

MAURITIUS FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST SESSION
Monday 01 June 2009

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ADJOURNMENT

MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

First Session

Debate No. 14 of 2009

Sitting of Monday 01 June 2009

**The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,
at 11.30 a.m**

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office -

Certificate of Urgency in respect of The Supplementary Appropriation (2008-2009) Bill (No. XI of 2009).

. Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment -

The Estimates of Supplementary Appropriation (2008-2009)

C. Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands -

The Black River District Council (Other Public Place Naming) Regulations 2008 (Government Notice No. 45 of 2009).

D. Ministry of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter -

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 9) Regulations 2008 (Government Notice No. 46 of 2009).

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

HARBOUR BRIDGE, RING ROAD, TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN LINK ROAD, VERDUN-EBÈNE LINK ROAD, BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM & EAST-WEST CONNECTOR PROJECTS – TENDER & TOLL TAXES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether in regard to the Harbour Bridge, the Ring Road, the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, the Verdun-Ebène Link Road, the Bus Rapid Transit System and the East-West connector projects, he will state where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) the tender procedures that will be followed, in each case, and
- (b) if a toll tax will be imposed on the users of the Harbour Bridge, the Ring Road, the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, the Verdun-Ebène Link Road and the East-West connector and, if so, the quantum thereof and the amount to be collected each year in each case.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the challenge facing the road sector is enormous with congestion affecting our day-to-day-life and estimated to cost the economy around Rs2 to 3 billion annually. A partial approach towards addressing this problem would be expensive and would result in sub-optimal desired impact. It is a conventional wisdom that in the road sector a holistic approach towards combating congestion requires both supply side and demand management measures.

As per the 10-Year Road Investment Plan of the Road Development Authority, an estimated amount of Rs40 billion would be required by 2020 to build roads, out of which around Rs4 billion would be invested on road maintenance. Part of the programme is already being implemented. We have just announced that as part of the multi-pronged approach to combat the negative effects of the economic crisis on the one hand and to prepare for the recovery, on the other, several road projects would start as from June-July of this year. These include the Triolet Bypass, Goodlands Bypass, Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road, Bus Lane, Second Carriageway from Pamplemousses to Grand'Baie, additional lanes on Motorway M1 from Trianon to Phoenix, Mare d'Albert-Grand Bois Road and Camp Thorel Access Road. These projects would add to those already under implementation namely the Access Road to Reduit Triangle, Access Road to Tianli and Upgrading of Belle Rive-Wooton Road, Wooton to Quartier Militaire, Gros

Bois-Mare d'Albert Link Road, the Road widening of Wooton-Quartier Militaire Road, Camp Thorel-L'Esperance Road upgrading.

Total investment in these projects amount to Rs2 billion and these are being wholly funded by the Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has also announced, in the context of the Budget, the implementation of an ambitious Road Decongestion Programme costing around Rs25 billion to be implemented over the next four years that will shape connectivity and mobility across the island of Mauritius. Projects included in this programme are the Harbour Bridge, Ring Road, Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, Verdun-Ebène Link Road, Bus Rapid Transit System and the East-West Connector. Mr Speaker Sir, most of these projects are not new. In fact, they have been repetitively referred to during the last fifteen years or so. Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have especially in mind the LRT and the Ring Road. Implementation of these projects has not been possible precisely because of the failure of the traditional mode of financing. There are no 25 solutions to secure funding in respect of major public infrastructure development projects. They can be financed either by taxpayers money or the imposition of user charges. However, Government prefers a mixture of the two. And this combination of Government cum private investment and a user pay principle is already commonly adopted worldwide. Examples which come to my mind are China and India among others. Reckoning with the determination of Government to come to grip with the congestion problem, it has been decided to adopt this alternative mode of financing.

The projects I referred to earlier constitute massive supply side responses to the congestion problem. These projects, if implemented on a standalone basis, would require excessively high toll rates to ensure financial sustainability and adequate returns on investments and therefore would not be viable. However, if implemented as a network of roads, the package would be viable for investment. It would not only ensure that the road facilities are provided to users but would also facilitate changing the financing. Thus, the road sector would be put on a sustainable path thereby freeing up budgetary resources for social spending and investment in education and health.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House on the status of these six projects.

For the Ring Road, it is being implemented in two phases. For the first phase which starts at Montebello and ends at Guibies; the design has been completed and the bidding procedure has already started. A consultant has already been appointed and works are expected to start by September of this very year. I must point out that at this phase, which is estimated to cost Rs 960m., will be financed to the tune of Rs480 m. by the State Investment Corporation.

With respect to the second phase of the Ring Road and the harbour Bridge, a consultant has already been appointed to determine how best to implement them as a Public Private Partnership Project. The consultant will submit their recommendation by September the latest, following which strategic partners will be identified for investment.

The Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road project was to be financed from a concessional loan from the Exim Bank of China. However, the first tender exercise for this project failed to materialise due to high prices quoted by the selected Chinese firms. It has now been decided to carry out a new tendering exercise at the international level.

For the Verdun-Ebene Link Road, financing has already been finalised with BADEA. A consultant has been appointed for the design and it is expected to invite tenders by the end of this year.

For the Bus Rapid Transit System, bids for engineering design have been closed on 27 May 2009 and they are being evaluated at the Central Procurement Board.

Bidding documents for appointment of a consultant for the East-West Connector project are being prepared and the bids will be launched by next month.

Adoption of the strategy which favours a combination of funding with a user charge would require institutional and organisational reforms in the transport sector which should fundamentally be based on the following international best practices –

- (1) separation of Government policy advice from delivery;
- (2) operation of transport systems are best carried out by alternative viable methods;
- (3) Government intervention allowing competition between modes;
- (4) safety regulations should be joint operator - Government responsibility, and
- (5) the cost of safety and enforcement should be met on a basis by the respective modes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the process there is need to bring in a Strategic Partner with extensive and proven experience in building and managing the toll roads. The Road Development Authority which currently administers the road network does not operate on a purely commercial basis and is fully funded by the Government. A Land Transport Authority will be set up shortly. It will absorb the functions of the Road Development Authority, the National Transport Authority and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. It will manage the existing and non-tolled roads. Therefore, we need to create a new organisation which would operate as a State-owned company. This new entity would attract reputable Strategic Partners. The setting up of the Road Development Company is a step towards adopting such a strategy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while the roads under the Road Decongestion Programme would continue to be owned by the Land Transport Authority, the Road Development Company would build and operate the infrastructure through a concession contract allocated by the Government. It would operate road facilities, collect tolls and pay a concession fee to the LTA. With the new institutional set up we need to ensure good governance, transparency and value for money to protect taxpayers money. Good governance in this case requires competitively selecting the strategic private investor which the Road Development Company will do, properly disclosing relevant information to the public, and having a regulatory entity to oversee the contractual agreements over the concession. This regulatory role shall be played by the forthcoming LTA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as the tender procurement to be followed by the Road Development Company is concerned, Government will ensure that the same rigour as the one characterizing procurement of goods and services under the Public Procurement Act prevails. In fact, the memorandum establishing the company shall be made to contain specific provisions regarding the tender procedures. Care will be taken to align them with what is obtainable under the Public Procurement Act. Government further envisages to arrange for the RDC to be

prescribed under the Public Procurement Act. With these strong safeguards, procurement exercises would be undertaken under such conditions where transparency, fairness and accountability will be of essence.

Regarding the expected quantum of the toll fees, it is premature at this stage to pronounce thereon. I wish to inform the House that a Financial Adviser has already been appointed to advise on the different options bearing in mind the principles of cost recovery and affordability. The report of the Adviser is expected by September of this year.

The road concession contract to be structured by the LTA would typically include required standards for construction, operation, maintenance, and toll collection. For monitoring the quality of the road during the life of the concession, several indicators of condition are usual, such as roughness, skid resistance, luminescence of pavement markings, and the presence and condition of signs, lighting, and other safety features. Performance on these indicators that falls outside the boundaries of acceptability may lead to penalties for the concessionaire.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister the blunt question, because he has said that when the Road Development Company will be set up Government will see to it that the procedures for tendering are this and that, my point is: will the Road Development Company fall within the ambit of the Central Procurement Board, that is, all tenders awarded by the Road Development Company will have to go through the Central Procurement Board?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned that it will be included in the Public Procurement Act as it is the case for the NHDC, SIC and other Government institutions.

Mr Bérenger: Again, it is not clear. I'd ask again: whether the Road Development Company, for every tender that it will award, will have to go through the Central Procurement Board and that this will be provided for in the law?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as it is now, for example, the first phase of the link road, in fact, the Central Procurement Office is looking at it. Similar is the case also for Ébène and Verdun and even for the modern....

(Interruptions)

Let me answer! I am making up a point, Mr Speaker, Sir. Most of these projects have already started. The procedures have already started and all these procedures have been looked by the Central Procurement Office, and that is the reason why I am telling you there will be complete transparency and it will be guided with the same principles as all parastatal bodies are being guided.

Mr Bérenger: I am not interested about principles at the stage. I think the hon. Minister should not refer to the recent past and present situation. Government is creating a new situation where the Road Development Company will be handling billions. My question is: as per the law, not looking into it or principles and so on, will the Road Development Company have, under the law, to go to the Central Procurement Board for all the tenders that it will award?

Mr Bachoo: As I have just mentioned, it will be guided by the same principle as all parastatal bodies are being guided. It is exactly the same principles and I have already given indications that so many tenders have already reached the Central Procurement Office.

Mr Bérenger: This can only mean that the Road Development Company will not fall under the Central Procurement Board. This can only mean that.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a difference between financing and bidding. I have just mentioned, as far as the bidding is concerned, the Central Procurement Office will definitely oversee all the works.

Mr Bérenger: Not oversee, not principles and so on! Will it be in the law as is the case for the present situation? Will it be in the law that the Road Development Company will be, by law, subject to the Central Procurement Board?

Mr Bachoo: It will definitely be under the purview of the Central Procurement Board. This is what I can tell. Definitely!

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether the Director of Audit will audit the accounts of the Road Development Company?

Mr Bachoo: Of course, if it is a Government concern! It is bound to!

(Interruptions)

I maintain again it will be definitely controlled by the Director of Audit.

Mr Bérenger: That is different. There is ‘no, of course’ into that. There is a list and some Government companies are not audited by the Director of Audit. Now that we have this answer that the Director of Audit will audit the accounts of the Road Development Company. Will the Minister be in a position to reply to Parliamentary Questions concerning the Road Development Company set in the house?

Mr Bachoo: Of course, I’ll do

Mr Bérenger: We know the number of cases, Government-owned companies where answers are not provided. Again, there is ‘no, of course’ into that. As far as the Ring Road is concerned, can I know how the SIC already involved and how is it going to be involved in this project?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, one thing I would like to make clear. For example, concerning the question on the Ring Road, which the hon. Leader of the Opposition is putting, for the last fifteen years, we have been beating about the bush. I still remember...

Mr Bérenger: The question is simple.

Mr Bachoo: I am just making a statement. Being given that there have been repeated delays in the implementation of projects...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, I was a Minister, but he held the post of power.

(Interruptions)

We were not given the freedom to act and we all know the problems, the delay...

(Interruptions)

I know the delay which was caused...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Gunness! Don't interrupt, please!

Mr Bachoo: I mean to say that there have been so many projects which have been queuing for the last fifteen years, at least, we have got now the guts to go ahead with the implementation of those projects.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can give you about ten examples.

Mr Bérenger: My question is simple: how is the SIC involved in that project?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered so many times.

Mr Bachoo: The SIC has projects in the Guibies area, and, therefore, it had decided to finance part of the project of Ring Road.

Mr Bérenger: Sir, I am given to understand that there is a quarrel between two consultants for the design for the Ring Road and so on, that there has been a quarrel, there has been a Review Committee set up and so on. Can I know whether this has been sorted out, whether the consultant has been appointed?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the first part of the project is concerned, the consultant has already done his work, has already submitted, and that is why in the days to come, we are going to issue the tenders. As far the second part is concerned, there was, if I am not mistaken, a challenge, but it had already been cleared. There is no other issue, because tenderers have the right to challenge according to the law. They challenged it, and, in fact, the one which has got it is an African company and they are doing their work. By the end of September, they are going to produce their report regarding the economic feasibility of the projects.

Mr Bérenger: We are still talking about the Ring Road project. We have been informed in the Budget Speech that the project cost stands now at Rs6 billion. Is that for the total project? Can I know what part thereof is provided for the tunnel *sous la Montagne des Signaux*?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, it is the second part of it that may go above, because it is an estimate only above R1 billion. The first part is approximately Rs900 m., which I have just announced

Mr Bérenger: Can I know, at this stage, what work has been done to identify the squatters concerned and what is going to happen to them?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the second part of the Ring Road, in fact, we are concentrating on the first part because we want to start it this year itself; the second part is that a committee has been set up along with the officers of the Ministry of Land and Housing in order to provide alternative sites to those who have been there for the past 10-12 years. In fact, there were many. Even in the previous Government, I still remember, we wanted to get them out of that place, it was difficult. Now, we are trying to work with the Ministry of Housing and Lands. I do hope that we will find a solution to the problem.

Mr Bérenger: Do I take it, therefore, that there will be some form of compensation? Rehousing or social help!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! Being given that the hon. Minister has said that there is a committee working on it, it will be hypothetical, at this stage, to find out. When the committee will make its report, then the question could be put. It is hypothetical.

(Interruptions)

Yes. But, I am applying the Standing Orders! The Minister has answered the committee is looking into all these aspects. We have to wait for the committee to come.

Mr Bérenger: The committee will work under policy guidelines decided upon by Government. The committee will not work in thin air, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, but the hon. Leader of the Opposition will have the opportunity.

Mr Bérenger: Since the project is split now into two parts, can I know by what date the first part and then the completed Ring Road likely to be operational?

Mr Bachoo: For the first part, in fact, the tenders will be out, most probably, in the weeks to come. As far as the second part is concerned, the Transaction Adviser has been appointed. He is looking into the economic feasibility of different things and probably the entire Ring Road will be ready by 2012. I sincerely believe that we will be able to complete it.

Mr Bérenger: Can I move on to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road? We have been informed that there is going to be retendering, I want to get that clear. Will the tender be opened to international firms and to local firms?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I had mentioned, we had to do away with the tendering exercise because it was too much on the high side and I am very sorry to say that there has been too much of talk against China and the Chinese companies, and the result of which there has been an article which appeared in the press which is very, very bad for our country. This time it is the French agency which is financing the project and we are opening it up. I do hope that we are very fast and within a month we are going to publish the tender.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take it that it will not be opened to French firms only.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know the conditions which the French authorities are going to impose. But, as at now, there has been no indication.

Mr Bérenger: In case a foreign firm qualifies as per international standards and so on, will there be any requirements for such a firm to employ local labour?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, as the Prime Minister, on many occasions, has made an appeal to foreign firms to recruit the Mauritian workers. We are going to insist on that. But let's wait for the conditions which they are going to impose. I personally believe that we are opening up and we are going to use all our powers which is within us to see to it that the local contractors also form part of it.

Mr Bérenger: Being given that we have been informed now that the conditions under which French financing will be obtained have not yet been finalised, that it will take the time that it will take, then there will be tendering and so on, can we know again an indicative operational

date? At what date indicatively that project, the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, will be operational?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, probably, towards the end of this month. We have got three to four weeks in front of us, the decision will be taken. The tender will take us about 40 days. It means 70 days, after that we are going to open it up. Maybe at the end of this year the work will start and it will be to the duration of 18 months.

Mr Bérenger: I am at a loss. The hon. Minister has just told us that it is not yet clear what conditions France will impose. So, we don't yet know whether it will be opened only to French firms. How can we have these short delays? Let's us be serious about it! By what date do we expect this project to be operational?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been the order of the Government to put it on the fastest of all tracks. According to the information that I have, by October the work has to start. The negotiations are on, and we are very, very fast on that. I will never say we are going to do it one of these days, which means none of these days. That is the reason why we want to go as fast as possible because everybody is suffering out there.

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on to the Bus Rapid Transit System, concerning the consultancy for the designing thereof, what stage have we reached exactly?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, for the modern Bus Rapid Transit System, the bids have been opened. It is being evaluated. I am not in a position exactly to say. But the evaluation is on. Probably, in ten days' time it will be ready. And once it is on, it means we are going to appoint the consultant to work out the details, the technical aspects of that project.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether Government has a rough idea of the *tracé* of this project at this stage or whether it will be left completely to the consultant?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have got the *tracé* which has started since Halcrow Fox, Ibesinsa and others. They have followed the same *tracé*. But now there can be slight modifications. In fact, even here also, we have put up a committee and the TMRSU and RDA are looking at the *tracé* and I feel that there will be slight modifications in order to save some of the houses.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know how it will operate?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, now concentration is much on the construction and being given it is already included in the other six projects, we will see. Once we reach it we are going to cross the bridge.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2005, Government has decided to go slow on the LRT project, whereas advisers like Professor de Rosnay himself has said that this was and is inevitable. Can I know whether the Bus Rapid Transit System will, in any way, prevent any future action in favour of the LRT, the Light Rail Transport System?

Mr Bachoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, it is provided in such a way that, in future, if we will have to change from one system to the other, there won't be any problem. We have this in mind.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will move to the last part, *le droit de péage*, the toll tax. I listened to the hon. Minister and the way he said, it is premature to say what quantum the

péage will be, implies that the decision in principle and in practice, come tomorrow, has already been taken. Is that the case and in which of the projects which I have mentioned has *péage* been agreed for in principle already?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the past, let's say about 10 years ago, when discussions were on for LRT, even at that time, this issue of *péage* was raised. In principle decisions were taken. Similar is the case now. But, as it has just been mentioned, we don't know the quantum, but, in fact, we are working on it and that is the reason why we have lumped all the five projects and then we will see in what way one can be dependent on the other and how we are going to introduce it, provided that all these will be taken at one and the same time.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether in the course of discussions with funding agencies, foreign friend countries, agencies and so on, whether the principle of *péage* has already been agreed to put into the minutes, if not the agreement, in which of these projects?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, the issue was raised and, as a matter of principle, even the financing agencies are agreeable, just as it was in the case of LRT in the past.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister, finally, when we reach that bridge, if that is the right expression, who will decide on the way the *péage* will operate? Will it be the Road Development Company?

Mr Bachoo: It will be the Road Development Company and, of course, Government will have its say on that. We can't leave it just like that with them because that concerns the common public.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, now we understand that Government has already chosen the open bus way as an alternative mode of transport. Is the Minister aware that following a recommendation to Government by one Professor Richman in September 2006, following a consensus meeting among stakeholders, one of the reasons put forward for that choice was that they feared the lack of political will from Government to choose for the LRT system? Is he also aware that among the three options, that is, the LRT, the close bus way and the open bus way. The last option was the open bus way, that is, the choice of the Government and that they put forward the inherent problems link to the open bus way and they feared in the report that this might not be a viable solution to solve traffic congestion problem in the country.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us not beat about the bush. So many projects were announced between 2000 - 2005. I was a Minister then! Yes, I agree, but I know the amount of red tapism. Mr Speaker, Sir, we had the Phoenix - Beau Songs Road, the Malinga-Crève Coeur Road, the light rail system, the Supreme Court. I can go on and on. Now that we have taken decisions, it's not for fear of X, Y and Z. We have taken a decision, we are practical, we are pragmatic and they will see in days to come, the number of projects that will see the light of the day.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister mentioned the Financial Adviser. Will the Minister inform the House whether it is the same Adviser from UK who was previously employed by the Ministry and for many reasons the contract was not renewed?

Mr Bachoo: It is not the same. The Transaction Adviser is an Adviser who has been appointed after proper tender procedures. It is an African company, I don't know the name.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, these projects and other projects to be handled and implemented by the Road Development Company would involve billions of rupees of public fund and the hon. Minister has already indicated that the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Transport would be ready to answer questions in Parliament...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: He has already said, yes.

Mr Dulloo: May I ask him, therefore, whether he would legislate to ensure parliamentary scrutiny of these projects to be implemented by this RDC and that this is the best way of accountability and transparency that Parliament should be able to scrutinise these dealings.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already I am going to mention all the questions and for the information of the hon. Member I am happy to announce that the Rs297 m. project in Goodlands is starting in the days to come.

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In view of the massive investment in the projects, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the policy of free transport to the elderly and to the students will be reviewed and may I ask him whether this subsidy could be re-engineered in the context of what is being done to benefit the nation better?

Mr Bachoo: This is a sacred issue, Mr Speaker, Sir and nobody will touch it. Concerning the second part, definitely, a committee has to sit down and look at the different aspects, whether we have to redirect it, but as a matter of principle, it is a sacred thing, we cannot touch.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, last question!

Mr Bhagwan: Concerning the *tracé* of the LRT and the bus rapid transit system, will the Minister inform the House whether there has been any *relevé* done concerning State lands which have been earmarked for these specific projects, whether, during the course of the past years, lands are still available, whether they have been given to individuals for minor projects, whether a recent survey has been done for follow-up?

Mr Bachoo: The land is still available except, as in the past, there were a few squatters. They are still there.

Mr Speaker: Yes, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: I have two questions. One I'll try again to get an answer. It is still not clear whether the Road Development Company will fall fully within the ambit of the Central Procurement Board. Can I ask again: will the Central Procurement Board Act be amended to include the Road Development Company among the bodies that fall under its control?

Mr Bachoo: I have already mentioned in the affirmative, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Yesterday, we were informed by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. We were given the guarantee that Government will go by the advice of Professor de Rosnay, special adviser to the Prime Minister, in the case of CT Power and Gamma Covanta. Can I ask the

Minister whether the same guarantee will be given concerning the LRT? Should Professor de Rosnay, advise that LRT is required, will it be followed?

Mr Bachoo: We have not solicited the intervention of Professor de Rosnay in that. We have our experts and engineers who are helping us.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: 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.

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2009) BILL

(No. IX of 2009)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2009) Bill (No.IX of 2009).

Question again proposed.

(12.05pm)

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, before starting, let me share with the House, a reflection that I have: what type of country, what type of Mauritius we want to make? All these discussions and debate that are taking place in the House point to only one thing: how better we can govern this country, we can rule this country, how we can make this country a better place to live in? I often hear the Prime Minister speaking in terms of changing the people, changing the mindset of people. His dream of a modern progressive State where everybody, irrespective of caste and colour, may feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice. That is the dream of one and all, and that reminds me or that leads me to one of the songs of Tagore in Gitanjali "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free, where the world has not been broken 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 of dead habit, where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action. In that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake". Let Mauritius awake!

(Interruptions)

In fact, that is the dream of one and all and this is how I can interpret when I hear the Prime Minister speaking of a prosperous Mauritius, of a Mauritius where everybody must have his place. At a time, when the whole world, Mr Speaker, Sir, is crumbling like packet of cards

because of the recession, and we have so far been able to resist the ravages of recession. The question that we ask: what is the reason behind it? How is it possible that a tiny Mauritius which has neither gold nor coal, neither do we have diamond nor petrol, but despite it we are able to resist the ravages of recession! What is the reason? I personally believe it is the spiritual factor that divine blessings on this country. Third, Mr Speaker, Sir, today, the days are gloomy, are very dark and recession has spared nobody. All of us know, even the biggest super powers, whether it is America or European countries, most of them are crumbling, where millions and millions of people are losing their jobs, whereas the BIT (*Bureau International du Travail*) just mentioned that over 250 million people will be on the pavements, many more million people will be below the subsistence level and the casualties are so high, but here luckily, in our country, we have been able to survive all those difficult moments, those days ahead are more difficult, but probably we can see the light of the day. Another reason which I believe why we have been successful so far is because we have a strong leadership, that is very important. We must have a strong leadership, we must have a dynamic leadership and all of us know that in any Party or in any Government, a Government without a leader, a Party without a leader, is just like a ship without a rudder. It is just like a kite, *cerf Volant*, cut off from its main string. It can fall down. It can either be like a house....

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bachoo: It can be like a house where there is no light, only bats and reptiles would creep in, that is the reason we need...

(*Interruptions*)

They may agree or they may not agree with him but, in fact, he inspires confidence and so long as he is sitting in Government House, then everybody can sleep peacefully on their beds. You may agree or not with him, but he inspires confidence. One thing I can say is that, so long, he is sitting in the Government House, everybody can sleep peacefully on their bed. So, he has got his...

(*Interruptions*)

Ecoute li aster. Try to listen what I am telling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, he is one who inspires confidence and, throughout the world, at least, he has been able to make up his name. That is the reason why we say we are forging ahead. We have got leaders who let power go to their heads, but we have to be practical and pragmatic in life. He is, at least, a true leader; he leads; a bad one misleads. A true one guides; a bad one may misguide. That's one of the reasons. Whether it is an organisation, a society, a club, a party or whether it is Government, it is the same everywhere. He strategises; others dramatise! That is another problem. He generates creativity, confidence and cooperation; others will generate conflicts, confusion and controversies. So, we are equipped properly with all types of shock absorbers. That is the reason why we are going ahead. Unfortunately, my good friend by my side, hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen, has been the most misunderstood personality. At a time when he was applying bitter pills, there was resentment. It's normal, it's human. But today we see the rewards that we are receiving. Our financial health is extremely sound, the Budget presented by him is a commendable one, and has provided us with a powerful current of fresh air and has come as a beacon, as a ray of light, not only with hope, but also with down to earth measures, because my Ministry got more than required and I have to be thankful to him. If my Ministry has

got it, this means the entire nation is going to benefit. He knew where to put the money and how to handle things.

This Budget had declared a war against poverty and depression. This is a Budget which is fighting to protect jobs and, despite all the unprecedented difficulties that we are facing, over 30% of the Budget is going for the upliftment of the poor. This is no joke at this critical hour. Who knows poverty better than my friend, hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen! Let us be very honest! He had known the pangs of hunger and the humiliation of injustice in his life. At a time when the so-called defenders of the poor were enjoying luxuries of life in their teens, my friend, hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen, was going up and down the streets, selling *gâteaux piments* in order to keep the family kettle boiling. So, this means that he knows the hardship and the problems, and that is the reason why he knows how to apply the solutions. When you have got an able leadership, you have got an able Minister of Finance, you don't have to worry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1972, at the Stockholm Conference on poverty and environment, late Mrs Gandhi made a statement. She was the only leader at that time who assisted that Conference. She said that poverty was the greatest polluter. These are the words that she used: 'greatest polluter'. That is why, in India, she advocated the policy of '*garibi hatao*', that is, remove poverty. We are not using the slogan. In fact, it is a different way that we are doing here, and we are thankful to the Prime Minister for having empowered the Ministry of Finance to take actions that can help the poor.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I move on the Budget itself, allow me to make a humble plea to all of us Members. Let us make our lives sublime by serving the nation selflessly and leave behind us footprints in the sand of time. That is my wish, my message because 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. This is the message in which I believe. If we have to work, we work selflessly; we work with dedication, because we must have in mind the future of this nation, of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to move towards my Ministry. I heard many of the orators on the Opposition side prattling words of wisdom; nothing has been done, what has been done in infrastructure. That reminds me of a great philosopher who said -

"He slept beneath the moon, he basked in the sun, he lived a life of doing nothing and died; he lived a life of going to do and died without nothing done."

So, we don't want to be like that. At least, once we decide, we have to forge ahead. It is only then that the nation will respect us, and listen to us. We have got so many projects in the past. Many projects were announced. In the PNQ, I wanted to give a list also. But how much was accomplished? I don't even blame the previous Government because we know the red tapism which was there. But I think, as people say, life is full of sound and fury, signifying nothing; so many things we have spoken but, in fact, nothing was done. That is why we are not going to leave till tomorrow what we can do today. That is why, when I answer questions, I always say when the projects are going to start. We are bound to go as fast as we can.

Now, where to start, how to start? I am thankful to our Deputy Prime Minister. In fact, he sowed the seeds in most of the cases. He started the project and, as you know, starting the project, looking at consultancy take much time. It's only when the project starts getting a concrete form that people come to know that works are on. But, in fact, before that, much work needs to be done. I am thankful to the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Rashid Beebejaun, for the work he has started.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we look at Macondé Bridge, there were dozens of questions which were answered in the past and, today, I heard one of the hon. Members stating that nothing has been done. If you have got eyes to see and ears to listen, you go to the south and have a look at the beautiful and magnificent bridge which had been constructed. In the days to come, works will be completed. That is one of the greatest achievements.

(Interruptions)

I don't know whether we will get time to inaugurate it, because we have got so many projects to inaugurate. So, we believe more in work than in inauguration. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the first point.

Second, as far as the road for Tianli Development Project is concerned, Rs101 m. contract has already been awarded and, in a few months' time, work will be completed.

Third, as regards the Réduit triangle, the entire area of 62 *arpents* needs to be developed, and we are providing all the services. There is a project of Rs290 m. Half of the work has been completed. In March, next year, the full work will be completed, and that will also give an indication of the way that leads to Highlands, the new city which is coming. Highlands is not only a dream; it can become a reality any time.

Fourth, Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody knows the calamity which people had to face. The road which leads towards Wooton and Quartier Militaire is accident prone. It is also a flood prone area. Almost 20, 30 days in a year, you can't pass through. I am happy to announce that the work order had already been issued, the work is on and, towards the end of the year, the first part of the work will be completed.

Fifth, Mr Speaker, Sir, from Belle Rive to Quartier Militaire, if I am not mistaken, papers are being vetted by the World Bank and, in a few weeks' time, we are going to launch the tender. Before the end of this year, the work has to start and the project value is above Rs700 m. That is the second phase of the Curepipe to Quartier Militaire road. Even that is coming towards the end of this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my friend, hon. Dulloo, has been an elected Member since 1976 in Goodlands. He knows the hardship that the people of Goodlands and the northern side of the country undergo from early morning till evening. I am pleased to announce that the Prime Minister gave instructions that this work needs to be done. Rs297 m. contract has already been awarded. The work will start in a few days' time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Triolet is one of the biggest townships which is coming in the northern side of the country. All the big hotels in the country are located in the vicinity of Triolet and you know the miseries that people have to undergo. Now, we are pleased to announce that the work, probably, may start within a month, and the project value is about Rs225 m. There is complete *transparence* everywhere. It is already ten years now.

With regard to the Phoenix-Beau Songes link road, you would remember they have been singing the song all the time about this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is already 10 years now. Hon. Members will remember, we had been singing the song of Phoenix and Beau Songes all the time. Now the bid evaluation is getting completed. The value is Rs300 m. and, probably, in 40 to 45 days' time, we are going to give a *premier coup de pioche* at Phoenix/Beau Songes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been plenty of accidents on the road from Pamplemousses to Forbach. I remember the problems that people had to face when I was Minister of Public Infrastructure. The evaluation of the bids is in progress and the value is Rs230 m. There has been so much competition that the price is going down by almost 30% to 35%. The contract of Rs230 m. will be allocated in the weeks to come. That is another great progress that we have made. Land acquisition procedures have already started as regards Forbach to Grand Baie. The tender documents are prepared and the value of that part will be approximately Rs270 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one remote village which we cannot forget. It is the famous village of Camp Thorel, found in Constituency No. 8. Year in year out, there has been a hue and cry that this village has only one access coming in and out. We are now proud to announce that, in a month's time we are going to inaugurate a new link road. I hope the hon. Prime Minister will be with us for the inauguration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the south, the Grand Bois-Mare d'Albert Link Road is valued at Rs53 m. The work is going to start probably in the days to come. The award has already been given.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is my duty to inform the House of what has been done in this constituency. Over the past one week, I kept on hearing that nothing has been done and that infrastructural works are suffering. It is my turn to say what has been done in the field of infrastructure. Mr Speaker, Sir, in a PNQ, I have already informed that the contract concerning the first part of Terre Rouge-Verdun would have been allocated, but unfortunately, it was too much on the high side. The lowest bid was Rs2.5 billion. In fact, we wanted to bring it to Rs2 billion. That is the reason for the cause of the delay. We will keep our word and do the needful as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need a new road from Verdun to Ebène. The feasibility and design has already been completed and, most probably, we will move for a tender. It will take a little bit of time, because this project is being financed by BADEA.

We are bound to widen the road from Grewals to Caudan because everybody who passes from Pailles to Caudan knows the problems that we face. Bids evaluation is over, the value is Rs310 m. Mobilisation will take place next month and the work will go on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance has announced in the Budget that a third lane from Pont Fer to St Jean will be constructed. I am pleased to announce that we are going for tender in a week's time because the designs and everything has already been completed.

As far as the first phase of Port Louis Ring Road is concerned, I have already announced that the value is Rs950 m. and it is going for tender. As far as the second phase and the harbour bridge are concerned, we have already appointed the Transaction Advisers who are looking at the economic feasibility first and then at the technical aspect. This work is going on. As far as the first phase is concerned, the construction work will start this year.

Concerning the east-west connection that is going to connect Central Flacq to Quartier Militaire, we have already prepared the tender documents for the appointment of consultants and, most probably, in a week's time, we are going to publicise it.

As far as other upgrading works, for example, Pampemousses to Terre Rouge to the tune of Rs110 is concerned, it is completed. The upgrading work valued at Rs20 m. from Pailles to Caudan has been completed. We are doing another work in the extreme south which we have not

forgotten. My colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, has been repeatedly reminding me of this Petrin to Chamarel. That is nearing completion. The amount spent is about Rs35 m. It is a tourist area also and, at the same time, those living in the south get plenty of difficulties as the road was very narrow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all of us know the difficulties in case the Mont Loisir Sugar Estate closes down. All the trucks will have to use only one narrow road. The only connection between the north to the east is the L'Aventure-Mont Loisir Link Road. The first part of the work has already started and the second part of the enlargement will start in due course.

Mr Speaker, Sir, work is already ongoing concerning the widening of Nallétamby Road from Palmerston junction to St Paul, that is near Gymkhana. We need consultations because we are against pulling down the trees. We have got a problem there and it is under study. The value is about Rs20 m.

We have also decided to widen the Avenue des Tulipes, because those living in St Jean are encountering difficulties. The acquisition work has already started. Unfortunately, we have got sewerage work in that region. Once it will be over, we will start the widening of the road.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not forgotten that we need a bypass from Rivière du Rempart that leads to Poudre d'Or Hamlet, on the left towards Port Louis, on the north towards Cap Malheureux/Grand Baie and on the east towards Goodlands. Probably, that work will also be accomplished in the month to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all these things are possible because Flacq ...

(Interruptions)

Flacq is all right! I don't have any problem. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to announce that there is a bypass in Flacq and the amount is about Rs30 m. So, compared to what is being done elsewhere, Flacq is almost a tiny spot.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot go on and on because there are other dozens and dozens of projects which we have already undertaken. RDA is responsible for construction, care, maintenance and improvement of motorways, roads and bridges. We had got a mission, the provision of a cost efficient mobility in comfort and safety for the commuters. With the advent of Programme Based Budgeting, the spending of RDA has been guided by the overriding objectives of lifting the standard of our road infrastructure and expanding our network.

From 2005 to date, an amount of Rs1,178,000,000 has already been spent on maintenance and upgrading of roads only. For example, 277 km of roads have been resurfaced and 70 km have been upgraded and improved. In 2005/2006, we have spent Rs153 m; in 2006/2007 - Rs167 m; in 2007/2008 - Rs258 m. and in 2008/2009 - Rs600 m. , which means we are going very fast.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the morning, I have mentioned the Road Development Company. As a result of the congestion, we do not believe that we are losing about Rs2 billion to Rs3 billion yearly. We cannot tackle the problem in parts. Partial approach may be expensive, and that is the reason why we are looking at it collectively. A holistic approach, which is extremely important, is required. We have got a project of Rs25 billion, 1% of GDP, as all of you are aware. So, Government has approved the setting up of a Road Development Company as a joint venture with other Government entities. It is going to operate as a State-owned company, and I again

give my word to the House that there will be complete *transparence*. We already had discussions on the user charges, and the recent visit of the Chinese President to Mauritius confirm that we are going to get the support of the Chinese authorities and that is the reason why we have to be thankful to them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to move to the Public Infrastructure Division of my Ministry. RDA is one part of it. As we have seen, we have got a *réclame* of what is being done. The second part concerns the Public Infrastructure Division. It is not a secret to anybody that this Division is overworked. It caters to the need of all Government departments and I would hasten to add that we have got only a handful of technicians. We have got 17 architects for about 300 projects. It becomes humanly impossible at times to cope. That is why I have to be thankful to my officers because they are performing a herculean task. If we had to retain the services of consultants for all the projects that we are doing, that would have cost the State billions and billions of rupees. It is my duty to inform the House - I can't list all of them - what we have attained. For example, from last year to this year, we have already constructed Phase III of Holyrood SSS, which amounted to Rs38.9 m; Phase IV of SSS Ebène - Rs78.9 m.; Phase III SSS at Vacoas - Rs116.8 m; Dr. Maurice Curé - Rs43.1 m.; classroom blocks at Sharma Jugdambi - Rs18.8 m; extension work at Bambous SSS - Rs8 m. And the project which is now under construction is the Phase II SSS Pamplemousses - Rs85.6 m; MGSS Solferino (Phase III) Rs31.6 m.; MGSS Flacq (Phase III) Rs53.2 m.; MGSS Moka, there was a big problem of toilet and administrative block, and I am happy to announce that it is nearly in completion; extension to Forest Side Rs58.6 m.; Triolet SSS (6 additional classrooms) Rs24.3 m.; Colline Moneron SSS (Phase III) Rs30.4 m.; SSS Goodlands (Phase IV) Rs101.3 m.; State Secondary School at Beau Bassin Rs98.9 m.; SSS Floreal Rs102 m.; SSS Quatre Bornes (Phase II) Rs121 m.; extension to Rabindranath Tagore Rs18.5 m. There are other projects which are coming, like Goodlands SSS (Phase III), SSS Hollywood (Phase IV), extension to Piton Workshop, SSS Port Louis and Bon Acceuil SSS. We have got a list; I can go on and on.

In Constituency No.6, there is the Moosun Government School. It is a pity for me to inform you that the school was there on 'vérin' for so many months. Now, I am happy to announce that, at Goodlands, we are spending Rs54.8 m. for a new school. There is the proposed renovation and extension of Dr. Beaugeard Government School to the tune of Rs49 m. As far as the MGSS at Nouvelle France, Flacq, Moka and Solferino are concerned, the construction works of Phase IV are already on. That concerns only the State Secondary Schools. I am happy to announce that, as far as the Royal College Port Louis is concerned, we are moving for consultancy works because we need a consultant. For the Régis Chaperon State Secondary School also, we need a consultant to advise us on how we can proceed.

As far as the primary schools are concerned, we are completing 179 classrooms in 40 primary schools towards the end of this year. This is no mean achievement for a department! 15 new toilet blocks in 15 primary schools are ready and I must say that these toilets were in deplorable conditions. There are 24 toilets which we have upgraded in 24 secondary schools. 170 other upgrading and extension works are being undertaken. As for the structural rehabilitation of primary schools, there have been 16 structural rehabilitation, three new football grounds in three schools, boundary walls have been constructed in 10 schools, waterproofing works in four schools. There have also been other infrastructural works like the tarring of yard, construction of drains, painting and tiling work, replacement of naco frames in 90 schools, turfing, reroofing, fencing and demolition works.

It will be just like a news bulletin during cyclone, giving the list of the schools and colleges, which I don't want to. This clearly gives an indication that we are caring for the needs of everybody. From the pre-primary schools up to the tertiary level, we are not leaving anything.

Apart from the Ministry of Education, I would like to move to the Ministry of Health. My colleague knows that regular monitoring exercise is being done on a weekly basis and then on a monthly basis with my colleague Ministers. The major projects are the Pandit Sahadeo, the Community Health Centre at Vacoas, the new medi-clinic at Plaine Verte at Rs49 m. - the work is already under construction. The new Jeetoo Hospital that all of us know, the tenders will be invited on 08 July, in a months' time. As for the IV phase, the work has started, the demolition work is over and the boundary wall is already on. The IV phase has started and the tender will be floated on 08 July, which is no mean achievement. It will be the greatest achievement in the health sector.

At Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, we have got the extension to the Emergency Department and the value is of Rs50 m. We have already gone to the Central Procurement Office. We have also got an extension to the laboratory at Flacq, a Neurology and Spinal Unit at Victoria Hospital. There is a new Operating Theatre at Victoria Hospital, that is, above Rs100 m. It is a turnkey project for which the documents are ready for the launching of tenders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we had problems in the hospital regarding the water reticulation system and we are spending over Rs150 m. at Victoria, Flacq, SSRN, Brown Sequard and ENT. The tender procedures are on and I sincerely hope that the work should start towards the end of this year. There is a new hospital coming up at Flacq, the Block C, costing Rs125 m., and work may start at any time. We are also working on the new Neuro Surgery Unit at the Victoria Hospital, for which the tender documents are ready and it would be above Rs100 m. Renovation works are being undertaken at Mahebourg Hospital, costing Rs20 m. I am not going to speak about the health care offices, the community health centres because there are dozens of them.

As regards the Prisons Department, there will be a new prison at Melrose to the tune of over Rs800 m., it is a very complicated project and many specialists are required. Now, we are looking for the appointment of a project manager and, once he is appointed, probably the tender will be launched. Even this project had been in the cupboard for about 10 to 12 years in the past. Regarding a new dormitory at Beau Bassin, we are working on the design to the tune of Rs12.2 m.

With regard to local government, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Flacq Fire Station is nearing completion, and we are spending Rs24 m. There is a new Fire Station at Tamarin, for which we are working on the design. There are two market fairs, one at Flacq and one at Rivière des Anguilles; we are completing the tender documents, and the works should start this year.

Regarding the Ministry of Finance, the new Customs House - I think the Minister must be very happy - was completed on time to the tune of Rs245 m., except a slight problem that we had with a sub contractor.

For the Ministry of Women's Right & Child Development, the Women Entrepreneurs' Centre at Triolet has cost Rs11 m. and is ready. We are actually working on the Notre Dame Women Centre and a multipurpose complex at Bel Ombre to the tune of for Rs6 m. and Rs13 m.

For the Ministry of Social Security, the recreational centre at Belle Mare for over Rs100 m is coming. It will be just like a five star hotel for old age pensioners, similar to the one we have in Pointe aux Sables.

For the Ministry of Labour & Industrial Relations, construction has already started for the Labour Office at Curepipe. We have a major project for the Ministry of Agro Industry, which is the Fish Auction Market at Les Sallines, and we are working on the design.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the renovation of the old Parliament House, a consultant has already been appointed, and most probably the documents will be submitted to the CPB in the weeks to come. As for the Flacq District Court, the renovation work has already been started, and that is costing us over Rs27 m. The new Bambous District Court is at design stage.

For the Police Band building at Vacoas, there are some outstanding works, and there has been a slight delay. The value of the project is Rs44.4 m. There is a new Police District Headquarters at Flacq, and the tenders will be issued shortly. We are also working on the Detention Centre at Piton.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot go on and on. I have just mentioned about 400 projects, which are the main ones. We have just passed the new CIDB regulation. The CIDB is not only meant to register and deregister, but has to regulate the construction industry because, as we know, there are so many contractors, and there must be certain modes which they have to follow. That is the reason for which we have empowered the CIDB, and all the engineers, contractors, architects will have to be brought under one paraphernalia. That is reason why the need for such an institution to look after this sector properly is being felt. The CIDB is going to set standards for the players in this sector. It will have to organise workshops, provide training and guidance to the small contractors. I am sure that the new regulation, which has come in force, will be able to look after the contractors and all those major players in the developmental framework of our country.

Having spoken on the Public Infrastructure, now I would like to move towards the Land Transport, that is, the Traffic Management and the Road Safety Unit. It plays an integral part in the life of all Mauritians. This year, 2008, there have been 20,877 accidents, 20,000 accidents, and the fatal accidents have increased from 133 to 162. It means that there has been an increase of 21% only this year. The two main causes are first, over speeding and, second, drink-driving. We have already introduced two new types of humps. One is called the normal rail mode, and the other one the pedestrian rail mode. These two types are going to replace the traditional humps. The new detection cameras have already been introduced on 29 December last year. Till today, 9,500 contraventions have been established, and fines to the tune of Rs18.5 m. have already been paid. Despite efforts, unfortunately, people are still driving under the influence of alcohol.

Despite efforts, unfortunately, people are still driving under the influence of alcohol and, since January till now, 275 drivers have been fined for driving under influence of alcohol. Necessary amendments need to be brought in order to harden the fine against offenders of drinking and driving.

Mr Speaker, Sir, The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has also carried out the following works. I won't go into details, but 31 traditional road humps have been removed; 31 traditional round top humps have been introduced and a dozen of normal mode and pedestrian

mode traffic calming devices have been constructed; 216 metres of guardrails and 845 signs have been fixed; footpaths have been constructed in many parts of the country. We have also introduced speed zones of 40 Km/hr in 15 regions: Terre Rouge/Triolet/Grand' Baie road, Mapou/Goodlands road, Mon Piton/Rivière du Rempart road, Moka/Camp de Masque road - those are dangerous roads - Quartier Militaire, Plaine des Papayes, the Vale road, Mon Choisy/Cap Malheureux road, Goodlands/Poste de Flacq road, Trou Aux Biches road, Pointe aux Piments/Mon Choisy Coastal road, Solitude road, Arsenal Balaclava road, Vingt Pied road and Rivière Noire road. These are the places where there were plenty of accidents, as these are accident prone areas. That is the reason why we have taken additional precautions. 383 metres of handrails have been fixed; 15 new pedestrian crossings have already been introduced; 328 square metres of single yellow lines have been painted; 2877 square metres of double yellow line have also been introduced; 27 new yellow boxes have been painted, and there have been plenty of road safety campaigns against speeding and drink driving

The GPS system of accident data collection, costing about Rs2 m., has been implemented. We have conducted road safety education in 154 primary schools and 12 secondary schools. Road safety week was also held and a road awareness campaign has been conducted at the community level for senior citizens. Road safety poster boards have been fixed in most of the primary schools and Road traffic regulations have also been drafted by the TRMSU. For example, the Photographic Enforcement Device Regulations, the Driving Licence Regulations, Driving Instructor's Regulations, Driving Schools Regulations, Electric Cycles and Power Assisted Cycles Regulations. All these have already been drafted and they are being vetted by the SLO.

Mr Speaker, Sir, 180 junctions are equipped with traffic lights and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit is looking after the maintenance. Nine new junctions have been signalised during the last financial year. I have received requests from other friends also, and we are going to look into their requests. Government is spending actually some Rs5.7 m. yearly on electricity charges for traffic lights. We are in the process of replacing all the signal heads, using traditional lamps by LED, that is, Light Emitting Diodes. That will reduce the electricity bill by 80%. This project is being funded by the MID Fund.

As a result of climate change, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are expecting rain at any time and anywhere. So, we are constructing, within a few months, some hundred bus shelters island wide. And this number will be doubled during the next financial year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moving towards the Land Transport Authority, at present, the National Transport Authority, the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit, the Police Traffic Branch, the Police Road Safety Unit and the Road Development Authority are working as separate units, separate entities. This means policy making, transport planning, traffic management, road safety, road planning, design and construction are not properly coordinated, planned and organised. That is the reason why Government is coming forward with the creation of a Land Transport Authority. All other organisations will form part of that Authority. Hence, duplication, bureaucracy will be eliminated, and we will be ready to face the challenges of the 21st century. The Bill for the creation of the Land Transport Authority will be presented in the days to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as in the morning, we have already mentioned that the LTA will own six major projects, as has already been announced. These projects will be built and operated by the

Road Development Company. I can assure the House again and again of *transparency*. Projects will not be delayed and will be put on the fast tracks.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we started talking about the alternative mode of transport since 1989, when hon. Jaddoo was Minister of Works. Today, we are in 2008, and we are still talking and talking. All of us have to share and shoulder the responsibility. Many documents were presented by consultants, starting with Halcrow Fox, Iberinsa, SOFRETU, and so many other consultants came and worked on that. We have already spent millions of rupees on consultancy works; billions of rupees have been lost in congestion. But, now, we mean business. The tender for the Bus Modernisation Programme has already been opened and evaluation is going on, and I can assure the House that we are going to act promptly and we are going to take our decisions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the most important works of my Ministry is also to look after the transport problem. The RTRA was replaced by the NTA in 1980. At that time, Mauritius had a fleet of 70,000 vehicles only. Today, we have 355,000 vehicles, that is, an increase of fleet by a fivefold and the roads are remaining the same.

In addition to licensing, registration and examination of vehicles, NTA is also responsible for administration of Free Travel Scheme. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not an easy job to administrate the Free Travel Scheme with the amount of problems that officers have to undergo almost daily.

We have issued 150,000 bus passes to students and disabled persons. NTA looks after payment of diesel and compensation to operators, enforcement of parking regulations. It is a very difficult and a very bulky operation. Officers remain the same, but responsibilities have been increasing day by day.

At present, registration of deeds of sales of vehicles falls under the Registrar General Department, and that takes three or four days in order to effect the transfer of ownership. But I am happy to announce to the House that, in a few months' time, this exercise will be carried out by NTA. It will reduce the time to 10 minutes only. Within ten minutes, the registration can be made.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to improve safety standards of vehicles, we are coming up with an updated Road Traffic Construction and Use Regulations. The present regulations date back to 1952, that is, before our birth. The new one, which is coming, will lay emphasis on construction, equipment and maintenance of vehicles. It will lay the emphasis on retrofitting of gas cylinders in vehicles, because putting up gas cylinders in a haphazard way is very, very dangerous. This is what we have noticed in our country these days. These regulations will lay standards for the introduction of new modern buses. It is also looking into ways and means for safe conveyance of dangerous and inflammable goods. I would hasten to add that vehicle examination centres will be privatised, and we have been singing this song for the many past decades. Invitation for the licensing of potential centres to undertake such works will be launched in a month time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that lung cancer is the second cause of death in the world. Increase in the number of vehicles on our roads is affecting our environment terribly;

climate change has become a cause for concern for everybody. I am personally looking into the control of smoke emission. The privatisation of vehicle examination centers will help us to minimise the emission through the strict standard that we are going to set. Sulphur content will definitely be reduced from 2,500 ppm to 500 ppm. Government has already taken a decision and lowering of sulphur content has got a bearing on smoke emission and, hence, the health of people will be improved.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House is aware that transport companies are complaining of being affected by illegal operators. For example, CNT is losing Rs 130,000 daily. Similar is the case with other bus operators.

At the request of my Ministry, the Commissioner of Police has provided a group of officers who, together with the inspectors of NTA, are carrying out checks, on a regular basis, on illegal operators in different regions of the island. We are going to enforce it, and we are going to double the operations.

We are encouraging the individual bus operators to group themselves into regional associations, with a view to improving their services and meeting the demand of the travelling public. Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about bus transport, we need to have a new vision; we have to take bold and courageous decisions; we have to find solutions, at the same time, we must have the political will to do so.

That is the reason why Government is providing billions of rupees for the modernisation of the bus transport system. Before closing this chapter on transport, I would like to remind the House that, although we are going through difficult financial problems, Government is maintaining the Free Travel Scheme for the benefit of students, pensioners and disabled persons. This system is benefiting 250,000 people.

The system, as it is, is most cost-effective and easy to implement. But we have to improve on it. There have been cases of abuse by operators. They don't play the rule of the game. They leave students and pensioners stranded on bus stops, at times, but we are taking action against those people. Between January till 15 May, 201 cases have been heard by the NTA. 96 bus conductors, 56 drivers and 12 bus owners have had their licences suspended. I do not hesitate to say that we are trying to see ways and means, even to have their licences not only being suspended, but even revoked in case of misbehaviour. We are doing our best to make the effort more efficient and more pragmatic.

Before concluding on transport, I have to say a few words on the National Transport Corporation, which had been in the lime light recently. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that NTC is facing serious financial difficulties and, in fact, its future looks very bleak. Government, in its foresight, had appointed Deloitte to carry out an assessment of the financial situation and to review its structure. Much has been said in the past in Parliament. I had given many explanations also. I don't want to go into the details. But the consultant has identified many weaknesses and shortcomings at NTC. A copy of the report has already been laid in the House, and the consultant has proposed a series of measures. In fact, we have already set up a committee, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry, to look into all those recommendations and to see to it that the recommendations are being applied. Once you start applying certain recommendations, we start taking strict measures. Definitely, on the other side, we get difficulties, we get problems. At times, they are not willing even to listen. They think

that it is business as usual, but if we continue in this way, the days of NTC will be counted. If we mean business, we have to take actions, and this is what Government is doing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to turn to another department of my Ministry, that is, the Shipping Division. I would like to inform the House that, today, 01 June, the New Merchant Shipping Act is coming into operation. We are having it proclaimed today, and the main provision of the Act is to ensure safety of life, safety of navigation, security on board ships, and prevention of marine pollution from ships through enforcement of the IMO Convention. We promote registration of qualified ships under the Mauritian flag. It also protects the interests of ship owners, cargo owners, other stakeholders involved in the carriage of goods and operation of ship. It ensures good employment and living conditions, and welfare of seafarers employed on board Mauritian ships. New clauses concerning piracy and hijacking of ships at sea are being introduced in the new Act, which is very important. On conviction, the offenders shall be liable to imprisonment for a term up to 60 years. Mauritius has not only jurisdiction to try the offence of piracy and hijacking, when committed in its maritime zone, but also in other places outside its jurisdiction. A Draft Memorandum, prepared by the International Maritime Organisation, concerning the repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Eden and the Red Sea is being vetted by the State Law Office. Once vetted, approval of Cabinet will be sought.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has invested Rs13 m. for the purchase of high frequency radio equipment. This apparatus will provide maritime safety information to fishing vessels in our territory waters and fishing banks. It will also provide communication services, weather forecast, cyclone warning, emergencies at sea. It will help to coordinate search and rescue operations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the end, I would say that work involving conception, feasibility, design, tendering, execution, supervision take several months and even years. It also involves the sacrifices of my officers down from the lowest to the highest in a well synchronised manner and at a certain given pace. I have presented a trailer of over so many projects. Each project has to go through all these steps. If this is not achieved, I am really perplexed. With my limited intellect, I can say that we have tried to do our best, and my only prayer is: let us try to develop praying mind, compassionate hearts and charitable hands, and not use politics to amass wealth to climb the social ladder and to fatten ourselves.

Thank you.

At 12.55 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.02 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): M. le président, je voudrais, selon la tradition, dire deux mots sur le discours de l'honorable ministre des infrastructures publiques, mais sans vraiment être méchant.

Dans la partie poésie qu'il avait citée au début, je relève une phrase. Il disait qu'il faisait appel à Dieu pour dire: *let my country awake.* J'ai le sentiment que *the country is wide awake.*

Après tout ce qui s'est passé, corruption, fraude, etc., le gouvernement devrait être *awake* pour être à l'écoute de la population.

A un certain moment, évidemment il a été très élogieux envers le Premier ministre. Il a dit que *the Prime Minister inspires confidence*. Ce qui est regrettable c'est que ce n'est pas réciproque. Le Premier ministre a – c'est sorti de sa propre bouche – dit qu'il n'a pas confiance en ses ministres. J'espère qu'il y aura réciprocité dans un avenir prochain. Ensuite, il a dit que le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances *is the most misunderstood person of the moment*. Le vice-Premier ministre ne doit s'en prendre qu'à lui-même, parce que, comme nous allons voir pendant mon exposé, il a laissé planer des flous de temps en temps.

Ce que je regrette aussi c'est que plusieurs membres du gouvernement ont une capacité extraordinaire d'ôter leurs manteaux et de les mettre sur nos épaules, pour nous blâmer de leur incompétence, parfois de leur arrogance, tandis que, du côté de l'opposition, même avant 2005, nous avons vu les différents ministres des finances dire, qu'avec l'OMC, avec le textile et le sucre qui allaient nous causer beaucoup de problèmes, il fallait prendre des dispositions, avoir une vue à long terme sur l'économie. Malheureusement, même après 2005, le gouvernement ainsi que le ministre des finances sont restés un peu sourds, ont été assez léthargiques. Ensuite, de 2005 à 2008, silence complet, quoique une fois en 2006 - j'y reviendrais - dans le budget de 2006/2007 le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances disait *the danger signs are already here*. Au paragraphe 7, il a ajouté –

'We must no longer bury our head in the sand.'

N'allez pas jouer à l'autruche. Et, pourtant, c'est ce qu'il a fait. En novembre dernier, il parlait de vaccins. Même avec ce qui se passait aux Etats Unis, en Europe, en Chine, une puissance économique extraordinaire qui commençait à trembler, il disait que nous, nous avions les vaccins nécessaires. Il parlait de *rough seas are ahead, violent winds*, de turbulences, de *fog*. Or, depuis belle lurette, l'opposition avait attiré l'attention sur les dangers que représentait la récession mondiale. Donc, *the fog is in their head*, dans leur vision. Je ne suis pas d'accord aussi, car l'honorable Boolell, l'autre jour, a dit que l'opposition fait de la démagogie, que nous sommes anti patriotiques. Il nous a même qualifiés de prophètes de malheur. Ce n'est pas vrai. Ce n'est tout simplement pas vrai. Comme je l'ai dit, depuis 2001, on avait attiré l'attention sur ce qui allait arriver, ne serait-ce que pour le sucre et le textile, même si on ne savait pas encore qu'il y aurait la récession. A un certain moment, on avait ironisé lorsque le *leader* de l'opposition, en tant que ministre des finances, et même après, avait dit que nous sommes dans un état d'urgence économique. Ils avaient rigolé et, aujourd'hui, nous sommes dans une situation où on ne peut plus se permettre de jouer à l'autruche. En novembre, le ministre parlait de vaccins, alors qu'en février et mars 2009, il disait qu'il fallait choisir entre les difficultés, des mesures à prendre, et l'épidémie de la récession. Le ministre Boolell a dit nous sommes des *bluff masters*. Mais de quel côté se trouvent les *bluff masters*, M. le président? Le ministre des finances est resté, comme l'a dit le *leader* de l'opposition, dans le déni, le refus d'accepter la réalité, le refus de voir la réalité en face pour aujourd'hui être paniqué. Je reviens sur ces deux mots blessants, *bluff masters*, parce qu'après tout ce qu'on a dit, toute cette campagne sur le thème '*putting people first*', on tente d'enlever le pain des malheureux, des pauvres parmi les pauvres. Cela est resté comme une arête à travers la gorge des travailleurs sociaux, à travers la gorge de la population.

Sur la question de pension, par exemple, quelle campagne n'ont-ils pas menée pour dire *pé coquin* pension, alors qu'on voulait *target* ceux qui avaient plus de R 20,000? Tout ceci pour venir ensuite dire, aujourd'hui, que tous ceux qui touchent plus de R 12000 n'auront pas une augmentation salariale. Donc, où sont les *bluff masters*? L'Alliance sociale a un gros problème: le manque d'humilité. On ne peut pas continuer à résister, à se montrer arrogant, frôlant parfois le dénigrement même de l'opposition. L'humilité est une grande valeur humaine, spirituelle et religieuse, et une qualité de *leadership*. Ce n'est pas en étant arrogant, en essayant d'imposer toutes ses idées, en faisant croire qu'on connaît tout qu'on fait montre de capacité d'un *leader*. L'humilité c'est une grande capacité de *leadership*. Finalement, après tant d'arrogance, tant de déni, on est revenu sur terre. On ne devrait pas se sentir gêné de revenir sur terre! La banque mondiale et le FMI sont revenus dramatiquement sur terre. En quoi cela aurait-il gêné un ministre des finances d'une petite île Maurice de dire la vérité, de dire que nous aurons des problèmes! Alors, essayons de mobiliser tout le monde, comme il a dit à la fin de son discours l'autre jour, et comme plusieurs ministres ont dit. Malgré les arguments bassement politiques, certains ont fait appel à un élan national. On aurait dû finalement dire que c'est une catastrophe nationale, *to take everybody on board*, au lieu de faire ce qu'on a fait jusqu'ici.

Je voudrais citer quelques extraits du budget 2006/2007. Au paragraphe 16 le ministre disait –

« *This Budget ushers in 40 major reforms that sweep away a non functional system which is very complicated, hard to understand (...).* »

Aujourd'hui, on est en train de *bypass* ce système de *procurement*, parce que c'était trop compliqué.

« *(...) and open to abuse and even corruption through excessive discretion.* »

C'est ce qu'on disait en 2006/2007.

« *We want to make things simple, transparent and ruled based.* »

C'est ce qu'il a dit en 2006. Déjà il parle de *ruled based* et, aujourd'hui, encore, dans le budget de 2009, il revient avec le concept de *ruled based*. C'est scandaleux ! Cette démarche de relever le taux de R 15 millions à R 50 millions sans passer par le *Procurement Board*, c'est ouvrir les vannes à la corruption, contrairement à ce qu'on avait dit en 2006/07. On dit qu'il y a une course dans les corps parapublics pour profiter de la corruption. Une course de '*qui sane là capave coquin pli boucou pli vite*'. Il y certains qui disent – '*couma to capave manze ça quantité la, éna Equal Opportunities Act maintenant, moi aussi mo bisin gagne mo part gâteau*'. En 2007/2008, au paragraphe 11, le ministre disait –

« *We must improve the living standard of the whole nation.* »

On n'a pas réalisé cela. On a *improve the standard of living* des corrompus, des petits copains, mais pas *of the whole nation*.

Sur le chapitre de la lenteur et la léthargie, au paragraphe 58 du budget de 2007/2008, le ministre disait –

« *We will address the problem of land transport and traffic congestion as a priority.* »

Aujourd'hui, il vient relancer *le ring road*, etc.

« In the next few years, Government will channel some Rs3 billion in road development. »

Au paragraphe 134 du budget 2007/2008, le ministre disait –

« It would be an irony that Government pushes its efforts to the limit to narrow its deficit only to find out that these efforts are completely nullified by the need to bail out parastatal bodies. »

Le ministre prévoyait en 2007/2008 que le gouvernement aurait à bail out les parastatal bodies.

“Such a risk is indeed high for there are more than 150 parastatal bodies.”

And more is being created in the present Budget. He added -

“Moreover, these parastatals transact in billions of rupees every year, employ a significant share of public sector human resources and have a significant weight in GDP. ”

He also added –

“In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we must align the management of our parastatals with our policy to eliminate waste in Government.”

C'est tout à fait le contraire qu'on a eu comme résultat. Pour preuve, le rapport de l'audit qui parle de plus de R 5 milliards gaspillées.

Malgré tout cela, je dois dire que c'est une bonne chose que le ministre admet maintenant que nous aurons des problèmes. Au paragraphe 9 de ce budget, il disait –

“This unprecedented economic storm is already pounding our shore.”

Après tant de mois de déni, *he says that it is pounding our shore; it is affecting the real fiscal, financial and external sectors of our economy.*

Au paragraphe 11, il ajoute –

“Public finance is already showing stress marks from the global recession.”

Au paragraphe 15, l'honorable ministre revient sur terre, et je le félicite lorsqu'il dit –

“We must refocus our priorities and our energy on the short-term imperatives, on the urgent needs of our people (...).”

Quatre ans après, il dit *that we must refocus our priorities and our energy on the short-term imperatives and on the urgent needs of our people.* Je me pose la question si on a la même interprétation de « *our people* ».

“(...) and on the outcome that the population wants.”

Au paragraphe 35, M. le président, parce que les données ont changé et les réalités ne sont plus les mêmes, il dit -

“Then there are the poor, the underprivileged, the families with modest income.”

Je voudrais rappeler l'honorable vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances ce que j'ai déjà dit ici l'année dernière. Je crois qu'il n'y a pas que *the poor, the very poor, the underprivileged and those with modest income.* La classe moyenne s'appauvrit de jour en jour.

En ce qui concerne le EAP, je souhaite bonne chance. En tant que travailleur social, je vais donner le coup de main nécessaire dans certaines régions, mais il y a également la classe moyenne qui s'appauvrit.

Vu ce qui s'est passé avec la léthargie jusqu'ici, M. le président, je suis assez sceptique, malgré les bonnes intentions du vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances. Au paragraphe 36, il dit –

“But the measure of the challenge keeps getting worse. Today, we see there is a need for further robust and bold actions and so we are fulfilling that pledge.”

Pour moi, le mot “*further*” est superflu, parce qu'il n'y a pas eu vraiment de *robust and bold action*. Lorsque le ministre, après toutes les promesses pendant la campagne et même après, vient dire que *we are going to fulfil our pledge*, je le souhaite de tout cœur. Il y a eu beaucoup de *packaging and repackaging*, comme on a dit. On parle beaucoup de SMEs. Au paragraphe 142, le ministre parle d'espace des métiers *that will start operation in July*. Quatre ans après, il vient dire que l'espace des métiers *will start operation in July 2009, to provide, inter alia, counseling services to the unemployed, to help them in identifying placement for training opportunities that best suit their aptitude and profile*. Cela avait été fait en 2000-2005. Il n'y a que le nom qui a changé. Ici, on parlait de l'espace des métiers, de la foire des métiers où on a invité la population aussi bien les compagnies au sein desquelles il y avait des postes vacants. Donc, ces compagnies venaient à la rencontre de la population pour faire le *matching* entre la demande et l'offre. Ce n'est pas un fait nouveau. On a fait le tour de l'île avec ce concept, et je voudrais profiter de l'occasion pour dire au ministre des finances qu'on parle tellement de métiers, tandis que les manuels de cette année-ci pour les *pre-vocational schools* n'ont pas été distribués jusqu'à la semaine dernière.

Au paragraphe 301, le ministre parle de « (...) comprehensive and elaborate strategy to save jobs.” Il dit: “*The equation is simple and straightforward: no enterprises, no jobs.*” Alors, il veut protéger *the enterprises to save jobs*. Mais, je pose la question: *What about the self-employed? I would like here to make a plea for the self-employed.*

(Interruptions)

At times, there are family enterprises. The sole breadwinner will not get what is being poured into the companies. Je ne sais pas si on peut ouvrir une ligne de crédit au DBM ou bien exempter temporairement les self-employed, tels que les marchands ambulants - un peu comme il a proposé pour d'autres catégories - du remboursement de certains de leurs loans ou des emprunts dont ils pourraient entreprendre. M. le président, ils représentent quand même une partie importante de la population. Si on peut faire quelque chose, ce serait bien.

(Interruptions)

Justement, on ne doit pas les négliger. Si le gouvernement et les entreprises ne sont pas capables d'offrir autant d'emplois, et si ces personnes ont déjà un emploi, il faut tout faire pour le préserver. Au paragraphe 179, le ministre parle de *protecting people, and I quote -*

“Looking at the world around us we see some countries facing unprecedented challenges.”

Il parle plus loin –

“Deep apprehensions are building around the gloomy prospect of widespread human anguish and social unrest.”

Je partage son souci.

Je crains moi aussi que si la situation se détériore, on pourrait avoir des *social unrests*. Nous ne sommes pas des prophètes de malheur comme le ministre Boolell nous l'a dit. Pas du tout!

Le ministre des finances ajoute –

“Mauritius is not at the centre of this storm. But we are also not outside of its rings. We must take shelter.”

Donc, il faut prendre des précautions. En tant que député et travailleur social, je suis très inquiet de la situation qui pourrait se dégrader. D'un côté, il y a les pauvres qui deviennent plus pauvres, donc plus vulnérables, plus sensibles et plus irrités, plus exploitables par certains groupes ; de l'autre côté, il y a une situation malsaine qui se développe, avec pour effet que chaque groupe ethnique est entouré de gros bras. Ce qui est dangereux.

Je vais vous faire un aveu, M. le président. C'est une initiative personnelle. Depuis plusieurs mois, je rencontre des gros bras de tous les groupes ethniques pour leur parler, pour les mettre en garde afin de ne pas causer de dégât, sans crier gare, sans demander quoi que ce soit, sans voir si le membre de cette même communauté a tort ou a raison, s'il a un problème. Cela est dangereux et peut causer beaucoup de tort à la société. J'espère qu'on n'arrivera pas à une telle situation, où deux groupes de gros bras vont s'affronter, ce qui pourrait faire exploser le pays. Je parle en connaissance de cause, parce que j'ai connu l'année 1968 et aussi le cas de Kaya. Donc, ce n'est pas souhaitable du tout, parce que ces personnes-là, comme je l'ai dit, sont vulnérables et, donc, facilement exploitables, manipulables. Ce sont de gros bras, mais avec peu de matière grise. Ils ne réfléchissent pas, ils se laissent emporter par des sentiments communaux, ils se laissent aller.

Je reviens une dernière fois sur ce qu'a dit l'honorable Boolell, parce qu'il a parlé de prophètes de malheur. Il a dit : après moi, le déluge. Au contraire, ce que nos militants nous reprochent c'est que nous luttons, nous bossons dur pour redresser le pays, et après c'est l'Alliance sociale qui vient, tout est dilapidé. Je peux transposer ce que le ministre Boolell a dit, parce qu'il dit 'après moi le déluge'. Donc, il fallait regarder de l'autre côté.

J'ai deux derniers points concernant les ONG par rapport au CSR. Il est dit au paragraphe 181, que *“Government will build up a strong NGO community etc.”* Je regrette d'avoir à le dire, mais je dis de tout cœur, avec beaucoup de franchise ce que je crains : le monde des ONG a pris un grand coup parce qu'il y a eu des ONG fictives, comprenant majoritairement des agents politiques qui bénéficiaient de grosses sommes d'argent, et ça démotive les ONG authentiques. On a eu des déclarations dans les journaux; il y en a même qui ont menacé de fermer boutique. Ce qui serait grave pour l'île Maurice, si les ONG authentiques arrivaient à baisser les bras, M. le président.

Par rapport à la proposition au paragraphe 253, où le ministre invite les grosses firmes qui font des profits à verser 2% de leurs profits afin d'aider directement les ONG – c'est de là où vient le mal - ou à transférer ces fonds au gouvernement *to be used in the fight against poverty*. Il y a eu une table ronde l'autre jour sur une des radios. A l'unanimité, les travailleurs sociaux, les représentants de ces grosses firmes et les présidents des fédérations ont dit qu'il faut absolument éviter de forcer les grosses boîtes à verser cette somme au gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

Il faut voir au cas par cas. Il y en a qui ne donne pas 2%, mais 3% ou 4% de leurs profits. Il faut être réaliste. Lorsqu'une firme fait un *sponsorship*, il attend une part de publicité ; il y en a qui le fait sans trop de *tam tam*. Mais, la réalité du monde du business est telle qu'ils attendent en retour une dose de publicité. Or, certains députés ou ministres, malheureusement – je ne le dis pas méchamment, mais c'est une réalité - sont tellement impopulaires, que ces grosses firmes ne veulent pas s'associer avec les politiciens dans les cérémonies de remises d'équipement. Laissons leur cette liberté; ils ont toujours aidé des équipes de football qui ont bénéficié des grosses sommes. Donc, il faut toujours éviter à tout prix de forcer ces compagnies à faire des donations. Il y a des *sponsors*, comme je vous l'ai dit, et puis il y a d'autres qui peuvent *sponsor* un enfant pauvre ou une famille et parfois même un groupe. L'autre avantage de laisser la liberté aux grosses boîtes, c'est qu'ils ont leurs critères, objectifs scientifiques qui ne sont pas des critères politiques. Donc ils sauront eux, quels sont les ONG qui sont performants et vont les aider. Je fais un appel sincère au vice-Premier ministre de voir de près ce principe.

M. le président on vient de parler du risque de *riot*, des problèmes. On a vu ce qui s'est passé dans d'autres pays, et même à Maurice. Lorsqu'une firme vient s'implanter dans une localité, qui 'prend en charge' cette localité, qui aide les gens, les pauvres, les associations et, en période de trouble, ce sont ces personnes qui vont aider ces firmes-là. Ce sont eux qui vont défendre ces firmes car il y a cet esprit d'appartenance, parce que cette firme s'est bien occupée d'eux. Il y a cet aspect-là aussi qu'il ne faut pas négliger.

Avant de terminer, je voudrais dire deux mots sur ma circonscription. C'est vrai que c'est bon signe, après quatre ans on a commencé à construire le Medi-Clinic, le centre de l'IVTB. Nous avons une très longue liste des réalisations en 2000-2005.

(Interruptions)

C'est palpable, c'est physique, on peut voir ! Je ne vais pas prendre le temps de la Chambre pour établir cette longue liste, avec *NDU* etc.

Je voudrais revenir sur le centre de l'IVTB. Lorsque Le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances avait annoncé dans son discours la transformation du *BAT* en un centre de l'IVTB, il avait dit *that it would cater mainly for students of the region*. J'avais posé une *PQ* la dernière fois.

(Interruptions)

Les chiffres sont là, il y a 25% seulement de jeunes de Port-Louis. Dans ma question, j'avais dit qu'il fallait *cater for the whole of Port Louis*. Je n'avais pas *single out* Plaine Verte, j'avais dit tous les faubourgs de Port Louis. J'avais parlé de Vallijee, Tranquebar, Vallée Pitot, Ste Croix, Roche Bois, etc. C'est une réalité, malheureusement. Nous avons des jeunes qui n'ont pas tellement brillé sur le plan académique mais qui pourraient, peut-être, bien faire dans des cours offerts par l'IVTB. C'est pourquoi on devrait faire quand même une plus belle part aux jeunes de ces régions.

Je voudrais dire deux mots sur les problèmes de la drogue. Mon collègue, l'honorable Alan Ganoo, avait posé une question la dernière fois. Je lui avais dit d'ailleurs que peut-être il se trompe en posant cette question. Il avait demandé la situation par rapport à la vente de Subutex de 2005-2008, année par année. Normalement, M. le Président, avant l'introduction de la méthadone, quand les gens avaient vraiment besoin d'acheter de la drogue, on aurait pu

comprendre une augmentation graduelle. Mais, M. le président, avec le programme de méthadone, on s'attend à ce qu'il y ait une baisse dans la consommation du *Brown Sugar* ou de *Subutex*, etc Permettez que je vous donne les chiffres! En 2005, de juillet à décembre - pour six mois – il y eut 177 cas d'arrestations de *Subutex*, en 2006 : 820 ; 2007 : 805 et 2008 : 843. Et pour cette année-ci, durant les quatre mois, on a eu 311 cas d'arrestations liées au *Subutex*.

Donc, il y a un gros effort à faire pour contrôler le trafic. En ce qui concerne le *gandia*, maintenant c'est pire ! Mon collègue avait posé une question sur le cannabis également. De juillet à décembre 2005, il y eut 200 cas; en 2006 : 595, en 2007 : 709 ; 2008 : 754. Donc, le trafic de *subutex* a dépassé le trafic du *gandia*.

Pour le *Ring Road*, je fais un appel. Le *Leader* de l'opposition avait parlé de cette question ce matin. Nous connaissons cette région de Vallée Pitot et la route Militaire. Le ministre Bachoo avait dit qu'en temps et lieu on va consulter les gens parce qu'il sera question de démolir un certain nombre de maisons. Ma crainte, c'est qu'on avance avec le *procurement*, avec le *bidding exercice*, l'allocation du projet etc. et qu'ensuite on bute sur une résistance qui, quand même, sera assez importante de la part de ceux qui ont toujours vécu là, qui ont construit leurs maisons. Je crois que le *Leader* de l'opposition avait parlé d'arrangement et de compensation. Il ne faut pas trop attendre pour aller négocier avec ces personnes. Je crois qu'il faudrait, dès à présent, commencer à négocier, à leur faire comprendre l'utilité de ce *Ring Road*, - nous ne sommes pas contre - de son importance pour l'économie aussi bien que pour les habitants de l'endroit.

Je crois que j'ai dit tout ce que j'avais à dire, M. le président. Mais avant de terminer, je voudrais dire un dernier mot sur la question de la santé. Il y a eu plusieurs cas dernièrement liés au département de la gynécologie – où c'est presqu'une boucherie. J'en ai parlé au *Deputy Prime Minister* et au ministre Jeetah. Il devait partir le même jour, mais il a pris la peine de me téléphoner parce qu'il n'était pas disponible. Ensuite, j'en ai parlé à l'honorable Kasenally qui faisait la suppléance au ministère.

(Interruptions)

Pour une bonne cause ! Je n'hésite pas à contacter les ministres, à frapper à leur porte pour une bonne cause. Je ne voudrais pas m'étendre là-dessus, parce que le *Deputy Prime Minister* et le ministre suppléant se sont rendus à l'hôpital pour voir la gravité de la situation. Je vais revenir peut-être avec d'autres PQs ou m'adresser par la suite directement au ministre pour voir comment on peut y mettre bon ordre car ce qui se passe est inacceptable.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(2.36 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo): M. le président, j'ai écouté mon prédécesseur, qui a été au ministère de la sécurité sociale. Naturellement, il suit le pas de son *Leader* sur toute la philosophie qu'est le Budget 2009. On entend de nouveau des mots tels que 'léthargie', 'lenteur',

‘rien pour améliorer la qualité de la vie des plus vulnérables’. Mais ce qui m’étonne, c’est qu’il vient de nouveau créer la confusion en ce qu’il s’agit de l’enlèvement d’une pension totale et la compensation qu’on a à payer à un citoyen mauricien. C’est la confusion totale ! Mélanger deux choses totalement différentes : la pension, et encore plus, quand on enlève totalement une pension, et après, parler de la compensation à être accordée aux employés.

L’honorable membre parle aussi d’humilité. Certes, M. le président, l’humilité est la plus grande vertu. Je l’accepte. Mais il faut aussi arriver à comprendre et être assez humble pour reconnaître le tour de force du ministre des finances qui a présenté son budget, et qui a été primordialement un budget social, surtout en cette période de crise économique mondiale sans précédente.

Naturellement, au cours de mon intervention, je vais essayer de répondre à quelques points qui ont été soulevés par quelques membres de l’opposition, mais je voudrais d’abord dire, M. le président, que *the presentation of a Budget in itself is an important event in the economic life of a country. It assumes key importance for the different measures announced, which have a bearing on every economic and social sector and on every citizen.*

Donc, M. le président, dès l’arrivée du gouvernement de l’Alliance Sociale - c’était en juillet 2005 - le Premier ministre, l’honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, a su prendre le contrôle de la situation économique, mais chaotique, laissée par l’ancien régime - ce que nous avons essayé d’expliquer en 2005 et aussi la découverte des squelettes dans les placards - d’une situation sociale marquée par le désespoir. Le Premier ministre et son ministre des Finances, tous mes collègues ministres et les élus de l’Alliance Sociale, ensemble avec la population, nous nous sommes mis au travail pour essayer de renverser la vapeur, et nous l’avons fait. Avec la vision humaniste de notre Premier ministre pour un nouveau modèle de développement et pour une île Maurice durable, un modèle basé sur la démocratisation de l’économie, sur un ‘*pro-poor policy*’ pour réduire la pauvreté et les inégalités, le gouvernement a pu franchir les obstacles, grâce aux réformes entreprises, à la compétence d’une équipe gouvernementale, à la persévérance et aussi la solidarité de la population. Le pays est reconnu à la fois par la qualité et le sens de *leadership* de notre Premier ministre et de son succès économique. Cette reconnaissance est dûe, en grande partie aussi, à la qualité, M. le président, de la diplomatie économique, menée par le Premier ministre. Aujourd’hui, Maurice sort gagnante, les Nations Unies, les Etats Unis, l’Union Européenne, l’Inde, la Chine, les pays Africains et les pays Arabes reconnaissent en Maurice un pays phare sur le plan mondial. Prenons deux exemples pour m’expliquer. L’Union Européenne - par la voix de sa représentante à l’île Maurice en la personne de Madame Claudia Wiedey - nous a félicité à plusieurs reprises pour notre succès, succès marqué par la bonne gestion des affaires de l’Etat. Et, par la suite, mon collègue, le ministre des finances, continue, avec la représentante, de signer plusieurs protocoles d’aide.

Avec la visite de Son Excellence, Le Président Jintao de la République Populaire de Chine, en février 2009, on a eu des retombées très positives pour l’île Maurice. Malgré la récession mondiale et la perte d’environ 20 millions d’emplois dans son pays, il nous laisse une enveloppe de R 8.6 milliards pour soutenir notre effort du développement économique. Le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, avait même dit que c’est un événement historique - un grand succès pour la diplomatie économique mauricienne. Le Premier ministre disait aussi que la Chine n’est pas seulement un pays ami, mais elle se sent proche de nous de par les conditions sur lesquelles se sont établies les liens et, la Chine, finalement, a promis d’être à nos côtés pour surmonter la crise internationale.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment, hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen, for delivering such a masterly drumbeat of 200 positive measures in the 2009 Budget and with a National Plan of Action up to 2010 with such a strong conviction to save jobs, protecting people and to prepare ourselves for recovery.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that the road to development is a relentless struggle. *Il n'y a pas de baguette magique pour cela.* The key words to this struggle are: vision, competence, discipline, perseverance, national solidarity and, of course, with good governance. Still, there are other tasks that we have to pursue on our social and economic agenda to consolidate and modernise our economy and our country and to raise the standard of living of our people. This Budget will supply the oxygen of confidence to the economy and will give our people renewed hope for the future in the midst of the deepest recession in our lifetime the world economy is facing.

M. le président, nous allons maintenir la vigilance, même si jusqu'ici le pays doit faire face à la récession mondiale qui entraîne dans son sillage, des désastres économiques, la croissance négative, le chômage galopant, pertes d'emploi et gel des salaires, baisse du commerce international et recul des investissements auxquels sont confrontés d'autres pays.

This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, constitutes an Action Plan covering the period up to 2010, will go down in history as one with a special social focus on our strategy that aims to save jobs, to act on better social protection and to share the fruits of economic growth among the people in the prospect of recovery. So, once again, I wish to congratulate my friend, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Just a short flashback, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as from 2005. We remember the first Budget, presented by the hon. Minister of Finance which contained a wide range of major reform measures focusing on the opening up of the economy, investment facilitation, fiscal improvement and the consolidation of the socio-economic development while protecting the weaker sections of the population.

M. le président que n'a-t-on pas entendu avec les réformes ! Quelle campagne insidieuse, quelle attaque, quelle bassesse n'a-t-on pas témoignée, des attaques dirigées comme des missiles directement au ministre des Finances, l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen. Mais cela ne l'a pas empêché de poursuivre son chemin et de mener le pays à bon port. La caravane de la démocratisation de l'économie passe et fait son chemin. Quelques jours de cela, que n'a-t-on pas entendu dire, qu'il y a même eu un *razor blade shadow Cabinet Minister of Finance*, en croyant être *Superman*, leurrait son auditoire exprimant sa haine, son dégoût en insultant l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen qui, selon lui, enrichit les riches et ne fait rien pour les pauvres. M. le président, j'aurais aimé dire en ces mots, que le ministre des finances, l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen, ne fait pas de la politique pour remplir son coffre-fort, non plus pour devenir l'homme le plus riche de la région de l'océan indien. C'est cela le point important. Le Dr. Rama Sithanen, M. le président, a connu la misère ; comme jeune orphelin, il a toujours obtenu son bien par la force du poignet. La persévérance et la patience font de lui, aujourd'hui, un brillant économiste et aussi un vrai patriote quand il choisit de faire la politique pour servir son pays et mener, en même temps, ce combat d'une part contre la pauvreté et, d'autre part, pour faire notre pays, Ile Maurice, une Ile Maurice durable pour concrétiser le rêve de notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam.

Ceci dit, M. le président, these reform measures have led the economy to a higher growth path. The economy has been robust and balanced. Employment was being created at a higher rate than before 2005, budgetary deficit was reduced, our foreign exchange reserves and investment were on the rise with more and more of foreign direct investment injected in the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the first to the third budget of the *Alliance Sociale* Government, there has been an outstanding skillful action in policy formulation. The Government has been able to pursue with vigour and conviction the course charted out during the past three years and, at the same time, to distribute to the people the gains realised. Hon Dr. Rama Sithanen rightly said in February last: “*sans la réforme, Maurice serait déjà en récession*”. Heureusement qu’on n’est toujours pas là.

Indeed, this Government has turned the economy which was in such a bad shape in 2005, under the previous Government. Their *bilan* in July 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was a *bilan* of low growth rates, rising unemployment, contraction of export, high budget deficit and low rates of foreign investment. We turned it into one that has been growing at a steady pace. The Government broad-based and inclusive strategy, underpinned by empowerment and expanding the circles of opportunities, has benefited to a large number of people. The support to small entrepreneurs, with special attention to women entrepreneurs – here, I can’t understand when ladies from the other side just say that nothing has been done for poor women - so much of investment for women entrepreneurs, small planters and to the vulnerable for enabling them to look for the future in hope. Furthermore, social transfers in terms of increase of subsidy on rice and flour and cooking gas has contributed to mitigate the rise in the cost of living, taking care, at the same time, for the low income group families and the middle income group families.

Mais, en face de nous, M. le président, s’est installé un refus total de l’opposition d’accepter la réalité. Le vrai problème est que l’opposition ne veut nullement avoir l’honnêteté et la décence de consentir que le gouvernement a réalisé des performances économiques et sociales les plus honorables grâce à sa vision.

(Interruptions)

En privé oui, mais comme ça se dit ‘*lors caisse savon*’ non, on ne va pas le dire !

L’opposition dira toujours non aux mesures très avant-gardistes qui ont été prises, mais surtout à la solidarité que lui a témoignée la population. Je viens d’entendre l’honorable Lauthan. Ils vont dire toujours non. Ils ont fait une sortie à l’égard de mon collègue le ministre Dr. Arvind Boolell, mais nous allons continuer de dire qu’ils sont des prophètes de malheur, mais sans jamais avoir pu présenter au pays un plan alternatif.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, well before the effects of the world economic slowdown reached our country, this Government had adopted expansionary measures through the Additional Stimulus Package (ASP), stimulating the business activities, maintain economic growth and preserve jobs. It has embarked on fundamental structural reforms of the economy to make it more resilient and, at the same time, went on consolidation of the existing sectors and diversification into new sectors of strategic importance.

Bien avant que l’Opposition parlementaire MMM ait commencé à marteler la population avec son scénario pessimiste et à créer une psychose de catastrophe tels que “*budget de répétition*”, “*manque de cohérence*”, “*effet d’annonce*”, “*budget sans implémentation*” ou “*manière tardive* ” dans la préparation du budget, le gouvernement, dirigé par le Premier

ministre, l'honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, avait déjà pris les devants avec vigueur, ténacité et expliqué les différents scénarios prévisibles pour faire face à la crise mondiale. Bien sûr que le gouvernement appréhendait depuis plusieurs mois déjà les effets de cette crise et, avec justesse, a jeté un véritable éclairage à la population sur les difficultés économiques qui se profilaient à l'horizon.

C'est à juste titre que mon collègue, le ministre des finances, devait mentionner dans son discours du budget, *I quote* :

"We must not let this global recession, however deep and long, lessen our resolve to achieve greater heights of development. We must neither let it shrink our economic horizons nor set back the impressive social progress over the past four years".

D'ailleurs, le Premier ministre avait bien situé les avancées positives de la situation en précisant le 20 décembre 2008, je cite : "Si notre économie demeure résiliente, c'est grâce à la vision du gouvernement".

M. le président, pour ne pas être en reste, le leader de l'opposition parle à profusion de "crédibilité perdue", l'Alliance Sociale pour lui perd de crédibilité et "retard à mesurer les effets de la crise". Si j'ai choisi de commenter ces remarques, c'est avant tout de placer le débat dans sa juste perspective. Le leader de l'opposition se doute de la vision du gouvernement, mais il semble faire abstraction le fait que seules les réformes enclenchées depuis 2006 ont permis au pays de bénéficier de ce que nous avons appelé le *early harvest*, le *robust growth* et le *bumper crop*, qu'il veut faire croire être un *bumper flop*. Ces réformes, M le président, ont permis de payer le PRB intégral à tous les fonctionnaires, même à tous les membres de cette auguste Chambre et l'opposition aussi en a profité, tout le monde vous et moi. Le boni de fin d'année, le recrutement de 2000 policiers et aujourd'hui, la compensation intégrale de 5.1% proposée par le National Pay Council aux travailleurs dont le coût au pays avoisinerait les Rs1,4 milliard.

On comprend cette prise de position, parce que l'honorable *leader* de l'opposition n'a jamais pu digérer notre succès, M le président. Il n'accepte pas le décollage économique bien avant l'avènement de la crise mondiale. Il n'arrive pas à accepter ce décollage parce que déjà il avait parlé de l'état d'urgence économique sans précédent etc. C'est nous qui avons fait sortir le pays de ce marasme et qui nous a permis de connaître une croissance de 5.3 % en 2008. Plusieurs secteurs étaient en pleine expansion alors que d'autres pays se trouvaient en récession en cette période. Plus de 400 millions de personnes dans le monde perdent leur emploi. Pour reprendre les propres mots du *leader* de l'opposition, il dit souvent and *I quote* : '*history has also recorded*' et aujourd'hui aussi nous reprenons ses propres mots : '*history has also recorded*' que le gouvernement avait hérité de l'état d'urgence économique sans précédent sous l'ancien régime. Nous l'avons dit, nous l'avons expliqué et on va le redire tout au long.

Il y a eu des pertes d'emplois qui se chiffraient à plus de 40,000 dans le textile, 10,000 dans l'industrie sucrière, une baisse continue de la croissance soldée à seulement 2% en 2005, une hausse du déficit budgétaire à 5.3%, une dette publique de R118 milliards et une baisse considérable de l'investissement direct étranger. N'avons-nous pas entendu le *deputy leader* du MMM, l'hon. Jayen Cuttaree, déclarer à cette époque -"Nous constatons que les usines ferment leurs portes à une vitesse vertigineuse"? Et à cette époque, M. le président, il n'y avait pas de récession économique mondiale.

Et c'est le gouvernement de l'Alliance Sociale qui a grandement réduit le chômage pendant les trois années consécutives de 9.6% à 7.2 % et, en une seule année 2008, comme l'a précisé le ministre des finances, nous avons créé 19,400 emplois plus que le nombre de jobs créés par le précédent régime en quatre ans, de 2002 à 2005. Nous donnons le résultat d'une année. Nous avons créé 6000 emplois pour les femmes, chaque année, l'*Empowerment Programme*, la formation, la petite et moyenne entreprise et nous avons donné l'occasion à 6,000 emplois pour les femmes chaque année et nous l'avons fait pendant trois ans conséutivement. D'ailleurs, le nombre des sans-emplois a baissé de 25% depuis juillet 2005, ce qui est contraire de ce qui se passe dans tous les pays développés, que ce soit l'Europe, le Japon, La Chine, l'Inde ou d'autres pays encore. Il faut savoir, M. le président, que lorsque le premier ministre d'alors, et aujourd'hui leader de l'Opposition, avait parlé 'd'état d'urgence économique', notre pays n'était nullement affecté par la récession mondiale telle que l'on fait face actuellement. Donc la question que nous posons : que serait-il arrivé, M. le président, s'il était au pouvoir quand la récession battait son plein comme c'est actuellement en Europe, aux Etats Unis et ailleurs? Certes, le risque aurait été que le pays se serait déjà enfoncé dans la récession et sa chute en 2005 aurait été imaginable. *It would have been a more dramatic failure for the former Government.* Cela aurait été le chaos total.

M. le président, le budget parle de *saving jobs*. Nous avons essayé de brosser un tableau pour expliquer que *le world economy faces today the biggest rise in unemployment in decades*. Le bureau international du travail avance le chiffre de 100 millions de perte d'emploi cette année. Même les derniers chiffres cités sont 253 millions de perte d'emploi cette année.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, joblessness evokes misery and despair and we do not want to see that for our country and for our citizen. Public policy has a vital part in alleviating the suffering of those who cannot get a job. It depends of our policy. We can create opportunities for them and we want them to secure a job, a decent job, a decent way and a decent salary. We need to save their jobs in this particular moment. Thanks again to various schemes, unemployment may no longer plunge our people into poverty and destitution. In Mauritius, we are currently witnessing a major transition from the old type of industrial society with its traditional dominance of unskilled workers to a growing proportion of a labour force with a higher standard of skill development. This is what we are aiming at. There is a significant reduction in the number of people working in operation role while employment in professional knowledge based role has increased. In the short term, policy effects have been directed at mitigating the effects of the economic slowdown on our enterprises and on our development employment opportunities and, for the longer term, policy actions to promote improved resilience of enterprises, social and economic progress, financial stability and the employment security.

Nevertheless, someone who loses his job has the opportunity to use short-term assistance from workers and social safety nets through stimulus package to industry. In a sense, the Action Plan 2009 aims at keeping people at work rather than subsidising unemployment. For now, the damage is under control. The Minister of Finance puts it in his Budget, "there has been a net job creation of some 9000 with total employment rising from 508,000 to 517,000". In Mauritius, the latest official figures recorded, as I said earlier, show a downward trend since 2005 from an unemployment rate of 9.6% to 7.2% in 2008.

Employment increased to nearly 17,000 from 502,100 in 2007 to 519,000 in 2008. Even the euro zone unemployment rate is on the increase. In January 2008/ 2009 it has gone up to 8.2% compare to 7.2% in 2008. With the world economic downturn, Government is trying to do

its best for the protection of jobs as it is often said that decent employment represents the best form of social protection against poverty.

M. le président, nous vivons actuellement dans un monde très vulnérable. Le chômage déshumanise. L'emploi, en contrepartie, accorde la dignité aux travailleurs. Mais l'opposition veut nous faire croire que notre cas est unique aujourd'hui. C'est seulement à Maurice que tout cela se passe. Il est malheureux de constater que certains veulent absolument créer un climat de découragement et de panique dans le pays. On a trop tendance à croire que les problèmes de récession liés à la perte d'emploi sont purement mauriciens. On subit comme on subit une fatalité. M. le président, ce sont des problèmes "*made in the USA and in Europe*" et ce ne sont pas des problèmes "*made in Mauritius*". Mais avec notre économie résiliente, on s'en sortira. Nous le résoudrons dans un élan de solidarité et d'effort de tout un chacun. Avec les réformes dans le monde du travail, le gouvernement met en place un nouveau contrat social pour pouvoir aider à la protection de l'emploi et aux entreprises en difficulté.

In the same vein, it is most important to continue the growth momentum of the economy, in spite of the fact that we are apprehending a slight drop in the manufacturing and tourism sector due to the effect of the global economic slowdown. I wish here to congratulate my friend, the Vice -Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, hon. Xavier Duval, for his *clairvoyance* and indeed bold initiatives taken in the tourist sector for promoting Mauritius as a tourist destination. Even the IMF stated that we should consider ourselves lucky with a reduced economic growth in 2009.

Ceci dit, M. le président, le deuxième volet du discours du budget de mon collègue le ministre des finances aborde notre politique de protection sociale.

Despite a lower growth, social protection, such as, education, housing, health, Empowerment Programme will continue to be a critical policy intervention for us. Assistance to poor families, pensioners, elderly, disabled, widows, orphans, SC/HSC subsidies, income support to families will always be our priorities. We are politically duty-bound and also as a moral obligation to pursue this policy for these people.

Indeed, the issue of purchasing power has been one of the comments of Opposition Members several times. But let me remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and Members of the House, one of the first measures announced in the context of the Stimulus Package by the Prime Minister concerned the need to protect the purchasing power of the population and, more particularly, that of households of the low-income group and of the middle-income class. In fact, it must be recalled that the Prime Minister announced the reduction of price of flour, bread and cooking gas in December 2008. The price of flour was reduced from Rs6.90 per half kilo to Rs5.85 and the price of a loaf of bread of 100 grams was reduced from Rs2.65 to Rs2.50. On the other hand, the price of cooking gas for a cylinder of 12 kilos was reduced from Rs315 to Rs300. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, without the intervention of this caring Government, the price of flour would have risen to Rs10.20 per half kilo before 20 December 2008. Government kept the price at Rs.6.90 per half kilo by ensuring a cross-subsidy to the tune of Rs683 m. It further reduced this price to Rs5.85 after 20 December 2008. Isn't this protecting the low-income group and the middle income group?

Similarly, without a subsidy, the price of cooking gas would have been around Rs550 for a cylinder of 12 kilo. The price to the consumer had been kept at Rs.315 before 20 December 2008 because a subsidy of Rs614 m. and, after December, it was further reduced to Rs300. These

measures provide immediate relief to those in the low-income and medium-income bracket, thus increasing their purchasing power.

Let me now come to some of the social safety nets that are implemented by the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity. M. le président, je me permets de rappeler à la Chambre que la politique sociale ne concerne pas uniquement la compensation. C'est cela que je disais au début de mon discours. Il y a toute une confusion en mélangeant pension et compensation : deux choses totalement différentes. La politique sociale va au delà de la compensation et mon collègue l'a dit l'autre jour à la réponse dans un PNQ et dans les budgets successifs depuis 2005, le gouvernement a fait provision pour le paiement d'une compensation, et en parallèle, accordé une augmentation aux diverses prestations sociales. C'est cela qu'on oublie. On ne parle que de la compensation. Il y a toute une gamme de prestation sociale envers les plus défavorisés. D'ailleurs, mardi dernier au Parlement, le ministre des finances avait avancé le chiffre de 250,000 comme étant le nombre de bénéficiaires d'aide sociale, incluant ceux bénéficiant des pensions, qui obtiendront la compensation de 5.1%.

Peut-être en parlant de couverture sociale, l'opposition semble bien souvent porter des visières. L'aveuglement partisan, sinon pathologique, de l'honorable *leader* de l'opposition nous surprend lorsqu'il a fait référence dans son intervention à ce qu'il appelle les "laissés-pour-compte du budget 2009". M. le président, pendant les premières 20 minutes de son intervention mardi dernier - il n'a fait que répéter les mêmes mots. Permettez-moi de les citer: les retraités, les pensionnés, les veuves, les orphelins, les handicapés sont, selon lui, les laissés-pour-compte du budget présenté par le ministre des Finances, l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen. Une simple analyse s'articule autour de plusieurs contradictions qui animent le champ politique de cette opposition. Pour lui, rafraîchir la mémoire, ce serait bon de rappeler que le gouvernement fait tout en faveur des groupes vulnérables pour leur assurer de meilleures protections sociales et leur intégration dans la société. Pour ainsi dire, le gouvernement a la capacité de créer, chaque année, une dynamique de mobilisation financière et des mesures sociales concrètes afin de soutenir les veuves, les personnes handicapées, les orphelins, les mères-célibataires et les pensionnés, donc, nos *grand-dimounes*, les personnes âgées. Ce gouvernement est *committed*, M. le président, à assurer de meilleures protections sociales. Mais on ne voit que pension, sinon compensation. On oublie la haute gamme de *benefits*. J'étais moi-même choquée, quand j'ai pris la responsabilité au ministère de la sécurité sociale, quand j'ai vu cette gamme de prestation sociale accordée aux plus vulnérables.

J'aurai voulu prendre trois exemples. D'abord, le *social aid*. Social Aid benefits have not only been increased by an overall of 5.1%, but, in other cases, social aids have gone up to 10%. Cela a commencé par 5.1%, d'autres séries de groupes vulnérables 10%, une autre série de groupes défavorisés: 15% et une autre série encore: 40%. There is today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 38701 personnes equivalent à 14471 familles on the Social Aid list of the Ministry of Social Security.

Let us see and examine together what a Social Aid beneficiary gets from the 2009 Budget. Let us take one example - social aid. *L'exemple d'une famille de six personnes* comprising the head of household, who is sick, cannot work, therefore, he benefits from social aid. He has his wife and four children. Jusqu'à juin 2009, c'est-à-dire, l'année 2008/2009, cette famille bénéficie d'une série de *benefits* comme cela se dit. The head of household: Rs959, the spouse: Rs959, the child under ten years: Rs373. Il a deux enfants âgés de 10 ans et 15 ans respectivement. Le taux change, il a deux fois Rs456, cela fait Rs912. Il a un enfant 15 ans à 20

ans, le *ceiling* change, l'enfant reçoit Rs569. Le total est Rs3572 mensuellement. Là-dessus, s'il loue une maison, il a un *benefit de rent allowance* de 50%. Il va jouir à peu près dans les Rs723, qui fait un total de Rs4,475.

Ce n'est pas fini! La famille, composée de six personnes, reçoit aussi un *income support* de R100. R600 additionnée au total nous fait la somme de R5,095. A partir du 01 juillet 2009, cela augmentera par 5.1% sur toute une gamme de *benefits*. Pour le mois de juillet 2009, cela nous donnera un total de R4,724. Le *income support* augmente par R15 par personne et avec les six personnes, cela nous fait la somme de R609.90 et un total de R5,414. *The overall increase is, in fact, 6,2% given that the income support has increased by 15%*. M. le président, *are these families des laissés-pour-compte du budget de l'honorable Rama Sithanen as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition?*

Je prends un deuxième exemple - les *single mothers*. Une nouvelle mesure budgétaire en juillet de l'année dernière a été prise à leur sujet. Je suis d'accord qu'il y a eu très peu de demandes, mais il faudra consolider la campagne pour faire comprendre aux *single mothers* que même si elles ont le *social aid*, elles peuvent aussi bien travailler, mais ne dépassant pas un salaire de R 7500 et tout en contribuant au NPF. Je prends, comme exemple, un *single mother* avec deux enfants, un âgé de trois ans et l'autre de six ans. Elle travaille, elle a un salaire de R3000 et elle reçoit, en même temps, le *social aid*. Elle contribue au plan national. L'année dernière, 2008/2009, une mère célibataire a reçu R959 et ses deux enfants deux fois la somme de R373. Elle avait le droit d'avoir un *special allowance* pour son enfant au taux de R700 pour pouvoir le mettre à l'école. Cela a fait un total de R2405. Elle a aussi reçu un *income support* de R100 multipliée par trois, qui fait un total de R2705 pour l'année écoulée. A partir de juillet 2009, cette même *single mother* va toucher, à elle seule, son *allowance* qui sera augmenté par 10% et non 5.1%. Elle aura R1055. Ses deux enfants auront chacun R410. Son *allowance* de R700 augmente à R1000, ce qui veut dire que les deux enfants auront R2000, mais à condition qu'ils soient admis dans un *preschool* ou au primaire. Cela fait un total R3,875 et ajouté à cela le *income support* – R115 X 3 - donnant un total de R4220. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these beneficiaries will receive an increase of 56% representing Rs1,515 as from July 2009. Ne venez pas maintenant nous dire que ces personnes défavorisées ont été les laissés-pour-compte du budget de l'honorable ministre des finances ! M. le président, je voudrais que chaque membre de cette Chambre - du côté de l'opposition aussi bien que du côté du gouvernement - comprenne et qu'il puisse aussi expliquer à son électorat, que *the age limit for entitlement to the special allowance of Rs1000 per child has been increased to 7 years*. Auparavant, cela se limitait de 0 à 5 ans. A partir du 01 juillet, ce sera de 0 à 7 ans. It is to allow the mother to take a job and after school hours, a primary school child of standard I, II and III can also be admitted in a *garderie* and when the mother finishes her work at 4.30 or 5.00 p.m., she comes and picks her child. At the time the mother is working, the Government takes care of the child and it is less worries for the mother. Est-ce que vous pouvez appeler ce gouvernement 'un gouvernement sans cœur' ? L'opposition va encore nous dire que ce sont des laissés-pour-compte du budget surtout quand on parle des mères célibataires ! Le MMM a été très avant-gardiste sur la protection des femmes mais, aujourd'hui, ils ne comprennent absolument rien du tout ce que nous faisons dans le budget pour ces mères célibataires.

Le ministre des finances s'est prononcé aussi sur les *abandoned women*. C'est triste. Qui sont ces *abandoned women* ? Il y a à peu près 5171 *abandoned women registered on the list of social aid* dans notre pays. Cela doit intéresser ma collègue, le ministre des droits de la femme,

l'honorable Indira Seebun, Pourquoi sont-elles venues vers la sécurité sociale? Parce qu'elles ont été abandonnées. Et par qui ? Par leur partenaire. Ils se sont séparés. Ils ont divorcé. Donc le budget prend soin de ces *abandoned women*. C'est triste, M. le président, de voir des *abandoned women*. Il y a 5,000 cas sur la liste. Les enfants de ces femmes vont bénéficier d'une augmentation de 10% et non pas 5.1%. Une femme abandonnée ayant deux enfants âgés de trois ans et de six ans va bénéficier d'un *rent allowance* et d'un *income support* dont le total sera R2,705. Cela augmentera par 10% à partir du 01 juillet 2009. La maman recevra R1055 et les deux enfants auront R410 X 2, mais l'innovation que le ministre a faite est que les enfants des familles pauvres auront leur *allowance* jusqu'à l'âge de 20 ans. Nous voulons promouvoir l'éducation tertiaire. Mon collègue, le ministre de l'éducation, se réjouit.. A partir de maintenant l'âge de ces enfants ne sera plus de 0 à 20 ans, mais de 0 à 23 ans. Ce qui veut dire que l'enfant de 21 ans aura aussi R626 en plus du *rent* et le *income support* par quatre, ce qui fera R3631. It has been increased by 38%, M. le président. Avec cet *age limit* de *child allowance increase*, le *income support* augmenté par R15, fera R115. Voilà ce qui se passe quand il s'agit de donner le maximum aux personnes qui sont les plus démunies.

Comme je viens de dire, M. le président, nous avons eu, pour l'année écoulée, à peu près 98,000 personnes récipiendaires de l'*income support*. Nous savons tous que le *food aid* auparavant à R40 par membre a été augmenté à R100. Le *income support* de R85 par membre a été augmenté aussi à R100. A partir du 01 juillet 2009, le *total income support* de cette année-ci va être augmenté par 15%, ce qui nous amènerait à R115 par personne. Il y a bien souvent une confusion. Ce n'est pas un *income support* par famille, M. le président ; c'est un *income support* de R115 pour chaque membre de la famille, même si c'est un enfant âgé d'un an, un jeune de quinze ans, un adulte, une personne âgée. Pour tout ce monde, ce sera R115 par membre de la famille. Voilà comment tout cela se passe.

Autre chose intéressante : c'est le *child allowance*. I want to, once more, convey my thanks and appreciation to my colleague the Minister of Finance for having at heart the education of children of poor families. Why cannot a child of a poor family background, benefiting from social aid, not get the chance of pursuing higher studies?

So, to encourage these poor children to pursue higher education, the age limit - *comme je venais de le dire, tout à l'heure* - has been increased from 20 years to 25 years.

Le ministère de la Sécurité Sociale prend soin aussi des orphelins. Que c'est triste de voir les orphelins qui ont perdu leurs parents ! Ils n'ont pas de mères ni de pères. Ils sont des orphelins.

L'année dernière, en 2007/2008, ce que l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen avait fait sous le *leadership* du Premier ministre, l'honorable Dr. Ramgoolam était une grande première. Je me demande, peut-être que tout le monde se rappelle que la pension des orphelins avait doublé. On n'a jamais fait cela à l'île Maurice. Cela n'a pas augmenté de 2%, 3% ou 5%, cela a doublé à 100%, c'est-à-dire, cela sortait de R 1,180 par orphelin pour venir à R 2,360 par orphelin. En 2008, *there is another increase* parce qu'on avait donné la compensation. *Our Government is bringing another increase today at 5.1%* et l'orphelin à R 2,703 qui représente un increase of R 131. Et je dois dire ici qu'une somme d'environ R 13 millions a été déboursée en faveur de 380 orphelins pour l'année écoulée.

Concerning the school allowance, ce fut l'innovation par ce gouvernement. Il y a une nouvelle mesure budgétaire. Dans le Budget Speech, le ministre avait dit –

"This Government is going to grant one-off payment of Rs400 per child to all the beneficiaries of Social Aid."

On sait que janvier est le mois de crise. Il y a la noël, les fêtes de décembre, les enfants vont à l'école en janvier, il faut acheter les sacs, les cahiers, les matériaux scolaires, les chaussures, chaussettes et uniformes. Les familles pauvres sont en crise. Donc, vers la fin de décembre, chaque enfant reçoit Rs400 pour pouvoir faire les achats de *school materials*. Nous avons à peu près 10,722 enfants pauvres qui ont bénéficié de ce *school allowance*. L'année dernière la somme a atteint Rs436 par enfants et cela nous a fait débourser une somme totale de R 4.7 millions pour ces enfants. En plus de cela, les enfants handicapés ont reçu trois différents *special allowance* de Rs300, ce qui fait R 900 par mois pour aider ces enfants pour les visites chez le médecin, le transport, les couches qui coûtent cher. Tout cela est fait par un *caring Government*, mené par le Premier ministre où le budget est dirigé par le ministre des finances.

The Government has dared to act in a timely and adequate manner. It was Mahatma Gandhi who said that 'success comes to those who dare and act'. I have no doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that with daring act, we are on the right path to limit the adverse consequences of the global meltdown.

Concernant le BRP, la pension de retraite, c'est un chapitre que le Premier ministre ...

(Interruptions)

Ne partez pas! Un peu de patience, je termine!

C'est un chapitre que nous - le ministre et les membres du gouvernement de l'Alliance Sociale - tenons vraiment à cœur parce que nous avons le respect de ces personnes et nous reconnaissions les sacrifices et le travail dur qu'ils ont faits quand ils étaient jeunes.

M. le président, je suis allée me documenter un peu, j'ai vu the Father of the Nation, late SSR. He was a man of his time.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Bappoo: Of all times! Even if he is not here, his vision is still being implemented. During his studies in London, he had a vision for Mauritius. Apart from political and economic reforms, he pledged for social protection for the elderly and the most vulnerable. He introduced the old-age pension. Today, we call it the Basic Retirement Pension.

(Interruptions)

Honorables membres, *il faut un peu de respect pour feu Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam*. He said at that time, I quote –

"Pensions for aged people, sickness benefits are the social services which should be provided and which are the only guarantees for the working class in a civilised society."

Today, at the head of a caring Government, *Alliance Sociale*, his son, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister pushed this vision further and twice in his first mandate after 1995, increased the BRP by 48% and brought it to Rs1000 in March 1996 and by 30% in July

1998 to Rs1300 and finally, to Rs1500 in July 2000. My colleague, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, was the then Minister of Finance. In August 2005, the Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, during his second mandate, amended the National Pension Act and restored the BRP to every citizen on a universal basis. Even the retirement age for our working citizens has been increased to 65 years, yet the Prime Minister has maintained the old-age pension at 60 years for all Mauritian citizens. And today, a person at the age of 60 is receiving his old age pension of Rs2802 per month. As from July, this will be increased to Rs 2945. R 143 d'augmentation, M. le président, je ferai une petite comparaison tout à l'heure. Now a person between 90 years and below 100 is benefiting Rs8335 per month. As from 01 July 2009, he will receive a pension of Rs8760, that is, 5.1% increase. A centenarian is currently receiving Rs9,461 per month. As from 01 July 2009, he will be paid Rs9,944 per month, that is, Rs559 increase. In addition to that, he gets his carer's allowance increase Rs1,856 and Rs859 for medical expenses plus a free visit by the doctor at his residence. In spite of difficult economic situation, the payment of universal pension has been maintained and the increase has been granted to all beneficiaries of widows, orphans, elderly and disabled. *Pour cela, qu'avait fait l'ancien régime pour nos ainés?*

It is to be noted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that when the former regime took over in September 2000, the pension was increased by a mere Rs75. Aujourd'hui, il y a une augmentation de R 143. In September 2000, it increased by a mere Rs75. When the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance, cela ne représentait que 5% et, à cette époque, pas de récession mondiale mais que Rs75 d'augmentation. After that, *when the wind of recession was far away from them, in July 2002, ce même BRP n'a augmenté que par R 90.* Une fois R 75 et après R 90, pas de récession mondiale à cette époque. Mais M. le président, comment allons-nous appeler cette politique ? Comment allons-nous qualifier cette politique de ce gouvernement d'alors ? Est-ce que c'était des laissés-pour-compte ? C'est à nous maintenant de dire 'domineur', voilà des laissés-pour-compte du Budget de 2002/2003, etc. de l'ancien régime. Pour eux, et de l'autre côté, les gros ont bénéficié R 6 milliards - cinq familles - et les ainés R 75, R 90 d'augmentation.

M. le président, le pays a connu le fameux épisode de ciblage de la pension de vieillesse en 2004, ce qui avait traumatisé nos ainés et nos 130,000 pensionnés. Ils devaient soumettre des formulaires compliqués et déclarer leurs avoirs, sous la menace d'emprisonnement. Pour certains de nos '*banne grands dimounes*', le choc a été fatal. Beaucoup d'entre eux étaient privés injustement de leur pension pendant plusieurs mois et, M. le président, tout ce chamboulement, toute cette mascarade politique du gouvernement précédent, c'était pour ôter la pension à 3,000 personnes de la liste des bénéficiaires. C'était une économie de bouts de chandelle ! Sur un budget de plus de R 3.3 milliards à cette époque, consacré au paiement de la pension de vieillesse, le gouvernement d'alors n'a économisé que R 30 millions entre décembre 2004 à juin 2005. Cela a engendré des coûts administratifs s'élevant à R 3 millions.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : Order please !

Mrs Bappoo: R 3 millions de coûts administratifs, c'est ça qu'on appelle un gaspillage des fonds publics, traumatisant les personnes âgées, causant une pression sur les fonctionnaires du ministère de la sécurité sociale, et finalement, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : Order please ! Hon. Lauthan!

Mrs Bappoo : ...at the end of the day, le précédent Premier ministre et son ministre de la Sécurité Sociale avaient dû présenter des excuses aux pensionnés et à la population. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we want to put only one question to the Leader of the Opposition and the former Minister of Social Security: would the country have been bankrupt - *parce qu'il avait posé cette question au ministre des finances l'autre jour* - if the old age pension to 3,000 pensioners were maintained, as only Rs30 m. were only saved?

(Interruptions)

Voilà toute l'histoire du *old age pension*. M. le président le *Chief Whip* me fait signe que le temps est limité, mais je voudrais dire quelque chose sur les *disabled*. Je ne sais si je dois m'arrêter ici, pour continuer ensuite après la pose-thé, ou vous me donnez la permission de continuer.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister would be taking the time of others. It is up to you to choose.

Mrs Bappoo: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker : Others' time would be deducted

Mrs Bappoo: As Minister of Social Security and National Solidarity, of course, I am looking forward for the development of a modernised and social protection sector for the vulnerable through the upgrading of pension procedures and payment, and through the promotion of new strategies to strengthen the institutional capacities and technical support. The country is moving forward to the most testing period in its history that requires exceptional initiatives. My Ministry has been assigned responsibility to better integrate the vulnerable, the poor, the disabled persons among others, in the mainstream of development. My Ministry is working closely with the Ministry of Finance and the UNDP for the setting up of a Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) with the objectives to better targeting the beneficiaries of social programmes and to better harmonising the criteria for the different social programmes run by different Ministries and to analyse cyclical and structural poverty alleviation policies.

Insofar as the disability sector is concerned, my Ministry has elaborated an Action Plan. There was no Action plan for the Ministry of Social Security on the disability sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We want to give a new direction to the disability sector, upgrade its capability to better serve persons with disabilities. The motto of my Ministry is "Valuing People with Disabilities". The Government will, hopefully, be ratifying soon the UN Convention on the rights of the disabled persons after having signed it in 2007. Disabled persons have been nominated on various Boards so that they can participate in decision taking for the improvement of their quality of life. All the disabled activists *militent pour le slogan* and they believe in it, and I believe in it too. It is: "Nothing about us without us". They must be allowed to speak. They are disabled people, they must have their chance. They must be allowed to speak of their needs, how they need to improve to be empowered. So, we have named them on the various Boards taking care of the disability sector. My Ministry is working with UNDP. A consultant has already been commissioned to my Ministry for the development of a database on disability. There was no database for disability. We are now having the assistance of UNDP to help us. Regarding training and employment, there is a good networking between my Ministry and the MEF to enhance the potential and the employability of persons with disabilities. The IVTB,

SEHDA and HRDC on relevant strategies partnership have been working with us to respond to the needs of people with disabilities. They have been trained and they are having employment opportunities. There has been a very good response from companies to recruit people with disabilities on their payroll. A number of companies like Infinity, BAI, Barclays, HSBC and MHC have each recruited some 10 disabled persons on their payroll. Government, through the MPI, is working on specifications for low floor buses to be purchased at the tune of Rs250 m. earmarked for that purpose under the *l'île Maurice Durable* Fund. We are furthermore taking appropriate action and this will please candidates for the next election. We are working with the Electoral Commissioner's Office and the Electoral Supervisory Commission with a view to making voting procedures more disabled-friendly at the ground floor level and have accessible room, will be reserved for disabled persons to go and participate in the procedures of election.

We are embarking on a Respite Care Programme. We have got land which we have acquired at La Marie; we have had a Consultant from the Leonard Cheshire International. He was in Mauritius for the last month and he has worked out on the concept of the project which will be a Respite Care Centre for disabled people.

Le support aux personnes âgées constitue un des axes prioritaires de mon ministère. La philosophie du gouvernement repose sur le concept que nos ainés aient leur place dans la société et se sentent en sécurité tout en leur accordant une retraite saine et sereine.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Government programme says - and I quote from it -

'My Government's policy underpinned by a deeply humanist philosophy and determination to ensure that our elders enjoy dignity and respect in their retirement.'

Le 21ème siècle fait actuellement face à une société vieillissante. Les démographes annoncent un taux de vieillissement de 35.1% en Europe et de 21.4% dans le monde, dont Maurice. La population vieillissante augmentera à la fois dans le moyen et long terme ainsi les plus ainés constitueront un taux plus élevé de la population vieillissante qu'ils le sont actuellement.

Par exemple, la projection officielle indique que cette population vieillissante sera doublée dans les 20 prochaines années et triplée d'ici 2047 pour atteindre quelques 362,712 personnes. L'impact économique et social devient ainsi conséquent.

For the first time, since the advent of civilisation, people aged 65 and over will outnumber children under five years and Mauritius is no exception to this global demographic trend. The national ageing trend, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 1972, the percentage of elderly population was 6%; in 2000 9%, in 2009, it will be 10% and 20% estimated in 2037. So, we have to work hard. Parmi les mesures initiées par le ministère, ce serait l'établissement d'une *carer's strategy* pour mieux mesurer l'impact bio-psycho-social du vieillissement, mettre en place des mesures d'accompagnement en terme de loisir et de leurs prises en charge, établir un programme de formation pour les *carers*, c'est-à-dire, les aides-soignantes afin de répondre à la demande croissante de ce type de métier dans le pays. C'est en grande demande ces jours-ci. Les familles veulent embaucher des aides-soignantes.

Cette initiative va créer des opportunités d'emploi. Mon ministère travaille en étroite collaboration avec celui de la santé, dans le cadre d'une politique intégrée pour le bien être des personnes âgées affectées par les pathologies du vieillissement and, last but not least , il va de la reconnaissance bien méritée pour le Gouvernement de pouvoir offrir ce deuxième centre récréatif et de loisir situé à Belle-Mare au coût de Rs117 m. Ce matin, mon collègue, l'hon Anil Bachoo, a parler d'un cinq étoiles. Le Premier ministre, à l'occasion de son bilan de 100 jours en 2005, parlait de ce projet. J'entends des commentaires qui disent qui disent qu'il y a du retard sur l'implémentation. Mais, je vous assure, M. le président, que c'est un projet qui va terminer avec la construction et tout avant la fin du terme du contrat de ce contracteur. Nous allons inaugurer ce centre avec tout le monde.

Nous travaillons aussi sur la création d'un observatoire sur la gérontologie et tout cela pour vous dire, M. le président, qu'au Gouvernement, nous croyons fermement à l'idée de vieillissement de notre population et cela ne doit être nullement un fardeau de la société si elle est bien planifiée.

I wanted to deal with the CSR, but I think my colleague, the Minister of Finance, has made it very good in having in his Budget Speech mentioned about profitable firms to either spend 2% of their profits on CSR activities approved by Government or to transfer the funds to Government to be used in the fight against poverty, priority sectors like education, social, housing, HIV AIDS, prevention, disability, elderly, abandoned children, women in distress etc.

Je dois bien faire le point, M le président. Nous travaillons de tout temps avec les ONG. Les ONG sont des partenaires très importants pour le développement sur le plan social, mais, bien sûr, parfois on constate des manquements et une certaine faiblesse de la part des ONG. Il y a manque de compétence, de formation, de pouvoir préparer des projets pour soumettre aux compagnies et aux sponsors etc. This CSR programme is coming at the right time. We want also to strengthen the NGO sector. We are working with the UNDP and we want to complete the project of strengthening the NGO sector. The Budget makes provision for the setting up of a Non-Actors State Unit.

I would like to thank my colleague for providing Rs2 m. to NSA (Non State Actors) project. I want to assure the House that my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance have already started on the implementation. A Programme Manager will be recruited soon. The UNDP will provide technical expertise for the setting up of this Non-State Actors Unit in my Ministry. We want to have, of course, appropriate monitoring and evaluation system which will be set in place to ensure value for money, transparency and accountability on the part of all NGO's.

We have spared no efforts to establish a strong NGO sector in Mauritius. The strengthening of the NGO sector is a project that has been made possible with the collaboration of the UNDP and MACOSS. The object of the project is to review all the legal framework of NGO's. They will have also to review the CSR responsibility policy. This will form the backbone of the national NGO policy and as regards the NGO academy mentioned in the Government programme, a portion of land to the extent of two acres has already been invested to my Ministry at Ebène triangle. The NGO academy will house the MACOSS Headquarters and soon I have been informed they will be embarking on this project. It will comprise a resource training centre, a conference centre with residential facilities.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we have Rs14 billion for our Action Plan to save jobs, protecting people and prepare for recovery, we need to act with lot of vigilance and do our best

to protect our citizens who are men, women, children, elderly and disabled people. As a caring Government, we have given more attention to the most vulnerable and needy families so that they are protected from the global recession. We have the confidence, we are committed to hard work and as true patriots, we need to save our country. This is our goal and for this, we need stability, political stability to pursue our work ahead.

I will just end with these three policies. We can make it, we have proved ourselves and we shall succeed.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(16:00 p.m)

Ms K. R. Deepalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start by congratulating the Vice-Prime Minister and hon. Minister of Finance for the Budget and Action Plan he presented to the House about a week ago.

Under the current prevailing conditions, it is indeed a good budget overall. I think he has done the best he can to navigate on a very difficult *terrain*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that although the population, as a whole, has understood that these days we are not in a ‘business as usual mode’, some Members of the Opposition have yet to wake up and realise that the world has experienced, over the last year or so, a most remarkable unraveling of a tenacious worldview - which we now know - was based on completely false, and misleading assumptions.

We are indeed living through rare historical moments where the world is witnessing the collapse of a worldview. Nobel academics had thought that they had cracked how markets worked and the world was hijacked with two theories - Rationale Expectations and Efficient Markets - which together, were supposed to be like a theory of everything. The great scandal of our time is the fact that these two theories have now been acknowledged to be totally false. As George Soros puts it, and I quote –

‘The prevailing paradigm that markets tend toward equilibrium, and deviation from it are random, is both false and misleading.’

As I said, a tenacious worldview has disintegrated. But, what will replace it? No one quite knows yet. At least, in 1543, when Nicolas Copernicus shook the world by postulating that the planets turned around the sun and not around the earth, as everyone had previously believed for the 10 preceding centuries, he had already started the Copernican Revolution which later was completed by Isaac Newton when he provided an explanation which showed that planets actually are kept in their orbit by the force of gravity. As I said, we don’t yet have a full view of what is going to replace the worldview that has disintegrated in front of our eyes. The Minister of Finance has done his best against this historically unprecedented backdrop and within the local terrain on which we can manoeuvre our economy.

However, as the crisis threatens to steal the winds from under our sails, it also provides us with a not-to-be-missed opportunity to conduct a major rethink of this very local terrain. We must seize this opportunity to think about long-term fixes that need to be brought to our systemic problems of labour productivity - hon. Bodha talked about that - of the level of knowledge and

skills of our labour force and the problem of using the exchange rate as a proxy for inherent competitiveness. No later than today or yesterday, we saw somebody in the paper saying that we should devalue our currency. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir we cannot continue like that, this is the inherent systemic weakness in our system. For forty years, since independence that is what we have been doing, using currency as a proxy for competitiveness. This cannot go on, therefore, my intervention, today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will be focused on the areas which are mentioned in the Budget and which need a major rethink if we want to put our best foot forward for the future.

The structure of my intervention will be as follows. I will start with some statistical facts that underpin our socio-economic fabric. Then I will try to look at an analysis of three of the aspects that I think need a rethink, namely our public sector, our private sector, the structure of our labour force and this is inextricably linked with our education system. I will then make five proposals which will flow out of my analysis.

In a nutshell, I am going to argue that in order for us to make any future truly transformational leap, whatever new paradigm unfolds at the global level, we must be able to turn washing machines into laptops. This is a terrible oversimplification and I will explain later, but I say this Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because when you look at the latest Household Budget Survey, it shows that over the five preceding years, the ownership of washing machines in households have increased from 39% to 61%, whereas the ownership of a PC went from 13% to 26%; that is why I am saying we should turn washing machines into laptops, but I will explain more on that later on.

Before I continue, let me just take a few minutes to comment on some other things that have been said on the other side of the House. I won't be long on that. Some Members of the Opposition, for example, hon. Dulloo has mentioned 1982. They think that by so doing, they will score some points on the Labour Party. Because they believed that lies repeated over and over again will be converted into truth. This is not the case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Regarding hon. Dulloo's intervention, I am not going to talk about those days when buses carrying people to work and students to school, had to be protected by materials normally used for fencing fields because it was as if they were being transported like prisoners. I am not going to talk about the cases when our electric network was sabotaged by some people by throwing bicycle chains on bare CEB wires. I am not going to talk about the cases of arsons in sugar cane fields. I am not going to talk about the sheer blackmail year in year out of unlawful strikes just before 31 May when the last ship had to leave our docks for Europe with our sugar.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I am not going to talk about these deliberate disruptive operations which were the characteristics of sheer bandit politics. I will leave them to their conscience, if they have one and I will let them muddle over how bandit politics has now evolved to '*paravan politics*' or maybe '*demi-paravan politics*'. And in any case, let them rest assured that the Labour Party will not allow lies to be converted into truth. Let me rather come to those who had something sensible to say, like hon. Bodha's intervention, which I followed with much interest. While I agree, with a number of things that hon. Bodha has said, namely on our education system, on the staggering number for tuitions, etc. I disagree with his statements about stimulating growth through consumption. Hon. Bodha argued that the Minister of Finance, instead of stimulating companies, should have stimulated the consumer. But that is totally wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, if there is one thing that is missing in this Budget, it is precisely that we have not said anything about what we are going to do with the situation where savings as a percentage of GDP has plummeted down to 14.7%. This in turn, affects our Current Account

Deficit. So it would be wrong to adopt any policy that would solely stimulate consumption in this country, it would be wrong because it would adversely affect the saving side. If you adopt policies that will prop up all consumption, it would make the situation worse, as far as our Current Account Deficit is concerned. Yet, on the other hand, you can't really cramp all consumption because then we will also be stifling our economic recovery. It is a difficult balance to be found between savings and consumption. It is not as simple as having to favour one totally over the other. As I am on the subject of savings and consumption, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to mention a side proposal here itself before I come back to hon. Bodha's speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I strongly believe that Government should urgently review its policy on gaming licences. Gaming and betting houses are proliferating in every nook and corner of towns and villages and, I think, we are seriously undermining any efforts that could and should be made to promote even a little bit of savings culture in this country. We really don't know what damage this is insidiously doing to our social fabric and we are only going to see it, staring in our face when it is too late to reverse the damage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that the argument put forward to justify the unleashing of all these gaming and betting licenses is that if we don't do this they will go underground. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if say there are 5000 illegal operators in this country and if you gave legal a thousand licences, are you going to put the other 4000 out of business? No Mr Deputy, Speaker Sir, but on the other hand, what damage are we doing by giving out the multiple licences in every single village, in every single town of this country. Let me remind the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that even Sir Anerood Jugnauth had started - I think in the late 80s such a policy of opening up access to gambling and betting licences. But when he saw what it was going to rise to, he pulled back the policy. I think that was wise and I am going to appeal to the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance to seriously assess the pros and cons of this issue and to take a decision that will protect this country from an irreversible addiction to 'zougaderism'.

Let me come back to what hon. Bodha has said and he asked: "what is the finality of political decision-making?" I do concur that this is a vital question. I have to confess - and I had told him - that, the other day, at lunchtime, I have a slight problem figuring out the MSM side of the Opposition and that is because the proof of the pudding is in the eating. So far, Mr Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand why when they were in Government, they did not apply the very valid things that hon. Bodha has mentioned in his speech. I think it was probably because they were being pulled back from some other people. I won't go into that. I am sure that it is very likely that hon. Jugnauth will, once again, make reference in his speech to some things that I have said in the context of the sugar reforms.

I have to specify to the House that the quote that he used from me in his speech on the Stimulus Package, a few weeks ago, was actually in a private letter that I had written about my disagreement on the MAAS on the Sugar Sector Reform and that was leaked to the press. That was in a particular context. In any case, it is *de bonne guerre* that he is using what I have said to play a political game. But I have to say that I did not hear even a whisper of dissent from the MSM side when there was the lock, stock and barrel sell-out on the Illovo deal.

Let me say another thing here regarding this political game of using me to argue their point. Let me say that anyone who thinks that however much I may agree or disagree with policies, impedes on my sense of team spirit with both my colleagues hon. X. L. Duval or hon. Sithanen, is dead wrong.

Let there be no doubt that this team consisting of hon. X. L. Duval, hon. Sithanen and myself, we are a real *force de frappe*, even if I may be forgiven to say so myself. Whenever we put our energy, our ideas and our actions together in the constituency, there is, I dare say, no other constituency team - even from this side of the House which can compete with us on the discipline and the team spirit with which we work together to bring solutions in the constituency.

(Interruptions)

I said that very sincerely. I know I am saying this myself, but I believe in that.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! Order please!

Ms Deepalsing: Actually, many people would not agree with me on this side of the House, but that does not matter. I still believe it. Many people in this country mistake differences in ideas and approach for structural disharmony. Nothing can be further from the truth, and we should just grow up and realise that a culture of argumentation, as Amartya Sen puts it, is actually essential in any democracy, whether that is for a party or for a country. And I have to say that the only person in this House who has read me right and who understands where I am coming from is the hon. Prime Minister himself. Sometimes, it does happen that I disagree completely with him on certain things even after lively discussions. But he knows that this does not even in one little iota, lessen my deep respect for him, my staunch faith in him as a genuine conviction politician or my unshakable loyalty to him. Nor does it in any way lessen my strong-mindedness when I say that he is the only Prime Minister worth the candle in this country. I am sure hon. Soodhun would agree with me on that.

(Laughter)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, earlier I said that the hon. Minister of Finance has done the best he can, given the international climate and the local terrain on which we operate. But, what are the contours of that terrain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and what are the things in this terrain that may be holding us back from our full potential as a nation? For better insight, I have turned to a statistical snapshot offered by figures from the CSO from this report on productivity and competitiveness over 1998 to 2008. What we see in here is that economic growth has actually mainly been driven by injection of capital. We all know that growth has three components: capital, labour and total factor productivity. Incredibly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over the ten year period that this economic and social indicator looks at, 82% of the growth is explained by capital injection, 13% by labour and total factor productivity accounts for only 5% of the growth. This is staggering, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because it shows that the average growth has been about 4.6% and that has been namely achieved by injection of capital, whether FDI or other sources of capital. What this says is that if we do not address the fact that our total factor productivity is only about 5%, if we do not address that, we will continue to have growth with injection of capital, but we will only trudge along, have incremental growth and we will never have the kind of transformational leap that we need to unleash the potential of this nation. This is why I said that I am going to talk about the education system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, we need to look at the TFP element and we need to zoom in on elevating the structure of our labour force and strengthening it so that we can go further. It is good to know that in 2000 the highest growth rate that we have known over the last 10 or 15 years since 1981 is 9.7% and that was in the year 2000 when the Labour Party was in

power. In fact, what does that show? If we look at the total factor productivity for that year, it jumped up spectacularly and this was partly explained because of the growth in the banking offshore sector. It shows that when we use higher skilled labour force, your growth will really jump up tremendously. What do we need to do in order to hike up the total factor productivity, the level of our labour force? We will come back to that later. If we look at other statistics on things such as unit labour cost, income distribution, the failure rate of the CPE or the change in the exchange rate over that period, it actually gives us a lot of food for thought.

In fact when we look at the household budget survey, 80% of households - we are talking of households and not individuals - earn less than Rs25, 000 in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Only 7.7% of households - not individuals - earn more than Rs40, 000. This says a lot about the structure, the local terrain on which we can manoeuvre. We have to think about how we can reengineer all this in order to jump forward beyond the crisis. This is the moment to navigate through the murky waters, but it is also the moment to seize, to take the time and rethink this whole local terrain and see what we can do to bring our nation forward.

Let me come back to what hon. Bodha had asked about the finality of political decision making. Of course, the answer has to upgrade the fate of our people, especially those who most need it. In fact, politics is not just about macro-managing the economy. If that was the case, we would just put 10 economists here and the rest of us could go and have a good life. So, it is not about macro-managing the economy only, it is about making sure that whatever we do and whatever policies we adopt, they bring the betterment of people and the majority of people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us look at what the evidence shows in the context of hon. Bodha's question. I have an interesting chart here that I have produced out of figures coming from the Ministry of Finance, the Central Statistical Office. It is a very eloquent graph, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because it shows that over the period 1991 to 2005 - I don't mean to offend anyone - if we look at those three mandates, 15 year period, whenever the MMM and the MSM have been together, it has proved to be a toxic formula for the people, that is regardless who the Minister of Finance was. Whenever Labour has been in power, it has been beneficial for the country and the graph shows it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What do we see here when we look at the 10% poorest people to the 10% richest people?

When you look at when Labour has been in power, the 10% poorest experienced a 15% increase in their share of income and it goes on with the 2nd decile, 3rd decile, 4th decile, till the 9th decile. Whereas when the MMM/MSM has been in power, whether it is the period of 1991 to 1995, or the period of 2000 to 2005, everybody has known a decrease in their share of income, except for the 10% richest. It is very revealing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because it shows that it does not matter who the Minister of Finance is, what matters is whether Labour is driving the philosophy, Labour is driving policies in this country. Because it is only when Labour is in power - this shows, this is evidence - that 90% of the people know an increase in their share of income. This is fact, I am not inventing this. You can go and check it. 90% of the people know an increase in their share of income when Labour is in power. Whereas when the MSM/MMM is in power, it is only the 10% richest who get a better deal.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order Please!

Ms Deepalsing: This is incontestable, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is fact. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now that we have seen what statistics say about the past, let us turn to the three areas which, in my humble opinion, need further attention in terms of Government Policy if we want to secure a long-term future that will be much more resilient to external shocks. By the way, let us not forget that experts are predicting another oil price rise in the near future after the recovery. So, we have to bear ourselves for that as well. The three areas that I want to comment on are the public sector, the private sector and the education system.

Let me start with the public sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget provides for major infrastructure works and it is felt that things are getting stuck in the public administrative system and that for things to go faster, we need to set up units such as the Road Development Company and so on. This is, indeed, a good thing, and I do fully support the objective that we need concrete results rather than time being spent pushing papers from office to office, I would like to say that we must be cautious that we do not, as a kind collateral damage, further weaken our public sector as a solid stakeholder for the development of our country. What I mean by that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that, in the past, experts have actually shown that our public sector has been at the forefront, at the base of delivering on development in this country. We have been the foster-child of development, because we have had a strong public sector with very solid high public officials. What I am saying is that while we recognise that our public sector is running out of steam perhaps, and thus we have to go around it to get things done, we must also address the root causes of why the public sector is running out of steam.

Over the last few years, we have adopted a trend of finding ways around the public sector. I am thinking about the National Empowerment Foundation as an example. I am not criticising the NEF, but I am saying that we must consider what we are really saying when we feel that the public sector, by itself, can no longer deliver on the fight against poverty. It would be dangerous for us to allow a kind of cynicism to develop about our public sector, because in the long run we will all suffer from the collateral damage that this will entail. We must thus find ways to empower our public servants so that they can steer policies that are evidence-based. Let me give you a concrete example. I am told that, at a recent meeting, with high officials of the Ministry of Health, - the Minister is not here - the Financial Secretary said to them that if the Rs7 billion of Health Budget were given to the private sector, we would have better results. And yet, there was no one there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in that meeting who could rationally discuss with the Financial Secretary to show him that he was dead wrong and that what he was saying was not borne out by evidence. No one could tell the Financial Secretary that in the US, they spent some 17% of GDP on Health in 2008 – mostly privatised service - and yet, it is a real disgrace that American infant mortality is worse than anywhere in Europe, where Europe spends very less than the States on health care - 11% in Switzerland, 9% Canada, 9% in France. In Mauritius, we spend only about 5% of GDP on health. Actually, when you look at the estimates it is Rs7 billion, and Rs 7 billion of a GDP of Rs251 billion is only about 2.8%. But, if we add the private part on it, let's say it is about 5%. In Mauritius, if we spend only about 5% of GDP on health, we do not have scandalous situation as in the US, where even with 17% of GDP, about 15% of the population does not have access to basic health care.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the problem is that our public servants no longer read and they are no longer adequately in touch with current affairs and international affairs. One of my proposals later will be to address this precise issue so that our civil servants, who are supposed to

help in policy making and policy implementation, will not be subjected to intellectual terrorism from people hailing from the World Bank and the IMF.

Let me come to the private sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The next area that I wanted to comment upon is the private sector and this is linked with the additional provisions made under the stimulus package and the 2% tax on CSR. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is absolutely in order for any Government to facilitate, as much as it can, the wealth creators of the society and those wealth creators, we all agree, are to be found in the private sector. There is and there can be no contest and no debate about that issue. As I said before, I do think that under the circumstances, the hon. Minister of Finance had no choice, but to extend Government help to enterprises in order to try and save jobs. I fully support that. But my worry here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that maybe we are overlooking an important systemic defect that has been with us for decades now. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us remind ourselves, that thanks to our financial conservatism and to the fact that our financial banking system was not that integrated with the rest of our world, our banks did not find themselves with toxic assets and they have not failed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the essential function of a bank is to channel capital to viable projects on which they can make a profit. Yet, for these viable projects, obtaining partial help from Government, the banks are not ready to underwrite the risks themselves. Why is that so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Everyone knows that in Mauritius, banking is not necessarily about project banking where banks will lend to any viable projects. Instead, banking here is about relationship banking, it is about who you know. In fact, there is even a case where a bank has followed its client in Mozambique in order to provide the essential banking services. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this cannot go on. This has got to change, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order for us not to give any incentive to this habit that Government is always here to bail anyone out. If we do not manage to reform this aspect of banking, over the long-term we are exposing ourselves to serious moral hazard. I also worry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this financial crisis may turn out to be an open season for rent-seekers. It may not be business as usual for anyone except for the oligarchs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in an article entitled the “The Quiet Coup” in this month’s edition of “The Atlantic”, Samuel Johnson, a former Chief Economist at the IMF, has raised the flag about the mentality of entitlement - here in Mauritius, we would call that ‘*rodeur bout*’ - that the powerful economic elite in the US is developing. In particular, he says, and I quote –

“Once this sort of thing gets entrenched, the only thing separating us from Latin America is sun and an annual carnival”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the same time that we are extending a helping hand to enterprises - as we must indeed do - we should also look into entrenched mentalities in our private sector. Look at the provision, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Budget for profitable companies to give 2% of their profits towards CSR. Now they are grumbling about it and they are saying that they already do CSR.

We should ask ourselves some candid questions about the entrenched mentality in our own private sector.

- Are we talking about the same mentality which had to wait for Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam to bring legislation before the sugar barons could provide a little piece of *la toile écrue* to protect workers in the fields so that they could be more efficient?

- Are we talking about the same mentality that has seen every single Government since independence being lobbied to depreciate the rupee so that currency competitiveness will stand in lieu of inherent competitiveness, thus getting the whole population to subsidise production?
- Are we talking about the same mentality whereby Government has to come with legislation to impose corporate social responsibility? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't know whether I needed to laugh or to cry when I saw on a weekend newspaper Mr Garrioch who, of all things, said: 'Government does not need to do that because the private sector already does CSR, for example, when there is a cyclone, they lend their equipment to clear out the roads.'

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what they think is CSR. So, tomorrow if there is a tree that has fallen in the street in front of my house, if I go out, I am doing corporate social responsibility or am I doing my duty as a citizen? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a big problem here. This kind of mentality cannot go on.

- Are we talking about the same mentality whereby there has always been wolf crying, even when there was no wolf, but only lambs, only flowers and bumper harvest in the fields?
- Are we talking about the same mentality where, even after hearing that Ministers are taking a pay cut of Rs10,000, there has been a *silence assourdissant* in the ranks of the top management of the private sector?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, note that the hon. Minister of Finance has talked about capacity to pay for an enterprise. But capacity to pay is not only with respect to what is on the profit and loss account; capacity to pay can also come in other ways. Let us take, for example, if 10 top managers in an enterprise take a pay cut of Rs10,000, that would give about Rs100,000 in a pot to give compensation of about Rs200 to 500 employees.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after I have gone through the above list, it may sound like we are the only country with such problems, but we must take heart, as our private sector magnates are not the only ones who disappoint political leaders. Even Margaret Thatcher once confessed that her greatest regret was that there was not much more charitable giving by the rich whose taxes she had cut. It is, indeed, normal for those with economic power to try and cling on to the privileges they have acquired over time. But in his speech on his motion for independence - and I am grateful to the hon. Attorney-General who has circulated this document - Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam had said –

"It is also right and proper that those of us who have been elected by the people of the country to be the guardians of their liberty should see to it that a powerful minority that has wealth and economic power at its disposal should not for ever frustrate the hopes and aspiration of the great mass of the people of Mauritius."

That was Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam on 22 August 1967. It is, therefore, imperative Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that while Government helps firms as it should indeed do so in such circumstances, we should also keep in mind what we are going to do in order not to for ever frustrate the hopes and aspiration of the population. At one point, we must also stop and think of the long-term implications.

Let me now come to the education sector which has been canvassed. I won't be long on that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Bodha, hon. Varma, hon. Dr. Bunwaree and other Members have talked about the problems of our education system. The education system has served us well for the past, but it is running out of steam and it is out of touch with modern pedagogical models of learning. It is, indeed, time for us to have the courage to get out of the box which has shaped our policy on education so far. Because without that, as I said before, we will continue to have TFP that is really shrinked with mostly low skilled workers, a population where only 7% of the households earn more than Rs40,000. What kind of terrain is that and where can that take us? Not very far, I would say!

We have a moral responsibility towards the staggering 50% of the children who are falling out of the system. The official figure is not 50%, but if you look at those who have just passed and who are going to fall off over the secondary term, it is about 50% we are talking about. We have a moral responsibility towards these 50% of children who are falling by the wayside. To those who are not convinced by a sense of moral responsibility, let me say that no matter how many roads we build, if we do not take care of these 50%, none of us will be able to travel on those roads that the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure has mentioned. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think we really need to take stock of what is going on in the education system and bring the fixes that are needed.

Therefore, I will now turn to my proposals. My first proposal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, I think we have to look at the long-term to bring a transformational leap forward. As I said before, we need to turn washing-machines into laptops. What I mean by that, I am not talking about any laptop, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am instead referring to the One Laptop Per Child project which is an organisation, an International NGO I have met. With the blessing of the Prime Minister, I have met the Chairman and their officials in Brussels, during my overseas mission, as a member of the JPA and we have talked, we have gone a long way and they are even ready to help us to find private financing, they have already contacted some private finance people and they are quite a long way in their discussions. So, I would really like to push for the adoption of the one laptop per child in Mauritius. This laptop which is rugged, low-cost, low-power, also runs on solar power which also integrates with *Maurice Ile Durable*. It is a connected laptop with content and software designed for collaborative, joyful and self-empowering learning. With this, children, together with parents and teachers learn, share, create and collaborate with each other. The technology of this laptop means that children can connect without the Internet, they can charge their laptop with small solar panels, they can learn and play even if they miss school. They learn how to repair the laptop, to disassemble it, to assemble it. After a few years, they actually have gained a few years of engineering experience and the open source software provided with it grows and adapts to the child as it is based on the theory of constructivism.

I am proposing that Government should implement One Laptop Per Child Project as proposed by the International NGO of that name. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must not make the mistake of looking at this as an IT project; I know you were the former Minister for IT. This is not an IT project, this is an educational project, and it will bring together parents, teachers and children in a holistic learning project.

According to the latest Digest of Education Statistics, we have some 119,000 children in the public primary sector. This laptop costs EUR 130, shipping included. If we implement this project in three batches of two grades each, the first and second, third and fourth, then fifth and

sixth, we are looking at some Rs250 m. per batch. Compare that to the Rs2 billion or Rs3 billion in tuition that hon. Bodha mentioned. And the State won't have to finance all this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, they have already contacted private finance, but we can also put some of the CSR money on that project.

The second proposal that I have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - I have mentioned it to the hon. Minister of Education already - it is the Roots of Empathy Programme. The Roots of Empathy Programme originates from Canada. It is an evidence-based classroom programme that has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression among schoolchildren by raising social and emotional competence and increasing empathy which is seen to be a key ingredient to responsible citizenship and responsive parenting.

Here, again the programme involves all the key stakeholders of a child's learning, that is, the parents, the teachers, the child and his or her peers. Experts around the world have endorsed this programme and they have also seen that by raising the social and emotional competence of the child, this also raises the cognitive competence of the child. So, I would urge the hon. Minister of Education to seriously explore the possibility of bringing this as a pilot project to start with.

My third proposal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about the public servants. I would like to propose that the PSC changes its criteria for considering public servants for promotion or even hiring. I would propose that relatively in-depth knowledge of current and international affairs be made mandatory in the selection process. We will then get our public servants to read extensively.

My fourth proposal is about the private sector and the banking sector. I propose that Government sets up a think tank committee to look at these related issues. I am thinking that perhaps the NESC could be given that task. In the meantime, as far as the Monetary Policy Committee is concerned, where the Budget calls for extending the membership of the Monetary Policy Committee, I propose that people with any iota of vested interest, not be appointed to the Monetary Policy Committee. Furthermore, I propose that in the interest of transparency and accountability, the Monetary Policy Committee adopts the practice of the Bank of England where the public knows how each member of the Monetary Policy Committee has voted on interest rates.

My fifth and last proposal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is with respect to available CSR Funds. I appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to give special attention to SPES (*Société pour la Promotion des Entreprises Spécialisées*), which was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1979. This NGO is doing a fantastic job with street kids in the area of literacy amongst other things; and they fully deserve to be encouraged and financially empowered. Besides, this NGO happens to be situated in our constituency. By the way, I would like to say that I have pledged myself with Mrs Langlois, the Director of SPES, that I will channel 2% of my own salary to her NGO. I would also like to invite the hon. Minister of Education and the Prime Minister to visit SPES in Quatre Bornes, to see what kind of fantastic work they are doing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by reiterating my confidence that under the guidance of our hon. Prime Minister, we will find our way out of the current international storm. I have no doubt that both the Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance are handling the ship with a firm hand as we ride out of the storm. I'll come back to this chart, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by wishing that Providence continues to bless our country with the prevalence of

labour-led philosophy and labour-led values so that under the able leadership of our one and only Prime Minister, the whole of the population continues to have a better life. And I can only wish that we will persevere in our efforts to bring a better future for our country and for this, I wish the hon. Minister of Finance; I wish the Budget, a very fruitful and successful implementation.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir.

At 4.44 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.18 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is now up to me to take the floor and express my views on the 2009 Budget.

Many Members from the Government side have insisted that this Budget must be considered as a special one, having as backdrop the world economic crisis. An economic crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir, whose depth, extent and duration are still unknown. *On ne sait si c'est le début de la crise, la fin, la fin du début ou le début de la fin. Les économistes, de par le monde, n'osent plus se prononcer, de peur qu'ils ne soient démentis par la tournure des événements. C'est de dire que même les meilleurs économistes du monde commencent à avoir des doutes sur leur capacité d'analyse et sur la validité de ces mêmes analyses.*

M. le président, je vais rapidement passer sur les critiques les plus pertinentes émises par l'opposition. The criticisms levelled at the Budget are, Mr Speaker, Sir, as follows –

- (i) The 2009 Budget, in line with the three previous Budgets having been presented by the hon. Minister of Finance, have maintained their strong private sector bias. It has not given adequate consideration to individual households, concentrating on the boosting up of the economy through support to enterprises and through public expenditure.
- (ii) It has not addressed the daunting problem of rapidly declining purchasing power and the drastic fall in real income of people, especially those on the lowest rung of the social ladder.
- (iii) Unlike Britain, France and India, where Governments have simultaneously tried to kick-start the economy by boosting up demand and consumption through VAT cuts, emphasis in Mauritius has been mainly on public sector infrastructure and support to private enterprises, with the view of, it seems, maintaining jobs. Further, the incapacity to start off public infrastructural development and the inability to realise the listed projects are also much deplored, Mr Speaker, Sir.
- (iv) The opacity of the newly established procurement process, which not only opens doors to corrupt practices, but also enhances the possibility of such practices, is another point now.

- (v) The setting up of the Road Development Company, which will undoubtedly reduce accountability and increase opacity of dealings, allowing a private company to handle billions of taxpayers' money.
- (vi) Also, the unexpected cutting down of the Solar Water Heater Scheme, showing a total disregard and a lack of commitment to the *Maurice Ile Durable* Concept, and a certain degree of incoherence in the Budget.

There is also a strong perception, Mr Speaker, Sir, that none of the measures announced will take shape and, to all these criticisms levelled by the Members of the Opposition, the Members of the majority had only the following to say: "We had heard this before", "C'est du déjà entendu". True it is, Mr Speaker, Sir that these points have been raised during the past four years, and this is the real problem. We have, in fact, been warning them regularly and, today, they cannot feign ignorance. *Ils ont été prévenus dès le premier budget de l'honorable Sithanen, M. le président. Si le ministre des finances fait la sourde oreille et ne rectifie pas le tir, c'est tout simplement parce qu'il ne tient pas à le faire.* He has already made up his mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, and has no intention of reviewing his policy. Come what may, his plans will remain unaltered. *Nous le savons bien, M. le président, et nul ne peut le nier, le ministre des finances est un fin intellectuel et doté d'une intelligence certaine et, s'il ne bouge pas, on ne peut que déduire qu'il s'est obstiné à poursuivre ses plans.*

M. le président, permettez-moi de citer quelques mots de Gérard Brenan, tout en invitant le ministre des finances de faire une petite réflexion.

Je cite –

« La sagesse est l'art d'admettre la fragilité de ce que nous pensons ainsi que la faiblesse des choses sur lesquelles nous fondons nos certitudes. »

Et, c'est pour cela, M. le président, qu'il faut rester à l'écoute de l'autre, afin de s'assurer qu'on puisse faire des analyses en se mettant à la place de l'autre. Cela nous rend plus ouvert, and *to take the Minister's own words*, « it is important to remain in the listening mode, de temps à autre, M. le président.

Ceci dit, je m'attarderai maintenant sur un secteur que j'ai à cœur, notamment le secteur éducatif. I must first of all admit that it was not my intention to comment on hon. Gokhool's passage at the Ministry of Education, as the substantive Minister, had already given a comprehensive account of all his Ministry's projects. But, since hon. Gokhool has chosen to make certain comments, I will briefly reply back. Hon. Gokhool had insinuated that the Leader of the MSM party, hon. P. Jugnauth, had been targeting him as well as the Minister of Finance. He became hysterical. And referring to hon. P. Jugnauth, he stated, and I quote –

“You are targeting me, as if I am the person who invented or brought forward the term “World Class Quality Education”. No! It was in the Government programme (...)”

And he went on to quote paragraph 147 of the Presidential Address, Mr Speaker, Sir. Firstly, let me tell hon. Gokhool that his fears are totally unfounded. At no point in time, did you really consider him to be l'*inventeur du terme* “World Class Quality Education”, for the simple reason qu'il a tout fait pour faire capoter ce projet. He was doing exactly the contrary! His actions were diametrically opposite to the whole concept or the idea of World Class Quality Education.

Let me further tell him, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, unlike him, we consider that this term is a good one, and that we have absolutely no problem with the term. Unlike him, we consider that it is, indeed, a laudable initiative to provide our students with a World Class Quality Education and, as far as targeting him or anybody else is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we only criticise policies and not people. He should also be aware that, when someone takes a wrong decision, he should not expect to be congratulated for it.

The introduction of ferocious competition at CPE level, the outrageously opaque system of admission to Form I in national colleges, the introduction of two categories of schools, the chaos at the University of Mauritius are but a few of the tumultuous series of actions taken in this sector by the Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member went on to state that he would have taken the then Government to Court if he had a child in school, because of the delay in the completion of some of the new State Secondary Schools. Well, my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: will he do the same today? Because after having assumed duty for three consecutive years, after having himself been the Minister of Education, today there are still students of SSS Quatre Bornes, SSS Belle Rose, who are actually attending classes at SSS Sodnac and SSS Vacoas. Mr Speaker, Sir, he has failed after three years in office to transfer these students from what he himself called *collèges fantômes* to the new buildings. *C'est ce que j'appelle avoir du culot, M. le président.* Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Gokhool could spare us with such demagogery. *Il trouve ensuite que l'abolition du ranking en faveur du grading system a fait baisser le niveau au CPE. Ces propos sont totalement sans fondement, quand le ministre vient lui-même dire, après quelques minutes, that there is an upper trend in the CPE results, and he attributes this success to his reforms.* Let me draw the attention of hon. Gokhool to the fact that the primary cycle is a six-year cycle, and the CPE results of 2006, 2007 and 2008 are those of students admitted in school in 2001, 2002 and 2003, and that he cannot claim paternity for the rising upper trend in CPE results. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is really too much! *Mais le plus grand désaveu vient de son collègue, l'honorable Dr. Bunwaree, qui, aussitôt installé au ministère, s'est attelé à annuler les mesures prises par l'honorable ex-ministre de l'Education et de défaire au plus vite le système qu'il avait mis en place.* Et, je dois le féliciter pour ce qu'il fait, M. le président! On ne peut pas oublier aussi que l'honorable Gokhool n'a réussi qu'à créer une situation conflictuelle avec la communauté étudiante, les parents, le corps enseignant, les *managers* des collèges. Il ne faut pas oublier cela, parce que c'est un crime d'avoir réintroduit un système de compétition féroce au niveau de la *CPE*, un système opaque d'admission en *Form I*, dans les collèges nationaux, les deux catégories d'écoles et les deux catégories d'élèves et enseignants que j'ai mentionnées. Encore une fois, tous les problèmes qui ont surgi à l'université de Maurice, *l'Eastern University* saga, les problèmes de la *TEC*, pour ne citer que quelques uns de ses frasques. Mais le comble, M. le président, c'est qu'il ne s'en rend même pas compte, car il semblerait qu'il n'a même pas pris connaissance des propos du Premier ministre dans son message aux étudiants de la nation, en mars 2008 - pendant que l'honorable Gokhool, lui-même, était ministre de l'éducation et qu'on célébrait les 40 ans de l'indépendance du pays. *The Prime Minister had publicly acknowledged that the regionalisation of admission in Form I was a good measure.*

And I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir, what the Prime Minister had to say, regarding this, in his message to the students of this nation –

“If you have paid attention to the results of Higher School Certificate this year, you might have noticed that it matters less and less which school you go to. We have all been

pleasantly surprised by the emergence among the very best performers of pupils from schools of which we have heard very little until now.

Your fate is not sealed by results at CPE or other examinations. We are aiming not at a system which measures its success by whether everyone gets the same results, but rather whether everyone gets the same chance to unleash one's full potential."

This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is an acknowledgement of the fact that our policy, the MSM/MMM policy was one that was good. Today colleges like SSS Ebène, SSS Sodnac, SSS Phoenix are amongst others which have emerged as high performing colleges, demonstrating that star schools can be a reality in every locality may it be a town or a village or anywhere in this island. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to other aspects in the education field. I must say that there have been lots of changes which we do appreciate on this side of the House in the education sector and surely there has to be some fine tuning, but we are on the right track. However, I would think that there are certain major things that we have to look over again and whilst I do fully agree with the Minister of Education when he says that we have to review our system and try to see how we can ensure that our students get a full development, an integral development, that is, so as to manage to tap out all their potentials.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are living in a world where we will need to be versatile, we will need to be able to adapt to changing situations to face new challenges and it is important that we manage to develop the multiple intelligences of our children. Now we talk about emotional intelligence. Hon. Ms Deerpalsing has rightly said that we need to cater for all types of development in our child: physical development, mathematical logical development as well as cognitive development, psycho-motor development, but very important, intuition, the emotional intelligence. We will need to cater for this to review and see how we can get people that have the necessary abilities, that have the acumen to be able to deliver in our schools.

Whether we like it or not, when we say that we need to have co-curricular activities, when we say that we need to have extra-curricular activities, we have to bear in mind that it is not given to everyone to carry out such classes. Unlike a class in a specific academic field, the teacher must have special classroom management because activity period is not like any other period. I must say that teachers are willing, that in many institutions, teachers were already doing it, that many, many institutions have already, in their framework, in their set up, possibilities such as the other day hon. Bodha was talking about his daughter in a private school having a *fiche d'aptitude* with more than 30 aptitude tests. Mr Speaker, Sir, you might be surprised, but some 30 years back in private schools in Mauritius, this was done. We have had it in the past, but with the trend, with the CPE competition etc, we have lost all that. Schools that were performing have started also to get into the rat race, to get into the competitive mode. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is one thing. The other very important thing that is affecting the school is the environment, *bien sûr*, there is discipline also and we have to cater for that.

I have seen that there are cases conferences being set up, case conferences, but we will need in the future, with the increasing number of cases of students showing personality problems to have institutions especially made for such students because the number is increasing. We have to open our eyes to look at the number of cases that we have in private and State secondary school on a daily basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said that, I will move on now, to some other facets of the education sector and I will take up the point raised by both hon. Mrs Bappoo and hon. Ms Deepalsing in saying that we have to make sure that everyone is taken on board. Hon. Mrs Bappoo, during her intervention, had been saying that, we, in the MSM-MMM Government had been using targeting. I would like to remind hon. Bappoo that we are targeting right now. What about the subsidies on the School Certificate and HSC examination fees? Is that not targeting? What was the spirit of the former Government when we started targeting the pension? Now it is clear that people earning huge sums of money do not need these Rs2000. What hon. Jugnauth was trying to do as Minister of Finance, was to try to get the funds to cater for those who are most needy. But what are we doing now? We tend to think that a particular policy is good when I apply it and it is bad when my neighbour applies it. This is not the right attitude to take, especially when we are embarking as we all say in a period of crisis and we have not to be demagogical about such things. We must not forget that a few months back when we had the rainy season and people had to queue up in front of the Social Security offices and had to show what they had in their house, filled up forms, state that 'in my house I have a TV set or I have radio set or I have a DVD' and then they considered whether they would be given some form of support or not.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to stay away from such demagogic, especially when the Minister herself had been a Member of the Cabinet of the former Government, today coming and stating such things does not really sound good from a person of her calibre. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that I will make an appeal to the hon. Minister to press upon the Minister of Finance because she has just mentioned: what is Rs60 m.? We had obtained Rs60 m. out of the targeting and pension scheme. The School Certificate and HSC exam fees subsidies amount to around Rs70 m. so what is a big issue, a drop of water in the ocean or give part of it, at least 50%, why not?

These are things that we have to consider and especially as hon. Ms Deepalsing states that when the Labour Government is in power, people's lifestyle get better, the standard of living gets improved and we take measures in favour of the people. So, carry on, start doing it! I will now try to move on to another sector which needs our attention. We have seen that in the tertiary sector, hon. Pravind Jugnauth had, while being in Government, come up with a scheme - the Tertiary Education Interest Support Scheme which was meant to allow young people to pursue their tertiary education. Hon. Jugnauth in 2005 had noted that many young people fail to pursue their studies due to lack of funds and because they do not have security to offer to lending institution and their parents did not have the means to support them. This was the spirit of the Budget at that time and hon. Jugnauth stated, that lack of funds should not stand between our youth and their ambitions. When he was in power, he came up with a scheme which allowed up to Rs400,000 to be given to young people so that they may follow their tertiary education in one of our tertiary institutions. Mr Speaker, Sir when hon. Gokhool came into power, he cancelled the scheme and he stated that no provision was made to sustain this project and he decided to do away with it. However, after three years, Government came up with a new scheme - the Government Guaranteed Loan Scheme to be financed by the famous Human Resource Development, Knowledge and Arts Fund. Rs1 billion was committed to that fund and would you believe it, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in spite of the billion of rupees only eight students managed to avail of this facility after one year, whereas in 2005 when hon. Jugnauth introduced the scheme,

within six months, 179 students availed of this facility. The figures speak for themselves, Mr Speaker, Sir. We can easily see which one of the two Ministers of Finance was more committed to provide access to tertiary education. I leave it for the people of the House to judge.

In paragraph 82 of the 2008-2009 Budget, hon. Sithanen had this to say, I quote –

“Above all we want to ensure accessibility by ensuring that no one is turned away from Tertiary Education through lack of funds.”

No one, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be turned away! At the end of one year, only eightf students have availed of this facility through this scheme - really disappointing!

Nous voyons qu'en 2008 le gouvernement n'avait malheureusement pas la volonté politique nécessaire pour faire aboutir ce projet. Parmi les autres projets annoncés dans le même budget, ‘Education at the click on the mouse’, il faudra repasser, M. le président ! ‘Open University’, il faudra encore repasser, ‘loan guarantee for laptop’, il faudra encore repasser, M. le président ! Nothing took off !

In 2008 the Additional Stimulus Package clearly mentioned that the Human Resource Knowledge and Arts Fund was used and some Rs300 m. were already committed. Today we are being told that Rs600 m. are being withdrawn from the Fund to be transferred to the SJR Fund while another Rs600 m. will be used for the new university campus at Côte d'Or. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am a bit astounded because when I add up these values I come up to the figure of Rs1.5 billion. I would like the Minister to explain how we reached this figure.

I am a bit surprised that even while going through the estimates, I could not find out exactly how this figure was attained. We all agree that we should develop our island into a knowledge hub, we should all ensure that foreign institutions come here and establish themselves and we should also ensure that these foreign institutions are of the standard required. There should be a close monitoring of the various phases in the development of these institutions because we have not forgotten the 16 Mauritian students having graduated at the MAURAS School of Dentistry and who are still awaiting to be registered by the Dental Council of Mauritius to be able to practise their profession.

As mentioned earlier in the House, in spite of the reassurance given by the Minister of Health that he is following the matter closely and that once it is gazetted, within a day he would ensure that this matter get settled, I am very sorry to state that in reply to Parliamentary Question of 14 April, when the Minister stated clearly that he was monitoring the case closely and that he was waiting for the paper to be gazetted in the Indian Government Gazette on 14 April, it was already known that on 15 March the paper was already gazetted. A close monitoring indeed! Still no registration as at now has been obtained for these children and it seems that the Dental Council is without a Board. We cannot allow such things. This is not the only case. We have not forgotten how the Eastern University had obtained its permit to operate in Mauritius when the parent institution in India had not even opened its doors. This was against the criterion set up by the University Grants Commission of India. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important that we behave in a professional manner and we have to make sure that we do not hurry and scurry and that our students in the future do not get penalised by the actions taken by decision makers today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said that, I will now shift to the MDI – *Maurice Ile Durable* dossier which I think has been tackled in a very light manner. Having stated that there would be a shift in the energy consumption pattern, that we should opt for renewable and clean energy, I

do not understand the rush with which the project was has been set aside. In the previous budget it was decided that people in Mauritius would be given the opportunity to buy a solar technology water heater in order to ensure that they obtain clean and renewable energy. It was meant to go till December 2009. Suddenly we have been told that this project has been put aside and the argument being put forward is that funds have been depleted. Mr Speaker, Sir, either we believe in clean energy or we don't. We want to increase the percentage of people using solar heaters in Mauritius, which is not only as I said earlier, a renewable source of energy, but also a clean one. It can only be beneficial to the nation. For our *Maurice Ile Durable* project to survive the scheme should have been extended for a few more years, allowing a larger proportion of the Mauritian households to avail of this opportunity. There are about 350,000 households in Mauritius of which only 20% has switched to the solar technology. We must therefore continue to gradually increase the number every year and reach the 90% target already attained in countries such as Reunion Island and other countries in the Southern African region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we also welcome the measures taken up to help small and medium sized hotels and restaurants to face this period of crisis. But again I would like the Minister to be cautious because we have to put it clear in our minds that certain big hotel groups in Mauritius are not doing badly. Having their intake of tourists declined by some 10% does not make them suffer losses and we cannot go about giving them the same facilities as those being given to the smaller units. We must not forget that some of them are doing fairly well or rather very well and that using the crisis as pretext they are planning their post-crisis development. Some of these hotels are planning to invest in renovating their hotels. If we look at the Budget carefully, we find that provisions have been made for hotels that are renovating to have their wage packet paid up to 50% by the Government through the Stimulus Package. I think this money could have been used more efficiently and more optimally by helping the small enterprises and perhaps, why not, by helping the households and by trying to increase their purchasing power. Mr Speaker, Sir, others before me have mentioned that the VAT cuts should have been considered and I also do agree because, as some people have mentioned in Parliament, we need to boost up consumption and VAT rises were not options that could be envisaged in such a period, Mr Speaker, Sir.

There are other points that are very important and which we need to consider amongst which I will go back to this very shady business of putting up the Road Development Company. Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is planning to give billions to private enterprises *pour gérer*. *Je me rappelle que quand l'honorable Jugnauth avait fait mention au cours des débats sur le Stimulus Package que certains membres du secteur privé étaient en train de s'asseoir et de discuter comment gérer les fonds du gouvernement. Je pense qu'ils n'avaient pas tort, l'information a peut être été filtré, on n'a pas eu les informations exactes, mais qu'est ce que nous sommes en train de faire ?*

Nous sommes en train de prendre des milliards, l'argent des contribuables et les mettre entre les mains d'une compagnie privée pour les gérer. Nous l'avons déjà souligné, ici, à l'Assemblée, que quand il s'agit d'une compagnie privée, même, nous voyons qu'il y a très peu d'*accountability*. Est-ce que nous ne sommes pas en train d'ouvrir les portes très grandes pour donner la possibilité aux gens de s'engager dans des pratiques que je vais appeler *corrupt practices*, M. le président.

We have to be careful. Hon. Miss Deepalsing has rightly put it. Why can't we think that public institutions can operate optimally? Why don't we give the credit to our public officers? The only thing is that perhaps sometimes when public officers will talk a bit, they might not get

the encouragement they require, in fact, they are asked to keep their mouth shut. So, we have to be careful. While she was saying earlier that they could not answer back to the Financial Secretary, I can understand what type of discussions might be going on. I do agree that we want to get projects to set up quickly and go up fast, but we have to be careful.

I know that some people have mentioned in the papers que les décaissements du Stimulus Package ont été trop lents et qu'il va falloir comme certains économistes sont en train de proposer de déprécier la roupie, mais tout cela ira encore une fois dans une seule direction à protéger certaines personnes quand la masse de la population va souffrir encore plus. Alors, M. le président, je pense que nous devons faire bien attention.

C'est vrai que dans le budget on a fait mention des *levies* sur les banques. Mais il faut faire attention parce que les banques passent leur temps à transférer tous les *liabilities* qu'ils ont sur leurs clients. Jusqu'à présent - d'ailleurs comme l'ont mentionné plusieurs membres de l'Assemblée - les banques de Maurice ne sont pas en train de subir une forme de pression car elles ont toujours été *very safe*. Elles ont toujours fait de sorte à ce qu'elles n'aient pas de difficultés, à ce qu'elles ne prennent pas de risque. C'est toujours l'épargnant qui paie pour *les pots cassés*. Il va falloir revoir tout cela.

Avant de reprendre ma place, M. le président, je voudrais dire quelques mots sur la culture. C'est vrai que très souvent, we do not realise the potential that we have. The diversity that we have in our island is, in fact, a rich source of riches for the island and perhaps we do not realise it. We have, in Mauritius, two world heritage sites. Mauritius has had a rich history for Mauritius has acted as the main place from where indentured labourers had been taken to Surinam, to Holland, to Guyana, Trinidad, Tobago and Fiji. Similarly, it has a prime place dans la route des esclaves. We have to consider all that. In the budget, they have mentioned the corridor of culture. I think it is very important and we have to consider all that as this might be a major attraction for tourists in the future. Like all other Members, I also do consider that it is a great thing to allow our artists to get the possibilities to develop their talents and potentialities. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what we lack in Mauritius. We need to promote creativity. We need to promote the versatility of our people and I think this is one measure that we all welcome.

Mr Speaker, Sir, no matter what will be the duration of this crisis, no matter what will be the means chosen by the Minister of Finance to tackle this problem, I trust the people of Mauritius. I believe that the people of Mauritius have the strength, the stamina and the resilience needed to take their destiny in their hands and to bounce back. I am sure that Mauritius will always come up as *un gagnant*.

Before resuming my seat, I would like to say one thing to the Minister of Finance. In spite of his bright intelligence, he has, over the past four years, not managed to impress us. I would like to go back to what the former Governor of the Bank stated and I think that this describes beautifully what Dr. Sithanen has been doing. I will end my speech by quoting the former Governor of the Bank, Mr Basant Roi, he mentioned –

“Thus far the Minister of Finance has yet to dazzle with his brilliance.

He has baffled us though.”

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.55 p.m.)

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Dr. J. B. David):

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have either listened to the interventions, read them in the press or read them through the unrevised version. When I went through the interventions of the Opposition, I cannot help asking myself a few questions. The first one is: do they realise in which times we are living? My second question is: how many light years are they from reality? My third question is: do they really mean what they said or was it just opposing for the sake of opposing?

Mr Speaker, Sir, we believe that politics is about principle and responsibility. Politics is about sense and sensibility, not about jokes and make-belief. This is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would say that being in the Opposition is not an excuse to be demagogical or just being funny. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is time that we coin a word to denote and define those who seem never to have heard about financial and economic crisis. I believe that it would be still more difficult to find a definition for those who know it and yet react as if nothing is happening in this world. Conclusion, both the ignorant and the demagogues are irresponsible and worthless.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, vernacular, common language and everyday use vocabulary have proved to be too weak to convey the global pandemonium in which we are living. These are crisis which are shaking the world over. No country is protected. Never before, at least, no one from this generation and even the parliamentarians who are eldest amongst us, no one has ever witnessed such apocalyptic tremors and these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, are not too strong. There is indeed havoc in all major financial centres. Economists around the world have used words which bring to our minds a situation of doomsday scenario. For the first time maybe we have seen in international magazines an analysis. They are talking of financial and economic Armageddon. For those who are not familiar with this word, may I remind them that Armageddon is the most virulent assault which brings the world to an end. This is how economists and experts around the world are defining this economic situation in which we are living. When we are talking of the end of the world of Armageddon, it means what it means.

I would ask the Opposition - perhaps they have not yet done so - to turn the pages of international magazines, to switch on to international TV channels and to listen to the cries of despair around the world, to hear the hungry children dying by thousands everyday and to watch desperate workers going out of jobs by millions, to see hopeless people having to sleep on pavements because they have lost their houses. They have not yet seen, heard or read about it; this is my friendly advice, that they would go and turn the pages of the international magazines. There is, Mr Speaker, Sir, despair, anguish, hopelessness about nations and we are not talking of the poorest nations. We are talking of nations which have been, for very long, yardsticks of wealth, power, of economic power. And only demagogues and people with, I would say, doubtful sanity would dare place all the sins of its Israel at the doorsteps of Mauritius.

It is against this backdrop, which I just mentioned, of global meltdown, of disruptive markets, of uncertainties and downturns, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government has dared commit itself to a few things. One, to keep the Welfare State alive and this is a feat. The Welfare State is contrary to what is happening today in the world and yet the challenge is to keep

the Welfare State alive. To open a wide safety net for solidarity towards the weaker segment of this population and to proclaim publicly - and this, I believe, is the beauty of this Budget speech - that we must get ready for recovery. Prepare for recovery! This is what the Minister of Finance says several times in this Budget and Mr Speaker, Sir, this is our battle cry, our rallying sound, our hope and trust: get ready for recovery! We believe that when there is darkness, this is the time we see stars shining. We believe that when we go deeper and deeper into darkness we say that the sun will soon rise, we say that *l'aube vient après l'obscurité M. le président!* We cannot win a game if we do not even start playing it. We cannot prepare ourselves for recovery if we do not set the stage to play. Before explaining Mr Speaker, Sir, how the stage is being set and to get prepared for recovery, let me first expose in this august Assembly the agenda of the under achievers. Those who spent time criticising and in days when they were tested, they turned out to be failures incarnate.

You would have expected them, therefore, to be modest and to learn. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, they got the cheek to be lesson givers as if they were reference in excellence, paragon of excellence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have picked up a few pearls of wonder from the anthology of the Leader of the Opposition. I believe Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps that my humble advice is that one of these days this will form part of a book of political jokes. Mr Speaker, Sir, on the spur of the moment, immediately after the Budget, the Leader of the Opposition had three comments to make. The first one is that the Budget indicates that elections will not be held this year; that was his first comment. The second, I am very sad that he is not around.

(Interruptions)

I should not anyway! The second one is that the body language of Government was not enthusiastic enough. The third one it is all *bla bla bla* and the fourth one was, at some point in time, he started criticising the Labour Party.

Let's come back to these comments and this is what the Leader of the Opposition, who was Prime Minister for some time - and we know how he became Prime Minister - had to say - *M. le président si quelqu'un ne serait qu'un étudiant d'économie à Maurice ou ailleurs, lisait les commentaires du Leader d'opposition, qui est supposé comprendre, analyser un budget, donner un jugement plus ou moins intelligent, que dirait-il de notre Leader de l'opposition ?* Let me come back to his comments because they are worth mentioning, just to show the level at which he has come.

In this Budget, the Leader of Opposition saw as if he was looking into a crystal ball. He said: "*les élections ne sont pas pour 2009*". Very intelligent! Therefore it will be for 2010! Very intelligent! And this is what we have always been saying; at least, he comes to his senses. Remember in 2005 we just come back from an election - July 2005, he saw elections coming in December 2005. Then elections coming in 2006, 2007, then he said, out of his experience and what not, that elections are coming in 2008. He says no, not in 2009, maybe next year. Well on this score, the Leader of the Opposition and myself agree totally that elections would not be in 2009 and this is what the Prime Minister himself said. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, at least, 2009 Budget has served a good cause among other things: bringing the Leader of the Opposition back to his senses.

The second thing, perhaps I will refer to Mr Speaker and ask for guidance. The second thing, he said, is that he was analysing our body language. Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Minister of Finance was there reading the Budget Speech, we were all listening, we were all analysing, we were all thinking of the glorious moment and of the future. What was he doing? Looking at our bodies! Mr Speaker, Sir, this is political voyeurism! Our bodies were more important! The body language, Mr Speaker, Sir, can express so many things. He was looking at our body language. Fair enough! But this is parliamentary ...

Mr Speaker: No, no!

Dr. David: I was wondering whether this was not parliamentary pornography.

Mr Speaker: No, no!

Dr. David: It is not.

Mr Speaker: The Minister has to withdraw.

Dr. David: I withdraw.

As an economic argument Mr Speaker, Sir, watching our body language instead of analysing the Budget, I think that this is hilarious. This is really farcical. Mr Speaker, Sir, the other argument is the *bla-bla-bla* which he has been mentioning several times, which was heard...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I think I have given a ruling some time. I will have to check whether I said whether *bla-bla-bla* was inappropriate to be used in Parliament. I will have to check, I am not sure, but I would ask the hon. Minister instead not to use that word and to use other words.

Dr. David: This is in the Hansard, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I did not notice that, but I will have to check whether I have given a ruling.

Dr. David: Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, just to show what it means. I am sure that you don't know what *bla-bla-bla* means. I don't know as well, until I went in the Hansard and saw what *bla-bla-bla* means. Let me read what the Hansard says and what was said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition himself. He said, let me quote the Hansard –

“There is nothing wrong with *bla-bla-bla*, I know that.”

The hon. Leader of the Opposition himself says that there is nothing wrong with *bla-bla-bla*. So, what was he saying when he said that this Budget is *bla-bla-bla*, there is nothing wrong. When confusion really starts in the mind, everything else goes sick, but with his usual cynicism and disgust he strides to sling mud on the Labour Party. What did he say? My colleague, hon. Ms Deerpalsing, referred just now to what the Labour Party has done for this country.

Let me just mention how the hon. Leader of the Opposition and another turncoat - which I don't want to look at now - said about the Labour Party in 1982. And, subsequently, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say every sign of progress in this country, every expression of national development, every advance of democracy, every fabric of Welfare State in this country, all these bear the signature of the Labour Party, whether they like it or not. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind this House again that the right to vote, that social security, that the fight for liberty, for independence, that free health care, free education, compassion for the poor, for the widows, for the vulnerable, all these when we look we see below all these documents the golden signature of

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. SSR, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be reminded for all these and even for things beyond. But what is the hon. Leader of the Opposition reminded for? We remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition for what he has done twisting laws and principles to give jackpot to the privileged in the Illovo deal. *Cela restera comme une arête dans sa gorge*, le *Illovo deal* will remind him for having declared *l'état d'urgence économique* in this country, will remind him for justifying SMF clubbing lady workers, will remind him for giving Agalega as Christmas gift to IBL, will remind him as defending the richest segment of this population, will remind him as giving Rs57 m. as a baksheesh to the sugar barons. *Mettez cela dans la balance* and then you will see what we will remind Labour Party for. This is the focus of these political actions. He should go and compare and go soul searching, instead of trying to despise the Labour Party. Mr Speaker, Sir, *il y a un proverbe Africain qui dit* –

“Si tu ne sais pas où tu vas, essaie de savoir d'où tu viens!”

We are, Mr Speaker, Sir, fortunate, to know where we come from and where we are going. And, in the dark days, the lighthouse was the Labour Party. We know where we come from. We know that we come from the darkness of the rule of colonialism; we know that we come from the darkness of the oppression of the oligarchy and we know that we are walking in the light of time tested principles given by the Labour Party. And it is because we know it, that we don't want anybody to stand on the way of progress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all agree and that would be absurd for my part to say that the Opposition does not have the right to oppose. We all agree that the role ad duty of the Opposition is to highlight and even to denounce what they consider to be misdoings, yet this exercise should not fall into demagogic or cheap politicking. These are days, Mr Speaker, Sir, when people around the world are in the pangs of all types, of all nature of sufferings. The Opposition should stop the game of delusion, should stop trying to fool public opinion because the public is intelligent and knowledgeable. It is so easy, Mr Speaker, Sir, to wipe up emotion and to be demagogical and yet how many unfulfilled promises from the other side, like announcing a lot of socialist measures, then ending filling the coffers of the privileged few and the Illovo deal is a perfect and classic example of that; like we know what they did, promising to support widows and pensioners and ending up robbing them and having to come in Parliament to offer apologies to them, like promising happy living to the population at the beginning and yet ending up with *état d'urgence économique*, while just a few fat cats - should we say fat cats, or should we say obese tigers - were around. The crude fact, let us put it in one word, their economic model had failed. The economic model of the previous Government has failed lamentably. I am not saying it. I know you will be perhaps surprised looking at it. The previous Prime Minister said: 'It is *l'état d'urgence économique*'. This does not come from me. The confession of failure came from the person who was at the head of Government then. What more can we say, Mr Speaker, Sir? I am not going to recall the distress in which they left us in July 2005. Our beautiful creole language has an appealing image for that: *noyer cotte pena di l'eau*. By this, I mean what they did was sinking the ship when the sea was calm because the captain just happened to be a hijacker. That's all, Mr Speaker, Sir, pirate.

Mr Speaker: No, I am sorry!

Dr. David: I withdraw! Hon. Pirate, maybe!

Mr Speaker: No, no...

Dr. David: It is not ok. Their economic model had been an utter failure. Just imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, what would have been the situation today if we had a growth rate of 2.3% started with 2.3%. What the situation would have been today if we had the massive debt they left? What the situation would have been today if we had not turned the clock round and started with a 10% unemployment rate? Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a word which came when they commented the 2008-2009 Budget. It came very often. They said *c'est de la magie noire, très noire*. Just imagine that. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the magic lies in the change of vision. The magic is the change in philosophy. The magic was because we changed the captain in July 2005. That was the beauty and the magic which changed everything. In fact, the magic, Mr Speaker, Sir, lies in our spirit of compassion and humanity. It lies in our concern to place people at the very heart of our policies. We didn't run. We have never run this country as a company with concern for rupees and cents only. We invest in people. The human aspect of our thinking dynamics stands above all other considerations. As I have always said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we run the country for all, but believe me, on this side of the House, we have a deliberate bias, call it bias, call it prejudice, call it *penchant*, call it by whatever name we wish, but we have a deliberate bias for the poor, for the downtrodden, for the underprivileged, for those who cannot help themselves. And this, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not an overnight discovered policy. It's a philosophy which has animated the Labour Party since 1936. This is what we call social justice, Mr Speaker, Sir, and when on Wednesday last I heard the Leader of the Opposition ragingly say that in 1982, all the blames had to be laid at the doorstep of the Labour Party, I could not help thinking that he does not know history, or as we usually say: *l'histoire de la chasse a été toujours écrite par les chasseurs et non par les lions*. Maybe he was on the side of the hunters! But, Mr Speaker, Sir, our very *raison d'être* is precisely to bring social justice and equal opportunities to all. The battle that we have fought and are still fighting, no other party and nobody else will ever repeat it. We have chosen the path that only the braves would dare tread. We'll leave the reminiscence of history for some other time, but suffice it for me to say that some, who considered themselves brave in 1982, capitulated and they went into the bottomless pit in 1983. They left! *Poëlon ti chaud!* This is what they said and they found all pretexts to leave, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I just mention again that the history of the Labour Party is an epic battle against the strong hold of capitalism, of right wingers and of reactionaries. He should go perhaps and read about the actions and interventions of our forebears in the Labour Party and then they will see the vision that has always animated us. Even, Mr Speaker, Sir, our and their political birthright has been won by the Labour Party. Never, never, never forget that! Even their right to stand in Parliament and to challenge the Labour Party, that right and that extent of freedom have been given to them by the Labour Party itself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the financial and economic uncertainties are so profound around the world that is a snowballing consequence spares nobody. The domino effect is awfully grim, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have said I won't mention it again, but in rich countries this is what is happening. Yesterday, Ireland was a reference of economic success. Ireland had broken the back of unemployment. Unemployment was reduced to almost nothing in Ireland, and it represented so great an Eldorado that hundreds of Mauritians migrated there. You know today, Mr Speaker, Sir, unemployment in Ireland stands at 10% higher than here, and financial institutions collapse. We have got to turn our best assets, that is, human beings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget has stepped up solidarity. I say 'stepped up' because this is what we have always done. We have built an inclusive society, and this is even more commendable and worthy of praise when in times of rough and tough, the previous Budgets,

since 2006, we have extended constant support to people and families who would otherwise live in the margin of development. We have shown an unbent determination to eradicate absolute poverty. We had identified 229 pockets of poverty. Our aim is not only to fight absolute poverty, but fighting poverty everywhere with the same commitment and resolution. We have set up Empowerment Programme to reskill workers and to reintegrate the laid-offs, to give another opportunity in life because we care for people. And that was not, Mr Speaker, Sir, a mere slogan when we said we want to put people first. Governments, NGOs, social cultural organisations and many other partners have successfully helped us in integrating the vulnerable. We are also working with the UNDP to take people out of that poverty trap. Mr Speaker, Sir, in an unprecedented time of crisis and world disorder, we, in Mauritius, are not only resisting the turmoil, but we are keeping our promises and standing firm to our commitments. We have made it a point, *un point d'honneur* to spell out in the Budget that the Welfare State is, in no way, affected. And these remain despite the hardship. Just look at the list, Mr Speaker, Sir: universal health care, free education, free transport for students and the elderly, universal pension benefits, increase of income support by 15%, single mothers in difficult situations they see their allowance increased by 40%. We have listened to the figures given by hon. Minister Bappoo. That was really fantastic. In fact, when she was giving the figures, nobody would think that there is recession in the world, that we are fighting so much against economic crisis. We thought that these were times of plenty, that people would benefit from here and there. But these are difficult times, and even in these difficult times, we have made it a point, because we believe in it. We have made it a point to stand firm by our commitment, Mr Speaker, Sir, and these commitments to support jobs security. Perhaps we would make a quiz even with the Opposition. Give me five countries in the world which are as daring for carrying hopes across as we are doing in Mauritius in these days! Show me five countries! And the answer, my hon. friend, the Attorney General, has given it to me. Let me mention these countries - Mauritius, Mauritius, Mauritius, Mauritius and Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir!

In fact, in countries which stood for so long as giants in the world, we have seen not the most vulnerable, but the best paid white-collar employees queuing up to find jobs. That was on television. Even Managers and CEOs were all out of jobs. We are not talking of the vulnerable and of those who have got to fight everyday for their living. General Managers are queuing up to find jobs, to take their money out of penniless banks and to find food from some charitable institutions. This is what is happening in the world, Mr Speaker, Sir. And these are images which we have constantly seen on television. These should send shudders down our spine because the image of hopelessness is so gripping in the world. If rich men collapse financially, what do you expect from the poor and the vulnerable? What do you expect them to do? This is happening in the rich countries. But here, Mr Speaker, Sir, the magic has worked in two different scenarios; the magic of humanism and the magic of a Government in action for the people. This is what we call in one simple term, solidarity, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Here, our main concern is that we are making sure that the underprivileged are primarily protected and I would invite everybody to read what the Budget Speech says on page 6, paragraph 35. I am going to read two sentences and you will understand what is happening with this Budget. I have never seen in this budget another place where the verb 'must' appears so many times in just two or three sentences. I will read them. The Minister was talking of the poor and the underprivileged -

“We must give them all the protection that we can. The nation must show greater social consciousness solidarity and compassion. All those who can must lend a helping hand.”

As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that verb ‘must’ translates the mind of the hon. Minister of Finance, the mind of the hon. Prime Minister, the mind of Cabinet and the mind of Government. The verb ‘must’ denotes our conviction, our stainless determination and our moral obligation not to allow anybody by the road side, come what may. There is a special place close to our hearts for the downtrodden, Mr Speaker, Sir. People, in these days, when things are rough and tough, they will appreciate that. For us, for this Government, for the Labour party, there is no alternative, we must help the poor and the underprivileged. The social dimension is at the heart of this Budget. In fact, the soundness of our economic management rests on human aspects. This is not only a question of balance sheet as I have heard from a previous orator.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our socialist credentials are based, to a very great extent, on the support that we extend to the working class. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has laid a lot of emphasis on the imperative to save jobs and to create jobs. At a time when rich countries are throwing workers out by millions overnight without any condition, when you come back to work, the doors are closed and millions are thrown out on the pavement. Don’t talk of recruitment. This is a word which is almost becoming of the past today. It is a word which we don’t see around the world. ‘Recruitment’ seems to belong to another world. People are throwing out by millions! Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance has been almost an orthodox in saying that we have recruited and we want to save jobs. It is like defying world winds, it is like challenging the storms, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the magic of change which we brought to this country since July 2005. We are obviously not like those who hold one language in the Opposition and one language when they are in power. We speak of socialism when we are in Opposition and, we still want to be, and we are still pro-workers when we are in power.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been so much disillusion and resentment when they were in power. But we, in the Labour Party, we have been true to our credentials for 73 years, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have the strength of history and experience, we have the blessings of our founding fathers, we have the time tested ideals to guide us. And what do these inspire us, Mr Speaker, Sir? Simply and straightforwardly that capitalism is a dead creed. It is a monstrous system which has finally started devouring itself, after having spread so much suffering and so much pain around. Capitalism cannot be controlled because it is a mad system. It cannot be brought under moral supervision because by essence it is unscrupulous. As we are fighting the battle and as we are preparing for recovery, let us be clear about one fundamental truth. We are today witnessing the end of an era and the birth of another one. We are seeing and hearing the birth pangs of a new world order. *Ce sont les douleurs de l'enfantement d'un autre monde auxquelles nous assistons.* And the 2009 Budget has two strong signals to send to the unfair attitude of some of the barons of the private sector, of some who still stand as relics of the distant past. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget Speech says and I quote –

“As regards the CSR the response has been uneven.”

What does that prove? That some of these thick headed capitalists still keep their purse tight and they happily count their billions while others are crying at their doors. Now that a levy of 2% has been taken on their profits, now that we want them to contribute, and if the needs arise, we will certainly legislate.

I have read recently that they are doing it out of benevolence. No, Mr Speaker, Sir, some are not doing it and we will compel them to do it! These capitalists are making billions!

(Interruptions)

They have made also from 2000 to 2005! With us it will not be the same. We have said that there will be a levy of 2% of their profits and this is being taken from them to fight poverty because some refuse to contribute. And let me say, very clearly, that this is, but a warning sign, which is being given to the rock hearted people who refuse to show solidarity.

The other measure deals with the corporate sector which throw out workers and yet, they continue distributing dividends. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the height of injustice and scorn! What I said, capitalism is unscrupulous, immoral and inhuman, and the best way to fight it is not to compromise with it. In fact, America and the United Kingdom are nationalising banks. This is part of the socialist programme and we have heard that even Alan Green Fund has agreed that the nationalisation of banks is a necessity. We have seen that the "New York Times" and "Newsweek" have supported this move. The State is intervening almost everywhere to regulate private enterprise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, there are moves which are socialist moves and we have to go in that direction, and even further. We hear, today, that capitalism has created a mess in the world. Market forces have turned out to be jungles and this mess they created cannot go on indefinitely. We need an alternative system. What have we seen in the US? Billions have been given to banks, and yet, CEOs are living in paradise. We have seen their golden handshake. We have seen that in Australia, billions have been given, and yet, the pay packets of these big fat cats have increased by 20%. Some are still earning millions of dollars, while they are sacking workers and, even in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Hon. Ms Deerpalsing, three weeks ago, raised suspicion in this very Assembly, about the use or the misuse of the Additional Stimulus Package. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance answered the PNQ and said that he was concerned – he referred to one firm - about one firm not using judiciously the Additional Stimulus Package, but there could be others. Mr Speaker, Sir, around the world, capitalism stands as a diabolical system. While we, in Government, are striving to place human needs above everything, capitalists are placing corporate greed above everything else. This is unacceptable!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the world is in transition and even the economic models of liberalism and, while market forces have shown their limits, they bring us to the dead end of mass unemployment and unacceptable social miseries. Should we blame the workers for the crisis that the world is going through? The workers are victims; they didn't ask for it. Capitalism has failed! And let those, in Mauritius, who believe that this system will carry on with their support, also start thinking about it!

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have heard, today, in this House, of so many attacks, so many criticisms levied against the democratisation policy which the Prime Minister has heralded in this country. Let me remind this House that this is part of our programme. When I am launching an attack on capitalism, some might say I am ideological-driven too much and too strongly. No, Mr Speaker, Sir, this forms part of the Government programme! May I, perhaps, read one sentence of our Programme, just to place us in the context!

The programme says, at paragraph 41-

“The concentration of ownership of assets, especially over the last years, is one of the factors accounting for the present downturn in the national economic situation. The concentration of ownership of assets is not only unfair, but also give rise to misallocation and inefficiency in the utilisation of resources and thus it impedes growth.”

This is only a summary of a socialist policy. Now, we want to democratize and open business and democracy in business to everyone, but what have we not heard in this Parliament from the Opposition? Mr Speaker, Sir, very quickly, I will come over it. The Apollo Hospital has been under attack simply so that other big clinics may be protected. Very clear! The BAI has been under attack so that other insurance cartels may be protected and even names have been mentioned. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tianli Project is under attack for obvious reasons, and here, allow me to express my concern. From the MMM, what have they said? That *Gouvernement MMM pou très sévère avec la Chine !*”

Mr Speaker: What is said outside cannot be quoted here.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am simply mentioning that the Tianli Project has been under attack, because of a China-bashing which has started in this House and which continues elsewhere as well. This is very dangerous! And we can go on and on with projects which have been challenged. I just want to mention just a few again. As regards the waste of energy project, let us not close our eyes, make as if we are not seeing and understanding what is happening. There was, in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir, a similar project which was submitted by a sugar industry. We didn't hear anybody protesting. We didn't see any demonstration and now that we want to democratise our source of energy, we can see what is happening. And we heard, at the time, no protest, no lobbying, nothing! And I do not blame the people or some people who genuinely believe - though not true - that there may be environmental problems. But, those who are calling the tune and staying in the background, why didn't they react? Why was there no lobbying? Why was there no protest and demonstration when one sugar baron wanted to do the same thing ten years back? Mr Speaker, Sir, we know their methods. And let that be clear as regards energy project or any other project, we will not allow the energy production to stay in the hands of cartels! That's very clear.

Let the message go to whom it has to go! We will not be economically colonised again, Mr Speaker, Sir. We will diversify, we will democratise and we will not allow cartels to take us to ransom. This is why we said that with regard to capitalism, we are breaking their backs through policies. At times, they don't feel it, they don't see it, until it comes, but it is our intention to break their backs and democratise this country. That's very clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. If they want to fight us, let these barons come in the political arena, then we will see. They act through puppets, but if they have got the guts to fight us, they must come in the political arena.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are other issues, other projects. We listen, we understand, we judge, we assess when they ask questions, and we know where they come from, we know what is their policy, we know what they want to aim at. The real issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, is what type of society we want: whether we want to go back to the days when the few privileged used to bring the majority into submission and subservience, the days when there was no political democracy. We believe that human dignity is at the centre of our action, and we will not live on bended knees, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This Budget fits our political vision; our programme will go on. Mr Speaker, Sir, times are challenging. We have to confront a situation which we have never heard, never seen and

never experienced before. Economic textbooks are almost outdated. Even economic `winners *ont perdu leur latin*. Some say that this recession will last very long, will be very deep; others say in two months' time we will get out from the tunnel. Obviously, economic forecasts lack visibility and some people, out of despair, are anguished about the future. On top of that, when there is so much anguish, when there is so much suffering outside, some, like vultures, wish and pray for catastrophe to accumulate, as if they want to get political mileage out of the sufferings of others. But we'll fight; the fight will go on, Mr Speaker, Sir. I still remember, James Meade considered that Mauritius would soon collapse. James Meade in the 60's said that 'Mauritius is not viable', but from this country which was on the verge of collapsing, we've made of it a model of development in the world.

I remember Mrs Indira Gandhi once saying: 'Mauritius is a big small country'. Remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, that some were determined to set this country ablaze in the 70's. Remember that some wanted this country to be just a cemetery. It reminds me of one thing. Recently, Mr Speaker, Sir, some anti-patriots were applauding when the name of Mauritius appeared as a tax haven; there were banner titles in newspapers. There were press conferences, condemning Mauritius, condemning ourselves as being a tax haven. But when the OECD placed us on the White list, thanks to the vision of the hon. Prime Minister and thanks to the pugnacity of the Minister of Finance, we heard no apology; we heard nothing in praise of Mauritius.

However, we've heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition last week saying - and I quote him verbatim -

"Le gouvernement n'a aucune crédibilité auprès des institutions financières internationales. »

This is totally false, Mr Speaker, Sir. This smacks of anti-patriotism. That's only wishful thinking. In fact, if we go through the list, we see...

Mr Speaker: According to our rules, so long that an hon. Member refers to something collectively, it might not be unparliamentary, but when he refers to an individual it might become unparliamentary. So, as far as hon. Members of this House are concerned, I think some language must be according to that. I don't want any hon. Member to come and insist that hon. Dr. David is unpatriotic.

Dr. David: So, let me perhaps mention a few references, Mr Speaker, Sir, where international financial institutions have acclaimed our policy. To start with, the IMF acclaiming our commitment to good governance, acclaiming our fiscal measures, taken with a sense of responsibility. We've seen the Bretton Woods institutions applauding our economic reforms and the strength of our banking system. The OECD has recognised the transparency and ethics of our offshore system. Foreign governments have entered and are entering into Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty with us. The European Union is working with us. The *Agence Française de Développement* has come back and opened an office in Mauritius, as an expression of trust and friendship. By contrast, all these international institutions are supporting us, giving a denial to what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said last time. Do you know what the international institutions said when he was Prime Minister? I'll quote only one - no need for me to quote many, only one would suffice. Transparency International said -

"L'île Maurice est le pays le plus corrompu au monde."

I did not say that. The Regional Secretary for Transparency International said that when he was Prime Minister –

Then, immediately after that, echoed another voice. The then Commissioner of ICAC said –

“La corruption est entrée à tous les niveaux à Maurice »

Maybe, perhaps, I'll refer to one quotation, which fits perfectly well what he was trying to do –

“Créer un sentiment de frayeur”

Do you know what Adolphe Hitler said in his autobiography?

Let me quote Adolphe Hitler, just to show that there is - I would not say some similarity because you will stop me, Mr Speaker, Sir, but unconsciously try to read somebody else. He said –

“Create fictitious enemies if you have to and show that your country is in danger. It scares people, and when people are afraid, it is easy to keep them enslaved.”

Have you read the policy of somebody else on what I was saying? I am sure you must have!

But, fortunately, Shakespeare added, and let me quote him.

Mr Speaker: Shakespeare was before Adolphe Hitler!

Dr. David: That's right! I did not say he came after! I took it after, just to bring more sense to what Adolphe Hitler was saying. Shakespeare said -

“Scarecrows, after a while, become fixtures and don't scare the birds anymore”.

Mr Speaker: Shakespeare is more flowery.

Dr. David: That's right! More flowery but, at the same time, giving an answer to Hitler before.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while I am about to conclude, I would like to call for loftier states of mind. It is so easy to do cheap politics, so easy to try to score, and so easy to be demagogical. But, in days of turmoil and topsy-turviness like these, patriotism should be the key element. We shall certainly fight each other as political parties today, tomorrow, in elections. But this does not prevent us all from having our eyes on the mountain top. The climbing, Mr Speaker, Sir, may be tough. The top may be difficult to reach, but we must all be guided by the will to reach the top whatever may be our difficulties. The country matters, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have been particularly energised by three words from this Budget. These words are “Prepare For Recovery”. These are words of hope and these are words of trust in the future. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are braver than we think. We are stronger than we seem. I trust, we trust the *débrouillardise* and the *savoir-faire* of the people. I trust that nation which has, more than once, faced challenges. I trust personally that the Almighty will get us through.

Candidate Obama energised the American people with three words: 'Yes We Can.' May I be allowed, Mr Speaker, Sir, to add three more words to what he said. He said 'Yes We Can', and I would like to add 'And We Will.' The time is rough, no doubt, but I have also no doubt that, with an *élan* of patriotism, we will make it. 'Prepare for the future!' That's the key words: 'Prepare for recovery; prepare for the future; prepare for victory!' Then, we shall all celebrate. Never, never give up! We prepare for victory, because the captain's name is Navin Ramgoolam. We will never give up. It's not time for ease and comfort. It's time to dare and to act. We were born to be winners, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let's not forget that. And, whatever happens, times may be

rough, difficulties may come, darkness may come, clouds may cover us, but if there's one thing all these difficulties will never bend it's our determination. In the name of that determination, in the name of the nation, we shall overcome.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.05 p.m)

Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for la Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have so many supporters that they want me to deliver the speech.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am here for almost 18 years. We have already listened to a lot of hon. Members from both sides of the House. Sometimes, I had pity, sometimes I enjoyed, but this is not the time to enjoy. This time, I think that we must be serious. When we listened to the hon. Members, it seems that Mauritius has already escaped from the economic crisis, which is not. We are only under a warning economic crisis; a economic warning of class two is in force in Mauritius. This is where we are.

The previous orator mentioned that we have to prepare for recovery. Yes, we are prepared! We are, as my leader, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, mentioned, a loyal and responsible Opposition. I totally agree with him. We have to contribute to our country, as a true patriot.

In fact, Sir, the population today is scared about what will happen tomorrow. As we use to say, they have now *épuisé leurs réserves*, because most of the people are spending money on food and education for their children. Perhaps, they are preparing how they are going to deal when the economic situation crisis *va frapper l'île Maurice*. So, I will make a humble request to the remaining hon. Members to spend a nice time, sometimes in the afternoon, at the end of a meeting. It's not the time to score points. We can do that; it is not the time to score points. Also, no Minister has to prove that he is the best Minister, as compared to another one. I heard hon. Bachoo giving a list of all the projects. He has been well trained in our team, under the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. I also agree with my sister, hon. Ms Deerpalsing. I really admire her because she has the courage to speak the truth, without hesitation, without any grudge, without enmity towards her friends. She says what she has to say.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is true to say that. Because, what has happened? Since July 2005 up to now, the hon. Minister of Finance came with a well specialised team from the United States and, at the beginning, he started his policy by as he used to say: "*serrer les reins*". He did not want to spend more money on projects. What hon. Ms. Nita Deerpalsing mentioned in this august Assembly is true.

I have been informed that a meeting was held by the Financial Secretary with all the Head of the Ministries telling them that, from now on - it was in 2006, "you have to cut down all the expenses, no promotions and no development, increase all the CEB, water fees, everything, then, after three years, *nou pou larguer*." He might have been right at the time; he was not even aware of what would happen in the world. Finally, after three years, *li fine tassé*, zero plombage! Finally he could not even *largué, serré*; as we use to say: '*bouze fixe*'. This is exactly the problem with the other team of the Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot has been said about the reform. I don't know whether we will have a chance to speak on the Budget again because, according to hon. Dr. Boolell, it is the last one.

History cannot be changed. Mauritius has and will always have a great respect and gratitude to the person who fought fervently to bring independence to Mauritius, namely Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Father of the nation. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, nobody can deny nor we can forget the contribution made by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, then Prime Minister of our country to pay respect once we name Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. He has fought for independence and we recognise it.

Similarly, Sir Anerood Jugnauth was also a visionary. What would have happened if the foundation of our economy had not been laid in 1983, 1987, 1991 and 2000? No one can deny the exceptional vision he had, Sir. We cannot forget that, in 1982, we had only two hotels in this country. When he left in 2003, there were more than 100 hotels! Same thing in the textile industry. I am a witness among others as I was a famous trade unionist in the textile industry. Not the best but, at least, I know that I have worked very hard for the interest of the working class and I have been in jail many times.

(Interruptions)

You cannot be a famous trade unionist if you have not been to jail. So, *mone goûte ça aussi*. What I want to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that, in the 1980s, we had only 48 factories in the textile industry. Only 48! When I was Minister of Labour in 2000, we reached 436 textile industries. This was the vision of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, then Prime Minister. He brought industries in every corner of this country, in villages parallel to the towns, in front of the doors of the population. What I want to say is that we should not also forget the liberal and well-regulated cyber island. What people were saying about it? I don't know if hon. Ganoo would remember about *l'éléphant blanc*. People were telling me, at the time, that it was an *éléphant blanc*, but thanks God, today, it is the fourth pillar of our economy. In late 1980s and early 1990s, the rule of 'king sugar' was coming to an end, as the economy became more diversified. New laws were enacted to provide a fresh crust to the development of the Financial Services. Once again, Sir Anerood Jugnauth's proactiveness led to have attractive conditions for investors and set the pace to change. Beside a strong legislation framework, various fiscal incentives were introduced to attract international investors to set up offshore vehicles in Mauritius during his time.

These have been decades of remarkable achievements, Sir. He has allocated tremendous facilities to small planters. We would have had a duty free island but, sadly, today, we do not have it because of *l'arrogance, l'orgueil* of some. This is where we are going. Sir Anerood Jugnauth strengthened the education system by constructing 46 schools, primary and secondary. The hon. Minister mentioned this morning that they are completing the III and IV stage, but *la base était* in 2000. He also introduced high tech medicine in Mauritius, heart surgery. Who can forget the heart surgery performed by Prof. Hassan Raffa for the first time? And my good friends, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, Dr. Abdool...

(Interruptions)

Then, he was in MSM! All MSM members are proud of him for yesterday, not today! There were also dialysis, breast cancer screening. I am happy to note that this Government is encouraging to set up joint venture such as Fortis Darné and Apollo Bramwell which will benefit Mauritians who previously had to spend large amount of money to go abroad for medical treatment. We know that Government has to spend Rs240,000 for operations which cannot be done in Mauritius. Now, we hope this is going to solve the problem. This is also the case for the sea food hub.

In the present situation, the question is: who are the stakeholders who have to shoulder the responsibility when we are facing the brunt of the financial crisis? We have the private sector which has reduce orders due to the downturn of major economies such as the USA, the Europe nations. Japan is still facing recession.

Government has to come with bold measures to boost confidence and the economic activities of the country as well as the purchasing power of the working class, so that the most vulnerable segments of our society are adequately protected. The working class has to play its role in the national efforts to face the consequences of the financial crisis. Today, the national effort is the concern of thousands of workers from the lower and middle income groups. This has already been canvassed by many friends.

In the context of economic recession, with the rising cost of living and job insecurity, the people of Mauritius were hoping that the national Budget would bring some relief, *une bouffée d'oxygène* in their lives, but the Budget of the Minister of Finance has been a great disappointment for the citizens. Mr Speaker, Sir, the cause of disappointment is that the Minister of Finance has never given a true picture of the economy. This is the problem. We have to come and tell the truth to the population. Now, the time has come to tell the truth to the population. I am not saying that he is cheating. *Loin de là!*

(Interruptions)

I have never said that. He has always played with the slogan 'early harvest, bumper crop, resilience', etc. He interpreted figures in his own way to blow his own trumpet and promote this economic model. In reality, the number of export enterprises has reduced. More than 35 factories have closed down. A lot has been said about it. I was Minister of Labour in 2000 and Minister of Employment in 2004, and I know about the situation. That's true! When I was Minister of Labour, nearly more than 35 industries were closed; we have to recognise it. Factories were closing down, but we also created 43,000 jobs in parastatal bodies, in the public service, in the private sector and in ICT. When did this Ebène Cybercity start?

(Interruptions)

We have to set the records straight, Mr Speaker, Sir. I agree with the facts. Why is the hon. Member shouting? I agree that factories closed down. This is the truth! But, at the same time, we created jobs! This is also a truth! I was the Minister of Employment, and I know!

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me give you figures which I got from the CSO. Factories have closed down; employment in the sector has reduced from 66,931 in 2005 to 62,275 in 2008. In this economic model, there is simply no place for social justice and equity. If we have to describe this Budget in two lines, all that the Minister of Finance said, in his two hours' speech, is to give support to the rich and let the poor wait for a job and make all the sacrifices. This is what he has said, according to me. Today, workers are facing severe consequences like loss of purchasing power over the four years, with inadequate salary compensation. Prices have gone higher, but salaries have not gone up with the inflation running at nearly 10% for the last three years and 7% this year. We know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the basket of the goods used to calculate the rate of inflation has been modified. This is the fact; this is the truth.

Not only the poor, but the low and middle-income groups have been facing the terrible consequences of high price of commodities and petrol. People cannot make both ends meet. There are many families - I am not going to name any because they will say that this area is poor

– where people are eating one meal per day; their children are not going to school. Hon. Members know that there are students who cannot even sit for SC and HSC examinations. There was a student crying on '*Radio Plus*' because his father is a taxi driver. I am telling you what I heard, but I don't know whether it is true or not. God knows! They are two brothers going to school; one is in SC and the other one in HSC. The father cannot obtain the allowances due to his financial situation, and does not qualify for that. The boy said that he was willing to participate in the examination, but because his father could not pay for it, he could not participate. There are such cases; we cannot deny it otherwise, there would not have been any crisis in the world, everything would have been good. Even in Saudi Arabia, in Dubai, in Bahrain, there are such cases. You can be the richest prince of the world, but there is a crisis in the country. Here, we have a mentality crisis. We have the Damocles sword of the new labour laws which have put the workers in a very vulnerable situation. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is very important. Government has brought labour laws, making it easy for employers to hire and fire. I know that; I am not blaming anybody. My friend, the hon. Minister might not have thought that the situation would have become so worse but, in fact, the existing laws give the power to an employer to hire and fire easily. What is the excuse for hiring and firing the workers? The economic situation of the factory, and this is a big problem.

Now, Government is coming forward with the argument that flexibility will help protect jobs. Let me state, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, in many countries, this approach has failed. In the long run, no job can be guaranteed in a globalised world. In Denmark, the Government has taken the position that, as jobs cannot be protected, it can, at least, guarantee a certain level of income and supplementary training so that the persons who have lost their jobs can be qualified for other jobs. It has a system of employment benefits up to four years, with an amount of up to 90% of the previous salary for the lowest level. What has been said by ILO?

ILO encourages a flexible approach which promotes high employment rates. Without competitive enterprises, which are able to adjust the workforce to market conditions, employment performance will be poor. However, high levels of market flexibility cannot solve the employment problem, unless workers enjoy sufficient employment and income security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our context, everything is being done to weaken the workers, to make them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. What is happening, Sir? Today, for every employer, there is only one excuse: we have a crisis in our economic situation. The previous orator said - and I agree with him - that some employers are crooks and will never contribute for the benefit of the workers. What happened two or three years before? Many hotels declared their profits worth billions of rupees. This is a fact. What I would like, to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, at that time, when these hotels were making a lot of profits, they could have shared some with the workers. Two years before, I remember, the best friend of the Minister of Finance declared that they were going to give one month's additional bonus to the workers. When you go through the conditions attached to that, 20% of the workers were qualified for this additional bonus. And how did they transfer the profits? Through the renovation of the hotel! Per billion! They said it would cost Rs1 billion but, in fact, the cost might have been Rs600 m. and Rs400 m. transferred to a bank abroad. This is something which has happened in this country. In fact, this is the problem. At times the management approached the workers and gave them a good salary. The workers were told that the tourists come to this country because of the good treatment that they receive from the workers. They told the workers the tourists are king, and that they had to give them good treatment, all the facilities. I agree! We trained them! Who trained the workers? Not

the management! It's Government, at the Hotel & Catering School at Ebène. Finally, we cannot put any conditions on the profits that they have to share. Today, these hotels are now writing to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment, informing him that they have the intention not only to reduce the number of workers, but that they are going on *chômage technique*. *Chômage technique* means that they are going to have 50% of the salary. Tomorrow, when the crisis will be over, they are going to continue with their cinema, making a lot of profits, and they are going to have renovation works. Every two or three years, there is renovation because this is the only way they can transfer the money. But what Government is doing, at least, for these people? For two or three years, they have made a lot of profits, billions and billions. They are not losing money; *c'est un manque à gagner sur le profit pour certains grands hôtels*. This is the problem. So, how long are we going to tolerate this? Even in textile, how many big factories are closing down? I met somebody who said: *tous les carnets sont remplis*. When I read the newspaper, I saw that he is applying for the financial support. *C'est maja karo, khalé pilé!* This is what they are used to do. What has Government been doing? What has been said in the new legislation? I came forward with nearly 30 amendments. In fact, my friend was not aware, and I cannot blame him. Thanks God he has now become the Minister of Education. That's good! They have abolished the Termination of Service Contract Board, and said that they were going to set up a committee for fast track. Where is the committee? Where is the fast track? Zero! All has been cracked. There is no first track, there is crack now. This is the result. I have been Minister of Labour for five years and I have never seen an employer coming and saying: this is my balance sheet and I am going to show you that I am making profit. I was Minister, and I did not get it! Will the trade unions get it? If they get the balance sheet, they don't know how to analyse it, they do not have the expert, they do not have the people. In my Ministry we did not have the people to analyse. So, do you think a trade union will have it? This is the big problem that we have today. And, on top of that, we are adding insult to injury. We are asking the workers to contribute 1% of their severance allowance for tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have nearly 465,000 workers working in the private sector, and we have only 65,000 workers working in the EPZ. We can say that this empowerment programme is only for EPZ workers. And what will happen to the rest of the workers? Nobody has thought about it. So, it is high time now to come and review. I am ready to contribute, as a true patriot, with my own experience of trade unionist and Minister of Labour. I want to contribute; call me in a meeting, I will come and volunteer for that; there's nothing to pay. Mr Speaker, Sir, now, in difficult times, we are asking the workers to bear, as I have stated. Finally, *le travailleur est le laissé-pour-compte pendant la croissance et pendant la crise. C'est ce que nous reprochons au ministre des finances*.

We have nothing personal against him; neither my friends nor the leader of the MSM, as mentioned by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. Il est clair que le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances, le Dr. Rama Sithanen, a choisi son camp depuis le début, mais au MSM, nous restons fidèles à notre devise et nos principes. Nous voulons défendre les droits du peuple, nous voulons être la voix du peuple au parlement et faire des propositions pour son bien-être.

M. le président, j'ai été ministre du travail. Je sais qu'une compensation salariale est un droit acquis de la classe travailleur, qui a déjà perdu son pouvoir d'achat pendant l'année écoulée. Pour nous, c'est une condition essentielle pour la paix sociale dans le pays; une paix sociale nécessaire pour la bonne marche de notre pays, face aux problèmes du jour, qui sont aujourd'hui d'une extrême gravité. Le gouvernement est en guerre contre les syndicats, pourtant

partenaires essentiels pour trouver des solutions pendant une crise difficile. Au MSM, nous avons toujours oeuvré pour une paix sociale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are facing difficult times; we need the support of each and every citizen of this country to overcome the difficulties of the economic recession. We need the support of the investors, as much as we need that of the workers. Il faut absolument un pacte social pour le secteur privé, le syndicat et la classe ouvrière, afin que le gouvernement puisse créer les meilleures conditions pour traverser une des phases les plus difficiles de notre économie. J'ai été syndicaliste et ministre du travail, et je suis bien placé pour le dire. I, therefore, appeal to the Prime Minister to review the whole economic approach and model with a greater sense of humanism and social justice. It is my humble request to him, in the interest of the workers and their families, to consider, Sir, strengthening income maintenance measures for the unemployed and consider more realistic social protection measures, increase opportunities for small and medium operators in agriculture, introduce support for the vulnerable groups and sectors, such as payment of examination fees. I will make a humble request to the Minister of Social Security, hon. Mrs Bappoo, that it is high time now to review the existing social benefits criteria for the 60% incapacity benefit.

(Interruptions)

Place an obligation - that is very important, Sir - on enterprises to carry out the restructuring in a social, responsible way; encourage greater social dialogue at enterprise, sector and national levels. My colleague, hon. Bodha, rightly said how, with R1 billion from the Budget support of the European Union, we can change the life of our low and middle income groups with a full salary compensation to all workers and old-age pensioners, with subsidy to 30,000 parents for SC and HSC examination fees, and with the review of the NRPT. These are the proposals which are in line with their values and principles of the MSM, and we are convinced that they will go a long way to bring a breathing space – *un ballon d'oxygène* - to hundreds and thousands of families, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At 7.45 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.52 p.m with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, je voudrais, tout d'abord, commenter le titre même du budget 2009, car il est lui-même annonciateur de désespoir, donc, très mauvais pour le moral de la nation mauricienne. The first title is: *Saving Jobs, which means that we are actually losing jobs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.* Second: *Protecting People, which means that the people out there are actually threatened. So, we have to protect them.* And, third, *Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: Preparing for Recovery, which means that we are in deep chaos.*

Donc, au départ même, le signal est très mauvais, M. le président. Le ministre a, lui-même, dit, et je cite –

"This year, the situation has become even more threatening, with a deepening of the recession."

Avec une dette publique approchant les R 160 milliards, le message envoyé dans le titre de ce budget est déprimant, angoissant et de mauvais augure. Le ministre des finances fait ici un *mea culpa*. Il reconnaît sa faute, M. le président. Il se cache derrière la crise financière, et ne pipe mot sur le gaspillage sans précédent, à tous les niveaux de l'État, comme le démontre le dernier rapport de l'audit, M. le président.

Si vous me permettez, M. le président, je vais passer en revue le budget précédent, et j'aurais aimé souligner quelques paragraphes. C'est le budget de l'année dernière, M. le président, et le ministre des finances disait –

"Without our economy would have suffered the full blast of preference erosion and continued its decline to lower GDP growth, lower income, higher unemployment, and rising debt and deficit. We would be today continuing to write all the indicators with red ink. Our reforms have saved our economy, our country and our population from these bleak odds. Today we are vindicated by the results. Last year, we had an early harvest. This year, we are seeing a bumper crop".

C'est juste pour souligner, M. le président, ce qui a été dit dans le budget de l'année dernière.

M. le président, le quatrième budget de l'Alliance sociale a été présenté dans la plus grande indifférence, la plus grande tristesse, car tous les membres du gouvernement n'étaient eux-mêmes pas convaincus. La grande majorité des mesures annoncées étant du archi entendues et du archi répétées telles que ce qu'on a entendues ce matin, encore une fois, notamment le *Harbour Bridge* pour R 8 milliards, *le Ring Road* – R 6 milliards, le *Bus Rapid Transit System* – R 5 milliards, *modern airport* – R 11 milliards et des autres projets PPP tels que *Tianli* – R 20 milliards et *town of Highlands* – R 100 milliards. Je m'arrêterai là, M. le président, parce qu'on a déjà dépassé les R 150 milliards. Une série d'annonces en quelque 200 points et deux heures. Nous savons tous éperdument bien que 90% d'entre elles ne verront jamais le jour, et resteront un effet d'annonce qui iront rejoindre les squelettes des précédents budgets, dans les placards de divers ministères, M. le président.

Comme a fait remarquer le *Leader* de l'opposition, le seul parlementaire enthousiaste durant la présentation de ce budget a été mon bon ami, l'honorable Dr. Boolell, car, en tant que ministre des affaires étrangères, *it is obvious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that he spends most of his time away*. Donc, il est coupé de la réalité, de la souffrance que le petit peuple endure depuis l'arrivée de l'Alliance sociale. Il était le seul à jouer au *dholok*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Personne n'a tapé la table à part l'honorable Dr. Boolell.

Au PMSD, nous sommes très sceptiques quant à la mise en application des mesures annoncées dans ce budget. M. le président, s'il y a quelque chose qui a choqué plus d'un depuis l'arrivée de l'Alliance sociale au pouvoir en 2005, c'est bien le manque de transparence totale et l'opacité totale dans la gestion des compagnies de l'État, des corps parapublics et le gouvernement lui-même à travers certains ministères que je pourrais décrire comme pourris, M. le président, sans oublier, bien sûr, la nouvelle version de la démocratisation de l'économie, soit la *'copainisation'* de l'économie. La démocratisation a été remplacée par le *'nou bannisme'* et le favoritisme, M. le président. Donc, les termes *'nou banne'*, *'nou dimoune et banne là'* font, désormais, partie du vocabulaire de nos dirigeants de l'Alliance sociale.

Aujourd’hui, la société mauricienne a été cassée en morceaux, a été séquestrée dans les ghettos communalo-ethniques. Il y a un repli identitaire sans précédent, M. le président, dans la société mauricienne, car le haut n’a pas su donner le bon exemple, M. le président.

Les jeunes quittent le pays en masse, M. le président, avec leurs parents, et ce budget ne vient pas arranger les choses. Ce budget est un passeport gratuit vers l’émigration. Le plus ironique, aujourd’hui, c'est que les termes '*nou banne, nou dimoune*', se résument à une petite clique de gros capitalistes proches du pouvoir, M. le président.

Finalement, la démocratisation de l’économie, avec le slogan "*Put People First*" a été un leurre, un attrape-nigaud. Aujourd’hui, le petit peuple réalise qu'il a été servi avec des slogans ronfleurs, afin d’assouvir les caprices des barons du pouvoir, M. le président, et les petits copains et, que lui, le petit peuple, est resté sur la touche. Les syndicats sont méprisés, les travailleurs malmenés, le *Welfare State* est menacé. Le langage utilisé par certains de nos dirigeants de l’Alliance sociale à l’égard d’une section de la population est honteux, M. le président. Je voudrais citer quelques qualificatifs, au cas où on aurait oublié, tels que gangsters, criminels, dinosaures, *batchiara, banne blancs là, banne là, lérat blanc*, accapareur...

(*Interruptions*)

All this has been said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(*Interruptions*)

I am coming on the Budget!

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. David: When was that said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this House or elsewhere? This has never been said! So, he cannot just invent things, Sir!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not mad; I am just telling the truth. Whatever has been said out there, I am saying it in the House.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: I can appreciate what has been said, and how it has been well received. The atmosphere has been very good. I believe we should try to keep on a trend, which keeps the right atmosphere in the House. I am sure you can manage to do that, while keeping the tenure of what you would like to say.

Mr Guimbeau: Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But it is good to tell the truth as well! C'est dommage, M. le président, et il est bon de rappeler que nous sommes tous des mauriciens. Je m’arrêterai ici. J’ai d’autres points à soulever, mais je le ferai plus tard.

Dans son discours sur le budget, le ministre des finances a eu le toupet de venir dire au paragraphe 307, je cite –

“We must be more united and responsible than ever and move forward with a deep sense of solidarity.”

M. le président, l'exemple doit venir d'en haut, mais tel n'est, malheureusement, pas le cas.

M. le président, je voudrais maintenant venir sur quelques anciens fleurons de notre République qui, aujourd’hui, à travers une mauvaise gestion, est quasiment en faillite. Je vais commencer par citer la STC. Nous avons tous vu des compagnies, comme, par exemple, la STC, qui aujourd’hui font des milliards de pertes suite aux décisions non réfléchies sur le *hedging* et des contrats négociés entre petits copains à l’extérieur. Et aujourd’hui, la STC est quasiment en faillite, M. le président.

Je voudrais aussi citer le CEB, M. le président. Je ne soulèverai que quelques petits points. Après avoir fait de la démagogie sur l’IPP, le président est venu dire que le CEB ne peut pas continuer à subventionner l’IPP. Aujourd’hui, on constate que l’électricité produite par l’IPP est beaucoup plus compétitive que celle du CEB.

Au niveau de la CWA, c’est la même histoire, M. le président. Ce sont des pertes, le réseau qui est dans un état pitoyable sans compter les vols sur les lignes.

On constate le même scandale au niveau de la CNT en ce qui concerne l’achat des autobus et des pièces de rechange. Il y a eu pertes d’argent.

En ce qui concerne les casinos de Maurice, nous venons d’apprendre qu’ils ont été repris par des étrangers, et, si je ne trompe pas, par des sud-africains.

Chez Air Mauritius, M. le président, le fleuron de l’île Maurice, il y a eu des pertes en milliards en raison de la politique des petits copains et des erreurs sur le *hedging* et le plus ironique dans cette l’histoire, M. le président, est que le *board* des directeurs est toujours présent. On demande aux petits employés de faire des sacrifices alors que les grands patrons sont toujours assis sur le *board* avec tous les bénéfices. Cela est inacceptable, M. le président ! Nous allons bientôt entendre dire qu’une compagnie étrangère a fait l’acquisition d’Air Mauritius. Tout ceci est bien triste, mais cela est dû à une mauvaise gestion.

Aujourd’hui, la DWC est fermée et la DBM est, nul besoin de le dire, aussi en perte. Toutes ces institutions sont gérées dans l’opacité M. le président et voici le résultat. Malheureusement, le dindon de la farce reste le contribuable, le peuple admirable.

M. le président, je vais dire quelques mots sur l’opacité. S’il y a quelque chose qui nous frappe à l’extérieur, c’est l’opacité dans laquelle les biens de l’Etat sont gérés. Je voudrais revenir sur le Stimulus Package, M. le président. Il a fallu plusieurs questions parlementaires, une *Private Notice Question* du leader de l’opposition, pour finalement savoir qui a été le bénéficiaire. Le premier bénéficiaire a été un député de l’autre côté de la Chambre, M. le président. Nous souhaitons que la liste de tous les bénéficiaires soit rendue publique. M. le président, le vice-premier ministre a dit qu’il allait ouvrir une enquête sur les compagnies du député. Nous savons tous que le député est un membre du comité de sélection et un membre de l’ICAC. Nous pensons que le député doit *step down*, pour suivre l’exemple de notre ami Yatin Varma, en attendant que l’enquête suive son cours.

M. le président, je viendrai maintenant sur l’*Equal Opportunity*. Qu’est ce qu’on n’a pas entendu sur l’*Equal Opportunity* - chance égale à tous ? Aujourd’hui on se bat au Parlement. Il n’y a aucune transparence en ce qu’il s’agit des recrutements dans la police, les hôpitaux, les municipalités et la *Special Mobile Force*, M. le président. Et quand les *back-benchers* posent des questions aux ministres, on vient nous dire que c’est *the policy*. Je considère donc que l’*Equal Opportunity* est, une fois de plus, un bluff, M. le président. C’est malhonnête; on a le droit en

tant que *tax payers* de savoir qui sont les recrues. C'est la moindre des choses car nous ne demandons pas beaucoup, M. le président.

Le *Central Procurement Board* a remplacé le *Central Tender Board* afin d'être plus transparent. L'augmentation du *threshold* de R15 millions à R50 millions et de R50 millions à R100 millions est une chose dangereuse, M. le président et ouvre une porte au favoritisme et à la corruption. Cela va entraîner un abus de l'argent public sans aucun contrôle. Aucun garde-fou ne dit que c'est une invitation à la fraude et à la politique de petits copains.

Le *Road Development Company* est une compagnie privée qui va gérer un budget de R26 milliards de fonds public, M. le président, afin de faire des routes et nous savons déjà quelles vont être les réponses, comme dans le cas d'Air Mauritius. Quand nous posons des questions parlementaires, le ministre va nous répondre, '*it is not answerable to Parliament, Mr Speaker, Sir.*' Vu l'opacité dans laquelle les choses sont gérées en ce moment, cela nous inquiète, M. le président, parce que c'est l'argent des *tax payers*.

M le président, au niveau de la CTDS, la Centrale Thermique du Sud, le ministre des finances avait parlé de scandale du siècle. L'honorable Nita Deerpalsing avait parlé de magouilles, M. le président et le Premier ministre avait dit qu'il allait instituer une commission d'enquête sur la CTDS. J'ai posé trois questions concernant la commission d'enquête, M. le président *because I believe that we have the right to know* about les magouilles et le scandale du siècle. La première réponse à ma question parlementaire fut que la commission d'enquête a été remplacée par un *inter-ministerial committee*.

The Deputy Speaker : Hon. Guimbeau, I have given you quite some latitude, maybe we should get back to the current Budget because CTDS, I am afraid, is a private company.

Mr Guimbeau: C'est fondamental ce que je dis là, parce que cela a trait à la transparence. C'est très important M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker : Mais revenons quand même au Budget de préférence.

Mr Guimbeau : *The interministeriel committee* a été transformé en un *high powered committee*, M. le président. J'ai de nouveau soumis une question, malheureusement, la semaine dernière, à l'adresse du Premier ministre. Elle a été renvoyée au vice-premier ministre pour mardi prochain. M. le président, je considère important que la lumière soit faite sur les magouilles et les scandales du siècle et je souhaite que toutes ces allégations soient confirmées car il serait extrêmement grave de la part du Premier ministre et autres ministres, si tel n'est pas le cas. Ce serait de la démagogie de haut niveau, M. le président.

J'aborde maintenant un projet qui est fait dans l'opacité. C'est un projet qui a été fait entre le gouvernement et une société étrangère, Tianli. Le gouvernement, avec de l'argent public, va investir R3 milliards en infrastructure - routes, *sewerage*, téléphones. Le *leader* de l'opposition a posé une PNQ, M. le président et nous ne sommes pas contre le développement. La politique du PMSD est au contraire de favoriser le développement. Il y a un point opaque concernant le *framework agreement*, M. le président. A travers une PNQ, le ministre avait dit qu'il allait demander aux chinois de révéler le *framework agreement*. Je suis venu avec une PQ et le ministre des finances a répondu qu'il ne croit pas que les chinois seraient d'accord. Mais, en Zambie, à côté de nous, tout a été fait dans la transparence, cartes sur table. La raison pour laquelle le ministre ne donne pas les détails mais il vient vous dire que c'est un projet de R20 milliards. Mais raison de plus, M. le président, vu l'ampleur du projet, nous considérons que

nous les mauriciens, les *tax payers*, avons le droit de savoir ce qui va être fait sur le sol mauricien, M. le président. Nous ne sommes contre aucun développement, mais nous voulons la transparence. Transparence, M. le président, et je vais répéter ce mot à plusieurs reprises.

En ce qui concerne le City Power, M. le président, jusqu'à présent nous ne savons toujours pas ce qui a été négocié, comment cela a été négocié et il n'y a pas eu de *tender*. C'est le flou total, un silence complet, M. le président. La population demande à voir clair, surtout en ce qu'il s'agit de tous ces projets énergétiques.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: With due respect, there is an expression which has been used “keep cool please! Keep cool!”

(*Interruptions*)

That is not a reason for the hon. Member to interrupt. Hon. Guimbeau, you may continue. Thank you.

Mr Guimbeau: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. M. le président en ce qu'il s'agit surtout de ces projets d'énergie que nous avons suivis ces derniers temps ...

Il y en a qui est sont très polluants ; je parle en général, je ne *pinpoint* aucun. Nous considérons que la transparence doit primer. On ne peut hypothéquer l'avenir de notre pays et de nos enfants avec des projets polluants colossaux sans que la population ne soit mise au courant, M. le président.

Maintenant je viens sur un autre projet, Gamma Coventa. L'opinion publique n'est toujours pas convaincue quant au bien-fondé d'un tel projet, un projet de *waste-to-energy*, dû aux nombreuses questions concernant l'émission de gaz toxique. A l'île Maurice, nous savons que les déchets sont constitués comme tels : 70% de déchets sont organiques, 5% de déchets dangereux et 25% sont des cartons, des métaux qui sont recyclables. Un incinérateur ne peut être efficient avec 70% de matières organiques dans les déchets récupérés. Le cas de Lucknow en Inde où ils ont été obligés de fermer à cause de trop de déchets verts dûs à un manque d'efficience. Au lieu de produire 5 méga watts, ils ont produit 0.5% mega watts, soit 10% de la capacité, et la Cour Suprême en Inde a même interdit tout permis au nouveau projet d'incinérateur.

L'utilisation du Maurice île Durable Fund rend perplexe plus d'un. C'est une contradiction totale et une aberration que de se servir de ce Fund pour un projet polluant. Le silence du conseiller du Premier ministre, M. Joel de Rosnay, sur Maurice Ile Durable et qui a formellement objecté à un tel projet nous amène à nous poser beaucoup de questions sur ce projet qui, en plus, se trouve sur les terres de l'état, ce qui est en totale contradiction avec le State Land Act qui prévoit dit que l'état ne peut pas louer une portion de terre pour un projet au détriment de l'environnement. Donc, le silence du gouvernement sur un tel projet fait surgir des doutes ; le Gouvernement a le devoir de clarifier son point de vue sur ce projet.

Des projets comme Gamma Coventa et CT Power ne peuvent aller de l'avant par *precautionary principle* comme cela se fait dans beaucoup de pays. Il n'y a aucune autorité pour un contrôle indépendant - *Independent Utility Regulatory Authorities*. Il n'y a aucun cadre légal afin de protéger la population contre tout abus de cette unité d'énergie extrêmement polluante. Une fois installée M. le président, il sera quasiment impossible de prendre une quelconque action

légale car le gouvernement et la population n'auront aucun recours à une cour de justice ou autorité afin d'arrêter les abus. Il y a une alternative durable qui n'est malheureusement pas exploitée, et je voudrais dire pour les déchets qu'il y a le compostage et le recyclage M. le président, qui demande quelques millions d'investissement au lieu de R 5 milliards et c'est sans risque pour la santé.

Que se passe-t-il à Mare-Chicose? Aujourd'hui, le gouvernement était supposé acheter l'énergie. Jusqu'à présent, zero ! Donc, nous nous posons beaucoup de questions sur Mare-Chicose. Nous savons qu'un projet comme Gamma Coventa va créer un deuxième Mare-Chicose. Donc, pour les déchets, il y a le compostage et le recyclage. Maintenant pour l'énergie, M. le président cela m'étonne, il y a le potentiel éolien. A l'île Maurice, il est de 450 mega watts pour notre énergie. L'énergie du vent est 20 fois supérieure à la capacité théorique que l'incinération de Coventa. Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement ne met pas l'emphase sur les éoliens, M. le président ? Il est quand même extrêmement inquiétant de n'entendre aucun député du Gouvernement et le ministre de l'environnement se prononcer sur ce sujet. M. le président, malgré tous les soulèvements des forces vives de la région et divers groupes et ONG, au PMSD nous objectons formellement contre tous ces projets, tout comme toutes ces organisations des ONG, parce que cela va à l'encontre de l'île Maurice, île durable. Le gouvernement a fait un choix, il a fait un choix de faire Maurice devenir une île durable. Donc, ce choix doit être respecté. Vu ce lourd silence sur certains de ces gros projets, je ne peux m'empêcher de dire haut et fort, qu'il y a anguille sous roche. Je pense sincèrement que le problème du silence du côté du gouvernement vient du fait que beaucoup de ces gros promoteurs de projets d'envergure ne sont rien que de gros bailleurs de fonds et, croyez-moi, je sais ce que je dis, d'où mon insistance au PMSD et j'ai eu l'occasion de poser trois ou quatre questions parlementaires sur le financement des partis politiques et le Premier ministre m'a répondu que c'était très compliqué et que j'avais l'air d'être un professionnel dans la matière. Je ne suis pas un professionnel, loin de là, mais j'ai la volonté en tant qu'un député de la République d'aller dans la bonne direction. Je l'ai dit à maintes reprises et je le répète, le financement opaque des partis politiques engendre le favoritisme et est la source de corruption. Je l'ai dit plusieurs fois et, je le répète, et je le dirai encore. Je réitère mon appel ici au gouvernement et, en particulier, au Premier ministre de venir de l'avant avec un Public Funding of Political Parties Bill. Je profite de l'occasion pour relancer un appel à l'Attorney-General qui est supposé avoir déjà présenté le Freedom of Information Bill.

(Interruptions)

Ces deux Bills représentent un pas de géant vers une démocratie saine où la transparence sortira grandie. Au PMSD, M. le président, nous pratiquons une politique de vérité, d'intégrité et de transparence et nous pensons sincèrement que c'est la seule façon pour un pays de progresser en toute justice et sérénité. Je répète, le PMSD est pour le développement et la transparence doit primer, M. le président. Après la faillite de nos institutions citées plus haut, les nombreux cas de projets d'envergure qui se font dans l'opacité, je voudrais dire quelques mots sur un autre sujet qui me tient à cœur, c'est allocation des terres de l'état. Je constate sans étonnement mais avec tristesse que les State lands saga continue de plus belle. Dans le budget 2006-2007, le ministre des finances disait, en parlant des terres de l'état, et je cite –

'An absurdity that has persisted for too long, is a very poor return on stateland. Government is accepting a pitance'

Et il décrivait les States lands comme *our most valuable assets*. Or, aujourd’hui, en 2009, M. le président, que constatons nous ? La saga continue de plus belle, et les terres de l’état sont bradées avec des puissants groupes qui paient toujours une pitance M. le président. Je vais citer quelques groupes. Je prends le cas de Tianli, 500 arpents, loués pour 99 ans à Rs50 l’arpent, M. le président après avoir expulsé 530 familles de petits planteurs. La valeur actuelle de ces terres, s’élève à plus de R 5 milliards. Je viens sur un autre projet fait sur les terres de l’état, l’hôpital Apollo, une centaine d’arpents de *prime State land* à Rs100 l’arpent pour un projet privé avec une exemption de la TVA à hauteur R 136 millions sans compter tous les travaux. Nous avons vu le cas de St Félix plus connu comme l’affaire Dulull. Nous avons vu le cas de l’île Plate donnée à des petits copains pour quelques Rs60,000. Ilôt Gabriel, petits copains et interdit les touristes de profiter de ce patrimoine. L’île aux Bénitiers, 155 arpents de nos plus belles plages pour Rs40,000. Acquisition obligatoire de terres agricoles à Triolet évaluées à quelques roupies, mais payées à plusieurs millions. The land was assessed by the Government valuer à Rs680,000 mais quand il a fallu compenser, la compensation a été à hauteur de R 7.5, de 7.6 million, jusqu’à présent on ne peut pas m’expliquer. Gamma Coventa, là-aussi, un projet privé sur 55 arpents de State land, un projet polluant en totale contradiction avec le State land Act et le MID et plusieurs autres cas qui sont en train d’être analysés par la commission des terres de l’état que le bureau politique du PMSD a décidé de mettre sur pied. Le but de cette commission PMSD est d’écouter et d’analyser les doléances, les cas d’abus, les cas où il y a des informations compromettantes sur toute allocation des terres de l’état et je voudrais profiter de l’occasion parce que nous recevons beaucoup de doléances, et je peux vous dire que c’est choquant, M. le président, concernant les terres de l’état.

C’est pourquoi, au PMSD, nous avons mis une commission qui va gérer toutes ces doléances pour que ces cas soient référés à l’ICAC et à la Police et nous allons suivre cela de près. Après tout, ce que le ministre des finances a dit sur les terres de l’Etat, nous, au PMSD, nous allons faire les terres de l’état notre cheval de bataille et nous allons exiger la transparence. Nous ne sommes pas contre que les terres de l’Etat soient allouées. Loin de là! Mais que ce soit fait dans la transparence et que toutes ces terres de l’état soient *rented au market value*.

M. le président, je voudrais profiter de l’occasion - comme l’honorable ministre l’a signalé - pour expliquer le mécanisme dans la location des *State lands* et comment les petits copains, et plus choquant encore, certains anciens officiers du ministère, tels que les *Land Surveyors*, ceux qui connaissent le rouage, se remplissent les poches sur le dos de l’état. La pratique est simple, M. le président, mais il faut tout de même avoir le *right connection* et le bon profil. Je vous cite ici le Ebène *filling station land lease*, le *Business Park of Mauritius*. *If Members want to have more information, they can refer to PQ No. No. B/523*. Ceci n’est qu’un simple petit exemple. Donc, la pratique est simple, comme je l’ai dit. Je vais expliquer comment cela se passe, parce que depuis le budget 2006/2007, je dois dire ‘*ine ouvert lisié tangue*’. Après tout ce qu’on a entendu sur les terres de l’Etat, aujourd’hui, cela nous intéresse - le PMSD - au niveau du *housing* et des *State land*. Donc, ce qui se passe, M. le président, c’est que beaucoup s’octroient des *cultivation or agriculture leases*. Vous savez que ce sont des *leases* qui ne valent pas grand-chose en terme de *rent*, M. le président.

Deuxième étape, ils forment une société pour ensuite faire une demande de conversion - je vois que le ministre sourit, c’est un bon signe - *a change of appellation* du *lease cultivation into industrial or bungalow complex*, M. le président. Donc, le *lease* a déjà changé de nom, il est

devenu industriel. Une fois le *lease* converti en celui d'industriel, la valeur du *lease* augmente considérablement et maintenant ce qui reste à faire c'est de trouver un promoteur. Les actions sont transmises au niveau du promoteur pour des millions de roupies. Il y a eu plusieurs cas. M. le président, j'avais une question à ce sujet qui n'a pas été prise. Donc, ces actions de sociétés valent des millions *overnight*, alors que l'état empoche toujours une pitance. C'est cela le plus amusant! Donc, pour un arpent de *cultivation land*, loué à bail pour quelques roupies, il se retrouve avec plusieurs millions, après avoir converti le bail et vendu tous ces parts de société à un promoteur commercial ou touristique.

Je voudrais, ici, M. le président, profiter de cette occasion et demander à l'honorable ministre des terres et du logement de revoir, de façon très méticuleuse, le mécanisme de location des terres de l'état et s'assurer que de tels abus ne se reproduisent plus. Un amendement de la *State Land Act* sur transfert des baux s'impose, M. le président. J'ai posé plusieurs questions parlementaires depuis bientôt six mois, un an, voire même deux ans, et j'attends toujours les réponses, M. le président. Je ne sais pas si le ministre pourrait les faire déposer sur la table de l'Assemblée.

Maintenant, pour venir camoufler tous ces scandales, le gouvernement est venu se montrer solidaire envers le petit peuple qui souffre et propose une réduction de R 10,000 sur les salaires de base des ministres. C'est une mesure très bien accueillie, mais qui ne représente qu'un jour de *per diem allowance* pour un ministre qui voyage, M. le président. Au PMSD, nous proposons au ministre des finances d'abolir le *per diem allowance* des ministres jusqu'à la fin de la crise, M. le président, et on verra si le ministre est vraiment sérieux dans sa politique de '*serre ceinture*'.

M. le président, je voudrais dire quelques mots sur nos artistes pour lesquels j'ai un grand respect. Nos artistes commencent à être enfin reconnus, mais il faut mettre plus d'emphase contre leur exploitation. Il faut que le ministre de la culture vienne de l'avant avec un *copyright law* afin de protéger leurs œuvres. Le ministre doit venir de l'avant avec un *legal framework concerning the quantum of pay to performing artists in hotels*. Nos artistes sont exploités dans les hôtels, M. le président. Il faudrait qu'ils fassent partie du développement et non pas se servir d'eux pour animer des soirées pour ensuite les mettre à la porte. Ce n'est pas correct, M. le président. Le ministre a répondu dernièrement qu'il allait venir de l'avant avec ces réformes que nous accueillons favorablement. Nous devons être reconnaissants envers nos artistes qui ont un rôle prépondérant dans le succès de l'industrie touristique à Maurice. Sans artistes, point d'hôtel, M. le président!

Je voudrais ici dire un petit mot sur le *solar water heater scheme*. Le *Leader* de l'opposition en a mentionné récemment, mais j'aimerais venir avec un petit détail en plus. Le ministre a dit que le *solar water heater scheme* a été beyond expectation. Mais on ne comprend pas, M. le président, pourquoi le *scheme* s'arrête en si bon chemin, d'autant plus que le *financing scheme* établi dans le *Memorandum of Understanding* entre la DBM et les *suppliers* est valide jusqu'au 31 décembre 2009. M. le président, aujourd'hui, je peux venir confirmer qu'il y a eu une mise-en-demeure contre la Banque de Développement, le ministère des Public Utilities, le ministère des finances et le gouvernement. C'est la raison pour laquelle tout le projet était bloqué. J'ai la mise-en-demeure en ma possession. Elle se monte à R 584 millions, et elle a été servie par une compagnie, *Alternative Power Solution Ltd*. Voilà la raison pourquoi tout le *scheme* a été bloqué. En un mot, on peut dire que le *scheme smells a rat*; une enquête approfondie s'impose.

M. le président, ce budget mentionne le *upgrading* de football stadiums dont celui du Stade Georges V. A Curepipe, nous accueillons favorablement cette mesure accordée à notre stade historique. Il fait aujourd’hui partie du patrimoine et l’histoire du football mauricien. Malheureusement, il est dommage de constater le changement de nom proposé par le ministre des sports pour ce stade et cela attriste les footballeurs; beaucoup sont venus me voir pour m’en parler. Nous pensons que nous devons rendre hommage à notre ami et ancien entraîneur, Ram Ruhee, dont nous reconnaissons toute la contribution en ce qui concerne le football mauricien. La construction d’un nouveau stade aux normes internationales dans une région dépourvue de facilités sportives lui rendra un hommage beaucoup plus digne et plus honorable que celui d’un simple changement de nom d’un stade existant, M. le président. Donc, je fais un appel au ministre, que le Stade George V - un patrimoine - garde son nom, parce que demain on peut entendre dire qu’on va changer le nom de Port Louis ou de Curepipe. Ce n’est pas correct, M. le président! Nous respectons Ram Ruhee pour tout ce qu’il a fait. Au contraire, il faut l’honorer de façon plus digne et construire un stade aux normes internationales dans une région dépourvue de facilités. Nous reconnaissons tous la contribution de Ram Ruhee.

M. le président, je ne serai pas plus long. Je voudrais juste dire quelques mots sur ma circonscription. J’ai fait le tour et je réalise, avec peine, qu’il n’y a pas grand-chose à dire, M. le président. J’ai réalisé une seule chose c’est que la circonscription No. 17 Curepipe/Midlands a été rayée de la carte, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Et le No. 20 ! C’est extrêmement injuste, M. le président ! Que ce soit dans la circonscription Nos. 17, 19 ou 20, nous payons tous la taxe. Nous sommes tous des *taxpayers*. Donc, je fais un appel pour que tout cela soit revu.

Merci, M. le président.

(21.30)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member of Savanne and Black River): I think that I must first of all answer a few points that have been made by hon. Minister David and hon. Ms Deerpalsing because I had, can I say, the misfortune or the fortune and luck of being there when they were speaking.

I will not dwell a lot to answer them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I think that I am duty-bound to set the records straight. Ladies first! Hon. Ms Deerpalsing seems to be saying that the MMM has been engaged in actions of banditry, this is the exact words that she used. She had a go at the MMM as if the MMM was a destructive force in this country and had been creating havoc in the 1970s and so on and so forth, the typical, hysterical criticisms that we hear from people who hate the MMM. Listening to her and also to hon. Minister David, I cannot understand why do people when they stand up in this House, have to talk with such hatred, *cracher leur venin comme si sur quelqu’un d’autre ou un autre parti politique*, even if the other party is their opponent. I will not follow these two hon. Members along the path that they have taken, but I think it is unfair, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You know, all political parties in this country, the Labour Party, the MSM, the PMSD and lastly the MMM, I am saying lastly the MMM because I belong to the MMM and I give precedence to the other parties, we have all contributed in one way or the other to the progress of this country. In fact, that is why we are

represented here, that is why people of our different electorates have voted for us. But I think we have been talking of humility in the past few days, I think we must all be humble. We have criticisms against the Labour Party, against other political parties, it is alright, so much the better, and it is mutual. But I was really shocked when I heard people talking in such a tone and adopting such attitude.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *il faut faire la part des choses* and the more so if the MMM was engaged in that type of anarchism, banditry and so on. The hon. lady seems to have forgotten that her party made an alliance with the MMM in 1995. So why should the Labour Party associate itself with bandits? If banditry means having defended the workers, if banditry means having engaged in trade union activities, helped the workers, helped towards national unity...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order please! Let us listen to the speech of the hon. Member!

Mr Ganoo: ..restored dignity to the working class of this country, then I agree, we are glorified bandits.

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! Order please!

Mr Ganoo: I conceive that we are bandits, but we are glorified bandits, if that means banditry. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Ms Deerpalsing even at one time wanted to become a Member of the MMM. I know who was her *parrain*, I would not cite people's name! So, it is not fair! Alright, they want to criticize the MMM or its leader. She can do that! But I think we have to measure the expressions and the words that we use.

Hon. David has been comparing the leader of the Opposition to Hitler, method Hitlarian...

(Interruptions)

Dr. David: No, no, I never said that! I never meant it! I never said that! No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just on a point of personal explanation - the Member has given way, and I am glad about that - I never said it, I never made any comparison, I simply mentioned a method.

Mr Ganoo: The imputation was clear. The hon. Leader of the Opposition uses a method that Hitler had been using. What does that mean? Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this again, I think, is *demesuré*, it is unfair and very unethical.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please! Hon. Ganoo, give me a second, please! I will ask Members for their collaboration. Hon. Ganoo is making his speech, I would like to have the honour of listening to him. Thank you! Then please keep quiet! Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Ganoo: But I will pick up from the statement that hon. Ms Deerpalsing made and I will start my speech through that. Hon. Ms Deerpalsing talked about the contribution of the Labour Party to this country. Of course, we all agree to that. That is one thing. But to say that when the Labour Party has been in power in this country, everything has been rosy, that is a completely different thing. As I said, all Governments make mistakes, the Labour Party has made several mistakes and I don't want to come back on that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What

happened in the 1970s and so on. I don't want to dig history and to come back on things which took place in that distant past. Time does not permit me to do that!

(Interruptions)

Well she said everything was rosy. In the course of my speech I will try to say something different, but she said something interesting about Labour-led values. She highlighted that labourism, *le travaillisme* is a political philosophy; c'est une pensée politique. She talked about Labour-led values and about how proud she is of the values of this philosophy. She has the right of her opinion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. True! I agree that the Labour Party, at one time of its history, had certain values, *représentait une variante socialisme, M. le président*. The point, in fact, that we are all making here on this side of the House is that when we look at the four Budgets which have been presented by hon. Dr. Sithanen during those past 4 years and even that Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we see that in fact, l'honorable Sithanen, for whom I have a lot of respect, I have said that a few times in this House and I have praised him for his intelligence and so on, a *bel et bien enterré les valeurs du travaillisme, M. le président*. Pour moi, this Budget like the 3 other Budgets in the past, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, demonstrates how the hon. Minister has been able, according to me, *de par sa mainmise intellectuelle, sa supériorité intellectuelle, sa mainmise idéologique, si je puis le dire, grandissante et l'influence* that he has wielded in this Government, *a entraîné toute l'équipe gouvernementale dans un dynamisme logique d'un ultra libéralisme effréné et débridé*.

Donc, de quels labour values parle Ms Deerpalsing ? De quelle idéologie travailliste nous parle-t-elle aujourd'hui, M. le président ? L'honorable Sithanen, je ne le dis pas ça méchamment, a pollué la pensée politique travailliste. C'est lui le maître penseur, M. le président, d'après moi. *This is not a value judgment, he has a political philosophy and he has prevailed over everybody in Cabinet and in Government and this is why today this Government is an ultra liberal Government. The measures in this Budget indicate, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, que nous avons affaire avec un ministre des finances brillant, quelque fois trop rempli de lui-même, un peu allergique aux critiques, mais qui est un homme de droite, qui a donné un pli de droite à toute les actions gouvernementales depuis que cette équipe est au pouvoir. C'est un value judgement, je ne fais pas une mauvaise critique, c'est mon opinion, M. le president !*

C'est un *value judgment*, ce n'est pas une mauvaise critique. C'est mon opinion, M. le président, et je vais le démontrer. On l'a dit ici, *this Budget reflects that when we come to compensation salariale, when we come to pension for the old, when we come to the ASP, the Stimulus Package and so on contained in this Budget*. C'est à cause de cela, M. le président, qu'à un certain moment, il y avait beaucoup de critiques au sein du gouvernement vis-à-vis de l'honorable Dr. Sithanen. Il y a certains parmi l'équipe de l'Alliance Sociale qui voulaient se débarrasser de lui. C'est pourquoi, à un certain moment, il voulait démissionner. Il déambulait avec sa lettre de démission en poche, parce qu'il ne souffrait plus des coups de poignard de ses collègues. *This is history, M. le président*. On voulait se débarrasser de lui parce qu'il était un *asset*, c'est vrai, mais peut être un *toxic asset*. On avait réalisé qu'il faisait plus de mal politiquement. Certains amis, de l'autre côté de la Chambre, n'étaient pas d'accord à l'époque avec le *NRPT* et d'autres mesures qu'il avait prises dans son premier budget. C'est l'histoire M. le président. C'est pourquoi le *Leader* de l'opposition l'avait dit. Nous sommes d'opinion que même le Premier ministre avait la mine grise le jour du budget ; il n'était pas content. Lors d'un budget, même si vous êtes Premier ministre ou ministre des finances, vous pouvez avoir des opinions différentes, *different sensibilities*. Le Premier ministre avait promis qu'il allait

augmenter la pension de vieillesse trois semaines auparavant, et cette mesure n'était pas dans le budget. Peut-être que le Premier ministre n'était pas content que cette mesure ne figurait pas dans le budget, M. le président, parce que tout le monde s'attendait à ce qu'il y ait une augmentation de la pension. Mais ce qui est important c'est que le Premier ministre a réalisé que ce budget n'était pas celui que le peuple attendait. Et c'est pourquoi il s'est rué à la télévision le même soir, quelques minutes après la présentation du Budget - quelqu'un l'avait dit avant moi. C'est la première fois qu'un Premier ministre s'empresse d'aller devant la caméra de la MBC pour démontrer la justesse du contenu de ce budget. Pourquoi avait-il à faire cela ?

J'ai écouté le Premier ministre vendredi à sept heures trente, quand devant la caméra de la MBC il a expliqué pourquoi ce budget était un bon budget. Donc, M. le président, le Premier ministre a dû aller prêter main-forte au ministre des finances. *Mr Speaker, Sir, all these are not objective criticisms. This is our opinion.*

Let me come to the Budget itself, the Action Plan. M. le président, je me pose la question : un budget peut-il être un *Action Plan* ? Quelle est la différence entre un budget et un *Action plan* ? *This will be one important plank of my criticism.* M. le président, un Budget trace les grandes lignes de l'action gouvernementale, définit ses orientations majeures, établit les priorités de l'heure, *strategized* les grandes options et n'est point un simple exercice de comptabilité et, moins encore un *Action Plan*. Regardez le *Programme Based Budget Estimate 2009*. Par coïncidence, alors que je feuilletais ce document épais, j'ai vu que *Action Plan* est défini par le *glossary* du document, *Programme Based Budget*, qui nous a été si gracieusement remis le lendemain par le ministère des finances.

Action Plan means annual, a multiyear summary of tasks, timeframes and responsibilities. It is used as a monetary tool to ensure the production of outputs and progress towards outcomes. This is an Action Plan, this is a right definition. But a budget cannot be an Action Plan, Mr Speaker, Sir. Un budget dépasse un Action Plan et c'est pourquoi, beaucoup d'entre nous, ont dit que nous ne sommes pas d'accord avec le contenu de ce budget, parce que c'est un budget qui définit seulement certains *tasks*. Et pour nous, un Budget dépasse cette notion ; un budget oriente, *strategised*, définit les options. Donc, il y a quand même une différence. Et pour moi, ce Budget s'apparente plus à un *Stimulus Package*, c'est un *boosted Stimulus Package*. Et l'honorable ministre des finances a peut-être raison. N'oublions pas que Monsieur Bheenick avait dit que le pays avait besoin d'un deuxième *Stimulus Package*, mais il n'a pas voulu reconnaître cela. Il a préféré, donc, sans le dire, venir avec un deuxième *Stimulus Package*. Il a écouté les conseils du Gouverneur de la Banque, Monsieur Bheenick. Il a bel et bien repris cette idée émise par M. Bheenick.

M. le président, cet exercice ressemble aussi à un *business facilitation plan*, une charte destinée aux patrons et aux entrepreneurs. Il fait la part belle au secteur privé, qui bénéficiera d'une énorme manne qui lui tombera du ciel à un moment où il est mal préparé pour en tirer profit, surtout en ce qui concerne les infrastructures. En d'autres mots, ce budget pèche par un manque cruel de *strategic and indepth reflexion* et contient en grande partie que de *fire fighting measures*. It is a collection of an incoherent set of measures, most of which are extrapolation from ideas and concepts which have not delivered expected results in the past. We have missed in fact, a real opportunity to really change paradigm to propel Mauritius into the next phase of its development. Who can be against the Minister's avowed desire, Mr Speaker, Sir, to save jobs, to protect people and prepare for recovery? We all agree that these objects are indeed commendable; we cannot oppose such a laudable quest, Mr Speaker, Sir. But is this Budget

equipped with the right tools, does this budget contain the right solutions to reach the right objectives? That is the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is why, since last year, it is the MMM who sounded the alarm, who gave the wake up call to the hon. Ministers of this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Members on the other side might not like Mr Luchmeenaraaidoo, but let us give the devil his due. He was the one, Mr Speaker, Sir, who ran the alarm bell, who gave the wake up call, and all of us, older than the others in this House, or who are older in age, although not necessarily most experienced politicians, we have gone through difficult times in our life and in recessions and so on. It is true, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can assess in what critical situation Mauritius and the world are. Yes, it is the greatest crisis that capitalism has known since 1930, and nobody knows, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, how to overcome the current crisis. So, it is not also fair for hon. Members on the other side to say that we are not alive to what is happening in the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *hon. Dr. David* avait posé la question, et quelqu'un d'autre avait dit la même chose : *Est-ce que ces gens de l'opposition savent dans quel monde ils vivent ?* This is unfair. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all, Government, banks, financial institutions, experts like Mr Osborne said. I quote him -

« Like a blind man trying to get out of a maze by tapping the walls with different kinds of sticks (...)

Walls - the Stimulus Package here!

“(...) in the hope of finding the way out”.

This is what we are all doing, like a blind man, with a stick, tapping, trying to see where the door is, to get out, Mr Speaker, Sir. Nobody knows, in fact, the consequences of this turmoil, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. From time to time, we hear about the ‘false dawns’. - this is another term, I have just learned a few years - that is, the flickers of hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We must admit, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this crisis also has been an eye-opener. On a planetary level, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after this crisis, everybody has come to realise that there has been, during the past 30/40 years, a sharp rise in equality between the rich and the poor. In the US, the top 1% of American earners were, on average, paid 20 times as much as the bottom 90%, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But by 2006, the ratio had grown 77 times, just to give us an idea of how the *fossé* had become wider between the little percentage of those high earners and the majority of the low earners.

The second point that we have learned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the world and, indeed, all Governments have been, during the past, impressed by the ideology of global free market fundamentalism. It started with Thatcher, Reagan, even the new Labour and it even infected certain leaders here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how many of them have not been mesmerised by that glamour of so-called financial gurus and trading gurus, the Madonnas and Beckhams of the financial sector? This crash has taught us many unpleasant truths, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and the most unpleasant of these truths is the following: we can't leave our destiny in the hands of those who believe in a pure, stateless, uncontrolled market capitalism which is now, in fact, a sort of anachronism. There is a pendulum swing today in the world, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we must make sure that this pendulum swings effectively.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, therefore, we have to remind ourselves that economic growth and the affluence it brings is a means not an end and the end is what it does to life chances and

hopes of people. We have to remind ourselves of the dilemma of the poor of this planet and that eradication of poverty is possible if the political will is here. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other truth that we have learned from this crisis is that communism is now buried since long, socialism has failed and capitalism has gone bankrupt now. We need, therefore, to revisit mixed economies, new models, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we need progressive policies and a progressive policy is not private but public, not just rising income and consumption for individuals, but widening the opportunities and this is what matters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another question I wanted to put to the hon. Minister of Finance, if he were here. The ASP was presented in December, this year, in Mauritius...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can we have some silence to listen to the orator, please? Thank you!

Mr Ganoo: ... and in certain countries further back, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But have we seen so far the 'green shoots' of recovery? In Mauritius or elsewhere, where are they, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Where are the green shoots? Months now since ASP has been implemented, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! It is true, in a few countries, the shoots have included a slim recovery in the fall in price of houses, in stock markets, in consumption and so on. But now we hear recovery is going to take place in the second half of this financial year. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we trust those bankers, those Finance Ministers and those economists? If they were that good at predicting the future, we would not be in the economic mess that we are in today. Nine months ago, very few of us had any idea of how quickly the world economy would crumble, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. What I mean is that what guarantee do we have that these Stimulus Packages would ride us out of the global crisis? What I am driving at, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that any Government, any Finance Minister can try to fix things, he can try to tinker, to adjust with incentives and he can hope to drive people to behave in a certain way. But, ultimately, there is no certainty that the medicine will cure, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is a very complex question, because economies like markets are driven by the same emotions that drive stock markets. We remember after Lehman Bros crumbled, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everyone...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't need tuition in English, please! I have been at the Royal College of Port Louis. I had an 'A' in English for my HSC, let me remind the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

I never teach lessons to anybody here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I listen silently and politely to everybody, even to hon. Dr. David.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was saying that after Lehman Bros crumbled, everyone cut back on everything, banks refused to lend; we will remember people stopped lending, companies stopped hiring, employees saw emoluments falling and the whole spiral exacerbated. This is the reason, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: why all Governments have had to spend like crazy to avoid a repeat of the miseries of the great depression.

But the question is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and this is what I wanted to ask the hon. Minister of Finance: will excessive Government's spending alone reverse the trend? Will it

arrest the collapse of our economies or does it store other troubles for us in the future? The massive amounts of money pumped in the global economy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could lead us to other *débalancement* in the future. And it is worth recording that the great depression was cured in those days, not because of huge Government's spending, but because of a gradual improvement in the health of the economy over several years. So, Government can ease the pain here and there but, ultimately, the economy will have to set itself right and Government should focus more on improving the efficiency of the spending, the efficiency of the economy. And this is the point I made at the beginning of my speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, instead of just throwing money at the problem. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a country does not need broad stimulus packages or unfocused infrastructural spending. In a sense Government and industry captains are just like risk managers, Mr Speaker, Sir. They should stick to sensible policies and should leave it to the economy and the people to do the rest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case of our country, I will be very brief because this point has already been touched upon by other colleagues on this side of the House, I will ask a few questions to the hon. Minister of Finance. Firstly, it is about saving jobs, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister tells us in the Budget that he has decided to set up a fivefold path, as mentioned in the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on this issue of saving jobs, the hon. Minister must scrupulously abide by the rules of transparency and he has pledged that he would regularly come to the House so that this exercise must be *au-dessus de tout soupçon*. The House must be regularly apprised of the applicants queueing up and the applications which are being processed and granted. In his Budget, the Minister talks about a Modernisation Fund at paragraph 54. But I understand that there was a Modernisation Fund at his Ministry endowed with Rs500 m., but not a single cent has been utilised from this Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been *décaissé*. So why set up another Modernisation Fund of Rs500 m., Mr Speaker, Sir? Thirdly, the hon. Minister told us in the PNQ that in spite of all this money that we are dishing out, there is no guarantee that these enterprises won't close down. He could give us no guarantee.

Fourthly, the Minister had explained about the procedures obtained before granting any assistance to these enterprises. But the fact remains according to our information that, in fact, there are two gentlemen from the private sector in his office who decide about everything. There is a committee, true it is, consisting of representatives of the Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry of Finance. Yet, the complaint is that there are two private sector gurus who wield power at this Ministry and who decide who, in fact, will qualify and they have the final word. This is not fair, Mr Speaker Sir, because this is public money which is being spent, and what have private sector bosses, even if they are nice people, and they are known to us here also on this side of the House, have they to do, why they have to decide upon which enterprises are qualified to benefit from the assistance?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last thing I wanted to say on this job saving issue is that in the case of RS Denim, it would seem - I am not going back to what had been said in the PNQ, Mr Speaker, Sir, but this is another aspect - that 70% of the labour force are foreigners. I would like to ask a question, whether it is RS Denim or another, textile factory: will Mauritian taxpayers foot the bill for saving jobs of foreigners? This, I think, is a very pertinent question because it is the taxpayers' money, *l'argent des contribuables*. And what happens if a factory or an enterprise, where the majority is predominantly foreign workers? Isn't this a criterion which should be looked into? I am not saying that this should disqualify the enterprise, but I think special

attention should be given to that aspect if the majority or a substantial number of the workforce or labour force are foreign workers.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I am not going to use the word bluff on the same score in paragraph 55, it is mentioned that we will also draw Rs740 million from the Social Housing Fund to use for saving jobs, Mr Speaker, Sir. But this Social Housing Fund is endowed with only Rs500 m. according to the budgetary provisions. So why does the Minister want to come and inflate figures? Why Rs740 m. from the Social Housing Fund - and this is another problem, I will come to housing in a few minutes - when the Fund has only R500 m. Mr Speaker, Sir.

On the second plaint, the issue of infrastructure, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I will not repeat what has been said, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister replied to a PNQ this morning, but if I understand properly the Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the little experience that I have, in fact, there are three different issues we are talking about, the largest investment programme in the history of the island. This is a term that he has coined and in this largest investment programme in the history of the island, there are three components. The first component will be piloted by the private company, the Road Development Company - the Harbour Bridge, the Ring Road, the Terre Rouge/Verdun, the Ebène Link Road, the Bus Rapid Transit System, the East-West connector and this will necessitate funds to the amount of 25.8 *milliards roupies*. This is the first component. The second one is the shovel ready projects, amounting to eight projects and costing another Rs20 billion. This is the second one. The third component is the PPP projects. If you go through the proposal, Mr Speaker, Sir, the PPP project will cost 500 *milliards de roupies*. Even if you cannot count, we have *calculateur maintenant* and this is R500 *milliards*. I think we must take all this with a shovel of salt not a pinch of salt. *C'est Alice au Pays des Merveilles, M. le président!* But we can understand the hon. Minister and this is a point that we have to make. It is all about psychology now. *C'est un placebo, l'ASP.* I am sure you know what is a placebo, Mr Speaker, Sir. I didn't know, I read it and I had to check in the dictionary. So, it's all about psychology now what is happening. That's why the hon. Minister is lumping all the projects. That is why he says eighteen months, because if he had said one year, nobody would have believed him. All these projects will not even be in eighteen months, Mr Speaker, Sir, but he had to say eighteen months. That added a dose of credibility when he said eighteen months and this largest investment programme in the history of this country for psychological reasons, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have all on this side of the House, although we are in the Opposition and treated as we are, have also some experience in infrastructural projects. Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know the cost escalation - I am sure when you were Minister dealing with contracts - overruns, delays in implementation, acquisition of land, tendering process, delays in evaluation, actions by aggrieved bidders, appeals in Court, and so on. What I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that I am sure our generation will not witness the completion of all these projects - perhaps our children will - if we can cross 2012. Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that you know what 2012 is all about, but if we can cross 2012 then, not even us, perhaps our children will see the completion of all these projects of the - how does he call it - largest investment programme in the history of our island. Is it bluff, Mr Speaker, Sir? I looked at the estimates and I took only one component, I forgot about the PPP. I forgot about the first one which is the Road Development Company projects. This bluff, Mr Speaker, Sir! I looked only about the shovel ready projects. This is what the Minister said. I just told you they cost about Rs20 billion, but I look in the estimates, Mr Speaker, Sir, do you know what I saw?

The funds allotted, Mr Speaker, Sir, were only about Rs3.4 billion. According to the Minister, for this component only, the project would cost Rs20 billion. I repeat, I am not talking about the PPP project which costs Rs500 billion, about Road Development Company Projects which will cost Rs26 billion, I am talking about Shovel Ready Project which costs Rs20 billion, but only Rs3.5 billion has been budgeted, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't know if we can call this a bluff.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another bluff. Paragraph 48 talks of the economy which will benefit from investment by public bodies, such as CEB, CWA and WMA to the tune of Rs7.2 billion. Mr Speaker, Sir, will CEB invest in investment projects? I asked a Parliamentary Question, last week - B/460 – as to whether the Minister will give information as to the amount of overdrafts taken by CEB, the amount of debts and net losses for the year 2006, 2007, 2008. Do you know the answer, Mr Speaker, Sir? The amount of overdraft for 2008 is Rs1.55 billion and the total borrowings for the year 2008 amounted to Rs5 billion; and net losses for the year 2006 is Rs1.1 billion and for 2007 it is Rs156 m. What is this? How can a parastatal body invest when, according to the hon. Minister himself so much money is owed by the CEB, Mr Speaker, Sir? I will not talk about the CWA and the WMA. Hon. Dr. Kasenally knows that these two organizations are in the midst of signing an agreement with a private sector operator, and they will focus and invest in the project. They will have to foot a hefty bill for this project itself. The CWA and the WMA will sign in the coming months - I think - the tendering process; I saw this in the newspaper. And where, therefore, will the CEB, the WMA and the CWA invest in infrastructural projects?

What we are saying, therefore, is that the exercise of boosting the people's moral must be circumscribed by the presentation of credible data, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will come to this question of procurement. Was there any need to announce that the figures have to be changed and the thresholds modified? According to me, it is true there is bureaucracy and red tapism, but this cannot be sacrificed on the altar of transparency, Mr Speaker, Sir.

What I am suggesting is that Government should have capacity building of the Public Procurement Office. Instead of having one Chairman, we could have two or three Chairmen. And for contracts of less than Rs50 m., for example, the law should have been amended for the Public Procurement Division – Divisions I, II or III - to sit everyday and they can decide who is the successful bidder, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are ways to think about how to overcome this problem of red tapism, bureaucracy and capacity building of this institution which is an institution above the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Public Procurement Office is just like the PSC, and, now, how can we bypass it for contracts of Rs50 m. when there are other ways of holding to the values of transparency?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to end up on this chapter of infrastructure by saying the following –

“It is in the face of daunting and unprecedented challenges that there is an opportunity to move out of our comfort zone and try new ideas and concepts.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the infrastructure sector, I would tell the hon. Minister that all the measures announced to alleviate traffic congestion are supply side initiatives for building more roads, which by the time they are implemented, will be caught by the incessant growth in the number of vehicles. This policy is not compatible with a small island State, with limited space and aspiring to become *l'île Maurice durable*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, do they know that the Terre Rouge-Verdun-link Road will contribute to alleviate the traffic problem by only 20% while the Ring Road and the Harbour Bridge will contribute to alleviate the traffic around Port Louis only? Much simpler and short to medium-term demand side measures like introducing a rail system, delocalisation of some Ministries and Government Departments outside Port Louis, the creation of a high occupancy vehicle lane -and the Minister confirmed to me a few minutes ago when I asked him whether this is among his projects. He told me that this is the case. The introduction, therefore, of a bus lane, Mr Speaker, Sir, using a dedicated lane on the motorway which can be implemented at low-cost immediately, we should go a long way towards addressing the serious congestion problem in a sustainable manner. What I am saying is that these road building measures will not only be a heavy burden for future generations, but also, Mr Speaker, Sir, there will be the question of the toll system – *la controverse* - and they will have a limited immediate impact on the economy. This massive investment, Mr Speaker, Sir, if it takes up at all, is artificial and not sustainable.

Concerning the traffic congestion, we must know that, in fact, in the recent past, there have been no infrastructure projects implemented. All these measures announced in the budget, I say it again, are supply side measures, attributing bottlenecks. They take years to be implemented. Therefore, we should also look at the demand side management, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to curb the demand of traffic. What I am saying is that there should be an in-depth reflection on the sustainability of introducing more vehicles on our networks.

Concerning the car loans, I will give an example. Why do we have to give somebody facility to buy a car if they are other systems to bring him down to Port Louis? We can give him a loan for other things, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mauritians are investing a lot in vehicles which run on fossil fuels, and which last for 15 years. There is uncertainty on the availability of fossil fuels in the world. We could have imagined innovative incentive schemes to divert part of this capital spending towards future oriented renewable energy devices, like roof top, creek connected photovoltaic systems in the context of an *Ile Maurice Durable*. Instead of giving him facility to buy a car, we can give him facility to have a roof top photovoltaic on his house, Mr Speaker, Sir. This will be better for him, for us, for everybody, for the economy and for *une Ile Maurice Durable*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, lastly, I will come on this question of cost of living, wage compensation, stimuler la consommation and so on. There is one missing link in this Budget, and it is precisely dans les nombreux pays qui sont venus de l'avant avec des plans de relances similaires. Des mesures ont été prises pour stimuler la consommation afin de relancer la croissance, préserver le pouvoir d'achat afin que ceux qui s'appauvrissent pâtissent le moins possible et que la consommation puisse se faire, que les entreprises puissent donner un nouveau coup de fouet à l'emploi et faire repartir l'économie. Mais, M. le président, à Maurice, nous savons tous que les consommateurs ont été complètement laissés sur la touche.

Avant la crise, ils étaient déjà asphyxiés par un coût de vie extrêmement élevé. En effet, le taux d'inflation a connu une flambée démesurée depuis 2005. *This has been said before me, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't want to go into that, but suffice it to say 2005/2006, l'inflation était de 5.5%, 2006-2007:5.2% M. le président. Maurice a connu le taux le plus élevé depuis 17 ans. Pour l'année financière 2007/2008 l'inflation a été à 8.8%, M. le président et malgré la chute des cours mondiaux des différentes commodités riz, farine, céréales, etc et cette année-ci, comme nous le savons tous, l'inflation a été de 7%, M. le président.*

M. le président, les mauriciens ont non seulement souffert de la situation internationale mais également de l'injustice de la part de notre gouvernement qui avait manipulé sciemment le taux de change, vous vous souvenez, dans le but de soutenir nos *export-oriented enterprises* et, en se faisant, exsangue la population. Pire, M. le président, nos gouvernements – j'ai entendu l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth dire cela la dernière fois – ont même manipulé notre taux de change pour octroyer une compensation moindre aux travailleurs l'année dernière. En effet, à partir de novembre 2007, la roupie a commencé à apprécier face aux principales devises, artificiellement et temporairement bien sûr entraînant ainsi une baisse des prix et de ce fait le taux d'inflation. Les projections avaient fait état d'une inflation de 10.3% en 2007. Mais après l'appréciation de la roupie et la baisse des prix, les prévisions ont fait état de 8.7%. Alors, les mauriciens se sont appauvris depuis des années. Le Bureau Central des Statistiques dans son *Household Budget Survey*, il y a deux ans, a démontré que le pourcentage des ménages qui se trouve sous le seuil de la pauvreté a augmenté de 7.7% en 2001/2002 à 8% pour la période 2006/2007. J'aurai aimé que l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing fût là, pour lui montrer mon document que le CSO a trouvé, M. le président. Dans le document, je répète, que le pourcentage des ménages qui se trouve sous le seuil de la pauvreté a augmenté de 2000/2001 de 7.7% à 8% pour la période 2006/2007. Le nombre des familles qui se trouvaient dans une pauvreté extrême est 26,900 contre 23,700 lors de la précédente enquête, M. le président. Tout cela est dans le document officiel. Le CSO explique que l'inégalité des ménages a connu une majoration en 2001/2002 et 2006/2007, M. le président. La proportion des revenus allant aux 20% des ménages se retrouvant dans la catégorie de salaires la plus basse a connu une décroissance passant de 6.4% à 6.1%, M. le président. Aujourd'hui, les choses se sont empirées et j'ai un document avec moi que j'allais de tout cœur et gracieusement montrer à l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing. Le document s'appelle « The Economist Intelligence Unit », M. le président. Voilà le document et je ne citerai qu'un item, M. le président. L'*Economist Intelligence Unit*, en calculant le *Purchasing Power Parity* par tête d'habitant a démontré bien cet appauvrissement de la population qui a débuté à partir de 2006. Ecoutez cela, M. le président –

« Alors que le *Purchasing Power Parity* par tête d'habitant était en 2004 à 9,864 dollars, il a grimpé en 2005 à 10,157 dollars, mais par la suite n'a pas cessé de dégringoler. En 2006 de 10,157 dollars, il est passé à 9,292 dollars. En 2007, 8,531 dollars, en 2008 à 7,774 dollars et est estimé à continuer sa chute à 7,448 dollars cette année, en 2010. *I will table the data and charts.* GDP per head US dollar at PPP, \$9,864: 2004, \$10,157: 2005, \$9,292: 2006, \$8,531: 2007, \$7,774: 2008, \$7,448: 2009, \$7,126: 2010, M. le président.

I have also got my graph, I wanted to show it to hon. Ms Deerpalsing, M. le président. L'honorable Bunwaree est un ancien ministre de finances, *I know he is a very fair gentleman, he will go and look and make a statement whether this is not true.* Donc, le *Purchasing Power Parity* comme je viens de démontrer, indique l'appauvrissement de la population qui a commencé à partir de 2006 et le *stimulus package* n'apporte aucun soulagement et ne remplit même pas un de ses principaux objectifs, M. le président, c'est-à-dire soutenir notre croissance économique.

I don't want to trouble the Members of this House with other figures in terms of la décroissance, M. le président, dans le secteur manufacturier. Depuis que le SP a été annoncé, tous les secteurs ont démontré le textile, d'après le CSO, et après l'annonce du plan, toutes ces institutions viennent maintenant montrer une décroissance pour le textile, etc. Pour le tourisme, nous savons tous que c'est 8.8%. M. le président, déjà avant la crise, la population était éprouvée

par la politique économique et avait un moral affaibli et le gouvernement a demandé à la population de faire des sacrifices en attendant *an early harvest et bumper crop*, mais à la place de la vendange est venue la crise qui était au rendez-vous, M. le président. Maintenant que la crise s'est installée, c'est la population qui a consenti d'énormes sacrifices depuis 2006 et qui doit, encore une fois, payer les pots cassés de cette injustice de la part du gouvernement. Comme témoin est le refus du gouvernement de payer la compensation à ceux touchant plus Rs12000 par mois et en payant une compensation ridiculement dérisoire aux autres, indirectement c'est la population qui donne un *Stimulus Package* aux entreprises, M. le président.

J'ai dans ma main un document que personne n'a cité jusqu'ici. J'avais demandé une copie au ministre mais il ne me l'a pas donnée, mais j'ai pu l'avoir. Le document s'appelle «*National Pay Council - Salary Compensation* ». Allons maintenant disséquer cette opération de *National Pay Council – salary compensation 2009/2010*. Qu'est qui s'est passé, M. le président ? J'ai parcouru le rapport, *which is not very bulky*. *A la page 6*, écoutez ce que je lis, M. le président –

« *Proposal* »

Representatives of the Government and the employers adopted the same stand with respect to the methodology for the determination of the quantum of salary compensation. They agreed for this year, salary compensation should not be given across the board. The common proposal is that a salary compensation of 5.1% should be paid to the first income bracket - comme nous le savons tous - and a uniform compensation of Rs200 should be paid to workers drawing salary from Rs3800 à Rs12000.»

M. le président, 5.1% de Rs 3800 cela fait Rs190 pour les plus bas de l'échelle. Rs190, vous divisez par 30 jours, Rs6.30 par jour ! Maintenant pour ceux qui ont touché Rs200, *above the threshold*, ils ont eu, Rs200 divisé par 30, Rs 6.60. Plus socialiste que cela tu meurs ! Nous avons vu dans ce document que *it is a proposal from representatives of Government who must have been briefed by the Minister that the bracket should stop at Rs3800*. L'année dernière c'était Rs3500, maintenant c'est Rs3800.

L'année dernière c'était R 3500, maintenant c'est R 3800. *This is the threshold* et, comme disait l'honorable Jugnauth, la dernière fois aussi, ce fameux minimum bracket était R 4300 quand nous étions au pouvoir, et la première année en 2006, ils ont ramené à R 2700 ; c'était à Rs4300 en 2005. Quant aux pensionnés qui ont eu 5.1%, tout à heure j'entendais la ministre Bappoo s'autocongratulait que les pensionnés ont eu 5.1%, un *senior citizen* touche R 2800, cela équivaut à R 140 par mois et par jour le pensionné touche, après le budget miracle du gouvernement, R 4.66 par jour.

Voilà ce que les pensionnés de ce pays ont touché de la part du gouvernement malgré la promesse de notre honorable Premier ministre, que leur pension serait augmentée - Rs4.66 par jour. Comment voulez- vous empêcher cette population d'avoir l'impression que le navire coule mais les canots de sauvetage ont été réservés pour les patrons seulement ? Voilà ce qui se passe, M. le président ! C'est pourquoi, en toute humilité, nous implorons le ministre des finances et le Premier ministre de revoir leurs propositions et de donner un *full compensation* aux travailleurs et de donner un *universal compensation* parce que c'est la première fois que les salariés d'une certaine catégorie, aujourd'hui c'est Rs12000 n'ont pas eu droit à une compensation salariale. M. le président, je lisais les discours de 82, dans les années de braise, de difficultés, de noireté, les gouvernements respectifs, même l'ancien gouvernement travailliste avait donné un *universal*

compensation à tous les travailleurs. On n'avait jamais *capped* à un barème de Rs12 000. C'est pourquoi en toute humilité et sincérité, nous demandons au gouvernement, au ministre et au Premier ministre de revoir cette façon, the *computation* de la compensation salariale.

M. le président, brièvement, sur les lois de travail, là aussi, je fais un appel au Premier ministre, l'honorable Soodhun en a fait certains commentaires. M. le président je ne voulais que dire ceci sur le Employment Rights Act. When the decision was taken by Government to review our Labour legislation, the social economic and context was different. Mr Speaker, Sir, it was in the first Budget 2006-2007 that Government announced this. Government will soon introduce legislation to reform both the wage determining mechanism on the labour laws in order to achieve the flexibility so on and so forth. Ecoutez cela, au paragraph 74, the notice period for separation - le notice de 120 jours avant, qui est maintenant d'un mois seulement d'après le nouveau ERA - *the cost of separation*, il n'y a plus de *severance allowance* maintenant, *the security of workers when they are resigning from a job, the support offered to workers and assistance are some of the important issues that are being addressed*. Ce que je veux dire c'est qu'en 2006, avant que la crise ne fasse son apparition, le gouvernement avait annoncé ses couleurs, avait pris la décision *to amend, modernise our Labour Laws and so on*.

But today, la situation est complètement différente, M. le président, and this is why the unions, the Opposition, we have asked to set up a committee to revisit this legislation in question, there is a Private Members Motion and I think we can do it. A consensus can be reached on the main points of divergence between the unions and Ministry and Government Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, dans ce context particulier, il fallait protéger, save jobs. If we want to save jobs, we have to revisit this legislation and I asked in PQ No. 515 last week on the number of employees that have been dismissed pendant les trois derniers mois and I got the answer from the hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, pour le mois de février, mars, avril, 3600 workers have been dismissed during the months of February, March and April 2009.

Je me perds dans mes papiers, mais tant mieux, j'ai le chiffre avec moi - 3589 employés ont été dismissed - c'est une written answer last week - during the month of February, March and April 2009. Le MEF parle de licenciement massif, M. le président, *I have been a trade union lawyer for a long time. This question of severance allowance* existe dans tous les pays - temps service, comme on dit en Créeole. It exists in all jurisdiction, you are an experienced lawyer and, I am sure, you know about that, Mr Speaker, Sir. The payment of a severance allowance is not in contradiction with the workfare programme, M. le président and this is why I make an appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to suspend this law up to the end of 2010. M. le président 2010 est une date fétiche dans ce budget et je demande donc au gouvernement de suspendre this law up to the end of 2010 and, in fact, if Government was serious and sincere in saving jobs why not freeze this piece of legislation. Mr Speaker, Sir ?

(Interruptions)

I will be very brief, if I am allowed, if I am not disturbed rudely ! Mr Speaker, Sir, I will try to wind up. Absolute poverty *est un débat qui dure depuis des siècles*. Last year I commended the Minister for this plan of eradicating absolute poverty, I said it was un petit pas dans la bonne direction, mais force est de constater, aujourd'hui, que not enough has been done. Out of Rs395 m. budgeted for this item last year, only Rs65 m. have been dispersed, only 67% have been dispersed. Out of a number of 5000 children from 3 to 5 not going to school as announced in last Budget, only 415 children according to the answers from the PQs have now been given access to

pre-primary school. Donc, seulement, 12% of the children in a year ! The Budget also mentions that out of 7157 familles en détresse, only 100 households are benefitting. I tried to calculate the percentage, it is 1.39% seulement, but to give the credit to the Minister, in his estimates last year, he said this will take 10 years. This is *en noir et en blanc dans l'Estimates de couleur verte, M. le président, qui nous avait été remise l'année dernière mais si, d'après ces chiffres, c'est 10 ans, mais* if we go by what has been done during this one year it will be 30-40 years.

This is why the hon. Minister has a problem somewhere, he has also himself to do some capacity building in his Ministry. This is not méchant what I am saying, the money is here, the poverty is here, we have, Mr Speaker, Sir, to fight as much as we can, all of us, and as scientifically as possible, to boost up this programme of alleviation of poverty. Mr Speaker, Sir, a recent study on newer science explains how poverty passes from generation to generation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, recent studies on neuroscience explained how poverty passes from generation to generation. Stress linked to poverty is responsible for damaging the working of poor children. Stress shrinks the volume of the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus, part of the brain most closely associated with the working memory. *Scientifiquement, this is how stress est engendré par la pauvreté.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, le cerveau même, je crois, est endommagé, comme le confirme le docteur Boolell – Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already taken the time of the House, but I will just make reference to a recent book called “The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better.” The thesis in this book is that in States and countries, where there is a big gap between the incomes of rich and poor, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, obesity and teenage pregnancy are more common. The homicide rate is higher; life expectancy is shorter and children's educational performance and literal scourge are worse. *Mais ça il n'y a pas de problème entre nous.* I am sure we are all in the same enterprise, in the same spirit, trying to alleviate this problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, chacun dans *son petit coin, que ce soit député, ministre, etc ..* And I would have just wished that there was a forum. I think a Member of the majority, one day, asked this question and the hon. Minister said, no, we cannot put politicians on board in this type of alleviating poverty by the State and so on. Perhaps we have to rethink about this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I have a last point on this question of absolute poverty. The hon. Minister is perfectly right, we must send poor children to school, give them lunch, *sac d'école, transport and so on.* Very good, Mr Speaker, Sir! But there is another side from which we must attack the problem of poverty. Mr Speaker, Sir, I live in a very poor Constituency - I am not making politics out of this. There are many squatter areas where people have been regularised. In law, they are entitled to occupy this plot of land - the hon. Minister knows. There are about 4000 to 5000 in Mauritius, in all parts of the country. But what do we see in these squatter areas ? Un enfant sort de l'école, rentre chez lui – avec son sac à dos et tout ce que le ministre lui a donné – et en temps de pluie, c'est l'inondation chez lui. La tôle est percée, il y la boue, le marécage. Comment fait-il pour rentrer chez lui? Comment ses parents et lui peuvent rester dans une maison dans de telles conditions ? Mr Speaker, Sir, I am making an appeal; we should perhaps have addressed

ourselves to this problem. You can just imagine these houses: no ceiling, no doors, mud everywhere, dirty greyish water around. If a child lives in such an insalubrious environment how can he cope, Mr Speaker, Sir? Poverty will engendrer *la pauvreté*, Mr Speaker, Sir. They have no light, la rue *n'est pas asphaltée* - I go to these squatted areas from time to time. There is no access, no amenities are provided to them. You must humanize all these regularized squatters, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this idea of spending hundred million of rupees, by giving CIS (corrugated iron sheets) to 1,700 families as mentioned in the Budget is to perpetuate these shanty towns, slums, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Unfortunately, there is no millionaire in these slums, as at now. We should not encourage these slums. Cent millions de tôles ont été données !

(Interruptions)

C'est le ministre qui a dit cela, M. le président. C'est à ces squatters là qu'on donne ces *corrugated iron sheets*. Why not think of something else out of the box? Cent millions, c'est pas assez ! Allons quand même construire 50 à 100 petites maisons pour ces gens là, M. le président ! This links my argument to the housing sector. M. le président. Concerning the housing sector, there are only two paragraphs, 184 and 185 respectively which mention about it. Do you know what are in these two paragraphs? The integrated project at Medine, La Vallette! *Kasse ene grand paquet!* It is something very laudable. And the second paragraph is about the 17 familles *qui ont eu des tôles*. These are the only two paragraphs. For La Vallette, R 250 millions pour ce projet ; Medine a mis je crois R 200 millions dedans; CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility de Medine) y a construit les maisons. Tant mieux ! I take no objection to that. It is not Government's money, but poor people are enjoying a beautiful house now. This is what there is on the housing sector - The Minister is not here. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will show you something about the housing problem and I think this is very interesting for everybody, especially Members of the Opposition. From time to time, we have asked Ministers about the waiting list at the NHDC. We wanted to know how many people have applied for social housing. And now, in this document, do you know what I see? Capacity constraints, especially on the policy front, result in difficulties in moving from policy statements to implementation. Let me quote -

‘The lack of primary data on demand for low cost housing expertise to address this problem and absence of institutional linkages working in synergy are major constraints to rational policy implementation.’

Et le gouvernement, avec tout l'argent qu'on a, la NHDC, les experts, you are still lacking on primary data on the demand of low cost housing ! Donc, le ministère ne sait pas le nombre de demandes, qui sont ceux qui en font la demande, où sont-ils, le montant de leur salaire and so on? This should have been there in a dossier readily available, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Why then are we constructing 774 houses in this Budget without any primary data ? M. le président, c'est prendre les enfants du bon dieu pour des canards sauvages. This is incredible! And do you know what the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Dr. Sithanen said, the other day, Mr Speaker, Sir? There is an interesting document on the demand, the housing

sector and so on. So, that document is there ! Cela veut-il dire qu'il n'y a pas de coordination entre les ministres, M. le président ? Sir, again, this is linked to the CSR.

(Interruptions)

Nous aussi nous ne sommes pas d'accord ici. J'ai entendu l'honorable Lauthan dire quelque chose de différent. Depuis le premier budget, j'avais, moi même, demandé M. le président, that we legislate because I think we are naïve if we think that all the bosses will readily give the two percent or whatever percentage. I believe that there should have been a legislation. And I said it, Mr Speaker, Sir. I asked the hon. Minister –

'Government should have made it mandatory for them to contribute to CSR activities and not voluntarily.'

This is my speech, in the year 2006/2007. I think we should legislate. The levy announced in this budget on banks and telephone operators, I think, is good - 'Robin des Bois'. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister forgot one other category, the independent power producers. I am sure the banks and the telephone operators are making a lot of money. So, they also should be included in that petit peloton des entreprises qui ont toujours la tête above water.

Tourism sector – this also was said before me Mr Speaker, Sir. On this score, I think the Budget is wrong. The tourism sector is still dominated by a few large hotel groups and operators. The promises made for the democratisation of the tourism sector have turned out to be just hollow slogans. The hotel sector is still a hermetically protected market. Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be realistic. Une contraction de deux pour cent - l'honorable ministre Duval m'écoute - dans le tourisme global et la baisse dans le taux d'occupation de nos hôtels allant de 8% n'est pas une 'crise', comme on veut nous le pretendre. Un management responsable et efficace doit pouvoir faire face à ce genre de défi, M. le président.

Un management responsable et efficace doit pouvoir faire face à ce genre de défi. Il nous faut rappeler la politique d'expansionniste imprudente de la part des propriétaires d'hôtels et des hôteliers, M. le président. Des emprunts colossaux, des endettements menaçant leurs situations financières, des rénovations à hauteur de milliards de roupies, le service de la dette est devenu un boulet qu'ils traînent. Je fais une distinction évidemment entre les grands et les petits hôtels. Ce secteur a été sponsorisé par tous les gouvernements, M. le président. On a mis des terrains à leur disposition, des lignes de crédit favorables à travers la DBM, le cycle à refaire des *equities*, la MTPA dépense des centaines de millions pour la campagne de promotion pour eux, M. le président.

L'hôtellerie Construction Scheme - rembourser leur rental qu'ils ont dû payer après l'augmentation, the increase decided by this Government. Why, M. le président ? Je crois moi que l'assistance aurait dû être sur un case to case basis. They do not deserve indiscriminate, une assistance inconditionnelle. Tout comme on fait pour les usines, you have to prove that you deserve it. This should also have applied to the hotels, M. le president. I think at a time when we are giving Rs5 or Rs6 to the pensioners, we cannot be that generous to the hotel owners and the hotel operators, M. le président.

Je vais parler sur le renewable energy, *si vous me permettez, M. le président*. Renewable energy, again, this is non-contravention. *Où est le Master Plan pour le renewable energy?* The Deputy Prime Minister was right. I know this a little, Mr Speaker, Sir. *L'honorable Guimbeau*

avait posé des questions : pourquoi pas les éoliennes? Où sont les éoliennes ? The upfront cost for renewable energy! When I was Minister - et notre ami de Rodrigues sait - I installed 3 turbines in Trèfles and they are still running. They cost more to us, *au gouvernement* than Pointe Monieu. There is a power plant in Pointe Monieu near Port Mathurin, the cost of production of electricity is higher with renewable energy. So, it is all a question of money, of cost, of investment, M. le president. We must keep that in mind, if there is no subsidy element, jamais le renewable energy va démarrer, jamais cette industrie, these projects will take off if there is no subsidy element. In all the countries of the world, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Governments subsidise heavily renewable energy *parce que dans le temps, pour l'environnement etc*, we have to do it. This is why solar heaters worked. Why in our case it did not work in our days? Because we did not give subsidy. Government did the right thing, I congratulate them. Last year, I did that. Les dix milles roupies, cela a incité les mauriciens et maintenant je crois que le fonds de R 250, 000 a été épuisé, mais ce n'est pas notre problème. Why has this known so much of success? It is because of the element of subsidy. Therefore, I hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as quickly as possible the Regulatory Authority becomes operational, the National Energy Fund starts mobilising funds. En ce qui concerne les solar heaters, je pose une question que personne n'a posée. On a dépensé R 250 millions pour les solar heaters. Où sont passées ces R 250 millions ? Qui a empoché cela? Un autre pays! Because it is produced somewhere else but for this, Mr Speaker, Sir, we could have set up a local industry with the help of Indians, Chinese or whoever to set up industries for the production of turbines, panels, solar water heaters, photovoltaic panels and so on. This could have become an industry and we could have served the region.

Lastly, there is a thing called the SIPP, the grid code and so on. *Vous vous en souvenez la dernière fois dans le budget le Premier ministre avait annoncé qu'il allait encourager les familles, les petites industries à diriger leurs propres* wind turbines and so on, and they could sell to the CEB. But you must have the grid code before you do that. This is not ready yet, I would ask the hon. Minister où on en est avec ce projet du *grid code*.

Pour terminer, M. le président - je ne crie pas au loup - de notre avis, ce budget ne contient malheureusement que des vœux pieux, du déjà vu, des coups de bluff, de fire fighting measures, des mesures ronflantes, des annonces creuses dans le but de booster le moral de la population. Le ministre de par sa maîtrise dans l'art de tripatouiller les chiffres, jongle avec les fonds évanescents à coup de milliards. Mais une déficience comme j'ai dit en terme du *strategic thinking* et des mesures robustes à long terme pour faire redémarrer l'économie sont malheureusement absentes. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous avons noté cette indifférence totale dans le pays. La population ne s'est nullement concernée par ces mesures, M. le président. D'autre part, this is on one side, but on the other side il y a une population qui s'appauvrit, désespérée, dépressive et déboussolée. Des syndicats sous l'impulsion d'une nouvelle génération de dirigeants, requinqués, combatifs et ayant retrouvé leur confiance, prêts à défendre leur acquis jusqu'au bout et une classe moyenne paupérisée, trahie, dépouillée de ses priviléges, tourmentée par le rêve d'émigrer vers des nouveaux lieux au Canada et en Australie tandis qu'une bourrasque économique s'annonce menaçante et inévitable, pêcheurs, petits planteurs frustrés qui attendent l'instauration d'un nouvel ordre social, économique et moral. Leur vie n'a pas changé en 100 jours. La démocratisation de l'économie est restée un creux slogan, M. le président. L'histoire nous interpelle. We have à twist with destiny, plaçons l'intérêt de la patrie avant celle de notre ego. L'alternance est prête, au MMM le mot d'ordre est 'no retreat, no surrender'.

M. le président, elections will come when they will, we are the ones who will put this country back on the road of recovery.

Merci, M. le président.

(10.57 p.m.)

Mr J. Von-Mally (Fourth Member for Rodrigues): M. le président, je vous remercie de me permettre d'apporter mon humble contribution aux débats de ce - si je pourrais le dire ainsi - demi ou mini budget.

M. le président, nous sommes dans l'œil d'un cyclone économique mondial et il semblerait que les cartes sur la table économique ont été redistribuées. Je pense que c'est très important, les cartes ayant été redistribuées, que nous utilisions celles que nous avons en main afin de mieux faire face à cette crise. Je vais parler surtout de Rodrigues, M. le président parce que les autres orateurs ont parlé longuement de *mainland Mauritius* et je vous rassure tout de suite ainsi que les honorables membres de cette chambre que je ne vais pas être long. Je ne vais pas vous martyriser davantage.

Il y a quelques bonnes intentions dans le chapitre concernant Rodrigues et le titre est intéressant : '*Greater solidarity with our citizens in Rodrigues. Rodrigues will benefit from the same scheme for growing onions, that is, the SJR Fund.*' Très bien! On l'accueille favorablement. *The scheme for the breeding of goats announced earlier will also be extended to small breeders in Rodrigues.* C'est bien, on l'accueille favorablement, les Rodriguais sont contents. Il y a aussi cette affaire de R 150,000 de la *National Empowerment Fund* pour les pêcheurs et les Rs6.4 millions pour les 1350 bénéficiaires du projet *Trust Fund* pour la construction de petits bassins et dalots.

Je trouve que c'est très bien mais par contre ce que je trouve étrange, c'est que dedans il est dit que: '*we are providing Rs22 m. funding to expand the road network at Citron Donis and upgrade Baie Tobaze*'. But I think this is already included in the RRA Budget. Je croyais que c'était R 22 millions en plus. Et croyez-moi, R22 millions c'est peu, quand on sait que pour asphalte un kilomètre de route, cela coûte à peu près R25 millions. C'est peu ! Que va-t-on faire avec cette somme ? Du *patching work* ! J'espère que le ministre des finances, ou le ministre des infrastructures publiques, va essayer d'y remédier.

M. le président, quand je parle de bien utiliser les cartes que nous avons en main, il faut le faire de la meilleure façon possible. Il faut utiliser de façon optimale les ressources de notre état archipel. On ne doit pas se cantonner seulement au *mainland Mauritius*. Notre état, c'est un état archipel. Je crois qu'il ne faut plus parler que de la République de l'Ile Maurice. Il faut parler de la République Mauricienne qui comprend toutes les îles de la République. Et si Rodrigues, la deuxième île de la République peut aider, peut apporter sa pierre à l'édifice économique de Maurice, qu'on nous donne les moyens de le faire.

At a time when we are talking of mega projects in Mauritius, we have the Dream Bridge and the Harbour Bridge - if I am not mistaken – with so many billions; Rs11 billion for the airport of Mauritius; so many millions for the ring roads, etc. But, in Rodrigues, not a single project! I will not say mega projects, but not a simple big project. This is not good, if we want

our people in Rodrigues to have jobs, we must at least start something big there. *On a donné des exemples. On a parlé de l'aéroport, du port.* Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a question: When are we going to construct another runway of about three kilometres long, at the eastern coast of Africa? Do you know where this eastern coast of Africa is found? It is found in Rodrigues, that is, Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport! And this will be a good stopover for planes going to Australia, to India, and this will greatly help the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Airport. Why don't we go ahead with this? Je crois que j'ai de la chance de parler juste avant le ministre du tourisme. J'espère que demain il va parler longuement à ce sujet. Il faut qu'au moins on commence avec un grand projet, car il ne faut pas que le gouvernement de l'Alliance Sociale arrive aux élections et que rien de grand ne soit fait à Rodrigues. Dans le passé, on a quand même fait des projets d'envergure, mais pourquoi pas maintenant ? Il faut, au moins, commencer quelque chose. L'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues doit collaborer car l'argent vient d'ici. Si on ne nous donne que des *peanuts*, on ne pourra rien faire !

(*Interruptions*)

On doit essayer de faire la part des projets pour que Rodrigues puisse vraiment aider aux développements de la République et ainsi apporter sa pierre à l'édifice économique de la République Mauricienne.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le tourisme, je dois dire que deux semaines de cela je suis intervenu dans cette Chambre pour parler de la nécessité d'aider les opérateurs touristiques de Rodrigues. Combien sont en train de subir les soubresauts de cette crise financière mondiale. Ce matin avant de venir ici, j'ai reçu pas mal de fax, de SMS des *gens et aussi* des propriétaires des petits et moyens hôtels à Rodrigues. Et c'est triste de le dire, les hôtels de Rodrigues affichent un taux de remplissage de 17%. Et ils disent que si cela continue, ils vont devoir licencier pas mal de travailleurs d'ici le mois prochain. Il n'y a pas que cela. Chez les agriculteurs au marché de Port Mathurin, la morosité s'installe. Il y a les chauffeurs de taxi, les différents opérateurs touristiques, les petites entreprises, l'artisanat, etc. Tout ce secteur est touché de plein fouet.

J'avais demandé au ministre des finances s'il ne pourrait pas enlever les diverses taxes, au moins pendant une période temporaire de six mois – ce qui fait à peu près R 3,200 pour six mois, donc environ R 30 million. Ainsi, les emplois seraient sauvagardés en plus grand nombre. It would have reduced so much misery in Rodrigues. I don't know whether it was a joke, but when it was said that the travel tax will be removed, beaucoup de personnes à Rodrigues croyaient que nous allions enlever ces R 3,200. Mais non, tel n'est pas le cas, car on a enlevé seulement R150. Les opérateurs touristiques me demandent comment ils vont dire aux touristes venant de la Réunion ou de l'Afrique du Sud de venir à Rodrigues avec une baisse du prix du billet de trois euros seulement. Comment est-ce qu'ils vont annoncer cela, M. le président? Le plus grave c'est qu'on a diminué le prix du billet Maurice/Réunion. C'était 320 euros avant et maintenant c'est à 199 euros. Tant mieux ! Ce matin, j'ai rencontré plusieurs touristes Réunionnais avant de venir ici, ils m'ont dit : 'Pourquoi cette discrimination ? Quand on quitte la Réunion pour venir à Maurice, on nous dit de payer 199 euros, mais on va transiter par Maurice pour aller à Rodrigues'. On leur répond : « Non, si vous allez à Rodrigues vous payez 320 euros. Est-ce qu'on est en train de boycotter Rodrigues M. le président ? J'aimerais faire un appel au Vice-Premier ministre, et au ministre du tourisme afin qu'ils puissent voir comment on pourrait aider ces opérateurs touristiques de Rodrigues.

M. le président, ceci étant dit, je ne vais pas être long. Pour bien utiliser les cartes que nous avons à notre disposition – parce que les cartes ont été redistribuées - ce serait bien de voir dans quelle mesure on pourrait consommer autant que possible les produits du pays, les produits du terroir mauricien. Parce ce que je pense que pour faire face à la crise économique, aux misères du peuple –comme en parlait l'honorable Alan Ganoo il y a quelques instants - la meilleure façon de combattre la misère, c'est de s'assurer que les pauvres mangent à leur faim. A Rodrigues, on est en train de tout faire pour relancer l'agriculture. La production augmente d'année en année. Le ministre des finances avait dit que, si on augmente la production de maïs à 5,000 tonnes, on aurait R200 million en plus. On en a produit, et on continue à produire de plus en plus. J'espère qu'il va tenir parole – il avait dit cela l'année dernière. Ce que moi je propose, c'est qu'à Rodrigues il y a des produits dont les mauriciens consomment et on pourrait en produire en grande quantité si on nous donne les moyens et l'aide technique nécessaire. C'est connu que Maurice restera toujours un importateur de viande et d'agrume, deux commodités qu'on peut produire à Rodrigues. Si le ministre de l'agriculture peut venir à Rodrigues et parler avec le commissaire de l'agriculture, on pourrait essayer de trouver un *modus operandi* ; des techniciens pourraient se rendre là-bas, parce qu'au ministère il y en a beaucoup, l'AREU, etc. Si on commence à produire, on pourrait essayer de voir les chiffres, à savoir combien d'oranges, de citrons et d'agrumes Maurice a besoin. Il faut faire une liste car on nous dit qu'il faut produire tant de tonnes de citrons ou d'oranges par an. On est prêt à convertir certaines vallées, parceller les terrains et donner aux agriculteurs l'encadrement nécessaire pour qu'on puisse en vendre à Maurice. Ainsi, cela aiderait l'argent à rester dans notre pays. Même chose pour la viande, pour l'élevage, je crois qu'il y a un manque de ce côté-là. Donc, les cartes économiques ont été redistribuées, mais maintenant on doit mieux les utiliser.

On a la possibilité de produire certaines choses dans notre état archipel, il ne faut pas s'en priver. Et ceux qui ont été à Rodrigues savent combien les produits rodriguais sont de bonne qualité, les produits bio surtout, parce qu'il n'y a pas autant de maladies. Cela revient cher parce qu'on n'a pas l'encadrement technique suffisant. Si on avait autant de techniciens à Rodrigues comme à Maurice, on pourrait produire beaucoup plus. On fait des efforts, mais l'achat d'un broyeur sera une bonne chose, ainsi on pourra faire encore plus de *compost* pour ne pas bruler autant de matières organiques. Ainsi, l'environnement sera moins pollué. Ça va dans la même ligne de pensée que l'honorable Alan Ganoo. On est en train d'aller dans cette direction et essayer de planter un peu partout. Avec le microclimat de Rodrigues, cela peut se faire. On peut vous offrir des produits de qualité tel que le citron, et certainement les haricots rouges que l'honorable Valayden aime bien. Il y a aussi les citrons et les 'conocono' que tout le monde aime, Bien sûr, cela concerne l'aquaculture. Nous avons aussi le piment, le maïs et beaucoup d'autres produits aussi.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Von-Mally: M. le président, concernant les énergies renouvelables, il y en a qui ont parlé avant moi. A Rodrigues, on veut faire de l'île Rodrigues l'île la plus verte de l'Océan Indien, si ce n'est du monde. On peut le faire. L'honorable Alan Ganoo a parlé des éoliennes. L'année dernière, j'ai parlé des petites éoliennes domestiques qu'on peut mettre sur les maisons. Actuellement, il y a une délégation qui est en Tasmanie. Il faut essayer de voir comment

travailler là-dessus. Mais il y a d'autres éoliennes qui sont en train d'être installées ; par exemple, l'installation de six éoliennes à Grenade.

L'année dernière, dans le budget, il a été dit qu'on allait encourager les gens à faire des projets PPP. Mais jusqu'à maintenant je ne sais pas ce qui se passe. Le gouvernement dit qu'on va faire des projets PPP, mais de l'autre côté, est-ce qu'on doit passer par le CEB? Est-ce qu'il y a un goulot d'étranglement quelque part? Pourquoi ne pas encourager les investisseurs privés, *the independent power producers*, à venir à Rodrigues pour produire et vendre de l'électricité? Je suis sûr qu'il y a des gens qui veulent le faire. Je pense qu'on devrait aller dans cette direction, M. le président.

En ce qui concerne les cables optiques, Rodrigues ne doit pas rester en arrière ; elle doit se développer en parallèle avec Maurice. Certaines personnes veulent ouvrir des centres d'appels à Rodrigues, mais elles ne peuvent le faire parce que ces cables passent à côté de nous.

(Interruptions)

J'espère que cela va se réaliser, parce qu'on attend cela depuis belle lurette et qu'on va aussi avoir ce fameux Sega Net.

M. le président, concernant le sport - je vois que le ministre des sports est à sa place - j'avais proposé quelque chose l'année dernière, mais jusqu'à maintenant cela ne s'est pas concrétisé ; on a déjà une équipe prête là-bas. J'avais proposé qu'on mette sur pied une sélection de football de Rodrigues.

(Interruptions)

Excusez-moi, la sélection de football de Maurice a besoin de sang neuf. On a besoin de bons joueurs. Il fut un temps où la sélection de Maurice faisait la gloire de la République. Mais, M. le président, cela date de quand ? C'était quand il y avait à peu près sept joueurs Rodriguais. C'était pour les jeux des îles et on préparait une sélection Rodriguaise qui avait remporté la médaille d'or ici et on avait pris sept joueurs. Maurice a eu plusieurs fois des médailles d'or dans les Jeux des îles. Mais depuis, qu'est-ce qui a été fait? Rien! Et il y a des bons joueurs à Rodrigues et ils sont prêts. Le ministre Sithanen avait dit: si vous le faites, on est prêt à financer. Je dis qu'on peut financer, l'équipe est prête. On a même envoyé des lettres. On a dit: commencez à financer et on emmène l'équipe à Maurice, vous allez trouver des bons joueurs. J'espère que le ministre de la jeunesse et des sports va considérer ce point et essayer de faire avancer les choses.

(Interruptions)

Je crois que je n'ai pas été trop long. M. le président, je ne peux m'asseoir sans parler...

(Interruptions)

Je ne vais pas répondre aux autres membres de Rodrigues qui ont été très anti patriotiques. Ils n'ont rien dit, rien proposé sur Rodrigues. Mais ils ont parlé du budget et trouv qu'on n'a pas utilisé tout l'argent alloué sur le budget de Rodrigues. Mais, M. le président, l'argent a été alloué pour une période allant jusqu'à la fin de juillet. Si on utilise tout l'argent, que va-t-on faire pendant les deux mois qui restent?

J'aimerais rapidement venir sur la question d'Agaléga. Mon ami, l'honorable Mahen Jhugroo aime bien parler d'Agaléga lui aussi. L'année dernière, on avait prévu de construire des

abris contre les tsunamis, les cyclones. J'espère qu'on a déjà commencé la construction de deux bâtiments sur les deux îles, un bâtiment sur chaque île. L'île ne fait pas plus de quelques mètres au-dessus du niveau de la mer et avec un tsunami, on croira que c'est une catastrophe. Je pense qu'il faut aller très vite de ce côté-là. Il faut que ce bâtiment soit assez haut pour protéger les gens là. Je garde un bon souvenir de mon séjour là-bas avec mon ami, l'honorable Mahen Jhugroo.

(Interruptions)

Ce n'est pas parce que les gens sont tranquilles qu'il faut les oublier ; Rodrigues aussi est tranquille. Mais comme l'a dit mon ami, l'honorable Christian Léopold, il ne faut pas confondre gentillesse avec faiblesse. Nous sommes gentils ; nous avons toujours fait des propositions, mais pas de façon arrogante. On a défendu la cause des petites gens. Laissez-moi vous dire, M. le président, que la région de la République Mauricienne qui est la plus pauvre ou qui est parmi les plus pauvres, c'est Rodrigues. C'est pourquoi je pense que Rodrigues mérite une attention particulière. J'espère qu'elle aura cette attention particulière et si, demain, lors *du summing-up* le ministre des finances dit qu'il faut enlever ces R 3,200, ce sera une des meilleures façons de sauver l'emploi. Le titre, c'était quoi déjà? *Saving Jobs!*

The best way to save jobs in Rodrigues is to remove the taxes of Rs3200. En fait, cela touche tous les Mauriciens. Le nombre de touristes réunionnais qui vont à Rodrigues s'est stabilisé. Il y a quand même pas mal de réunionnais, de sud africains et de français qui y vont. Le nombre de touristes qui a diminué sont les mauriciens. Les mauriciens sont en train de boycotter. On leur dit d'aller à la Réunion et de ne pas aller à Rodrigues. À la Réunion c'est à meilleur marché.

(Interruptions)

Il faut baisser les taxes pendant au moins quelques mois. Il y a des tours opérateurs qui ont dit que même par R 1000 cela aurait aidé, mais pas par R150. Je demande au gouvernement de faire quelque chose. Peut être que je viendrais avec un amendement en comité. Comme on l'a dit, on va être solidaire avec *les citizens* de Rodrigues. Je crois que c'est une occasion à ne pas rater pour montrer aux Rodriguais que nous formons vraiment partie de cette République Mauricienne.

Merci, M. le président.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 02 June 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 11.22 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 02 June 2009 at 10.00 a.m.