



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION
FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2011**

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Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebejaun, GCSK, FRCP	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

<i>Mr Speaker</i>	Purryag, Hon. Rajkeswur, GCSK, GOSK
<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Roopun, Hon. Prithvirajsing
<i>Deputy Chairperson of Committees</i>	Deerpalsing, Hon. Ms Kumaree Rajeshree
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 29 of 2011

Sitting of Friday 18 November 2011

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 3.30 p.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

- (a) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 188 of 2011).
- (b) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 189 of 2011).

B. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (General Rate) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 193 of 2011).

C. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment –

The Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction Exemptions) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 190 of 2011).

D. Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No.12) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 191 of 2011).
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 192 of 2011).

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES FINANCING - BANKING SECTOR

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice Question*) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the scheme for the release of Rs3 billion over three years by the banking sector to the Small and Medium Enterprises, under the Small and Medium Enterprises financing, he will state if an agreement has been signed with the banking sector and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) names of the banks participating therein, indicating, in each case, the amount earmarked therefor;
- (b) security that is required to be provided by the Small and Medium Enterprises to benefit therefrom;
- (c) estimates of deduction from tax in respect of the bad debts of the Small and Medium Enterprises that the banks will be allowed to claim, and
- (d) amount of money that will be provided by the Equity Fund to offer risk cover.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, as we move on in the twenty first century, the lessons of the last century are clear. It is necessary to find a third way to avoid the traps of either unjustified faith in the market or excessive trust in the ability of the State to act in the place of the market. This third way involves a partnership between Government and the private sector to avoid both bureaucratic and market failure. I believe this third way can be a powerful tool.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with respect to SMEs, we know that the market is not working well enough to address either the problem of access to finance or the cost of finance. This is a global phenomenon where the market finds it particularly difficult to assess the risks. At the same time, attempts to address this problem by the State through Government institutions have had a limited impact over the last decade under different Ministers of Finance.

Yet, despite these efforts, the problem of access to and the cost of finance remains with us. We cannot repeat the same unsuccessful approach over and over in the hope that eventually success would emerge. Instead, we need to build on schemes which work. This is why the solution may require the third way of a collaborative approach between commercial banks and the State. This approach works because the State is able to address some of the risks the market

is unable to take but delivery of credit relies on market mechanisms which the State is unable to replicate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not just philosophy nor is it theory. We have tried this approach and it is working. One of the most successful schemes to support the renovation or expansion of capital equipment by SMEs has been the Leasing Equipment Modernisation Schemes (LEMS). Under LEMS, leasing companies deal directly with SMEs but the risk is shared with Government that provides a guarantee of 30 percent. Moreover, the lending is at an affordable rate of repo plus 3 percent, currently 8.5 percent.

The success of the LEMS has encouraged us to develop this third way through a Factoring Scheme. The scheme provides short term financing for discounting the credit sales of SMEs. Under this scheme Government underwrites the system through an initial injection of funds to factoring companies. As a result, the interest cost to the SME has almost halved to 7.5 percent.

The success of the collaborative approach under LEMS and Factoring should convince all of us that a Government partnership with the commercial banks is the right way to address the more difficult problems of SMEs regarding access to and cost of finance.

This is why commercial banks will provide loans of Rs3 billion to SMEs over three years at repo plus 3 percent i.e. presently at only 8.5 percent.

The Mauritius Bankers Association, as representative of all the banks in Mauritius, has written confirming their agreement to the scheme. However, to ensure compliance, in the coming Economic and Financial Measures Bill we are bringing amendments to the Bank of Mauritius Act to give the Bank of Mauritius power to enforce the agreement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no doubt that the banking sector will implement the scheme as from 01 December 2011 once the Budget debates are over and the Budget related bills have been considered by the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, all 14 commercial banks engaged in Segment A banking activities will participate. That is, all banks engaged in domestic banking. I am tabling the list.

Regarding the target of Rs1 billion per year, this will be allocated amongst the 14 participating commercial banks on the basis of their ratio of the total Segment A loan and overdrafts to overall Segment A loans and overdrafts as at end September 2011.

The Bank of Mauritius will communicate the quota for each bank and monitor compliance in line with the legislation we are introducing in the Financial and Economic Measures Bill. However, we are looking into the possibility of allowing commercial banks to reallocate quotas amongst themselves for the benefit of ensuring that the goal of Rs1 billion lending at repo plus 3 percent to SMEs is met.

The Bank of Mauritius may also set up an account, which would receive any unallocated funds. These amounts would be deposited at zero interest and would be lent at favourable rates determined by the Bank of Mauritius to commercial banks that have met or exceeded their agreed lending quota.

Commercial banks will report monthly to the Bank of Mauritius on their compliance with the agreed targets. Commercial banks will also report on unsuccessful applications by SMEs, to enable a database to be built up for corrective action in the future.

Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can have a high degree of certainty that SMEs will indeed benefit from Rs3 billion of credit at repo plus 3 percent, currently 8.5 percent, over the next three years. Mr Speaker, Sir, I also want to highlight that all transaction charges imposed by commercial banks on these loans will be waived. In addition, as announced in my Budget Speech, we are removing registration duties on loans not exceeding Rs1m. In total, an SME would benefit from some Rs25,000 on a loan of Rs1m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning part (b), there are no additional security requirements to be provided by SMEs beyond the existing framework. However, SMEs will be able to more easily qualify without additional security requirements due to the 35 percent risk guarantee to be provided by the Equity Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning part (c) of the question, we need to first clarify that the measure proposed is about bringing certainty and clarity to the process. I am informed that it is already the case that, for debts not exceeding Rs200,000 and for debts owed by companies in liquidation or receivership, these debts are considered bad for tax purposes without the bank having to go to court. We are clarifying that these provisions will now apply to all SMEs. However, any bad debts to be allowable as a tax deduction need to satisfy the MRA as being genuine. The MRA will disqualify any amounts which are improper.

In terms of estimates of deduction from tax in respect of bad debts of the SMEs, I am informed that there is no tracking by the MRA that would enable this figure to be determined. In

any case, this is more an issue of timing affecting cash flow rather than a giveaway - I'll explain it later perhaps. As such, this is more a business facilitation measure than a subsidy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (d) of the question, Rs50 m. will be allocated for this purpose from the Equity Fund. Half the funding will, of course, come from the banks, and the other half from government.

Mr Bérenger: I did not catch what the hon. Minister of Finance said. When will the scheme be set in motion?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, through courtesy with the National Assembly, we are waiting for the debates to be over. In fact, we have confirmation from some of the major banks - and we hope that all the banks will do this - that this will be done as from 01 December this year.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister of Finance say that an amendment will be brought to the Bank of Mauritius Act. Is the amendment ready, and could it be circulated?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it will come hopefully before the end of the year with the Economic and Financial Measures Bill. It is not obligatory for the measures to come into force before the banks start the lending, but it is a monetary mechanism, a sort of reallocation mechanism, and we expect this - I can't prejudge what Cabinet will do - to come very shortly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: It was a bit complicated to understand how it will be apportioned amongst the different banks; some being huge banks and others small ones. Can we have a clarification about what will be the criteria to apportion that Rs1 billion per year?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are trying to make it as simple as possible. We know that there is Rs1 billion per year. We know basically what the loan book of all the domestic banks - leaving out the offshore banks - are, and the Rs1 billion will be allocated *pro rata* to their loan book. If some of the banks - that's the mechanism for reallocation - cannot actually meet the minimum that is set by calculating it *pro rata*, then they can actually either put that at the Bank of Mauritius with zero rate of interest or on-lent through other banks which have a bigger SMEs portfolio.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister of Finance say that the Bank of Mauritius will look at that and will monitor how the banks perform. But I have not heard of any penalty. Is there any penalty provided for in case some banks do not play the game?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the penalty is what's coming in the forthcoming Bill. The banks that are not meeting their quota and have not on-lent will, in fact, have to deposit the money with the Bank of Mauritius at zero rate of interest. So, that is the penalty, but there are other measures. That's why, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good that I mention that the Bank of Mauritius will monitor monthly; positive, how much has been given and, negative, how much has been refused. In fact, there are other measures, as the hon. Leader of Opposition is aware probably. Section 50 of the Bank of Mauritius Act gives power to the Bank of Mauritius to provide for directed lending, that is, you will give so much to such a sector at such percentage rate.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister of Finance lay emphasis on the interest rate being only 3% above repo rate, which brings up to 8.5%; well, 8.5% is 8.5%. Has the hon. Minister of Finance received representations from associations, organisations representing Small and Medium Enterprises on that scope?

Mr Duval: Not really. I can't recall, but if we may have. Obviously, this is 3% above the repo rate; we do need to work out the cost of funding of the banks and the administrative cost etc. I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this is a big improvement. Only about 14% is being charged at the moment; it's about 5½% less than the going rate. In fact, over the three years, not only will the interest rate be much lower, which would probably cost the banks about Rs150 m. to Rs200 m., but also all the transaction charges, which can be quite high, which can be up to Rs10,000 or Rs15,000 charged by the bank on giving a loan like that, will be waived. So, we are talking about actually over the three years; quite a substantial amount of lost revenue for the banks.

Mr Bérenger: In his Budget Speech, the hon. Minister had said that the law would be amended, so that the banks do not have to go to the courts on bad debts. Now, I understand it has been found that it already exists in the law, but with a ceiling. Are we raising this ceiling, or are we still amending that part of the law?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a debate between the Ministry of Finance and the MRA. The MRA would like to have it in the law, but we think that in practice notes it would be better, so that the practice would be so. If obviously there is abuse or something like that, then it can be changed more easily than an amendment to the law. There is some debate but, at this

stage, we are thinking of amending just the practice notes of the MRA, so that in fact, this can be put into practice.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know what will be the procedure? The banks will not be going to the courts. What will be the procedure that will be followed? Will that procedure be applied by the MRA or somebody else?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it's a normal commercial procedure. Any company that has a bad debt, obviously, can write it off, and then set off in their annual tax computation. The procedure, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be first for the bank to try and recover. The loan has to go bad for a certain period of time. Once it has gone bad, then the bank will act on the security. That's the first thing. As you know, every loan is granted with a security. So, that also will come out of a bad debt. The third thing, of course, is the Equity Fund. The Equity Fund will step in and provide 35%. It is only after these three steps that the amount that remains will be recovered from tax. We think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that given the average of VAT may be 6%, the actual industry's average for SMEs bad debts 6% of the actual loan portfolio, this would probably not cost the MRA more than about Rs7 m. a year. It is not a major cost.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister of Finance has just made reference to the Equity Fund, could we now have more information on the Equity Fund and to which Equity Fund are we talking about, how much funds does that Equity Fund have in hand and how it will be funded in the future with this additional responsibility?

Mr Duval: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, once we look at the amounts that they are given, we think that the Rs50 m. from the Equity Fund will be sufficient for the next three years. So, we're not talking about a lot of money. The Equity Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Equity Fund set up by my predecessor. Nevertheless, it was never actioned, their money is still with the banks. So, it is Rs300 m. and we will action it now and, out of that Rs300 m., Rs50 m. will be kept for this scheme.

Mr Jugnauth: I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that under the Transitional Support Scheme, the rate of interest that was charged was 5.5% and under the Food Security Fund it varied between 3 to 5%. Can the hon. Minister say in what way, if ever, this new measure will impact on the other schemes?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, they are not changing. The DBM, in fact, has already brought down whatever was in excess of 8.5% I think there is possibly the publicity in the

papers of this week. It has already been brought down; they have some at 11-12% bringing it down to 8.5%. The lower ones are not being raised but, as the hon. Member will remember the Transitional Scheme was very limited in its amount. We are talking about 20,000 SMEs. The transitional or whatever only dealt with about a 100 companies. So, the idea of this Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to touch the masses because good intention measures have been taken in the past, but all of them have either been a total flop or have addressed only a small part of the SMEs.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister whether he is aware that the cost of deposit is only 4%, and when you add to that the tax deduction of the bad debt and also the guarantee of 35% on loan default, and when you add to that the fact that there is an excess cash liquidity at the banks of more than Rs5 billion, does he not consider that the rate of 8.5% is excessively high and looks more like to benefit the banks than the SMEs?

Mr Duval: I don't know how you can work that out, Mr Speaker, Sir. Bringing the rate from 14% to 8.5%, I mean, you have to have a bit of a special mind for that...

(Interruptions)

How you can move from 14% to 8.5%, but it is in fact to benefit.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Duval: I have also been able to mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the cost to Government is limited. We have only Rs50 m. - a way of saying - compared to Rs3 billion in the Fund and, half of that money, Rs25 m., is money belonging to the banks anyway. So we are talking about Rs3 billion to thousands of SMEs, the cost is Rs25 m. and the estimated costs of the bad debts is about Rs7 m. I think we are doing very well, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, because of the excessive profits already made by the banks with a large margin between the deposit rate and the lending rate, when the vice-Prime Minister considers all this, does he not think that this programme, by giving tax facilities and guarantees for renewal of existing loans where there is already a big book of bad debts at some of our banks, is this not tantamount to a bailout for some of these banks?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am surprised – anyway, I will reply to it. Companies are allowed, banks are allowed to deduct their bad debts. This is not new; I hope you don't think it is new that they are allowed to deduct their bad debts from the tax computation. That has always been the case, but what they had to do is to wait for the courts and not only that, but they had to

actually prosecute the SME, so you will lose both ways, you will have a loss of time for the banks.

On the other hand, I hope this doesn't mean that the hon. Member wants us to put all the SMEs into liquidation. In fact, it will benefit more the SMEs probably because they will no longer have to take a lawyer, go to Court and all these problems. They are going to benefit and, I have said again, that the costs to the Exchequer is about Rs7 m. a year. If you look at the various amounts that have been given in the past, it is far more than that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This is not a measure to help banks; we have had tremendous problems to get this across. You can say - it is easy to talk, to criticize is easy but we have had tremendous problems to get this down to 8.5% to the banks.

Now, if you can do better you can wait a few years, 10 to 20 years and do it if you want, but we have had tremendous problems to reduce it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I had to enlist the help of the Prime Minister to get this done and also the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a cornerstone of the policy of Government *vis à vis* SMEs. To be able to provide large amounts of money, to a large amount of SMEs at reduced costs is important and giving better access to SMEs to commercial loans. If it doesn't work, there is always a risk, if it doesn't work the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius is more than willing to apply his direct lending under Section 15 of the Bank of Mauritius Act.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the 35% guarantee by the Equity Fund, may I know from the hon. vice-Prime Minister whether there would be a ceiling on the per loan guarantee, would this guarantee apply to former loans which are already outstanding and bad, which would mean that effectively we are giving money to the bank to satisfy bad debts?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think we should think that all banks are carrying huge amounts of bad debts - this is what hon. Li Kwong Wing is saying, that all banks are carrying loss. I hope this is not the case. In fact, they do have to take some risks; this is why we are encouraging them to take some risks. This is the whole point. They consider sometimes that SMEs are bad risks and, therefore, I am glad if they are making some bad loans, at least, they are taking some risks. No, this will apply to only renewals and to new loans, Mr Speaker, Sir. We want it to apply to renewals, because it is a fact of life that most SMEs already exist.

And we think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that to be competitive, they need to have access to cheaper loans. So, it will be apply to existing SMEs upon renewal and to new SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad to inform the House, there has even been talk even from the bankers themselves, may be. I am sure we can impress upon them that if this works we can extend the amounts at a future time.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance give a guarantee that SMEs should not '*risse diable par la queue*' to get this loan at a rate of 3.5% above repo rate from commercial bank.

Mr Duval: I think I was quite clear in my answer. I don't know if all...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Duval: It is obviously on a first-come first-serve basis. I am told, Mr Speaker, Sir, that already the banks are receiving numerous enquiries concerning this new scheme. I am hundred percent sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this will work and that we will be able to disburse the Rs1 billion over the next year and that will have a tremendous effect on SMEs.

Mr Baloomoody: In answer to part (b) of the question, the hon. vice-Prime Minister said that the existing security requirements will be required by the SMEs and we know now the existing requirements that you have to give collateral if you have a private property. In case of bad debts what will happen to that collateral which the SMEs have given as guarantee?

Mr Duval: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, you also answered part of the question from your colleague that, if there are debts in the banks there is always in Mauritius banks collateral given. There is always some sort of security. That will always continue as before. We will not come and mess around with the banks to tell them what security that they should have. But, what we are doing, is increasing the value of the quality of the security by providing this additional 35% from the Equity Fund which, as you know, is already funded 50% by the banks.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. vice-Prime Minister must have surely become aware of the reaction of the Chairperson of the Mauritius Bankers Association saying that, and I quote -

« Le nouveau plan que propose le budget 2012 ne va en rien diluer la rigueur appliquée jusqu'ici sur le crédit aux PME. »

Has the hon. vice-Prime Minister had discussions with the MBA on that aspect with regard to the SMEs?

Mr Duval: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member was previously himself Minister of Finance. What we are doing is increasing the security available to an SME by 35% of its own amount. That's a major thing. We would not want banks to start giving money left, right and centre. *Même avec la rigueur qui est imposé*, the banks will need to take into account that out of every Rs100 now, Rs35 will come from the Equity Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is clear.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has met the *porte-parole*, the representative of the SMEs, Mr Deepalsing, after the Budget just to reassure him and to take into consideration what he said? That is, Government should encourage the State Bank and the MPCB to lend at 5% as it was under the previous Government. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has met Mr Amar Deepalsing, the representative of the SMEs, who made that statement and who strongly recommends what I am saying?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I met Mr Deepalsing a few times before with his members, but he is very vociferous - like all the Deepalsing are, we know that. So, he is very vociferous...

(Interruptions)

I am not saying it is bad; I am just saying that he is very vociferous and, in fact, I read after in one of the papers at least - I don't know if there had been more declarations - that he was very happy with the loan and honestly, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have done the maximum.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem! Then, the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir! Being given that we are talking about Small and Medium Enterprises, especially with respect to small enterprises which don't even have collateral to give - they don't have a house, they don't have property to give in guarantee - would the hon. Minister of Finance consider on a case by case basis, to ask the Equity Fund to guarantee more than 35% so that even those smaller enterprises can get access to credit?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not withdrawn any of the other schemes that were there. We are just saying that the other schemes still exist, that my predecessors had done. It's just that they are not working. So, this comes on top of it. The other schemes are still there. There is also, as I said, Rs300 m. Equity Fund; Rs50 m. are being used for that. The other schemes are still there and it's a very tricky issue to provide access to finance. I mean, if you look at the past trend, some of the financing has been provided for by various institutions; the DBM, mostly. Some of them, Mr Speaker, Sir, only get about 40% repayment and 60% are actually written off because it's very difficult where to actually strike the balance.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister of Finance say that it was not easy to bring the banks on board as far as this new scheme is concerned, but that they finally sent a letter of approval. Can we have a copy of that letter placed in the Library? Is the Association of Bankers which sent that letter already aware of the contents of the amendments that will be brought to the Bank of Mauritius Act?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the letter came some time ago, because this has been going on for some time and it was a letter on the regional conditions, but it has not changed vastly from this and we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this will be applied. I am giving a guarantee to the House that this will be applied and, in fact, it would be applied not in one year's time, in the coming weeks and the House will have plenty of occasions to question me if it is not applied. Also, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will see whether I can, but, as I mentioned, it was a few weeks ago and there may have been some changes to the actual finalised agreement. As I have mentioned to the House, we are still talking to them about some of the final points. For instance, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to be able to say that for trading companies, people are not going to buy big luxury cars out of this. So, there will be some conditions which are still being worked out and at the end of the day, it would be a pleasure for me to lay on the Table of the Assembly a complete set of regulations.

Mr Speaker: Next item!

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.

PUBLIC BILL*Second Reading***THE APPROPRIATION (2012) BILL**
(No. XXVI of 2011)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2012) Bill (No. XXVI of 2011).

Question again proposed.

(4.05 p.m.)

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, ayant eu le privilège d'assister à tous les débats qui ont suivi la présentation du budget, il y a de cela deux semaines presque; ayant écouté pratiquement tous les discours prononcés dans la Chambre durant ces débats, j'aurai deux remarques préliminaires à adresser à mes collègues, députés de la Chambre.

D'abord, je suis animé par un sentiment d'indignation et je vais vous dire pourquoi, M. le président, si vous le permettez. Lors de la présentation du budget, il y a donc deux semaines, nous étions tous là, députés de la majorité, comme de l'opposition. Lors du discours du *Leader* de l'opposition nous étions tous là, députés de la majorité, et de l'opposition et puis après, quand les autres députés et les autres ministres se sont mis à parler, il y a eu un grand absent, le ministre des Finances.

A mon avis, M. le président, mis à part le *Leader* de l'opposition et le Premier ministre - cela se comprend- le député qui a été le plus absent de tous ces débats, dix jours durant, aura été le ministre des Finances. Pourtant, M. le président, dans la tradition de *Westminster*, un budget c'est la loi des finances et comme tout projet de loi, celui qui propose à la Chambre l'approbation de ce projet de loi doit être là pour le présenter, l'expliciter, pour écouter attentivement ce qu'en disent, à la fois, les collègues du gouvernement et les députés de l'opposition pour ensuite réagir et quand bien même ce serait nécessaire à porter des corrections utiles. Mais cela n'a pas été le cas. Je me suis laissé dire, et j'ai été moi-même pendant plus d'une quinzaine d'années, député ici, que de tous les ministres des Finances depuis l'indépendance; de Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo, qui probablement fut le premier ministre des finances après l'indépendance, de Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, de Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo jusqu'à Pravind Jugnauth en passant par Paul Bérenger et tous les autres, jamais un ministre des Finances n'aura été autant absent et pourtant, nous

avons vu et je les en félicite - le Deputy Prime Minister, sans doute, le doyen de la Chambre en terme d'âge, le ministre Anil Bachoo, les ministres Madame Bappoo, Dr. Bunwaree, et même les ministres Dr. A. Boolell et Dr. Kasenally, dès lors qu'ils étaient au pays, être présents à toutes les séances.

Donc, c'est un sentiment d'indignation, M. le président. Je le dis sans qu'il n'y ait rien de personnel mais je pense que dès lors qu'on est ministre il faut absolument assumer ses responsabilités par rapport à notre démocratie.

Deuxième remarque, très rapidement, c'est les débats de ces derniers jours qui ont semblé devenir des règlements de compte. Des règlements de compte où l'on ne parlait plus du budget, des règlements de compte qui ont frisé l'indécence dans la mesure où les alliés d'hier se reprochaient des choses qui existaient avant même l'alliance. Donc, ils auraient dû en être conscients comme cette caricature parue dans '*Le Mauricien*' d'hier qui démontrait une députée de la majorité disant à son Premier ministre - si je connaissais l'épisode du billet de R 20, j'aurai recommandé de ne pas faire alliance. Vraiment indécent! Mais l'indécence est vraiment poussée à son comble quand les plus volubiles, les plus hystériques sont précisément ceux qui ont changé de casaque hier encore. Tout le monde le sait. Si vous regardez les rangs de la majorité, la moitié est issue de différents partis politiques, soit c'est leur droit. Mais, au moins, ne poussez pas le ridicule jusqu'à reprocher à l'un ou à l'autre des partis de l'opposition, des choses faites pendant que vous-même, étiez membre de ce parti. Voilà, M. le président, deux remarques préliminaires, il aurait mieux fallu que les débats se focalisent sur le budget et c'est ce que je me propose de faire.

Ce budget a été présenté dans un contexte particulièrement difficile et inquiétant. Un contexte de marasme économique, de dégradation du climat social et d'instabilité politique. De marasme économique parce que tous les indicateurs tournent rouge. Sans entrer dans les détails, qu'il s'agisse de l'inflation, qu'il s'agisse du déficit commercial avec la Chambre de Commerce et d'industrie nous promettant une année 2012 sans croissance des exportations, qu'il s'agisse du chômage, qu'il s'agisse de la dette publique qui est censée crever la barre de 60% du PIB d'ici la fin l'année, qu'il s'agisse de l'investissement privé avec des projections d'un repli encore plus conséquent l'année prochaine, qu'il s'agisse de l'investissement étranger, qu'il s'agisse du traité....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker : Order !

Mr Obeegadoo : ...le ministre des Finances a sans doute un congrès à aller animer qui serait plus important que les travaux parlementaires ! C'est à se demander pourquoi nous sommes là nous et pas dans des congrès à Quatre Bornes, à La Source, ou ailleurs ! Je disais donc, M. le président, que ce budget est présenté dans un contexte de marasme économique.

Sur le plan du social - la pauvreté. La pauvreté, elle est là. Elle est visible, elle est tangible pour tous les députés de terrain. Nous la voyons, nous la palpons. Nous pouvons en témoigner tous les jours. Un ménage sur deux, M. le président, est aujourd'hui endetté. 18,5% des revenus des ménages sont consacrés au remboursement des dettes. Vous n'avez qu'à voir certaines émissions - une des rares excellentes émissions de la MBC qui s'appelle '*Anou Bouzé*' - 'Enquête en Direct' sur Radio One. Ces histoires que vous témoignez sont à vous fendre le cœur. Comme ce petit garçon qui s'est brûlé l'oreille en se penchant trop près d'une bougie pour sa révision, pour repasser ses devoirs, à la veille des examens de CPE parce qu'il n'y a pas d'électricité chez lui.

Tous les jours, M. le président, nous témoignons de cette situation. Savez-vous que les prestations sociales, the *social benefits*, ont augmenté en termes de dépenses de 82% en cinq ans, de 2005 à 2010 ? Savez-vous qu'en termes d'aide sociale de 2005 à 2010, nous sommes passés de 17,500 familles bénéficiaires à 19,500 ? Savez-vous qu'en termes de *food aid*, un mauricien sur treize serait récipiendaire du *food aid* et qu'au sein de la République, tenez-vous bien, M. le président, il y a 1,700 ménages sans électricité, 1,400 maisons sans eau et à Rodrigues 50% de la population Rodriguaise habitent des maisons qui ne sont pas pourvues d'eau courante ou d'une toilette, au sein de la République en 2011. Donc, les gens font l'expérience d'une part de cette pauvreté et d'autre part la fraude et la corruption, les cas de favoritisme, les scandales politico-financiers à n'en plus finir, le manque d'eau ; il y a d'autres, M. le président, inévitablement, une dégradation du climat social et, ajoutée à cela, l'instabilité politique et là c'est tout simplement une question d'arithmétique. Déjà, avant même le départ du MSM du gouvernement, cette instabilité était palpable. Avec le départ du MSM du gouvernement, le gouvernement n'a plus la majorité dans le pays. C'est simple. C'est arithmétique. À la dernière élection, l'alliance dite de l'avenir d'alors obtenait 50% de suffrages des votants. Il est évident que même si on supposait- ce qui est difficile - mais, en supposant, que le parti travailliste ait gardé et préservé tout son électorat depuis les élections, le départ du MSM implique forcément

qu'arithmétiquement ce gouvernement, il est minoritaire. Il est illégitime moralement puisqu'élu avec le MSM au sein de l'alliance de l'avenir et comme nous le disait un observateur cité par mon collègue, l'honorable Baloomoody « un gouvernement avec des compétences plutôt limitées » au niveau de son gouvernement du cabinet et un gouvernement donc faible en tout état de cause alors que le pays va mal et qu'il faut l'incapacité de voir plus loin, de prendre des décisions courageuses. On s'attendait à ce que ce budget soit donc une bouée de secours, apporte une souffle nouveau ; que ce budget réponde aux attentes d'une part d'une vraie relance économique, fondé sur une croissance inclusive qui serait génératrice d'emplois, qui permettrait de protéger le pouvoir d'achat des ménages et, d'autre part, un budget de solidarité sociale. Et qu'a-t-on vu et qu'a-t-on eu à l'arrivée ? Un budget de relance économique, certes. Le ministre des finances a fait le pari de relancer l'économie en tentant de stimuler les investissements et je ne vous ferai pas le catalogue des mesures proposées par le budget, mais c'était cela le pari - de relancer donc les investissements. Et tout cela repose sur d'abord une croissance de 4% pour l'an prochain. Je suis plutôt dubitatif et tous les observateurs s'attendent à ce que la croissance soit bien moindre que les 4%. Vous savez, au lendemain du budget, le journal weekend, l'hebdomadaire le plus lu, titrait 'Hypothèse osée en déclinant toute une série de présuppositions sur lesquelles le budget s'était basé'. Même le très diplomate et très prudent Pierre Dinan, observateur économique avisé, disait que s'il fallait utiliser un slogan pour ce budget, ce slogan serait 'Et tout devient possible' comme si nous avions une baguette magique ! Mais même si la croissance avoisinait les 4%, l'on n'arriverait pas à contenir le chômage, l'on n'arriverait pas à relever les défis du pays. D'ailleurs le FMI déjà prévoit un taux de chômage aux alentours de 8.4% pour l'année prochaine alors même que nous ne savons pas ce que sera ce retour de la grande récession qui s'annonce pour 2012.

M. le président, ce budget souligne l'importance de réduire notre dépendance sur les marchés traditionnels. Tant mieux ! *Long overdue* ! Mais quelles sont les mesures proposées pour faire ce qu'ils appellent '*rebalancing of growth*'. Quand ? Comment ? À partir de quelle ressource ? Comment évaluer l'impact de cet effort du gouvernement ? Silence total ! R 5 milliard prévus pour les infrastructures, tant mieux. Il faut bien compenser face à la crise ce repli dramatique des investissements privés et ce repli est prévu jusqu'à 2014. Mais quelle transparence ! J'ai souvent fait le reproche au ministre Bachoo, mais une des rares réalisations de ce gouvernement de 2005 à 2011 sera sans doute les infrastructures routières. Et pourtant,

contrairement à tout autre pays démocratique, personne ne sait pas ce qui va se passer demain. Comme ça, on apprend hier cette nouvelle route qui va permettre d'éviter ce que nous appelons '*rond point la bière*' à Phoenix. Personne ne le sait. Personne ne l'annonce, ce n'est pas explicité. Nul document n'articule la vision, les propositions et le public est placé devant un fait accompli. Donc, un manque de transparence.

Mais, je m'égare - revenons donc aux propositions budgétaires. Les PMEs viennent de faire l'objet d'une PNQ donc je ne commenterai point. Mais, allons plus loin, les réformes de la fonction publique - voilà un chantier essentiel, d'importance fondamentale. Dès lors qu'on parle de bonne gouvernance, d'efficience, de *quality of delivery of public services*, comme le dit le budget. Où est le courage politique pour aborder cette question ? Vous avez lu ce qui s'est dit au forum de la Jeune Chambre Economique - tout le retard pour délivrer des permis ; permis de développement foncier. Tout le monde sait quelle était l'attente. Rien ! Les observateurs parlent d'un essoufflement d'un élan réformateur qui avait caractérisé, il est vrai, les premiers pas de ce régime dans les années 2005-2006. Et le gaspillage des fonds publics ! Je ne répéterai pas ce qui a été dit. Nous savons bien toutes les révélations de rapport de l'Audit, du rapport du PAC et la gestion calamiteuse des entités parapubliques, avec des nominations en tout genre basées sur l'appartenance aux organisations socioculturelles ou autres, sans référence aucune à la compétence, M. le président.

Quant au MID, projet d'importance capitale, là aussi le budget est très timide. Rien pour ce qui est de l'eau. C'est vrai, on nous parle maintenant tardivement de R 468 millions pour la réparation des tuyaux. Mais quid de la capacité d'exécution, comme souligné à maintes reprises par le *leader* de l'opposition ?

Et puis, il y a les signaux contradictoires. Je me réfère à ce comité conjoint ministère des finances/Banque de Maurice qui va désormais déterminer le taux d'inflation qui serait souhaitable. C'est vrai que la question de l'indépendance de la Banque Centrale a toujours été un sujet sensible. Mais comment interpréter cette initiative ? Doit-on en déduire que le gouvernement considère que la Banque de Maurice se focalise trop sur l'inflation aux dépens de la croissance ? Si c'était le cas, puisque nous avons un *monetary policy committee*, pourquoi ne pas le doter de compétences nécessaires et le laisser faire son travail ? Quelles sont ces signaux contradictoires ? Où veut en venir le gouvernement ? Comme l'a dit si bien un observateur économique, n'y a-t-il pas le risque, en trop ciblant l'inflation, que nous en fassions une

fixation ? Et déjà, les nuages s'amoncèlent à l'horizon. On a vu le recul, le revirement du gouvernement par rapport au secteur offshore, où, en catastrophe, le ministre a dû enlever la *solidarity levy*. On a vu le problème eu égard au secteur bancaire, eu égard aux PME, comme en témoigne le discours virulent du ministre au congrès de La Source, menaçant le secteur bancaire.

Voyez-vous, M. le président, dans une situation aussi grave, à la veille des développements au niveau de l'économie internationale qui pourraient avoir des conséquences très, très fâcheuses pour nous, ce qu'il aurait fallu c'est la capacité de ce gouvernement de dégager un effet de synergie, de pouvoir motiver, réunir toutes les forces de ce pays ; les entrepreneurs, la classe moyenne, les travailleurs, une collaboration rapprochée entre secteur privé et secteur public. Il aurait fallu mobiliser pour faire face aux défis qui nous guettent. Au lieu de cela, il y a un ton de complaisance qui caractérise ce budget. Et comment, dès lors, espérer le rétablissement de la confiance, qui est le facteur fondamental pour la relance économique, pour relancer les investissements ! Comment, alors que ce gouvernement, en fermant les yeux par rapport à tout ce qui est corruption, lenteur administrative, inefficience bureaucratique, n'a pas la crédibilité pour motiver les travailleurs à donner le meilleur d'eux-mêmes, les entrepreneurs à prendre les risques nécessaires, à investir, à créer des emplois ! M. le président, ce qui manque finalement c'est ce *feel-good factor* qui a été à la base de notre développement durant les années 80.

Je me permets de douter de l'efficacité de ce budget pour initier une vraie relance économique sur le plan social. Peut-on vraiment parler d'un budget de solidarité sociale ? Certes, il y a un certain nombre de mesures intéressantes sur le plan social, et je serai le dernier à le nier. Mais ce qui manque c'est cette vision globale ; c'est ce sens de direction ; c'est cette capacité d'analyser les problèmes, d'en situer les racines, et puis de proposer des solutions, de les expliciter et de les communiquer pour susciter l'adhésion populaire. C'est pour cela que nous parlions de confettis ; les confettis c'est joli, ça fait plaisir, de belles couleurs, mais les confettis n'apportent pas de solutions. Les confettis tombent d'en haut vers le bas, mais ne permettent pas d'avancer.

La pauvreté, M. le président. Où en est-on ? Quand le ministre des Finances était devenu ministre de l'Intégration Sociale, une des premières interpellations parlementaires qui furent l'œuvre de mon collègue, Alan Ganoo, c'était justement pour lui demander 'mais quelles sont les études ?' On nous parlait d'un institut qui allait être créé, un expert mauricien qui avait passé la

moitié de sa vie à l'étranger qui allait réaliser une grande étude sur la pauvreté. Mais rien ! La dernière étude, c'est celle qu'avait commandité Rama Sithanen, et qui avait permis d'identifier quelques centaines de poches de pauvreté à travers l'île. Donc, quelles sont les causes de la pauvreté aujourd'hui à Maurice ? La pauvreté absolue ; quelles en sont les manifestations principales ? Comment les combattre ? Nous savons que le ministre Duval avait envoyé une équipe au Brésil qui, sous Lula, a eu un succès certain dans le combat contre la pauvreté. Nous savons que la Banque mondiale a révisé son approche en cherchant à baser la sécurité sociale sur les bases de l'assurance sociale. Mais où en est-on ? On aurait voulu voir une étude, une analyse, une stratégie énoncée. Rien !

Le *Welfare State*. Réalisons-nous, M. le président, que le *Welfare State*, tel qu'il existe à Maurice aujourd'hui, les prestations sociales principales datent de 35-40 ans ! Y a-t-il eu une réévaluation de notre *Welfare State* ? Vous savez, aujourd'hui le débat n'est plus entre avoir plus de *Welfare State* ou moins de *Welfare State*, mais comment en assurer la pertinence et l'efficacité. Aucune réflexion, aucune communication ; si le gouvernement avait une réflexion quelconque.

Pour ce qui est des catégories vulnérables, nous aurions voulu voir des mesures spécifiques, ciblées, répondant aux défis de l'immédiat pour les femmes seules, qui sont en nombre croissant, les veuves, les femmes victimes de violence domestique, les enfants. Six nouveaux *shelters* c'est très bien. Espérons qu'ils verront le jour vite. Mais, sérieusement, vingt staff additionnels, alors que madame la ministre, présentement ministre de la sécurité sociale, nous disait, l'année dernière, qu'il lui fallait immédiatement au moins quarante ! Quand ces vingt seront recrutés éventuellement, nous aurons en tout et pour tout quarante-huit staff de la CDU, psychologues inclus. Comment voulez-vous qu'ils puissent répondre aux besoins d'une population de 1.3 millions ? Combien de cas de Grand Sable encore ? Combien de cas de Vallée des Prêtes, où cette petite fille avait été tuée ? Combien de temps faudrait-il attendre pour les vieux, les handicapés et les jeunes, M. le président ? Les jeunes ont reçu une taxe sur les SMS. Je vous pose une question. Réalise-t-on l'importance pédagogique des *SMS* même si les jeunes utilisent un langage particulier mais l'on passe du registre oral au registre écrit. J'ai été moi, combien de fois, agréablement surpris en témoignant de jeunes qui n'ont peut-être même pas réussi le *CPE* communiquant par *SMS*. Tous les jeunes communiquent par *SMS*. Ils écrivent en

anglais. C'est important pour la jeunesse. Et, aujourd'hui, on a l'impression que tout ce qui est communication – à l'âge de la communication – est boycotté dans ce budget.

Les *billboards* qu'on va taxer beaucoup plus que dans le passé sont tellement importants, ont tellement d'impacte dans notre petite République. Je ne sais pas si l'usage des *billboards* est répandu à Rodrigues mais certainement à Maurice cela a un très grand impact.

Le coût de l'internet – le budget n'en parle pas et c'est tellement important en termes de facteurs pour accroître la productivité à tous les niveaux.

M. le président, le temps presse, j'aurais voulu vous parler du logement. Voyez vous, il y a certaines mesures qui sont excellentes – terrain de la CHA, NHDC, syndic, mais le fond du problème, comme le disait si bien mon collègue Ameer Meea, ces 27,000 familles qui demandent un logement enregistré auprès du NHDC. Quand aurons-nous un plan stratégique sur cinq ans, sur dix ans, sur quinze ans pour nous dire comment résorber cette demande dans le respect du MID ? Parce que, M. le président, on n'a pas d'espace à Maurice pour continuer à construire comme on le faisait dans le passé.

La santé, M. le président, mon collègue, le docteur S. Boolell, a fait une analyse remarquable des défis qui nous guettent, mais les maladies non transmissibles, on en parle désormais, heureusement qu'on en parle tous les jours du fait que la moitié de la population est soit diabétique ou pré-diabétique, que la moitié de la population est ou obèse ou en situation de surpoids, y compris 15% des enfants entre cinq et dix neuf ans.

M. le président, l'épidémie du cancer qui tue quatre-vingt-dix mauriciens chaque mois ! Le cancer du sein chez les femmes qui a plus que doublé en dix ans. Tout cela n'est plus une fatalité grâce aux recherches, grâce aux progrès. Nous savons qu'aujourd'hui, prenons le cancer par exemple, le facteur héréditaire a un effet relativement minime. Ce qui compte avant tout, c'est l'hygiène de vie et l'alimentation. L'hygiène de vie – seuls seize pour cent des mauriciens entre 25 et 75 ans ont une activité physique régulière et adéquate.

Alimentation - le Professeur Pugo-Gunsam, nutritionniste à l'Université de Maurice nous dit : 'Un tsunami d'éducation alimentaire doit balayer l'île Maurice et sans doute Rodrigues'. C'est pour cela que j'avais noté des propositions fort intéressantes formulées par un commentateur, un analyste économique, Eric Ng, qui préconisait à l'occasion de ce budget, une taxe sur les *fast food* ; les *fast food* qui se répandent à vue d'œil non seulement dans les grands centres commerciaux, mais aussi à tous les coins de rue.

Une taxe sur les boissons contenant des sucres ajoutés ! On pourrait imaginer une taxe sur les *crisps* mais malheureusement ce budget aurait pu avoir été le premier pas dans cette situation où il nous faudrait, comme le MMM l'appelle, un état d'urgence de la santé publique.

Deuxièmement, en ce qui concerne le diabète, M. le président, l'ancien ministre de la Santé avait commandité une étude sur les drogues illicites. Le ministre nous dit que l'étude est en cours. Mais quand passera-t-on aux actes ? Le budget précisément aurait été une occasion. Ce qui aurait fait entrer des revenus pour l'État qui aurait pu aller au secteur hospitalier, qui aurait pu aller vers l'agriculture biologique, par exemple, qu'il s'agit d'encourager. Mais, M. le président, comme le disait si bien mon collègue, fondamentalement revoir *the focus, the priorities of policy from the curative to primaritise the preventive* - je pense que 80% du budget de la santé *is curative*. Pourquoi pas dans ce budget des mesures pour encourager - comme l'avait fait le ministre Bhagwan à l'environnement - des parcours de santé, des *joggings tracks*, des *recreation parks*, des facilités de sport à travers le pays. Pas d'imagination, pas de vision ! Ou alors, peut-être ne devrait-on pas blâmer le ministre des Finances. Comme vous le savez, vous avez été ministre, M. le président, et les propositions doivent venir des ministères ou alors cette absence de réflexion se situe au niveau des ministères eux-mêmes. Allez savoir ! Je parlais des drogues illicites - le temps fait défaut.

Le budget nous annonce R51 millions pour la réhabilitation des alcooliques et des drogués mais la prévention rien et pourtant c'est là que se situe le cœur du problème. Je pourrais, si le temps l'avait permis, M. le président, vous parler de l'état de nos Cours de Justice. Vous avez vu le tribunal de Curepipe et le ministre de l'Enseignement Supérieur disait ne pas comprendre. Il prétendait ne pas comprendre quand je disais qu'on aurait pu faire une utilisation judicieuse de l'ancien bâtiment du *MBC*. La Cour de Souillac siège désormais dans le bureau du *Clerk*. La Cour de Moka, qui se trouve à Rose Hill - le bâtiment est à Moka et la construction n'avance plus.

Le tribunal de Mapou vous donne envie de pleurer quand vous voyez tout ce personnel dévoué, essayant de faire leur travail correctement, M. le président.

Et les prisons ! An attendant les fameux bracelets, on ne va rien faire pour améliorer les conditions de ces prisons où règne la promiscuité. Je lisais l'autre jour dans le journal que quelqu'un avait été grièvement blessé parce qu'il jouait dans la cour de la prison de Beau Bassin.

M. le président, je vais passer rapidement à l'éducation puisque c'est la tâche que m'a confié le MMM. M. le président, nous savons tous quelles sont les priorités pour l'éducation et ça devient un peu lassant de le répéter à chaque fois que nous puissions offrir une éducation obligatoire, pertinente, de qualité à tous les mauriciens de l'âge de cinq ans à seize ans; que par souci d'équité, nous permettions l'accès aux plus pauvres à l'enseignement pré-primaire, le préscolaire ; que l'on permette à ceux qui en ont l'envie, à ceux qui en ont la capacité d'aller le plus loin possible après avoir eu seize ans: polytechnique, secondaire, deuxième cycle, enseignement supérieur et que la qualité soit au cœur du projet éducatif, qualité en terme de ce qu'on appelle l'efficacité externe pour que les produits du système arrivent à se trouver un emploi sur le marché du travail et aussi en terme d'efficience interne pour qu'on utilise judicieusement et qu'on soit redévalable pour ces millions.

Vous savez que le ministère de l'Education est un des ministères – le deuxième je crois – le plus budgétivore mais personne n'a de compte à rendre malheureusement. Malgré le NTF, malgré le *programme-based budgeting*, rien ne change.

Que nous dit le budget? Beaucoup de mesures intéressantes – 25% en plus pour les *special education needs*. Formidable ! Le ministre des Finances, Paul Bérenger, en 2003, avait fait un premier pas. Aujourd'hui, l'on vient offrir 25% en plus. Excellent ! Mais qui c'est qui va s'en occuper ? Je suggère au ministre une unité spéciale. Il y a des gens compétents. Il les connaît sans doute. Il nous faut une unité spéciale.

Des crèches: R 1,500 pour les familles les plus pauvres. Utilisation du *CSR*, excellente idée ! *Child Minding in schools*, très bonne idée, c'est la tendance internationale que les écoles servent à quelque chose, on investit tellement dans ces bâtiments au-delà des heures de scolarisation formelle ; qu'ils puissent servir à quelque chose c'est tant mieux mais tout est question de mise en œuvre. Laissez-moi-vous donner un exemple. Le gouvernement vient nous dire qu'on va étendre les R 200 qui sont allouées au niveau du préscolaire aux trois à quatre ans. Vous savez cette initiative était celle du Parti Travailiste/MMM à l'époque, en 1997. Nous avions donné, n'est-ce pas, une subvention aux quatre à cinq ans. Mais le montant est resté le même, il est toujours à R 200. Et vous, trouverez vous, M. le président, une école maternelle à R 200 pour vos petits enfants? Cela n'existe pas. Y-a-t-il eu une évaluation de l'efficacité de ces R 200 pour les quatre/cinq ans avant détendre aux trois/quatre ans. Nous sommes tous d'accord. C'est un impératif, il faut que les enfants des plus pauvres aient accès au préscolaire, parce qu'ils

sont déjà désavantageux par rapport à leur capital socioculturel. Mais, nous dit le ministre : 'il manque 5%'. Il y a 5% des trois/quatre ans qui ne sont pas scolarisés. Alors pour amener 5% à l'école, on donne R 200 à tout le monde. Expliquez-moi cette logique, d'un point de vue pédagogique, d'un point de vue de *management* ou d'un point de vue économique ! Et ces 5% auront à payer bien plus que R 200. N'est-ce pas un cas où il aurait dû y avoir une réflexion sérieuse, une évaluation de ce qui existe déjà pour pouvoir donner plus à ceux qui ont moins ? A quoi va servir ces R 200 aux 95% qui sont déjà scolarisés ? Expliquez-moi ! Aucune logique, M. le président !

C'est comme cette histoire de transport gratuit pour tous les étudiants. Alors, ce qui s'est passé, c'est qu'un jour il y avait une partie à Rivière du Rempart. Le Premier rencontre un petit garçon – enfin la famille d'un petit garçon, qui lui dit : 'Vous savez ce petit garçon ne va pas à l'école parce qu'il n'a pas les moyens de se payer le bus'. Et donc, le gouvernement fait quoi ? Transport gratuit pour tout le monde ! Je ne suis pas contre. Mais n'y avait-il pas d'autres moyens plus efficaces, les *school buses*, par exemple, gratuits ? Je ne sais pas. Quelque part, ces initiatives sont dénudées de logique. Mais enfin tout est dans la mise en œuvre. Alors, pour combattre l'échec au CPE, le *Summer School Programme*. Pas mal comme idée ! Vous savez qu'à l'international, quand on réfléchit à comment compterait l'iniquité des leçons particulières, l'on pense justement à des cours additionnels, les cours particuliers aux frais de l'État pour les plus démunis. Mais ce *Summer School Programme*, comment va-t-il être mis en œuvre ? Déjà, M. Tengur - c'est peut-être la première fois que je suis d'accord avec lui - nous dit : "Attendez, réfléchissez bien avant d'allouer cet argent". Le programme va entrer en opération immédiatement et il est confié à une organisation, à une ONG qui s'appelle "*Poverty Eradication Movement*". Enfin, c'est ce que disent les journaux. Le ministre nous expliquera tout cela la semaine prochaine, au moment de l'examen en comité. Mais comment comprendre, le Ministre parle de cours additionnels et cette dame qui est responsable de l'ONG, nous dit : "Non, c'est une colonie de vacances". Allez comprendre ! Et c'est pour cela que je disais que tout cela coûte énormément à l'État, il faut voir la mise en œuvre.

Et puis, extension du préprofessionnel pour une quatrième année. Excellente idée ! Mais ce fameux préprofessionnel qui avait été imaginé par mon prédécesseur – rendons à César ce qui est à César – Kadress Pillay, dont j'avais, moi, assuré la mise en œuvre, parce que contrairement à d'autres, nous n'étions pas animés par ce que le *Leader* de l'opposition appelle le fanatisme de

partis. Le Parti Travailliste ne nous avait fait aucun cadeau à l'époque, nous critiquant, en arguant que ce n'était qu'une garderie, qu'il n'y avait aucun projet pédagogique, qu'il n'y avait aucune mesure de son efficacité. Aujourd'hui, plus de six ans après le départ du MMM/MSM, c'est toujours la même chose, il n'y a pas eu de projet pédagogique, il n'y a pas eu d'évaluation. La semaine prochaine le ministre viendra nous dire qu'il est d'accord pour une évaluation, comme il nous l'a dit l'an dernier. Ne voilà-t-il pas qu'on va étendre d'une année et cela coûte de l'argent à l'État. A quelle fin, comment en assurer l'efficacité, M. le président. Maintenant on va donner R 500,00 à chaque école publique. On va dire aux parents: "Faites-en ce que vous voulez". Je ne souviens encore au temps où j'étais ministre de l'éducation, vous savez à quoi servaient en priorité les fonds attribués aux *Parent-Teacher Associations*, à construire des abris pour les parents qui venaient attendre les enfants après l'école. Mais ce n'est pas comme cela qu'on avance ! Ce qu'il faut et c'est évident, il faut établir des minima, *minimum standards*, et aider toutes les institutions à parvenir à ces *standards – standards* en termes de taille de classe, de taille de la cour de récréation, de facilités sportives, de facilités pédagogiques. C'est là qu'il faudrait une standardisation et non pas donner à chaque PTA R 500,000 pour qu'ils en fassent ce qu'ils veulent. Mais comment est-ce qu'un ministre des Finances, qui est le garant de l'utilisation judicieuse des finances publiques, peut imaginer un tel projet et venir l'annoncer à toute la nation ! Mais pire encore, M. le président ! Savez-vous qu'un quart de nos enfants au primaire fréquentent des écoles privées, non seulement les écoles dites catholiques du RCEA, mais aussi les écoles du *Hindu Education Authority*. Alors, me direz-vous que ces enfants ne sont pas des enfants pauvres et ne méritent pas les R 500,000. Les écoles privées rendent service à l'État, parce que sans les écoles privées l'on pourrait ne pas offrir l'éducation à tout le monde. Près d'un quart, 20% à 25% des enfants au primaire sont des élèves des écoles privées, et au secondaire, c'est pratiquement la moitié. Avant c'était beaucoup plus avec la construction des collèges d'État, dont nous ne sommes pas peu fiers d'ailleurs. Aujourd'hui, c'est à peu près moitié-moitié. Alors, les établissements publics vont bénéficier de R 500,000, mais pas les enfants qui vont dans les collèges privés, et les collèges privés ce n'est pas des enfants riches. Je ne parle pas des écoles payantes, je parle de tous ces petits collèges privés aux quatre coins de l'île. Alors, quand est-ce qu'on réalisera que le ministère de l'Education n'est pas le ministère des institutions publiques, mais le ministère de l'Education nationale pour tous les enfants.

M. le président, le temps fait défaut. J'aurais voulu vous parler de l'*Open School Programme* qui est une excellente initiative que nous avions annoncée il y a sept ans, c'est-à-dire de pouvoir utiliser les infrastructures sportives, des établissements scolaires pour la communauté, de pouvoir utiliser la bibliothèque de l'école comme bibliothèque publique permettant aux enfants qui n'ont pas les facilités chez eux de venir faire leurs devoirs après les heures de classe, d'utiliser les IT labs comme un endroit pour des activités ludiques, pour que les gens viennent se familiariser avec l'outil informatique. Tout cela, nous l'avions proposé il y a six ou sept ans, éliminé par celui qui était alors le secrétaire général du Parti Travailiste, parce qu'il y avait l'empreinte MSM/MMM. Aujourd'hui, nous y revenons avec sept ans de retard, mais tant mieux ! Mais il y a une chose que je ne comprends pas du tout, c'est ce *National Institution for Civic Education* qui va être logé au *Prime Minister's Office*. Pourquoi ne pas faire confiance au bon Dr. Bunwaree, qui lui, est déjà chargé d'un programme de *Citizenship Education* dans les écoles ? Mais, qu'est-ce qui va se passer, M. le président ? Sans vouloir offenser qui que ce soit, est-ce qu'on va obliger tous les enfants à faire des *essay competitions* sur Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam ? Est-ce cela l'idée ? Pourquoi ne pas confier la chose au ministre de l'Education, puisqu'il est le ministre de l'Education ? Je ne vois vraiment pas ce que le *Prime Minister's Office* devrait avoir à faire avec ce projet.

Je passe à l'enseignement supérieur.

Le ministre a tellement d'ambitions, de grands projets qu'à chaque sortie publique, il nous parle d'un diplômé par famille ; 100,000 étudiants étrangers à Maurice ; des campus universitaires à tour de bras dans tous les coins du pays, y compris à Rodrigues. L'*Open University of Mauritius* - que nous avions, rappelons le, voté et approuvé en 2005 - n'est toujours pas opérationnel et le taux d'inscription supérieur qui va passer de 45% à 70%. Donc, je m'attendais que ce budget soit le budget d'enseignement supérieur. Un nouveau ministre, en apparence dynamique, avec tant de projets et je disais : « Voilà le premier pas vers le *knowledge hub*. » Que dit le budget, à part un petit paragraphe qui nous sert du réchauffé, qui nous dit :

« *SLDC will reserve land next to the knowledge triangle in Réduit for campuses of renown foreign tertiary education institutions.* »

Mais j'ai comme l'impression que c'est l'honorable ministre Anil Bachoo, se remémorant les visites que nous avions effectuées déjà en 2003/2004 avec le Premier ministre d'alors, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, qui a suggéré cette idée au ministre des Finances.

Il y a sept ou huit ans de cela, M. le président, nous parlions exactement de la même chose : d'utiliser le terrain à côté – on l'appelait déjà le *knowledge triangle*, à Réduit - pour faire venir IIT de Bombay, de BMI Institute of Technology and Science, Manipal University, la première université dans le privé en Inde pour ce qui est de la médecine. Mais ce sont des projets qui datent de 2003/2004. Et tout ce qu'il y a pour l'enseignement supérieur dans ce budget, c'est ce paragraphe. Sinon, c'est un silence assourdissant à la mesure du bluff du ministre de l'Enseignement Supérieur. Un gradué par famille, M. le président ! Je vais le répéter encore une fois. Pour 100 petits enfants qui entrent à l'école primaire, seulement 80 à 82 obtiennent le CPE. Déjà là, cela rend impossible d'avoir un diplômé universitaire par famille. De ces 100 petits enfants, 40% à peine obtiendront le *School Certificate*, 20% seulement obtiendront le HSC, maintenant on permet deux 'A' *levels* ainsi de suite, imaginons que ce soit 25%. Même si ces 25%, dans leur totalité, allaient à l'université, mais comment avec 25% pouvez-vous prétendre avoir un diplômé par famille ? Bon sang, *it defies all logic* ! Et pourtant le ministre continue à nous parler d'un diplômé par famille ?

(*Interruptions*)

Sans doute ! Patience ! Le ministre de l'Education nous promet la réforme du CPE en 2020. Nous attendrons le 22^{ème} siècle pour avoir un diplômé par famille.

Concernant le campus universitaire, M. le président, aucune étude est faite. Quand nous étions au gouvernement, le JEC avait commandité des études. Nous avions une firme internationale qui nous avait fait un *swot analysis* pour ce qui est du marché. La *Tertiary Education Commission* avait produit un document clair dès 2005, comment transformer Maurice en *knowledge hub*, quel était le potentiel, comment avancer de manière réaliste, sans rêver. Sept ans plus tard, on nous parle toujours de *knowledge hub*, il n'y a aucun document qui vient expliciter, qui vient articuler la pensée du ministre ou de son ministère. On nous promet un document stratégique qui se fait toujours attendre. Campus universitaire ! Mais où est la demande ? L'autre jour, interpellé ici à l'assemblée nationale, le ministre nous a avoué que 95% des élèves qui sortent du secondaire vont déjà à l'université. Il reste donc 5%, représentant 600 élèves. Mais on va faire des campus universitaires à Montagne Blanche, dans le nord, dans le sud, dans l'est.

(*Interruptions*)

L'honorable Madame Radegonde me disait que ce n'est pas encore le cas dans l'ouest, mais peut-être dans 10 ans, on aura un campus dans l'ouest, à Rodrigues pour 600 élèves. Où est la demande ? Quelle université ?

Dr. Jeetah : Mr Speaker, Sir...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Member does not want to give way, I can't allow the Minister.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Obeegadoo : Quelle université, M. le président ? Et pour quoi faire ? Où est le plan visant à produire les compétences que requiert le marché du travail et les employeurs à Maurice ? L'*Open University of Mauritius* qui va faire quoi, quand et comment et quand cela entrera en opération ? Il n'y a rien dans le budget, M. le président, tous les experts étrangers se moquent de nous. A l'international, quand on mesure le taux d'inscription dans l'enseignement supérieur, c'est sur la base de la tranche d'âge de 19 à 24 ans, étudiant à temps complet. Maurice, depuis longtemps, même quand j'étais ministre, l'on me disait : « Comment vous calculez votre taux d'inscription. » On fausse les chiffres en y ajoutant ceux qui sont là à temps partiel. Ils sont nombreux. C'est presque la moitié de nos étudiants au supérieur qui sont à temps partiel, et on vient dire 40% d'inscription. Ce n'est pas vrai. Nous avons environ 20%, ce qui est déjà bien. Mais il nous faut faire mieux pour rattraper notre retard par rapport aux pays qui sont en stade similaire de développement que nous, la Turquie, la Malaisie, le Sri Lanka. Il faut continuer à faire beaucoup mieux, mais n'exagérons rien ; 45%, 75%, ce n'est pas réaliste, ce n'est pas possible demain.

Voyez-vous mon sentiment c'est que, dans le contexte présent, le ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur vient d'être créé. Donc, c'est difficile. Le ministère doit donner des résultats. C'est la première fois à Maurice que nous avons un ministère séparé de l'enseignement supérieur. Alors, ce ministère privilégie à tout prix la quantité. C'est une obsession de la quantité aux dépens de la qualité, et c'est une vision réductrice de l'enseignement supérieur qu'il aperçoit tout simplement comme une extension du secondaire. On va faire de l'enseignement. On va offrir toutes sortes de diplômes venus de l'étranger. Et un des reproches que je fais au gouvernement alors qu'avant 2005 – et le ministre Bachoo le sait – nous disions il ne faut pas laisser entrer n'importe qui. Faisons, comme l'a fait Singapour et pas comme l'ont fait les îles des Caraïbes. Allons chercher les meilleurs et emmenons-les ici. Mais on a ouvert grandes les

portes et n'importe qui – je ne fais pas d'attaque personnelle - désormais opère des universités. Les universités c'est juste *transmission of knowledge, there is no production of knowledge, there is no research*. C'est une honte !

M. le président, il serait temps de conclure. L'année 2012 sera certainement l'année de tous les dangers. C'est le retour, malheureusement, à la situation de 2008, la grande récession internationale, la crise financière, peut-être en pire parce que là, il va y avoir une conjonction de différents facteurs. L'état des finances publiques dans la zone euro, aussi aux Etats Unis, en Amérique du Nord, les égarements, dirais-je, des banquiers non-régulés, qui n'ont pas été corrigés après 2008, la spéculation. Bon, qu'importe 2012, nous n'avons pas le choix dans la petite République de Maurice ! Il faudra faire face à ce qui sera le retour de la grande récession. Il n'y a pas de place pour la complaisance ou du court-termisme. Ce budget, c'est un budget qui voit le court terme, il n'y a aucune vision allant au-delà d'un an, deux ans. Il nous faut une vision pour le pays de 20 ans, de 30 ans. Il faut rallier la nation autour d'un projet, autour d'un thème mobilisateur, autour d'un *big idea*, comme disent les anglophones. Nous l'avons fait dans le passé avec les TIC, la Cybercité, la grande réforme éducative, le projet du *duty free island* et de faire de notre pays un *Island State* à l'image de Singapour. Au lieu de cela, qu'ai-je entendu ici durant les débats? On nous a ramené à Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, aux disputes des années 70, aux faits et méfaits des gouvernements des années 80, aux alliances qui se sont faites, qui se sont défaites, qui se sont mal faites durant les années 90. Mais, bon sang! Le peuple s'attend à autre chose de nous! C'est que nous regardions l'avenir et non pas le passé !

M. le président, les idées ne manquent pas sur ce que pourrait être ce grand projet mobilisateur. Imaginons un nouveau plan d'aménagement du territoire de la République en conformité avec le développement vert, le MID, les technologies nouvelles, mais aussi les créneaux porteurs pour la stratégie de développement de demain. Imaginons le *knowledge hub* précisément, clairement énoncé et réaliste pour avoir une population éduquée où tous les mauriciens auront réussi onze années de scolarité tout au moins. Imaginons une nouvelle gouvernance bâtie sur le mauricianisme, faite de méritocratie, fondée sur l'intégrité publique et la transparence. Ce sont là des thèmes mobilisateurs pour rallier la nation au-delà de l'appartenance ethnique, au-delà de l'appartenance de classe, au-delà de l'appartenance sexuelle. On pourrait le faire, M. le président. Mais je me dis quand bien même le ministre Xavier-Luc

Duval aurait voulu le faire, aurait-il pu? Quand bien même le gouvernement aurait voulu le faire, aurait-il pu?

Le drame, M. le président, c'est qu'à cette étape délicate de notre histoire, nous avons un gouvernement, malheureusement - je dis malheureusement - en panne d'idées, à bout de souffle. Un gouvernement qui est incapable d'analyser et de comprendre le présent pour penser à l'avenir. Un gouvernement qui est trop faible et qui ne peut pas prendre les décisions qui s'imposent pour relever les défis de la relance économique et de la solidarité sociale. Le MMM, tout au long de ces débats, a lancé trois appels pour qu'on rend aux vieux leurs dûs, la totalité de R 330 de la compensation salariale, qu'on enlève la taxe sur la jeunesse que constitue cette mesure honteuse d'imposer une taxe additionnelle pour les SMS, de ne pas imposer une majoration des tarifs sur l'eau en attendant que le gouvernement puisse démontrer des résultats probants en termes d'amélioration de la collecte et de la distribution d'eau.

Il y a maintenant un quatrième appel. Si l'année 2012 va être l'année de tous les dangers, il nous faut un gouvernement avec un mandat clair, un gouvernement fort. Il nous faut un gouvernement avec un *leadership* qui soit à la fois expérimenté et éclairé, un gouvernement doté d'une équipe avec toutes les compétences nécessaires pour relever les défis de demain. C'est pour cela, M. le président, par patriotisme, nous disons si l'année 2012 sera l'année de tous les dangers, pourquoi est-ce que cette année 2012 ne serait pas le moment de rendre au peuple le pouvoir de décider que l'année 2012 soit l'année des élections générales?

J'en ai terminé, M. le président.

At 5.05 p.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.42 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development

Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, let me congratulate the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this laudable work. I was just hearing my friend and Member of Parliament from the Opposition, hon. Steven Obeegadoo, making reference to the absence of the Minister of Finance from the House. But, let me remind him that, being given that the Finance Bill has to come next week and, at the same time, the Economic and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, my friend is busy preparing it.

Let me remind the House that, last year, it took nine months for the then Minister of Finance to come with that Bill in the House. This needs not be repeated, and that is the reason which explains the absence of my friend from the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to congratulate not only the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, but also our Prime Minister, who is the key stone of the government arc. Without him nothing is possible; the source, the spring, the fountain of inspiration come from him. Normally, in a house, we won't expect to have two visions. Vision has to be one; ideal has to be one, and destination has to be one. That is the reason why he needs to be congratulated, because he is the torch bearer, he shows the way, and we follow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a party for that matter, even a club, needs a leader, needs a president. One which doesn't have a leader is just like what we have on the other side of the House; in search of a leader - yesterday son, tomorrow father and the day after, maybe grandfather. But, here, we have a leader. A party without a leader is just like a ship without a rudder. It can go anywhere, and it can crash anywhere. It is just like a house where there is no light; only bats and reptiles would creep in. It is just like a kite, *cerf-volant*, which is cut off from its main string; it can fall either in mud or in dirt. It is just like a counterfeit coin, which even beggars will refuse to accept. That is the situation of a party which has no leader. We have a leader; he creates the right impression, he shows the right direction, he is socially oriented - everybody knows - he creates the right spirit and is quality conscious.

That explains the reason why we are on the right track. A leader is to a party what hope is to a hopeless person. I would like at the very outset explain this, because if the leadership is not strong, then the ship trails; it won't have any direction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a leader here who does what is right rather than what can appear to make him popular, because what is right is not necessarily popular, and that which is popular is not necessarily right. That is the reason why we say that we do the right thing; we take the right decision, and that is the reason why we are on the right track. Under him, the party has a vision; it has a direction, a determination, dedication, destination and a deadline also. When we speak of vision, we speak of the ability to see what is even invisible, to see beyond the obvious, and here vision doesn't mean only to do things; it also means pre-empting and preventing problems. Under him, we can do it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in front of us, what do we have? A bleeding Opposition, full of demagogery - from the beginning till the end. I can hardly come across any Member of Parliament on the other side that has made the right contribution to the Budget, except they have been blaming us right from the beginning till the end, pure of demagogical statements, nothing is good, painting that which is black and blackening that which is dark. That has been the impression which we got from the statements that they had made. At least, we have to accept one thing, namely that hon. Leader of the Opposition has acclaimed the Budget in some places. Apart from him, the rest has been only critical of the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that reminds me of a person who met a priest and asked him a question about whether, when he meets a demagogue, he prays for him. The priest replied 'when I meet a demagogue, I pray for my country'. When I see demagogical statements, I always think of that priest. So, let us not survive on falsehood. Let us not survive on false issues. Let us not be emotional and sentimental about things. Let us not get involved in contradiction and conflicts and conflagrations only. Let us be honest. Even as the Opposition tries to see the light that is at the end of the tunnel, all of us can see hope, *l'espoir*. Even to a dying man, the doctor never says that the end is there. My hon. friends, Dr. Abu Kasenally and the Deputy Prime Minister keep on telling me that, even for a dying man, we say that there is hope so long as there is life. But, we are not dying. So, at the end of the tunnel we can see the light. If you don't see the light, people will make you feel the heat in the days to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Helen Keller was once asked ‘what is worse than one who has no eyesight’? The answer she gave was ‘having eyesight with no vision is worse’. So, we must have vision, at least, and that explains why I’m telling that we need to have vision, and we need to have determination. They criticise most of the time; they are only critical. Whatever good we even do, they find something wrong in that, as if they have become experts in criticising. They have made a career out of criticism. Just like we have career diplomats, now we have career critics, criticising everything, rejecting everything, finding faults with every situation, with every person, with every politician. They feel so unhappy when the world outside is happy. They feel bad when others feel good. They always try to find cracks in everything. They never feel good for all the works that we have done; everything that we have done in this country. I have the feeling that they can even put off the light to see how dark it is. Always pessimistic attitude! This is a very wrong concept. They can put off the light to see how dark it is. They believe that the sun shines to cast shadows only and not to throw light on us. That is the biggest problem. They count only troubles, and they never think of any blessing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition had been at the helm of power for so many years. Most of them have tested power, they were there. But, what has been their contribution? What has been the end result? I don’t find anything, Mr Speaker, Sir. They had the privilege and opportunity to work like us. They were here earlier. But what has been the end result? That reminds me of a very interesting saying ‘He slept beneath the moon, he basked beneath the sun; he lived a life of going to do and died with nothing done’. So, by beating about the bush day and night, counting their chickens or day dreaming, they won’t achieve anything, unless and until they perform. That is the reason why my hon. friend has already set the target. We know how we have to move, how we are going to reach our destination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, they are trying to live in the past. They want to remake history. Jawaharlal Nehru has written somewhere in Discovery of India ‘Don’t remake history if you can create history; don’t leave in the past, don’t swim in the past, because if you live in the past, it means you are living in the grave and, from the grave, even dreaming you can’t dream’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am hearing of remake. There was a great film about 30 years ago entitled ‘*Sholay*’, which was a super hit, but the remake was the biggest flop. So, remake never pays. This is history, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is almost obvious and historical truth. I have myself been a student of history. So, every ending has got a new beginning. If you can start, so far the

better. The past, Mr Speaker, Sir, is dead and buried. The future is not yet born. Then, why think about the dead, past and unborn future? Live in the present and have a look at the present!

If you think only of the past, your present efficiency gets punctured. That is the biggest problem for them today. They had the chance but, unfortunately, they missed it. Anyone who loses power then realises the importance of power. Rabindranath Tagore, in Gitanjali has rightly stated: 'spring has passed, summer has gone and winter is here; yet, the song I meant to sing remains unsung'. I have been stringing and unstringing my instrument, that is, I have been playing, I have been beating about the bush and nothing was left, nothing was done. That applies to them. Mr Speaker, Sir, just to speak about spilled milk, what is the need to regret when '*jab chidiya chug gayi khet*'? When the birds have already destroyed the harvest, eaten all the grains, there is no need for you to weep, to regret, to cry on spilled milk, and no need to repeatedly keep on criticising unnecessarily.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have learned one thing in life, and that's from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. Mr Speaker, Sir, you are yourself one of his followers. I still remember that even in the most difficult days of the early 80's, I was a candidate of the Labour Party, and during electoral campaign, we were undergoing all type of hardships, but what was great in that old man was his attitude, which was always positive. If attitude becomes negative, life becomes restricted, success becomes limited. That is why we have to think of the best, work for the best and always expect the best in our life. That explains the reason for our success.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that reminds me of one of the statements that he used to make in those days. I am translating in English. He said –

"It is the 'spirit' in which you act for the country that puts the seal of beauty upon your life".

And that reminds me of the call of the great sages of India, 'Tighten your belt! Roll up your sleeves! Be prepared to sacrifice yourself at the altar of your country!' This is the message and this is what, in fact, we have to do as politicians. Stop acting in an irresponsible way! Stop criticizing unnecessarily! Mr Speaker, Sir, where there are no problems, they unnecessarily create problems. They are suffering from problem phobia; they stand up and enumerate scandals. Everything that we do, they give it a scandalous interpretation. But who doesn't have problems? In the family we have problems, among friends we have problems. If you go to the seaside and you expect the sea to be without waves is mere foolishness. You come to live political life and

you expect political life to be without problems! It is mere stupidity! You go to the seaside, you don't know the art of swimming, you will be carried to the watery grave. So when you come to live political life and to govern the country and you don't know how to govern, the result will be there where you are. It's a simple truth and that is the reason I would say that there is no need for them to regret, because they were given opportunity and we have to strive, we have to struggle, we have to sweat and ultimately our country will succeed.

Again as Tagore wrote -

‘I slept, and dreamt that life was beauty,
I woke and found that life was duty.’

This is, in fact, what we are doing. This is our work Mr Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately, we are supposed to be examples that we have to set to others. And again I am saying so, because I heard Members on the other side, their pessimistic attitudes. I won't use the word 'unpatriotic', I won't use that word because it appears to be strong, but we heard them. In Parliament, the question that we all ask: are we not the pride of this nation? Are we not the fine specimen of the Mauritian population? Is not Parliament the Citadelle of integrity and morality, sacrifice and character? Then, why adopt such an attitude in the House? Is it because they are not in power, therefore, whoever is in power, any step taken to uproot them, to finish them out is important.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as politicians, one thing we should remember, we don't do politics to amass wealth, to climb the social ladder, and to fatten ourselves; on the contrary, we have to develop, trained minds, compassionate hearts and charitable hands. This must be the message: we are not here to amass wealth, whether it is Rs44 m., whether it is Rs147 m. or 44 acres of land at Wolmar ...

(Interruptions)

I am not interested in that! If you have come to play your role as politician, you play it well if you want to serve. I have been in politics for the last 34 years, Mr Speaker, Sir. Politics means sacrifice and we have to do this and at the same time we have to be very careful because the eyes of the nation are on you, every step that you take. All of us are subject to all types of criticisms, all types of demagogical statements, but we have to be careful. Mr Speaker, Sir, life is short. One great scholar - I forgot his name - has rightly stated that:

“Life is short,
the vanities of the world are transient,

but they alone live who live for others;
the rest are more dead than alive.”

Longfellow rightly stated –

“Let us make our lives sublime by serving others
And departing, leave behind us footprints in the sand of time;”

I think he was right, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have accepted responsibility because we are Ministers, we are Members of Parliament, and together with responsibility it means taking risk. We are taking our risks and we have to venture. Those who stay on the outskirt, they are linesmen; they have no value in life. We have taken and accepted responsibility, we have taken the risk and we are accountable at the same time. On the other side, they are in the comfort zone, day dreaming and passing all types of comments. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to accept risks, we have to accept responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a Government budget, an alliance budget, a budget which has the signature and the stamp of the Leader of the Labour Party, of the Leader of the Government. But the accusations leveled against our friend, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, from one till the last, that it is a pro-capitalist budget, a PMSD budget, capital gains tax, solidarity tax, all types of nonsense they kept talking

Mr Speaker: The Minister should not use the word ‘nonsense’!

Mr Bachoo: I withdraw that word. I am not going to stoop as low as to speak again of the Illovo, as to speak again of the past, but capital tax, solidarity tax, all these things have been repeatedly used and the words ‘pro-capitalist budget’. Mr Speaker, Sir, how can you bring prosperity? If you want to bring prosperity you can’t bring it unless and until we encourage thrift. We cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong, we cannot enrich the poor by impoverishing the rich; we cannot help the wage earner by destroying the wage payer. We have to keep that in mind, we believe in a mixed economy.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I remember Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam in the early 80’s, when we were campaigning – I was very young at that time – there is one sentence that he used to utter: *Nous sommes des gauches modérés.*

We believe in that system, Mr Speaker, Sir. How can you expect investment, when from rooftop, you are shouting that people should come and invest? Do you think they owe us a

living? If you want development you have to encourage investment, you have to create wealth. If you want to distribute wealth, from where are you going to get it? We should encourage investment, at least, to lure them, to bring them towards us, support them and in return the country will go ahead.

Have a look at India, since the 1990's onwards! I am not an economist, I am a layman, but I know how India prospered and even China, the so-called extreme socialist countries. Today, they are bound to accept the midway. Mr Speaker, Sir, you cannot expect to pluck flowers without watering the plant; if you want to pluck flowers you have water the plant. If you want to milk the cow you have to feed the cow; you can't do otherwise.

Let me take you to Mahatma Gandhi. He was one of the greatest socialist leaders in the world, one of the greatest supporters of the poor in the world. He was the symbol of the destitute - of the semi-starved - millions in India. He died for the downtrodden. He even admitted and openly declared that he could not fight against the entrepreneurs. He called them '*dharohar*'. '*Dharohar*' means that they are trustees. His greatest disciple, *Acharya Vinoba Bhave*, his custodians, trustee, has written somewhere that, just as the bee sucks the honey of the flower without destroying the flower, so should you take from the rich without destroying the rich. I am talking to you about the great socialist leaders in the world, of the path makers, the fathers of democracy in the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today we can't be so calculating. Again, that reminds me of a saintly man in Mauritius in the early 1960's, when I was in school, and one of my teachers who was an extremist and Marxist, poisoned my ears, telling me: "Look at this spiritual man! He only goes in the homes of rich people, he only moves in big cars." So, I got really convinced - I know that my friend, hon. Minister Choonee knows whom I am referring to. So, one day that saintly man happened to come to the house of my own grandfather. I was there, very young. So, I asked him the first question –

"*Swamiji*, I am told that you only move in the house of rich people."

Do you know what answer he gave me? He laughed, smiled and told me -

"What am I going to get from those who don't even have a square meal of food per day?

Let me go towards those who have and from them I can snatch and find morsels and help those people who are helpless and hungry."

And that was none other than the Late Swami Krishnanand, the founder of Human Service Trust, a very close friend of late Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. I believe in that because we should get from them. Opposition wants to destroy them. The ideological war is over. It's all '*bla bla bla!*' you will do here and from here, we are talking all these things, but each one of you; you are good friends of the big capitalists and I am not. That's why I say, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to be honest in our life and we should know what we speak. You come here and claim that you will fight against them; You speak against '*le grand capital*' and when you go out, it is quite the contrary which is true. But I am not a hypocrite.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Xavier Duval, at least, he had the guts, with the blessing of the hon. Prime Minister, that 2,000 houses of CHA be given free to those people who are poor. Because, if you want to live in this country - I know all types of communal words will be attached to all these things. Here, we are communalists; outside I know what happens and I know what type of campaign is going on, 2000 CHA houses have been given. So many budgets have come and gone! At least, credit is given to the hon. Prime Minister and to hon. Xavier Duval that they cared for those who are at the lowest rung of the ladder. Those earning less than Rs3000 have also been taken care of and let me misquote Tagore -

“He is there where the tiller is tilling the land and the path maker is breaking stones. He is there in sun and shower. Put off thy demagogical mask and even like him come down on the dusty soil. You will see what the suffering of those people is!”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I remember another great fellow who has rightly stated -

“So long as thousands live without food and water, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, care not the least for them.”

He went a step further and said -

“So long as even a single dog in my country is without food, my sole religion is to feed that dog.”

This is the concept that we have to care for those who are helpless. And this is a caring budget! And when you heard him in the PNQ, it is neat and clear that all the provisions will be implemented. This is at least the guarantee that we have given to the nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Members of the Opposition remind me of those messengers of gloom and doom. That takes me to memory lane when I was a student: Shakespeare's witches –

“When shall we three meet again

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"
 When the hurlyburly's done,
 When the battle's lost and won."

So, this type of messengers of gloom and doom, they keep on chanting such slogans and that reminds me even of the present day Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not even forgotten the prediction of two Nobel Prize winners, Meade and Titmus that Mauritius is doomed because of its mono-crop economy. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam proved them wrong. We have not forgotten 'The Overcrowded Barracoon' of V.S. Naipaul that Mauritius is a country of nurses. We proved him wrong. Mauritius is a country of budding intellectuals. So, that's why we will prove the opposition is wrong as well, as we have proved others. We had a *per capita* income of a few dollars. Now, we have 8600 dollars as per capita income. If this is not advancement, this is not progress, what do you call that? That is the reason I say: don't be the messengers of gloom and doom in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our key note is confidence. We are not proud, we are humble. We are not apologetic. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are confident. We are not conceited. We are proud but we are not arrogant. We are cool but we are not cold in our approach. This is clear! Mr Speaker, Sir, I always believe in a philosophy – To action you have the right, not to its result! Let not the result be your motive! Never be tempted by the result to do the job! The Opposition is mean and calculating. Two plus two is equal to four, but in politics, two plus two never becomes four. Forty years you are there and only two years in power! How do you explain that? So, don't be calculating like that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the tree bears fruits, water wets, rivers flow, not for their own sake but for the sake of others. So, should we, as politicians, act in such a spirit! For us, action is the answer not inaction. Running away from a problem means cowardice. The result is shame, the result is sorrow, the result is defeat. Unfortunately, they are suffering from a problem phobia. I cannot go on and on and on. Only one thing I will tell my friends on the MSM side: you know if an iron ring is put around a growing tree, as the tree grows, the ring will be swallowed into the growth of the tree. That is the situation of MSM today.

(Interruptions)

I am not talking of *bracelet*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I come on my Ministry, let me remind my friends of an epic, a very interesting epic in India – Mahabharata. What is not in the Mahabharata is nowhere. The story of a king, of an emperor, it was very interesting; that epic has to deal with life and that Mahabharata is a mirror which reflects life. The king was born blind but he became deaf to the words of wisdom. Attachment - he had a son, Duryodhana, and you know, when you think of an object, it leads to attachment, and attachment leads to desire. My son should become the king and when desire is not fulfilled, attachment leads to anger, anger leads to delusion; delusion leads to loss of memory; loss of memory leads to destruction. When you cross eighty, you want to remake life. That is very difficult because you are supposed to be beyond...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I like to hear Mahabharata, let me listen!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. You are supposed to be above pleasure and pain, heat and cold, victory and defeat. There must be equanimity within. That is the state, that is what you have always been taught because we should know how to detach; step by step we have to detach because when the time comes, I think all religions preach that. But if, at this particular moment, only because of son or because of the near and dear ones, you get attached. The message of Bhagavad Gita is clear, that you have to detach. I don't want to go more than that, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have made my point that we have to be practical, we have to be pragmatic, and we have to think about our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard in the Budget Speech from the Opposition side that it's full of promises and nothing more. Let me tell my friends on the other side of the House that all the promises that were made - at least, I am talking of my Ministry - all promises have been kept. Where I am going to start, I hardly understand, North, South, East or West. So many multiplicities of projects! But I will try to do justice to my Ministry and to officers of my Ministry by, at least, citing a few examples of what we have done.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Public Infrastructure deals with all Government buildings and I am happy to state that most of the work has properly been done. We have efficient officers. You know many people on the Opposition side claim that they are very proficient, but success is the reward of efficiency, not necessarily of proficiency. So, here, we have got efficiency; efficient officers are doing the job. If I take the example on the educational side, my colleague, the

Minister of Education is here, we had hundreds of projects in the educational field - 16 schools are under construction actually, amount spent is Rs440 m. That includes SSS Holyrood, Colline Monneron and Piton, Royal College of Port Louis for which nobody cared for in the past; in the month of January, we are completing ten classes in that school. We have seven projects totalling Rs350 m. and they are nearing completion. That includes SSS Rivière des Anguilles, Floreal, Goodlands, as well as many primary schools. That is one example; plus we have got 56 projects which are under design or tender stage. That is no mean achievement!

When we move to the health sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have got twelve projects and Montagne Longue Hospital was already closed. By the end of this year we will have a hospital in Montagne Longue. Accident and Emergency Department in SSRN Hospital, in the morning I was there and I know it's nearing completion. Seven projects costing Rs220 m. have been completed. One complete ward of Rs125 m. in Central Flacq Hospital is already completed; 38 projects are under design and tender stage; the Mahebourg Hospital has been earmarked for next year; a new block at Flacq Hospital; Radiotherapy Block at Victoria Hospital; main Operating Theatre at Victoria Hospital; Neurology and Spinal Unit at Victoria Hospital and a host of other places. The Community Health Centres in many parts of the country are being upgraded.

So much work has been done that we have not even got time to inaugurate them. If I am not mistaken the Medi Clinic at Plaine Verte will be inaugurated towards the end of this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Police Department and Prison Department, we have been handling projects worth billions of rupees. I heard my friend hon. Obeegadoo mentioning the problem in the prisons. I can only ask him to be patient; a beautiful prison is under construction at Melrose.

(Interruptions)

Cinq étoiles! Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police Headquarters in many parts of the country are being upgraded. New Police Stations are coming up also. There are 38 projects belonging to different Ministries, they are either at design stage or tender stage. We have even not neglected Fire Stations at Tamarin and Rose Belle. So nobody can come forward and tell us that as far as construction works are concerned that there is any delay. Recreational Centres that are five-star hotels for our old mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, one at Pointe aux Piments and another one at Riambel. Swimming pools at Camp Carreau and one at Rivière des Anguilles. Market fairs in many parts of the country and there are other projects which need to

be implemented. Unfortunately, because of shortage of staff, we have to take recourse to consultants and that delays the project and, at times, the project costs go up.

Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from that, in my Ministry of Public Infrastructure, I have other departments, the Maintenance Department where we look after 4000 to 6000 projects annually. And the hon. Minister of Education knows that we have nearly upgraded almost all the toilet blocks in all the schools. This is no mere achievement. Nobody can come forward and tell us that we are sellers of dreams. We are dreamers of dreams, but we are doers of deeds as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the second arm of my Ministry is the Road Development Authority - that is one of the finest arms of the Government of Mauritius. We have got modern and efficient road. Never in the history of this country has so much work been done as we are doing under the leadership of the actual hon. Prime Minister. We are proposing R 250 billions of investment in the forthcoming 10 years, Mr Speaker, Sir. R 250 milliard in 10 years! This is the projection in general that includes the Harbour Bridge, the Dream Bridge and everything. For 2012 alone, provision of *R 21.2 milliard* for infrastructural project plus Rs 1.5 billion in contingency, anybody who comes first with projects will be given that money – I hope I will get it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Decongestion Programme: Rs25 billion concerning the widening of roads and removal of bottlenecks. Mr Speaker Sir, I have to give you a few examples: Terre Rouge/Verdun, all of us know, 16km next year will be completed because I heard them murmuring time and again during their deliberations that nothing is being done; it is only too much of talking, but Terre Rouge/Verdun, next year, 16 km, *R 2.2 milliard*. Verdun/Trianon, another 11 km completed next year. So, by next year I hope the big problem of congestion will be over in one part of the country. Port Louis Ring Road; the first phase is nearing completion, another six months time. The second phase falls under PPP and most probably towards the end of January, we are going to take a decision.

Mr Speaker Sir, the widening of the motorway from two dual carriageways to three starts at Caudan and ends at Phoenix roundabout. The first phase Pailles to Bell Village is completed, Rs210 m and a flyover has been provided at Bell Village.

Second phase, Pont Fer to St Jean will be inaugurated by the hon. Prime Minister in the weeks or days to come. The work will be completed probably towards the end of next week.

Mr Speaker, Sir, St Jean to Pont Colville will be completed in two months time and the last part will be at Pont Colville Deverell Bridge; we had a problem because there has been a

challenge in the contract and that is delaying the project, but probably within a month or so the CPB has to take a decision.

Apart from that, at Caudan, the grade separated junction is under construction. There has been a slight delay because of a problem of sewerage. Apart from that, we will have grade separated junction at Pont Fer/Phoenix/Jumbo, Riche Terre, Quay D and Terre Rouge. Roundabouts will be converted into grade separated junctions.

The Dream Bridge is no longer a dream bridge. It has become a real bridge, a Harbour Bridge. Acquisition of land has already started. The idea is to link the region of Les Salines to that of Roche Bois.

In addition to that, we have got another great project which is coming up that is the link between Sorèze to Coromandel with a view to *décongestionner* the region of Coromandel and that is A1 and M1. The link of A1 and M1 is also under the PPP.

Apart from this, Mr Speaker, Sir, since Independence, all Governments were dreaming of having dual carriageway from airport up till the north, but it is this Government which was able to realise the dream; from Pamplemousses to Forbach, the work is over and the last part of it, Forbach to Grand' Baie, probably in a month time, the work will also be completed. This means dual carriageway from the airport up till Grand' Baie will already be completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to this, all of us know that in the villages there has been many improvements. The villages are being turned into township now. The hon. Prime Minister has been telling and we must see to it that in every nook and corner of the country, people must feel that there is development. Even to alleviate the problems for heavy traffic congestions in those areas, we have provided bypass.

Concerning Goodlands bypass, everybody knows it; there is no need for me to speak. Actions must speak louder than words. Triolet bypass, everybody knows, and in addition to this: Phoenix/Beau Songes, Rs280m. have been spent and people who live in that side, they know how much relief they are getting today because I remember hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee stated nothing has been done in her constituency. I hope now, that she gets time to visit her Constituency. Phoenix/Beau Songes forms part of that Constituency and if my friend hon. Hervé Aimée is here, all requests which were made to me, all requests have been taken care of. All requests were approved and big projects are going on, in his Constituency worth more than Rs 100m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Schoenfield Bypass is already over, the first part is completed and hon. Mrs Bholah is there, she can be a witness and she can testify in the House, the amount of relief that the people are getting as a result of that route. The second phase will start in the month of February.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I know people living in the eastern part of the country, the difficulties, our students, our children; the hardship that they get from St Pierre to Réduit. Almost for one hour they get clogged in the traffic jam. I am pleased to announce that in the weeks to come work on St Pierre bypass may start and our Government is going to spend above Rs200m. in a 4 km route.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some roads have very poor engineering characteristics and with the increase in traffic over the years, major upgrading works have been carried out. From Wooton to Belle Rive - work is already completed. From Belle Rive to Quartier Militaire, that is costing the Government of Mauritius Rs 950m and that work has already started. I think we have completed 15% of the work and by next year, people living in that side will be very happy. The Higginson Road where the bitter accident occurred, works have already started. Government is spending some Rs170m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not yet forgotten the south: Nouvelle France to La Flora, the enlargement of the road will take place because it is a very dangerous one. It is called a dark spot. The enlargement may cost us above Rs150m. Work may start probably early February or March. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have spent Rs 120m for Motorway M2 from Terre Rouge to Quay D. It has already been upgraded. La Vigie to Nouvelle France, all of you know, Rs168m. of work is completed. The road between Pamplemousses and Mapou, Rs90m. of works is already completed. Flacq bypass has also been completed. It costs us Rs65m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are other projects which are in the pipeline. I remember, we had listed all these projects and many of them were of opinion that nothing will be done. It is only propaganda. Everything has been done. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to announce that with the blessings of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the East Coast Trunk Road is also in the pipeline that will be a link between the airport in the south to the north, that is, Forbach to Bel Air. Consultants have already been appointed to upgrade this alignment, which was previously prepared by one Indian consultant.

Second, East-West connector, that is, the dual carriageway connecting the East to the West, it will act as a bypass to Moka, St. Pierre, Quartier Militaire; the feasibility is being finalised by the consultants.

The third major project will be a dual carriageway Nouvelle France to Souillac because with the increase in traffic, even the South needs a dual way. Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is spending billions in order to upgrade our roads. We have not forgotten Mahebourg to Bel Air. In three phases, the work will be completed; the upgrading will be completed that is costing the nation Rs1.5 billion. The work probably may start in the month of March. Concerning the third Highway project from Réduit to Quartier Militaire, the last leg was left from Quartier Militaire to Flacq and, probably, work will start in the month of March.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can go on and on. The Tulipes Avenue at Quatre Bornes is already in the pipeline and the tender procedures have started. I can assure my friend, the vice-Prime Minister that, in the months to come, the work may start also.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not only big roads, not only major roads, that are undertaken by RDA, but also reconstruction of bridges. The work is over in Camp de Masque because it has created a big havoc during the last flood. At Mapou, the work is nearly in completion. Poudre d'Or Village which was submerged for weeks and weeks in water, work is nearing completion. At l'Amitié, we are midway in our work. At Arsenal, the work is completed; in Terre rouge, the work is on; at Rivière Citron, Barlow, Dagotiere, the work is completed. For Bramsthan, it is nearing completion; at St Julien, the work is on; at Quatre Soeurs, it is nearing completion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have also carried out improvement of geometry of existing roads in many parts of the country. There is no need for me to spell out all those villages. The Ferney Bridge at the cost of Rs70 m. will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister, probably, in the months to come. The Pont Rouge at Pailles is at the cost of Rs55 m. There are three steel bridges where we have started construction and repairs also, that is, Tamarin, Rivière des Galets and Souillac.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the third arm of my Ministry - the Land Transport Division. Last year, we have taken the decision to create the Mauritius Land Transport Authority so that we can bring under Land Transport Authority, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the RDA Traffic Management Unit and NTA. Mr Speaker, Sir, part of the MLTA Act has already been proclaimed and the rest will follow. A consultant was also appointed and they have come with

very ambitious proposals regarding the transport system in our country for the forthcoming 15 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all of us know Government has provided free travel to all students and our old age because we have got a Government that cares for everybody from womb to the tomb. This is what we call the Ram Goolam *raj*, this is what we call the Welfare State.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard hon. Obeegadoo just making a passing remark. The Prime Minister went there and saw somebody, got conquered and provided the free transport. That reminds me of late Sir Sewoosagur Ramgoolam also. Once upon a time in 1976, he took the decision and he was criticised for about 10, 20, 25 years. Why did he provide free education? Similar is the case! That reminds me of the dual carriageway. We remember the oligarchs, when Sir Sewoosagur started the construction of that dual carriageway, saying he is one-eyed, he should be blind, what is he doing? Whenever you start a good work, reactions are always like that by the reactionaries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, just imagine our children who are going to schools and colleges, the relief that they are having when they are getting the free transport. I know that because I live in a village where most people are poor and I know what blessings people give the Prime Minister, the old age as well as the youngsters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the beginning, we have to admit that this scheme had certain teething problems, but now everything has been corrected and strict actions were taken against all those who are making abuse of the system and I am certain that the system is working very well. From 2009 to 2011, there were over hundred suspension cases of those who misbehaved with passengers and the hon. Prime Minister has, all the time, been telling us that one case is too many. We had to see to it that Government had to take strict action and we are pitiless against those who make an abuse of the system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, NTA is a big organisation. 400,000 vehicles registrations, but now we have taken the decision that anybody can pay the registration fee in any Post Office. We have been able to decentralise the problem. We are not facing the same problem as they were facing in the past. Then comes the question of number plates. Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard hon. Uteem said that concerning the number plates, *gouvernement finn reculé. Ce n'est pas reculé*. As a caring government, when we find that there are problems, that people are getting difficulties, what do

we do? Out of hundred projects, if in one or two, we have made certain concessions, this means that we are flexible and those people who are stubborn, those people who are unbending, we know the consequences. We have to be attentive to their demand. We have to listen to people and the hon. Prime Minister took the right decision. He was the one who got the retro-reflective plates. He was the one who has been insisting all the time and today we know the importance of putting up such plates, and today I can announce that 40% of our vehicles are already fitted with reflective plates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have given more time and we are appealing to those people. But, most probably, Government will have to take a decision and to put up a deadline. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are imposing the speed limiters in heavy vehicles as from 01 July 2012. We have contacts with the Attorney General's Office. We are trying to amend the regulations to include van drivers also, because they create more problems than the heavy vehicles. Many of them are mischief makers. We have to look after them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as privatisation of fitness centers are concerned, expression of interest was published in the papers. Apart from that, the request for proposal is being launched. I hope within a few months, even that contract will be awarded. The CPB is looking after that. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit of my Ministry, TMRSU, is also doing a wonderful work. I can't assure the House in what way we can limit or whether there is any magic formula for us to completely eliminate number of dangerous accidents on the road. But with the limited staff that we have, we are doing our utmost best and the hon. Prime Minister has assured the House that he, personally, and his Ministry are looking into this issue. This is the responsibility of each and every Mauritian. I always believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the saying of one of the great scholars that there is nothing wrong in a motor car, which compels you to drive so fast as to kill innocent pedestrians. If our ideals are wrong, the fault is not in the machine. So, there must be a sense of *retenu* on behalf of all the drivers and, keeping that, in mind, we are introducing the penalty point. Most probably, in the weeks to come, penalty point will be ready. We are going to be pitiless against all those who are messengers of death on our roads. That is a guarantee that we can give to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister again for providing us funds for the installation of speed cameras. Most probably, it is a warning to all our friends also and if a politician is caught, that can harm him more than any other commoner. My appeal will

also be to all our hon. Members, we have to be careful because it will not be bogus installations. We have to be careful about it, penalty point is coming. Sensitisation campaigns have also been conducted by the TMRSU throughout the country, in schools and colleges, in all institutions, and I do hope that we are going to get the results that we need.

One hundred bus shelters for next year have also been approved. Mr Speaker, Sir, the harbingers of misfortune were putting, I remember, questions in Parliament. It was as if the National Transport Corporation was over, dead and gone. I could still remember the number of questions. I remember what was written in the papers. I gave assurance to the House at that time that things would improve at the NTC.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the financial situation was bad. A consultant, Deloitte, was hired and appointed. He came with chilling conclusions. The forecast was towards the end of 2010, CNT would have a cumulative negative cash position of Rs409 m. At the same time, CNT received negative publicity in the press, in the media and these publicities were blown out of proportion. It gave us the impression that it was just to shake the confidence of the public on the CNT. That affected the morale of our workers also. They were made to believe that doomsday scenario was in the making as the consultant pointed a very, very bleak picture and, in such a situation, even the financing agencies run away from the CNT. All odds were against us, but we were not discouraged. We tried hard and I am proud to announce that, under the able leadership and guidance and advice of the Prime Minister, CNT is back on its rails. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have taken action and today in spite of all difficulties, we have started renewing our bus fleet. We have already procured 60 buses which are already in operation – Nissan; another 57 will be delivered in the months to come. We have invested in 117 new buses costing NTC Rs301 m. and next year, we are procuring another 65 buses. Buses are attractive and, as I have mentioned, there would have been a negative cash flow of Rs409 m., but we have approved the consultant wrong. CNT has registered a positive cash of Rs38 m. up till today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is no mean achievement and per month we are going to continue getting, at least, Rs5 m. At the same time, new electronic ticketing machines have already been introduced. Surveillance cameras have already been installed. That's why I have to take this opportunity to congratulate the workers of CNT and, at the same time, officers of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation also falls under my Ministry. All of us are aware of the havoc created by pirates. They have become a direct threat to our region and

we need to have a closer watch on our seas. We have to take measures that are in line with IMO and SOLAS Convention. That is why we have upgraded the High Frequency Radio Communication System which has cost the Government Rs13 m. and we are spending an additional sum of Rs18 m. on Global Maritime Distress and Safety System. We are working in close collaboration with Mauritius Oceanographic Institute because we also want to ensure that ballast water does not contaminate our ecosystem.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot but congratulate the shipping division of my ministry which handled ably, energetically and efficiently the case of Angel 1 which got stuck just outside our lagoon. That was our first experience. Even New Zealand with millions of possibilities could not save its sea from being polluted or its birds from getting contaminated. We managed not to allow a single bag of rice or a single litre of petrol to spill in our sea. That is no mean achievement. I have to congratulate all our friends who were involved in that: Prime Minister's Office, my Ministry, Ministry of Fisheries and all other Departments of Government. The Piracy and Maritime Environment Bill which will deal with offences related to piracy is ready; in the days to come, it will be approved by the Government and brought in Parliament. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have two vessels that are providing services to Rodrigues and Outer Islands Development Corporation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to come to another important institution that falls under me and that is, in fact, the National Development Unit. It has executed thousands of projects. It has changed the whole fabric of Mauritius. It has improved the standard of living of our people. It has contributed to the social and economic development of our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole world is scared of the scourge of floods. What is happening in Thailand is known to everybody today. We have not left any stone unturned to protect our citizens from any possible natural calamities so much so that even Justice Domah, in his report, has congratulated the work which was effected by the officers of NDU.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme was started by this Government. We had to identify high risk flood prone areas and we have provided all types of adequate infrastructure to address the issues. Mr Speaker, Sir, Mon Goût, Pointe aux Sables, Flacq, Ebene – regions which were badly affected by floods two years ago, the problems have already been solved.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have constructed and upgraded 129 drains plus nineteen bridges which have cost us above R1 billion. The list is so long that it will take me almost one hour or more than one hour to answer all. Mr Speaker, Sir, at the same time, new roads have been constructed; roads have been upgraded; sports facilities have also been provided.

As I have just mentioned, we have spent one billion thirty five million rupees in one year as far as roads, bridges, drains and sports facilities are concerned. I heard hon. Obeegadoo stating that we have to follow what our friend Bhagwan has done. He was talking about jogging tracks, about sports amenities. We have done five times more than him in a lapse of one year and this speaks for itself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have constructed volleyball pitches, football grounds, lighting of sports infrastructure, leisure parks, cremation grounds, safe children playgrounds, bowling alleys, health tracks. With the support of local authorities, we have lighting of sports infrastructure in many parts of the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Citizens Advice Bureau has also done a marvellous work and I don't want to dwell into all these, but one thing I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have done a wonderful job in the Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, I would conclude by quoting one of the quotes which two years ago, the Prime Minister of our country has quoted:

'What is our aim? What is our ideal? What type of Mauritius do we want to build where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free; where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; where words come from the depth of truth; where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection; where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit; where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action. Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.'

Thank you.

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(6.37 p.m.)

Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is always a privilege and an honour to stand up in this august Assembly to make a speech on the Budget which is considered as one of the main events in the life of a Parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I feel very sad when I listen to hon. Bachoo reciting a number of things from the Scriptures. I am not as versed as he is, but Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when you stand up and speak in the House, you should have the nobility, you should have the sincerity. He said something that when you are 80 you should be detached and you should 'bow down to life'.

My first souvenir of hon. Anil Bachoo was as from 1982 where he was asking for a vote under a spin doctor coming from the United States. He was asking for a vote to do what? To make Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam at the age of 82 become the Prime Minister the next five years up to 1987. He was doing it. He started his political career. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir....

(Interruptions)

The hon. Speaker is not here. Hon. Bachoo is the only one who was in the 1982 battle, except Paul Raymond Bérenger. But, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was right. Why did he stand as Prime Minister? It was because he felt he could serve his country, he felt that was his mission and that was his duty, and that he could stand the test of time up to the age of 87 - I bow down to that. But he cannot come today, in this august Assembly, and tells us a story like this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I am not versed in the Upanishad, on scriptures but I know one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the *Mahabharat* and the *Bhagavad Gita* show you one thing: you have to do your duty by commitment, by sincerity, by loyalty, when you feel that that is the path you have to take.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Bachoo started with the Labour Party, then he went with the MTB, with the MMM, then with the MSM, then came back to the Labour Party. *Ce sont les zigzags politiques de quelqu'un qui pense qu'il est en ligne droite, mais ce sont les autres qui voient les zigzags, pas lui.* He has always applauded the Leader of the day, which he is doing now. But he should not take us for a ride; he should not take Parliament for a ride, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I stand up here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a *pur-sang* MSM, because I pride myself in politics, commitment, sincerity and loyalty and I have always said so, but between you and us,

there are only five metres; sometimes it takes five years to change, to go from there to come and from here to go there, or otherwise if you cross the floor, it takes you a few days.

(Interruptions)

You have to choose. I have always said - when I see hon. Dr. A. Boolell, I bow down to see. We were 50, more than 50 of us here, on this side of MSM/MMM Government, he was standing there alone, he was resilient; but I bow down to him, because he was loyal to his party and he believed that his party would come back to power. He came back to power. That's why I say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that when we have the opportunity to serve our nation and our people, we too, should do it with commitment and with loyalty.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about this Budget, I feel like rewriting it, rewriting it with more ambition, with more pride, with more hope for Mauritius. We want to rewrite it, give it a more paradigm shift, to be bolder.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to talk about the local and international situations. But before that, I was a Minister in a Government led by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, as Prime Minister. We are here today. Why are we here today? Some say because of the Med Point affair...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aimée, please!

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened to each and every one on the other side of the House. I have not interrupted anybody and I do not think it is fair that some Members, after having made their speech at the beginning of the debates, end up interrupting all the Members, on this side, each and every time. We cannot do that. Listen to me because I have things to say.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Why are we here? Why am I here? Some say because of the Med Point affair, some say because of other reasons, but we gave, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have served as a Minister under Sir Anerood Jugnauth, I have served as a Minister under hon. Bérenger and I have served as a Minister under Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. But I cannot understand that when I have an issue of national importance like the Michaëlla Hart affair, like air access, like law and order, I cannot have access to the Prime Minister. I cannot understand this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and they know what I am speaking of. How can you have that sort of leadership, *un culte d'inaccessibilité*, an aura of adulation shown on TV? How can we have this?

How can I not meet a Prime Minister when I need to talk to him to go further, to decide on a flight to Shanghai, to go on a mission to London, to choose a Chairman of the Mauritius Tourism Authority? Why? *Pourquoi ce culte d'inaccessibilité?* I think you should be a Labour to understand this. I cannot. And then...

(Interruptions)

Yes, you are proud of this, but it is not...

The Deputy Speaker: Please, you will have the opportunity to reply!

Mr Bodha: But, it is not in my system. It is not in the system of the MSM. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the MSM comes in any Government, in an alliance, it is with our heart, with our soul, with our loyalty, with our competence, because we want to be part of that team. And this is what we gave to Dr. Navin Ramgoolam and the Labour Party! We come to serve, we come to decide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my Ministry, – when I was the then Minister - the Tourism Industry, I consider that it can shape the Mauritius of the next years. It can do to what Mauritius did with the sugar cane; the Tourism Industry can do that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it came to my Ministry, I had no Chairman at the MTPA, no Chairman at the Tourism Authority, no Chairman for the Tourism Fund. There were other parastatals and they were chaired by two Members of the PMSD - who are still here. And in all, I recruited three or four Enforcement Officers and one retired Superintendent of Police to address the issue of law and order, but when I see this, I am jealous of hon. Khamajeet. I do not know how he does it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I am saying is that there is a style of leadership about decision-making, about the time we take to do things. Hon. Minister Anil Bachoo is proud today of thinking of what he has done - but we all know that all this was planned many years before - with the Deputy Prime Minister - when he was Minister of Public Infrastructure. So, what I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we had the problem of Med Point, of course, we had this problem of decision-making, the problem of commitment, of consideration of the partnership. Because we fought an election together, we went to the people together, we had a programme, a manifesto together and we wanted to be part and parcel of the Government. All the Ministers here know of what I am talking when it comes to decision-making, access to the Prime Minister, etc.

Maintenant, nous avons un capitaine avec son équipage et il dit qu'il n'a pas confiance dans son équipage ; il se méfie de ses ministres. Nous avons un capitaine qui dit : Demain quand il y aura la tempête et les bourrasques, mes hommes ne pourront peut-être pas tenir la force des vents de l'Opposition. Nous avons un capitaine qui est là et qui n'est pas là. That's the whole issue, because when we are in an alliance, we have to find this synergy and we had promised the Prime Minister, the best of our ability, competence and loyalty. I personally did that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Having said this, what is happening in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Ce budget manque quelque chose de fondamental: la confiance et la stabilité politique. La confiance vient de la capacité d'un gouvernement à donner de l'espoir à tous les stakeholders. La stabilité vient non pas des nombres mais de la cohésion. This Government does not have the stability and it does not show the confidence that this country needs in the daunting times.

A few things, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: we can see the business wait and see attitude; we have *le Civil Service au ralenti*; we have the political uncertainty when it comes to business confidence; everybody is saying what is going to happen; everybody is waiting for something to happen. Maybe the Budget could have been the catalyst, but it was not the catalyst. Everybody wants this country to have a breath of fresh air, a new hope, a new leadership. Everybody is waiting for that. *En attendant, cela continue.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, the Budget does not create the confidence and the stability our country needs in the difficult and very daunting times. Let us see what is happening in the world today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We know Europe is reeling with the euro crisis. The United States is unable to stand up. And what is happening in Europe? France is thinking in terms of a 0.6 growth; Germany a bit stronger, and in Italy what has happened? Silvio Berlusconi, a magnate who controls the media, the TV and the press, who is himself a magnate in the economic world, who has an interaction with the underworld, who can even influence the Judiciary, he has been forced to resign and to leave, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the lesson to learn. And when we see Italy at the brunt of a catastrophe, when we see what is happening in Europe, should we still look only at Europe? The focus of the other budget was rebalancing the economy. Let us look east. India is moving at 8, 9%; China is moving at 8, 9%. Let us look west nearer Africa which is the continent of tomorrow and we are blessed, history has changed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but geography has not. We are blessed to be in the Indian Ocean

between Asia and Africa. We are blessed because we can still use the situation of geography for the betterment of the next generation to come. But this Budget does not do anything about this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year we are getting 20,000 Chinese coming as tourists, starting from 6,000 with one flight to Shanghai. If the 20,000 Chinese are spending 1,000 euros, it's 20 million euros and 20 million euros, it's Rs800 m. Tomorrow we can double this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The next year, we can multiply this again. But we are not doing it because we don't believe in it, I don't know. I will come back to this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Concerning Africa, we want to be the star and key of the Indian Ocean again. We want Air Mauritius to be the airline and to make Mauritius as a hub. I will come to that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But let us see what is happening to the country. All our parastatals are doing badly; most of them are losing millions, giving a poor service. We are paying more for less water. The hedging saga cost Rs10 billions at Air Mauritius. The national carrier is still reeling under it. It cost Rs5.4 billions at the STC, we are all reeling under it, paying the hedging fee at the petrol station; the number of cases at ICAC, we have a new contract of Rs800 m. at the duty-free paradise, we don't know what is going to happen; how many parastatals are without a CEO or a chairperson; we have the whole jackpot of Betamax, Rs8 billions in 15 years, *garantie*, foolproof. We have the law and order situation. I will say a few words on that later.

Concerning the democratisation of the economy, I am sad, hon. Ms Deepalsing is not here. When Appavou is getting disintegrated and the others are buying the hotel, is that democratisation? Now, we don't talk of democratisation of the big companies, we talk of democratisation with the Small and Medium Enterprises. It is as if we don't talk about the Sugar Barons, Sugar Estates, we are talking of the small planters. But what is democratisation? It is an urgency; it is a duty to history to bring a new equilibrium in our society. This is democratisation of the economy. I had one brilliant idea which I raised here, in Parliament, talked to the Prime Minister and he said it is brilliant. I talked to the Deputy Prime Minister, I said: let us take Rs500 m. - I am making proposals as well - and create a Hotel and Tourism Investment Trust, let us buy shares in the five, six big companies and sell the shares to the workers, give them one when they buy one. This would have been democratisation of one of the sectors of the economy. And the Prime Minister said: 'yes, *to ena raison*.' We can do it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we see the situation of the country. I have raised all these problems. We are living in a country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where two neighbours were

talking to each other and it ended up in the arrest of one of them *pour un complot pour porter atteinte à l'intégrité du Premier ministre et de déstabiliser le gouvernement. C'est notre pays. Nous avons deux voisins qui se parlent et cela se termine en une arrestation pour complot pour porter atteinte à l'intégrité du Premier ministre et de déstabiliser le gouvernement.* And this is not enough because two persons have a provisional. You have somebody else.

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Assirvaden, I have listened to him!

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, I will take care!

(*Interruptions*)

Please, don't interrupt!

Mr Bodha: This was one charge. There could have been another charge of diffusion of false news and even the arrest of the hon. Leader of the Opposition was contemplated at Line Barracks. Why? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because two neighbours were talking to each other!

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: *Et on est en train de déstabiliser le gouvernement!* Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the country where we are living and hon. Bachoo can recite the scriptures, of course. We do not *zig zag*, we go straight, Mr Deputy Speaker. Sir. What can we achieve in this country because it is a formidable island. We can achieve the democratic model of the Scandinavian countries with good governance. We can achieve the Singapore model of education and management. Mauritians are geniuses. We can achieve the Dubai model as a hub and we can achieve the uniqueness of Mauritius as the land of peace, tolerance, conviviality and prosperity with equal opportunity, unity in diversity. This can be achieved, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the Mauritius we want to build. When the former vice-Prime Minister last year came with the Budget, he put targets, we had an ambition. It is fair for us to congratulate the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on a number of measures that he has brought because he believes that they will bring betterment to the nation. But it is our duty to say that he has not been ambitious enough, bold enough, fair enough. This is our duty as an Opposition and I am going to make a number of proposals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let us see what the Prime Minister said last year –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, sustained economic success requires two main ingredients. The first is a long term forward looking perspective (...)"

I have just painted it.

“(...) aimed at generating economic growth and efficiency. The second is the focus on social justice, and ensuring growth is inclusive. The Budget outlined by the Vice-Prime Minister, has both of these ingredients in abundance, and he should be congratulated for this Budget of the first Budget of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*.”

This is what the Prime Minister said and, he continues –

“The forward looking nature of this Budget is evident in its focus on rebalancing growth and investment for the future.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he continued to say –

“(...) I had come in 2005 to the nation with an agenda to democratise the economy. I am glad that we have indeed made a number of inroads in that direction.”

He was speaking of the cane industry.

It is the way that he ends which is good, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is what he said –

“Let me conclude, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, by stressing that the policies we have been pursuing while adapting to the continuing changes in the global economy, are taking Mauritius in the right direction. (...) They will be telling about opportunities fully seized, and they will be telling about potential fully realised.”

Now let us listen to this -

“As importantly, if not more importantly, they will be telling about a government which left no stone unturned to integrate those who are less fortunate into the mainstream of economic development, thus pursuing the noble aim of inclusive development.”

He ends up with Roosevelt and I am going to say what he said about Roosevelt –

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

Does this Budget correspond to this? Does the Budget of 2012 correspond to the saying of the Prime Minister mentioning Roosevelt?

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

Are we providing enough for those who have too little?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what the Prime Minister said. I am leaving something very beautiful because I will tell you what the Prime Minister said about Sir Anerood Jugnauth in his speech on the Budget. What did the hon. vice-Prime and Minister of Finance say about taxation?

“C'est un budget de continuité with some measures which are very welcomed and you shall bring welcome changes to our society in Mauritius and to the taxation system.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you were in the Chair, it needed to be corrected, but you can correct in a good way and you can correct in a bad way. I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that corrections have been made in an excellent way.

(*Interruptions*)

And then they go out and say the Minister of Finance

(*Interruptions*)

The most beautiful side of it is coming, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The NRPT has been abolished. I had called this tax, when I was the Leader of the Opposition, the Navin Ramgoolam Parti Travalliste Tax and I said that he could have been the Poll Tax like that of Mrs Thatcher in London. The NRPT has been abolished, but replaced nevertheless with a Solidarity Tax on very rich people who earn more than Rs2 m. a year and who have interests as income and who achieve benefits also from dividends as income. It is 10% additional. It is not excessive. He said so. Why is it excessive in 2012?

(*Interruptions*)

He said so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Later I will tell you what you can do with Rs150 m.? What you can do with 1% of this tax or 1% of the other tax?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why I am saying that you can say something this year and you can set something else the next year.

The Foreign Affairs Minister, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell...

(*Interruptions*)

I bowed down to him earlier to his resilience and to his loyalty. He said –

“The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has delivered and he has delivered much to the expectation of the Opposition. But he has delivered and lived up to the expectations of the nation. He has conveyed a very strong message (...)"

(*Interruptions*)

“(...) a message of solidarity in the face of adversity. It is in the light of events unfolding on the international world which is constantly changing the landscape so much so to the extent that you don’t know whether for certain the new economic model will adapt to the changing circumstances.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to the Med Point affair. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Med Point affair started

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please! The hon. Member should continue with the speech.

Mr Bodha: We all know how it started, we all know what was the objective: *attache une laqué ferblanc*. We all know what happened and we made a campaign of truth. One thing which is important in politics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is loyalty and the other one is that you should be true to your conviction. We toured the island because we were in search of truth and we asked a number of questions. We asked three questions to hon. Dr. Jeetah. One regarding as to whether he had met Dr. Malhotra, whether he had received some specifications about the Med Point, whether he had given some instructions to some officers to go on site. We asked three questions to the Deputy Prime Minister: whether Government - he was there – had taken a decision regarding the purchase of a geriatric hospital as a built-up concern, whether he was there and whether hon. Pravin Jugnauth was not there. We also asked him whether he signed a resolution of Société Medinvest where he is a shareholder for Med Point to stop its activities to be sold. We asked whether the Prime Minister was aware of a number of things. First, of what the Leader of the Opposition had said to ICAC when it came to false news, whether he was aware what had happened with the exercise of evaluation, whether he was aware that there was a decision taken *favorisant* Med Point.

All these questions have been put: the truth is trickling down the drain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will not go long on this affair; I will just say what happened with the PNQ of the hon. Leader of the Opposition; hon. Baloomoody and hon. Uteem spoke about it. We had this PNQ about the proceeds of the sale, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and we had a propaganda, banners ‘rend casse, casse ine allé’. The hon. Prime Minister made a statement; the money is gone, gone to London. I have been told that on TV; what was shown, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was asking where is the money? The hon. Prime Minister in a sitting position made a remark, saying that: ‘dimande li’. But, now I am asking the hon. Prime Minister, where is the

money? We believe in only something very simple, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The money has to be traced legally. What we called tracing. They should be an audit trail, not only for the sum which is at the Baroda Bank, which is left Rs120 m, but we should have an audit trail of the Rs15.5 m. as well, for the whole sum and freeze the whole sum. Let the truth come to the people of Mauritius. Let us do the tracing. Let us do the freezing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Then let things go on, let the inquiry go on and I am convinced that the truth will come out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and the MSM will come out stronger after the inquiry. I commend the two Members of the MMM who have said that they have staged a relentless fight for the truth and they will continue with the relentless fight. This is good for the democracy of this country. This is good for our generation to come. This is good because it will bring a bowl of fresh air on this fight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I have mentioned the *démocratisation de l'économie*, but I forgot to say one thing - I would like to know what the hon. Prime Minister is going to say about it - when the Government is going to disinvest from the casinos; from Domaine les Pailles, from Port Louis Waterfront Retail outlets, from the Belle Mare Tourist Village, from the Lake Point Complex and offer a management contract for Citadel, is that democratisation of the economy? Or is it privatisation of Government assets? If it is privatisation of Government assets, that is, our assets, it means that it is doing the contrary and not doing at all the paying. It is paying lip service to the issue of democratisation of the economy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, as I gave the example, if we set the hotel and tourism investment trust, it will go far in one of the booming sectors to give a shareholding of 50,000 workers in the profits and dividends of the tourism industry.

Let me come to law and order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have lived one of the most traumatic ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please!

Mr Bodha: ... experiences as a Minister of Tourism. This was when Michaela Harte was murdered and I was the Minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people have forgotten about it. Today, we can say that it did not do a lot - thanks God - to tarnish the image of Mauritius. But, one Michaela Harte murder could have destroyed the whole industry! At one point in time, the fourth day when I clicked Michaela Harte on the internet, there were 80,000 websites mentioning Michaela Harte – it pains me. I know that for the Minister, it is not an easy job. I saw « *Des*

français attaqués dans leur chambre hôtel au Morne ». From the information that I have, it is a five-star hotel. From the information that I have, it is a very, very important person from France, close - we have to check - to a very high profile political figure in France. It is so sad. *Le couple avait 58 ans et 45 ans.*

The second thing is « *Trois touristes détroussés dans le nord. La police a enregistré trois cas* ». I know it is a tough job for the Minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you know what I have done? I have created a squad of officers to go on tourism sites to help the Police, to mix and then to be able to address a certain number of issues, some sort of “intelligence” and I have asked the Commissioner of Police to give me somebody who could get head that section. He gave me a Superintendent of Police to help. I have just learned that he has been sacked. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this was a good idea and he was a man that the Commissioner of Police had proposed to me. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ...

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask hon. Ministers Pillay and Jeetah to tone down, please!

Mr Bodha: When it comes to the law and order situations, the hon. Prime Minister will come tomorrow or on Monday, he will give the statistics, but the nature of crime has changed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There is this capacity of drug addicts to do harm, looking for their dose. That capacity is amazing! When we see what happens in Jamaica - what we call the island culture of petty crimes, drugs, violence, alcoholism - we should do everything for it not to happen to Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

Qu'est-ce que je vois là ? Vols des équipements de la SMF, des officiers de la GIPM (Groupe d'Intervention de la Police de l'île Maurice). *I remember that I was the attaché de presse of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the GIGM had come, le groupe d'intervention de la gendarmerie nationale de France*, to train the people. *We heard that the GIPM have been arrested for larceny*. Il a eu un vol d'équipements à la Clarisse House. Il y a eu un vol dans le campement du Premier ministre à Roches Noires. What is happening, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Maybe I have some sort of a deformation, I see it from the tourism image, that the image of our country has a safe haven. We should do everything to protect that image. There was a report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *le rapport de United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, on homicides, je vous lis le rapport –*

‘Maurice décroche 4.2 points dans le premier rapport de l’*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* sur les homicides au niveau mondial. Les 54 assassinats et meurtres

recensés en 2009 ont été pris en compte. Il n'y a pas que l'affaire Michaela Harte qui a placé Maurice sur la carte mondiale du crime. L'île figure en bonne place dans une étude sur la prévalence des meurtres au sein de 207 pays par *the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*'.

Et je lis la conclusion –

« Avec ces 54 meurtres recensés en 2009, Maurice fait partie des pays africains où le taux est relativement faible, mais elle fait pâle figure par rapport à d'autres pays et on nous met au même titre que d'autres pays, mais on nous a placés pour la première fois sur la carte mondiale du crime ».

I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a national concern. We are not making politics out of it; we want to help the Prime Minister, and I will come on drugs. The figures of number of people addicted vary from 10,000 to 20,000. I am going to take a very least conservative figure: 10,000. If 10,000 people are spending Rs500 a day, how much is it? It is Rs5 m. per day, and for 360 days it is almost Rs2 billion. This is a very conservative figure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The other day, we mentioned the 1986 Commission of Inquiry on drugs. I have a proposal to make to the Prime Minister. The time has come to have another Commission of Inquiry on drugs. The time has come to have another Commission of Inquiry on drugs, because drugs have changed, the nature has changed, the pattern has changed, the hubs have changed, the way of trafficking has changed, money laundering associated with drugs has changed. We have to review the law, and I am making a suggestion. Let us, as a nation, come up with a Commission of Inquiry and clean our country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We want to help; we want to have the same bold courage Sir Anerood Jugnauth had in 1986. Let us do it together, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now come to tourism. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my former colleague made a statement here - and it was advertised on the MBC - about figures. Let me read from the Bank of Mauritius report. Growth tourism receipts increased by 10.5% in 2010; the hotels and restaurant sector grew by 6% in 2010, as against a contraction of 5.9% recorded a year earlier when the sector suffered from weak economic conditions prevailing in the main source markets. In 2010, the sector contributed 0.5% to overall GDP growth, and this year the forecast is more than 4%. France and Reunion Island is more than 5.6%, and the receipts are Rs42 billion for this year. I think that we can make it better. I will give a number of proposals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

One thing is interesting. India increased by 50%, and China moved from 6,000 to 20,000. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we listen to the traditional hotel sector, they will ask you only three things: air access, weak rupee and low wages. This has been the paradigm of the hotel industry over the years, but I would like to tell the hotel industry one thing Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. One plane costs Rs9 billion. It is the price of four hotels. And you want the plane to go there and sit on the tarmac! Air access is not giving flights, air access is brainstorming, how to make Mauritius the star and key of the Indian Ocean and a hub between India, China and Africa, between Europe and Australia. I will come to Air Mauritius a bit later. Let us come to the Hotel Industry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has said that the environment levy will be paid only if it is profitable.

Let me tell you what Sun Resorts has published -

« Les chiffres publiés pour le groupe de Sun Ressorts pour les neufs premiers mois de l'année montrent des pertes de R 115 millions, soit une augmentation de 113% par rapport à la même période l'année dernière. Le groupe hôtelier a enregistré des pertes de R 115 millions. Pourtant, Sun Resorts a réalisé une hausse de 15% de son chiffre d'affaires qui est passé à R 2.4 milliards. »

Mais pourquoi il n'y a pas de profits ? Il explique -

« Sun Resorts estime également que la démolition de Coco Beach, la construction de Long Beach a eu un impact sur ses résultats d'implication en coût de main-d'œuvre et de frais de marketing. »

Alors, ils annoncent une perte.

What sort of accounting do we call this? If we rely on this, we have no levy. The industry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - I have always said so - should be the industry of Mauritius; it should belong to Mauritius. The tourism industry makes its business on the image of a country, on the warm welcome of the people of Mauritius. What are we doing for the people of Mauritius? I have always said this. The vice-Prime Minister had put a cleaning unit, which cost Rs100 m. in three years. He said it was his priority; he took the Tourism Fund's money, employed 115 people for three years to embellish Mauritius. I can understand that could be his priority but, for me, that was not sustainable. I talked to the then Minister of Finance, and some went to the National Empowerment Fund, some went to the Local Government, and some stayed with me with a small team of 15. He has put -

“I am allocating Rs25 m. to the Tourism Authority to resume its comprehensive cleaning and embellishment programme”.

Yes, we need a comprehensive cleaning and embellishment programme. But why don't we ask the hotels of Grand' Baie to clean Grand Baie? Why don't we ask the cluster of Trou d'Eau Douce to clean Trou d'Eau Douce? Why don't we ask the cluster of Bel Ombre to clean Bel Ombre? Why don't we ask the cluster of Flic en Flac to clean Flic en Flac? What is the District Council doing? What is the village council doing? What is the municipality doing? What is the NDU doing? What is the Minister of Environment doing?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should know what we are doing. The tourism product of Mauritius is a fantastic product. If you add the total of the hotels of Grand' Baie, it could be about Rs20 to Rs30 billion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can't they help? I had proposed to put a Fund of Rs200 m. from government and Rs200 m. from them to make Grand' Baie a shop window. Why can't we do that? That's why I have said we can rewrite this. There are so many ideas which can be implemented. It depends if you are interested in it. I am not thinking of the poor general workers who are going to work. It is alright, but we can do more with less, and we can involve those who should.

I will say one word on the Tourism Authority. I will not say much because the only thing I would like to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that when I arrived, there were 2,400 applications which had not been treated, which had not been processed, and I have sent six cases to ICAC. There was a case where Tourism Authority files were filed in a *quincaillerie*. There was a system, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that's all I have to say.

Let me now come to air access and I would like to tell the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the Minister of Tourism and Leisure that I have ordered an air access study with KPMG and the results of this study are at the Ministry of Tourism. It can help to reshape and to put Mauritius in a good position. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a plane costs Rs9 billion, a flight to Shanghai costs 275,000 Euros, Rs11m., Rs1 m. per hour. Without the Air Mauritius, this country is nowhere! But, what happened to Air Mauritius? We had a month-to-month General Manager for one year. We had one kangaroo hunter for one month and now, we have an Acting General Manager for six to seven months. How can we treat our national carrier in this manner? I asked for an appointment with the Prime Minister to sit down with him, to explain to him that the plane costs Rs9 billion. We have three A340 planes

with four engines. They are using 30% more petrol, jet fuel, than the A330. We don't know what to do with that. We have to make a decision. Are we buying more A330s? What are we doing for the years to come? Air Mauritius cannot continue as it is. It cannot be a company which is neither low-cost nor high brand.

We should have a low-cost regional carrier for the Indian Ocean with planes flying daily to all the cities and concerning the duty free - I will come to that later. We have a low-cost Indian Ocean and then, we have a strategic partner. We have a strategic partner, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with one of the big companies to be able to service the industry because we are a high-end industry, five-star. We need planes to carry people who have a five-star budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to meet the hon. Prime Minister to explain this to him; we have to sit down, please organise a meeting or call the stakeholders. It never happened and this goes to the core of new Mauritius because if you want to make Mauritius as a hub you have to start with Air Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now come to the duty-free paradigm, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There is one line; do you know what the duty-free can do to Mauritius? I have always, said so. We need 50,000 Chinese, 50,000 Indians, 50,000 Russians, 50,000 others, 200,000 spending 1000 Euros; it's 200 m. Euros, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming to the country. Bagatelle and La Croisette will not last long, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the tourists don't go there. We have to make them go there and buy, the brands are coming, the intermediate brands are coming, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, to do so, to have the duty-free, otherwise, what is happening? The Mauritian people are going there to have fast food and window shopping and coming back from Bagatelle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what do we need? We need a legal framework and I am addressing myself to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, we have to sign the Madrid Convention. The Madrid Convention is the protocol which starts in 1891. Thanks to the international procedural mechanism, the Madrid system offers a trademark owner the possibility to have his trademark protected in several countries by simply filing one application directly; because, if we don't fight counterfeiting we will not have a duty-free paradise. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am making a plea; first, we should have the signature of the *Protocole de Madrid*. Second, we should fight counterfeiting. Third, I had a meeting with the *Comité Colbert*. The *Comité Colbert réunit, M. le président, les 70 plus grandes marques de la France; Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Cartier, toutes les grandes marques*. We have had a series of meetings with the *Comité Colbert*

together with the Board of Investment. It is up to them to follow-up, to make this pillar happen. It can happen. We believe in it. It is one of the future paradigms of Mauritius. The Chinese will not come if you don't have shopping, the Indians as well, the Russians as well, and we are well placed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to do well as a duty-free paradise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to come to poverty. In times of robust growth, in times of bumper crop, the Minister then said, we had 7000 people who were absolutely poor. Hon. Obeegadoo said - "We don't know where they are." It was a brilliant idea of the hon. Prime Minister to start the Ministry of Social Integration. I will say it was a good idea as well to give it to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, but we would like to know - the money is there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir – because when poor people come to us; they have urgent needs, daily needs, one has not eaten, not gone to school, housing problems, electricity bill not paid, husband left, the wife is left alone with the children.

Do we have a mechanism to address this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This is what we need. *Un endroit où on sait que quand on va venir là, quand on va partir, on va se sentir soulagé de sa pauvreté, dans la dignité.* This mechanism is it there? The money is there. So many people come to us. I would request the Minister to put this mechanism, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and then to enable this person - *celui qui frappe à la porte dans sa pauvreté, dans sa misère* – to obtain something *et faire de sorte que quand il repart chez lui, il peut aider sa famille.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said one thing; it is about the Labour Party and power. We said that they don't like to share Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I think we made an experience. The MMM made an experience in 1995; sharing of power in dignity with a partner, I think is very strange to their culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Même dans le cas de la réforme électorale* - this should be the one before the last of my subjects - *d'après ce que j'ai entendu, à moins qu'ils ne le nient, ce que souhaite le Premier ministre, c'est une présidence avec des pouvoirs exécutifs.* *Dans la deuxième République proposée, c'est une présidence avec un président avec les pouvoirs exécutifs* who can hire and sack his Prime Minister. Again, it shows the way, the thinking.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *la réforme électorale, on l'attend depuis longtemps.* I will make a plea to the hon. Prime Minister is that if we have an electoral reform, it should be in the interest of the country because here we would be the fathers of that new Constitution and we should not have the new generation later saying that we did not do what had to be done as regards power

sharing between the President and the Prime Minister. We still believe that the hon. Prime Minister should be the one, as in the Westminster system, who runs this country and runs it according to the will of the population. Mr Speaker, Sir, there were bits and pieces that I wanted to say. There is one thing that I want to set records straight. The hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Mr Faugoo, mentioned 2004 in the Rose Belle Sugar Estate saga. He said that the two Ministers were here. I was the Minister of Agriculture in 2004. What we did in 2004, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is very simple. What we did was to give an authorisation for VRS recoup cost, that is, we gave them the authority to sell their land to able to recoup the cost of VRS in terms of pension, lump sum and in terms of the *7 perches*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Ceci dit*, I wanted to correct this.

Let me just say one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My first plea to the Government is: if you were to give all the old age pensioners the Rs104 that is missing between Rs330 and Rs204, it costs Rs150 m., which is nothing. If you were to remove the tax on the SMS, it is Rs150 m., which is nothing. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me just tell you one thing. It is that the banks - Mr Bheenick says so – made a profit of Rs30.3 billion. 2% of that is Rs200 m. I would ask them: why don't they take Rs200 m. to have ten football clubs with 250 professional football players, with having their banks as sponsors, having a league where we can play football and then, we can professionalise the industry? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it does not need a lot of money to do a lot of thing.

What I would like to say, now to end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is, I will quote the hon. Prime Minister, he said –

“What we wanted to do, Sir, although Mauritius is naturally affected (...)"

He said –

“Our success is a result of our vision and of our hard work, the understanding and support of the population and also the result and the effectiveness of our economic diplomacy, but, here, in all humility – this is the Prime Minister speaking - Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that we also stand on the shoulders of giants. They laid the founding stones of the nation, our founding fathers who fought for independence and took up the challenges that this young nation of ours had to face. And these include all those who have one way or the other worked in the national interest, including Sir Anerood Jugnauth. We have always said - I

heard hon. Pravind Jugnauth say that nobody talks of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we have been talking a lot about him – we may not agree with him – this is hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam speaking - we have never always agreed with him, but he has also his contribution to make in this country.”

And he quotes as Warren Buffett puts it, Mr Speaker, Sir -

“Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many new trees have to be planted and we need a new hope and a new leadership in this country.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.44 p.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Dr. A. Boolell):

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I add my voice to those who have congratulated the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, let me call the bluff of my friend, hon. Bodha.

They had been in Government and they chose to submit their resignation. When they did submit their resignation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they stated openly to the nation that they would stay loyal to the Leader of the House, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, leader of '*l'Alliance de l'Avenir*'. That was the promise made and they stated it loud and clear to the nation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - they would sit as Government backbenchers. That's what was stated. But, suddenly out of the blue, what was the pressure that was exerted on the leader of the MSM. Why suddenly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they then chose to come up with lame excuses as to whether they sought appointment with the hon. Prime Minister and they didn't get any appointment. They were privileged party in the Government and, as and when required, the hon. Prime Minister did accommodate them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He did give them appointments as and when required. I am not going to reveal what took place in Cabinet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but what was the pressure? There was an alleged accusation, but then there was a provisional charge against hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. There was a provisional charge; we are not here to make any comment. But what was the pressure that was exerted upon them to submit their resignation? Why suddenly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they found all kinds of lame

excuses. We know what their intention was. They thought they could blackmail us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That was their intention to interfere with the institutions.

(Interruptions)

That's what their intention was! But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a vast difference between them and us. In respect of our leader, power was not thrust upon him. There was no mummy and daddy around to take care of the Leader of Labour party. He took the stairs of the Labour party and he has brought Government to heights beyond any recognition. Today, we are reaping the benefit of hard work, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

On the issue of audit trail, the leader of the MSM was Minister of Finance for more than 14 months. Why didn't he deem it fit to ask for an audit trail or to ask for the tracing of the money? Why suddenly out of the blue, they became wiser after the event? Let me say it to everyone who wants to hear. The Med Point has brought the meltdown of the MSM and there is no return, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And when they are cornered, they want to hit back and they tried to hit below the belt. This is what they are good at. Ask hon. Bérenger what he was subjected to in the electoral campaign when there was a by-election and Labour dished out all the support to the then Leader of the MSM!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have no lessons to learn from them. We know what they are worth. And if ever there was a mistake that we did make and if ever there was a false start that we did make, it was contracting an alliance with the MSM, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We heard that they topped the polls at the elections. We know what they were up to during the electoral campaign. Let me tell them right here in this very House, they joined Government with two specific purposes. Firstly, to swell their war chest and secondly, to try to undermine the Labour party, targeting specific Ministries where we had proximity with the people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We all know that. We have no lessons to learn from them. And now, I read in the paper, an article written by Mr Rivière on respect for institutions. They are bringing into disrepute the Office of the President, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That's a fact! I am not saying it, Mr Rivière said it. This is why they thought, unlike them, Mr Speaker, Sir, we could not interfere with institutions, because they did it in the past; they dismantled the ECO, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, within 48 hours. That is their track record; they are politically obscene and they should neither be seen nor heard. I utter a warning to some of our friends who are trying to contract so-called alliance: be careful of the ides of march. We know that some people within the rank and the file

of the MMM are trying to do, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: waging the communal flag, trying to say that we could bring Sir Anerood into the political arena ...

(Interruptions)

Within the MMM! Not you, in particular, but some people who are not Members of Parliament, are waging a political campaign, trying to bring the President into the political arena, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I would not have dared to say so, but then hon. Bodha was trying to compare Sir Anerood with Sir Seewoosagur. Let me remind them that when Sir Seewoosagur became Governor General, he was a man who understood the very essence of ethics. He never indulged in politics. He stayed far away from the realm of politics but we know what is going on at Le Réduit. I say it without fear or prejudice, and we have to put an end to this Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Either you dare to resign and face the electorate or else chose to seek elsewhere, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The Deputy Speaker: I inform the hon. Minister that, according to our Standing Order, he cannot criticise the President. Please!

Dr. A. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not criticising the President. I am simply stating facts.

The Deputy Speaker: Please! I gave my ruling on that issue. The hon. Speaker also mentioned it yesterday and the Minister should abide by the Standing Orders.

Dr. A. Boolell: I abide to your ruling, but then I am referring to statement made by those who went to Le Réduit and I am referring to statement made by the President himself in respect of meetings he had with people...

The Deputy Speaker: This is what I am telling the Minister. According to our Standing Orders, he cannot bring certain person in the debate in the National Assembly, unless he goes under certain specific procedure. Please!

Dr. A. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to the issue of Med Point.

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, please!

Dr. A. Boolell: On this side of the House, we are a party of principles and I recall when alleged accusations were leveled against some of our Ministers, we chose to stay as far away as possible from institutions which were doing its work properly. Let me take the case, with due respect, of hon. Choonee. When he landed into trouble for an accusation in respect of an alleged accusation of which he had nothing to do. I ask a simple question: did any Member of the MSM

express solidarity with hon. Choonee? Did they express any solidarity or they left him on his own, they left him to fend for himself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What is the power that hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee can wield on the Jugnauth's family, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What is the power? What is it that she has whispered in the ears that had brought the downfall of the MSM Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What is it ?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. A. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have seen the MSM at work and when I say that they deserve to be treated with contempt, that they should neither be seen or heard of, this is the opinion shared by the public at large. What are they trying to do? They are trying to whip up some communal feelings. This is what they are good at. Trying to rally calls from X, Y or Z because they are so desperate! I am not going to comment on advice tendered to lawyers not to defend the case entered by the then Government against Sun Trust. Let me remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because you are a Member of the Party and I have a lot of respect for you.

The Deputy Speaker: No, please! The Minister should not go that far.

Dr. A. Boolell: I withdraw! Let me remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the MSM suffers from, what we call, the drawer syndrome.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Bundhoo, please resume your seat and let the hon. Minister make his speech!

Dr. A. Boolell: When investors go and see them, do you know what they do? Pull the drawer; look at the person in the eyes! You know what is the message that is sent? Fill the war chest because, eventually, we will be at war against the Labour Party, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! This is a fact and I say it without fear or prejudice. Where is morality? Where is political morality, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Where is decency? This is a country where there is rule of law and decency, but they have tried to run the country, when they were in power, with an iron fist. I recall, since they have provoked me, when Sir Satcam Boolell was leader of the Labour Party and invited to attend a congress organised by the MMM, do you know the kind of pressure that was borne upon him?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon.Aimée!

Dr. A. Boolell: Do you know the threat that was issued against him? Let me remind our friends that I may forgive, but I never forget. We know the treatment meted out to Sir Charles

Gaëtan Duval to the extent that they could have provoked a communal riot in this country and, had it not been for the Labour Party and Sir Satcam Boolell, we know what this country would have become. Torn into pieces, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! We know what they stand for. That's why I say they deserve contempt, they have been censored by the electoral and there is no return! But I grant you there may be one or two decent people on the other side, who have been victims of blackmail. But let me tell them, we create political space within the alliance for those who want to join the rank and file because they were elected under the banner of the *Alliance de l'Avenir*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I have to reply to all the points raised by hon. Bodha, I will never raise issues concerning my Ministry. But we know when hon. Bodha was Minister of Tourism - we grew up together, I have a lot of respect, but do you know what his intention was as Minister of Tourism, he has been talking about the outstanding files, issues, but when my young friend took over as Minister of Tourism, do you know how many files, problems, remained outstanding? There were 800 files which were yet to be cleared. He raised the issue of security. We have seen to it that the Police Force be strengthened, be given the resources. When you look at the items in respect of funding to be released to the Police Force, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all the measures being taken as deterrent - I know there had been an unfortunate mishap in one of the hotels, but in less than four hours the Police have acted promptly, and the alleged person who has committed that crime has been arrested. When they were in power, did they forget what happened in Grand Bay? There was a blast. We know what the nexus was. I don't want to raise the issue here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That's why I say: those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones at those who live in brick wall houses and if they run a China shop, they should not hire a bull, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is what happened to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. I congratulate him because he spoke with conviction. Not only did he speak with conviction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he delivered a caring Budget, a Budget which has achieved the twin objectives: social equity, justice and growth. It is a budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which is pro-development and pro-poor. It is good also to remind ourselves of what the hon. Prime Minister stated when there were pre-budgetary consultations. He stated when the perils are high, we should all put our heads together to face the daunting challenges and to ward off the threats. It is in this spirit that the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance waged an

extensive pre-budgetary consultation. At the bar of public opinion, there was wide discussion and he reached out to one and all. This is why we say we need to rise with the rising tide because we are all in the same boat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Earlier, my friend mentioned Mahatma Gandhi and he quoted one of the sayings of Mahatma Gandhi. It is true: eradicating poverty is not only the business of Government. The corporate sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is also the custodian of the poor and they have to develop a new mindset. This is why we say, we eradicate poverty through profits. The Minister deemed it fit to innovate and allow every Minister to highlight the mission, the vision statement of one's Ministry and also to spell out shortcomings or, for that matter, the gap that has to be filled. This is a Budget where there is ownership and inclusiveness. We call it a Mauritius incorporated Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

What is the main objective of this Budget which has been delivered against a backdrop of financial and economic crisis? We have set a high level of ambition and what is this high level of ambition? To make a quantum leap from the middle income country to become a high income earning country. Earlier, my friend talked of the Malthusian doomsday scenario predicted by Mead and Titmuss, then two noble laureates.

How we will move from an overcrowded barracoon, a nation of nurses, people who used to write to the Queen to be enrolled in nursing colleges, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We have travelled indeed a long way. We have travelled a long way because of the political will to take bold and courageous decisions. I recall one day Sir Satcam Boolell telling me that he was travelling with Sir Gaëtan Duval and they came back from a mission. They flew over Grand Bay and it was Sir Gaëtan Duval who stated: 'they will turn Grand Bay into an oasis because the potential for tourism was tremendous.' These were people, like the then Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, with vision and fortitude.

These are the values which underpin the philosophy of the Labour Party/PMSD, that enable us to make the leap and will constantly make the quantum leap. In 2005, people thought we would be in office only and not in power because public finances were in shambles, but we restore public finances. We submitted a country strategic paper to international financing agencies. We embarked upon bold reforms: macroeconomic policies and fiscal rectitude. Sectorial reform which is paying dividends, turning the sugar industry into sugar cane industry; coming up with a comprehensive energy policy highlighting the merits of energy mix and then

we introduced procurement because the award of contract should be transparent and there should be accountability. We delivered the document to the European Union. We became a showcase for all ACP countries and within less than two years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we are about to reap an early harvest, there was the first recession which started to loom. Against a commodity bubble, because then in 2008, the price of one barrel of petrol was 147 dollars, we were faced with a quadruple shock: the food-feed-fuel shock and, of course, erosion of trade preference, phasing out a Multi-Fibre Agreement. Despite this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we not only, prior to that, introduced free transport, but we paid PRB in toto. You know what is happening to Greece. At one time, neither Sarkozy nor Angela Merkel was going to release the sixth tranche of a bail out package earmarked for Greece. Do you know what the sixth tranche is for? To pay civil servants Soup Kitchens are sprouting all over the place to cater for the needs of the elderly! The people in Europe who cannot afford to have three meals a day are skipping meat, in this very country, we have created the fiscal space which has enabled us to introduce stimulus package, ERCP to save jobs and to rescue ailing industries. Not only that, with the National Resilient Fund, we have put up a firewall unlike Europe, unlike European debt-laden countries, whose debts are tied up with the banks. *Si on ne sauve pas l'Euro, c'est l'Europe qui s'écroule M. le président.*

We were told that we need to compare ourselves with so-called like-minded countries. I am saying Europe is a like-minded country. Even some people may argue that we are not comparing like with like, but we know if Euro is not saved, Euro will collapse, but then there is a good lady who today is the Managing Director of the IMF, Ms Lagarde, who is saying to the core UN Member States that they have to tread cautiously in respect of austerity package because austerity packages can kill growth. When there is unsustainable debt and when there is no growth, we know what the consequences are. Who would have thought, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the United States, because of fiscal imbalance, would have been downgraded from triple A to double A+? These are the facts. And what can little Mauritius do? Before I come to Mauritius, we know what the consequences could be when countries in the euro zone, debt-laden, run out of money, they have used their last ammunition, they cannot come up with a stimulus package, are saying that they would not be able to honour their commitment in respect of the Millennium Development Goals. There is no money for overseas development assistance. This will have an impact upon Mauritius, and I will come to it later on, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The EU is reviewing the development policy to target and to come up with a development agenda, only to help least developing countries. And make no mistake, in the Budget, we have obtained - because we are star performer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - almost Rs3 billion, which has been credited as general budget support. We do not know what is going to happen in 2015, whether there will be grants, which would be credited to the general budget support.

What does Europe want to do now? They want to incorporate the finances of parastatal bodies into general budget. You know what it means. But we have solution to all the problems. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first, let us pray that Europe does not collapse, that IMF becomes a lender of last resort if need be. And, today the irony of the situation is that China and India are pointing fingers to the European countries, telling them "put order in your house, adopt sound macroeconomic policy". There has been a shift, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We call it not a paradigm shift, but a new balance of power from west to east. This is what the Budget tells us. This is what I am going to highlight to all of you in respect of what we need to do – sorting out problems upon problems.

In respect of our export to the United States, true that there would have been extension of the Third-Country Fabric, but at the same time the Third-Country Fabric be extended to transpacific partners, to other LDCs. There will be shortage of overseas development assistance and extension of Third Country Fabric, probably to other least developing countries. There won't be any concessionary loan. This why I say we pray and hope that Mrs Lagarde, Director of IMF, together with other financial institutions, will address the issue in a very forceful and meaningful manner, because we don't want the day of reckoning to be postponed in view of the impact upon a small country like Mauritius, which is far away from a remunerative market, and has no choice but to constantly capture new markets. We know that in a global momentary era, we all can suffer setbacks, because of the interconnectivity. But, we are confident that they will be able to redress the economic situation. Otherwise, the consequences can be very, very far-reaching. But what is it that we need to do? We know for certain that we have put up a firewall, but the Resilience Fund that has been set up cannot stay forever. Time is not even on our side, time is not even on the side of any country in the world, whether it is China or the US, whether it is India, except that the emerging countries can survive better. So, let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tell you what we are going to do.

First, we expect that the IMF, as a lender, will play its role fully and that the debt-laden countries will adopt the measures called upon them to do. We know that it's like as if it has relinquished its sovereignty to IMF.

Second, follow the leader, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If we have to manage diversity and consolidate social cohesion in this country, there is no better leader than the Leader of the *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and this is a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because he has been proven to be right. We have an economic model that is being sought after by many countries in the world. If I have to cite Stiglitz, praising Mauritius, urging the United States to emulate the success story of Mauritius. What we need in this country is unity in diversity, but sometimes there is an outcome that has to be balanced. We have gone further and we have introduced the Equal Opportunities Bill, and we hope that the Commission will be set up once we get the right person.

So, let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, say that the time has come also to set up a capital market. We are a gateway, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mauritius is a gateway to Africa, to India. There is a time when probably we will have dual listing of reputed companies on our Stock Exchange, and when the resources are available, our parastatal bodies can have recourse to money, which probably will be easier than obtained elsewhere.

Third, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are putting a lot of emphasis upon the blue-green economy, and I will come to this when I'll talk on extended continental shelf.

Fourth, innovative entrepreneurship. This is what we are preaching. We want to move from traditional entrepreneurship to innovation entrepreneurship. Finland did it, Korea did it, because they invested in research and development. We have to look at seed capital together with private and public sector, identifying niche market, research and development, doing marketing research, because the world today is a world of tasks and not end products. Parts are being produced in different parts of the world. We know what our workforce is.

I congratulate the Minister of Finance when he stood up and highlighted the merits of extending concessionary loan to small and medium size entrepreneurs. If you want to wage war on poverty, you have to empower people, and I will highlight the accompanying measures which we grant to entrepreneurs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this country can achieve miracles. We have the will and we have the zeal. We have not become star performer or obtaining high marks in respect of criteria

established by EU. I am not going to talk of the Economic Forum Index, the Mo Ibrahim Index on good governance. First, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been cited as a showcase by no less a person than Mrs Hilary Clinton.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me highlight what we are going to do in respect of facilities that we are going to extend to entrepreneurs. On the trade front, whilst pursuing negotiations at bilateral and multilateral levels, we have focused on the creation of better market access conditions through dedicated attention to Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), which continue to negatively impact on competitiveness, we are going to address this. With the assistance of the World Bank, we have launched a database on Non-Tariff Barriers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Its objective is to conduct systematic analyses of the effects of NTBs on trade and competitiveness, while facilitating exports by providing information on NTBs. We have catalogued 6,000 tariff lines and classified them under existing regulations in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry commissioned a study aimed at streamlining the Non-Tariff Barrier at domestic level. In the light of the recommendations, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Commerce has already initiated action to eliminate a number of trade barriers that impact adversely on trade competitiveness.

In addition, the International Trade Centre is assisting Mauritius to identify Non-Tariff Barrier at regional and international levels so that we may address these through bilateral or multilateral talks. Let me add that in the context of the Tripartite Initiative, an online system to report on Non-Tariff Barrier existing in Member States has been established, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For its part, COMESA is now in the process of implementing a legal framework that would allow Member States to challenge any Non-Tariff Barrier enforced by individual Member States. No doubt the combination of all these actions will create a more favourable environment to the flow of trade and will contribute positively to the very good work already being done by the public-private sector committee set up to ensure business facilitation.

In the same direction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our active participation in the negotiations at the level of COMESA has finally led to the adoption by the COMESA Council of Ministers in Malawi last month, of a change in tariff heading rule for a number of products of interest to Mauritius. These include apparel, plastics, canned tuna and PET bottles. For our textile producers, this change represents a tremendous opportunity as it will now be possible for them to import fabric from the cheapest source for garment making in Mauritius to be subsequently

exported on the COMESA market at zero duty where we also have a 25% preference, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We know what the COMESA stands for. We are talking of a market of more than 450 million consumers. We can gauge the significance of this opening.

In addition, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in respect of negotiations which we entered with Egypt, Egypt has taken the decision to lower the value added rule from 45% to 35% to qualify for preferential access on the COMESA market. What we are saying is that there is no problem of market access. We are talking simply of market access. We are not talking of gainful market access and the relaxation of conditions of access would provide an incentive to our exporters to look more closely at the market potential of Egypt which has a population of more than 65 million people. We appreciate the efforts being made by Egypt to promote regional integration through this measure.

We are setting up, with the assistance of the World Bank and the IOC, a Single Trade Information Portal spanning on details of legislation, regulations, procedures, guidance notes, fees, forms, licenses and permits and penalties. This will be eventually converted into a single window for the processing of all trade documents online thus facilitating business transactions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have so many issues that I want to highlight and I would try to skip some of them because I know many of you feel hungry. In collaboration with the ACP-EU Trade.Com Capacity Building Project, now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have set up an investigation authority and there is capacity building of the investigators and that of the private sector. The Ministry is working with the consultants for the creation of a website so that stakeholders can file application online and also have access to the necessary information.

In the same vein, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are working with WIPO to finalise Legislation on Intellectual Property Rights and we are also looking at trade barriers. The Director General of WIPO will be in Mauritius in February next year to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to implement the Intellectual Property Development Plan. The purpose, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to facilitate our entrepreneurs and to reduce cost of doing business or otherwise the transaction cost. These are opportunities which are knocking.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have signed a Free Trade Agreement with Turkey. Turkey is a country which is strategically located being a gateway to Central Asia, to the Balkans and can certainly use its influence to enable us to penetrate the North African market. Being a member of the Customs Union, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this enables us to harmonise our relations with EU.

Let me highlight that next year, in the first quarter of 2012, the Turkish Economy Minister, Mr Mehmet Zafar Caglayan will lead a business delegation. The Turkish side has proposed the appointment of a Commercial Counselor to be based in Mauritius.

Necessary action is being taken for the proposed opening of an office of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency. The development of an Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement with Turkey is already on the way, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, Mauritius is capturing new markets and we are identifying countries which have become emerging countries. Turkey today is a power house, is a gateway and opens new vistas, new avenues for us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that negotiations at the level of the World Trade Organisation have stalled. And in the meantime, many countries are signing Bilateral Trade Agreements with other countries. EU has signed 22 Free Trade Agreements, US has endorsed Free Trade Agreements signed with many Latin American countries which means that the trade is going to be more competitive. And because of the fierce competition, we have to produce quality products because the preferences are over despite the fact that we have obtained a long time frame in respect of tariff reduction at the World Trade Organisation. But, we don't know what is going to happen. With the signing of Free Trade Agreement, EU has signed a Free Trade Agreement with Mercosur, but there is no undertaking given that sugar will be on the list of sensitive products. Do you know what is happening in the EU with the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It means that there may be further erosion in the price of sugar. Do you know what is happening in EU with the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The commission has gone back on its words despite the fact that Parliament has taken decisions that the quota market for sugar should stay beyond 2020. But now, they are going back on the promises because of their so-called restructuration. They want to import, to source out sugar from cheaper countries. Do you know what this means? That's why we have to accelerate the process. And we are turning the sugar industry into sugar cane, a service also which we can market on the African continent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Time is of an essence. There are many daunting challenges, but we are leaving no stone unturned. And I know for certain, measures spelt out by Government in respect of facilities and incentives being granted to the nation have to be implemented and those who undermined the process will be weeded out. We cannot tolerate people who want to undermine

the process of Government. We want this country to make the quantum leap and we have honesty of purpose in our dealings, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

There will be a Ministerial Conference which is going to be held in Geneva at the World Trade Organisation. This meeting has been convened by Australia and Norway. But I don't know what the outcome is although we are not too positive in respect of the outcome.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when Mauritius submitted jointly with Seychelles to the UN Commission on the Limits of Continental Shelf, today, Mauritius and Seychelles - because this submission has been approved by the UN Commission on the Limits of Continental Shelf - are not only Island States, they have become archipelagic States, Ocean States, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And this is a historical landmark, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have made history and the President of Seychelles will be our chief guest at our independence celebration and together with the Prime Minister, they are going to define policies as how best we can make the most of the blue economy.

There is a paper which is being prepared by the IOC which is going to be submitted to the conference which is going to be sustainable Rio+20. I think that the conference will probably be held in South Africa in 2012. We are going to see to it that the blue and green economy have to be the emerging sectors. There is tremendous potential. The World Bank has prepared a report on the relevance of blue and green economy. We have to make the most of it because Mauritius and Seychelles have become archipelagic States, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mauritius has now recognised its extensive ocean territory comprising our territorial waters, Exclusive Economic Zone and the extended continental shelf. Let me also indicate to the House that Mauritius had deposited a Preliminary Information Note concerning a claim of the extended continental shelf, of approximately 180 sq. kilometers, in the Chagos Archipelago region on 06 May 2009. We have started work on the preparation of our submission for the region and expect to make the final submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say loud and clear: the future is secured in this country. We have to mobilise our resources, skill and re-skill our people, invest in research and development and the private sector is called upon to play its role fully. Banks cannot remain forever averse to risk because this country belongs to one and all and we are keen to create a Mauritius incorporated where we have widened the circle of opportunities for one and all, the space for every Mauritian, dignified of the name, true patriots Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me also highlight the role that Mauritius played to bring political parties to the negotiating table in Madagascar to sign the road map. If it were not for Mauritius and I repeat it, if it were not for Mauritius they would have been no road map. We played a prominent role, but we do not beat our drums, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Today, on the regional and international scenes, we have carved a name and the Prime Minister, in his meetings, with Heads of States has earned respect. It was not thrust upon him, it was, with respect, earned through sheer hard work and because of the stand he takes in regional and international forums, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When we have to defend the interest of poor Palestinians, when we have to fight for human rights, when we have to embrace democratic values which we cherish, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the philosophy of the party to which we belong. We do not talk; we walk the talk, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When it comes to the Indian Ocean Commission, we are looking forward to turn the Commission into Community to widen the economic and commercial space and I am glad that Mr Jean Claude de L'Estrac, a man of high competence and one of the founding fathers of the Indian Ocean Commission, is going to be the incoming Secretary General of the IOC. The election of Mr Jean Claude de L'Estrac is a fine example, I believe, of the capacity of the Labour Party, to put the interests of the country first, away from petty politics Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister has said it recently and I want to re-affirm it: our institutions are, remain independent and selection, of course, should be on the basis of competence and competence alone.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have travelled a long way to dignify our nation and I do not want to highlight the several measures taken by the Ministry to put us on the world map. But, we are a small country, we would have liked to have embassies in different parts of the world, we would have liked to reach out to Latin American countries, or for that matter, to have an embassy in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. But we are signing an economic and cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia, but then, we believe in real politics, we have to live with the means that we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, highlight another issue which I consider to be very important: the issue of circular migration. We are establishing a nexus between the visa Schengen countries and circular migration. With the new Lisbon Treaty, we are able to take up the matter with the European Commission. As we have done with France, we can discuss with other European States and, of course when the economic situation is redressed, there will be

plenty of opportunities for our people. This is what we are doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We entered into negotiations and we will see to it that Schengen Member States, whether they are members of the EU or not, open the gates wide because Mauritians, when they are recruited, they deliver. They will acquire experience which is shared, there will be no brain drain, it is brain gain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and we know that the opportunities are knocking and we have to create the opportunities for our people.

At the same time, I took up the issue of employment for blue collar workers with Mr Kevin Rudd, Foreign Minister of Australia. We had a breakfast meeting and I raised this issue with him. Since Western Australia is one of the richer States, every week 1,000 people are flocking to Western Australia to take up employment. There are many Philippinoes and I said: ‘why don’t we create opportunities for young talented Mauritians, those who want to re-skill in other sectors?’ I have talked to my colleague, hon. Minister Dr. Bunwaree that the Training Institute in Australia and the MITD should harmonise the equivalence of certificates. Mr Kevin Rudd has been very receptive. So, we are widening the circle of opportunities because the world has become a global village and Mauritius, even if it is a hamlet in this village, has a legitimate right. While I talk of legitimate right, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am talking of legal security, I am talking of security in respect of our export to EU and we hope that by 2014, we will be able to conclude a full economic partnership agreement with Europe. What does it mean? It means the opening of new vistas, new avenues, looking at services sector. But our people have to dare. They need to take risk. They need to conclude strategic alliance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because we are a showcase, a clean jurisdiction as established by the OECD countries.

We are discussing the bilateral investment treaty with Americans because we have the legal and institutional framework, because we are an attractive destination, because we are becoming a gateway, because Africa holds so many promises, we want to attract investment and Americans are going to come and invest in Mauritius. We are talking of high investment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because we believe in high investment, high efficiency, high productivity and high salary. We are opening new avenues, tapping at new markets, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

But, then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for Africa, you will recall that last year I reminded everybody in this House of a song sung by the beautiful lady Shakira *Waka Waka* – Time for Africa. My Ministry is now exploring the possibility of developing and implementing a Global Hub Africa. Jean-Michel Sévérino, in a book entitled ‘*Le Temps de l’Afrique*’ has estimated that

the population of Africa will reach 1.8 billion in 2050, that is, the current population of China and European Union. Africa is undergoing a silent economic transformation with some countries growing at 10%. I have in mind a country like Ghana. Some of the world fastest growing cities are in Africa.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a growing middle-class, with good purchasing power, they have the means and resources and the ability to travel. They want to spend, so we have to create the facilities for them. This is why Mauritius is positioning and repositioning itself as a gateway, as a knowledge hub, and as a medical tourism hub, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, we have to cater for people who want to cross frontiers, cross the borders, come to Mauritius as there are opportunities. This is why we have a vision. We have fortitude. There is hope despite, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a hostile economic and financial climate. As I said, people are looking up to Mauritius because of its economic model. There are many countries, which want to emulate Mauritius as Mauritius has become a showcase on the African Continent.

What is the relevance of this global hub Africa? First of all, we need to define our strategy. We want to tap this growing consumer market in Africa. The new institutional coordination set-up will enable us to map out a coherent and holistic plan of action, in order to develop our relations with Africa. The BOI, MTPA, Enterprise Mauritius, TEC, SMEDA and the private sector have each a specific perspective of how Africa can be tapped. Our objective is to bring these varying perspectives within the framework of our diplomatic initiative towards Africa. Our five diplomatic representations in Africa, namely, Addis-Ababa, Cairo, Maputo, Pretoria and Antananarivo and our network of honorary Consuls, will be put to contribution in this strategy. This is where the two roaming ambassadors will be given a prominent role with specific duties to achieve the targeted results.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget refers to the gradual opening of air access as Mauritius seeks to become a hub between Africa and the rest of the world. But, at the same time, we have to see to it that the interest of Air Mauritius is not undermined. We are strong proponents of a cautious liberalisation air access. We have a reputation to keep, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In this context, the extension of our network of partnerships with other airlines is being activated. Indeed, facilitated access to the Continent whether through the development of a maritime corridor or air-links will be the key to unlocking new markets and supply bases on the Continent. I am not going to talk of interconnectivity because my friend talked about fibre to

home and the interconnectivity with Africa to bring us closer to Africa. The intention expressed in the Budget to transform Mauritius into a transhipment hub recognises the importance of this access and this is, but natural from the perspective of a small developing island, isolated from significant markets.

Again we are working closer with COI and COMESA Investment Fund to transform Mauritius into a transhipment hub. Before I come to the setting up of a Civil College and the regional organisations, which have to operate under one common umbrella, let me turn, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to Double Taxation of Avoidance Treaty and Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements in Africa. We are going to blaze the trail of China and India on the African continent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is where the resources are and we have pressed upon many African countries with which we have entered into agreement that they have to ratify their agreement, and that the opportunities are knocking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But then, beyond Africa there are countries which are members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association Regional Cooperation; India and Australia, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Allow me to welcome the appointment of Mr Bhagirath, former High Commissioner of India to Mauritius as the next Secretary General of the IOR-ARC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we were the first to talk of a Pan-African FTA. When there is a FTA, things become much easier in respect of what we want to achieve, to attract investment, to sign Double Taxation Agreement or Investment Protection Agreement. I am not going to highlight our relations with countries with which we have strong ancestral values and ties. The presence of India and China is very visible in our physical landscape, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Therefore, we have vehicles with which Africa conducts relations with these countries, namely the India-Africa Summit and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; two continental processes, which will provide a basis for a mutually beneficial partnership and help advance the Global-Hub-Africa Strategy.

Let me Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, highlight to hon. Members on both sides of the House as to the outcome of the meeting, which I had with hon. Minister Krishna. He has asked me to convey a message to all of us that India, put a lot of premium on goodwill which it has in Mauritius. India looks at Mauritius as the trusted friend and let me remind the House what the present Prime Minister of India stated: “India will do nothing or will never act unilaterally to hurt the interests of Mauritius” that great little country described by late Shrimati Indira Gandhi.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this explains how the India-Mauritius Double Taxation Agreement came about, a treaty which continues to serve the interests of our two countries. It has contributed in no mean manner to the development of our financial services sector leading to the provision of remunerative employment to our young professionals. No doubt India has also gained from the inflow of investments. In the coming weeks, we will be discussing the concerns of both the Mauritius and the Indian sides in respect of the application of the Treaty with the expectation that we can find mutually satisfactory solutions. Our relations with India go, of course, far beyond the Double Taxation Agreement even though the latter seems to attract more than its fair share of media attention.

I am not going to highlight the merits of the statement made by the former Prime Minister of Finance. That was a very good statement. We are sending strong signals to our operators, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We know what Mauritius stands for India. There was a time when India had no foreign currency. Did you know why? It was because sanctions were imposed against India. We have sided with India on the issue of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Germany was a donor to India. They applied sanctions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. India has to airlift 67 tonnes of gold, which it pledged to IMF as collateral. It appealed to the Indian Diaspora to send money to India and Mauritius stood by India and the jurisdiction of Mauritius was used to safeguard the interest of Indians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has always stood by the side of India in International Forum, in Geneva on human rights issues. There is mutual respect and we stand to gain mutually that's why we need to operate as a tandem, but in unison with our common objective. This is what we have told our Indian brothers and sisters that there should be no reflex condition hitting at Mauritius for no apparent reason. I know that Government is very sensitive, operators are very sensitive and I know much has been taken to redress the situation. There is no better jurisdiction than Mauritius and it is precisely because we are overregulated that others are seeking elsewhere.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me remind our friends that we are willing to broaden the agenda and, of course, our Indian friends are looking forward to the visit of hon. Prime Minister. But we know that Mauritius and India stand shoulder to shoulder on issues where we have commonalities of interest. This is why I say we are a gateway and if we have to have dual listing on our stock exchange, let us do it GBOT is here and they can certainly act as the conduit for the dual listing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. State Bank of India, Insurance of India, they are all here

and they have to be responsive to the needs. We have created opportunities for them as and when required and there is the Tax Information Exchange Office which has been set up. We are responsive to the needs of our Indian friends because we must recall what they have always told us. 'You just ask, we will give'; this is the special bond and relationship.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, we have excellent relationship with Pakistan also and when I met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are going to conclude a Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan and we are looking forward for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan to travel to Mauritius and she is very keen to come, not only she is a beautiful lady, but she is a good Minister and she delivers on promises.

I am not going to talk on Comprehensive Economic Corporation Partnership with Singapore, but Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are also turning towards Russia. There will be a Mauritian week organised in Russia and the Russians are coming and they want to invest in Mauritius. So we want to facilitate export to Russia, there is a Joint BOI-MTPA-EM, enterprise Mauritius Venture.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the issue of the establishing a Civil Service College. I am working very closely with all colleagues, especially with the new Minister of Civil Service Affairs and he has impressed upon me to raise the issue with Minister Krishna and Minister Kevin Rudd and I am glad to report that we will enlist the support of those friendly countries and, at the same time, we want to incorporate our virtual Institute of Diplomacy into the Civil Service College and we want to widen the portfolio of this college because we want to attract foreigners to come and, at the same time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we want to bring under one common umbrella the regional of Multi-Disciplinary Centre for excellence where technical assistance and support will be given and there will be capacity building also dispensed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I am sure the Speaker will tell you that because he was a former Minister of Foreign Affairs and while I am travelling overseas many of my friends had the opportunity to act as interim Minister of Foreign Affairs. There is one thing that we need to have, a culture of restraint. When it comes to sensitive issues, you need to have a culture of restraint. I am not talking of soap politics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know what I am saying. There are issues that have been raised but cannot be uttered. My plea to all of us in this very House is that this is a country which has positioned itself as the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, as a gateway and it is a country which holds a lot of promises and as

true patriots we have to move the process and we have to see to it that we achieve the set objective of moving from a middle income trap to a high income country. We have talked of global Africa hub. We have talked of setting up a global financial capital market. Of the number of Free Trade Agreements we have concluded, of the daunting challenges and threats but we can overcome. We can overcome because we have the political will to do so and under the stewardship and leadership of the hon. Prime Minister we have travelled a long way and let me tell our friends on the Opposition bench, let me tell them, 'tread cautiously and make sure that you don't falter'. It is your trust as to what you want to do in respect of concluding or not concluding. But be careful that there may not be erosion within the rank and file of your party. Be careful, and I am saying it without fear or prejudice, let me tell them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are here today on this side of Government and we are here to stay for the next 50 years...

(Interruptions)

...because in 2018 we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of our Independence. We shall overcome and we will stand shoulder to shoulder with our Prime Minister because we accompanied him when he took the rungs of the ladder, when he learned to take the steps of the Labour Party to give, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new image to the Labour Party, but let me remind all of us here, had it not been for Sir Satcam, I would never have been here, and I say it without fear or prejudice because there was a time when we organised meetings, there were only three persons attending the meeting and when we were in Opposition, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have seen many of our friends, hon. Bunwaree, hon. Tsang. Man Kin and many others, holding the fort, working hard with sweat and tears. When called upon to make sacrifices, we do it in the name of the party and we shall never retreat in our responsibilities. We never shirk from our responsibilities. We are proud because this is a party which widens the circle of opportunities, which creates the space for one and all and there is space for everybody to come and join the rank and file of the Labour Party, *Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are here today. We are here to stay and we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our Independence together with our Leader. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Mr Nagalingum 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 Monday 21 November 2011 at 11.00 a.m.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 8.59 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 21 November 2011 at 11.00 a.m.