* changing to 'scratches to scratches' and dreaming of LOTO and dreaming of becoming millionaires instead of working hard to earn a living. Now we hope by scratching we will become millionaires. Money that would otherwise go into the family budget is now going down the drain and families are becoming poorer. For one millionaire there are in their household thousands of those people who are becoming poor and destitute. This gambling mentality must be reversed, but this potentially dangerous situation does not seem to affect unduly our Minister of Finance. Not even a passing remark that should go down discouraging this mentality. Instead what is the hon. Minister proposing? The hon. Minister is going to move gambling houses to shopping centres.

We all know shopping malls are the places that most young people visit. School children go to shopping malls during vacation. During the weekends, families, mothers, fathers and children go to shopping malls. Now, this government is bringing casino to the people. This is simply unacceptable, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing boasted that she has been able to take out 'Ti Vegas' of Saint Jean, without mentioning who were the ones who gave the licence to 'Ti Vegas' in the first place. Today, she does not say one single word when this government is going to take 'Ti Vegas' to the shopping malls.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while listening to hon. Minister Dayal this morning, I could not help wondering how ignorant Members of this House are of their own history. This Budget is probably one of the least social justice inspired Budgets. He stated: 'give us a single example of what the MMM did when they were in power.' I will tell you what hon. Paul Bérenger and Sir Anerood Jugnauth did when they were in power. In 1982: a country bankrupt, on its knees after

Labour Government has clung to power. IMF, World Bank were pressurising government to abolish free education, to remove subsidies here and there. And, in this dire time, what did Sir Anerood Jugnauth and Paul Bérenger do? At this time, when there was record unemployment rate among the youth, in spite of the empty coffers inherited, do you know what that Government did? They introduced unemployment benefit. Unemployment benefit was given in 1982. They should know their history. We are caring on this side of this House. We care for the unemployed, we care for the poor. That is why, when we talk, we talk passionately, and that is why we are revolted when we see this Government giving a meagre Rs4 a day to our pensioners and bragging about it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is in these dire conditions that you recognise a genuine, caring or compassionate government, and not when the coffers are full. Yet, the Minister of Finance decides to pick and choose between poor primary school going children; those of ZEP and those of non-ZEP schools. I am, of course, referring to the provision of a hot meal daily to children attending ZEP schools. Of course, we are in favour of giving a hot meal to children. We have been advocating it; it is in our programme. Last year, in my speech on the Budget, I made an appeal to the hon. Minister of Education on the same point, that is, to give a free hot meal to every child attending primary school in this country. But still, why this difference between ZEP and non-ZEP schools? I take the example of my constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have one ZEP school in the region of Tranquebar, which is called Guy Rozemont Government School. Most of the people living around Tranquebar - I am talking about those poor people living around Tranquebar - don't send their children to the ZEP schools. Instead, they go to the star schools like De la Salle, Labourdonnais or Raoul Rivet because they want to have a better education.

So, now, these poor children, just because they are from non-ZEP schools, won't be entitled to a hot meal. What type of discrimination is this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I really hope that one of these children's parents go to the Equal Opportunities Commission and make a complaint that they are being discriminated against. There is no justification for such discrimination. All children are the same. You should give every child the same right to a hot meal in this country, and the government has the means to do it. The coffers are full. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is still time to correct this injustice, and I am appealing to the hon. Minister to come up with such an amendment when he is going to sum up.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now come to child benefit to poor families who qualify for it; the benefit that has been increased to Rs750 per child per month. Paragraph 293 of the Budget Speech reads as follows –

“As from now, child benefits will only be paid to families who send their children regularly to school. An attendance rate of less than 90 percent for two months running without medical certificate will be sanctioned by withdrawal of benefits.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, absenteeism in schools for flimsy reasons should be discouraged. But this measure, meant to provide a check on it, is utterly unacceptable. You cannot penalise children this way. Primary schooling has been rendered compulsory quite a few years ago now, and the law provides that parents found guilty of deliberately encouraging their child not to go to school and to stay at home are guilty of an offence and liable to a fine, and even to imprisonment. The law is already severe. Parents who do not send their children of age to school can be prosecuted. Why now sanction them twice? Why now sentence them to jail, and then deprive their child of this meagre Rs750 benefit?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, going through the Budget Speech that deals with social housing, I have not stopped wondering whether the government has indeed a coherent social housing policy and, most importantly, who is responsible for its implementation. If it does have one, what is it meant to cover? Are they the families living in extreme poverty, *dans la misère et le dénouement total*? Are they those families drawing a monthly maximum salary of Rs6,200, a figure quoted elsewhere in the Budget? Are they those low middle-class families owning a plot of land but unable to raise funds to obtain bank loans to build their houses? Who are the beneficiaries of social housing? Does this Government have a coherent plan as far as social housing is concerned? Which Ministry, which agency is responsible for the implementation of the social housing policy of this Government? Is it the Ministry of Housing and Lands? Is it the Ministry of Social Integration? Is it the National Empowerment Foundation, is it the Housing Development Trust, or is it the NHDC? What's the idea behind having so many different agencies for the implementation of social housing schemes? Is it a matter of each group having to protect its own mountain? *Chacun protez so montagne*? What is the role of the private sector in all that? Is it only to organise social events, to have pictures taken with Ministers to show that the private sector has constructed a house?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the provision of proper housing with an adequate living surface for the poor families is one of the foremost responsibilities of any government, as housing may be considered as one of the most fundamental rights of an individual and his family. Poverty can never be eradicated if people, families continue to live in shanty towns like Tranquebar, Karo Kalyptis, to quote it as an illustration, in sheds or *longères*, or stable-like structures, unfit even for animals.

The Government must have a short, medium and long terms programme to do away with such types of sheds, where promiscuity and all its attendant problems prevail and where human beings especially children are made to live in squalid conditions, often victims of the vagaries of the weather.

The Minister of Finance should have shown, in his Budget, determination to solve the housing problem of the most vulnerable families of our society, which is a major social problem across the country. It should be clear to everybody, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, starting with the hon. Minister himself, that there should have been only one institution to act as the coordinator, as the apex body responsible for all projects and schemes regarding social housing and that institution can only be the Ministry of Housing. It should also be clear that the housing problem, even the social housing problem, cannot be solved from CSR Fund, cannot be solved by NGOs or by the public sector companies in search of publicity in return for their compassion. The responsibility lies with Government while the private sector, through CSR, can only be a modest source of funding. The CSR Fund cannot be depended upon for middle and long terms housing projects as you can never know whether the current business year of a given firm will be the same for another year - *un financement à travers le CSR est très aléatoire*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the last point that I would like to talk about is Africa. At long last, the Government, through the Minister of Finance, has come to realise that Africa is witnessing the dawn of a new era and Mauritius ought to have what the Minister calls 'our new comprehensive strategy on Africa'. The Minister reminds me of the mood swings in relation to Africa. A few years ago, it was afro-pessimism and even the serious and respected magazine 'The Economist' wrote off Africa, describing it as "the hopeless continent" while, last year, the very same magazine 'The Economist' ran with a very different cover headline: "Africa rising - the hopeful continent!" Like so many reports now favourable to Africa, the Finance Minister too

has come to realise the existence of an Africa with growth opportunities for investors, a dynamic African consumer market and a rising middle class.

What is the hon. Minister of Finance proposing? To make Mauritius the gateway for Africa? Last year, the hon. Minister of Finance, in his Budget Speech, announced the appointment of two roving ambassadors. In a Parliamentary Question, we found out who were the two roving ambassadors, whereas in respect of one of them, I have no qualms because he has a long experience of staying, living and working in Africa. The second political nominee has absolutely no track record in Africa. Her only qualification is being close to the Labour Party. Now that the two roving ambassadors have been appointed, what is their budget? What is their role? Where are their offices? I spoke to one of them and he said to me: 'I am still an orphan, I am still waiting. Maybe in this Budget, I will have a proper office; maybe in this Budget, I will have a proper staff.' Is this how, we, in Mauritius, go about promoting Mauritius as a gateway to Africa? Today, in his Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance no longer talks about ambassador. No new ambassador! Instead what is he saying in his Budget? He proposes to appoint Honorary Consuls. No Ambassador. No roving Ambassador. No new embassies in Africa instead Honorary Consuls and why is he doing so, and I quote - because this is shocking:

'They provide excellent service at no cost to Government.'

This is how you're going to be the gateway to Africa: penny-wise and pound-foolish; relying on foreigners to act as our Honorary Consul where we should have been investing massively and opening Embassies. I am glad the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs is here to listen to what I am saying. We need to have a coherent plan for Africa and implement it. We can talk all we want about Africa, but today Africans do not know Mauritius. Today the professionals in Africa don't know how they can benefit from Mauritius like India has benefited from investment coming through Mauritius. Similarly, African nations can benefit from investment being routed through Mauritius. It is not by having Honorary Consuls that we are going to implement this. We need strong coherent decisive policies. We need to identify markets. We need to go there aggressively like we did in the 90s when we opened our offshore sector and we targeted India.

What is more shocking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I will end on this. Let us see what the Minister sees as our responsibility towards Africa: sharing our experience on democracy, governance and development. I can understand that we have something to show, to share regarding socio economic development of our country, although our neoliberal economy

approach leaves a large section of the population by the side of the road and this is not probably what is desirable for most emerging African countries. I can understand our contribution for socio economic policies, but when it comes to sharing our experience on democracy and governance, I begin to wonder whether the Minister realises what he is talking about at a time where multi-party democracy has now been firmly established across Africa. True it is that there are still several countries on the African continent where there is need for improved democracy and where, for example, Presidents have been in office longer than might be seen as healthy in a functioning democracy. What are we going to offer to these countries in terms of democracy and governance? A political system where the Head of Government can stay in power for an indefinite number of terms; an electoral system which creates lopsided Parliament after each election with sometimes only a symbolic presence of the Opposition and where women are grossly under-represented; a democracy where institutions are perverted, where cronyism is the order of the day, where meritocracy is flouted and where the only qualification required is the ability to be an excellent *lèche-bottes* with the result that the country stinks of corruption, *passé-droit* and nepotism; where some leaders use their office in the pursuit of private gain rather than public good; where ministerial offices are used as marketplace to corrupt voters and sometimes to ferment conspiracy against opposition party MPs. Is this the experience that we want to share with the African countries? I am sure if this is what we want to share with them, they can teach us a lesson or two about governance and democracy. Are we going to tell these African countries, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how to go about good governance? Are we going to tell them: you know when you negotiate big juicy contracts, go and sign a confidentiality agreement; go and sign a nondisclosure agreement so that if the Opposition starts questioning you, starts making you accountable for public funds, you can turn around and say: 'I am bound by confidentiality; do it not only once, do it twice and become a serial repeater in opacity'. This Government did it with Jin Fei contract and did it again when it came to ID cards. Is this how Mauritius is going to teach Africa about governance when we, ourselves, in Mauritius, live in opacity; when we ourselves can't take the criticisms of the audit bureau and want to close it instead of taking the lessons and becoming more transparent?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in two weeks' time, the people of the towns and cities of this country will get the chance to sanction this Budget and after the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, you will see what will happen to this Government.

Thank you.

(3.49 p.m.)

**The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was just listening to hon. Uteem making his speech. He was speaking about the leadership of SAJ and Bérenger. Something was cropping into my mind listening to that leadership and I was just thinking of what happened in the eighties under the leadership of SAJ. Maybe the hon. Member was very young at that time and was not aware. But, let me inform the hon. Member that, at that time, the then Government *Bleu/Blanc/Rouge*, together with Sir Gaëtan Duval and Sir Satcam Boolell, decided to decentralise the EPZ textile industries, because Government wanted to create jobs at the doorstep of people and the only promising sector at that time was EPZ. That was the time that Sir Gaëtan Duval was calling for ‘*Solange, amene mo diary*’; it was the construction sector and the EPZ which employment providers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what did the then Government decided at that time, when trying to see where these factories would be implemented? It was first said under the leadership of SAJ: ‘Don’t take EPZ factories in Plaine Verte! Out for Plaine Verte!’ I am speaking about that just to make hon. Uteem think about...

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, I was a Minister at that time, but I was not the Prime Minister. The leadership was not in my hands.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry! Hon. Uteem, when you were intervening nobody interrupted you. So, please return the courtesy.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that was the truth. And also, at the same time, the then Government, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister, after Plaine Verte said : ‘Don’t bring textile factories and give employment in Rose Hill, because we did not have votes from these people.’

*(Interruptions)*

*J’étais parti prenante, oui ; j’ai été aussi ministre à cette époque*, but I was not the leader. If I was a leader at that time, I would not have done that, because being Minister of Women’s Affairs

at that time, I had no say in the decentralisation programme. So, don't come and speak today of SAJ leadership. People are waiting for the remake of 2000...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** No interruptions, please! Hon. Baloomoody!

**Mrs Bappoo:** And now you speak about the leadership of SAJ and Bérenger again to create employment - when you yourself MMM, you spoke about *état d'urgence économique*. Now you are going to come back and create employment! Don't fool people by these sorts of statements.

Secondly, I think there is misunderstanding about the child allowance of Rs750. I am going to clarify this, because we are neither penalising parents nor children. Child allowance will stay as it is, but this is creating an incentive for children not to be absent from school, instead of only penalising parents.

Also, for social housing scheme, the question is being put: who is responsible for housing scheme, Ministry of Social Integration, Ministry of Finance, NHDC or Ministry of Housing? I will also explain about what has been the Government policy for social programme on housing scheme when I come to my speech.

M. le président, je voudrais dire que la présentation d'un budget est un évènement important dans la vie économique d'un pays. Il contient d'importantes mesures qui ont une incidence certaine sur les secteurs économiques et la vie sociale des mauriciens. Finalement, un budget touche directement à la vie de chaque mauricien/mauricienne de n'importe quelle couche sociale où il/elle est issu.

M. le président, j'ai été là depuis le début des débats et j'ai pris la peine de les suivre jusqu'à fort tard. La façon dont l'Opposition traite le budget ressemble à une démarche totalement absurde. Soit cette démarche révèle de la frivolité de l'Opposition - parce qu'elle parle d'un budget frivole - ou révèle de l'enfantillage ; elle veut en même temps banaliser les débats budgétaires, ce qui constitue pour elle un manque de respect envers cette institution qu'est l'Assemblée nationale.

Si nous suivons bien les débats de la Chambre, on va se rappeler que bien souvent vous entendez les membres de l'Opposition qui crient à haute voix, qui hurlent et qui disent : « on est payé des fonds publics, on est là pour servir le pays ; donc, il faut poser des questions ». Mais aujourd'hui que voit-on ?



*(Interruptions)*

Oui, absentéisme, comme dit l'honorable Stéphanie Anquetil.

*(Interruptions)*

De plus, même le public est étonné de ce qui se passe au sein de l'Opposition. L'analyse a paru même dans 'Le Mauricien' du samedi 17 novembre 2012, sous le titre : "Les débats budgétaires au second plan."

*(Interruptions)*

C'est mis au second plan. Non, non, non, il fait son travail. Le budget doit être présenté au Parlement en décembre de chaque année, cela a été présenté. Il n'y a pas de premier plan et de second plan. Le budget est prioritaire, mais vous, vous vous êtes enfouis de ce Parlement...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Minister, I am sorry! I advised hon. Baloomoody not to interrupt the Minister.

*(Interruptions)*

There is no discussion, there is no argument! I am simply requesting the hon. Member not to interrupt.

*(Interruptions)*

I have talked to both sides. I am talking to him at the moment. Hon. Baloomoody, please!

**Mrs Bappoo:** M. le président, je parlais de cet absentéisme et même ils ne font que désertier l'hémicycle - naturellement pour des activités politiques, pour faire campagne - en demandant à leurs activistes de cesser de faire des palabres, mais venez voter en masse, il faut gagner les élections. Mais non, M. le président, ce n'est pas cela, c'est la panique. Ils reconnaissent la force du gouvernement sur le terrain. C'est pourquoi cet absentéisme. Nous aussi nous avons à faire face aux élections municipales ; cela se passe en décembre, nous avons le budget, nous avons la campagne, mais on n'est pas là pour causer ce manque de respect à notre Assemblée nationale. M. le président, je dis tout simplement, au nom du gouvernement, attendons voir le 09 et 10 décembre, et on saura.

*(Interruptions)*

Correction à qui ? Vous allez voir ! Correction, vous l'avez déjà eu dans les cinq municipalités en 2005 ! Vous avez été déjà mis *out* des municipalités, des cinq mairies, ce sera encore la même chose cette année.

M. le président, aujourd'hui, cette manœuvre est soumise, bien sûr, à des variations. L'Opposition - comme je l'ai dit, ils sont rusés, ils ne font pas de *walk-out* mais désertent au compte-goutte. Vers 9.00 p.m., 9.30 p.m. 10.00 p.m., les bancs sont vides. M. le président. A l'heure de la consolidation de la démocratie gouvernance, l'Opposition se livre vraiment et lamentablement dans des calculs politiques au lieu de se concentrer sur les grands enjeux économiques. Ce n'est que purement des calculs politiques.

M. le président, permettez-moi de rappeler que tous les exercices budgétaires, depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir du Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, et de ses gouvernements successifs, révèlent sans conteste de sa vision axée sur l'installation d'une société juste, prospère, moderne et inclusive au sein de laquelle des opportunités sont données à chaque citoyen Mauricien pour qu'il puisse développer son potentiel. Ce n'est pas seulement l'Opposition qui est sensible à l'égard des pensionnaires, des personnes âgées et des personnes handicapées, nous avons aussi cette sensibilité. Donc, ne venez pas faire des mathématiques pour nous dire quatre roupies par jour. Allez demander aux personnes âgées ! En sus de leur pension de décembre, elles auront leur bonus et là-dessus leur 4.3% augmentation en janvier 2013.

*(Interruptions)*

Elles ne viennent pas se plaindre pour dire : 'Ah, quatre roupies par jour ! Que des miettes ! On n'a rien !'

M. le président, les différents budgets, depuis ces dernières années, ont toujours favorisé la mise en œuvre d'une pléiade de mesures de réformes liées à une politique de prudence fiscale, la consolidation de notre développement social et économique tout en protégeant les groupes les plus vulnérables de notre société. Mais les plus récentes crises financières de la zone euro ont contraint le gouvernement à mettre en place des mesures additionnelles visant à augmenter la résilience de notre économie face aux chocs extérieurs et à maintenir à distance ces menaces et aussi, à ajuster notre politique aux nouvelles situations mondiales causées par la récession et l'austérité en Europe, notamment la Grèce, l'Espagne, l'Italie, la France et ailleurs où déjà dans ces pays la croissance est stoppée.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 1996 and after the 2005 Election, the Prime Minister took the first steps towards securing a better life for our people by planned economic development because we want to bring hope to many. And this is our action. We want to improve the quality of life of our people. The Prime Minister's move added a new element of certainty in his

*programme gouvernemental*, in the Presidential Address where our motto was “Putting People First”. That lays the foundation to give a fair share to the people in the development process. How many criticisms have we not heard about that motto “Putting People First”, *de la bouffonnerie contre le gouvernement en disant “Putting People First”*? But you go and ask people outside, and they will give you the exact reply about their own life today.

After his first mandate, the country bristled with difficulties. Economic growth went down at its lowest from 9.3% in 2000 to only 2.2% in 2005, public debts at its highest level to the amount of Rs118 billion compared to Rs56.7 billion in the year 2000; cuts in the old age pension was enforced on our elders and inflation was at its high level. The then Prime Minister even stated four months before the general election, that is, the then Prime Minister in 2005, said

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*“La situation est dramatique et sans précédent. Le pays est en état d’urgence économique”.*

It is there in Hansard. We are not just bluffing.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the country faced numerous problems requiring urgent action. The MMM/MSM Government from 2000 to 2005 failed to develop a strategy of economic and social development which resulted à *“une situation de catastrophe”*. *Ce gouvernement de 2000 à 2005 avait failli lamentablement, pour paraphraser celui qui avait été le premier des bancs de l’Opposition à donner la réplique sur les propositions budgétaires de 2013*. With the advent of the new Government led by the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, in 2005, the strategy of economic development assigned a prominent role for the rapid expansion of industries, economic growth, FDI, the upgrading and the modernisation of the infrastructure and a higher stage of economic and social development. It also imposes an obligation to construct and manage public sector enterprises for further investments. And in our mixed economy, private enterprises have also flourished and have received help and support from Government through the stimulus packages to allow them to resist the economic crisis. In the field of national activity, he also envisioned far-reaching changes in the public administration. This Government has introduced new organisational patterns and modern tools and techniques of management and administration with a view to instill into the governmental machinery greater efficiency and make it more responsive to the needs of our people.

M. le président, il faut se rendre à l'évidence. Le pays est à l'abri de la tourmente financière mondiale grâce à sa résilience bien que la moitié de la planète soit en récession, le gouvernement demeure optimiste quant à une croissance de 4% pour l'année prochaine. Avec le taux de croissance de 3,8% et celui qui est projeté de 4% à la fin de 2013, je peux dire avec satisfaction que le gouvernement peut avoir les coudées franches pour faire avancer sa politique économique et sociale.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we want to achieve high growth with low inflation. Our country seems to have struck a fine balance. *Les indicateurs-clé ont déterminé la résilience de notre économie.* The last inflation data shows that it has cooled to 4.1% compared to a much higher rate from 2000 and 2005. Investment, including FDI, is rising and estimates for 2012 will show an increase again of 2.4% to reach Rs78.5 billion compared to data of last year. The Balance of Payment has also improved and will show a surplus of around Rs3 billion which shows a Rs500 m. note more than expected. Budget deficit would be 2.5% of GDP, a much lower deficit than the 3.8% Government has expected. It must be recognised that unlike most European countries where drastic measures have been taken to reduce employment in the public sector and to freeze increases in salaries and social benefits, here, my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval has come up with a budget that gives a new dimension to our social policies. He needs to be congratulated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have in mind the innovative and well-designed measures in sectors such as education, disability, hardcore poverty whereby the announcement of giving a hot meal will be allotted to every child in the *ZEP* schools. That's why I said, once more, he needs our congratulations.

Je ne peux pas ne pas dénoncer une déclaration mal inspirée d'un quelqu'un à la radio selon laquelle le budget 2013 ne serait qu'un exercice de comptabilité. On vient d'entendre tout à l'heure, celui qui m'a précédé, que ce n'est qu'un exercice de comptabilité. Mais non, M. le président, car il a fait preuve d'intelligence en tant que politicien qui a su allier l'économie et le social, mais tout en favorisant les plus vulnérables et les plus démunis.

*Moreover, all social benefits will be increased over and above the inflation rate as from 01 January 2013.* Ainsi donc à compter de janvier 2013, les bénéficiaires de la pension de vieillesse de 60 à 89 ans auront droit à R 3,494 au lieu de R 3,350; ceux de 90 à 99 ans auront droit à R 10,404 au lieu de R 9,975 et les centenaires auront R 11,807 au lieu de R 11,320. Ce qui constitue une enveloppe budgétaire de R 7,87 milliards comparée à R 7,25 milliards l'année

dernière, ce qui démontre une hausse de 8,6% en une année pour les prestations sociales des personnes âgées. Et sans hésitation de la part de ce gouvernement, le budget 2013 prévoit une augmentation au taux de 4,3% aussi à tous les bénéficiaires de *Social Aid*, à tous ceux qui touchent l'*Income Support* et cela englobe quelque 70,000 personnes au bas de l'échelle et ces personnes seront concernées par cette mesure.

Cette mesure va s'appliquer aussi, M. le président, à toutes les personnes qui sont bénéficiaires d'une pension de retraite ou d'invalidité, de veuve, d'orphelin et les autres. C'est la raison pour laquelle le budget de fonctionnement de mon ministère est passé à R 12,8 milliards contre R 11,9 milliards en 2012. Les projections indiquent une augmentation prévisible pour atteindre presque dans les R 13,7 milliards en 2014. Une telle décision obéit à une optique d'être toujours auprès des faibles, les plus vulnérables et les familles les plus nécessiteuses. Elle fait partie, je dois dire, d'un impératif d'aller plus loin dans la dimension sociale et être *pro-poor*. Mais c'est quelque chose que plusieurs membres de l'Opposition refusent de reconnaître et pour nous taxer d'être anti *pro-poor*.

Ce gouvernement tient ses promesses tout en faisant preuve de réalisme. Cette initiative est une réponse à la bonne maîtrise technique de l'impact budgétaire en faveur de nos aînés contrairement aux commentaires de certains députés que les mesures sociales relèvent du recyclage - faute d'arguments ! Quand j'entends cette phrase, M. le président, 'recyclage de nos mesures', je dis, bien sûr, faute d'arguments. Je constate qu'il fait fausse route. Soit, il veut jouer aux abonnés absents soit il veut se montrer du côté obscur de sa propre intervention lorsqu'il disait l'autre jour, le premier intervenant de l'Opposition, qu'il n'y a rien pour une meilleure distribution de la richesse aux groupes les plus vulnérables.

Allow me again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for his skillful act in policy formulation in favour of the poor. He has pursued with added vigour the course chartered by previous budgets and, at the same time, distribute to the people the gains realised so far. The budget will go down in history as one with a sharp social focus in line with the Prime Minister's vision and Government strategy with the objective to share the fruits of economic growth among all Mauritians.

Mais que n'a-t-on pas entendu du côté de l'Opposition ? « Budget *fizet*, budget fade, budget frivole, un budget trafiqué et mensonger venant d'un *Leader* politique que de nom qui arrive difficilement à se faire remarquer, budget flop et faillite et tel un tsunami destructif qui

s'écrase sur Maurice ». Pourquoi faire peur à cette population ? Pourquoi faut-il faire peur ? *This is threat! Threatening the population that the tsunami is coming over them!* M. le président, je considère que ce ne sont que des clichés. Ce ne sont que des paroles creuses et stéréotypées de cette Opposition en manque d'arguments pour convaincre. Cela est évident car cette année, encore pour eux, est plein de dangers. Moi, je le vois comme cela. Mes amis le voient comme cela. Plein de dangers ! La cohabitation MMM/MSM - le fameux *Remake 2000* - donne déjà des signes de fatigue. Leur *Remake 2000* leur donne déjà des signes d'irritation. Ils sont irrités et nerveux et c'est sûr que ce *Remake* n'a pas provoqué l'engouement et le déclic. Allez sur le terrain, vous allez entendre ce que les militants disent de ce *Remake* ! C'est la grosse déception totale.

*(Interruptions)*

Au contraire, comme je dis, c'est de la panique. C'est triste d'entendre bien souvent les gourous du *Remake 2000* qui disent : « Ah, c'est de la misère, le pays plonge dans le précipice ». Depuis six semaines après le départ du *State House* le pays plonge dans le précipice ! Ils prient pour la misère. Ils prient que la population devienne beaucoup plus '*misère*'. C'est cela le mot qu'on sert. Mais heureusement qu'on est là, le gouvernement est là pour leur donner le maximum de protection.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one hon. Member of the Opposition stated that nothing has been done to alleviate the poor, we are not pro-poor. We believe that education of the people is the best antidote to poverty. There is a series of reforms coming from my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education for the education sector: pre-primary, primary and secondary. This is one of the best ways of helping the poor. The best way of helping the poor is to give access to schools. Even if education is compulsory there is a high rate of absenteeism in certain areas. So, how to give access to the poor in the schools? This budget provides for concrete measures to support and empower the poor, the needy, the weaker sections of the population, the children and the students from poor families. One of the fundamental measures is the provision of high investment in education, IT infrastructure and equipment and never before such a scale of investment has been targeted. It adds also to the knowledge and skill development.

Among a series of social measures stated in the budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would wish to elaborate a bit further on two new social policies. One is the uniform support of Rs750 to every child every month in families who live in stark poverty and earn less than Rs6,200 per

month. This measure will cost Government Rs100 m. and this would benefit nearly 20,000 poor children. The second social measure is the support to university students who are unable to pay their fees. There is the provision of Rs20 m. to assist financially students from vulnerable families who are unable to secure a loan to pay their university fees. For these two measures, the beneficiaries will have to meet an eligibility criteria. The families will have to be registered through the SRM programme, that is, the Social Register of Mauritius. I would like here to enlighten the House on what the Social Register of Mauritius is all about.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has an extensive social protection system, which is complex and spread across many Ministries with many small programmes to strengthen existing programmes and ensure that they better address priority risks and vulnerabilities. Government has announced some time back in the budget 2012 that we are coming with a project for the setting up of a Social Register for Mauritius. Many are those who still do not understand what the Social Register of Mauritius is. The objectives of the SRM are clear –

- (i) to determine the eligibility of beneficiaries of social programmes;
- (ii) to manage the social programmes in an integrated manner like for here, giving assistance to poor children, but they must be at school; but it will not be for families with more than three children; but the child must have an attendance of 90% in school. These are the integrated approach;
- (iii) better harmonise the criteria for the different social programmes run by different Ministries, and
- (iv) analyse structural poverty reduction policies.

To meet these objectives –

- (i) we are bound to collect information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the poor and other vulnerable people in Mauritius, and
- (ii) then we are to provide a national dynamic database, which will be a key management tool for policy design and planning and for poverty monitoring.

So, what happened all through this year? As from April 2012, the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) has been operational and used for the registration of claimants for the Housing and Crèche scheme run by –

- (i) the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and
- (ii) the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment respectively.

Through that Social Register that has been produced after requesting for application from poor families under the criteria that was set up in the last Budget, we have had 716 applications for the Crèche scheme and some 27,561 were registered for the Housing scheme. These registrations were done over the island through Social Security Offices and including Rodrigues. Once the information has been collected, it has been transferred by electronic link to the respective organisations responsible for the running of the schemes. This one grand premiere in how to determine eligibility of people of families who are looking for a better roof, that is, for looking for a better house for themselves and their families.

The 2013 Budget has come with two more schemes to be registered under the SRM. The schemes are –

- (i) the scholarship for students from vulnerable families, and
- (ii) the issue of Rs750 per child per month for children of all families earning less than Rs6,200 per month.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the three important criteria are -

- (i) limited to families with three children per family, i.e. for not more than three children in their families;
- (ii) it will benefit families who send their children regularly to school, that's why I say the Integrated Approach. We don't just give money and the child doesn't go to school. To alleviate poverty, those children should have accessibility to school, and
- (iii) the attendance must be 90% for these children who will be eligible for that scheme.

This new measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will also assist in streamlining the various social assistances, which have so far been provided to needy children. Under the current Social Aid Act, the level of social aid provided to children varies depending upon the scheme it is being provided and is much lower than the amount of Rs750 as announced in the Budget. This seems not to be clear to hon. Members of the Opposition after I listened to hon. Uteem.



With the coming into force of this new measure, a consistent approach will be adopted and families with a maximum of three children will be entitled to their social aid as usual. They will be granted whatever allowance is being given for other children. For example, the children going to school, even if they don't have the 90% - because they have more than three children in that family - they will still be having their allowances of Rs447 if the child is under the age of 10; Rs546 for every child between 10 and 15 and Rs681 if the child is under the age of 15 and 18, and who is not beneficiary of a basic invalidly pension. So, it is not penalising children. Those who do not fall under the criteria mentioned, they will be still be benefitting from the criteria of the existing Social Aid Programme. Those who will fall under these new criteria, they will have the chance to have the Rs750, which will give them a better chance to attend school. Thus in the long run, this will alleviate the problem of poverty because the children will come out after the CPE with better results and going for secondary education coming out with better results and later on getting employment, etc.

Le chapitre de création d'emplois - comme je venais de dire, les prévisions pour une croissance de 4% sont réelles en 2013. Qui dit hausse de la croissance dit aussi création de la richesse nationale, développement socio-économique et création d'emplois. Il n'y a aucune honte à soulever la question du chômage. Le pays connaît un nombre de chômeurs, soit quelque 8 % de la population active. Mais pour la première fois depuis quelques années, le phénomène régresse de la façon significative en regardant le secteur des *TICs*. Qu'est-ce qui se passe? C'est le seul secteur prometteur. La *job machine* qui est nouveau aujourd'hui. *It is the machine creating job.*

La *job machine* crée des centaines et des centaines d'emplois. En 2011, il a contribué à 6,7% au PIB contre 6,4% en 2010. En termes réels, ce secteur a généré R 19 milliards en 2011 contre R 17 milliards en 2010. Avec cette croissance, M. le président, on peut dire que le secteur des *TICs* est un apport considérable en termes d'investissement et de création d'emplois et se place confortablement comme le troisième pilier de notre économie. Si l'optimisme revient, c'est d'abord parce que le ministre des finances a fait les bons choix politiques. À l'exemple des mesures pour la reconversion professionnelle des jeunes gradués, l'investissement massif pour faciliter l'emploi des jeunes en termes de dotation budgétaire de R 330 millions comme cité plus haut et l'économie mauricienne est donc, j'en passe, de réunir les conditions pour vaincre le chômage. Mais il faut être optimiste, M. le président. Il faut savoir planifier l'avenir. Et non,

matin et soir chanter la même chansonnette: *'nou lors bord précipice, tou dimoun pe vinn misère, nou pou plonge dans précipice'*. Les gens n'ont pas envie d'entendre ces slogans.

The youths have greater opportunity under this Government. The nation expects them to aspire and to excel. There are new frontiers to cross, new horizons to reach and new goals to achieve.

M. le président, si vous me permettez, j'aurais aimé, très brièvement, dire quelque chose sur mon ministère, qui est le ministère de la sécurité sociale, dont les trois axes les plus importants sont -

- les personnes handicapées;
- les personnes âgées, et
- le secteur associatif (ONG).

La dimension sociale de ce budget s'insère dans la philosophie sociale de ce gouvernement. Elle cadre d'abord avec la tradition socialiste du parti travailliste. C'est avant tout un budget de continuité en faveur des plus vulnérables et je viens de l'expliquer.

*The welfare of the vulnerable group has always topped the list of priorities of this Government.* En 1994, le budget du ministère de la sécurité sociale était de R 1,6 milliard. En 2013, le budget de la sécurité sociale touche R 13 milliards, soit une augmentation de 712 % sur le social. M. le président, j'aurais aimé ici dire que si certains sont de mauvaise foi, les chiffres ne le sont pas. Les chiffres parlent d'eux mêmes. N'est-ce pas une preuve suffisante d'un gouvernement qui est *consistent* dans sa politique de *pro-poor* pour arriver à cela ?

Nul n'est insensible - et encore moins ce gouvernement - au sort de nos concitoyens ayant un handicap. Ce gouvernement porte une attention particulière au bien-être des personnes handicapées.

Nous voulons aussi que l'enfant handicapé fasse partie des enfants d'un même monde, et cette politique est travaillée par mon collègue, le ministre de l'éducation – le *'Special Education needs'*. Que l'enfant handicapé soit comme les autres enfants que nous appelons normaux - dans le même monde. Je dois vous dire, M. le président, qu'hier j'étais ravie de voir les 90 candidats présentés par l'alliance Parti travailliste/PMSD pour les élections municipales. Parmi, j'ai vu un activiste qui est une personne avec un handicap. Je suis très contente de voir que les handicapés ont droit à la politique. Il fait partie de la communauté des activistes handicapés. Un ticket lui a été alloué, et il est candidat dans un des *wards* de Port Louis. Il est très, très actif, et je lui

souhaite bonne chance. Qu'il puisse briller et être à la hauteur de ses responsabilités une fois qu'il sera élu !

Donc, au ministère, nous avons travaillé un plan d'action pour le secteur des handicapés. Nous avons été le premier gouvernement à élaborer un plan d'action quand j'ai exercé les responsabilités du ministère en 2005. Jamais le ministère de la sécurité sociale des gouvernements précédents n'a eu un plan d'action et une politique formelle pour les handicapés. Nous avons ratifié la convention, nous avons soumis notre premier rapport ; nous avons développé une base de données, ce qu'on appelle un *database*, sur les handicapés. Cela a été lancé en janvier 2012 pour pouvoir mieux gérer les problématiques de l'handicapé d'une façon stratégique. Sans un *database* vous ne pouvez rien faire. Nous avons amendé le *Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act* au mois de juillet. Les études ont démontré les manquements, et donc il y a eu des réformes approfondies. Suite à ces manquements, la bonne formation professionnelle des handicapés a été revue, repensée en profondeur, et la question de l'adaptation du contenu d'étude aux besoins du marché du travail était posée. Il y a eu le redressement de ce *Board* et, aujourd'hui, ils ont mis sur pied un *Hearing Committee*. Ce *Hearing Committee* aura le pouvoir de convoquer les employeurs à venir s'expliquer pour les raisons de non-conformité à la loi, en donnant un moratoire de *non-compliance*, et les forçant à recruter des personnes avec un handicap.

J'ai rencontré tous les *CEOs* des corps parapublics, et j'ai pu constater que leur *response* était très positif. D'ailleurs, il y a plusieurs qui s'intéressent à l'emploi des personnes handicapés. Mon collègue, le ministre Anil Bachoo, était venu récemment avec des mesures pour amender le *Building Control Act* quant à l'accessibilité aux bâtiments. Si les personnes avec un handicap n'ont pas d'accessibilité à un bâtiment, c'est un des plus grands obstacles de leur vie, car ils ne peuvent pas entrer, ils ne peuvent pas aller dans un bureau, et donc ils sont coupés complètement.

Nous allons mettre sur pied le *School of Performing Arts*, et là c'est le ministère des Arts et de la Culture qui collabore avec mon ministère, parce qu'il y a bien sûr des artistes handicapés, mais qui sont vraiment des artistes talentueux. Ils ont de grands talents artistiques, et nous voulons créer ce groupe national d'artistes; les personnes avec handicap. Donc, de tous les côtés, c'est *disabled friendly*.

Je peux vous dire que cela fait déjà deux ans qu'on a revu toutes les conditions avec l'*Electoral Commission* pour ce qui est des projets d'accompagnement pour les handicapés, pour leur faciliter l'accès aux procédures de vote, pour que ce soit plus *disabled friendly*, pour qu'ils aient accès dans les salles réservées au rez-de-chaussée, avec des chaises roulantes, et que le *voting booth* soit mis à une hauteur correcte.

*So, we are very consistent, and I am very happy that hon. Minister Xavier-Luc Duval also announced that the Service to Mauritius Programme* qui, maintenant, va donner l'accessibilité aux personnes handicapées de pouvoir faire leur application pour être embauchées. *Thirty seats have now been reserved in this scheme for people with disabilities, and there is also provision for Braille PCs to visually impaired students in schools.* A partir de là, le budget a été renforcé, et je suis sûre que nous allons faire de notre mieux.

Pour les personnes âgées c'est la même chose pour tout ce qui est de leurs loisirs, de leurs prestations sociales. Nous savons tous que nous traversons une phase démographique, et il y a des séquelles du vieillissement de la population. Le pays a atteint aujourd'hui 164,500 personnes âgées, représentant à peu près 13% de la population. En 1972, ils n'étaient que 6%, en 2000 9%, et aujourd'hui c'est presque 13% de la population. Donc, l'impact, M. le président, va être vraiment très prépondérant sur les personnes âgées tant pour leur *pension support ratio*, l'impact sur l'économie, sur le logement, sur la prise en charge, etc.

Le filet de protection sociale autour d'un éventail de prestations sociales et autres facilités sont -

- (i) La pension de retraite avec les 164,586 bénéficiaires qui coûtent à l'État R 7,4 milliards annuellement.
- (ii) La pension d'invalidité à 26,878 personnes, avec un budget annuel de R 1,055 milliards.
- (iii) Le *Social Aid* qui concerne autour de 19,800 familles, avec un budget annuel de R 628 millions. La pension des veuves qui s'élève à un budget de R 838.6 millions avec, en plus, le transport gratuit, les soins gratuits, et l'éducation gratuite pour les enfants.

Donc, pas de démagogie. Ce sont des faits, et c'est pourquoi que je dis que la pension sur une base universelle, le transport gratuit, les loisirs, avec les centres récréatifs résidentiels, vont toujours rester prioritaires sur notre agenda, et nous allons continuer dans cette même direction.

Comme nous parlons de centres, vous savez tous que nous avons un centre à plein temps à Pointe aux Sables, un deuxième à Belle Mare, et un troisième qui est en construction à Pointe aux Piments et qui sera opérationnel l'année prochaine. Mon ministère est très sensible aux abus et à la maltraitance à l'égard des personnes âgées. On a eu au début de la proclamation de la loi un nombre de 5,163 cas d'abus envers les personnes âgées. Mais, après tout ce qui est médiation, *counselling*, *family counselling* et *conferencing*, aujourd'hui le nombre de plaintes enregistrées est en baisse. De septembre à janvier cette année-ci, on n'a eu que dans les 400.

Pour terminer, je parlerai du secteur associatif, c'est-à-dire les ONG. M. le président nous voulons que le gouvernement valorise this partnership between NGOs. It constitutes the social capital which makes our society move ahead in peace and harmony if we really work in partnership. It is comforting to note that this Budget provides an increase of Rs1 m. in the budget of the NGO Trust Fund. We are working on the Social Entrepreneurship Programme with the EDI, which is the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India. We are launching the National NGO Policy Paper in December, and this is something also which will be a *grande première* because we have never done it in the beginning.

Pour terminer, M. le président, je dirai que le budget est un coup politique réussi et pas frivole - pas de frivolité, mais un succès. Avec le budget de 2013, une dynamique est en marche. C'est une vision en faveur des jeunes et leur enrichissement. Le ministre a mis l'économie mauricienne sur une perspective crédible. Tous les indicateurs économiques sont en passe de repasser au vert - ils ne sont plus au rouge. Le budget 2012 avait fait des mesures ambitieuses. Ces mesures ont été tenues à 91% et ont été bien accueillies, ce qui constitue un bilan remarquable, comme l'a expliqué le ministre des finances. Celui de 2013 fournit l'occasion pour lancer d'autres engagements, libérer l'initiative et la créativité surtout parmi les jeunes, et cela malgré une conjoncture défavorable.

So, let us be strong and disciplined; these must be the very foundation of democracy, the dynamic and progressive society, *un ordre social plus juste* which we are creating, and which can only be achieved with unity and hard work.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

*At 4.45 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 5.20 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

**BANGALEEA, MR H. – BANK DOCUMENT - TABLED**

**Mr Speaker:** In the course of the PNQ on Tuesday last, hon. P. Jugnauth stated that he was producing a bank document in relation to the account of Mr Bangaleea.

After perusal of the said document, I hold that the document is admissible and can be laid on the Table of this Assembly.

Thank you.

(5.21 p.m.)

**Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):** Mr Speaker, Sir, having listened carefully to the hon. Minister who has spoken before me, I can only say that it is a matter of - not to say shame – shock, and unparliamentarian, that a lady who has served Cabinet under the Prime Minister, comes today in Parliament and discloses what was said in Cabinet at that time.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mrs Bappoo:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes.

**Mrs Bappoo:** With your permission, I have not disclosed anything. It is something that has been made public and the whole country knows the decentralisation programme of the EPZ sector at that time. There is no disclosing matter of Cabinet.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Baloomoody:** Mr Speaker, Sir, coming here to say that there was a policy from the then Prime Minister not to have any industrial zone in Plaine Verte, and still to remain Minister in that Cabinet is *indigne* of a Minister. She should have resigned if she did not support that policy.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have considered your point of order. I have also listened to the explanation given by the hon. Minister. I will look into the point and, if need be, I will give a ruling. The hon. Member may proceed with his speech on the Budget.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, the pride of place in the Parliamentary calendar no doubt belongs to the annual ritual of the Budget. But, this year, Mr

Speaker, Sir, it is the first time since its independence that this year's Budget, in its presentation, conception, has been a non-event.

Not only the contents itself is nothing but an accountant exercise, the hon. Prime Minister, himself, by announcing the Municipal elections, which was due two years ago, - choose to announce that election three days before the Budget was to be passed - has succeeded in downplaying the role of the Budget in this Parliament today. He has been able, by this act, to marginalise the PMSD in that Government, to marginalise the role of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, because he knows that now he is very comfortable with some *transfuges*, and we know that there is no interest, especially from the Labour Party in that Budget.

Just have a look at those present! I was talking to my good friend, the hon. Attorney General while hon. Mrs Bappoo was addressing the House, saying that we were more interested in campaigning than being present in the House. I was just telling the hon. Attorney General: look, if the four or five of us were not present, there would have been no quorum for her to stand up and talk.

*(Interruptions)*

A Minister from Government!

*(Interruptions)*

Not from Opposition!

**Mr Speaker:** Well, please, give way! As long as there is a quorum in this House, we can carry on with the Budget. Hon. Members should understand that they should be present in this Assembly. When I say Members, I say all Members, but I cannot control...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Baloomoody:** I do understand your...

**Mr Speaker:** Wait a minute! Let me finish! I cannot control the movement of hon. Members. Proceed!

**Mr Baloomoody:** I am only replying to the hon. lady because she made a comment and it is fair that we should be allowed to answer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget has been labelled as 'a Budget of lack of ambition', a '*budget sans vision*' which will not permit growth, no new ideas, *un budget vide, un budget décevant* and so on and so forth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this morning when one of my colleagues, hon. Ameer Meea, was referring to what a newspaper has said, there was a shout from that side: ‘This is from ‘L’Express’; ‘L’Express, zot lagazette, you paid them to do that!’ But let me quote from a newspaper which is not ‘L’Express’. The first edition which came after the Budget: ‘no vision, not even a camel!’

**Mr Speaker:** Which paper is it?

**Mr Baloomoody:** It is the ‘Mauritius Times’.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, you say it is ...

**Mr Baloomoody:** Yes, the ‘Mauritius Times’, a Labour paper!

*(Interruptions)*

It said:

“And so the 2013 Budget came to pass, unremarkable in content and insipid in delivery, at a level of intervention which we have got accustomed to in the National Assembly. It bore the stamp of an Accountant.”

As someone said about the subject of accounts, ‘it’s not only dry, it’s dead, dead!’

“The country was expecting to get a much needed, clear sense of direction, which in this blessed country is usually given with an obvious economic bias by the Minister of Finance for lack of a firm statement of Government’s more encompassing political philosophy. Under the circumstances – he concludes - we are orphans because we have neither, and so we will continue to drift along on a zigzagging course.”

Clearly this reflects the mood in the Labour Party, the mood in the country, the mood out there, after the presentation of this Budget.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No interruptions!

**Mr Baloomoody:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would limit my intervention on three issues: the Labour situation; law and order and the Police, and access to justice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Budget itself, when we know that on each and every occasion, the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment had an opportunity to address the workers, be it on a rally, be it in meetings in his office as Minister, he has promised to change the two Labour laws, namely the Employment Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act. We know that since the implementation of these two Acts, every



month nearly 1,000 people are losing jobs; an average of 6,000 per year. Around 500 to 600 families are suffering because of this law and, up to today, although we have put questions many times. Hon. Ganoo, during this year itself, has asked two questions. The answer is: "The draft is ready. It will come forward very soon". But, in the meantime, Mr Speaker, Sir, heads of families are losing their jobs. And don't talk about workplace scheme! Because we are talking of people who are over 45 and 50, who could not be re-employed, people who are dismissed with only one month's notice and only by a stroke of a pen you write to the Ministry and say: 'for economic reason, I am laying off X, Y and Z'. And this is done. So, I hope that the hon. Minister who is working out now, when he will address the House, he will tell us how soon he will come up with it. But, he must come sooner for the interest of those workers who are suffering, and not only the workers, their families as well. He should do it; he should come and announce in this House - and I hope he does it today - when is he going to amend the Labour law so as to ensure that there is no more suffering on behalf of the workers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also the question of industrial injury. It is only when there is an industrial injury that the Factory Inspectorate will go on the place and enquire. Very often, they come and say: we did not know that there were such dangerous apparatus on such premises. Again, in this Budget, there is no mention of increased manpower with regard to Factory Inspectorate to ensure a safer working environment. There is nothing for the workers in this Budget, no protection, no change in the law and we know that although we are expecting an inflation rate of 6 to 7%, they have had a minimum increase in salary compensation.

Let me turn to the question of law and order. You read the papers as well as me; we know as a fact that the number of crimes and misdemeanours are increasing every day. Let us not talk about statistics because, later on, I will show you what colourable device has been used to show a decrease in crime rate when, in fact, there is continuous increase in crime rate in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about the statistics, before, crime was defined not only for statistical purposes, but was defined under section 4 of the Criminal Code Act. Section 4 defines crime punishable by penal servitude, a fine exceeding Rs5,000 and it included also misdemeanours. Misdemeanours are imprisonment for a term exceeding 10 days and a fine exceeding Rs5,000. The Police used to send the figures to the Statistics Office; they used to include not only crimes, but also misdemeanours. However, because this was going on the

increase, Government decided, by mere administrative decision, to send only crime figures to the Statistics Office. So, misdemeanours are not included in the figures that are being shown today. This is why the hon. Prime Minister keeps standing up every now and then telling us that the statistics is going down. Crime is going down when there is backlog in the Court to judge accused! When there is no place in the prison! When people cannot pay fine, they are being imprisoned. 35% of prisoners today are people who cannot pay fine. And they say that crime is going down! When the Police tell us they can't cope with so many inquiries, crime is going down! Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, assaults, larcenies, domestic violence and drug offences are not included in the definition of crime!

We know that the amount of drug offences has been increasing. The amount of assaults on women keeps increasing every day. Every day and night, there are larcenies in each and every corner of this country - larcenies by violence, larcenies by breaking, simple larceny on individuals walking around on the street, but these are not included in the statistics. The hon. Prime Minister will come and tell us now that the number of crimes has gone down.

It is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this was a colorable device used to mislead the people when, as a matter of fact, crime is beyond control because there is lack of leadership in the Police Force; beyond control because there is lack of manpower in the Police Force; beyond control because there is lack of proper equipment in the Police Force. If you have a Police Force which are not feeling at ease to work and which are frustrated, you will never get good results. We have a Police Force today which are frustrated; there is lack of middle management. There are so many vacancies; the posts of Superintendent of Police which are not being filled. Assistant Superintendents of Police are acting as deciding officers in important areas. I will just give you one example, Mr Speaker, Sir. At Pamplermousses and Triolet, there are many hotels and many Police Stations which used to be headed by a DCP. They used to have three or four SPs, now there is only one SP in that entire district and he is the deciding Officer. This is why enquiries get delayed or enquiries are done in a hastily unprofessional manner, like in the case of Michaela Harte. We have seen what happened in the case of Michaela Harte.

What shame it has done to our country, to our justice system! Instead of coming to the House and telling us what remedial action he will take to ensure that we get professional Police inquiries, good and proper inquiries, he tells us he will do away with the Jury system. Do we blame the jury now? But the Jury represents the people. If the people today tell you they don't

trust your inquiries, they don't trust your Police, you take action, not come and say that you will do away with it!

**Mr Speaker:** I have to interrupt the hon. Member. Did the hon. Member mention who blamed the Jury?

**Mr Baloomoody:** The hon. Prime Minister. He said that....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Wait a minute! I will just refresh the Member's memory. Last time - it was sometime in July - I referred to a report made by 'L'Express' concerning an allegation against the hon. Prime Minister to the effect that the hon. Prime Minister allegedly said something about the Jury. I referred the matter to the Director for Prosecutions. I would advise the Member to refrain from treading on that dangerous path.

**Mr Baloomoody:** The hon. Prime Minister at a certain time did mention that probably we have to review the Jury system. He did mention it.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, review the Jury system is different from blaming members of the Jury. The Member is a Barrister, he should understand the difference.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Baloomoody:** So, review the system! I hope that he will review the system of the Police during the inquiry, giving them more equipment, more power and more training. I hope that there will be no intervention by politicians in Police inquiries. This is another case of frustration in the Police. We know what happened to that lady in the *briani* case. How depressed - what happened to her?

*(Interruptions)*

The lady Police Officer in the *briani* case! If they don't know, they don't know! I don't want to give the names of people here.

**Mr Speaker:** No, wait a minute! As long as the hon. Member does not mention the name of that lady, it is alright.

**Mr Baloomoody:** We know what happened in Rivière des Anguilles Police Station. We know now there has been interference in certain cases.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Well, hon. Member I would suggest that you be careful before making any allegation.

*(Interruptions)*

Wait a minute! I think you will proceed without making this allegation. Carry on!

**Mr Baloomoody:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been reported, and a Minister has admitted having phoned a Police station; for whatever reason, I don't know.

**Mr Speaker:** Exactly!

**Mr Baloomoody:** He has admitted ...

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, I am telling you to refrain from this course of action.

*(Interruptions)*

Wait a minute! I am talking to the hon. Member. Carry on with your speech, but refrain from that course.

**Mr Baloomoody:** It is a fact that a Minister did phone a Police station to inquire, although he is not a Barrister. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is another frustration in the Police regarding the recent PRB Report. According to certain Officers, the PRB Report has not done justice in the Police Force for Officers in the ranks of Inspector and Sergeant. We know that there is a Committee on Errors and Omissions but, unfortunately, these Officers cannot go and depone with regard to their rights, because only the Commissioner of Police can go. As you know, the Federation is controlled by the Commissioner of Police. And the Act clearly says that they are not allowed to make representations and this is creating a lot of frustration. I will appeal to the hon. Prime Minister in this specific case, to allow at least the Police Officers who feel aggrieved to have a *porte-parole* before that Commission instead of relying only on the words of the Commissioner of Police only, because there is a feeling that the Commissioner of Police does not fight for their rights. So, they want to fight for their rights themselves. In fact, when you look at the details, there is, in fact, a great anomaly. I don't want to go into the details here. I have been informed, and I have seen it, especially with regard to Police Officers, Inspectors and Sergeants. So, I will appeal to the hon. Prime Minister who is the Minister of Interior, if he will advise the Commissioner of Police to allow these categories of Officers, at least, to have a team or a few representatives of their rank to go and explain to the Committee on Errors and Omissions and make appropriate submission. This is with regard to law and order, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The more so, when we know that in the Police Force there has been only one examination for promotion during the last ten years and the result came two years later after Police Officers have entered action before the Supreme Court. It is only mentioned that there will be 600 new

recruits, but we know that 500 Police Officers leave the Police Force every year, and now it is increasing because they have better opportunities in the private sector. There is a problem of management in the Police Force, especially a lack of middle management at the level of SP and upwards. Here again, when I say there is a problem with regard to law and order, it is because one of the reasons is that the Police is not motivated, not properly equipped and there is political interference in certain cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to the issue of access to justice. Mr Speaker, Sir, access to justice is a fundamental human right. The legal system can play an important role in supporting poverty eradication by helping our poor people to access to justice and to have the appropriate mix of rights and revenues. Mr Speaker, Sir, reforming the law on paper is not enough to change the reality on the ground.

When we look at what is happening today, there has been legal aid given in criminal cases and the system apparently just starts working, it is in its teething period. So, I hope that this system will get on smoothly very soon. But, however, when we look in civil matters, Government, on this side, is trying to make access to justice easier, more accessible. But then, when we look at what is the intention with regard to civil matters, it is frightening. It is a system where we are going to have justice for the rich only. Before coming to civil matters, let me finish on the criminal issues. Legal aid has been given. Very good! But then, there is that problem of Bail and Remand Court. What was the idea of having a Bail and Remand Court? When we voted the Act here, it was to have a court to entertain Bail and Remand Court, especially for those who are at the prison, where we had camera instead of moving the prisoners here and there; for safety and security reasons, it was decided to have a Bail and Remand Court for them. I remember at a certain time, the question was whether we have it in the vicinity of the prison. Now administratively, the Judiciary has decided to take a certain decision, but no Magistrate Court will be entitled to entertain a motion of bail. We know that the Commissioner of Police issued a circular in July last year, telling each and every Police Officer who takes decision, NSP and onwards, that he will have automatically to refuse bail if somebody is already on bail. So, what happens in practice? If somebody is already on bail, they have to object for bail, but then, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a double standard, I do not know from where. Is it a policy of jail for the poor and bail for the rich? We heard in this House a few days ago, when the Timol were arrested, although they were still on bail for issuing cheque without provision or something like that, they

went to the Casernes Central at 10 o'clock, they were accompanied to the Bail and Remand Court, released on bail and there was no objection from the Police.

*(Interruptions)*

But, it will come with the *ti-dimounes!* So, the objection is raised at the district level, be it in Savanne, - you have been a practitioner, you know how it works - you put a motion there, the magistrate cannot entertain, you have to come to Port Louis. Go and see the Bail and Remand Court which is now overcrowded with cases! The earliest date you will get will be, at least, in eight days, the minimum; sometimes in 15 days. 90% of the cases before the Bail and Remand Court are being granted there, because they are not the same offence. OK, he had a previous one, but he has not been sentenced, he is on bail. So, today people are spending a minimum of ten days in cell, without being given the opportunity to hear their bail motion and this is creating considerable hardship for, especially, the poor. Now if he is represented, he has a lawyer, the lawyer can press to have an early date, but the earliest date, like I said, will be 10 days. If he is not represented, he is forgotten now in the remand centre at the new wing in Beau Bassin. So, by an administrative decision, we are creating considerable hardship to people who are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty.

Now let us come to the civil issues. Are you aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is a draft rule in circulation? And I hope it remains in circulation permanently. Listen to that! If I have met with an accident and I have to enter a case before the Supreme Court to claim for damage and, let us say I estimate my damage, if I am physically handicapped my damage is Rs5 m. How much do I have to pay – not legal fees to the Attorney and Barrister – to the court? Rs10,000 before you lodge a claim, together with 1% of the total of any monetary claim included in the action. So, if I have to enter an action, I claim Rs10,000, so he starts by 10 with 1% of Rs5 m. which is Rs50,000, you have to have Rs60,000 to enter a case to claim an injury which you have suffered. Now, if the case lasts for more than two days, which very often happens, you pay Rs10,000 per day or a lesser amount that the Judge may impose. So now, the Judge is involved in collecting revenue. You go and negotiate with the judge: '*R 10,000, faire ène bon ti prix -*' what the Judge will impose, inviting the Judge in raising finance for the authorities. Where are we going? I can go on and on. I have already given Rs60,000 to lodge the case and if I lose the case, because it is a defended case by the insurance company which, of course, can afford, I'll have to pay Rs50,000 costs. Rs60,000 to lodge the case, Rs50,000 if it is a defended case, if it is an

undefended case, it is Rs10,000. So, I hope that the hon. Attorney General will come and make a clear statement so that this circular can be shelved...

*(Interruptions)*

You have not made it officially yet.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Attorney General, this is what the hon. Member is saying.

**Mr Baloomoody:** Yes, the hon. Attorney General. He is a good friend of mine; I do not have anything against him. He should come and inform the House clearly that this issue is not on the agenda and we stop debating about it once and for all. This is one aspect of civil matter.

We are coming forward with the e-filing. We all thought that when we talk of e-filing, it is to facilitate the work and to ensure that we have cheaper and quicker justice. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, no! So, with the e-filing now, each Attorney and Barrister will have to pay Rs10,000 to be registered. Now, whenever you lodge a case for each document you file, which is only pressing a button, by e-mail, you pay Rs10. So, over and above all the costs we are imposing on young barristers and young solicitors, we are putting additional cost which, at the end of the day, it is the litigant who will have to come and bear the cost. This is the e-filing which the Judiciary intends to introduce, but with a high cost to the litigants. I am being told by a Senior Attorney that, because of the e-filing, if you go to the Supreme court, where there are two judges, the brief will cost around Rs40,000 to Rs50,000. The more so, they make it compulsory, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, if an Attorney or a Barrister does not have the means to be registered, he can never enter a case, he can never file a document in court, because he has to be registered and he has to go through that process.

It is good to have e-filing, but then it should not be compulsory. We have a system, and we should keep that system. Those big Chambers which can afford to go for e-filing can do so, but small litigants don't have to go for e-filing. When we look at what is happening with regard to fees, costs and e-filing, one is wondering whether the Judiciary is becoming a source of revenue for the Government now, paying that much now to enter cases.

Again, I would make an appeal to Government, especially the hon. Prime Minister who is responsible for the Judiciary, to look at this matter because access to justice, Mr Speaker, Sir, is becoming very expensive. Although we are giving some legal aid here and there, access, especially in civil cases, is becoming very expensive. Let's take a simple example of a landlord and a tenant. Do you know how many people come in Court and say: *propriétaire pé dire aller*,

*donne moi enn délai?* He is given three to six months. He won't have the means to be legal aided because he and his wife earn Rs5,000 each, and he can't afford to pay a lawyer and an Attorney. Now, with all these costs, he will never be able to pay. We are talking about *ti-dimounes*, tenants. You know as well - you have been a long standing Barrister - how often the reasons put forward are frivolous just to get an increase in rent for "x" and "y" reason. And, as the tenant leaves, there is a new tenant with new rent. So, we have to look into all these because I know as a fact - I work closely with the *ti-dimounes*, mainly in my constituency and others - that they are having difficulties. Probably, we will look at the issue of extending legal aid in cases of landlords and tenants, when we know there is a problem of housing in Mauritius, so that they are not exploited.

Before coming to another issue, let me talk a bit about legal studies. In fact, it was not in the list, I just got a few students who sat for the Bar exams. Now, the new rules make it even more difficult, Mr Speaker, Sir. When we voted that law, we all intervened. We were supposed to make access to legal studies more easy, more equitable, but, unfortunately, it is not so. Now, with the new system in place, there is apparently no resit if you fail more than one paper. If you fail more than one paper, you will have to do another year; the full course. What is worse, Mr Speaker, Sir, the fees were Rs40,000 and, as from next year, it will be Rs100,000; more than 150% increase. This creates considerable hardship to many people because those who study in Mauritius - you know as well as I do - are people who can't afford. It is only yesterday when they went to fill in their forms that they were informed that now they will have to pay Rs100,000. Once again, I will appeal to Government, particularly the hon. Attorney General, to see how - especially those who sat exams last year - we can assist them so that they can resit their exams at a normal rate, instead of having to pay Rs100,000, because they did not know that when they entered into that avenue. It is *en cours de route* that they learnt that it has gone up from Rs40,000 to Rs100,000. Apparently, you have to pay it in advance. By next week or the next 10 days, they have to find Rs100,000 to pay. So, I will make an appeal again - for those young boys and girls who, unfortunately, did not pass the exams - that this matter be looked into.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come to an issue which I raised, but, unfortunately, it was not well ventilated. It is about a sort of controversy - and I don't want it to be - recently in the Judiciary. It is the question of arbitration. Mr Speaker, Sir, in this year's Budget, for the first time the



authorities officially recognise that we have a problem in the Judiciary. I will read paragraphs 256 and 257 –

“Justice is a service that we provide to all our citizens. It must be delivered fairly, efficiently and on time.”

For the first time, we recognise there is a problem in the Judiciary. At paragraph 257, it is said –

“The Attorney General will introduce a Judicial and Legal Provisions Bill to ensure that judgments are delivered expeditiously.”

So, we are now recognising that there is a problem at the level of the Judiciary. Judgment is being delayed, and we all know that justice delayed is justice denied. But, why are we having this problem in the Judiciary? We are having another problem again because there is no legal framework; there are no rules and regulations. I come to the issue of arbitration. Whilst our judges have no time and are finding it difficult to write their judgments expeditiously, at the same time they are taking private arbitrations.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Well, let us say certain of the judges.

**Mr Baloomoody:** I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I understand that it applies only to certain. I am not saying that judges should not take arbitrations. I will quote what I read from the internet yesterday regarding an issue in America, where litigants are challenging arbitration in a court of law, saying that you cannot have two types of justice with the same judge. First, he comes and sits here, and you wait your turn on the roll for your case to be heard, and secondly, by negotiation you retain his services, he comes and settles the case earlier and quicker, which means that if you can afford, you can choose your judge, agree on the fees, and he gives you an early justice. Is it the role of a judge? Let me quote from that arbitration case in America, known as the Delaware case of Chancery, which says and, I quote –

“The judges are facing a lawsuit by a citizens group questioning the legality of judge-run arbitrations and accusing the court of conducting secret proceedings.”

That’s very strong. The question is whether a judge paid by taxpayers should be able to run private arbitrations which, up to now, are secret. Because we know private arbitration is private, and the proceedings are secret.

**Mr Speaker:** You are quoting from a judgment?

**Mr Baloomoody:** No, from an article.

**Mr Speaker:** Could you give the reference?

**Mr Baloomoody:** Yes, it is the Delaware case of Chancery. I don't have the reference.

**Mr Speaker:** Give the case! It is good for reference.

**Mr Baloomoody:** All right, I will look for it. The question is whether we should not have an Arbitration Act to regulate the question of arbitration so that we can have some more transparency, as we have in England. I am sure you are aware that in England there is an Arbitration Act, and the judge can only take arbitration if he is allowed by the High Court Judge, and if the exigencies of service allow him. The fees are regulated and go to the kitty in the judiciary system.

I think that in order to ensure that there is no controversial aspect on our judges, that it is about time we are for arbitration, but it should be done in a regulated manner as it is done in many cases.

Again this morning, my colleagues and I, who are Barristers, were shocked when we heard about the mess at the Tertiary Education Commission. Tomorrow this case may go in court, why do we have to put our judges in such embarrassing positions, getting them to sit on Boards? Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, if that case goes to court tomorrow, hon. Justice Domah might be a party, correspondent or respondent because he is a member of the Board! And we know - from the hon. Minister's mouth - that there has been malpractice. He is going to refer the case to ICAC, he is going to refer the case to the Police and the DPP will have to look into it again and we have a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court on the Board! Here again, we have to review this practice. Is it proper? I am not saying anything against that judge, but I am talking about the practice: should we have judges sitting on Boards? Once again, I will appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that, at least, we have judges who concentrate most of their time doing what they should do, sitting at the Supreme Court, listening to cases and writing a judgement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by saying that I am addressing the House today after seven years continuous Labour Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, our Constitution aims at making Mauritius the land of opportunity. Unfortunately, the Labour Party with its alliance has converted Mauritius over the last seven years into a land of '*roder boue*', a Government which feeds only on slogans and promises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our Republic needs new direction. We need a political renewal based on social justice, the values of which are as follows –

- (i) the equal wealth of all citizens;
- (ii) their equal right to be able to meet their basic needs;
- (iii) the need to spread appropriate opportunities and life chances as widely as possible, and
- (iv) the requirement that will reduce and where possible, eliminate unjustified inequalities, fraud and corruption.

I have done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.03 p.m.)

**Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East):** Praises be to the Almighty God and peace be upon all of us. I wish to thank you once more, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to address this Assembly on the Budget Speech of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before starting my speech, in my capacity as the Leader of the *FSM (Front Solidarité Mauricien)* and, in particular, in solidarity towards all Mauritians, and even further to all suffering nations, I request the House to hold a minute of silence for the victims of Palestine, especially the children.

*(A minute of silence was observed.)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to refer to the remark made by the hon. Prime Minister last week when he was answering the PNQ on arm trafficking. An arm trafficking is really a serious issue. Mention was made of Miss Catherine Austin and I conveyed to this House the fears of Miss Austin for her security if ever she comes to Mauritius and her wish that she be accompanied by CIA agents for her security. At that point, the hon. Prime Minister ironically said that he finds it funny that the Hezbollah is asking for the CIA to come to Mauritius.

**Mr Speaker:** Will the hon. Member give way? If I have heard properly what the hon. Member said; he said that he conveyed on behalf of Miss Austin her fear for her security? Does the hon. Member have her authorisation?

*(Interruptions)*

Did she contact the hon. Member to convey her fear? Did she talk to the hon. Member?

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** Yes.

**Mr Speaker:** And she asked the hon. Member to convey her fear for her security?

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** Yes.

**Mr Speaker:** This is what the hon. Member is saying?

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** Yes. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister, even though he is surrounded by a hoard of advisers and a strong team of the National Intelligence Unit, is not aware that the Hezbollah is no more, is scraped. *C'est un défunt...*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry hon. Member! We are debating the Budget. I would suggest that the hon. Member speaks on the Budget, please! Whatever issues the hon. Member has raised so far have nothing to do with the Budget. So, please, speak on the Budget.

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** I am coming to the Budget. The hon. Prime Minister should understand that I am an elected Member of this House, elected under the banner of *Front Solidarité Mauricien (FSM)*. What can there be as a better illustration of my love, patriotism, best allegiance to my country as well as allegiance to the international community than to ask for security for a foreigner?

**Mr Speaker:** No, no, I am sorry!

*(Interruptions)*

I am sorry! Please just wait! I have to decide. I am the Speaker! I think that whatever the hon. Member is saying is irrelevant to the debate. So, I appeal again to the hon. Member to speak on the Budget; otherwise, I will have no choice than to tell the hon. Member not to continue his speech on that line. However, the hon. Member has the right to speak freely on the Budget.

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** Okay, thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect, having said this, let me now come to the issue of the day, that is, the Budget.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, thank you.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** Then, I will try to make some remarks about my Constituency at the end of my intervention.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget leaves me with mixed emotions. Until now, I feel that our Government has not well understood the sufferings of the people of this island. Since my election to this House, I, under the *FSM* Party, have consistently fought to have a balance and equitable society and we are also eager to see Mauritius progress. I thus take this opportunity to congratulate some of the measures taken in this Budget. Of course, I wanted as much as all

Mauritians to see more pro-poor measures. I am also disappointed by the way Government is encouraging the richer to get even wealthier. Throughout my life, I, and my Party also, have struggled to further improve the life of the poor and vulnerable people of our society.

It is by no coincidence that I am here representing these people in this House, people from all walks of life and from all parts of Mauritius. They sometimes complain that they do not feel that there is peace, justice and liberty all around. Poverty, Mr Speaker, Sir, is rife and growing. This current Budget does not address the bread and butter issues. All this to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that budgeting is forecasting and budgeting is planning. To be able to prepare for the future, we should first alleviate the immediate suffering of the people of this country, then, we shall be confident in the long run. For years, Mauritians have been taken for a ride by believing that there should be some measures of sacrifice to make them better off in the future - *couma tout le temps inn dire bizin serre ceinture*. But, in reality, things in our society are deteriorating.

I have been going through the Budget carefully and precisely. I have listened to all views of this item. It seems to me that we have chosen to give privilege to yet another economic policy which has turned out to be a complete disaster. I should recall the House and, more importantly, the hon. Minister of Finance himself that insistently I have been urging towards a shift of paradigm of our economic system, which, till now, by the absence of measures in that direction, does not appear to have been taken into objective consideration. The ongoing world economic turmoil is here to remind us as a wake-up call, that this way of taking the economic aspect is wrong. Ireland, where our hon. Prime Minister used to live, is a perfect reminder of this economic collapse.

Mr Speaker, Sir, certainly I welcome the measure to make hi-tech equipment and the internet readily available to the poor. I would have preferred that the tablet computer be given to all children, including those from families earning less than Rs10,000. At the same time, I would have liked the Government to provide income support to poor families as well as providing hot meals to children from those families. The gap between the richer and the poorer classes is widening due to modern technology being made available to the wealthier people. This is directly reflecting on their performance at school, as poorer classes show a lower standard of achievement. I thus propose that Government should provide a more sophisticated lab to all schools instead of a tablet computer. By providing proper IT lab, children will be keen to attend

school and each child, no matter what background, should be given equal access to all facilities. All poor families should have been given a grant to attend university.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, we have one of the highest internet rates; connectivity is still today *un mirage pour les pauvres*. And to add insult to injury, after failing to provide laptops, as promised in the past, the Minister has the cheek to propose tablets to the students. Can we forget the Rs400 m. voted in previous Budgets to supposedly assist and alleviate the need and suffering of the people of Agalega? Until now, not a single rupee has been used to construct *une piste d'atterrissage pour les avions*. *Mesure qui aurait soulagé tant de douleur que jusqu'ici, on ne peut y croire*. *Des femmes qui donnent naissance dans l'avion qui atterrit aux Seychelles, l'avant-bras fracturé de ce pauvre qui s'est terminé par une hémorragie* because of having to wait for so long. Is this because these people do not vote for us or represent an insignificant *rapport de force*? The poorer classes need a good balanced diet. Certainly! I profusely insist that Government investigates the cartel that exists among the firms importing food.

Let the Government strengthen the Competition Commission to fight this high injustice. I propose to expand the tax of fat food. There is no competition on beef import, and yet, the Government has not addressed this issue in the current Budget. The banks have been reaping off customers, especially the poor. The policy of treating customers fairly has not been very effective. Bank levy should have been increased and banks should be fined if they continue to apply abusive practice. Setting a cap on interest rates would be a good start. The true economic measures such as taxing currency transactions, bank profits and offshore transactions are long overdue. Just as there is a reduction in lease for hotels and hotel renovations, I would request Government to cap housing loans to families earning less than Rs10,000. I would also request the Government to expand the Double Tax Agreement to Gulf States and similarly introduce flights to Gulf States to attract Arab tourists.

I would like to see a ban on gambling, with no licences given to gambling houses within five kilometres from schools and *lieux de culte*. Moreover, I would expect stricter laws on alcohol.

I welcome the nine measures on law and order, but it does not go far enough to tackle the rising crime and insecurity on the island. Therefore, we need more Police patrolling the streets. More drug control should be implemented with stronger punishment. Extensive protection

should be given to those who inform the Police of drug dealers and more funding should be accessible to treat addicts. A special unit should be created for those addicted to drugs as they do not need prison, but rather they need aid and support and, more importantly, follow-ups.

I wanted to see Government assisting the *marchands ambulants* by creating better facilities and providing alternative jobs for those who want to stop working on the streets and broaden their opportunities. But I have found no solution in this current Budget for the *marchands ambulants*. No answers have been given to the unemployed, *les gradués chômeurs* and the small and medium enterprises. The hon. Minister of Finance has tried a sort of human approach by saying he is giving some hot meals to students of the ZEP schools, but, overall, he came with a formula that makes the solution worst than the problem.

C'est pour moi du clientélisme. Ce budget ne donne pas l'opportunité aux petits de s'émanciper. Les petits entrepreneurs feront toujours face à une lourde bureaucratie alors qu'ils demeurent les garants de notre système économique.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, the people of my Constituency, the people of Vallée Pitot, Roche Bois, Plaine Verte, Vallée des Prêtres and the suburbs of Port Louis, *les marchands ambulants, les maçons, les ouvrières de la zone franche de ma circonscription n'auront pas le temps d'attendre plus longtemps; ils sont dans la peine et ils souffrent.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a high level of prostitution in our country, and yet, no mention on how to control *cette prolifération dans le budget*. There should be a tighter control on the so-called *salons de massage*. A lot was mentioned in the last Budget concerning houses for the poor.

However, we are still waiting to see any construction work being done. Certainly, I have to welcome the project for Karo Kalyptis. There are too many large corporate companies using CSR for their own interest. I want the Government to ensure that CSR Funds and NGOs contribute to Government programmes in a cohesive manner. There have been too many times where NGOs and other corporate companies duplicate their effort with limited success.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have brought to this House the suffering of the people of Agaléga who are from Constituency. I am glad that the Ombudsperson for children is paying a visit to these people of Agaléga but I feel that it is not enough *parce que ce peuple éprouve les pires difficultés du monde pour quitter et pour revenir vers sa terre natale. Les femmes enceintes ne reçoivent pas les traitements appropriés et ces artistes n'arrivent plus à s'exprimer.*

Que dire, M. le président, de cette misère noire qui se propage à deux pas de notre Assemblée nationale, plus particulièrement, là où j'étais il y a quelques jours seulement, à la Cité La Cure. Est-ce que ces gens-là ne sont pas des humains? Pourquoi les avons-nous délaissés? Est-ce comme cela que notre île Maurice 2013 va s'épanouir? Près de 400 familles majoritairement Créole, bien sûr, comprenant des autres aussi qui vivent dans des conditions inhumaines, d'insécurité et dans une pauvreté absolue. M. le président, je vous invite à m'accompagner pour constater *at first hand this drastic situation*.

Je présente à la Chambre ici une pétition signée de 800 personnes. Avec votre permission, M. le président, je vais lire cette courte pétition -

*«Nu bann habitants Cité La Cure, nu habite sa place là depuis trois ans. Avek beaucoup difficulté, douleur nu finn ranz enn lacaz en tol pu casyet soleil ek la pli pu nu zenfant. Pena delo, pena lalimiere, nu encore pe rezister.*

*Nu pe signe sa petition là avec l'espoir qui l'honorable Meeah pu faire entendre nu souffrance ek nu doulere dans pli haut niveau».*

Voilà l'enregistrement, je le remets à cette Chambre!

**Mr Speaker:** I have listened to the Member and especially the contents of the petition. I think this is enough. The Member is not allowed to produce this.

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** Ces gens-là m'ont accueilli, M. le président, avec des larmes puisqu'ils savent que je les représente. Je leur apporte un soulagement et je suis ici comme leur porte-parole *and I am fulfilling this responsibility*. M. le président je sais que les puissances étrangères veulent prendre possession d'Agaléga, mais ils me trouveront sur leur chemin car il faut respecter ce peuple. Cela ne doit pas devenir un deuxième Chagos sous le règne du fils.

The election of Barrack Obama, Mr Speaker, Sir, reminds us, first and foremost, that ethnic minorities are having a more prominent role in societies today. It reminds us also that the working class is more powerful than the financial traders. It shows us that we should listen to the working class and not to any other thugs no matter how nicely dressed with superb speeches they are.

Mr Speaker, Sir, production is the rule of the day. We should believe in our working class and we should gear all our policies towards them, then towards the needy and the downtrodden. But the hon. Minister has preferred to go for those who can pay for a personalised number plate. What a shame at this time where those at the lower rung of the ladder are suffering and can



barely afford at least one decent meal per day. Is that budgeting? This is the way that we have traditionally been ruling *avec une politique partisane et discriminatoire*.

*Ce budget reste silencieux sur les nombreux problèmes de société comme la hausse de la barbarie à la place de la criminalité. We should not continue with this mechanical economic, these economic criteria that are not making our people better. This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, does not address our municipal concern.*

There is not real measure to modernise *l'approche envers les citoyens* and make them benefit more. *Ce gouvernement tente de prendre en otage la démocratie locale, que ce soit municipale ou villageoise. Le comportement des ministres ces jours-ci pour les élections du 02 et du 09 décembre laisse à désirer.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, presenting a Budget within electoral periods and using the MBC for its promotion and as a means of propaganda for the Government, definitely put at stake the concept of free and fair election. But what to do? *Nous sommes en otage d'un système qui se clame d'être démocratique. Soyons sûrs, M. le président, et les honorables membres, que le tout-puissant ne restera jamais l'observateur passif de cet abus.*

*Prenons les annonces pour les petits planteurs ! Il semble que cela va créer encore plus de problèmes que des solutions. This is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should opt for a change et un vrai changement - un changement où l'orgueil n'aura plus sa place mais, main dans la main, chaque fille et chaque fils de ce pays peuvent aider à contribuer pour une destinée plus sûre.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should not postpone problems of today indefinitely. Time is to focus on ways and means to face them. One main area should be improving public service and efficiency, not by going by the IMF or World Bank method, but rather developing a Mauritian homemade approach. *Nous devons combattre le favoritisme, mais où sont les mesures dans ce budget ? Le gaspillage, où sont les mesures ? Le transfugisme - comme ces carapates qui changent de chien pour leur avantage personnel.*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry the Member has to withdraw those words. Does he withdraw?

**Mr Fakeemeeah:** *S'il faut le faire, je vais le faire.* I withdraw. We should not opt for more of the same. We should condemn *la légèreté de notre ministre des Finances*, we should restore confidence. The coming Municipal election will be the occasion for the *Front Solidarité Mauricien* to show the difference, *en termes de volonté et de conviction* in putting the people first *et être au service du peuple pour le plaisir de Dieu.*

*Merci.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Please! No argument!

**Mr Mohamed:** After this speech reading, may I now move for the adjournment of the debate, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Aimée rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 26 November 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

**Mr Aimée rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

*At 6.34 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 26 November 2012 at 11.30 a.m.*