



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2013

CONTENTS

QUESTION (*Oral*)

MOTION

BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

Members

Members

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
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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, Attorney General
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. 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

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 27 of 2013

Sitting of 16 November 2013

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

CPE - ABOLITION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to Government's decision to abolish the Certificate of Primary Education Examinations soon, as announced in the 2014 Budget Speech, he will state –

- (a) the time frame within which the CPE Examinations will be abolished;
- (b) if Form III Examinations will replace the CPE Examinations, and
- (c) the reasons why Government has taken so long to realise that the CPE Examinations stifle the intelligence, talents and abilities of children and impose on them the trauma of being branded as failures at the CPE level.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of the innovative reforms in the Education sector, it has been stressed that we should have a schooling system which facilitates the preparation of our children for life in a very conducive environment so that they can be transformed into global citizens endowed with the right skills and be adequately prepared to integrate the world of work.

In parallel, we want to promote a system of education which is stress-free and devoid of intense competition and, at the same time, do away with the phenomenon of additional tuition. This system should promote holistic development of learners and render learning experiences of children more enriching and enjoyable.

With these objectives in mind, it has been agreed that we come forward with a Nine-Year Schooling System which will be beneficial to our children. The Nine-Year Schooling System was proposed at the '*assises de l'éducation*' in October 2013 and stakeholders had the opportunity to submit their views and to react thereon. The proposal announced in the Budget Speech by my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development is a valid measure and should be implemented in close collaboration with the stakeholders of the education sector.

As pointed out in my speech on the Budget a few days ago, in the Ramdoyal Report of May 1990 on Nine-Year Schooling, it had been advocated that this, I quote –

“System has raised hopes on seeing the bogey of Mauritian Education, the CPE, abolished once for all (...) the trauma caused by the CPE and its partner in evil, private tuition, is the consequence of the intense competition for a place in one of the few ‘star’ secondary colleges”.

I had also mentioned in my speech that, in the submission made to the high level panel of eminent persons (UN), the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group, which I had the privilege to chair, had highlighted the need for countries to stress for a Nine-Year Schooling as part of the Development Agenda for the post 2015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Nine-Year Schooling is a system that rests on the philosophy of being fair and equitable to all learners through increased and more adapted provisions for learners. It seeks to do away with the high stake examinations at the early age of 11 years. It seeks to free teachers, parents and children from being overly concerned and singularly motivated by performance outcomes. It will refocus attention on more meaningful and long term aspects of learning which will contribute to the holistic development of the learner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have over the past years planned for the future in terms of the new strategic orientation for the education sector. It goes without saying that as we embark on a major reform programme like the Nine-Year Schooling, a number of preconditions should be met, as highlighted earlier.

Recent policy measures implemented across pre-primary, primary and secondary subsectors constitutes a solid and strong foundation upon which such a reform programme can now be developed. As a matter of fact, this Government has come forward with new curriculum frameworks for the pre-primary, primary and secondary subsectors.

As regards the pre-primary education, access has substantially improved through grass root intervention – I mentioned from access to pre-primary, from 82.3% in 2004, when my colleague, hon. Obeegadoo, was Minister; I will not blame him, but I have to mention – from 82.3% in 2004 which meant that about 18% of children aged between 3 and 4 were not going to school and has now reached 98%, Mr Speaker, Sir. This had to be done. There were some things that had to be done to reach these results and all this were things that had to be done before we start implementing the Nine-Year Schooling which is supposed to follow. So, the pedagogical gap also...

(Interruptions)

They could not do it because with that access at pre-primary.

The pedagogical gap, Mr Speaker, Sir, between the pre-primary and the primary levels have now been bridged by new systems put in place and as for the primary subsector, new innovative pedagogical programmes have been introduced and the curriculum have been extended and reinforced.

At the secondary level, we have been able to come forward with a new curriculum/syllabus for the lower secondary and implemented a national assessment at Form III level. Moreover, we shall be introducing the *Carnet Scolaire* as from 2014 which will provide a profile and record of all performance and competencies as the child progresses to the whole of the nine-year schooling cycle and also beyond.

These constitute important elements for the foundation upon which the project for the Nine-Year Schooling can be successfully implemented.

It is also important to highlight, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in the context of budget support under the 11th EDF, the EU has opted for the education sector where there are a number of important visible reforms and which had secured the intervention of international development partners like the AFD and ADV. This shows the confidence of our international partners in our education reforms agenda.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to add that during my recent mission to Finland and UNESCO, I had interactions and discussions with counterparts on education and it was noted with satisfaction that we are on the right track and there is keen interest to share Mauritian experiences in Education. All these give us a moral comfort and encouragement to progressively move ahead on our reform programme.

The new CPE reform has many implications in terms of pedagogy, curriculum, textbooks, infrastructural facilities, mode of assessment, allocation of seats, certification, training of teachers, etc. which are being addressed.

In order to implement this budgetary measure, a High Level Committee has been set up to look into the implementation of this new system of schooling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a first meeting of the High Level Committee was chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry a few days ago and comprised core representatives from my Ministry, the MIE and the MES. The High Level Committee will also soon co-opt other members made up of representatives of Trade Unions, NGOs and other organisations who can contribute. The Committee has found that a number of critical factors have to be taken on board for the successful implementation of this measure, namely -

- (i) There should be a conducive infrastructure and environment which favours good teaching and learning.
- (ii) There should be no compromise on the quality of education. Quality assurance would have to be reviewed.
- (iii) Although the CPE examinations will be reviewed, there will be regular and continuous assessment which will cover both the academic part and the acquisition of life skills, which is not at all the case until today.
- (iv) Issues such as the proximity of schools to the residence of the students and level of academic attainment after the 9-year schooling would also be taken into consideration.
- (v) New pathways for higher education and a diversification of learning opportunities.

It is worthwhile noting, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have embarked also in a project for identification of gifted students so that dedicated support could be given to them too. Special pathways will be opened for them; our country should support and nurture outstanding performances of our bright students.

Our existing system refers to pre-primary, primary and secondary sub-sectors.

The new system will have the following -

- (i) Early Childhood Care (ECD) – (3 - 4 years)
- (ii) Basic Schooling (5 – 14 years), that is, the 9-year schooling, and
- (iii) Post 9-year schooling (14 – 18 years)

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the process, we will have to ensure that there is a smooth transition to the new system of schooling. The nine years of basic education will provide parents and students

the assurance that they have a stable school environment for basic education and after 9 years of schooling, different pathways and opportunities would be open to them, much more than what exists today, both in the academic and professional streams.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it goes without saying that the school infrastructure will continue to be upgraded and there is no disparity between schools. Parents will also have to be sensitised on the new system of schooling and this will create much more opportunities for parents to play a more active role.

The High Level Committee is working on the *modus operandi* of the new system and as soon as all implications have been studied and all stakeholders have been consulted, I shall inform the House of the *modus operandi* agreed upon with the stakeholders and implementing guidelines, by way of a statement.

The Committee, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also exploring a number of options which will also be integrated in the 9-year schooling e.g. co-education, different pathways for TVET, specialised schools, setting up of Polytechnics, a greater degree of regionalisation with a new system of scholarship for regional schools and a certificate for lower secondary education.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are confident that the diversification of learning opportunities under the new schooling system, coupled with new modes of teaching and learning as well as an assessment which takes also on board life skills, will provide motivation for completion of the secondary schooling and ultimately higher education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the PNQ in relation to the time frame for phasing out the CPE in the present form, we have to situate the policy context and I wish to stress that there are certain preconditions for the implementation of this 9-year schooling system and this has, of course, to be taken on board. The implementation will cover the third cycle of the primary level, that is, Std V initially and then Std VI. You know now. I have already explained that in Parliament on a few occasions. The primary schooling stage is divided into three sub cycles: Std I and II cycle 1; Std III and IV cycle 2 and Std V and VI. So, I am saying that the implementation will cover the third cycle at the primary level in Std V initially and then, of course, the year after, Std VI.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is no. But I would like to state that with regard to Form III, there is already a National Assessment which has been introduced since 2010 and now covers the following subjects: Mathematics, English, French, Computer Studies and Science. When I say Science, I mean the three subjects: Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Every stage of schooling should have an in-built system of assessment, both continuous and summative. So, to be clear, the Form III exams exist already and will still be further strengthened. But, the CPE as such will be an examination for the Std VI students, as we have an examination for Std IV. *Il y a un autre pour Std V, pour Std VI aussi il y aura un examen comme tous les autres examens.* But the selection process is not going to be based on that examination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for part (c) of the question, I have already stressed that our Education Human Resource Strategy Plan which covers a period 2008-2020 has highlighted the need to implement a series of reform measures that would eventually help to phase out the CPE.

Such measures cannot be drastically implemented overnight, I repeat, and this Government is the first to realise the problems associated with the CPE and took bold...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member will stop laughing soon!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about education here.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Dr. Bunwaree: As much I would have thanked the hon. Leader of the Opposition to have come forward with such an important issue, I expect that we are going to debate it as gentlemen and all educated...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Proceed hon. Minister!

Dr. Bunwaree: Such measures cannot be practically implemented, as I said. And we have taken bold decisions earlier to address a few of them strategically and, over which there has

been consensus. I always kept discussing with the stakeholders and partners of education. Wherever there has been consensus, no voice against, we have moved forward, we have implemented and some bold decisions, as the one which is going to come on 20 December, that is the re-sit for CPE students when they fail in one subject.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have also amended the Education Act held...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition asked three points, I reply the three points.

(Interruptions)

Let me reply, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Bunwaree, you may proceed with your answer. But I will invite you to come to the point.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, I am finishing...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let us try to be to the point!

Dr. Bunwaree: I am finishing. We are proposing to implement this 9-year schooling as from 2015. Let it be clear! As enunciated in the Strategic Plan, there is a need to review the CPE exams as I said, in the current format, so that the pupils who are in their primary schooling possess the required foundation for further studies at the next level.

The review of the CPE will provide a systemic reform to improve efficiency in the primary school system so that there is a higher transition rate from primary to what is going to follow afterwards, that is, 7th, 8th and 9th year.

The underlying objective, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to ensure that learners attain high levels of achievement in literacy, numeracy, ICT and essential life skills while maintaining the standard of quality education.

M. le président, il est bon de souligner...

(Interruptions)

...il est bon de souligner que les actions et le bilan du gouvernement...

(Interruptions)

...il faut souligner. Je vous ai dit qu'il y a une publication qui va sortir bientôt. Vous allez voir ce gouvernement ne se gargarise pas d'effet d'annonces...

(Interruptions)

...de belles rhétoriques...

(Interruptions)

C'est un gouvernement qui traduit ses promesses en réalité.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am sorry to interrupt you!

(Interruptions)

The questions are quite specific and I expect specific answers! There is no need for debate on the whole education system.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the part (c) of the question asked for the reasons why Government has taken so long. This is more than specific!

(Interruptions)

So, I am saying...

(Interruptions)

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are interrupting, so let me show them the graph of what hon. Obeegadoo did with the CPE! *Regardez...*

(Interruptions)

...we are speaking about CPE!

(Interruptions)

The question is on CPE!

(Interruptions)

Je vais circuler cela.

(Interruptions)

To pu trouver la, mo pu circuler la...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I say order! I have...

(Interruptions)

I say order! I have already indicated...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister! I have already indicated the line that the hon. Minister should follow and I expect him to follow the line I have intimated earlier!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Bunwaree: I am helping the hon. Leader of the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And I do not want any...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Bunwaree: He may not know...

(Interruptions)

He may not know that...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Obeegadoo himself has implicitly accepted le progrès réalisé au niveau de l'éducation et de l'économie en générale aujourd'hui. Il a reconnu que le concept du *9-year schooling* était valable dans les années 90, dit-il, parce qu'à l'époque le pays n'avait pas les moyens d'offrir une éducation secondaire à tous les enfants sortant du primaire. Mais les choses ont beaucoup changé. On parle d'un sujet d'importance nationale. Je dis et je le répète, les pédagogues sont d'accord avec le *9-year schooling* et les parents sont d'accord. Qui sont ces honorables personnes pour venir nous dire le contraire aujourd'hui ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Shame! *Aucun applaudissement li pa pu gagner.* Shame on him!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been given no time frame at all within which the CPE exams will be abolished!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I think there is a question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Eta assizer do bourik!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is a question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Budget...

(Interruptions)

... the hon. Deputy Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

... *ale occupe MITD ek banne abus sexuel do imbécile!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Ale occupe MITD...*

(Interruptions)

Voyou sexuel !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, I do not want any provocation from...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: But he starts it again!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, put your question!

Mr Bérenger: In his Budget Speech last Friday, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Keep quiet!

Mr Bérenger: The Vice-Prime Minister said that, after wide consultations, CPE exams will soon be a thing of the past. English is English, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I noted that in his speech last Wednesday, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said something very different. I quote...

(Interruptions)

Si li ti rest finance ti pu ena moins abus sexuel...

(Interruptions)

I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir -

“This will come, pas demain, mais cela ne va pas trop tarder.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all understand what that means. I would wish the Minister to explain to us why this blatant contradiction between what was said by the Deputy Prime Minister concerning the abolition of CPE exams soon and what he has said last Wednesday, and that he has repeated today that absolutely no time frame at all can be given.

Dr. Bunwaree: Je regrette, on n'est pas en train de comprendre soit l'anglais ou le français...

(Interruptions)

J'ai dit que cela va entrer en 2015...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say no interruptions! Allow the Minister to answer!

Dr. Bunwaree: 2015 c'est sûr. Mais mon collègue le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances est venu annoncer le *9-year schooling*. Et quand un *9-year schooling* démarre, automatiquement le CPE, tel qu'il est, va devenir chose du passé. C'est ça qu'il a dit. L'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition a été ministre des Finances, a été Premier ministre, ne sait-il pas, dans un budget, comment ça marche ? On a fait une proposition, il faut qu'on travaille là-dessus maintenant...

(Interruptions)

Mais je vous ai dit et je le dis haut et fort que cela va devenir une réalité à partir de 2015 ! Qu'est-ce qui est plus simple que ça !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, next supplementary question !

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister of Finance was absolutely clear: CPE Exams will soon be a thing of the past, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now, we know that there are people in the Labour Party and others close to the Labour Party who in the past have fought against the abolition of the CPE Exams, and even today, on the radio, in the press, and elsewhere, and I am sure in that so-called High-Level Committee, itself, who are dead against the abolition of CPE Exams. Can we ask how the hon. Minister is going to see to it that those people in the Labour Party and around the Labour Party will not, once more, sabotage the abolition of CPE Exams?

Dr. Bunwaree: Therefore, I understand that the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants this to happen. I thank him for that and, of course, we will...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think he can misrepresent, in your presence, what I have just said, telling me that I wish that the abolition should not take place! I think this is out of order and should be withdrawn.

Dr. Bunwaree: *Il y a un problème là.* I said: 'should take place'. He is agreeable to that, and I thank him for that. This is what I said. So, you are agreeable that it should take place, and you are...

(Interruptions)

Vous êtes en train de vous poser la question ; que se passerait-il si au sein du Labour Party il y aurait des difficultés ? Ça c'est notre affaire, nous oignons, nous allons nous en occuper !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes. Just one minute. But, your answer was not fair. Proceed with the next supplementary question.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, he is never fair.

Mr Speaker: Proceed, with your next supplementary question.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say definitely there will be no National Form III Exams. Can we...

Dr. Bunwaree: I never said that.

Mr Bérenger: Yes, you said that! You said: definitely, no! My question was: whether, the CPE exams will be replaced by a Form III National Exams, and his reply was no. If he wants to check his note, if we have to check, his reply was no!

Mr Speaker: You will have time to reply.

Dr. Bunwaree: I said no, it will not replace the CPE. I did not say no, it will not exist. Your question was...

(Interruptions)

'Bé pose to question bien!' Your question was whether...

(Interruptions)

Il y a un problème avec le *Leader* de l'opposition. Je comprends...

(Interruptions)

La question est...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order, now!

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet! Order! I say order!

Yes! Next supplementary question! Time is running! Next supplementary question!

(Interruptions)

I have said next supplementary question!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I quoted the words used by the hon. Minister of Finance that the CPE exams - not bla-bla-bla; I quoted him - stifled the intelligence, talents and abilities of children, and imposes on them the trauma of being branded a failure at the CPE exams. Does he agree with these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, if yes, can he tell us why the 2003 reform going in that direction - education reform - was sabotaged by the Labour Party and by the then Minister of Education with a counter reform of 2005?

Dr. Bunwaree: Ça c'est une question intelligente, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Là, il ne...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, when he says, 'this is a...', he means that other questions are not. I have had enough of this, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think insinuations are enough!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The principle is...

(Interruptions)

Will you listen now!

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet! I want some order! I said order!

(Interruptions)

Now, I am going to give a ruling. When a question is asked, the answer should be forthcoming without any comments on the nature of the question.

Dr. Bunwaree: Comprenne qui pourra! M. le président, la question qui m'a été posée est une question pertinente à laquelle je dois répondre comme ça se doit. On me demande pourquoi on n'a pas laissé continuer - si j'ai bien compris - la réforme de 2003; c'est-à-dire la réforme Obeegadoo. Mais, c'est parce qu'il y avait beaucoup de problèmes. Premièrement, le système n'était plus accepté. Même le BEC, le Bureau de l'Éducation Catholique, a décidé à un moment de quitter le système, alors qu'il avait déjà démarré. Il y avait peut-être quelques petites choses qu'il fallait maintenir. Mais quand le jugement du *Privy Council* est tombé, est-ce que le Bureau de l'Éducation Catholique avait fait des *HSC Schools*? Il ne l'avait pas fait. Il avait décidé de ne pas le faire.

Deuxième chose, M. le président, les écoles qui ont été mises sur pied par le *then Minister* Obeegadoo, ont été qualifiées - pas nous, même dans le pays - d'écoles fantômes. Je peux vous donner...

(Interruptions)

Je m'explique.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I said order! Proceed, hon. Minister!

Dr. Bunwaree: There were schools which had no building, but yet pupils were admitted, and then had to be diverted to other schools. *Vous voulez avoir les exemples:* Belle Rose SSS.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Don't interrupt the hon. Minister!

Dr. Bunwaree: *Redirected to Sodnac* parce que 'Belle Rose fantôme' n'existe pas. Les enfants ne vont voir que des fantômes!

(Interruptions)

Ebène SSS!

(Interruptions)

Quel *shame*!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Dr. Bunwaree: Ebène SSS. Encore, les enfants vont à Ebène SSS, ils cherchent Ebène SSS, fantôme ! Ils vont à Sodnac.

(Interruptions)

Monneron SSS!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order, now!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, give way! This is the second time I am giving warning. There will be no third warning. You proceed, hon. Minister!

Dr. Bunwaree: I can continue, but I do not want to waste the time of the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes! Proceed, no comment!

Dr. Bunwaree: I stop this. But, there were what we have called '*écoles fantômes*'. They rushed in a project which could not be implemented correctly. Il y a d'autres raisons que je peux donner encore. Mais pire encore - et là, je vais circuler cela parce que quand ils sont venus avec un nouveau système, ils ont administrativement réformé le système du CPE, mais pédagogiquement, zéro, et résultat, voilà, je vous montre, et je vais circuler ça. Je pense que vous voyez, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! I am warning you! I was about to tell you to withdraw. Be careful! Yes, proceed!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Bunwaree: Je pense que vous voyez, M. le président, ce que j'ai mis en rouge. C'est là, quand l'honorable Obeegadoo devient ministre un an après ; donc, il a eu le temps d'agir. Regardez comment les résultats du CPE baissent, et regardez là où mon ami Gokhool vient. Regardez comme ça monte ! Et ça continue à monter, et, M. le président, donc il y avait un problème dans ce système qu'il avait mis en place. Ça ne marchait pas ; et il y avait pire encore, il était venu avec un système de *grading*. *Grade A*, c'était des enfants qui avaient plus de 75 points. Alors, on m'a expliqué - le MES et les experts de l'éducation - qu'avec le système qu'il avait mis sur pied, il y avait beaucoup d'enfants qui ne faisaient pas la composition, par exemple, parce qu'ils disaient: « sans la composition, je peux avoir mes 70 ou 75 points, et j'aurais eu le *grade A*. » Donc, tout le système était chamboulé. Je ne le blâme pas, parce que s'ils ne discutent pas suffisamment comme moi je le fais avec les *stakeholders*...

(Interruptions)

Toutes mes réformes de l'éducation ont réussi ! Toutes les réformes qui ont déjà eu lieu ont réussi, et là on va venir avec la réforme...

(Interruptions)

On me pose la question, il faut que je réponde ! Là, je vais venir avec la réforme du *Resit*, et cela aussi va réussir.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Yes, hon. Obeegadoo!

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the key...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some order!

Mr Obeegadoo: I refer to the last part of the question. Being given that the key issue is the phasing out of the CPE as an instrument of selection, being given that the hon. Minister has confirmed that this has been mentioned since 1990 Rapport Ramdoyal Master Plan, will he confirm that in 1998 Labour Party Minister Pillay had proposed exactly the same thing when, if I am not mistaken, this Minister was Minister of Finance? Will he confirm that, just after he

became Minister of Education, in October 2010, four long years ago, he produced a document, which said that –

“Addressing the problem of high failure rate at the end of Primary and making public spending on education become more cost effective entails that the very purpose of CPE exams has to be reviewed as the present instrument of selection to a record of achievement.”

Four long years ago! Will the hon. Minister then explain if this is not an admission of failure on his part that, at the end of the mandate...

(Interruptions)

...he is telling us that these reforms, that we have always defended, will now be postponed to 2015, when this Government will no longer be in power?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Bunwaree: Not at all! Not at all! *Le problème avec...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to answer!

Dr. Bunwaree: Le problème avec l’honorable membre c’est qu’il croit avoir bien fait ! Il a cru qu’il a très bien fait ! Mais, quand on a vu les résultats – je viens de vous circuler les résultats – catastrophiques pour le CPE même ! Parce qu’il n’a vu qu’un petit bout de la montagne. Il a vu l’arbre, il n’a pas vu la forêt.

Deuxième chose, M. le président, c’est que pour que ce projet de *nine-year schooling* et *phasing out of CPE* – qui vont ensemble – réussisse, il a fallu prendre beaucoup de mesures. Je ne vais pas redire ce que j’ai dit dans la réponse. Mais, il fallait faire beaucoup de choses, parce qu’on ne comprend pas - on n’a pas su comprendre peut-être - que lorsque les enfants évoluent, il y a des évolutions dans leur propre système. Et quand les enfants arrivent supposément en *Form I*, *Form II*, *Form III* maintenant, ils sont obligés – ça c’est une bonne chose – à faire plusieurs matières. Au contraire, nous avons élargi la base à ce niveau. Il y a l’*Entrepreneurship Education* qui a été ajouté ici. Il y a le *Sports* qui est devenu un sujet examinable, où les enfants de *Form I*, *Form II*, *Form III* sont obligés de faire toutes les matières. Ce n’est qu’à partir de la *Form IV*

qu'ils vont commencer à faire le choix de ce qu'ils voudraient être leur carrière plus tard, et le job qu'ils voudront avoir dans leur vie. Donc, il y a des tas de petites choses à faire. Ce n'est pas en deux jours que cela se fait. J'ai dit tout à l'heure que maintenant cela va réussir, parce qu'on a pris plusieurs mesures correctives, et qui donnent leur preuves ! Le *Form III assessment* existe ! Il n'existait pas en leur temps ! Le *resit* en *CPE* ! Pourquoi n'avaient-ils pas mis cela ? Cela existe maintenant ! Tous ces systèmes étaient obligatoires. Eux, ils avaient mis la charrue devant les bœufs.

(Interruptions)

Moi, je mets les bœufs devant la charrue !

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

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, whereas the hon. Minister of Finance states categorically that CPE exams will soon be a thing of the past, *c'est dramatique* that the hon. Minister should have replied 'No', when I asked whether Form III exams will replace CPE exams, meaning that CPE exams will be abolished. He said 'No'. He can only mean that both CPE exams and supposedly some form of assessment will be kept. Therefore, he is contradicting the hon. Minister of Finance, saying that CPE exams are not going to be done away with. Can I, therefore, after what the hon. Minister of Finance has said on behalf of Government, request Government for a firm timetable and a clear roadmap as soon as possible, leading us to the abolition of CPE exams?

Dr. Bunwaree: *Oui, ça c'est le style, mais je veux quand même mettre les points sur les 'i'.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. You have just given a ruling that questions are to be answered without comments coming first, and he goes blatantly against your ruling.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, I have ruled. No comment, but answer the question!

Dr. Bunwaree: D'accord. Mais la question qui est posée, c'est quoi? Mon collègue, le ministre des Finances n'est pas le ministre de l'Education !

(Interruptions)

C'est le ministre de l'Education qui va venir *implement* ce que le ministre des Finances a mis dans son budget. Ça c'est clair. Premièrement, j'ai expliqué tout à l'heure que le CPE va *phase out* automatiquement avec le *nine-year schooling*. Est ce que je n'ai pas dit ça? C'est obligatoire ! Mais seulement, j'ai aussi dit que les enfants qui passent aujourd'hui le CPE sont des enfants de la sixième. Mais, est-ce qu'il y aurait une classe de la sixième sans examens? C'est ça qu'on veut me faire comprendre ? Il y un examen en Standard I, un examen en Standard II, un examen en Standard III, un examen en Standard IV, un examen en Standard V. Il y aura un examen en Standard VI !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Dr. Bunwaree: Cela ne va pas être un examen comme ça existe maintenant ; le CPE !

(Interruptions)

Deuxièmement, l'examen de la Forme III, comme je l'ai dit, existe déjà. J'ai aussi dit qu'on va le consolider, parce que c'est sur la base de cet examen de *Form III* qui va exister. Ce n'est pas un examen qui vient remplacer le CPE, parce qu'il y a un autre examen en sixième qui va venir, obligatoire.

(Interruptions)

Mais les enfants qui ont fait leur *Form III* vont avoir le droit de pouvoir choisir pour aller plus loin, et il y aura un examen. C'est sur la base de cet examen qu'ils vont faire la suite de leur avenir à l'école.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

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.

(12.17 p.m)

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2014) BILL

(No. XXIII of 2013)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2014) Bill (No. XXIII of 2013).

Question again proposed.

Mrs P. Bholah (First Member for Piton & Rivière de Rempart): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start by congratulating our Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, and his team for penning and presenting such an innovative, inspiring and intrepid Budget with groundbreaking measures, despite hurdles such as worldwide recession and climatic calamities like the floods of this year. I also salute the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for his unflinching support, trust and vision.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is no secret that we are living in a world that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let's have some silence and listen to the hon. Member!

Mrs Bholah: ...is unstable. Economic turmoils are destabilising many developed countries across the globe, causing impoverishment of many nations. We humbly recognise that we cannot change the euro crisis or the situation in the United States, but the Minister of Finance has not only managed to bring novel measures, but also prudently managed the checks and balances, in order to buffer and adapt to the impact of these challenges. The Finance Minister

has remained committed to providing a honest, responsible and effective Budget, and to build the base for a better Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we had been promised a series of budgetary measures for the outgoing financial year such as –

- the tapping of African markets by strategically positioning ourselves with regard to African countries and organisations like the SADC;
- the use of higher technologies at grassroots level in the schools;
- social consideration to vulnerable people,

and we have seen the action by the National Empowerment Foundation.

To cite an example, Mr Speaker, Sir, this coming Monday, hon. Minister Surendra Dayal will be launching cattle rearing project at Panchavati, by donating several cows to the breeders; the empowerment of women, we have seen at the PME level and at the level of the Minister of Gender Equality; keeping and maintaining a healthier environment, we have seen so many cleanup programmes to enable our children live in a cleaner world by the Ministry of Environment. These measures will all be seen to fruition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the tourism sector, diversification of destinations has yielded its results by producing some big fat Indian weddings in Mauritius, and eventually reviving growth in this sector.

Looking for new marketing strategies and improving air services for the tourists are some measures to enhance further the growth in this sector. Provision has been made in this Budget for the national aviation company to buy new aircrafts and increase the number of flights to important destinations.

Special funds are being provided for the promotion of regional cooperation, involving also the local hotels. These measures are not just promises. The new airport terminal is concrete proof of how this Government fulfils its promise under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the financial sector, the setting up of antifraud divisions and appropriate legislations had been very effective in combating money laundering and corruption in the world of financial services.

This Budget is further going to provide relief to the middle income group by the application of very important restrictions in the loan condition at the level of local banks. This measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, has indeed been acclaimed in the community of civil servants, and also by private employees who are striving hard to live a decent life and preparing the future of their children by taking loans from banks.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world of technology has risen to such a level that even our primary school children are now benefiting from the facilities of tablets and computer aided teaching. Those who did not receive their tablets the year before will be eligible for them next year, ensuring again that promises are maintained and fulfilled.

The tertiary education is not being left out at all in this new Budget. Mr Speaker, Sir, modern university campuses have already been identified in several regions, including Piton in my constituency, during a recent site visit with hon. Dr. Jeetah, along with my colleagues, hon. Deva Virahsawmy and Dr. Hookoom. This Government is even going further to set up an IIT Delhi Research Academy. The Indian Institute of Technology, which many may know, is one of the most prestigious engineering universities in the world, where the topmost students compete to become worldclass engineers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, research, which is a mechanism of learning for further advancement in the field of education, is becoming more and more demanding in our country today in order to be able to compete with other countries.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, the implementation of the independent rating system and licensing of higher education institutions will ensure the quality of learning and teaching in our universities; by having institutions that are promoting quality education and cutting edge research, we are ensuring that we are moving forward towards a higher level of education and applying modern tools and scientific approaches.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Youth Employment Programme has given a new boost to the new university graduates, who, instead of remaining idle without a job, are being given on the job training and are being adequately remunerated for a decent living. Be it the medical field, engineering, law, creative arts or business, graduates can only cement their knowledge when they have actual practice with clients, interacting with people and dealing with the nitty-gritty

demands of the jobs. Theory can only take you so far, but practice is what puts the knowledge into gear.

Mr Speaker, Sir, talking of unemployment, much is being done to encourage employment of local people in search of jobs by organising job fairs, where the youth from high schools are already postulating for jobs in a variety of employment opportunities such as hotels, business and other local companies.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, the demand for qualified personnel is increasing so much that the Minister of Labour is facilitating the recruitment of professionals from abroad, and the results are visible when we see so many foreign nationals employed in the construction sector and other industries.

To maintain a healthy working environment we need to take good care of our citizens. Mr Speaker, Sir, given the high rate of diabetes and hypertension patients, Government is intensifying its campaign towards prevention and awareness of the nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, modernisation of health care department, such as the recent construction and commissioning of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital has been a concrete example of this Government's commitment towards making health care primary and basic necessity.

Make no mistake hon. Members, without health there is no wealth. Mr Speaker, Sir, the recruitment of new doctors, the increase in the allowance for treatment abroad from 500,000 to 800,000, and the putting up of new specialised hospital is going to be of tremendous help to those who are ailing and need help. Never would have anyone imagined the fluidity in the hospitals these days when all patients are receiving the primary and specialised care after being hospitalised without any delays. From dialysis to blood profusion, from dental care to physiotherapy, one can no longer complain that Government hospitals are lower in standard than the private clinics. Besides, the mediclinics have brought healthcare closer to the community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one generation back, that is, in 1980, there were about 25,000 births in Mauritius, and last year there were only 14,492 births. Despite this gradual decrease in birth rate, our population is increasing. The reason, as we all know, is because of the gradual increase in life expectancy of both males and females which stood at 71 years for males and 78 years for

females in 2012. It was 63 years for males and 60 years for females in 1980, under the correction of hon. Minister Bappoo.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been emphasised, over and over again, that our most important resource is our population. Thus, it is crucial to keep our population healthy and fit so as to be more productive. Awareness programmes are being carried out all over the island by the Ministry of Health. Dieticians with a good formation are very important for the care of diabetics. Just recently, we celebrated the World Diabetes Day, and we noted that number of diabetics has decreased. We need to continue on this trend, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am a dietician by profession, and I know its importance. While it is good to have a huge Ophthalmologic Retinopathy Centre, we need to focus on preventive measures. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is achievable provided there is proper education of patients. Here, dieticians can be of great help.

Next, what about psychologists, especially for cancer patients and families? I am of the opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir, the country should anticipate the need of dieticians and psychologists when caring for chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes and dialysis to look at the social and nutritional aspect of health.

Health is not only defined as absence of disease, but also incorporates the wellness and wellbeing aspect of the individual and that includes mental health, improvement through support of counsellors and follow-ups with dieticians. This, in turn, increases productivity of individuals.

This present Budget has been most appropriately tailored to deal with the new health challenges facing the population. The significant increase in health budget allocation testifies the commitment of the present Government to meet the health care needs of Mauritians and the good work being done by our Minister of Health, hon. Lormus Bundhoo. How frequently did we come across individuals, standing near strategic public places, soliciting the generosity of passers-by to contribute for sending sick relatives abroad for treatment? Fortunately, such sights have become significantly rare since last year, because of the increase in the monetary allocation for individuals for overseas treatment. The recruitment of additional medical and nursing staff in hospitals as well as the implementation of shift system in the Accident & Emergency Unit will go a long way to further improve health services and patient care. It will also be a significant relief to the new doctors eagerly waiting to be employed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to maintain a healthy nation, the environment needs to stay clean. Solid waste and natural landscapes are being looked after in a better way by means of additional budgets to the local Government and its local councils. With the increase in the number of local councils, the rural and urban agglomeration are being better looked after, in terms of cleaning, embellishment, greening landscape and improvement of the natural topography so as to cater for the tourist attractions. The relooking of the Roches Noires public beach and the rehabilitation of various other coastal areas by the Ministry of Environment, my colleague, hon. Deva Virahsawmy, are some examples. On the other side, the local infrastructure budgets have been more than doubled, and government is leaving no abandoned lands uncared, thus avoiding proliferation of mosquitoes and associated epidemics.

On the other side, Mr Speaker, Sir, here, my sincere congratulations to the hon. Minister, Mrs Mireille Martin, for having launched the one-stop shop under the 2013 Budget at Rivière du Rempart, where women can get opportunity to showcase their various activities to entrepreneurs' skills, whilst, at the same time, women will benefit from training in many sectors such as home economics. They will be able to express their talents without having to go to the cities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the deadly flash floods of February and March 2013, this Government has left no corner of this country uncared. Major rehabilitation works in flood affected areas, such as Marie Reine de la Paix, Bell Village, Canal Dayot in Port Louis, have reached considerable progress and are nearing completion. Some Rs1.3 billion is being sent under the Emergency Programme so as to secure the inhabitants in the flood affected areas, in addition to having provided immediate relief to the victims of floods. We all recall the terrifying waters in which our relatives have lost their lives. This Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, immediately concentrated its efforts in the relief and rehabilitation works, and the results are visible now, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We are confident that if such floods reoccurred due to the effects of climate change, there shall be no casualties in these regions. In other difficult flood prone areas, studies have already been carried out by foreign consultants, jointly with local counterparts, through a Watershed Management Study, under the assistance of the World Bank, and upgrading works are to start very soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, many other localities have been made safe from floods which occurred on 13 February 2013. To name a few examples in my constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir, the village of Gokoola which was flooded on 13 February has now seen a 4-metre large drain of length of about 3 kilometres stretching out to l'Amitié, and discharging safely in Rempart River and in the Mon Loisir area. Other villages such as Barlow and l'Amaury have also seen a transformation of the rural landscape into secure areas, where waters are flowing safely under the bridges and in the new canals. People can now build their houses in safety, and embellish their yards without fear of being inundated during heavy rainfalls.

Since the phenomenon of climatic change is bound to affect our country through cyclones, floods and other natural disasters, this Government, under the vision of the hon. Prime Minister, has, in a short lapse of time, set up a Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre, which is already operational since a month. This centre shall ensure that all measures are taken through electronic data and early warning systems, and that the population is safe from one of any forthcoming natural disastrous phenomenon such as tsunamis and sea surges.

Talking of the sea, Mr Speaker, Sir, the encouragement given to fishermen and those in the field of aquaculture through grants, and facilities, but boost the seafood hub already in operation, whereas the removal of VAT from the purchase of all agricultural equipment and the payment of advances in sugar sector being maintained, provides a reasonable relief to the sugar cane growers, seen the loss of interests in agriculture, in the Mauritian population, these days.

Mr Speaker, Sir, talking of infrastructure in Mauritius, the preparation of the Mauritius Light Rail Transit Project, assisted by the Singapore Government, was triggered by our Prime Minister, followed by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, hon. Anil Bachoo. This project is definitely going to be a milestone in the transportation system. Not only shall it change the outlook of Mauritius into a very modern landscape, but provide a rapid means of reaching one's destination.

The Decongestion Programme, under this Government, has seen so much work achieved, as never seen before. The third lanes along the motorways, the by-pass in several densely populated rural villages, the Terre Rouge-Verdun highway are among some examples of the huge investment in the transportation sector made by this Government. Besides, Mr Speaker,

Sir, in my constituency, the completion of the second phase of the new Schoenfeld Road shall bring a lot of relief in terms of time saving and safety for the road users.

Other small road improvement projects such as Piton junction in Constituency No. 7 and Mapou roundabout, and also in other constituencies, have been earmarked under this Budget and shall be implemented very soon. My sincere thanks to the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, and the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Anil Bachoo.

Similarly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the budgetary provision for a sustainable supply of water and energy to the Mauritian public is of utmost importance for this Government. Various encouragements given to the small scale power producers through this Budget shall enlighten the load on the CEB power stations which are mainly running on oil and bagasse.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while hard work is being done to improve infrastructural systems to provide security and safety for our citizens, it is also important to make avail some leisure and sports facilities, mainly for the youth and for everybody else. The budgetary provision for numerous football grounds and the recreation of the emblematic soccer teams *d'antan* will surely revive the craze for local football, while at present our attention is more focussed on English Premier League teams such as Arsenal and Manchester United. The hon. Minister of Sports is doing so much to rekindle the flame and raise the standard of the Mauritian football, and I wish him the best of luck.

Education has had a significant earmarking of funds, and we will see major changes in our educational system. Of course, the 9-year schooling has been debated for the past few days. This measure will ensure that our children remain in school for longer and not be thrown out of the system at the end of six years only. It also aims to maintain the level of literacy and numeracy high. Such a measure will be implemented after research, pedagogical consultation and a solid plan. However, to put any groundbreaking change in action, the wheels have to be set in motion. Mr Speaker, Sir, while the Opposition can only indulge into negative discourse and giving us flak, this Government has had the guts to come up with such a plan, and to move ahead with action. With all that we have to accomplish under our Prime Minister's vision, we have no time to rest on our laurels.

The introduction of music classes at primary school level, Mr Speaker, Sir, will definitely have a positive impact on the learning and listening capacities of school children. This measure

has been met with derision, by critics in the Opposition. However, research has shown that early music training has an impact on cognitive development such as language skills and executive functioning. At that early age, when the brain is still plastic and can be modified according to what we learn, music training not only develops math notions with the use of half notes and keeping time during music, but also gives a sense of relaxation and a different way for learning to take place aside from in a verbal fashion. The inculcation of love for music, the understanding of musical lyrics since early childhood makes an individual an intellectual without limitations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

While concluding, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can say that this Government is aiming at reaching a higher level of living standard, producing stars of music, cinema and sports like the recent gold winners in the field of kickboxing, reviving the love for local football, reducing the time wasted in travelling through congested areas by travelling in ultra modern trams, and eventually live in a world of sustainability where the country can stand on its own foot as far as possible, given that there are no mines yielding gold or iron.

This is the wish of all of us here, especially the hon. Prime Minister and this Government, which, I am sure, will be in place for many years to come, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for one hour fifteen minutes.

At 12.46 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.04 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Roopun!

Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, events unfolding since the last year's Budget has proved to be enlightening for the whole population in many aspects. It has enabled us to see the true face of this Government and of our leaders. We have been accustomed to the manifest lack of true leadership and inability to take prompt decision, and to this, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have now to add some other virtues.

Before coming to this, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned that Mauritius has, this year, for the first time ever, become the most competitive economy in Africa.

And here, what are those virtues, Mr Speaker, Sir? We have now witnessed clear cases of cronyism, abuse of power, double standard, and repression.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this time, last year, we heard how our Minister of Education and Human Resources was dealing with a case of alleged child paedophile, how he reacted, and up till now, we don't know where matters stand. The one who raised that issue, here in this House, and eventually outside this House, was arrested in December, was to be detained, called back again in January, but Mr Speaker, Sir, the alleged main suspect was convened to the Police only months after; if I am not mistaken, around August and October this year. There are so many examples, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will just make reference to a few. We know what happened the day following the Municipal Elections in Dr. Maurice Curé SSS, what entailed abuse of power, Senior Police Officers transferred, arbitrary arrest, search warrants, and this lady today has risen to stardom and is a very successful businesswoman.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have also discovered how a driver of Mauritius Telecom, by sheer proximity to power, was turned a multimillionaire with accounts in Singapore and other countries, holding immovable properties abroad; how a previous Town Councillor who, while on bail on a case of alleged corruption, was operating a Ponzi scheme in the very building where the regulator is housed. The very building, Mr Speaker, Sir! We learn also about brothers and close relatives of Ministers getting contracts, becoming key players in strategic sectors like higher education, energy and the port. How can I not, on this line, Mr Speaker, Sir, mention the case of this businessman who happened to obtain a piece of State land, took a loan from the State Bank - now the SBM - to build a building which was going to be sold later on to the State Insurance Company of Mauritius?

I fail to understand what level of good governance we are talking, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what intrigues me when we talk about good governance. We are supposedly to be one of the best countries in Africa. We are number one. On a different line of thought, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have all witnessed the amateurish manner in which this country is being run. We have had the NTC saga which highlighted how this Corporation could not for years renew its fleet, merely because of tug of war between the Minister and the Chairman of that Corporation. I won't come into detail, but at least it's good that we refresh our memory about it, because I have got my friend who went back as 1980, 1982.

I just want to talk about what happened this year, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have seen lack of responsiveness of the Disaster Committee earlier this year, lack of proper equipment at the Meteorological Services. Here, one hon. lady who just spoke before me was trapped with no other than the Project Manager of the NDU. You know where, Mr Speaker, Sir? At the epicentre of our capital city; on the main street. She was trapped in her car. And what happened? We had to give a special public holiday that day. What happened, Mr Speaker, Sir, thereafter? What we would have thought the Government of the day could have done? We are not talking about a remote place around the island. I used the words 'the epicentre of our capital', used by so many every day. We had to wait weeks. There was culpable neglect on that same spot about one month thereafter. We had, I must say, fortunately, only a handful of deaths, because we know it was a day where we did not have so much traffic inside Port Louis, and we know what happened, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, why I wanted to raise those few examples is because here, for these examples I have just given, we are not concerned with a Minister down in the ladder. We are concerned with two powerful and mighty Ministers within this Cabinet, namely the hon. Prime Minister, and one of the hon. Vice-Prime Ministers, who is number four in this Government, who are responsible for those departments which were involved, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is why I wanted to raise this issue, to put everything in context within what we are boasting we are. I do not have the habit of being over critical, but, at least, I wanted to put it in the right perspective, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have also this double standard.

The hon. Prime Minister, so mindful, it is said, of the institutions. We have here examples of how persons who are not close to the power are treated! Do you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir! There was an unfortunate incident with the previous Attorney General, someone with whom we sympathise. There was nobody coming forward to make a statement to the Police, until the time the hon. Prime Minister of this country made a public declaration stating that whoever has got information can safely come forward. What is the signal, Mr Speaker, Sir? It is a *désaveu* to our institution, which is called the Police Department. This is what saddens me, Mr Speaker, Sir, irrespective of what we have. Others may say politicking or whatever, but these are fundamental issues over which we should ponder.

Mr Speaker, Sir, fortunately - forgetting the ranting we have heard of a few Members on the Government side - I know that over there, there are many seasoned politicians; humble, experienced. They know how uneasy they are with such things happening in our country. Unfortunately, they are bound, I understand, by solidarity, but, at least, we know, whatever may be in this Budget Speech, if we are sincere to ourselves, what is the mood outside today. We know it quite well.

Just to say, *en passant*, just to remind; the Government did not organise any public rally for 01 May. We know the reason! We know the reason, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the situation we have been seeing over this whole year. And I must tell you people outside are in a situation where they have lost faith in this Government. There may be silence for certain specific reasons, but I have serious apprehension what lies behind this silence.

What troubles me is that when I read this Budget, the way it is written, it's as if we are maintaining the *status quo*. There is nowhere I can see, I can feel this compassion for the people who are suffering outside. I may be wrong. This is only my impression. But, it's as if everything is okay; we are doing well in such and such fields; we have moved three-quarters to our destination as regards our standard of living. So, we proceed in the same direction. But I ask myself, Mr Speaker, Sir: is this the right attitude? Do we have a Government here, which is taking stock of the situation? Coming with measures? Even not with measures, but, at least, to show their concern that they are caring, they understand the plight outside. I will give you an example, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I have been in the legal profession for nearly 30 years now, and I have clients who are well settled in business and commerce owing – you will be shocked, Mr Speaker, Sir – rent mostly for Rs2 m. What is still more saddening? The landlord won't ask them to leave. He is giving them latitude, because he knows that whenever this one is going to go, this property is going to stay idle. This is the situation that we have got today, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This is why I'll make a solemn request to everybody in Government: you are here, you have to govern, you have got your problem, but the country should not suffer because of this. This is my plight, and this is my request to this Government. Please, try to understand the situation outside.

You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been here all of us; we have been debating this present Budget. I think hon. Bhagwan mentioned it; there is a complete disinterest. Nobody is interested, be it in this House, be it outside. I was shocked, Mr Speaker, Sir, that today - I have not been reading the newspapers for the whole week...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt you. You can't say 'nobody'. There are so many hon. Members listening to you!

Mr Roopun: I rephrase it. The interest which I have noted in the past is failing, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't see the same interest; be it here, be it outside. There was some curiosity for the first one or two days, but this faded out very quickly. I am asking myself the question. What is going to change after we have debated this present Budget and what are we going to achieve? The hon. Minister of Finance stated about a feel good factor being created. I ask myself whether - not a feel good factor - there is any feeling at all, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will recall in my intervention on the Budget last year, I talked about the way we handled this very important exercise. I stated that whether we are doing justice to this most important exercise which this House has to conduct every year and I am still reflecting on it, whether in two or three weeks we are doing justice to this exercise. I applauded the other time, when the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance stated that he was going to put at the disposal of the PAC two Financial Analysts. I am not Member of that Committee, but I ask hon. Members who are here whether these two Financial Analysts have been made available to this Committee. My information is that no Financial Analyst has been there to assist this Committee.

I won't repeat what I stated last time, but in a nutshell I say that I think the whole exercise should be reviewed so that, at least, this oversight which we have on the Executive, we should have a better mechanism through which we can do this very important duty, Mr Speaker, Sir.

On this same line, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me, I take this opportunity to speak now about this Parliament as an institution. We all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have three branches of Government, and there is this issue of separation of powers. We have to move forward.

On the issue of PAC, I will ask Members from this Committee to try to see; not far away. I am not stating countries that have got a long tradition of parliamentary democracy. We can learn a lot from what is happening in Africa itself, how the PAC is functioning, what are the facilities that are being given to the PAC to do its functions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Parliament is supposed to be overseeing the Executive, but we know what has happened over the years. The role, the power of Parliament compared to the Executive, how it is proceeding, Mr Speaker, Sir; the way things are being done. I'll float this idea: whether Parliament should not be totally independent from the Executive, with a separate budget, which this institution should try to administer - completely separated from the Executive. I think we should give this a serious thought, Mr Speaker, Sir. In other jurisdiction, not only the administration is completely different, even recruitment is done in some other way, which shows that independence.

Coming back, Mr Speaker, Sir, to this overview function we have got, we have seen that you are limited by the Standing Orders. If a question is asked, be it the most pertinent, you have no control whether the hon. Minister answers or do not answer; we are bound by our Standing Orders. Is this something which is modern? Are we proning now good governance? Transparency, this is what we are proning. So often, parliamentary questions which have to be tabled, because we could not reach them because of time constraint, are never forwarded. At times, one question – the Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Member mean answers to parliamentary questions?

Mr Roopun: Yes, written answers. Sorry, I think that I mixed up a bit; written or oral answers which have not been reached, and which have to be filed.

Just another example, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the view - and I want to share it here with hon. Members – that even if the Chair thinks that a particular question by an hon. Member is pertinent, and the hon. Minister does not have the answer right now, and it is something which is crucial to the matter in question, the Chair should have the right to suspend this question and ask the hon. Minister to come back with the required information. This is what I want to see; some dynamism in this House, so that we can function properly, Mr Speaker, Sir. These are mere suggestions, Mr Speaker, Sir, but at least I wanted on the same line try to see how we can move forward this institution, and also try to make the Executive more accountable, and have a proper

balance between the power given to this institution and also vis-à-vis the Executive, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with this, I come to another aspect which I consider very important. It is about the way the Budget itself is prepared. Mr Speaker, Sir, I agree that there are in any Budget various elements which may be very confidential and which cannot be disclosed beforehand, and which should be included in the Budget Speech even if the mechanism has not yet been fully worked out. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, on issues which have not got this sensibility like we have here - forget the issue whether it should be in the Budget Speech altogether - coming with a line stating that we are going to abolish CPE or having nine-year schooling without any previous consultation, reviving football by appointing traditional teams or others, and then working on it, this is something which I am a bit uneasy with, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In the same line, we have built an airport, it is now operational, and now we state that it is going to be part of whatever hub. I tried to read a few articles on it when the hon. Prime Minister went through the inauguration and a few others, nowhere did I see any mention made of what is being written here in this Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that when the hon. Prime Minister is going to intervene, he is going to enlighten us, whether there has been a previous planning, whether there has been consultation, who worked on them, and how we came to that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is why I ask myself: how do the various Ministries work? Last Friday, during the Budget Speech, we heard what was stated about the CPE exams. Surprisingly, there was a communiqué which was issued on Monday by the Minister. I wonder whether there has been consultation before, and how there is interaction between these two Ministries, whether there is a department thinking strategically regarding planning, where it is found, at the PMO, in each Ministry, and who is doing the planning for this country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I must tell you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I regret that we no longer have a Minister of Economic Planning and Development. I regret it and I put this also, both from the front bench of Government and also from the front bench of the Opposition. With all these challenges coming and which are likely to come in the future, who does this strategic planning for our country?

Mr Speaker, Sir, there had been a lot of papers regarding what causes the success of this country, irrespective of Government. I won't come into that, but one of the reasons was our proactiveness. The second reason which has been advanced is that we have been doing everything through consensus, Mr Speaker, Sir; consensus among stakeholders, consensus between the public sector and private sector. When I talk about consensus, I come again to this issue of education.

Just to explain my point of view, we are now planning, envisaging to put into place something which was discussed nearly 25 years ago; the report of 1990 which talked about nine-year schooling. So many Ministers passing by, and now we are coming back, basically with the same situation that we were to establish 25 years ago. What a waste of time, resources and energy, Mr Speaker, Sir! What have we created in the meantime, Mr Speaker, Sir?

I am not blaming only the policy-makers, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am also blaming those supposedly experts who help to frame those policies. If you are an expert in a particular subject, in a particular domain, you can't blow hot and cold at the same time. If you have advice and you think, in your deliberate judgment, that a particular plan is good for this country, you yourself cannot, because of a change of Government, also change your conviction. I think this is something which we have to think over; who are those advising the policy-makers and what should be done, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether they also should not, in some way or another, be accountable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard a lot of this Budget. I won't try to be too negative, and at least acknowledge two measures, which I think go in the right direction. The first one I have in mind is the decision of the Government to try to regulate the amount which a commercial bank may charge as interests. I applaud this measure, Mr Speaker, Sir. I must be frank with you. I have known many cases where there has been abuse. We know now, Mr Speaker, Sir, banks, as a whole, have got a quasi-monopoly in granting loan, today. Irrespective of Competition Commission and all the legislation, we know what the situation on the ground is. I applaud this measure to try to regulate the amount of interest which is being charged, but I wonder, if Government considers that what is going on is unfair, why we limit it to individuals only. If it is a practice which is wrong, I am asking myself the question why it only concerns individuals.

Another measure, which I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should commend is the issue about State lands. These leaseholders, I may term them to be quasi-owners of those plots of land. They have been there for so long, but it is only a small piece of paper conferring them the ownership, not of the house, because the house has been for them most of the time, but of the land on which this house is situated. What is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that once they get a title to that land, everything becomes so simple. If a leaseholder dies, leaving three or five children, it has been the policy of the Ministry to transfer the lease only to one of them, not to all the five heirs. There are lots of administrative hassles, lots of uncertainties regarding all those who are residing in that house, and above all, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing can be done with the assets they have. It is very difficult for them to take a loan, it is very difficult for them to make any arrangement between heirs, and finally we are left with a situation where there is uncertainty; there is deadlock. I think that it is a wise decision taken by this Government, be it by the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Housing and Lands, that this is regularised. In so doing, it is going to help the Ministry, but, above all, the leaseholders themselves. Once we put this property *dans le commerce*, it becomes easier for those who own them to try to do whatever they deem fit, be it a *règlement de propriété*, be it a sale of undivided rights amongst heirs. I may go on quoting a lot of other advantages, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now wish to rectify something which has been stated in this House a few days ago, during a PNQ, regarding the issue of football. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister is not here, and I state that it is rather unfortunate that he misquoted an interview which was given by Sir Anerood Jugnauth. I'll just make reference to it, Mr Speaker, Sir, and quote what Sir Anerood Jugnauth stated just before the part which the hon. Minister referred to. In this interview, Mr Speaker, Sir, the previous Prime Minister made it a point to state –

“C’est malheureux, mais nous étions arrivés, à l’époque, à une situation où il fallait faire quelque chose. La situation était devenue grave, malsaine. Certains matchs finissaient dans un climat de violence (...)”

And then, he went on to state that perhaps this is why we resulted in the regionalisation, and subsequently we know what happened. Just to say here, Mr Speaker, Sir, where, how, and when the situation degenerated.

It was not in the nineties. It was at a specific period of time in the history of this country. And if it degenerated to such an extent that everything had to be banned, it was essentially not a question of football, but a question of law and order. We should not mix issues. It is not because there have been some problems that we should mix things. During that same time, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2003, may I remind this House that the Mauritian team got the gold medal at the *Jeux des îles*, and this also, during a time when there was regionalisation? Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is perhaps the only time in our history that we were able to win over South Africa? We did it, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why we should not try to amalgamate everything, but we should try to be very rational. In this interview, Mr Speaker, Sir, Sir Anerood Jugnauth also gives the clue as to how we can *relancer le football*. I am going to quote what he stated, Mr Speaker, Sir -

“Il faut ouvrir des écoles de football pour enseigner aux jeunes. Il faut aussi que le gouvernement investisse massivement dans le sport. Je ne parle pas de petits subsides, de petites mesures, mais d’une aide conséquente, avec pour objectif de relancer, sur de bonnes bases, le football à Maurice. Je pense, par exemple, que le profit du loto pourrait servir à cela. Il faut créer une équipe nationale, professionnelle, dans laquelle se retrouveraient tous les Mauriciens.”

I think that, by trying to put what was stated the other time in context, we now have a better idea of what had been stated by Sir Anerood Jugnauth in this interview, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I’ll take another matter, which I think is of concern to every one of us. I see that you are watching the clock, but I won’t be too long. I will take the issue of law and order, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is something which concerns every one of us. We know that time and again the hon. Prime Minister quotes statistics, stating that there is a decline in the rate of crime, but, unfortunately, nobody believes him, including myself, Mr Speaker, Sir. Previously, there were certain posh areas which were the target of criminals. Do you remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, a house in l’Amaury, Rivière du Rempart, which was burgled? Do you remember there was a heinous crime in Castel or Hermitage, which occurred some time back, where an old lady was molested? Can you tell me which part of this country is safe today? In Flacq, in my constituency, we had lately a trader who was killed at the time he was leaving his shop. There are so many around, Mr Speaker, Sir. My understanding of the situation is that it is not a question of putting more materials, having more policemen, but I think the problem is more

serious than this. We have got, first and above all, a problem of leadership in this Department. We have got someone at the head that we never see and never hear. We have got so much frustration in that sector, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Here, hon. Bhagwan, very often raised the issue of the type of materials that have been provided. We heard, the other day, that half of these policemen were allegedly engaged in some other commercial activities. My personal feeling, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that if we take this issue together with the issue of illicit drugs, there should be a thorough enquiry about the way our Police Department is organised. We should do some real thinking, whether structural changes should be brought and what the real problem is. Why is it that we have got this security problem in our country? And side by side, we also have to consider the social aspect of crimes because criminals live in an environment and we know what prompts them. But I think there should be some serious thought on that issue also, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also have a few other matters to raise, but, unfortunately, I have run out of time, and I won't take the time allotted to my friends. I will end up by making reference to my constituency, as it is the tradition. I won't, as I say, add insult to injury by demanding more works to be done in my constituency. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure is here. I am not saying that there is no work to be done. There is. But, at least, I wanted to remind my other friends from that same constituency that hon. Khamajeet, in his zeal to talk about issues which have nothing to do with the working of this House – of which I won't come again – forgot to realise that he is also the PPS of that constituency. I have read his speech, and I just want to remind him that I have not seen a single word that he stated about what is happening as far as Constituency No. 9, where he is the PPS, is concerned, and what he is doing.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon Issack!

(2.48 p.m.)

Mr R. Issack (Fourth Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): M. le président, je me laisserai inspirer par un proverbe chinois -

« Tout le monde aime la flatterie, chacun se méfie de la franchise. »

Je n'ai pas l'intention de flatter qui que ce soit. Mieux vaut se méfier de moi aujourd'hui, mais je laisserai les faits parler d'eux-mêmes. La meilleure de toutes les flatteries, je suppose, c'est la vérité. La vérité peut être pour vous. La vérité peut être contre vous. Mais, de nature, je ne suis pas un thuriféraire, quelqu'un qui balance l'encensoir pour grossir et embellir une image qui n'en ait pas une.

Le gouvernement a son rôle à jouer. L'opposition aussi a un rôle à jouer. Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons une philosophie, nous avons un budget, nous présentons le budget, nous annonçons les mesures, et nous explicitons nos arguments. Nous faisons comprendre ce que nous voulons offrir au pays et aux habitants de ce pays. Notre devoir, évidemment, c'est de justifier notre action.

L'opposition a un rôle à jouer. Quel doit être le rôle de cette opposition que nous avons en face de nous ? L'opposition doit relire le discours du budget, éplucher le discours, le décortiquer et l'analyser, et, par la suite, dire ce qu'elle pense. Elle a le droit et le devoir de s'opposer à notre philosophie, à certaines mesures ou à la plupart des mesures. Cela est leur droit le plus absolu. Mais ce que nous attendons d'une opposition, c'est la critique intelligente, la critique honnête. Des hommes et des femmes qui sont honorables doivent effectivement avoir un comportement honorable, tout aussi bien qu'une pensée honorable. Critiquer oui, mais constructivement ! Ce qui est important c'est aussi faire des propositions. Nous, nous sommes là pour écouter. Si on souligne nos manquements, ce sera à nous de les corriger, et de tout améliorer. Le rôle de l'opposition c'est aussi de nous orienter dans nos actions.

Mais le constat, M. le président, est alarmant, et ahurissant même. L'opposition n'a qu'un objectif. Que dis-je ! Une obsession: démantibuler ce gouvernement, noircir ce gouvernement, le faire partir au plus vite, en donnant une claque à la démocratie, parce que nous avons été élus démocratiquement. Nous sommes un choix du peuple. Alors, l'opposition veut nous déboulonner. Mais cette clé pour déboulonner Navin Ramgoolam n'a pas encore été inventée, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

En écoutant les membres de l'opposition, parfois je me demande avec quel cynisme, quel crétinisme ils s'adressent à cette Chambre ! J'accepte qu'ils nous critiquent, mais ils viennent de l'avant avec des arguments fallacieux, avec des arguments puérils, inimaginables. Mais, M. le

président, reconnaissons quand même, parce que nous sommes honnêtes... Reconnaissons quand même qu'il y a des membres de l'opposition qui font honneur à l'opposition. Ils s'expriment avec honnêteté. Ils sont très clairs dans leurs arguments. On voit qu'ils sont des gens, des hommes et des femmes responsables, et nous apprécions de telles personnes. Mais nous nous demandons si, de l'autre côté, il y en a qui nous apprécient ici. Peut-être que l'honorable ministre des Finances n'aurait pas eu à présenter un budget, parce qu'on aurait eu beaucoup d'argent en excès si jamais il fallait mettre une taxe sur la démagogie...

(Interruptions)

On ne peut pas venir dans une instance suprême comme le parlement pour se comporter comme des oiseaux de mauvais augure.

(Interruptions)

Dans son cas, des couleuvres de mauvais augure! La façon dont ils s'acharnent sur nous c'est comme des loups affamés qui veulent nous déchiqueter, et maintenant il y a aussi des vautours, parce qu'on s'attaque aussi aux morts. L'opposition scandalise tout. L'opposition ne voit que des scandales. Nous n'avons pas le droit d'esquisser le moindre geste, parce que c'est un scandale.

M. le président, comment gérer tout cela? En poursuivant notre action, parce que l'opposition a une façon d'agir. Certains membres de l'opposition sont, pour prendre une expression de la Bible, 'Méphistophéliques', diaboliques. On satanise tout! Ils ont une vision noire, apocalyptique. Tout cela, M. le président, vous savez pourquoi? A cause du pouvoir! Ils ont besoin du pouvoir. Mr Henry Kissinger avait dit –

« Le pouvoir est l'aphrodisiaque suprême. »

Dans leur délire, on croirait qu'ils ont pris du viagra avant de venir ici vider leur colère, leur haine, leur venin sur un gouvernement qui fait tout pour apporter un peu de bonheur à ce peuple. Tout est fait par eux pour laminer ce gouvernement. Nous savons qui ils courtisent. Nous savons pertinemment bien pourquoi ont-ils dit que ce n'est pas un budget de Xavier Duval, mais un budget de Ramgoolam. Parce qu'on aura à critiquer pour le besoin de critiquer. Mais, mon cher ami, l'honorable Roopun, disait, il y a quelques instants, qu'aujourd'hui c'est un peu le vide. Ces jours-ci, ce n'est plus comme avant. Il n'y a pas beaucoup de gens au parlement pour venir parler

de ce budget. Evidemment, M. le président! On n'a rien à dire. Qu'est-ce qu'on viendrait faire ici? L'opposition – regardez, c'est vide. On n'a pas beaucoup de choses à dire!

(Interruptions)

M. le président, nous avons devant nous deux oppositions.

(Interruptions)

Hé, mo pas pé cause transfuges là! Ecoutez!

(Interruptions)

On viendra là-dessus.

(Interruptions)

Atane, nou pou guetter cote transfuges la été!

M. le président, nous avons en face de nous deux oppositions. Et qu'est-ce que ces deux oppositions ont en face d'eux? Eux-mêmes! L'opposition face à l'opposition. Et ils parlent de *remake*.

(Interruptions)

On va voir là, le *remake*.

(Interruptions)

Notre rêve, M. le président, c'est leur cauchemar.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence !

Mr Issack: Souvent, l'honorable Premier ministre a l'habitude de dire, en s'adressant à la population « on vous a donné une intelligence pour réfléchir. Vous avez votre esprit. Réfléchissez. » La population va réfléchir. En tant qu'un citoyen, je vais réfléchir, et essayer de voir quelle est cette opposition, quel est ce *remake* que nous avons en face de nous.

Première chose, où est l'élément de confiance dans le *remake* ? Il y a le passé qui joue contre le *remake*, et il y a aussi le présent qui joue contre le *remake*.

(Interruptions)

Nous dans budget là ! Ce que nous voyons, M. le président, c'est un semblant de cohésion, de cohérence ; c'est tout un simulacre.

(Interruptions)

Il y a trop de choses qui vous séparent. Je viendrai sur le budget !

M. le président, une petite question que se posera la population : « que n'avez-vous pas dit l'un sur l'autre ? »

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruption!

Mr Issack: Il y a le mariage, le divorce...

(Interruptions)

...le remariage. Elizabeth Taylor et Richard Burton n'ont pas fait mieux qu'eux !

(Interruptions)

Qu'est ce que Sir Anerood Jugnauth n'a pas dit sur Paul Béranger !

(Interruptions)

Et qu'est ce que Paul Béranger n'a pas dit sur Pravind Jugnauth !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence !

Mr Issack: Hier, le ministre Faugoo a cité notre ami...

(Interruptions)

Il a cité ! Mais une citation qui a fait mal !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, no conversation!

Mr Issack: Mais, M. le président, laissez-moi donner la réplique à notre ami, l'honorable Jhugroo. Qu'est ce que Pravind Jugnauth n'a pas dit sur Navin Ramgoolam en 2010 ; un peu

avant même, en 2008 : ‘une opposition loyale !’ Vous êtes loyal dans l’opposition, mais quand vous êtes dans le gouvernement vous n’êtes plus loyal !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I don’t want any interruption!

Mr Issack: A cette époque-là, c’était la flatterie, l’amour, le désamour, le grand amour ! C’était hyperbolique!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Look, you withdraw the word!

Mr Issack: *I withdraw.* Le MSM adulait le Dr. Ramgoolam. Notre cher ami l’a qualifié de grand visionnaire. On l’a adulé, on le défiait même.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some silence!

Mr Issack: Qu’est-ce que le MSM n’a pas dit sur le MMM !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aimée!

Mr Issack: On avait presque pornographié le MMM ! Souvenons-nous ! Pas plus tard qu’hier je lisais sur Ipad un éditorial de Rabin Bhujun.

(Interruptions)

Vous voyez, M. le président,...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Issack, you address the Chair! There is no conversation. Address the Chair!

Mr Issack: On parlait de la longueur de la cravate. Une cravate *chupa chups* ! Il y a un proverbe arabe qui dit : « ta langue est comme un lion, si tu ne la contrôles pas, elle te dévore toi-même. » Aujourd’hui, ils sont dévorés par leur propre langue ! Vous êtes rattrapés par votre passé !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Listen! You are free to go out!

Mr Issack: Le problème a commencé comment, et pourquoi ? Pourquoi quitte-t-on le pouvoir ? C'est tout simplement à cause de Medpoint ! C'est là que tout a commencé. Un Medpoint critiqué par le MMM ! « *Zotte même acheter zotte meme vender.* » Aujourd'hui, voilà on a blanchi ce qu'on a noirci, et on noircit ce qu'on avait blanchi auparavant. Donc, quand le Président a quitté le Réduit, il y a beaucoup de raisons pour nous faire comprendre cela.

Maintenant, pour faire plaisir à l'honorable Madame Labelle, je viens sur le budget lui-même.

(Interruptions)

L'honorable Perraud me rappelait quelque temps de cela que j'avais dit un jour à ses élèves: "*tomorrow starts today*" ! Ce budget de 2014 c'est l'avenir ; c'est demain. *It is an A to Z Budget*, rempli de nobles intentions et de nobles objectifs. Notre ami, l'honorable Roopun, faisait référence il y a quelques instants à un budget qui n'était pas *caring*. Bien au contraire, à la page 55 de son discours, l'honorable Xavier Duval parle d'un "*caring and compassionate Government*". Voilà *a Budget that empowers youth, women, poor, consumers, public officers*. C'est un budget qui englobe la société mauricienne, qui concerne tout le monde, et qui donne à chacun la part qu'il mérite.

(Interruptions)

J'entends régulièrement une référence à la pauvreté. Oui, la pauvreté existe ! Et l'honorable Xavier Duval le souligne lui-même dans ce budget. Il va même dire la pauvreté absolue aussi.

"There are still families living in absolute poverty."

On n'a pas dit *that we do not care for the poor people, those living in absolute poverty*. On le reconnaît, et on fait des efforts dans cette direction. Ce que l'opposition ne doit jamais oublier, c'est que la pauvreté c'est une décision divine. C'est un choix divin. Dieu a créé les pauvres, il y aura toujours des pauvres et même dans les pays les plus riches. Que ce soit en Arabie Saoudite,

aux Etats-Unis ou au Canada, partout il y a des pauvres. On ne pourra jamais éradiquer la pauvreté. Personne ne peut.

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que nous ne faisons pas d'effort envers les pauvres ? À un moment où l'on parle de problèmes par rapport à l'État providence dans certains pays, il y a ici dans 'Le Point' un article où l'on remet en question l'État providence en France. On cite le Premier ministre Britannique, David Cameron, qui a été très critique à l'égard des prestations sociales. Alors qu'ici, à l'île Maurice, malgré toutes les difficultés sur le plan local et international, nous maintenons le rythme. Nous continuons à pourvoir aux pauvres tout ce qui est humainement possible.

Surfer aujourd'hui sur l'indigence des uns et le dénuement des autres c'est faire de la mauvaise politique. On peut souligner les problèmes qui existent, mais il ne faut pas faire de la politique sur les pauvres. Tout comme vous, nous aurions souhaité pouvoir éradiquer la pauvreté.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair! "Vous" means who?

Mr Issack: Excusez-moi, M. le président ; pas vous en tout cas.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Mr Issack: Yes. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'entre 2000 et 2005, le MMM/MSM était au pouvoir. Nous reconnaissons qu'ils ont fait des efforts. Mais, est-ce qu'ils ont pu éradiquer la pauvreté ? Dans quelle mesure ont-ils pu soulager les pauvres dans ce pays ? Nous avons des limites. Venir parler aujourd'hui du coût de la vie qui augmente c'est naturel, et c'est même normal ; tout augmente tout le temps.

Il faut aussi prendre en considération les facteurs exogènes qui viennent greffer sur l'économie d'un pays. Nous importons presque tout, et si les prix flambent ailleurs, ils vont évidemment flamber ici aussi. Mais est-ce à dire pour autant que nous sommes dans un pays où tout va mal ? Est-ce à dire pour autant que le gouvernement ne fait rien ? Nous sommes dans un pays merveilleux, et nous avons une population unique. Mais nous avons aussi un gouvernement attentionné. Ce que nous offrons à la population est tangible ; c'est palpable, c'est visible. C'est un constat quotidien : le subside sur le riz, la farine, le gaz, les différentes aides sociales ; quelques 175,000 personnes qui touchent la pension de vieillesse. Il y des pensions pour les veuves, les invalides, les orphelins, pour ceux qui se trouvent dans des difficultés par manque

d'emploi. Pensons au coût du transport gratuit ! Dans le domaine de l'éducation, ce que à peu près 250,000 de nos enfants bénéficient ! Il y a le domaine de la santé, le logement. La richesse d'un pays se mesure aussi - ça se voit qu'on a progressé - avec le nombre de téléviseurs, de voitures, de véhicules.

J'ai lu "*The Economist Pocket World in Figures*". Nous nous trouvons parmi les 50 premiers pays à posséder le plus d'ordinateurs par rapport à sa population. On a enlevé le VAT sur plusieurs produits alimentaires. Alors, devrions-nous continuer à dire que nous n'avons rien, nous ne bénéficions de rien, on ne fait rien ? Le pays s'embourbe, sombre dans la pauvreté?

C'est un pays tourné vers l'avenir, tourné vers la modernité. Et dans ce même livret, je suis tombé sur un chiffre. Quelqu'un de l'opposition avait critiqué nos routes, et dans ce livre j'ai vu que nous sommes 11^{ème} dans le monde - *we have one of the most crowded networks* - mais c'est pour cette raison justement que nous avons d'autres projets. Nous avons un aéroport moderne. Ça c'est l'avenir qui nous le dira. On ne peut pas dire que tout va mal, que tout n'est pas bon. Nous avons eu un nouvel aéroport, c'est bon. C'est pour l'avenir, ce n'est pas pour l'immédiat, parce qu'on envisage une *aviation hub*, on a l'intention d'*expand the cargo freeport facilities*. Il y a un hôtel qu'on va construire. Et puis il y a le port, on va étendre le quai. Le canal de navigation va être approfondi. Mais il y aussi le *light rail* qui vient. On se tourne vers la modernité. Evidemment, il y a des manquements. Il y a des choses qu'on aurait pu mieux faire. Il y des choses qu'on fera mieux probablement. Mais au moins on agit. Quand on ne fait rien on nous critique, quand on fait quelque chose on nous critique. Finalement, que faut-il faire ?

(Interruptions)

Maintenant, M. le président, je souhaiterais parler sur les medias. Préférons-nous la télé privée ou être privé de télé ?

(Interruptions)

Une mesure a été annoncée, et comme d'habitude on en a fait tout un scandale. On n'a pas encore conceptualisé le tout. Il faut attendre. Hier, le Premier ministre a expliqué. On procède par étape. On ne peut pas aller trop vite. On doit tirer des leçons du passé.

Un jour, moi-même j'ai été choqué. J'étais dans ma voiture quand j'avais entendu quelqu'un vampiriser le Premier ministre d'alors, qui était l'honorable Paul Béranger, parce

qu'on lui avait donné... c'est bon la liberté, mais il n'y a pas une liberté qui est une licence de dire n'importe quoi. Donc, il faut qu'il y ait des paramètres...

(Interruptions)

Mais cela viendra. Hier, le Premier ministre a dit, il a expliqué...

(Interruptions)

Oui, mais au moins nous avons des radios ! Il y a des pays où il n'y a même pas de radios, M. le président. Il n'y a qu'une radio. On monopolise, on colonise l'esprit des gens. Mais, ici, nous avons une population qui a le droit, la liberté de s'exprimer. Que ne dit-on pas sur n'importe qui et sur n'importe quoi dans nos radios ? C'est la liberté, la liberté la plus absolue ! Mais, quand même, il ne faut pas laisser une liberté qui va finalement à la dérive. Il faut réguler. La MBC a ses *plus and minus marks*.

Je suis d'accord avec l'opposition quand elle crie parfois. Pourquoi ? Parce que nous aussi nous avons souffert quand c'était l'opposition qui était au gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

Non, c'était comme cela. Il y a même un directeur de la télévision, dans une interview, il l'avait dit noir sur blanc -

« La MBC c'est le paillason du pouvoir. »

Et il était un directeur général nommé par un précédent gouvernement. Alors, acceptez... mais il ne faut pas toujours tout diaboliser. Il ne faut pas oublier que nous avons beaucoup de chaînes aussi à la télévision. Il y a des programmes éducatifs. Votre problème, votre grief majeur c'est sans doute les informations.

(Interruptions)

On aurait souhaité des informations plus objectives, certainement.

Mr Speaker: Quand vous dites 'votre'...

Mr Issack: Oui, excusez-moi, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: ...c'est le *Speaker* ou bien l'opposition ?

Mr Issack: M. le président, parfois on est un peu emporté face à des adversaires.

Mr Speaker: Gardez votre calme!

Mr Issack: Oui, oui. Alors, le monopole de l'information, M. le président, cela n'existe pas à Maurice.

(Interruptions)

Et toi, to comment Bhagwan même dan sa film indien là.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, excusez-moi !

Mr Speaker: Non, mais on ne peut pas faire du cinéma quand même.

(Interruptions)

Mr Issack: Oui. Un peu de détente, M. le président, et je crois que vous aussi vous participez.

Les informations sont libres. Toutes les radios donnent toutes les informations sur tout le monde, sur tous les partis politiques. L'opposition a droit à la parole, s'exprime clairement et librement sur toutes les radios. J'entends souvent l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan, mon ami, l'honorable Deven Nagalingum. Cela fait plaisir de vous entendre.

(Interruptions)

Oui, mais j'avais pris un congé médiatique. A partir de maintenant il va entendre parler de moi.

En passant, M. le président, je demanderais au gouvernement de prendre en considération la réouverture du *Media Trust*. Le *Media Trust* a eu un bon impact sur le corps journalistique, un effet très positif. Grâce au *Media Trust*, il y a eu pas mal d'activités, une certaine professionnalisation du métier a été rendue possible par les différents séminaires, les différentes conférences, des bourses, etc.

C'est vrai, on est parfois amer contre la presse, contre certains journalistes. Mais, je dois reconnaître aussi qu'il y a des manquements, c'est vrai. Mais, donnons l'occasion à nos journalistes de mieux s'épanouir, de se professionnaliser. Il y a une loi qui viendra réguler, je suppose, les médias, mettre des paramètres, etc. Mais il est vital, quand je réalise parfois, ayant été moi-même membre de la presse, quand on s'irrite à cause d'une information, il faut d'abord

se poser une question : est-ce que l'information est vraie ? Mais c'est vrai aussi qu'il y a des informations qui sont erronées, très erronées. Alors, je ferai humblement appel au gouvernement *so that we can take the press on board.*

M. le président, on me fait signe de m'arrêter, mais avant de m'arrêter, je voudrais brièvement aborder la question des sports - du football. J'ai beaucoup d'estime, d'amitié, de respect, d'admiration pour le ministre Devanand Ritoo. Je connais sa sincérité, c'était un très grand et très beau joueur de football. À la radio, j'ai appris hier ou avant-hier comment il avait conquis son épouse qui venait le voir jouer au football. C'est vrai, il a raison, sur le terrain, il n'y avait pas de problème.

L'honorable Roopun a fait ressortir, aujourd'hui, que quand il y a eu des problèmes, ce n'était pas à cause du football. Il avait fait référence probablement au hooliganisme. Moi aussi je suis pour la relance du football. C'est vrai, les membres du public étaient enthousiastes, on envahissait les stades. Mais le problème pour moi, ce n'est pas le football, ce ne sont pas les clubs, ce ne sont pas les comités des clubs, ce sont les spectateurs en dehors du stade. J'ai des appréhensions, j'ai peur à cause de cela. J'ai peur que les blessures s'ouvrent à nouveau. Ce matin, j'ai entendu quelqu'un à la radio raconter comment il était dans un bus quand on a envoyé une pierre ; il a perdu son œil. Si le ministre est sûr de lui, cela me réjouit, mais il faut savoir quelle formule ; c'est cela mon inquiétude. Je souhaite qu'on trouve la bonne formule, parce que, sincèrement, véritablement, j'ai peur de ce réveil du tribalisme. J'ai peur ! Toujours dans ce livre, M. le président, *"World in Figures 2014"* - cela vient de sortir - l'île Maurice est le 21^{ème} pays le plus paisible au monde. On est classé au 21^{ème} rang. C'est quel bon pays, et je ne voudrais pas voir un jour, à cause du tribalisme, les gens s'entredéchirer, il y a une instabilité. Ça c'est mon inquiétude, mais je suis tout à fait d'accord avec l'idée de relancer le football. J'ai une opinion, j'ai préféré le dire. Hier, l'honorable ministre Martin rappelait qu'au Parti travailliste, nous avons le droit à la différence. C'est un parti démocratique, absolument démocratique. Peut-être je citerai ici une phrase que j'ai fait mienne –

"The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism."

C'est parce que j'aime mon pays que j'ai dit ceci.

Je terminerai, M. le président, en faisant un humble appel aux membres du gouvernement, aux ministres.

En plusieurs occasions, mes amis de l'opposition, particulièrement l'honorable madame Ribot, l'honorable Nagalingum et même le *Leader* de l'opposition - nous sommes députés de la même circonscription - avons à travailler ensemble ; pas pour vous, pas pour moi, pas pour nous, mais pour la population, pour les habitants. Nous avons à mettre nos différences et nos différends de côté quand nous travaillons pour la société. Il y a plusieurs projets que nous souhaitons voir se réaliser. Il y a des problèmes évidemment. Je ne vais pas tous les énumérer ici, mais nous souhaitons que les trottoirs de la Route Royale soient refaits. Nous voulons avoir un nouveau marché de Rose Hill. Une mediclinic nous a été promise. Nous voulons avoir un bureau de poste à Camp Le Vieux. Il y a des problèmes à la NHDC, et je remercie l'honorable Dr. Kasenally qui est descendu sur le terrain. Il est venu rencontrer les habitants pour prendre en considération leurs doléances, et j'espère que nous aurons le coup de main de tout le monde. N'étant pas PPS, je ne peux pas parler pour Beau Bassin mais...

(Interruptions)

Oui, c'est mon mandant après tout, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, voilà ce que j'avais à dire. J'espère que j'ai tout dit, et tout ce que j'ai dit, j'espère que cela n'a offensé personne.

Merci, M. le président.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(3.34 p.m.)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget is viewed by the population as an issue fixing device or rather an instrument of hope. Whenever any economic issue crops up, and which goes against the interest of the citizens, it is hoped that the Budget will bring out the remedial measures. Is it so with the present Budget? Did this Budget meet the expectations of the population? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people's response outside compels me to answer these questions by the negative.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given the many serious problems to which this country is faced, the Government should have laid much emphasis on subjects which are primarily the immediate concern of the citizens. I mean the creation of jobs, measures to protect those at the lowest rung of the ladder, the fight against poverty.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start by dealing with poverty. This is a subject centered on human dignity and suffering, and I find it quite strange that the Budget Speech, at paragraph 8, states that families living in conditions of absolute poverty make up less than two per cent of our population. This is absolutely false, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Factually false! But the content of page 331 of the Budget Estimates document set the record straight. The very first paragraph states that 107,000 individuals benefited from income support, also known as allowance, for rice and flour. The beneficiaries are the poorest and most vulnerable citizens of this country. A simple calculation shows that they represent 9% of the population, and not less than 2% as mentioned in the Budget Speech. This figure goes in line with the Household Budget Survey of 2012, according to which 9.4% of households live in absolute poverty. Thus, roughly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some 10% of our population is living in absolute poverty condition.

Paragraph 423 of the Budget Speech states that the proposed New Income Support Programme will cover 8,000 vulnerable families below the Poverty Intervention Line set at Rs6,200. This figure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is outdated. Looking again at the Household Budget Survey of 2012, we see that 9.5% of households, that is, 33,800 families falling in the absolute poverty category, refer to households with income less than Rs8,000. This means, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the threshold of Rs6,200 has to be adjusted to at least Rs8,000 to make justice to the absolute poverty reality in the country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should be frank and compassionate when dealing with poverty, the suffering of our most vulnerable citizens. A Government has the duty to recognise and state the truth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after having spoken very briefly on poverty, let me come to the issue of Local Government. I have been Mayor of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill for two consecutive years, like other hon. Members in this House here who have been Lord Mayor and Mayor. Based on the experience that I have acquired, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can most humbly vouch that the marvelous job carried out by the Mayors and Councillors of the three Municipal Councils under the control of the MMM/MSM team have yielded obviously a tangible result.

(Interruptions)

Much effort has been deployed to resolve problems relating mainly to scavenging and obstructed drains whilst other major and minor projects are underway. All this is in only one year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The governing team in Port Louis has been able to accomplish in one year what the preceding team had not been able to do in seven years. Hats off to the Lord Mayor and his team who have been able to find a solution to the thorny issue of hawkers! But, unfortunately, this Government has never believed in the autonomy and independence of Local Authorities. Despite all the efforts made by the Lord Mayor and his team to come up with an acceptable solution with regard to the hawkers' issue, the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands has deemed it fit to brush aside this courageous job, and to decide, in isolation and at his own discretion, to apply another formula which is fundamentally opposed to what the Municipal Council had decided. He should have given the Municipal Council of Port Louis a free hand on this question. The decision might not be perfect, but, at least, it goes in the right direction, and it could have been improved in the future. But, today we are back to square one. This is what I call *approche et loi centralisatrice*. Even the Secretary General of the PMSD, presently in Government, finds it outrageous, and has recently stated in a press interview, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that he thinks that, I quote -

« La nouvelle équipe est en train de faire de son mieux pour administrer la capitale. Nous devons nous mettre en tête qu'il a différents styles de gestion. Il faut donc laisser le temps au maire de faire son travail. Il faut laisser à l'équipe MSM/MMM le temps de gérer la Municipalité de Port Louis. »

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has come up with a new Local Government Act with a view, supposedly, to give more powers to local authorities, but we have seen that the Act is more *centralisatrice que jamais*. We have seen how the release of fund is at the sole discretion of the Minister and his Ministry. We have seen how a local authority cannot even terminate the contract of anyone who fails to pay for his stall in a market fair without consulting the Minister. And talking about *loi centralisatrice*, let me elaborate on another example contained in the Budget Speech.

We have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, learned that as part of the implementation of the project of speeding up the delivery of Building and Land Use Permit, a central e-monitoring system will be set up at the level of the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands to track applications for building and land use permit. Whether they relate to Municipalities or District Councils, while this system should be set up at the Ministry, that's the question that we are asking. This could well be established in each and every local authority, which besides comprises of technicians, people who are experts in the domain, who have got the appropriate expertise to process these applications. The trend worldwide is autonomy. Why should Mauritius be an exception, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our local authorities need a breathing space, as clearly the hon. Minister is indulging too far in the running of these institutions, and this is detrimental both to the local authorities and to the Minister himself. On the other hand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and still regarding the project of speeding up with the delivery of building and land use permit, applicant will be invited to make the application online via the E-Local Government Portal, and that permit will be delivered within 14 days from the date of the application.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am quite sceptical about the implementation of this measure inasmuch as we all know the issuance of permits are subject to clearances being obtained from other authorities such as CWA, CEB, WMA, Fire Services etc. As per the Budget Speech, these bodies will be called upon to issue their clearances within one week of the submission of the online application. Though I find it very difficult on the practical aspect, I would like to know what about the requirement of public notification prior to the issuance of a permit. Has this aspect been taken into consideration, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The idea of issuing permits within short delays is very commendable in itself, but it is the implementation aspect which is of utmost importance, and this is where *le bât blesse*.

As far as this measure is concerned, from another perspective, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, local authorities should be given the means which would allow them to play a more important role, and not to restrict themselves to refuse collection, street lighting, road mending, etc. For example, they may play a more active role in the promotion of sport.

And, talking about sports, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the measures which has surprised a lot of us in this Budget Speech, and even my good friend, hon. Reza Issack, who just

spoke before me, the decision of the Government to return to the old football teams, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Whatever the reason put forward to justify such a decision, I remain of the opinion that this measure is an ill-conceived one. We must go down memory lane to recall the climate of terror which was created in Curepipe, particularly around the stadium or at the bus terminal whenever a match was being played. We should not forget the various cases of serious assault recorded before and after a match. Such was the case for Anjalay Stadium and others.

Have we forgotten, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the circumstances in which *l'affaire Amicale* was perpetrated? The main reason behind the decision to go back to the old teams is to fill our stadium once again with enthusiastic, proud and cheering fans. Fine! But, this could have also been achieved at the regionalisation project, being given a chance at least. Had the Government given the Municipal and District Council enough financial resources to cater for the needs of the regionalisation projects, things would have been different. The achievement of *Union Sportive* is just but one example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but the facts remain that no special effort has been deployed in this respect.

We should recall that, prior to year 2000, football was banned in Mauritius following sad events which followed a football match and leading to loss of lives. With the advent of the MMM/MSM Government in 2000, the old regionalisation process became, and the then Minister of Finance, hon. Paul Bérenger, allocated a sum of Rs1 m. to each Municipal and District Council to help revive football in Mauritius. It is by this bold decision that 13 regional teams were created and had glorious days such as *Union Sportive* or the ASPL 2000, to name only a few, but the same facilities were no longer extended to this club as from 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we all know the end result. That's why I insist that regionalisation should have been given a chance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether the hon. Minister agrees or not, the decision to go back to the old formula is but an attempt to revive communalism, and this is very, very dangerous for our country. We have witnessed many sad events related to communalism and football. The hon. Minister stated in his speech that appropriate safeguard would be put in place in order to ensure national representativeness of the club, and that they do not hold names which carry communal undertones. Should I remind the hon. Minister that these requirements existed

already at the time when an incident involving serious assault or even loss of life took place some years back after football matches?

In light of this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I invite Government to review its position, like many other hon. Members here that have expressed before me on this issue, and to come up with a more acceptable formula after wide consultation with all the football stakeholders and other interested parties. No stone should be left unturned when it comes to preserving social peace in our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this brings me to the issue of law and order. We all know that the issue of law and order is very sensitive; one which requires urgent drastic measures. Despite the statistics, according to which there is a fall in crime rate, and which is shouted from the rooftops by some, the fact remains that the issue of law and order is evolving from bad to worse. This is no secret. Rape, homicide, burglary and theft have become the bitter daily lot of the citizens. When we talk of theft, we now talk of hooded gangs. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly, the citizens should be given the means to protect themselves, and I think that one of the measures should have been the abolition of taxes on security tools such as CCTV. This device should be made affordable, as it may help by acting as a deterrent.

On a completely different note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another issue which should have been addressed in a bold manner is that of water supply. In Mauritius, we cannot often talk of severe drought, true it is that there are periods where there is no rain, or where rainfall is below expectation, but we also have periods of heavy rainfall which bring about floods; serious floods which have even caused death. I won't dwell on this issue, but my point is why, year in year out, we have water supply problems. This is a problem which is affecting all parts of the island. In my own constituency, it is particularly acute, especially in the regions of Plaisance, Trèfles, Roches Brunes and Camp Levieux. There is clearly mismanagement in this direction, and I know the CWA is very concerned about this. I must also put on record that the hon. Minister is doing his level best, and I heard two or three weeks ago that the situation is more likely settled. So much the better!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is one point in the Budget Speech, which is the 'CEB Prepaid Meter.' Let me briefly view on that point. The Budget announces that this project will now bring light to 5,000 households who were in darkness through the installation of prepaid

meters by the CEB, and now electricity consumers will have to pay in advance the electricity that will be used. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must admit that this project is a laudable initiative. In fact, this would allow households to adjust their electricity consumption according to their budget, thus avoiding unnecessary arrears and disconnection, as well as the additional disbursement of the reconnection fees. As per the Budget Speech, this project aims primarily at vulnerable households. But, with regard to the various projects spelt out, the Budget Speech is silent as far as the implementation aspect is concerned. Perhaps the hon. Minister could enlighten the House further on this particular project.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question that I ask is: what is the tariff per kilowatt consumed that will be applied, since it is a prepayment, not even cash paid on delivery but before delivery? Will the consumers get a discounted rate? I also request that the prepayment should not include the charged fee of Rs150 for the MBC. The consumers should not be made to pre-finance MBC. On the contrary, the CEB should use this prepayment to finance the installation of the circuit breakers that Government is imposing on them by law. I, therefore, request that the CEB install the circuit breakers when they install the prepaid meters.

Next, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the project of licensing of local broadcasters, I am at a loss to understand the rationale behind the criteria of broadcasting only films, sports and entertainment programmes. The advent of private TV has been claimed since long. The idea is precisely to have access to objective and unbiased information, not as what the MBC imposes on us every day. But the very fact of limiting local broadcasters to films, sports and entertainment programmes is clear that the Government is afraid of the dissemination of unbiased information. Why so? Do it, as we did in 2000 and 2005, when we brought private radios, which were allowed to operate as any other radio station then in existence! The restriction to films, sports and entertainment programmes is a clear indication that the Government is afraid; afraid to show the truth, afraid to inform its fellow citizens. That's the main truth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me deal with a last topic: project distribution over the country. When a Government is elected, it is mandated to work for the well-being of the country at large. No region or constituency should be better off than others. But, what I found is that some constituencies are more equal than others. Some Members of Government have even

confided that many projects are implemented in Constituency No. 9, for example. That's what people even in Government are saying. But what is clearly obvious from this and the previous Budget presented by the current Government is that major projects are not fairly distributed. It all depends on who serves which constituency. So, I appeal to Government to put an end to such an approach, as it might turn out to be counterproductive.

Constituency No. 19 or Constituency No. 20 also forms part of Mauritius, and they deserve the same attention as others, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. God knows how many major projects need to be addressed in Constituency No. 19, Stanley-Rose Hill, like my good friend, hon. Reza Issack, just mentioned. I'll just mention a few. The traffic jam at Vandermeersch Street. Those using that road in the morning do know something about the traffic jam which is caused, especially when buses have to reach Queen Elizabeth College to drop students. A solution should be found, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have already, together with my colleague, hon. Mrs Ribot, addressed this issue in this House, and with the hon. Minister personally. Buses operating in the narrow internal roads of Rose Hill constitute a real danger for pedestrians and vehicles. Are there no other alternatives to this problem? The resort to small buses and the enlargement of some part of the road would surely help, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am quite disappointed to know that this Budget is silent on the famous gambling park that was going to house all the casinos and gaming houses which polluted the environment where they are situated. Their very existence in the midst of residential areas pollutes the environment and attracts our youngsters towards gambling.

Another point which I would like to raise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns one class of taxpayers whose condition has to be considered, and consequently addressed. I have spoken, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of a single parent with a family, more especially of the single woman family. She has absolutely no deduction than any other taxpayers, and yet she is in a special situation. She might be unmarried, divorced, with children, with an alimony which is not forthcoming. A tax deduction will have to be reviewed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at page 54, paragraph 455 of the Budget Speech, I note that Government is contributing a sum of Rs40 m. for the Plaza Theatre. I sincerely thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance for this, but as you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the whole project, according to what the Minister of Local Government, in his reply to a PQ that I

put in this House, and my colleagues as well, will cost around Rs400 m. So, if I can make an appeal to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance to see to it that an additional sum be provided, so that we can bring alive our theatre in the very near future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at paragraph 489 of the present Budget Speech, it is stated that Government has the intention to amend the law so as to allow some 17,000 families having housing units on lease land belonging to the State, the possibility to buy the land at a nominal price not exceeding Rs2,000. I can recall that some of these lands were allocated in various regions between 2000 and 2005, even in my constituency in Rose Hill. I am very happy for these families, and I have found this decision a very commendable one.

Just to reply to my good friend, hon. Reza Issack, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not support unjustified criticism, but I am duty bound to express my disapproval on matters which, to my most humble opinion, go against the interest of the country, as this country does not belong to us, people gathered here in this august Assembly, but belongs to the future generations. We are simply the trustees of their interests and to leave them with a good legacy. The best interest of the country should be above any individual interest or agenda, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As matter stands today, one of the most vital missions of Government should be the fight against poverty. This can only be achieved if we all, gathered here, put our heads together as true patriots, and aim at one common target: the wellbeing of our people. As the great Nelson Mandela rightly put it –

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity; it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes, it falls on a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(4.07 p.m.)

Mr A. Hossen (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): M. le président, je voudrais tout d’abord vous remercier pour la possibilité qui m’est donnée de participer dans ce débat budgétaire.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence please!

Mr Hossen: Le budget, M. le président, a été présenté par le vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances vendredi de la semaine dernière, dans cette auguste Assemblée, et, au niveau du parlement, nous débâtons sur ce budget depuis mardi dernier.

M. le président, le débat autour du budget n'a pas démarré ce mardi - cette semaine-ci. La vitalité de notre démocratie est telle que tout le monde participe dans le débat budgétaire déjà depuis de nombreuses semaines. Chaque individu, quel que soit son statut social, quel que soit le secteur dans lequel il est appelé à exercer, est un ministre des Finances depuis plusieurs semaines, et commente sur les provisions budgétaires à venir.

Notre vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances, depuis de nombreuses semaines lui aussi, justement, a initié de nombreuses consultations auprès des différents *stakeholders*, que ce soit syndicaliste, commerçant, travailleur manuel, fonctionnaire du service civil, ou dans la fabrication, dans le tourisme. Tout le monde a eu des consultations à différents niveaux avec notre vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances, et c'est en tenant compte de toutes ces consultations, en tenant compte de ce qui a été écrit à travers notre presse, en tenant compte des nombreux débats qui ont été initiés à travers les différentes radios du pays, que le budget a été peaufiné, M. le président.

Donc, je voudrais d'abord remercier le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour ce budget 2014. Je mentionnais tout à l'heure de la vitalité de notre démocratie en parlant de la participation de tout un chacun au niveau du débat budgétaire, et c'est précisément cette philosophie, M. le président, qui a toujours guidé notre *leader*, notre vice-premier ministre dans la conception des budgets qu'il a eu l'honneur et le privilège de chapeauter depuis 2005. Cette philosophie fondamentale, ce fil conducteur n'est nul autre que l'importance que de placer l'individu au centre de toutes nos préoccupations. C'est une philosophie qui a été transmise de génération en génération par les pères fondateurs du Parti travailliste, et c'est sur cette même philosophie que le Premier ministre oriente toutes ses initiatives, toutes ses démarches depuis 2005. Donc, c'est un budget qui se positionne dans la continuité. C'est un budget qui a comme priorité la consolidation des droits fondamentaux, M. le président, de chaque individu de ce pays. Lorsqu'on parle de droits fondamentaux, je parle des différentes générations des droits fondamentaux. Donc, justement, lorsque je mentionnais tout à l'heure que la population tout

entière, librement, à travers la radio, à travers la presse, à travers les nombreux débats, a la possibilité, a la liberté, M. le président de s'exprimer, c'est la première génération de droit fondamental de chaque individu qui se manifeste, qui est bien présente, qui est bien vivante dans notre pays.

Les différents budgets présentés par notre gouvernement ont toujours privilégié la consolidation, donc, de la démocratie; ont toujours consolidé, privilégié les droits fondamentaux de l'individu à l'accès à l'emploi, à l'accès à la santé, à l'accès à l'éducation, à l'accès à des valeurs culturelles, à l'accès à la perpétuité pour les traditions qui sont bien établies dans notre pays, M. le président. Et c'est surtout cette préoccupation qui domine avant tout le Budget 2014 qui est à l'étude.

Mais ce Budget 2014, M. le président, ouvre aussi de nouveaux horizons, toute une panoplie de nouvelles mesures qui sont offertes. Puisque si nous avons une obsession au sein de ce gouvernement, cette obsession c'est de veiller que le pays, que notre nation, et que notre jeunesse soient toujours en phase, M. le président, par rapport aux développements qui se font à l'étranger. On le sait. Avec les nouveaux outils de communication et de la technologie informatique, le monde, M. le président, est devenu comme un village global, où nous avons un accès facile et rapide aux communications, aux actualités, à tout ce qui se passe, à tout ce qui se développe à l'étranger, M. le président. Il faudrait veiller qu'on ne soit pas en déphasage par rapport à ce monde qui est un monde où la concurrence devient de plus en plus féroce, M. le président, et d'abord consolider nos valeurs acquises, consolider les droits fondamentaux, mais aussi permettre à notre jeunesse, à notre nation et à notre population d'avoir accès à de nouveaux horizons.

On a mentionné plusieurs mesures dans ce budget, M. le président. On mentionne *the Aviation Hub*, une *Marine Services Platform* qui sera initiée dès l'année prochaine. On mentionne *the Ocean Economy*, on mentionne le *Petroleum Hub*, on mentionne aussi la promotion, M. le président, de *la Green Economy*, de l'industrie cinématographique, l'ouverture vers l'Afrique. Là, s'établissent de nouveaux piliers, de nouvelles opportunités qui sont offertes, non seulement à nos entrepreneurs, mais aussi à cette jeunesse qui demande, M. le président, à s'épanouir dans notre pays. Les services essentiels ; lorsqu'on parle de budget, il est important aussi, M. le président, de jeter un petit regard en arrière, de voir qu'est-ce qui s'est passé dans

notre pays durant l'année écoulée, et surtout ce qui s'est passé dans notre pays durant cette année écoulée qu'on n'aurait pas pu prévoir dans le budget qui avait été présenté en 2013. Et là, c'est triste de constater que notre pays, malheureusement, a été affligé le 30 mars dernier par des inondations, M. le président ; quelque chose qui a choqué tout le monde. Des inondations qu'on ne pouvait, malheureusement, pas prévoir ; et des inondations qui ont coûté la vie à des innocents, M. le président. Je saisis cette occasion, encore une fois, pour exprimer notre sympathie vis-à-vis de ces nombreuses familles affligées. Mais que dire de la réaction, que dire de cette communion au niveau de tous ceux concernés dans ce pays, de chaque individu de ce pays pour redresser la situation, M. le président ? Il y a eu comme un élan de solidarité, il y a eu comme cette passion illimitée pour essayer de faire de telle sorte qu'on soit mieux préparé - si jamais malheur nous frappe de nouveau, malheureusement, à l'avenir - à affronter de telles calamités, M. le président. Et là je voudrais saluer, à leur niveau respectif, en leur qualité respective, tous ces bons volontaires, qu'ils soient fonctionnaires ou pas, qui se sont manifestés, d'une façon spontanée pour essayer de rétablir l'ordre, pour essayer de nettoyer le pays au plus vite, mais surtout pour démarrer toute une série de projets, M. le président, qui ferait qu'on soit mieux équipé si tel malheur nous frappe, malheureusement, de nouveau.

Tout autour de Port Louis, à l'entrée de Port Louis, ce matin, j'ai constaté des travaux qui ont non seulement démarré, mais qui progressent à un rythme très accéléré pour éviter que l'entrée de Port Louis soit inondée de nouveau. En commençant par le nord de Port Louis, on fait tout le tour de Port Louis jusqu'au sud, il y a de gros travaux majeurs qui ont été initiés, des travaux qu'on pouvait difficilement imaginer, M. le président, que tout cela allait être possible, que tout cela allait se réaliser, se concrétiser dans un laps de temps si court, puisqu'il y avait une urgence, M. le président. La meilleure façon de manifester notre respect vis-à-vis de ceux qui ont été affectés, affligés, vis-à-vis de ceux dont les proches ont été victimes de ces inondations, c'est de montrer que nous avons la volonté, que nous avons la combativité, la détermination, M. le président, de veiller que de telles inondations n'affectent pas d'autres innocents de notre pays. Là, je voudrais, à tout seigneur tout honneur, M. le président, saluer la détermination, la volonté, l'initiative, le *drive*, le *role model* qu'a été notre vice-premier ministre, et le ministre des Infrastructures publiques, l'honorable Anil Bachoo, qui a su maîtriser la situation, M. le président.

Au cours de ces débats, depuis mardi, M. le président, j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention ceux, surtout de l'opposition, qui sont intervenus. C'est malheureux, M. le président, de constater qu'ils ont mis beaucoup d'emphasis... ; il fallait quand même faire ressortir la priorité qu'on doit accorder, et qui est déjà accordée par ce gouvernement vis-à-vis de ceux qui se retrouvent au bas de l'échelle, M. le président. On a parlé des mesures d'une façon très négative.

Ce présent gouvernement, depuis 2010, notre Premier ministre a jugé utile dans sa sagesse de venir créer un ministère, le ministère de *Social Integration and Economic Empowerment*, justement pour venir *empower* ceux qui se retrouvent au bas de l'échelle, pour donner un support, un coup de main à ceux qui se sont retrouvés dans une situation vulnérable, ceux qui sont les plus démunis de notre société, M. le président. C'est l'initiative de notre Premier ministre, c'est l'initiative de ce gouvernement ; on a mis en place les outils nécessaires.

We have set up the indispensable and essential set of procedures and regulations so as to see to it that every civil servant, be it in the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, be it elsewhere in any authority, to see to it that he is in a position to attend in an urgent manner to any individual who finds himself in need of help and assistance from the Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Je voudrais d'abord déplorer l'attitude, la façon négative dont les membres, surtout de l'opposition, ont essayé de décortiquer les actions initiées par ce ministère de *Social Integration and Economic Empowerment*. M. le président, lorsque je parle d'*empowerment*, *empowerment is not about distributing money, empowerment is not about Government acting as an ATM to distribute money right, left and centre. Empowerment is about providing the necessary tools; empowerment is about educating every individual who is vulnerable, who is down the ladder, who needs some assistance. Give him the dignity and the possibility by himself to climb up the ladder. This is what empowerment is about.*

On a eu aussi le mois dernier, et c'est malheureux de le constater, sur le parvis de la Cathédrale de Port Louis, toute une campagne qui avait été initiée. M. le président, moi, j'ai été sur ce parvis. J'ai été à la rencontre de ceux responsables de ce projet, de cette initiative. Je voudrais, aujourd'hui, dans cette auguste Assemblée, prendre un cas particulier qui me concerne, qui concerne notre *Deputy Prime Minister*. Nous avons eu des concertations, non seulement à

notre niveau, mais aussi auprès du ministre responsable du logement, l'honorable Dr. Abu Kasenally, auprès du ministre responsable des Infrastructures publiques, et du ministre responsable des Administrations régionales.

On parle du développement, et j'ai mentionné tout à l'heure l'urgence avec laquelle le gouvernement a initié des projets pour faire face à d'éventuelles inondations. On a critiqué, dans cette auguste Assemblée, l'initiative prise par ce gouvernement pour étendre le réseau routier dans notre pays, M. le président. Étendre le réseau routier n'est pas seulement venir permettre l'accès aux véhicules. Mais c'est surtout et avant tout, M. le président, venir privilégier la mobilité de notre jeunesse, venir privilégier l'accès, l'opportunité à l'emploi à tous ceux qui se retrouvent dans des régions rurales.

Le développement de ce pays, M. le président, sous le *leadership* de notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, ne se fait plus uniquement dans les régions urbaines. Le développement de ce pays se fait aux quatre coins du pays. Il faudrait qu'on puisse mettre en place, M. le président, les infrastructures indispensables, essentielles pour permettre à un jeune gradué d'une région rurale, qu'il soit complètement au sud, complètement à l'est ou complètement au nord de ce pays de pouvoir postuler à un emploi dans la capitale. Il ne faudrait pas que ce problème de proximité s'érige en obstacle à l'ouverture d'un emploi à un jeune diplômé d'une région rurale.

Parallèlement, il faudrait permettre aussi à tout entrepreneur qui souhaiterait créer une entreprise, créer une usine et créer des emplois que le problème de proximité ne se pose plus. Créer une usine ou une industrie dans une région rurale avec des infrastructures routières appropriées permettrait l'accès facile à ces entreprises. L'accès facile, comme le dit mon cher collègue, le ministre des Administrations régionales, à tout décideur, tout étudiant, et à toutes les personnes qui voudraient avoir une opportunité. *This is also about equal opportunity being extended to each and everyone.* On ne met pas des visières.

On n'est pas dans cette auguste Assemblée, comme l'a justement fait ressortir mon amie l'honorable madame Deerpalsing lors de son intervention. La pauvreté, comme l'a signalé aussi l'honorable Issack, concerne tout le monde, toutes les sections de notre population. Lorsqu'on parle en termes de développement, lorsqu'on parle en termes d'*equal opportunity being extended*

to each and every one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is about giving really opportunity to all sectors of the population, to all regions of our country.

L'exemple que je voulais vous mentionner concerne parallèlement le développement routier, avec l'avènement de la *Ring Road Phase II* qui traverserait l'année prochaine la région de Tranquebar à Camp Manna. Je faisais allusion au projet qui avait été étalé sur le parvis de la Cathédrale. Mais déjà, M. le président, depuis le 10 septembre de cette année, en tant que député, j'ai été invité à participer dans le cadre de la délocalisation des *squatters* de Tranquebar avec l'avènement de la *Ring Road*. J'ai été invité par qui ? Par les Forces Vives de Camp Manna, les *squatters* de Tranquebar, par Caritas, par ceux responsables de la paroisse de Ste Anne à Tranquebar. Donc, l'Église était pleinement partie prenante.

L'Église s'est portée volontaire, et j'accueille cette initiative de l'Église. J'accueille cette démarche de l'Église de venir se positionner comme partenaire de l'État. Puisque la proposition de l'État c'était quoi, M. le président? J'ai eu la possibilité, lors de cette rencontre, de répondre aux différentes interrogations et interpellations. Et j'ai donné l'assurance que toutes ces familles - ils sont au nombre d'une centaine, M. le président - qui sont concernées par cette délocalisation, qui se retrouvent sur le tracé de la *Ring Road* qui va traverser Tranquebar, après confirmation auprès de l'honorable ministre du Logement, après confirmation auprès de l'honorable ministre des Infrastructures publiques, après confirmation surtout de l'honorable *Deputy Prime Minister*, qui est mon colistier, que tous ceux concernés par ce tracé seront délocalisés avec toutes les infrastructures prévues du côté de Petit Verger à Pointe aux Sables, qu'on va initier régulièrement un dialogue. Et je salue l'attitude, la façon dont ces gens se sont manifestés ce jour-là ; d'une façon ordonnée, disciplinée, dans le respect.

C'est ce dialogue que nous, au gouvernement, avons déjà initié, M. le président, depuis le 10 septembre. Ce n'est qu'en octobre que le projet s'est manifesté sur le parvis de la Cathédrale. C'était précisément pour cette raison que j'ai dû me manifester. J'ai dû être présent sur le parvis pour dire quoi ? Pour dire à Mgr Labour que ce dialogue, ce partenariat avec ceux qui sont concernés avait déjà été initié, que notre gouvernement avait déjà pris l'engagement de délocaliser, pourvoir ces gens de toutes les infrastructures de base.

La seule requête qui m'avait été faite, M. le président, le 10 septembre, concernait la permission à être accordée aux familles nombreuses de pouvoir procéder à l'extension de leur

maison dans l'immédiat et non pas avoir à attendre deux ans. Et j'ai la bonne nouvelle, M. le président. M. le ministre de *Social Integration and Economic Empowerment* et M. le ministre du Logement m'ont confirmé que dans des cas exceptionnels, tel le cas qui se présente pour les *squatters* de Camp Manna à Tranquebar, cette autorisation va être accordée. C'est ça que j'ai communiqué au Père Labour puisque tous les projets sur le parvis concernaient la dimension, l'espace au niveau de ces maisons. Et j'ai la bonne nouvelle. Tout le monde le sait à travers le Budget 2014 qui est à l'étude ; chaque famille *squatter* qui va être délocalisée de Tranquebar et qui va se retrouver à Petit Verger, et non pas chaque famille de Tranquebar, M. le président.

Chaque famille qui a été bénéficiaire dans ce pays, que ce soit du côté de Tranquebar, de Vallée Pitot, de Cité La Cure, de La Gaulette ou d'ailleurs, que ce soit du côté de Camp Le Vieux, comme l'a mentionné mon collègue, l'honorable Nagalingum, chacune de ces familles, qui aujourd'hui détient un bail de l'État, un bail pour la *State land* contre paiement d'une somme n'excédant pas R 2,000, deviendra propriétaire. *This is what empowerment is about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.*

(Interruptions)

On parle du retour des clubs traditionnels de football dans ce pays. Qu'en est-il, M. le président, du retour du MMM dans la Municipalité de Port Louis ?

(Interruptions)

Il faudra en parler puisque j'ai démarré mon intervention en faisant référence à la vivacité de notre démocratie. M. le président, à l'image de notre Premier ministre, nous sommes des véritables démocrates. Ce n'est pas avec arrogance que j'affirme cela ; c'est avec honneur, avec force, et avec fierté. Il y a de véritables démocrates qui se retrouvent de ce côté de la Chambre, M. le président. Le retour du MMM à la Municipalité de Port Louis ! Moi-même, étant un ancien Lord-maire, ancien maire, je me faisais du souci, puisque ce sont avant tout des adversaires politiques. Je me disais que là, ils vont bénéficier de toutes les conditions favorables, conditions que moi-même, que l'honorable Nagalingum pouvait difficilement imaginer à l'époque où on a été Maire, M. le président. Conditions favorables je mentionne. Le *New Local Government Act* qu'a présenté notre collègue, le ministre des Administrations régionales, l'honorable Aimée, a fait la part belle à la démocratie locale. Ils ont eu un mandat comme conseillers municipaux, non pas de cinq ans, mais de six ans, M. le président.

On a fait un pas de géant pour la consolidation de la démocratie à Maurice, avec une participation féminine de plus de 30% dans les collectivités locales. Je mentionne bien collectivités locales. Je ne vous parle pas uniquement des municipalités. Le rêve, la vision, l'objectif de notre ministre des Administrations régionales a touché non seulement les municipalités, mais aussi les conseils de districts ; villes et villages. Plus de 30% de représentation féminine!

L'honorable Lesjongard a cru utile de quitter l'hémicycle. Mais lorsqu'il avait présenté son projet de loi sur les administrations régionales en 2003, il avait fait mention que le mairat du maire devrait être d'au moins deux ans. Une année de mairat ; l'honorable Nagalingum l'a confirmé tout à l'heure, et a même mentionné que, dans son cas, il a bénéficié, il a eu le privilège, comme l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan précédemment, d'avoir un mairat étalé non pas sur une année, mais sur deux ans.

Ailleurs, au niveau des démocraties avant-gardistes, je prends un exemple qui nous est connu, en France, M. le président, lorsqu'on vient élire le conseil municipal, on vient élire le maire et son conseiller pour un mandat de cinq ans. On a proposé une période de transition, un pas géant pour consolider la démocratie régionale que de venir proposer un mairat sur deux ans seulement, et la presse en est témoin, tout le monde en est témoin.

Quelles n'ont pas été les promesses faites pendant la campagne des dernières municipales! Ils ont même mentionné - ce n'est pas moi qui le dis, vous êtes témoin de ça - que la priorité des priorités allait être le relogement des marchands ambulants à Port Louis, et nous, en véritables démocrates, nous avons joué le jeu lorsqu'il y a eu cette décision de la cour, M. le président, que l'obligation sur le Commissaire de Police, l'obligation sur la municipalité, une *mediation agreement*, document qu'a signé la police, la municipalité, l'association des commerçants, identifiant 14 rues de Port Louis autour du marché central. Donc, les marchands opérant sur ces 14 rues de Port Louis devaient, selon l'ordre de la cour, être délocalisés. Et nous, en tant que gouvernement responsable, on devait agir. On a agi, M. le président. Dès octobre de l'année dernière, on a demandé à l'administration municipale de Port Louis de procéder à un *survey*, à un relèvement des marchands, du nombre de marchands opérant sur ces 14 rues. L'administration a soumis son *survey*, comprenant 1,050 *genuine hawkers* qui devaient être délocalisés, et, sur la base de ce *survey*, le gouvernement a identifié les deux sites, Decaen et la

place de l'Immigration dans le nord, qui, au niveau de ces deux sites, pourraient accommoder ces 1,050 *hawkers*.

Les élections municipales sont venues entre-temps. La nouvelle administration, le nouveau conseil MMM/MSM s'est installé à Port Louis, et à la première réunion de leur conseil municipal, ils ont mis de côté ce *survey*. Ils ont initié ce qu'ils ont appelé *une expression of interest*. Quels sont les critères de cette *expression of interest* ? Premièrement, on doit avoir 18 ans pour pouvoir être participant. Deuxièmement, il faudrait être au chômage. Troisièmement, il ne faudrait pas être détenteur d'un permis ou d'une licence, et quatrièmement, M. le président, on devrait être habitant de Port Louis.

Lorsque j'ai parlé du développement tout à l'heure, initié par notre gouvernement, j'ai mis l'emphasis sur le fait que le développement concerne toutes les régions ; villes et villages. On n'a pas mis de visière pour voir où il fallait développer et où il ne fallait pas. Eux, ils ont mis de côté. Je vous donne deux exemples. Premièrement, l'exemple de cette vieille bonne femme qui habite la région de Pamplemousses, qui descend tous les jours sur Port Louis depuis plus de 15 ans, M. le président, pour vendre ses légumes. Elle fait cette activité à Port Louis depuis ces 15 dernières années, mais elle n'habite pas à Port Louis, elle n'est pas qualifiée. Elle ne se retrouve pas sur la liste de la municipalité. Injuste! Le cas de ce *hawker*, *genuine hawker*, qui a hérité d'un terrain ; il a toujours travaillé à Port Louis. Il est détenteur d'une *hawker's licence* délivrée par la Municipalité de Port Louis. Mais, du fait qu'il a hérité d'un terrain en dehors de Port Louis, il n'habite plus à Port Louis, donc, mais il travaille toujours à Port Louis. De ce simple fait, il est exclu.

Ils ont fait des critères, et ils se retrouvent avec une liste de 1,738. Ils ont mis de côté l'ordre de la cour, ils ont ignoré cette liste de 14 chemins, M. le président, et depuis dix mois, ils se tournent les pouces. Ils prennent une ville en otage. Ils ont cassé un record ; le record d'être impopulaire auprès de tous les *stakeholders*, M. le président, et quand je vous dis cela, permettez-moi de faire référence à certaines coupures de presse. Ces commentaires ne viennent pas de moi. Je vous cite l'*Express* du mardi 06 août 2013, une déclaration de Monsieur Raj Appadu, Président de l'Association des commerçants à Port Louis. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit ?

« Nous n'avons jamais eu un maire aussi avare de dialogue »

lance Raj Appadu porte-parole du Front Commun, regroupant les différents commerçants de la capitale.

Et, Raj Appadu d'ajouter, M. le président -

« Nous avons, à maintes reprises, sollicité les rencontres avec le maire. En vain! »

Monsieur Aslam Hossenally, le Lord-maire, reconnaît pour sa part qu'il n'a pris contact avec les commerçants parce qu'il était très occupé ces derniers jours. Quelles étaient les préoccupations du Lord-maire MMM, Monsieur Aslam Hossenally, pendant ces jours? Qu'est-ce qu'il faisait? Il ne pouvait pas se libérer pour s'occuper de la priorité des priorités. Eux-mêmes, ils avaient identifié cette priorité, M. le président. Vous savez où il était? À part le fait de se retrouver à Bangkok, Monsieur Aslam Hossenally était au Champ de Mars! Amateur de courses. Je dépose sur la table de l'Assemblée les préoccupations de Monsieur Aslam Hossenally. C'est ça le retour du MMM dans l'administration municipale de Port Louis, M. le président. Voilà, je soumetts deux photos montrant notre Lord-maire dans ses préoccupations premières. Les intérêts de la ville sont rétrogradés. Les intérêts de la ville ne participent même pas aux courses. Le cheval de la ville est éliminé, il n'est plus à l'agenda, il ne participe plus dans cette course. Donc, je dépose ces deux photos sur la table de l'Assemblée.

M. le président, j'ai parlé tout à l'heure des inondations, et mon cher collègue, Deven Nagalingum malheureusement...

The Deputy Speaker: L'honorable Deven Nagalingum.

Mr Hossen: Mon cher collègue, l'honorable Deven Nagalingum. Merci pour cette précision, M. le président. Il n'est malheureusement pas en présence de toutes les données. L'honorable Deven Nagalingum, et à juste raison - comme je le fais moi-même - a mentionné les inondations. Il a mentionné les travaux de drains qui concernent la région de Port Louis. Il le sait, et moi aussi je le sais. Avant l'arrivée des grosses pluies d'été, c'est la première priorité de chaque maire, Lord-maire, conseil municipal, de réunir ses effectifs, de venir établir un calendrier pour tous les secteurs de sa ville, procéder à *raising the slabs and the drains, proceeding with the cleaning of all drains*, et on est appelé à soumettre ce calendrier de travail auprès du ministre des Administrations régionales, M. le président. Le travail n'a jamais été fait, et je vous en donne la preuve. La preuve c'est quoi?

C'est qu'en date du 24 janvier 2013 - je redis la date ; c'est le 24 janvier 2013 - M. le président, on n'avait pas eu les inondations de février ou du 30 mars encore ! Le ministère de l'Environnement, et je salue l'initiative de l'honorable Deva Virahsawmy ; il a assumé ses responsabilités. Comment ? Il a servi une contravention à l'égard de la Municipalité de Port Louis en date du 24 janvier 2013. Je vais déposer ce document sur la Table de l'Assemblée nationale, où il est mentionné « *poor maintenance of canals in Port Louis resulting in accumulation of solid waste, causing nuisances and health hazards.* » Le ministère de l'Environnement avait déjà tiré la sonnette d'alarme depuis le 24 janvier 2013, prenant en contravention la Municipalité de Port Louis, et exigeant de la Municipalité de Port Louis un calendrier, que j'ai mentionné tout à l'heure, à être soumis auprès de l'autorité compétente pour établir quels vont être les travaux à être effectués pour le nettoyage des canaux et des drains dans la ville de Port Louis, M. le président. Et, *adding insult to injury* - c'est là où le bât blesse, M. le président - en date du 12 avril 2013, il y a une lettre signée par le *Chief Executive* de la Municipalité de Port Louis, que je vais déposer sur la Table de l'Assemblée. En date du 12 avril 2013, le *Chief Executive* adresse une correspondance au ministère des Administrations régionales, donnant les détails des dépenses qui ont été effectuées par la Municipalité de Port Louis pour la période 09 décembre 2012 jusqu'au 10 avril 2013. Cinq mois ! Le 09 décembre, ils assument la responsabilité. On parle du 10 avril 2013, et moi je vous ai parlé de la contravention du 24 janvier. Donc, ils étaient déjà avertis formellement par les autorités concernées. Quelles ont été ces dépenses qu'ils ont considérées comme prioritaires ? Je vais vous établir la liste, M. le président.

Construction of drains, R 122,616.99. *Construction of drains*, seulement R 122,616.99 ! Voyages à l'étranger, IMF ; R 71,501. Deuxième item concernant les voyages ; *overseas mission*, R 55,399. Si je totalise l'item 'voyages' seulement, il arrive à un montant de R 126,900, dépassant déjà les travaux concernant le nettoyage des drains. Et le pire est à venir, M. le président. *Youth and cultural activities, sports activities, public ceremonies!* *Sports activities*, tenez-vous bien, R 1,024,519.52 ; *public ceremonies*, R 836,090.71, et *youth and cultural activities*, R 669,265.52, totalisant - *pour les items amusement, mangé, boire, briyani là !* - R 2,656,775.71.

C'est ça le bilan catastrophique du retour du MMM à la Municipalité de Port Louis. Ils ont passé sept années de disette. On se disait que pendant sept longue années ils n'ont pas eu à

manage quoi ce soit. Ils n'ont pas eu la possibilité de diriger, de *supervise*, de *manage* quoi que ce soit. Ils vont se retrouver à la municipalité après sept années de disette. Ça c'est leur bilan, et aujourd'hui, l'honorable Bérenger vient annoncer, M. le président ! Après dix mois, il se réveille. À ce moment-là seulement il réalise qu'il y a un problème de relogement des marchands ambulants dans la ville de Port Louis. La solution pour le centre-ville de Port Louis reste le relogement des marchands ambulants. C'est cette unique solution qui vient donner satisfaction aux commerçants, aux maraîchers, aux propriétaires de taxis, aux piétons, et à tous *les stakeholders*. Les commerçants vont rester en place. Les maraîchers vont rester dans le marché central. Il faudra reloger les marchands ambulants. Et on a joué le jeu !

Depuis dix mois on a attendu, patiemment, comme véritables démocrates ! On a accordé deux *prime sites* à la municipalité. Qu'est-ce qu'ils avaient à faire ? Tout simplement *to proceed with the allocation of stalls*. Il y avait une liste, un *survey* qu'ils avaient eux-mêmes établi : 1,050. Il faut un *expression of interest*. Ils arrivent avec une liste ; vous savez de combien ? 1,738. Et parmi ces 1,738, il y a au moins 600 qui n'ont jamais exercé comme *hawkers*, qui sont des petits copains, des activistes politiques, des agents à être récompensés. Et figurez-vous bien, ils ne vont pas exercer comme *hawkers* ! Ils vont sous-louer ces étals. C'est ça qu'on appelle un *judicious and effective management of public funds* ? Ils ont l'audace de venir réclamer R 75 millions additionnelles ! Est-ce qu'on peut se permettre, après dix mois d'incompétence, après dix mois d'amateurisme, après dix mois de politique de petits copains - et là, lorsque je vous parle aujourd'hui dans cette auguste Assemblée, il n'est plus question de dix mois ; il est question d'une année. Catastrophique ! C'est une motion de blâme.

Nous, comme véritables démocrates ! Le MMM quelques années de cela se prétendait être le champion de la démocratie régionale. Ils se tapaient l'estomac comme étant des ténors de l'administration régionale ! Mais ils vont à contre-courant, M. le président ! Ils font faire du recul à l'avancement de la démocratie locale, puisqu'à travers le monde, à travers les démocraties avant-gardistes, on parle d'un mandat mairal de cinq ans. Ici, tout le monde qui est passé par le conseil municipal - l'honorable Deven Nagalingum, je suis sûr, ne va pas me démentir, me contredire là-dessus - une année mairale est insuffisante pour qu'on puisse établir un projet. On avait accordé deux ans. Lorsqu'on procédait, au mois de décembre dernier, aux élections des maires, est-ce que, quelque part, on avait annoncé qu'au bout d'une année on allait les

remplacer ? C'est une motion de blâme que leur propre *Leader* vient leur infliger, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Il n'y a pas autre chose que cela. C'est une motion de blâme. C'est un aveu de la faillite de l'administration du *remake* dans nos municipalités. Et lorsque je vous parle de cela, M. le président, nous agissons toujours en véritable démocrates. Le budget qui est à l'étude, lorsque j'examine les items de *grant-in-aid* qui sont accordés aux cinq municipalités - je ne vous parle pas des Conseils de districts. Je m'arrête aux cinq municipalités - élogieux ! À mettre à l'actif d'un véritable démocrate en la personne de l'honorable Hervé Aimée, ministre des Administrations régionales !

(Interruptions)

Il n'y a pas eu de visière, M. le président, pour soutenir mes arguments ! Ce sont des preuves concrètes mentionnées dans le budget qui est à l'étude. Pour la municipalité et Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, leur *grant-in-aid* passe de R 192,825,000 à R 233,976,000, M. le président. C'est une augmentation de l'ordre de 52%, M. le président. Si ce n'est pas ça la démocratie locale, qu'est-ce qu'on appellerait une véritable démocratie locale ?

(Interruptions)

Et non seulement ça ! Je vous ai parlé de Beau Bassin-Rose-Hill sous l'administration municipale MMM/MSM. Maintenant, je vous parle des chiffres pour Quatre Bornes, toujours sous l'administration municipale MSM/MMM. Leur *grant-in-aid* va passer de R 173,182,000 à R 233,976,000, M. le président, représentant une augmentation de 35%.

(Interruptions)

Et pour cette administration incompétente, petits copains, l'administration *remake* MMM/MSM de Port Louis, leur *grant-in-aid*, M. le président, passe de R 415,135,000 à R 495,850,000 - un demi *billion of rupees*, M. le président - ce qui représente une augmentation de 30% !

(Interruptions)

Jamais à l'époque où j'ai été Lord-maire ou maire, j'aurais imaginé une telle générosité de la part du gouvernement central, et c'est la démocratie prônée par le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, s'ils ont quelque part un peu de dignité - je me permets de terminer - lorsque j'ai mentionné ces chiffres, à juste raison ! Que mentionne le ministre des Administrations régionales dans le budget?

« One of the primary objectives of the Ministry of Local Government in as far as local administration is concerned is to promote effectiveness and efficiency of local authorities. »

Je vais devoir malheureusement terminer, M. le président, sur deux mauvaises notes. La première mauvaise note, M. le président, et là, je fais un appel auprès de Monsieur le ministre des Administrations régionales, je fais un appel auprès de l'*Audit Department* de la Municipalité de Port Louis.

(Interruptions)

Le directeur du bureau central de l'audit n'a pas accès à auditer les finances de la municipalité. La municipalité a son propre département de l'audit, et je fais un appel à ce département de l'audit et au ministre des Administrations régionales.

M. le président, dans le cadre du jumelage de la cité de Port Louis avec la ville de La Possession à l'île de La Réunion, il est une longue tradition que chaque année il y ait un échange de délégation de personnes du troisième âge entre ces deux villes jumelées ; et cela depuis de très longues années. Le Conseil municipal de Port Louis est appelé à envoyer une délégation de trente personnes à la ville de La Possession à l'île de La Réunion. Et la désignation de ces trente personnes âgées - *trente de nou bann grand dimounes* - se faisait comment, M. le président ? Se faisait dans la justice ! Chaque conseiller municipal, quel que soit son appartenance politique, qu'il soit du groupe majoritaire ou du groupe minoritaire, était appelé à désigner une personne du troisième âge de son arrondissement pour former partie de cette délégation. Aujourd'hui - lorsque je vous parle maintenant - à la Municipalité de Port Louis, ils ont toujours droit, malgré le fait qu'on ne retrouve que vingt-quatre conseillers à la mairie de Port Louis...

(Interruptions)

Le ministre a approuvé une délégation de trente personnes, à tout seigneur tout honneur, on donne la prérogative, donc, au Lord-maire de désigner six personnes, et les vingt-quatre autres

doivent être désignés par chacun des conseillers. Savez-vous ce qu'ils ont fait ? Ils ont écarté les conseillers du Parti travailliste et PMSD, ils les ont mis de côté...

(Interruptions)

...ils n'ont pas droit de désigner une personne du troisième âge ! Est-ce qu'on peut se permettre, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

...de pousser...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Hossen: M. le président, est-ce qu'on peut se permettre de pousser la politique partisane pour justifier une telle bassesse? Puisque ces personnes du troisième âge, M. le président, ont contribué au progrès et développement de leur ville, à juste raison, doivent être récompensées. Ça c'est la première mauvaise note.

La deuxième mauvaise note, M. le président, chaque année – écoutez-moi bien – la Municipalité de Port Louis procède à la distribution des jouets aux enfants des régions défavorisées. Chaque conseiller à droit, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Information and Technology!

Mr Hossen: M. le président, chaque conseiller, chaque année – quel que soit son appartenance politique, qu'il soit du groupe majoritaire ou du groupe minoritaire, dans le respect vis-à-vis de nos enfants, des êtres innocents – avait droit à un nombre équitable de coupons à être distribués. On a invité ces enfants à venir sur l'esplanade que, nous, au Parti travailliste, lorsqu'on a administré la ville de Port Louis, avons transformé cette esplanade de la Municipalité de Port Louis en esplanade du peuple.

Lorsque les petits enfants du peuple venaient sur l'esplanade chaque année, on procédait à la distribution des jeux. Savez-vous ce qu'ils ont fait l'année dernière, et ce qu'ils s'appêtent à faire au mois de décembre ? L'année dernière, ils avaient distribué les coupons uniquement parmi les conseillers MMM/MSM, M. le président. C'est une honte !

(Interruptions)

Comment peut-on imaginer, M. le président, qu'on peut descendre vers une telle bassesse ? Ce n'est pas raisonnable, et on condamne cela. C'est quelque chose qu'on ne va pas tolérer, et je demande à l'audit de la Municipalité de Port Louis, et je demande au ministre des Administrations régionales de vérifier cela.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, j'ai quelque peu débordé sur le temps qui m'a été alloué. Je pense que c'était cependant important de venir faire la lumière sur ces pratiques honteuses qui se font...

(Interruptions)

Des pratiques occultes justement ! Il n'y a pas de meilleur terme pour qualifier cela. Honteuses et occultes ! Ce qu'on condamne sans réserve, M. le président !

Vive la démocratie à Maurice ! Vive notre *Leader* et Premier ministre, le Docteur Navin Ramgoolam ! Le pays continue son avancement vers le développement et le progrès.

Merci, M. le président.

(4.57 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism and Leisure (Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen): M. le président, je voudrais commencer par féliciter le Premier ministre, l'honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, et le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, pour ce budget d'avenir. C'est un budget de continuité où toutes les composantes de la société mauricienne se retrouvent.

M. le président, permettez-moi de répondre à l'opposition qui brosse un tableau sombre - comme toujours - sur le pays.

Je voudrais rappeler les membres de l'opposition, qu'en 2005, le Premier ministre d'alors, l'honorable Bérenger, a admis que "le pays était en état d'urgence économique." Il faut faire ressortir, M. le président, qu'il n'y avait même pas de crise financière à travers le monde pendant cette période. Tous les indicateurs économiques étaient dans le rouge -

- Le taux de chômage a touché les 9.6%;

- La dette publique était à 56% du PIB;
- La croissance du PIB est passé de 10.2% en 2000 à 2.7% en 2005;
- Le FDI était à R 2.8 milliards seulement;
- Le tourisme à 2.3%;
- Le textile était en décroissance avec -12.3%, et
- Le déficit budgétaire était à 8.1%.

M. le président, c'était un héritage catastrophique que nous a laissé le gouvernement d'alors, le MMM/MSM. Ils ont quand même un bilan entre les années 2000 à 2005. Ils ont augmenté la TVA de 10% à 12% dans un premier temps, et de 12% à 15% dans un deuxième temps.

M. le président, il ne faut pas oublier la dissolution de l'ECO, parce que l'ECO a convoqué un de leurs ministres. Le jackpot de R 45 millions pour le Sun Trust, et évidemment, M. le président, le 'mari deal' d'Ilovo de R 9 milliards. Il ne faut pas l'oublier ! C'est pourquoi aujourd'hui, les membres de l'opposition se trouvent de l'autre côté de la Chambre. Je dois faire ressortir aujourd'hui, M. le président, que l'opposition propose au peuple la même formule, le *remake* de l'an 2000.

Je dois faire ressortir aujourd'hui, M. le président. L'opposition propose au peuple la même formule ; cela veut dire le *Remake* 2000. M. le président, le peuple mauricien n'est pas dupe. Il sait quelle équipe qui travaille pour l'intérêt du pays. M. le président, c'est ce gouvernement qui a ramené la stabilité et a su naviguer alors que la crise financière bat son plein en Europe.

Il ne faut pas oublier que ce gouvernement vient de payer un *PRB* de plus de R 6 milliards aux fonctionnaires sans augmenter la TVA, alors que dans d'autres pays, à cause de la crise, les salaires ont dû être revus à la baisse.

C'est ce gouvernement qui va transformer l'île Maurice à un état de résilience, et sans équivoque.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall now turn to my Ministry. My Ministry acts as a facilitator for sustainable tourism development and for positioning Mauritius as an up-market destination.

The overall strategic thrust of Government is to sustain the long term viability of the tourism sector by increasing tourist arrivals and growing tourism receipts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, the tourism sector is striving hard to sustain growth and employment levels. Fundamental changes in the international tourism environment such as emergence of low cost destinations, the rising cost of air tickets and the changing patterns of travel have also taken their toll on our tourism industry.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of all the odds, our tourism sector has remarkably ridden out the global economic crisis and performed relatively well.

- The share of tourism sector to GDP increased from a low figure of 2.3% in 2005 to 8.2% in 2012.
- Tourist arrivals have continued to increase, registering a figure of 965,441 last year as opposed to 761,063 arrivals in 2005. We are targeting the one million mark this year.
- Tourism receipts reached an all time record of Rs44.4 billion in 2012 compared to Rs25.7 billion in 2005.
- The sector provides some 100,000 direct and indirect employments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has during the year obtained various awards, largely attributed to the excellence of its service delivery, quality of tourism product, and attractiveness of the destination.

- In March, this year, the International Travel Berlin awarded the “*Destination de l’Année 2013*” to Mauritius.
- In May, this year, the World Travel Awards awarded two awards to Mauritius -
 - (1) the “Indian Ocean’s leading Honeymoon Destination 2013”, and
 - (2) the “Indian Ocean’s leading Diving Destination 2013”.

- Last month, Mauritius obtained the “Next Travel Destination Award” by China Travel Award.
- Again, last month, the International Tourism Conclave and Travel Awards of India awarded the “Best Destination Country 2013” to Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these results clearly demonstrate that the policy measures adopted by this Government are paying dividends. But, still, we need to provide the sector with the required support to confront new challenges, and resist the external shocks.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the level of my Ministry, we have, following consultations with all stakeholders, including AHRIM, elaborated a 10-year Economic and Social Transformation for the Tourism Sector. The plan aims at pursuing growth at an average annual rate of at least 5%, with a more diversified portfolio of source markets, while consolidating, enhancing and reinforcing the destination as a leading island resort.

Over and above, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has drawn up a 3-year PBB Strategic Plan, covering the period 2014-2016, to reposition the tourism sector in the new business environment.

The strategic plan articulates the policies, strategies, projects, and programmes that would be implemented over a period of three years to respond to the emerging challenges, and enhance the visibility and attractiveness of the destination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the setting up of a Joint Public and Private Committee announced in the 2014 Budget is most welcomed, as it will serve as a platform for exchange of ideas among the different stakeholders, to advise Government on the marketing strategies to be pursued to grow tourist arrivals, and mitigate the adverse effects of the Euro Zone crisis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will support the SME operators for their business to grow in the interest of the whole industry, with their integration, and in the interest of the destination.

The SME Refund Scheme demonstrates the determination of this Government to democratise the economy and to support SMEs. I have asked the MTPA to assign a Desk Officer just for the SMEs in order to better support them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to welcome the Rs25 m. as a Special Fund to boost arrivals during the low season from the short haul markets. It is expected that this strategy will help to fill the rooms, especially during the low season.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to adapt to the global economic shifts with the emergence of the BRIC countries as new economic powers. On average, a fifth of the population of the emerging markets travel abroad on holidays or vacation every year. Within two decades, on the back of a rising middle class, this will swell to two-thirds of the emerging markets population.

China alone has an outbound tourists estimated at 80 million this year, with spending over USD 80 m.

With a view to mitigating the negative impacts of the Euro Zone crisis on one hand and to tap the vast potential of the emerging markets on the other, we have diversified our market base by penetrating more aggressively the emerging markets like China, India, Russia and South Africa while consolidating our traditional markets, particularly France, United Kingdom and Germany.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Euro Zone, which constitutes our main tourism source market, will remain critical for many years to come.

In fact, the Euro Zone was accounting -

- almost 68% of our total tourist arrival in year 2000 with 439,989 tourists;
- 57% in 2012 with 555,528 tourists, and
- 54% for the first ten months of this year with 428,377 tourists.

It is important to note that Europe remains a very important market for Mauritius. We are doing our best to consolidate the traditional markets.

It is heartening to note that tourist arrivals from France registered a positive growth of 4.8% last month after a continuous declining trend since May 2013. The British and the German markets also have renewed with positive growth since the beginning of this year with 14% and 10% respectively for the first ten months of this year.

The MTPA jointly with the tour operators, hoteliers and travel agents will continue to market Mauritius as an ideal holiday destination that offers a complete and diversified product offer, ranging from sun and beach to encompass water sports, wellness and ecotourism.

Joint advertising campaigns will be undertaken with airlines and trade partners to consolidate the visibility of the destination, and attract wealthy and top spenders to Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2014, the rebalancing of tourism growth will be accelerated with a more pronounced penetration in emerging markets like China, India and Russia.

In China, Mauritius is being positioned as a destination of choice for honeymooners, golfers and movie producers. I am glad to inform the House that, at least, two Chinese movies will be produced with Chinese stars very soon in Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

I will ask the producer to contact hon. Li Kwong Wing to play in his movie. This medium should create good visibility for the destination in China. Thailand has had a big success with the movie “LOST IN THAILAND”, which brought a wave of visitors. A similar effect will definitely occur after the production of these movies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the introduction of direct flights to Shanghai and Beijing by Air Mauritius, tourist arrivals from China have increased by twofold. Last year, we received 20,885 Chinese tourists. This year the figure will be more than double.

In India, our focus is primarily on the MICE, wedding, and honeymoon segments. Last year, Mauritius attracted some 55,197 tourist arrivals from India. This year, it is forecasted to reach the figure of around 60,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has recently introduced an incentive scheme to give a further boost to the MICE segment. This scheme provides supports ranging from Rs100,000 to Rs200,000 to MICE customers, provided the minimum group size is 100 tourists. The sponsorship would cover costs incurred in Mauritius and relating to -

- (i) entertainment;
- (ii) cultural events and shows, and
- (iii) transport and logistics.

It is expected that this scheme will attract more visitors to Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Russia is another promising market that holds tremendous potential for our tourism industry. With the 40 million high spenders outbound tourists from the Russian Federation annually, Mauritius is targeting the rich segments like wedding, kite surfing, honeymooners and family vacations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Chinese and the Indian markets represent vast business opportunities for our tourism operators to compensate for the lost in tourist arrivals from our traditional markets. However, our operators will have to reorient their marketing strategy, adapt their product offering, and adopt new business practices to take full advantages of the new opportunities arising from the Chinese and Indian Markets.

Hoteliers, tour operators and DMCs would require an in-depth knowledge of these markets in order to tailor their product to the needs of these travellers. The Tourism Authority and the MTPA will mount appropriate training courses for the benefits of the frontliners in the hospitality industry to equip them with basic skills and expose them to the Chinese and Indian cultures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, prospection of new markets in niche segments with the right product offerings are being undertaken by MTPA to enlarge our tourist base. Actions at that level have been initiated in South Korea, Turkey, Japan, Scandinavian Countries, CIS countries and the Middle East Countries.

EDUC Tours for Tour Operators and the International Press Road shows and joint marketing campaigns with stakeholders are being organised to create awareness of the destination and sensitise tour operators to sell Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the regional front, we are directing our marketing efforts to proximity markets like Reunion Island, South Africa and Kenya.

Promotional campaigns with tour operators, road shows, media trips and sales driven campaigns are being carried out to boost tourist arrivals from these markets.

For period January to October 2013, tourist arrivals from the regional markets have increased to 220,068, compared to 215,268 for the same period in 2012.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today we are living in a world of hyper-connectivity which has altered the entire travel and tourism value chain. Internet and mobile connectivity are now the order of the day. Even in this House, we have started to turn to paperless, like I am doing right now.

Technology has greatly empowered the tourists to be at the centre of decision-making. By clicking on a computer mouse, they can switch to new routes or destinations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to ensure that our destination is at the centre of the stage, the MTPA will, as from 2014, embark on a variety of e-marketing and direct sales campaigns on major travel websites.

Social media like Facebook and leading travel social network will be also leveraged by the MTPA to generate buzz about the destination.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our market diversification strategy requires that Mauritius broadens its tourism product portfolio, and develop specific niche segments. Eco-tourism, medical tourism, business tourism, shopping tourism, cultural tourism, sport tourism, MICE and grey tourism offer tremendous opportunities for broadening our tourism product, and would be promoted more aggressively.

There is scope for our rich cultural heritage to be promoted and developed, considering that, according to the World Tourism Organisation, cultural tourism will account for 20% of all travels in the next 20 years.

In this context, the development of the Port Louis Heritage Trail to enhance the visibility of our historical buildings and sites, and provide an authentic experience and ambience to our visitors will be completed in the course of next year.

This project will be followed by a National Heritage Trail Programme.

Sports tourism is another fast growing segment within the global travel and tourism industry. Sailing competition, Kite Surfing competition, Golf International Competition, Beach Volley competition and the Beach Soccer competition are a few sports activities that are being promoted aggressively by the MTPA to give a boost to sports tourism.

The Vanilla Islands Project constitutes yet another avenue for offering a different package through the twin destination centre concept.

Cruise tourism will be given a new impetus. An Action Plan will be elaborated to relaunch the cruise tourism industry, and to position Mauritius as the main port of call in the Indian Ocean.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Tourism Industry is welcoming the 5-star New Terminal of the Airport. Who would have believed that Mauritius would have such a great airport in the Indian Ocean? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this new terminal of the Airport has become a reality with this Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, air connectivity is a live subject, and let me reassure the House that developments are expected on a number of markets.

Condor Airline has started to fly the route Munich-Mauritius since last month.

Emirates Airline will start flying its A 380 daily to Mauritius as from next month.

Corsair Airline is adding four additional flights for next month. A special flight from Romania is flying to Mauritius in December.

TUI Dreamliner from UK will start flying as from May 2014 to improve connectivity from UK.

Our existing flights to Kenya and Perth are being aggressively marketed to improve yield.

Considerable emphasis is being placed on Reunion and South Africa, which are our proximity markets.

Over and above, Dubai is being promoted as a gateway to target the Middle East and the CIS Countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these initiatives do not only connect Mauritius to our major source markets, but also show willingness and determination of this Government to support the tourism industry.

The institutions of my Ministry will continue to provide the necessary backup support and services in terms of destination promotion, product diversification, destination attractiveness and training to frontline operators.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Africa has over the last decade emerged as a strong economic force, with a sustained economic growth of 5% since 2000, despite the global downturn.

The growing Africa represents an interesting opportunity for our tourism sector, with an outbound tourists estimated at 31.7 million this year.

The MTPA will, as from 2014, implement an Africa Strategy, targeting tourism from the African countries registering sustained economic growth, namely Kenya, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Gabon and Nigeria.

The Africa Strategy of MTPA will focus –

First, niche segments such as medical tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, golf and shopping tourism.

Second, positioning of Mauritius as a gateway between Africa and Asia, thereby growing the influx of transit passenger flow at the new airport terminal.

Third, promoting South Africa and Kenya as a hub for Mauritius to connect to other countries.

Fourth, attracting adventure seekers from African countries, whereby attractive multi-destination packages will be offered under the Vanilla Islands concept.

This strategy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will further diversify our market base, and reduce our excessive dependence on the Euro Zone. Tourist arrivals from South Africa, Kenya and the African continent have registered significant increase since the beginning of the year, and this trend will continue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius-Africa Fund set up in the 2014 Budget is a move in the right direction. This will accelerate the regional integration process, and stimulate trade and investment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we live in a challenging time, characterised by uncertainty and hyper competition. As we embark on the next phase of our development, we need to sharpen our competitiveness, and achieve high growth. This is the overriding objection of the 2014 Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we like it or not, it is growth that will lead to inclusive development and prosperity. Without growth, there will be neither development nor inclusiveness. By laying the foundation for new economic pillars in the 2014 Budget, we are diversifying our economic base for sustained economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our country has come a long way over the last seven years. More than ever there are challenges ahead, and this Budget is providing the means to ride these waves, and seize the new opportunities.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Assirvaden: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. Jeetah rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 19 November 2013 at 11.30 a.m.

Dr. Bunwaree rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 5.25 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 19 November 2013 at 11.30 a.m.