

No. 29 of 2009



FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION
SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2009

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MAURITIUS
Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 29 of 2009

Sitting of Saturday 21 November 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. Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities -

The Radiation Protection (Registration of Radiation Sources and Facilities) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 141 of 2009).

B. Ministry of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications) –

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit and the Audited Financial Statements of the Tourism Authority for the years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 (In original).
- (b) The Tourism Authority (Speed Limit Zone for Pleasure Craft) (Bel Ombre) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 134 of 2009).

C. Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment –

- (a) The Digest of Crime, Justice and Security Statistics for the year 2007.
- (b) The Public Procurement (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 142 of 2009).
- (c) The Schedule to Virement (Contingencies) Warrants Nos 1 to 39 and Nos. 41 to 67 and 69 & 70 of 2008/2009 (In original).
- (d) The Digest of Demographic Statistics 2008.
- (e) The 2007 Census of Economics Activities – Phase I – Small Establishments.

D. Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources –

- (a) The Annual Report of the Private Secondary School Authority for the year 1996.
- (b) The Annual Report of the Private Secondary School Authority for the year 2003.

E. Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security –

- (a) The Annual Report of the Tea Board for the year 2008.
- (b) The Annual Report of the Farmers Service Corporation for Financial year 2006-2007.

F. Ministry of Health & Quality of Life –

- (a) The Medical Council (Registration of Registered Medical Practitioners) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 137 of 2009).
- (b) The Dental Council (Registration of Dental Surgeons and Dental Specialists) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 138 of 2009).
- (c) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 139 of 2009).
- (d) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 140 of 2009).

G. Ministry of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter –

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 135 of 2009).
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 24) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 136 of 2009).

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION - 'A REVIEW OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CONSTITUENCIES 2009' REPORT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission on A Review of the Boundaries of the Constituencies 2009, he will state –

- (a) when a motion will be introduced in the Assembly in regard thereto and, in case it is approved, indicate if measures will be taken to ensure that no electors be disenfranchised, and
- (b) if a motion will be introduced in the Assembly for the inclusion of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, Tromelin and St Brandon in such one of the Constituencies, as may be determined by the Electoral Boundaries Commission and as recommended in the Report and, if so, when.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, immediately after the Report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission on a Review of the Boundaries of the Republic of Mauritius was tabled at the National Assembly on 10 November 2009, I initiated a series of consultations with the Electoral Commissioner and the State Law Office to discuss the implications of the Report.

As the House is aware, at paragraph 13 of the Report, the Electoral Boundaries Commission draws attention to the consequential implications of adoption of the Report.

One important point that I would like to draw the attention of the House to, is that the new constituency boundaries, recommended by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, will only take effect after the dissolution of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at page 38 of its Report, the Electoral Boundaries Commission has outlined the implications on the right to vote of voters who will find themselves in constituencies different from those in which they presently vote if the new boundaries come into force. For example, a voter currently in Constituency A but moved to constituency B through the redefined boundaries, may be unable to vote in either of the two constituencies if the National Assembly Elections are held before 16 of August 2010, which is the date until which the current 2009 Register of Electors will remain in force, and the reason is as follows -

Following the passing of a Resolution to give effect to the Electoral Boundaries Commission's recommendations as from the date of the dissolution of Parliament, the voter previously in Constituency A will no longer be eligible to vote in Constituency A because his residence will now be in Constituency B; he will also not be able to vote in Constituency B, because between now and until 16 August 2010, the voter's name will continue to be on the present electoral register in force for Constituency A and a new register including his name as a voter in Constituency B will only come into force after 16 August 2010 following the compilation of the new register. That is why the Electoral Boundaries Commission has recommended the taking of legislative measures to prevent the possible disenfranchisement of electors in the context of a pre-August 2010 general elections.

In the face of such complex legal and administrative issues arising from the recommendations, it would be unwise for Government to rush legislation and a resolution in Parliament without a thorough, dispassionate and extremely careful study of the implications and a rigorous preparation of the related legislative amendments, including any necessary, constitutional amendments.

Once this exercise is completed, a decision will be taken both on the passing of the resolution and the introduction of the related legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now move to part (b) of the question. The House is no doubt aware that Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, form part of the Republic of Mauritius, as stated in section 111(1) of the Constitution. The Commission has recommended that those islands be included in such one of the constituencies as the Electoral Boundaries Commission may determine.

I will, in due course, introduce a motion in the Assembly, in line with this recommendation of the Commission. It is considered that it would be more convenient for this motion to be moved on the same occasion as that of the passing of the resolution under part (a).

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, it is not my intention to get the hon. Prime Minister to rush on such matters, but I am sure he is aware that the Constitution, the supreme law of the country, has it that a revision of the boundaries of the constituencies is to take place after ten years. I quote the Constitution: “as near as may be after the presentation of the last report.”

The last report was presented in March 1999. Therefore, we are already late, and I won’t go into the reasons. I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is aware also that, in 1976, the then Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, presented a motion 11 days after the report was tabled. In 1986, the then Prime Minister, Sir, Anerood Jugnauth, presented a motion after three days but, in 1999, the present Prime Minister was the then Prime Minister, and he presented a motion nine months after the report was tabled. Today, it is the eleventh day after the report was tabled. The hon. Prime Minister can no longer do the same job as his father. But will he agree with me that, without rushing, it would be in the interest of the country that the motion on the report be before the National Assembly as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister: Let me say one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, before I come to the second point of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, namely that the report was laid, I think, in March 1999, and the motion was approved in December 1999. But the crux of the matter, what is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the new register reflected the new boundaries, no one was disenfranchised, the report was approved, and when the election was held in September 2000, no one was disenfranchised. So, even if there was a gap, it was approved.

(Interruptions)

I am talking about 1999. In any event, the resolution will only take effect after the dissolution of Parliament, not before; and we have taken that on board.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that, in case the motion to be presented by the hon. Prime Minister moves that the report be rejected, this would amount to a *motion de blâme* against the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Will he agree that, if that takes place, it will bring us back to the present situation where it is 3:1, which is not at all

in line with the Constitution? The biggest constituency has three times more electors than the smallest. It would bring us back to that situation, and we would have to wait another ten years...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition will have an opportunity to debate on the motion when it is presented in Parliament.

Mr Bérenger: I am not pre-empting. That is the only place - since we do not meet secretly anywhere - where I can bring to the attention of the hon. Prime Minister points which, I think, should be kept in mind. So, that is why I have put that question. Will he agree to keep that in mind when considering his stand on the motion to come?

The Prime Minister: I would tend to agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is trying to pre-empt what we will decide. In any case, Parliament is supreme and sovereign; we will decide what to do. Mr Speaker, Sir, as the report says at page 38, when they talk about the consequential implications of the adoption of the report - and I did say - there are complex legal and administrative issues that are being looked at, that are being worked out. I have talked to both the Electoral Commissioner and the State Law Office, and they are actively looking into that. It is more complex than it appears at first hand. Once this is done, we will come to the resolution.

Mr Bérenger: One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is aware that, in 1976, when the first review report was presented to the Assembly, the then Prime Minister argued that some 100,000 electors would be disenfranchised. This time, the Electoral Commissioner - I am sure after taking due legal advice - has added the comment which the hon. Prime Minister has referred to, whereas the report was rejected in 1976. Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that the situation is totally different this time?

The Prime Minister: I don't quite understand what the Leader of the Opposition means by 'the situation is different this time'. I am not quite following what he is saying.

Mr Bérenger: Insofar as 1976 is concerned, the Electoral Commission then didn't indicate a way out of disenfranchising a number of electors; this time, we are in a different situation, because the Electoral Boundaries Commission has been one step ahead and made the recommendation.

The Prime Minister: That is true. I understand the point which has been raised. That is why I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, as soon as the report was made available, I had meetings with both the Electoral Commissioner and the State Law Office, and they are working precisely on this, because this is precisely our concern, namely that people should not lose their right to vote, and we have to ensure that this is so.

Mr Dulloo: I have two questions, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you would allow me. First, we know that Parliament would stand dissolved in July next year, that is, in just over seven months. Therefore, should not this Assembly be called upon to take a decision forthwith to ensure that those people who could be affected directly, if ever these recommendations would be put in place, be not kept in a state of confusion, uncertainty and ambivalence too long, in order to ensure a free and fair election?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member, I know, has never been Prime Minister ever, but he is a barrister and knows very well - first of all, up to July, it is eight months, not seven months - that the lifetime of this Parliament, at least, has eight months. But the

general election may be held within a period which may well stretch in 2011. The lifetime of the Parliament may well stretch, because there is plenty of time.

(Interruptions)

There are eight months, not seven months; the hon. Member said seven months.

(Interruptions)

He is not listening to himself. On the contrary, if I do the election now, does he know what will happen to him?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mr Ganoo: Since the hon. Prime Minister has himself said that he already had discussions with the Electoral Commissioner and the State Law Office, can I ask him whether it is envisaged to amend the Constitution to render the new Boundaries Report effective?

The Prime Minister: Yes, in fact, when I had consultations, they were working on the legislative amendment, including the amendments to the Constitution that need to be brought.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister referred just now to my capacity as barrister, but may I just, as a Member of Parliament...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, carry on! Order, please!

Mr Dulloo: May I just, as a Member of Parliament, refer him to section 39 of the Constitution defining constituencies? Section 39 subsection 4 provides that if those recommendations were approved, the recommendations would have effect as from the next dissolution of Parliament, that is, all the delimitations or alterations of the constituencies will come into effect as from the dissolution of Parliament. This would mean that those people who are living in one particular constituency and who would move to another constituency, notwithstanding the Representation of the People Act, section 4, which says that the date to be taken into account is 01 January, would automatically, by virtue of the Constitution which predominates over the Representation of the People Act, move to the relevant constituency as per the Constitution and as per the law. To make sure and for certainty, if ever any amendment would be required, it would be the Representation of the People Act.

The Prime Minister: This is precisely why I think hon. Ganoo asked the question whether it would include constitutional amendments.

Mr Bérenger: Just to clarify that point; I am not asking for the legal opinion or opinion *tout court* of the hon. Prime Minister. But is he telling us that he has already been advised by the State Law Office that there is a need for a constitutional amendment?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there would be need for constitutional amendment; that is my understanding, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: May I ask another question to the Prime Minister? We know the complexity of the issues. May I ask him whether he took cognizance of what SSR said during the debates in 1976 when SSR, at that time, just like the Prime Minister today, had highlighted all the complexities and the intricacies of the problem? If you would bear with me, SSR said, at that

time: 'matters would have been in order either if it was possible for the resolution to give retroactive effect to the recommendations with effect from 01 January, but this is not constitutionally possible'.

The Prime Minister: That is why precisely I said - I thought that is why the hon. Member asked the question as well as hon. Dulloo - that if that is the case, we will bring constitutional amendments as well.

Mr Dulloo: May I, therefore, suggest to the Prime Minister that he immediately seeks...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should not suggest; he should ask questions.

Mr Dulloo: May I suggest and, therefore, ask him...

Mr Speaker: Put it in a question form!

Mr Dulloo: ... whether he would go by the suggestion that he should immediately seek constitutional expert advice before seeking to amend the Constitution?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me just say to the House that I am a firm believer that the right of vote is sacrosanct; so does the Party I lead, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I remind the House that it is the Labour Party, under the leadership of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who was just mentioned, who gave the right to vote to adults including women, that is, the right to vote was given - they would not have been here if there was no right to vote - also to women through universal suffrage. And it is the same Labour Party, Mr Speaker, Sir, under the same Prime Minister, who gave the right of vote to the young people of this country at the age of 18. It is the same Labour Party, under my leadership, that enfranchised the inhabitants of Agalega in 1998, I think, who voted for the first time in the general election of 2000. The hon. Member should feel reassured that I take this very seriously, and I don't want anybody to be disenfranchised.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I, therefore, in the light of this last reply given by the Prime Minister, ask him whether it was the same Labour Party that postponed the general election...

Mr Speaker: No, the question is not allowed.

Mr Dulloo: ... and abolished by-elections, and it was the MMM which restored these elections?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I don't know where ...

Mr Speaker: I have not allowed the question.

The Prime Minister: You have not allowed the question. Otherwise, I would very gladly answer the question, because he is sitting there. He does not know the history of the MMM.

(Interruptions)

Go and learn the history of the MMM!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order now! Enough!

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.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order! Leave it! Don't do that!

PUBLIC BILL
Second Reading
THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL
(No. XXI of 2009)

Order read for resuming debate on the Second reading of the Appropriation (2010) Bill (No. XXI of 2009).

Question again proposed.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): M. le président, il faut bien sûr placer le budget qui est devant nous dans son contexte, et le contexte dans lequel ce budget est devant nous...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. David, order please!

Mr Bérenger: ... c'est que ce budget arrive après quatre budgets amers présentés par le même ministre des finances en 2006, 2007, 2008 et 2009. Et aussi, ce budget est le dernier budget - puisque nous avons adopté un *calender year* - avant les prochaines élections générales. J'insiste là-dessus, puisque cela permet de mieux comprendre ce que nous trouvons dans ce budget.

Premièrement, après quatre budgets amers, il y a eu unanimité *out there*, comme disent certains...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No comment please! I said no comment!

Mr Bérenger: *It is usually out there.* Il y avait unanimité que *payback time had arrived* après quatre budgets amers. Il y avait unanimité qu'un meilleur partage de la croissance est nécessaire, et que le temps était venu pour rétablir le pouvoir d'achat des salariés, des pensionnés, des veuves, des orphelins, de ceux qui bénéficient des allocations sociales. Cette unanimité, syndicat, MTPA (*Mauritius Tax Payers Association*), Forces Vives et l'opposition l'avaient exprimée. Pourtant, répondant au *Private Notice Question* du 10 novembre dernier, le ministre des finances avait été catégorique : pas question d'un ajustement des salaires, des pensions de vieillesse, des allocations sociales à partir du 1^{er} janvier 2010. Mais, après avoir été catégorique, une semaine plus tard, avec les élections générales derrière la porte, il a eu à rectifier le tir. Il aura noté que je parle de rectifier le tir ; on n'utilise pas des mots comme 'céder', 'capituler'. Jamais ! Il a été forcé de rectifier le tir. Et il a accordé, selon son calcul à lui, 3.5% d'ajustement des salaires, des pensions de vieillesse et des allocations sociales. Bien sûr, M. le président, 3.5%, c'est très insuffisant. Et après ce que la population a vécu depuis 2006, ces 3.5% représentent moins de 1% de ce qu'il a retiré des poches de la population depuis 2005 à travers les nouvelles taxes qu'il a introduites, comme le *National Residential Property Tax* et la taxe de 15% sur l'épargne surtout, mais aussi, à travers la TVA, la *State Trading Corporation* et des compensations salariales insuffisantes année après année. De même que les ajustements à l'*Income Tax threshold*, les R 15,000 additionnelles pour toutes les catégories concernées, sont eux-aussi insuffisants. Par contre, l'unanimité s'est faite dans le pays contre le NRPT – *National Residential Property Tax* - et contre la taxe de 15% sur l'épargne. Mais, malgré ça, contrairement à ce qu'il a fait dans le cas de la compensation salariale, à partir du 1^{er} janvier 2010, il a refusé d'abolir le *National Residential Property Tax* et la taxe de 15% sur l'épargne. Je note, M. le président, que le ministre des finances, au nom du gouvernement, propose maintenant un *tripartite committee*. J'espère que ce sera un vrai *tripartite committee*. Il propose maintenant un *tripartite committee* pour revoir le fonctionnement du NPC, la façon que le NPC fait ses calculs. Mais, en fait, en agissant comme le gouvernement vient d'agir autour de cette question d'une compensation intérimaire de 3.5%, le gouvernement et le ministre des finances ont donné le coup de grâce au NPC. Le peu de crédibilité qui est resté à cette institution bidon a disparu. En tout cas, M. le président, pour la population, *payback time* était arrivé ; mais, la population est restée sur sa faim. Et, depuis mercredi, ceux qui veulent entendre, ont entendu les ventres grogner sur les radios et dans la rue.

Deuxième remarque, M. le président, il y a eu encore plus de répétitions et de *repackaging* que dans les budgets précédents. *Repackaging* de projets déjà annoncés année après année, mais pas *implemented* à cause de *delivery problems*, comme le ministre des finances l'a dit, dans le cas des infrastructures surtout, mais aussi, dans le cas des petites et moyennes entreprises. Par ailleurs, nous avons eu droit à une longue liste des moindres petites choses faites depuis 2005, et à des détails interminables concernant des projets qui n'ont pas leur place dans un discours du budget.

Enfin, M. le président, il y a eu, encore une fois - et c'est pour la dernière fois avant les prochaines élections générales - les effets d'annonce. Mais, cette fois, ce sont des effets d'annonce cyniques, car le ministre des finances sait bien que les élections sont derrière la porte. Ces effets d'annonce, dans ce discours du budget, ont parfois pris des allures de manifeste électoral. Comme ce fut le cas, à la veille des élections, dans le dernier budget, et comme dans le cas des 10,000 *social houses*. C'est maintenant qu'on annonce 10,000 *core social houses*,

donnant l'impression que cela va être fait très vite, alors que le budget lui-même ne prévoit - je reviendrai là-dessus - que 600 *core houses*. Nous savons quel sera le sort de ces 600 *core houses*.

En fait, M. le président, comme me disait quelqu'un, les budgets du ministre des finances actuel are *onion like* – ses budgets sont comme des oignons – *the more layers you peel, the more questions arise, and the more you cry*. Budget après budget, nous avons eu le même exercice, mais, cette fois-ci, encore plus exagéré que dans le passé. M. le président, nous avons encore une fois eu droit à la rengaine habituelle - qui n'amuse plus personne - sur l'héritage catastrophique de 2005, et les squelettes sur lesquels ils se sont engrangés depuis 2005. Le ministre des finances, dans différentes déclarations avant la présentation du budget, nous avait promis, *new poles of growth* - de nouveaux pôles de croissance économique.

J'ai noté le ton du ministre des finances lorsqu'il parlait de l'héritage catastrophique et des squelettes. J'ai noté le ton qu'il a adopté et qui montre que lui-même ne se prenait pas au sérieux. C'était le ton de la comédie. La vérité, M. le président, est, en fait, que depuis 2005 le pays récolte ce que nous avons semé.

(*Interruptions*).

M. le président, le pays récolte ce que nous avons semé entre 2000 et 2005 du côté du IRS - *Integrated Resort Scheme*, de l'ICT – *Information Communication Technology* et du *Seafood Hub*. Alors, qu'avant 2005, certains parlaient d'apartheid économique et d'éléphant blanc ; ça c'est la vérité ! Il s'agit, en fait, d'un *early harvest* de ce que nous, le MMM et le MSM, avions semé entre 2000 et 2005. Le ministre des finances ne manque pas de *toupet* ; à la deuxième page, au paragraphe 15 de son discours, il a eu l'outrecuidance de dire –

“(..) due to our diversification policy, new pillars are emerging. These include the ICT and seafood sectors. The IRS/real estate(...)”

M. le président, on voit qu'il n'y a pas de taxe sur le *bluff* et sur le *toupet* ! Je pense que les élections de 2005 sont loin derrière nous. Reconnaissions la vérité. Les *poles of growth* depuis 2005 sont ces trois secteurs. C'est la vérité, il faut le reconnaître, et il faut reconnaître qui a mis ces trois *poles of growth* en chantier, en marche, en route, entre 2000 et 2005. Ce que l'histoire a retenu déjà, c'est que sans *l'Ilovo deal* historique ...

(*Interruptions*)

...il n'y aurait pas eu de *cyber city*. Quand les jeunes de l'île Maurice passent devant Le Réduit, ils savent que cela avait été mis en chantier grâce à *l'Ilovo deal* et grâce aux décisions prises par le Gouvernement de MMM/MSM entre 2000 et 2005. Sans *l'Ilovo deal* historique, il n'y aurait pas eu de *cyber city*. Il n'y aurait pas eu des dizaines et des dizaines de collèges et il n'y aurait pas eu le *Highlands project*, dont se gargarise le ministre des finances, M. le président.

En tout cas, M. le président, alors que nous avions lancé entre 2000 et 2005 les *new poles of growth* qui nourrissent l'île Maurice depuis 2005, avec ce présent budget, il n'y a presque rien eu en termes de *new poles of growth*. Il y a, bien sûr, le *Land Based Ocean Park*, et je suis ce projet de très près. Mais, on en parle depuis 2006, et les miracles qu'on nous avait promis tardent à venir. A ce stade, j'ai lu attentivement tout ce qui a paru sur le projet en question, et ce qui est une nouveauté finalement depuis 2005, c'est un *Green Data Centre*.

Je souhaite bonne chance au *Land Based Ocean Park*, car je pense que ce projet mérite l'encouragement de tout un chacun, mais cela tarde à venir. Ce qui est mentionné dans le budget,

je le répète, c'est uniquement un *Green Data Centre*, car le reste tarde beaucoup à venir. Sur ce sujet - je le regrette et je suis sûr que le premier ministre serait d'accord avec moi - nous cherchons de nouvelles initiatives à prendre, de nouveaux *poles of growth* ; la petite île Maurice a reçu un budget où pas un mot n'a été dit sur la grande île, Madagascar, juste à côté, pays continent. Alors, que Madagascar est en train de prendre un nouveau départ ces jours ci et que nos deux peuples frères pourraient faire des choses extraordinaires dans le respect mutuel, *under the partnership* digne des deux pays, s'il y a un *new pole of growth* sur lequel il faudra s'appuyer dans les mois et les années à venir, c'est bien une coopération fraternelle, intense entre la grande île Madagascar et l'île Maurice. Cela viendra, M. le président.

Je viens à la crise financière et économique internationale et au *Stimulus Package*. Là encore, nous avons eu droit au cliché habituel. *We have been ahead of the curve and so on and so forth*, alors que la vérité est tout autre. Je pense que le ministre des finances actuel devrait reconnaître, une fois pour toutes, qu'il est resté trop longtemps prisonnier d'un *denial mode*, alors que la crise frappait déjà et qu'elle cognait à nos portes ; un *denial mode* qui nous a fait perdre beaucoup de temps, M. le président. Il suffit de rappeler – je ne m'étendrai pas là-dessus - que dans le budget du 06 juin 2008, après des mois et des mois de crise financière et économique internationale, le ministre des finances parlait de *bumper crop* et prévoyait ...

(Interruptions)

Non ! *Early harvest*, c'était l'année précédente. Depuis que le ministre n'est plus à l'agriculture, il ne sait plus faire la différence entre un *early harvest* et un *bumper crop*. En 2008, il a parlé de *bumper crop* et, M. le président, il prévoyait, je dis bien, à la mi-2008, une accélération du *GDP growth*. *As late as mid-2008*, le ministre prévoyait une accélération du *GDP growth* alors que tout ralentissait depuis des mois déjà de par le monde. Lui, il prévoyait une accélération du *GDP growth* qui devait passer à 6.2% en 2008/2009. Tellement de clairvoyance impressionnante ! J'aimerais ajouter que, quand on parle de *resilience*, il faut reconnaître que le *resilience* dont a fait preuve l'économie mauricienne a été avant tout dû à la solidité – certains diraient au conservatisme, mais je préfère dire à la solidité - de notre système bancaire et de nos hôtels, ainsi qu'à la modernisation de notre secteur textile qui s'est faite avant 2005 et avant la crise financière et économique qui nous frappe. Quant à savoir quand retirer le *stimulus package*, je pense qu'il y a unanimité qu'il faut bien choisir le *timing*. Beaucoup dépendra de l'évolution de l'économie mondiale en 2010 et surtout de l'évolution de nos marchés en Europe et aux Etats-Unis.

En septembre dernier, M. le président, le prix Nobel de l'économie, Joseph Stiglitz, estimait qu'il est difficile de savoir, je cite –

« Il est difficile de savoir s'il y aura ou quand il y aura un 'W' ou *double-dip recession*. »

C'est-à-dire, après le début de reprise que nous vivons ces temps-ci, un *double dip*, un deuxième 'V', un 'W' donc. Le mois suivant, l'économiste, Nouriel Roubini, un des rares qui avait prévu la crise financière et économique actuelle, estimait que, je cite –

« *We are already planting the seeds of the next crisis.* »

Et Dominique Strauss Khan, à la tête du Fonds Monétaire International, lui, disait, avec précaution, le 12 novembre dernier, qu'il n'y aurait sans doute pas de *double-dip recession*. Jeudi dernier, l'OCDE, regroupant toutes les économies développées, estimait pour sa part que le chômage continuerait à augmenter jusqu'à l'année prochaine aux Etats-Unis et jusqu'à 2011 en

Europe. Et, si tel est le cas, nos principaux marchés d'Europe et des Etats-Unis subiront ce coup que leur porte le chômage qui se développe, M. le président. En tout cas, tant que durera le *stimulus package*, il est indispensable qu'il y ait transparence totale concernant l'aide financière accordée aux firmes privées, de même concernant les *tendering procedures*, en général, et pour les projets d'infrastructures en partie.

M. le président, lorsqu'il a parlé du *GDP growth, unemployment, inflation, budget deficit, foreign reserves, balance of payments, public debts*, le ministre des finances a choisi de comparer notre performance à nous, à celle des pays les plus en difficulté. Il est permis de faire d'autres comparaisons. Le ministre des finances a prévu que nous aurons un *GDP growth* de 2.8% en 2009 et de 4.3% en 2010. En 2009, la Chine fera 8% ; l'Inde, 5% ; l'Egypte, 4.7% ; l'Indonésie, 4% et le Pakistan, 3.7%, comparé à nos 2.8%, tels que calculés par le ministre des finances et le *Central Statistical Office*.

M. le président, le Fonds Monétaire International vient de prévoir que, je cite –

« *Emerging economies* feront, en général, 5.1% en 2010 (en moyenne) ».

Ce qui veut dire que même les chiffres prévus par le Fonds Monétaire International - auxquels le ministre des finances s'est référé - sont au-dessous de la moyenne. Donc, je demanderai que lorsqu'on fait des comparaisons qu'on ne nous compare pas uniquement avec les pays qui sont les plus en difficulté, mais aussi avec le pays qui trouvera le moyen de faire mieux que nous.

Our employment rate is at 8%; it is 5% in Pakistan; 3% in Malaysia and Singapore. Inflation is at 3% in Mauritius. We all know que l'ordre du jour c'est 'deflation' ces temps-ci. Ce qui inquiète les gouvernements ce n'est pas '*inflation*', mais '*deflation*', c'est-à-dire que les prix baissent au-dessous de 0%. En fait, *our inflation rate is 3%*. Inflation has crashed the world over; it is at -0.4% aux Etats-Unis; at -0.8% in China; 0.5% in Malaysia and Singapore; 0.4% in the Euro zone in general. Our budget deficit is 5% of GDP. It is 5% in Pakistan and 3% in Indonesia and Singapore. *Je pourrais continuer*. My point is that when we compare, it is not fair to compare our performance with those countries that are most in trouble.

The Minister of Finance has been upbeat concerning our foreign currency reserves and our balance of payments, and also concerning the national debt. I don't go along with him, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am worried and, in fact, very worried for the following reasons. Mr Speaker, Sir, if our reserves and our balance of payments are positive - according to me and from advice I have sought - it is not attributable to the economic fundamentals of the economy, that is, what is happening in the tourism and textile sectors in particular, but is attributable to massive external borrowings, something which the country has stopped doing for years. External borrowings! I repeat that if our balance of payment and our foreign currency reserves are positive, it is because of massive external borrowings. In fact, Government has borrowed more than US\$600 m. from external sources since 2005. Since Independence, no Government has borrowed that much from external sources in such a short period, Mr Speaker, Sir, which brings me to the external debt which has doubled. Again, I am talking about the external debt, which has doubled over 18 months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that every single unit of foreign currency borrowed from outside the country will have to be repaid in foreign currency. Nowhere has it been explained to us, to the country, to our children and grand children, how the export performance of the economy or receipts from tourism would be boosted in subsequent years to allow the repayment

of this massive external debt. I think the hon. Minister of Finance and Government should rethink their attitude, as far as our foreign currency reserves and balance of payment is concerned on the one hand and external debt on the other. We have entered a dangerous zone. I think we should take stock of the situation and take the measures required to prevent the country from slipping deeper into external debt.

I note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the hon. Minister of Finance does not provide us with figures for the debt service ratio, that is, external debt servicing as a percentage of export earnings, which is the right indicator in this case. I invite the hon. Minister of Finance to give us the figures as at to date. But please, Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that, if the hon. Minister of Finance does give the figures for the debt service ratio, he gives the correct figures.

Just listen to what I am going to say, because I can and I will show that the hon. Minister of Finance *prend beaucoup de liberté avec les chiffres*. Let me give one concrete example. At paragraph 74 of his speech, the hon. Minister of Finance says -

“The ICT/BPO sector has grown by 40.8% per cent in the past three years, and is expanding by 16.2 per cent this year (...”).

Fair enough! Then follows -

“It is now contributing 5.8 per cent to GDP from less than one per cent in 2005 (...”).

This obsession with 2005 is totally wrong; *c'est faux*. The hon. Minister - if he is not aware already – must double check and correct that. This is *faux*, Mr Speaker, Sir. If you go on the Central Statistical Office website, which is open to everybody – I did so - you will see that the figures are not at all that. He says that this sector contributes, as I have just said, 5.8%, but it contributed less than 1% in 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The official Central Statistical Office website shows that, in 2005, it already contributed 5.3% of GDP. This is from the official website, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I go further! You can go back to 2000; it was already 4.5%. So, let's be serious. I am not in the business *de jouer avec les chiffres*, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think it is only fair that such statement, again this obsession in 2005 should be done away with and when figures are communicated to the House, they should be correct figures.

We heard that the Director of Audit has just produced a damning report on *gaspillage*, waste, *scandale* in the public sector, parastatal bodies. The heart of the 2006 Budget speech was, and I quote “war on waste”, and we were presented with a permanent campaign against waste. We were offered a new culture of efficiency in 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, today, in 2009, and for the 2010 Budget, not a word. *Un silence plus qu'éloquent*. Not a word *après les coups de tonnerre de 2006*, at a time when waste and corruption are all over the place, and at a time when we know what is taking place at the STC, CWA, Wastewater Management Authority, NTC etc. Since 2006, things have deteriorated, not only in Central Government, but in all those parastatal bodies and so on. We do not hear a word in the 2010 Budget Speech.

This takes place at a time when emergency tendering procedures are increasingly resorted to by the CEB and others; when we are setting up, for the purpose of road building, a company, the RDA, the Road Development Authority, under the Companies Act. Maybe, it's for those reasons that there is not a word in the present Budget Speech on waste, corruption and *scandale en général*. On one specific issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, whereas in the 2009 Budget presented six months ago, we were promised legislation to prevent residential fraud by non-residents, we have

seen no such legislation. Not only have we seen no such legislation announced six months ago, but also, now, when we hear no more about legislation proposed, we are informed - if you would allow me - at page 49, I quote -

“Companies listed on the stock Exchange and having minority foreign shareholding will be allowed to acquire immovable property without prior approval”.

This is all that we have been informed of, and we no longer hear anything on the legislation proposed. In what country are we? We have the MRA, ICAC, Police, a Minister promising legislation, and there is abuse by quite a number of non-residents. There is abuse. They are acting nearly outside or inside the law.

We were promised legislation, there is the MRA, ICAC, Police, and it is the Chairperson of the so-called Democratisation of the Economy Commission that has become Chairman *Columbo*. We were promised legislation, an Act. Probably if we do not have legislation before us, it's because *c'est le silence complet* concerning waste, *gaspillage, scandale et corruption* in this present Budget.

As regards our foreign currency reserves, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am surprised that the word “gold” is nowhere to be found in the speech of the hon. Minister. “Gold” does not exist for him, and the speech was delivered two days after the Bank of Mauritius purchased two tons of gold from the International Monetary Fund. When it did that, it doubled from 2.3% to 5.7%. It doubled the percentage of our foreign currency reserves held in gold.

The Central Bank’s Governor is appointed by whom? The hon. Prime Minister! Don’t tell me that the Governor and the Central Bank purchased two tons of gold without the green light from the hon. Prime Minister! Who will believe that? And, yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, what words did not the hon. Minister of Finance use! He lost control of himself. He insulted people who said we should do exactly what the Bank of Mauritius did last week, two days before he delivered his speech, and without a word, without a reference to “gold”, Mr Speaker, Sir. We had been requesting for months and months that the Bank of Mauritius should increase the share of its international reserves held in gold, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now, two tons of gold are purchased, not when the price is low, but when the price is at its peak.

(*Interruptions*)

You’ll have to go and check the word “site” and so on, and then you’ll come back. Mr Speaker, Sir, the price of gold, when the MMM made the proposal...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: No cross talking, please! You are disturbing the hon. Leader of the Opposition. You won’t like people to disturb you when you are talking.

Mr Bérenger: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, *ce dont je parle est une telle perle, qu'inévitablement ça brille !*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order! Order! Order!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, when the MMM made the proposal, the price of gold was then USD780 per ounce. When the Bank of Mauritius purchased two tons, the price of gold had risen to USD1,140 per ounce, that is, it had increased by nearly 50%. The fact of the matter

is that Mauritius has lost a fortune. On the one hand, there has been hedging at Air Mauritius and STC and, in this case, there has been hedging by the hon. Minister of Finance. *Têtu!* And the result is that we have indeed lost a fortune, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some better qualified than me have calculated that, if action recommended had been taken at the time, the result would have been some Rs20 billion. Mauritius has lost, Mr Speaker, Sir, a fortune, and we know that countries like the US, France and Germany keep more than 50% of their international reserves in gold. And, even now, after the Bank of Mauritius has purchased two tons of gold, we are still only at 6%, and we've lost, indeed, a golden opportunity because of *l'entêtement* of one Minister of Finance. And, finally, the Bank of Mauritius, as I said - I am sure with the green light from the hon. Prime Minister - started to move, but too late, very late, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before the Budget was presented, the hon. Minister of Finance had repeatedly stated that this Budget would concentrate on infrastructure development and Small and Medium Enterprises. And when he says that in his speech, *c'est un aveu d'échec*. Since 2006, year after year, the major part of the Budget Speeches have been on public infrastructure development and on Small and Medium Enterprises and when now, on the eve of general election, he comes back on those two issues, *c'est un aveu d'échec*. But better late than never!

In terms of infrastructure, the whole country knows how much time has been wasted. *On a tourné en rond depuis 2006*, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In 2007, in the second Budget, the hon. Minister said that the priority of priorities was traffic congestion. We are now more than two years later, Mr Speaker, Sir. In those days, PPPs were going to solve all the problems. There were going to be PPPs for everything, for the Dream Bridge and the Ring Road. I forgot what I said, but I have been proved right. None of these PPPs got started, Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as roads and traffic congestion is concerned.

Concerning the CWA, what a mess it is in! It has never been in a greater mess, and it is now that a Special Water Distribution Improvement Programme is being set up. Year after year, we have been told that action is being taken, old pipes are being replaced and all sorts of things. Nothing! And it is now that a Special Water Distribution Improvement Programme is being set up; now that the CWA is in a total mess. And now we are informed that Bagatelle Dam, which should have started a few years back – granted they took Government in 2005; all right, Bagatelle Dam should have got started and ready - will start in December 2013. It is his own words.

Concerning sewerage, in his speech he says that – and I think this one must be probably genuine ignorance - we are well on our way to achieving 50% of the population connected to the sewerage system, we are well on our way to doing that in the given year. Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the truth? When the national – especially the Plaines Wilhems - sewerage project was adopted years back, the target date was 2008.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Minister must go and check. He doesn't know everything. In those days, the target date was that connection of 50% of the population was to be achieved in 2008. This was moved to 2010, and now it has been moved to 2015. The figure he quoted is not the one which is used in the official documents. Now, it has been postponed to 2015, and time is money. When the project was designed, launched, it was meant to cost the country Rs2 billion – R 2 *milliards*. The latest figure, Mr Speaker, Sir, is Rs7 billion – R 7 *milliards* - because of time wasted and, instead

of acknowledging that, we are informed that we are well on our way to achieving the target. Unfortunately, this is a serious matter, because we know that, when there are delays and defects, the people of Quatre Bornes, of Rose Hill, all over the place and, tomorrow, Grand' Baie, Baie du Tombeau, go through a lot of troubles. That goes on and on, because we are late, because of tendering procedure, to the extent that the European Bank of Investment, serious foreign donors no longer want to give us money. We know what the exchange of correspondence has been over the last years, and we know what tendering malpractices there have been also. And, yet, we are told 'we are well on our way'; *directement* in the sewage pit. I'll come back to that later on through a PNQ.

A word on the NHDC. We all agree that urgent action is required. It is repeated in the Budget Speech that Rs280 m. will be made available to upgrade, reinstate the high-rise NHDC estates throughout the country. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should be given more details; the priorities, the work plan. With what are we going to start? Sewage, electricity, water problems? We should be given a work plan, because the situation is urgent, and I want to know. I am given to understand that this figure includes what the CEB, the CWA and the Wastewater Authority are to provide in their budget. We are entitled to know how much has been provided in their own budget by these different institutions. We have to work urgently, but the heart of the matter, the heart of the problem is the absence of syndics. There are a few functioning syndics, and they should be treated correctly and encouraged. But, the heart of the problem is the lack of syndics. *L'histoire a retenu, M. le président*, that, when that high-rise project was started, the then Government provided, in the repayment of the loan, Rs250 per family for syndic purposes, because no syndic will function if it doesn't have financial means. It is elementary. So, it was provided then; elections came, another Government came in, and I won't mention the name of the gentleman concerned; *l'histoire a retenu son nom. Pure démagogie*, so as to be able to go and say 'we have brought down the repayment terms!' This was cancelled by Government and, since then, no syndic has been functioning and no syndic will function - there are a few, as I said. Bravo! Unless we provide for financial means! All that we are going to spend is not going to last if we do not provide, at the same time, financial means - on a temporary basis, granted - for syndics to function. I suggest that those Rs250 per family should be provided for a temporary basis - one year, two years. It is worth the money. Otherwise, all these millions that we are going to spend on infrastructure will not last. So, I appeal to Government: let's do that. They won't be able to reintroduce Rs250 per month *dans l'état dans lequel les appartements sont*. But, somewhere down the road, *si des conditions humaines, un environnement acceptable, humain est créé*, the syndics will function on their own. I appeal to the Government to consider granting the Rs250 that were provided for under the previous Government and removed out of sheer demagogic by another Government. This has brought all this chaos on our head. This is the reason; nothing else. This is the reason, and it will stay with us. Governments will come and go; it will stay with us, unless we provide financial assistance, Rs250 per family, be it on a temporary basis, until we have got the situation back to normal in all these NHDC high-rise estates, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SMEs. *Ils sont à bout ; ils sont exaspérés.* I don't think there is another country where small entrepreneurs are like that. They are not trade unionists; they are not revolutionaries; they are small entrepreneurs. I have never seen so much exasperation expressed. There must be a reason for it. *Exaspération pure et simple*, Mr Speaker, Sir. The reason is that they were promised, in 2006, nine low cost estates. One is being completed, and work is on on two others. They were promised nine. We are in 2010, and not even three! They were promised five tourist

villages in 2006. Two are being completed now - not yet being completed - and there are many other reasons. There is also a lot of incomprehension. I am not surprised when we know how the institution taking care of them has functioned - *querelle interne, politisation à outrance*. How can you communicate in such circumstances? We have just voted a new institution. It can't work worse than the previous one. But, in the meantime, the SMEs have suffered.

I noted that, in his speech, the Minister said that Government is going to work with the federation. Bravo! But, you will remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, a few weeks back, when we voted a new law, I pointed out that, on the Board of the new Small and Medium Enterprises Authority, there will be a representative of *la Chambre des Métiers de l'île Maurice*. They do good work and they deserve to be there. But there was no reference to *la fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises*. It fell on deaf ears; no amendments were brought. It is left totally to the Minister to choose one representative. At least, in his speech, the hon. Minister of Finance says that Government is going to work with the federation of the Small and Medium Enterprises. He should keep his word.

(Interruptions)

This is not a golden word. Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that those who really feel left out on the eve of the next general election are the SMEs, the small planters and the fishermen. These are two social categories, two groups of people who need urgent attention and that feel totally left out.

I move on to the tourism sector. I believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, that Government *sous-estime la gravité de la situation*, and I'll explain why. The number of tourists coming in has dropped, but what is more disturbing is that the earnings have dropped by nearly 20% in 2009. It could be 18% if I am not proved wrong, but I said the earnings in that sector have dropped by nearly 20%, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is a drop in the average length of stay; there is a drop in spending *per capita*. Both occupancy and rates are under pressure. The big hotels are cutting down rates, left, right and centre, Mr Speaker, Sir. Rate cutting is the last resort, and we are resorting to precisely that since a number of months. *Les petits hôtels sont en difficulté, les grands hôtels accusent le coup*. Why I say that I believe Government *sous-estime la gravité de la situation*? Because I have heard nothing from Government or from the Minister responsible on the impact of that drop of nearly 20% on earnings, the impact on the *petits entrepreneurs, les petites chambres d'hôte, les petites tables d'hôte, les tout-petits restaurants!* *Combien de petits boulot, de petits business, des milliers et des milliers, se sont développés*. The fall-out, the multiplier effect that we have talked about so much in the past is hurting terribly. A lot of *petites gens, a lot of tidi-mouines* have borrowed to develop *une chambre d'hôte, une table d'hôte*, many things; a lot of imagination; and it is hurting very much.

We are talking about the big firms, big hotels, small firms, but we are forgetting these people. The mood was good. Tourism was on the rise. So, people borrowed Rs25,000, Rs50,000, Rs100,000, Rs200,000 and now hundreds, if not thousands are in serious trouble. I think Government should urgently carry out a survey to find out where it is hurting, how much it is hurting and they must be helped urgently, because I know - I meet people - a lot of these *petits entrepreneurs* who have borrowed and who are in big trouble. They need help urgently, Mr Speaker, Sir. For these people, *c'est tout, sauf un plaisir, et je demande au gouvernement de leur accorder une attention urgente et particulière, M. le président*.

I am going to move on to the *Maurice Ile Durable*, and I would suggest that we break here.

Mr Speaker: Yes, we break here for one hour.

At 12.57 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.00 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was reaching the MID, *Maurice Ile Durable* Project, and I think it is agreed by one and all. If we read what experts say and write in the press, it is clear that, until today, this *Maurice Ile Durable* Project itself is *une coquille vide*. But it is not too late. Because Maldives, next to us, is showing the way, a small country, one of the most threatened by global warming, sea rise. Maldives is doing very courageous and very positive things. Therefore, the project of *Maurice Ile Durable* is a very good one. But, as I said, it has remained, until now, *une coquille vide*. There is no coherent strategy, no set targets, and no integrated roadmap to reach the destination. But it is not too late, as I said. Whatever Government is in power, I think we must go in that direction. Whether we call it, as in Maldives, zero carbon or we call it *Maurice Ile Durable*, we must move in that direction. We have lost already a lot of time, and there are contradictions. Quite a number of Government actions are in total contradiction with the concept of *Maurice Ile Durable* and with the idea of using non polluting energy sources and so on.

In this Budget, more than in the four last Budgets, *le gouvernement essaie de rattraper le temps perdu*. Better late than never! He has proposed an Energy Management Office. I must say that I remain to understand what its terms of reference, its role and the staffing will be exactly. Let's give it a try, and I hope that when the Ministers responsible for this project speak, they will give more details. But, even what is proposed in the Budget speech is *désordonné, décousu, often très flou*. To take one example, what is said about this *éco-village* is very fluffy. We are going to set up *éco-village*, but when you try to get a grip on what *ce slogan* means, it does not contain anything. As I said, what is very disturbing is the fact that Government is supposedly still going ahead with projects that are in total contradiction with the *Maurice Ile Durable* – CT Power project, *incinération*. Even with regard to the new engines that we are purchasing for Fort Victoria, we are rushing ahead, because projects are late. It is a good thing that projects like CT power are late, and I hope they are dead. But, in the meantime, we have to rush and buy heavy oil machinery to produce electricity, which is again polluting and, at the same time, as *Maurice Ile Durable* remains *une coquille vide*, we go ahead with projects that are in total contradiction with the concept *Maurice Ile Durable*, at the same time, we do not do what we should be doing, especially concerning *bagasse* and *ethanol*. There is still room to do more electricity production out of *bagasse*. I won't say that there is plenty of room; no! But there is still room to use in a better way, more efficiently, and what is left of *bagasse* to be used for the production of electricity. In the case of *ethanol*, *on tourne en rond encore une fois*, Mr Speaker, Sir. We speak about it, and one feels that there is no political motivation. No one will invest billions - we are not talking about millions, we are talking about billions. No one in the sugar industry or elsewhere will invest billions in electricity products using *bagasse* or in *ethanol* if the political will is not there and if the guidelines are not clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let's take the example, which I read with interest, at paragraph 214. I quote –

“A study has been completed on the development of a National Grid Code to enable CEB to purchase electricity from Small Independent Power Producers (SIPPs) that adhere to

the policy of promoting clean, renewable and local energy sources. At the beginning of January next (in a month time supposedly) the Ministry of Public Utilities will announce the prices at which SIPP's with less than 50 KW capacity will sell to the CEB."

No one will go - I am very sceptical - in small Mauritius with those small producers. But the symbolism of it, no small producer will go into that. No big producer will go into more bagasse-based energy production and no big producer will go into *ethanol*. In fact, I understand we are on the verge of going backwards. I understand that Alcodis is reaching the end of its road, and Alcodis can be part of the solution in producing *ethanol*, but no one will go into that business if they are not guaranteed prices. Right now, the mood between Government and the sugar industry is such that there will be no decision taken to move forward with more *bagasse* energy production and *ethanol*. Everything is frozen. Why? The hon. Members sitting opposite me know better than me. They know the very serious thing that has happened around the consultant's report. As we know, there is a consultant that has been jointly appointed by Government and the sugar industry to look into the price after a lot of politicking, propaganda, and political manoeuvres. A consultant has been appointed jointly by Government and the sugar industry to look at it, whether CEB is paying too much, as said by some people, for the electricity that the sugar industry is selling. Those who know, know - I know - what has just been taking place, and it has shaken confidence totally and will hurt beyond this issue of *bagasse*-based energy production. I am not going to say more, because this is a matter between Government and the sugar industry. But it is very, very disturbing, because of the behaviour of Government. I know the details and the two gentlemen who have been sent to Washington to do the job that they were told to do, with the result that Government knows. But it is very, very bad and, right now, I repeat, all decisions are frozen, because there is a crisis of confidence between Government and the sugar industry on this issue of the price to be paid for electricity produced, and the same issue will arise when we talk of *ethanol*. There also, everything is frozen. I won't say more, but we will see how the situation evolves. We talk about *Maurice Ile Durable*, and I must quote this one also - I was quoting the Minister saying earlier how we are well on our way to this and that. *C'est une perle; j'aurais tendance à dire une perle en or*, when we talk about solar water issues, Mr Speaker, Sir. The words used by the hon. Minister of Finance: "Last year, we introduced the scheme to promote the use of solar water heaters; it has been an outstanding success". When I look at him, I think he believes it. Why? Because Rs290 m. have been approved for 29,000 solar water heaters instead of Rs 250 m. Has an audit been carried out?

(Interruptions)

What is a different matter? We are supposed to heat water with solar water heaters, and this is Rs 259 m. of public money. I advise Government to carry out a thorough audit to see how many of the 29,000 solar water heaters are, in fact, in existence. This has been one of the biggest rip-offs since 2005 and when I raised it, Government stopped abruptly, but the damage was done. You know what kind - Mauritians are great people, and they have a lot of imagination also - of tricks that were invented, the deals that were struck between a so-called supplier and a so-called purchaser, the lack of control, financial and technical, at the Development Bank of Mauritius, and the Minister says that this has been an outstanding success. The idea was great, but it was the biggest rip-off, and he knew it and, yet, he called that an outstanding success. If that is an outstanding success, what is a mess? And, in fact, *entre les lignes*, there is self-criticism, because after having called it an outstanding success, the Minister takes the precaution of saying the following. It is said that a further 50,000 additional households are derogated; very good. I said

it was not good when it was stopped abruptly. I requested to put it in order and get it going again. So, I approve totally, but the fact that it has been a mess, that it has been a rip-off is contained in that other paragraph. He says that Government will give a subsidy of Rs5,000. Before, it was Rs10,000. So, instead of promoting, we now give half of the subsidy. I quote -

“Government will give a subsidy of Rs5000 per unit. We will give priority to those whose application to the DBM could not be accommodated as the programme had ended. Furthermore, the new programme will only be opened to registered suppliers who meet set standards”.

Of course, it has to be like that, but on a *mis la charrue devant les boeufs. On a mis le* heater *devant des gros malins*, and now the damage has been done, the rip-off is done. So, in fact the criticism is there, and I agree that there may be standards that must be technical and financial **control**, one mess is enough. Let us go ahead, but not the way it was done for the first 29,000.

I would wish to advise Government on two things with reference to these solar water heaters. *Leur durée de vie* is not that long. After five years, ten years, it will have a problem. In Reunion Island, they already have the problem. As far as I remember, in Reunion Island they are setting up 10,000 per year. It's been going on for a number of years. 10,000 solar water heaters, and already a good number of those solar water heaters *sont arrivés à la fin de leur vie utilitaire. Leur durée de vie est de cinq ans, dix ans.* So, you must plan what you are going to do with these things. Otherwise, instead of *Maurice Ile Durable*, we are going to add to our environment problem. I think we should devise a scheme *pour recycler*, and that is what is being done in Reunion Island. These solar water heaters are already being recycled, but again one will not go into that business if it is not interesting business, and I think Government must also encourage competitive local production of solar water heaters. Then, when DBM went in without preparation, some funny chaps imported parts not worth anything. So, I think we must not only prepare for the recycling of these instruments, but also encourage competitive domestic production.

A few other remarks before I end, Mr Speaker, Sir, on health. I strongly feel that the population is not getting value for money. We spend a lot of money in health, but every time I go to visit somebody in Cados Hospital and some other hospitals, it is heart breaking; the filth, the noise, the conditions in which the families have to meet the sick. And, yet, billions are going into the Health Ministry. So I hope we – I mean the people of Mauritius - get value for money in the health sector. Not only are *certaines salles dans un état execrable*, but they have a shortage of specialists, and there are waiting lists. It is time that we get value for money. At long last, at l'hôpital Jeetoo works have started, but again how much time wasted. How much time? Mr Speaker, Sir, I'm not a prisoner of this *fanatisme* that I hear on the other side. No Government can make only awful things. But they live in a fool's world; as if all they do is good, and all that other Governments did was bad. How childish, Mr Speaker, Sir! In health, of all areas, what we did between 2000 and 2005 is there for one and all to see, be it in terms of hospitals built, in terms of upgrading and so on. We did not build the new Brown Sequared Hospital for them...

(Interruptions)

But we built a modern Brown Sequared Hospital; another hospital. I think action has to be taken for the people of Mauritius to get value for money.

Concerning education, I am a bit shocked. Only four short paragraphs; nothing substantial.

(Interruptions)

He was talking about the size, the colour and kind of gloves that would be given to hospital servants, and whether they would be given things for their nails before they put their gloves. He went on and on with details that have nothing to do, with the result that, on issues like health, he had nothing to say. Four small paragraphs, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I read with keen interest what hon. Dr. Bunwaree, the new Minister of Education, means to do, and I approve. They won't admit it, but it is going back to what prevailed before 2005. This is one case of *fanatisme*. Now, they want to correct it without letting it show that they are correcting. But, at least, there should have been something in the Budget in terms of *ligne de direction*, in what direction are we going. Granted the Minister will speak, but I am a bit shocked that, at this turning point for our educational system, only four short paragraphs are to be found, and again the new campus. Year after year, the new campus for an additional 8,000 University students! Reference is made to Rs600 m. When is it going to start? Where? I hope we will get more details, because it is the third year where mention is made of a new campus of 8,000 students, and I see nothing on the horizon, Mr Speaker, Sir.

After I spoke on health, I forgot to mention ageing. I find it quite extraordinary that an intellectual like the hon. Minister of Finance...

(Interruptions)

Il a ses défauts, mais ce n'est pas un imbécile.

(Interruptions)

Tout le monde prend un malin plaisir dans ce gouvernement! But I am really shocked *qu'un intellectuel comme le ministre des finances* should say the following: "our population is ageing; it is a new trend". But where has he been living? For the last ten years, throughout the world and in Mauritius, the ageing population problem has been with us. You know what has happened? Again, an *intellectuel* like him boasts on every occasion that they have reintroduced universal, non-contributory pension, that is, the chap who gets Rs100,000, Rs50,000 per month, it is universal and he gets this non-contributory. I think that the hon. Minister has repeated this thing so much that really he thinks that ageing is a new issue. But we took that decision, because the ageing issue has been with us for ten years. Everybody knows that this non-contributory universality is non-sustainable. I think the hon. Minister of Finance, every night, reads one World Bank report...

(Interruptions)

But how many World Bank reports do you have showing that this is not sustainable in the long run? He does not believe that he said something like that.

(Interruptions)

Anyway, I think it is time to stop this stupid thing of universality. When you think that the hon. Prime Minister now gets this non-contributory increase! I do not take it; I do not know if he takes it; I have said that I don't. *C'est obscène!* People earning Rs150,000, Rs200,000 get this, and Mrs Bappoo claps on every occasion!

(*Interruptions*)

How short-sighted can he be, can he makes himself and, in the end, he has to re-read his speech to check whether he really said that, Mr Speaker, Sir!

(*Interruptions*)

Yes, yes! So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry for our old people because they were expecting much more than what is found in this Budget Speech. They have been led to believe that they could expect much more than this 3.5%! What is a 3.5% increase in old-age pension, widows' pension, and handicapped? What does it represent? They have that and two buses for old people. Very nice! But the old people of Mauritius expected and deserved much more than what they have been offered.

Concerning the *Centre Culturel*, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have tried to understand. I have been a trade unionist for 12 years in the harbour, and so I know the granary from top to bottom. I have tried to make out what is this granary project. It says –

“In this regard, the Granary building at the Port Louis waterfront will be rehabilitated and converted into a “Cultural and Artistic Boulevard”, lined with exhibition space, an art gallery and studios for sculpture, metal work, painting, drawing, and music practice.”

I am all for helping our artists all out, but this is the kind of project that is not going to be *traduit dans la réalité*. I do not think so. I don't even think it should! I do not know if the person who has suggested that has visited that old building. It is a dangerous building. It must be preserved, consolidated, but it is a dangerous building. I don't think at all that it fits the purpose that we are saying it's going to fulfil, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, on the other hand, when we talk of *centre culturel*, let me appeal to the hon. Prime Minister. There are few living people on earth that deserve more respect than Nelson Mandela; very few. But, in fact, I do not think there is anybody else. You are completing your five years, and the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre is still hosted in a small school out there; behind a school! I find that an awful shame and, again, it is the result of *fanatisme*. Now they are talking of a cultural boulevard. I said that here, but they were not in a listening mode. They were still prisoner of their propaganda. When we decided that the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre would be hosted in the Central Post Office building, I said that it was a great idea because it is exactly the idea to have a cultural boulevard. I called it a cultural corridor with Aapravasi Ghat there and Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre in the old Post Office building, with a cultural corridor between them.

We all know that 90% of the workers in the harbour are like Nelson Mandela, of African descendants. Their ancestors, their grand fathers worked in the harbour. So, the idea was to have a historical building close to the harbour where so many slaves and freed slaves have worked over the centuries, with Aapravasi Ghat there. It would have been something fantastic, and it is not too late. There are other buildings in that area that can be rehabilitated, that can host in front of the sea the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre, and then Aapravasi Ghat next to it. This is the history of Mauritius – slavery and indentured labour. No *fanatisme*. The idea of having the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre hosted there was cancelled, and a fanatic like the Minister behind the hon. Prime Minister – not Mrs Bappoo; next to her – convinced Government to go back to La Tour Koenig! This is a rape of history. La Tour Koenig was built with slaved labour, and this is where they insist we must host the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre. And, still, nothing is being done! Absolutely nothing! And this building built by slaved labour over the

years has been a hotel, a restaurant, a night club, a brothel, and this is where this Government chose to supposedly build the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre! It is shameful. But it is not too late. I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister; it is not too late to drop this idea. Not only is it *indécent*, but it will cost a fortune. It is *au bord de la falaise*. Everything, except political fanaticism played against it and, yet, you did it. But it is not too late. Four and half years later, nothing has been done, and we are supposed to respect Nelson Mandela, we are supposed to respect the descendants of slaves, and they are still stuck there, at the back of a school at Pailles. I appeal to Government: it is not too late. I am not saying that we must go back to the Postal Museum idea, but there are other buildings - where the DWC was - that can be acquired, and this so-called boulevard that we are talking about can take shape with Aapravasi Ghat here and the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre there, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Concerning social housing, *c'est en panne depuis 2005*. We constructed thousands of Firinga type social houses. This was not a priority for Government. *C'est en panne depuis des années* and, now, on the eve of elections, certainly they are going to construct 10,000 core units plus 2,500 service sites, which we delivered. It was a good idea, and it is a good idea. But it is very late and, between the lines, he promised 10,000 core houses, 2,500 sites, but no service sites for next year in the Budget Speech and only 600 core houses in 2010.

As regards *démocratisation de l'économie*, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government had promised to the planters, the labourers and the artisans direct individual allocation of shares 35% in electricity, bagasse electricity production, ethanol, refining of sugar into white refined sugar. They have been promised that, and now Government back-pedals and comes with the Cane Democratisation Fund. *Franchement!* We were ganging together the Labour Party and the MMM on the eve of the 1995 elections when the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, came out with a good idea, genuinely democratising the sugar industry, the setting up of the Sugar Investment Trust, so that planters...

(Interruptions)

Yes, but listen to the rest...

(Interruptions)

Sir Anerood Jugnauth and Mr Rama Sithanen came out – he was not yet doctor – with a good scheme for democratising the sugar industry, so that planters, labourers, artisans become shareholders. We were ganging up together. They had a campaign going *pé couillonne zotte, pé faire zotte acheter vieux ferrailles*, and although we were going to elections together – the hon. Prime Minister will remember – we said “No, we are not going to turn *fanatique* like that!” We went with the Labour Party, but we say no. We refused to criticise; we said ‘yes, it's good’, and we added why in the sugar industry only. Today, I say the same thing. How fanatical can you get again? The SIT is there. We want to strengthen it. We want to expand it, use it. No! *Pure fanatisme!* So, they go and create another *canard boîteux*; the Cane Democratisation Fund instead of Sugar Investment Trust! Now, we are going to take shares from SIT, put here and take here, put there and take there. Mind you, it won't happen, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially if it is pushed forward by hon. Deepalsing; it is a sure recipe for a dead duck.

(Interruptions)

I made the same point, I was for, I am for, and I asked why just in the sugar industry. Of course, you have to be careful when you talk of democratisation of the economy when foreigners are

involved. We have to be careful. But, in the tourism industry, in the big companies, why can't employees become shareholders like planters, labourers, artisans? I said that in 1993, and I repeat it in 2009, Mr Speaker, Sir. One thing on which I want to put a question is a paragraph on the Mauritius Telecom shares. There is one paragraph *très ambigu*. It says at page 48, I quote –

‘Whilst the fiscal deficit for 2010 is projected at 4.5 percent of GDP, Government Borrowing Requirement will only be 4 percent of GDP. This is mainly due to the sale proceeds of Mauritius Telecom shares which is expected to raise at least Rs1.5 billion’.

With no details given at all!

(*Interruptions*)

My point is: give us all required clarification, and I want to know whether the employees have become shareholders. It's an ongoing thing. I want to know whether - the previous Government and the present Government said this would happen to the employees of Mauritius Telecom and also especially as Orange has come in the way it has - all the safeguards that were put in the agreement when France Telecom came in will be preserved?

One thing that I find regrettable is that there is not a word said - since we are talking of democratisation of the economy of workers - in the speech on *les accidents de travail*. We have seen a number of *accidents de travail*; very sad *accidents de travail*. We know that the Ministry is totally understaffed; they need more money and, yet, there is no mention at all. I think it is very insensitive on the part of the Minister, but it can be corrected, and I hope that the Minister, who is not with us, will give us details of what is in the present Budget that will allow the Ministry of Labour to better protect the workers *en termes d'accident de travail*.

As regards law and order - just as the hon. Minister of Finance said that we are all on our way to this and that in the case of sewage - when we listen to him, ‘tout va très bien, madame la marquise’, mais tout ne va pas très bien monsieur le ministre! We know how many crimes are reported daily, and I don't think that this is the correct attitude. I go much more with the attitude of the Prime Minister, namely that there is room for improvement all over the place, forensic lab equipment. Everything that can be done must be done. Because when we talk of crimes, of law and order, it is not only figures, it's perception also. The people must feel that the Government cares, and that everything is or will be done to better protect them. And this is not the feeling one gets reading the Budget Speech.

This being said, there are a few good things, for example, CCTV will be extended to Grand' Baie and Port Louis. It is very good. But I expect that the police - because CCTV is the responsibility of the hon. Prime Minister and of the Commissioner of Police – will give special attention to areas like Roche Bois, where dummies were placed and must be replaced, Mr Speaker, Sir.

We are informed that we are purchasing a Rs1.8 billion offshore patrol vessel. I am interested to know whether the order has already been placed, when it will be delivered, because it is urgently needed. But what I didn't like was the fact that the Minister had nothing to do on *la multiplication, la prolifération des casinos*, the gaming houses and so on. I am sure the hon. Prime Minister gets report. This has become a national issue, cutting across communities. All communities, all parents are fed up, shocked in front of this *prolifération de casinos, de maisons de jeux* all over the place and, yet, not a word on that. I think this is very bad, and I appeal again to

Government. I am not against the Loto, which has been launched with a fantastic smile by the hon. Prime Minister. But we are corrupting the minds of people; that kind of publicity that is taking place. This morning, I was looking at the third wave of publicity. The first one: *Avec le Loto, tout est possible*. This is unacceptable. You give the impression that personal effort, hard work counts for nothing. “*Tout est possible avec le Loto*”. Then, it was “*Pour gagner, il faut jouer*” as if, if you don’t play every day, you are an outcast; you are not part of the swinging team. I think the third stage is: “*Avez-vous gagné aujourd’hui?*” *Avec le crescendo! Avec le Loto tout est possible! Pour gagner il faut jouer ! Mais, il faut jouer tous les jours ! Avez-vous joué aujourd’hui?* I am surprised you don’t have Loto publicity here, at the rate that we are going. It is going to get money for different purposes, but we must stop polluting the minds of youngsters, of people in general. I think the promoters should be told what kind of publicity they are allowed to carry on.

Before I end, I will talk about Rodrigues. Rodrigues is mentioned five times in the Budget, *mais en passant*. Rodrigues is mentioned when such and such project is referred to, and it is said that this will apply to Mauritius and Rodrigues. The hon. Minister of Finance, in 2006 – let’s say he has not been Minister of Finance for a while, he has lost the hand - forgot Rodrigues completely. This time, Rodrigues is referred to, *en passant*, here and there, but there is no global reference to Rodrigues, as if the expression ‘Rodrigues Regional Assembly’ burns the tongue of the hon. Minister. He has never mentioned that in any of his speeches and, yet, this is *le coeur de l’autonomie*. I think, out of due respect, he should say ‘I am allotting so much to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for this and that purpose’ and so on. Of course, next time, he should not go to the other extreme and *piétiner l’autonomie*. They must be allowed to practise their *autonomie* but, out of respect, there must be in the Budget Speech a reference to *l’enveloppe allouée au Rodrigues Regional Assembly et les grandes lignes du développement préconisé par le Rodrigues Regional Assembly*. Going by the reaction of the hon. Minister, I think he agrees with me, and the next Minister of Finance will be able to do that. I said the next, not the present.

To end, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is not a word about the general elections.

(Interruptions)

Why, of course? I have done my home-work, I have gone to the Estimates, and I have seen what is provided for in the Estimates. We are asked to provide Rs335m. in 2010. That is necessarily for general election in 2010. He should have told us: I have provided so much money for general election in 2010. This would have prevented them from saying that they can go until 2011 and so on. But it is provided for 2010, and Rs164 m. is provided for 2011. Therefore, we are left to guess, since nothing has been said, that those two sums are for the forthcoming general and municipal elections. When the hon. Prime Minister speaks, he will, maybe, tell us more than what he said this morning.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the first months of financial year 2010 will be of crucial importance for Mauritius. In regard to economics, a lot will depend on the way the world economy evolves, especially the way our main markets in Europe and the United States evolve. The future will tell, as I said earlier. In regard to the forthcoming general election, let me say that what every Mauritian must wish and work for is for the next year general election to be as smooth as those of 2005. Whatever the results of those forthcoming elections, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius and its people must win, and Mauritius and its people will win.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(14.45 p.m.)

The Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): M. le président, laissez-moi commencer par féliciter mon collègue, le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances pour ce budget. Un budget qui, je dois dire, a reçu l'approbation de tout un peuple. Il faut savoir écouter, il faut savoir lire, il y a toujours des voix discordantes, mais nous sommes une démocratie et la grosse majorité du peuple mauricien s'est exprimée et s'exprime encore sur la qualité de ce budget. Un budget qui est venu, bien entendu, dans un moment crucial.

Au démarrage même de son discours, le *leader* de l'opposition a placé ce discours dans un contexte de budget, après quatre budgets qualifiés par lui d'amers et le budget d'avant les élections. Tout en suivant le raisonnement du *leader* de l'opposition et les thèmes qu'il a soulevés, j'étais comme, nombreux de ce côté de la Chambre, sous l'impression que lui-même a décidé de faire un discours électoraliste. Depuis que je suis dans cette Chambre et que j'ai eu l'occasion d'écouter le *leader* de l'opposition en tant que *leader* de l'opposition, jamais je n'ai vu de sa part un discours qui a été plutôt une liste de mesures, de critiques, et il ne me semblait pas être lui-même convaincu de ce qu'il disait. J'ai l'impression qu'il a fait travailler le budget par un second qui a lu entre les lignes et a cherché ; par exemple, là il y a un point où on peut les critiquer, sous ce paragraphe il y a un autre point qu'on peut critiquer ; notons ces points. J'ai eu cette impression, parce que le *leader* de l'opposition est quelqu'un d'expérimenté. Il n'y a pas eu que du négatif dans le discours qu'on a écouté avec beaucoup d'attention, en particulier, la recherche qu'il a sûrement faite, notamment quand sont les élections, cherchons les items ; ça c'est son travail.

M. le président, je dois dire que ce discours était à tout prix électoraliste avec une certaine inconsistance dans les argumentations et, de temps en temps, essayer de tirer la couverture sur soi pour dire : nous, c'est notre travail. J'ai aussi eu l'impression qu'il y a eu une amnésie totale, car ils ont oublié qu'ils étaient au pouvoir cinq ans avant nous, de 2000 à 2005. Combien de fois le *leader* de l'opposition est venu nous dire que pas une seule fois il n'a entendu ceci ou cela. Mais moi, pas une seule fois, je n'ai entendu parler de l'*increment* qui va être donné au mois d'avril. Ça, c'est pour les travailleurs de ce pays. Sous l'item de compensation, je pensais qu'il allait venir avec des points travaillés, appliqués, mais il est passé rapidement là-dessus pour dire que c'est grâce à la PNQ qu'il avait posée une semaine avant. Ça c'est de la démagogie, de l'électoralisme. Tout le monde sait qu'un ministre des finances ne peut pas dire une ou deux semaines avant ce qu'il va venir annoncer dans le budget. Il le savait, et il est venu poser sa PNQ pour essayer de venir faire croire à la population que c'est lui qui sera responsable de ce que le budget pourrait apporter de positif une ou deux semaines après.

Ce qui est encore plus difficile pour moi à comprendre c'est qu'en parlant de la compensation insuffisante de 3.5%, moins de 1% de ce qu'on a retiré de la poche de la population mais pour étayer son point, il mentionne le NRPT et les taxes sur les intérêts qui, de toute façon, sont les taxes payées par ceux qui ont les moyens. Il est venu défendre ceux qui ont les moyens, comme d'habitude, pour essayer de donner l'impression de défendre les petits. C'est pour moi de l'inconsistance et de la démagogie. Il a entendu les ventres grogner sur les radios. Les radios grognent toujours ; même si personne ne parle, cela grogne. Il a parlé d'effet d'annonce, de *onion like Budget*. On épingle et on épingle. Il a oublié qu'il y a un oignon au milieu. Et, c'est cela qui est utilisé pour donner le goût. Mais, il a oublié – encore une fois, de

l'amnésie – qu'en 2001-2002, la TVA est passée de 10 à 12%. C'est cela qu'on appelle 'éplucher la population'. En 2002-2003, moins d'un an après, la TVA est passée de 12 à 15%. En l'espace de douze mois, augmenter la TVA de 50% ! Si ce n'est pas les oignons qu'il épluchait, qu'épluchait-il alors ? Le dos du peuple !

On a entendu parler de pension. On a oublié les longues queues que faisaient les personnes âgées de notre pays, à la suite des mesures de ce gouvernement, et l'honorable Lauthan était alors ministre. On a cru comprendre qu'ils allaient revenir à ce système. Je dis à la population mauricienne, ainsi qu'aux personnes âgées : Attention ! De grâce, ne laissez pas – bien sûr, ils ne laisseront pas – ces personnes reprendre le pouvoir dans ce pays ! Puis, ils viennent nous dire que ce pays récole aujourd'hui ce qu'eux avaient semé, en prenant l'exemple de l'IRS. Malheureusement, l'honorable Cuttaree n'est pas présent. Mais, ils étaient avec nous au sein d'un gouvernement, et on commençait déjà à parler du *Permanent Resident Scheme*. C'était pour aller en ce sens. Vous pouvez avoir une mesure aujourd'hui et la voir aboutir plusieurs années après. Mais il serait juste de dire que c'est quelque chose sur lequel plusieurs gouvernements ont travaillé. Ils ont aussi leur empreinte. Je ne dis pas le contraire.

J'ai dit la même chose pour l'éducation. La partie qui est bonne a été prise en compte. Mais, seulement, qu'ils ne viennent pas dire que c'est leur bébé ! Ce n'est pas possible ! Pour ce qui concerne l'informatique, c'est encore plus clair. Qui ne sait pas que c'est le premier gouvernement de Navin Ramgoolam qui a commencé l'informatique, par les accords signés entre le ministre de l'informatique de l'époque et le ministre de l'informatique du gouvernement Indien ? Qui ne se rappelle ce que le Premier ministre Manmohan Singh avait dit à Ebène, lorsqu'il est venu inaugurer le domaine de l'informatique à Maurice ! Aujourd'hui, venir nous dire que c'est eux ! Ca, c'est de la vraie comédie ! Qui est venu dire, en 2005, que l'île Maurice était dans un état d'urgence économique ! On sait très bien que la situation était sérieuse. Ils étaient au pouvoir ! Mais, s'ils ont tellement fait du bon travail et que nous bénéficions de la récolte, pourquoi le peuple a voulu les mettre à la porte, les botter hors du pouvoir en 2005 ! Bien entendu, M. le président, je ne vais pas continuer dans ce sens, car on ne finira jamais. Ils font de l'opposition mais, je m'attendais de la part du Leader de l'opposition, qu'il fasse comme il avait fait l'année dernière. Il avait choisi trois ou quatre importants thèmes du budget et était venu exposer ses points, soutenus par des argumentations valables. Mais, aujourd'hui, je regrette, je n'ai pas vu cela.

Il a aussi parlé de Madagascar. Il est vrai que Madagascar prend un nouveau départ, mais, de grâce, donnez la chance à ces gens de démarrer. Il y a tellement d'incertitude, on a vu tellement de choses. Attendons voir ! Cela ne veut pas dire qu'on ne pense pas à ce pays. Nous croyons vraiment dans l'avenir avec Madagascar.

Pour résumer le bon travail de ce gouvernement, M. le président, et pour lequel j'ai félicité celui qui a la responsabilité de gérer les finances, il y a eu des notes d'appréciation, comme celles qui viennent de grandes personnalités telles Mme Clinton - ce qu'elle a dit de l'île Maurice. Il nous faut retenir cela, et nous devons être fiers aujourd'hui. On peut ne pas tout faire, on peut ne pas toujours réussir, mais il est bon d'écouter les critiques pour mieux diriger la barque de l'île Maurice. Mais, seulement, ne venez pas critiquer là où ce n'est pas critiquable.

En ce qui concerne le *stimulus package*, le *Leader* de l'opposition n'a pas été contre ce qui a été mentionné dans le budget. Mais, il a préconisé la transparence, et il peut compter sur ce gouvernement que cela sera fait.

Je ne vais pas entrer dans les détails de tous les points qui ont été mentionnés, car mes collègues ministres vont les reprendre. Juste en ce qui concerne l'histoire de l'or, M. le président, cela n'est pas comme l'a dit le porte-parole de l'opposition sur les finances. Ce n'est pas du tout ça. L'île Maurice a répondu positivement à l'appel du FMI pour venir en aide aux pays pauvres. La banque de Maurice a considéré que c'était valable, qu'il fallait faire le bon geste et, c'est dans ce sens, que ça a été fait. *The FMI has recently issued SDRs, and SDR 82 million have been obtained by Mauritius* ; ce qui fait à peu près quatre milliards de roupies. Il faut aussi noter que 60% des réserves de Maurice viennent de la banque de Maurice et 40% des banques commerciales ; pour les banques commerciales, il y a zéro or. Donc, M. le président, c'était dans un contexte très particulier. Ce n'est pas une question de prix, etc. Bien entendu, lorsqu'une offre est arrivée, il a fallu la considérer et cela a été fait positivement.

M. le président, je voudrais rappeler à la Chambre quelques petites étapes par lesquelles ce pays est passé depuis 2005. L'Alliance sociale est venue au pouvoir en juillet 2005. Nous avions un manifeste électoral. Lors de cette campagne qui nous a conduits au pouvoir, nous avions expliqué à la population que la situation économique était catastrophique et difficile ; tous les paramètres de l'économie avaient viré au rouge. Aussitôt arrivés au pouvoir, nous nous sommes rendu compte de l'ampleur du problème, qui était encore plus important que ce qu'on avait envisagé et entrevu. Nous étions dans une phase où il y avait déjà des chocs internationaux ; choc de l'organisation mondiale du commerce. On était déjà entré dans la phase de l'influence de ces mesures, alors qu'avant, c'était dans les débats et discours. On était en plein dans la crise, et les mesures commençaient à nous tomber sur la tête. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'il y a aussi eu la crise du pétrole au même moment. C'est dans ce contexte extrêmement difficile - une économie dans le rouge, des squelettes dans tous les tiroirs et placards, la crise internationale pétrole et OMC - que le gouvernement est venu avec une politique de réforme qui, aujourd'hui, comme tout le monde le sait, a porté ses fruits et continue de le faire ; plus rapidement que l'on ne pensait, et c'est pour cela que le ministre des finances a parlé de *early harvest*. On avait prévu de bons résultats, mais bien avant que les résultats ne commencent à être obtenus, on a ressenti les premiers signes. Tout le monde était content. L'espoir commençait à revenir au pays. Mais, malheureusement, très vite, nous sommes tombés dans une crise financière économique internationale sans précédent. Je ne vais pas m'étaler là-dessus. Mais cette crise a eu, et continue d'avoir jusqu'à maintenant, comme on le sait, des effets négatifs sur notre système économique.

Malgré cela, nous avons toujours pensé aux travailleurs de ce pays, à ceux qui créent la richesse. C'est pour cela que lorsqu'il y a eu le PRB, le gouvernement a décidé de l'accorder *in toto* ; dans la totalité, parce qu'il ne faut pas que les travailleurs se sentent perdants. On a fait le maximum en ce qui concerne la compensation salariale. C'est dans ce contexte que ce gouvernement est arrivé jusque là aujourd'hui, et c'est dans ce contexte que le budget a été présenté. Si on voulait être électoraliste, on aurait pu aller beaucoup plus loin et essayer de faire beaucoup de choses mais, peut-être, cela aurait été de façon irréfléchie. C'est pour cela, encore une fois, je félicite le ministre des finances pour avoir réussi à faire un budget où l'économie a été maintenue dans la bonne trajectoire et, en même temps, pour avoir fait un budget basé sur le social qui pourrait satisfaire le maximum de la population.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la compensation salariale, je dois dire un petit mot car j'ai été moi-même un peu artisan de plusieurs choses qui ont été faites jusqu'aujourd'hui. Le ministre des finances a préconisé, dans son discours, la mise sur pied d'un comité tripartite pour revoir les critères du *Pay Council*. Je dois demander aux syndicalistes et même à l'opposition de

faire attention. Il faut discuter si on va maintenir ou pas, ou alors si on va modifier en particulier deux critères : l'emploi et *the capacity to pay*. Cela peut jouer dans un sens comme dans l'autre. J'ai déjà fait le point ici, dans cette Chambre, en plusieurs occasions, et je ne voudrais pas rentrer dans les détails. Mais c'est seulement pour dire que *le capacity to pay*, par exemple, peut jouer dans un sens ou dans l'autre. Si on ne prend pas en considération *le capacity to pay*, et si les entreprises ont beaucoup de capacités pour payer, elles peuvent nous dire que cela n'entre pas en ligne de compte ou que cela n'est pas à considérer, parce que les règlements stipulent qu'il ne faut pas prendre cela en considération. Que se passerait-il alors, si les entreprises ont beaucoup de moyens, et qu'on ne prend pas cela en ligne de compte quand on calcule la compensation ? Il faut faire très attention ; il faut peut être modifier. Si le ministre des finances est venu dans son discours avec cette proposition, c'est pour tendre la main aux syndicalistes, aux représentants des travailleurs de ce pays, pour leur faire comprendre qu'on a fait un pas dans leur direction, mais qu'il faudra venir s'assoir en tripartite et revoir la chose. C'est ce que j'ai toujours demandé aux camarades syndicalistes au moment de la mise sur pied du *National Pay Council*, qu'ils avaient boudé pendant quelque temps. Ils avaient ensuite accepté de venir, mais pour ne pas rester trop longtemps. Je pense que c'est un pas dans la bonne direction que ce gouvernement fait vis-à-vis des représentants du monde des travailleurs et qu'on trouvera la meilleure voie de sortie en ce qui concerne le mode de calcul de la compensation salariale, dont personne n'est contre et est d'accord qu'il continue d'exister d'année en année.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first come to matters concerning education and, later, I will have some words on human resources, arts and culture. Just to remind you again, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the difficult international and local context, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech is still being characterised by what we call "ferocious competition, uncertainty and insecurity". We, Mauritians, in this context, have pledged to mobilise all competencies, creative energies and goodwill in this country in order to create an inclusive, caring and harmonious society, where there will be opportunities for all, without exception, to have a prosperous and happy future, and where enduring economic success will equally be characterised by equity, ethics, social solidarity and justice. We, indeed, before coming to power, pledged to "put people first", and this has not been an empty slogan. It carries within itself the root of people empowerment that necessarily takes shape through a proactive education and training sector. We believe in it, Mr Speaker, Sir. With this in view, I would like to mention that, despite several financial constraints, from 2005-2006 to December 2009, we have allocated Rs36.6 billion to the education and training sector, or an average of 12.9% of Government expenditure, to provide quality education and promote the holistic development of the Mauritian child. I am, therefore, thankful to my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, for having maintained education - despite what is being said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition - among the top priorities, and allocated a record Budget of almost Rs11 billion for 2010. This shows that Government recognises education. I wish to reply to the hon. Leader of the Opposition on the comments he has just made, namely that education serves as leverage for creating equity and social betterment, enabling people to be actively responsible for their self-advancement on the ladder of social mobility.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the provisions of free education, backed by free bus transport given by this Government within the 100 days that we were in power, free textbooks for primary, reinforced by free materials for needy students, as well as subsidies, which have been maintained in one way or the other on the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examination fees for needy students, especially for those coming from economically modest backgrounds, reflect

the gesture of a caring Government that extends its supporting hand to those who, through no fault of theirs, I must say, have been traditionally deprived of such benefits. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is our social concern. This social concern of ours is intrinsically linked to our educational commitment, and this commitment is today more significantly reflected in our actions. We want to ensure that the best brains of this country are not left to an apathetic beatitude. Brains, Mr Speaker, Sir, need to be nurtured, and our endeavour has systematically been that knowledge sharing and knowledge generation become central, not peripheral to the knowledge society we want Mauritius to be transformed into.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have elaborated, as everybody knows, an Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan for the years 2008-2020. This Plan, peer reviewed and fully supported by stakeholders, both local and international, encapsulates Government's vision -

- to provide opportunities to all our people, children, youth and other vulnerable groups in particular;
- to develop their potential, and
- transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation, an intelligent State in the vanguard of global progress and innovation, with a culture of achievement and excellence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Educational Reform Agenda has been very well received by the vast majority of stakeholders and, of course, by the Opposition as well. I wish to thank them for that. I also wish to tell them that we have maintained whatever we have found good in what was done before us. But, of course, we have corrected, where we thought we had to intervene. One of the *différences majeures que j'ai constatées entre les deux prises de position, les deux philosophies, peut être, c'est que dans le système de l'ancien gouvernement il y avait l'oubli de l'élite. Mais, nous avons dit qu'il fallait aussi permettre à l'élite de continuer d'avancer. C'est la grande différence entre les deux façons de penser et, c'est dans ce sens, que nous sommes en train de nous diriger.*

We have produced the plan, which has been rendered public, approved by the Government. My Ministry is embarking - has already embarked, I must say - on the formulation of the Implementation Plan, which would be ready in the first half of 2010. M. le président, je m'empresse immédiatement de souligner le fait qu'on n'a pas attendu la finalisation du *Implementation Plan* pour agir. Nous avons déjà commencé, en effet, divers projets dans le plan et diverses initiatives ayant pour but d'améliorer la qualité de l'éducation, et sur lesquels on a vu qu'il y avait consensus, qu'il n'y avait pas de voix discordante et qui ont déjà été mis en chantier. Je me permets de citer quelques uns.

- The Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) has been set up since 2008 and already been made operational.
- The Pre-Primary Curriculum Framework has just recently been made official.
- Co-curricular activities have already been introduced in schools with the ultimate purpose of developing the whole personality of the learner.
- A School Management Manual for Rectors of the State Secondary Schools has already been published. (*Ce sont des éléments qui sont mentionnés dans le plan, mais qui ont déjà pris forme et sont déjà opérationnels*).

- Resources have been allocated for the development of an e-culture in schools.
 - The EDUWEB as an interactive platform - *je vais revenir là-dessus plus tard dans mon allocution* - has been launched for the sharing of experiences, good practices in teaching and learning, and dissemination of knowledge using the web casting mode.
- The Regulatory Framework to facilitate the expansion of the post secondary sector has been developed already to increase access to tertiary education.
- The Mauritius Institute and Training Development (MITD) has been set up (*ce qui va regrouper l'IVTB et le Trust Fund Technical Schools*) so as to harmonise and strengthen the TVET system.

The House will note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Strategy Plan I am speaking of - the guide on which we are going to work for the years to come - focuses on five internationally-sanctioned and agreed-upon pillars of education and training, namely access, quality, relevance, equity, and achievement.

Given that education is a dynamic process, the Plan, as I said, spans over a period of 13 years, starting in 2008. Innovations, however, are to be grafted onto it as new knowledge and new technology emerge. But, what will not change, Mr Speaker, Sir, is our commitment to the children of this country. We have taken the solemn oath that no child will be left behind, and we intend to fulfil our pledge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as has been highlighted by my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, we have given special thought to those children who, unfortunately, due to physical disabilities and learning difficulties, cannot enjoy the benefits that other children enjoy, despite positive efforts of non-State actors to help them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, important actions are being taken. For example -

- Strengthening of the Special Education Needs Department of my Ministry.
- Setting up of a Special Education Needs Development & Resource Centre (*préconisé par le budget*), which would cater for primary and secondary school children suffering from various types of disabilities under the same roof.

(The 2010 Budget, as I said, has provided resources for it. Such a Centre will be the first of its kind in Mauritius and will be fully equipped to provide professional/specialist services, as well as counselling and therapies).

- Our plan is to set up other such centres regionally in a second phase.
- At least, one in each educational zone.
- The Centre will be made operational in close collaboration with NGOs having the necessary expertise and international support would also be sought wherever and whenever necessary.

No effort, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be spared to provide children with special needs with the opportunity to join mainstream education at all levels. In fact, with a view to catering for the needs of our children at a younger age, the ECCEA will set up an Early Childhood Care Education Authority, a Division to provide help and support towards this end.

What is most comforting in this Budget, insofar as I am concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the fact that handicapped children – *les autrement capables comme on les appelle* – will have certain facilities, namely -

- Arrangements have already been made to provide facilities for them for transportation from their homes to the University.

C'est un *breakthrough*. Je remercie, encore une fois, le ministre des finances pour avoir permis à cela de devenir réalité. Je prends un exemple. C'est la première fois que je me suis trouvé en face d'un tel problème dans ma circonscription.

(Interruptions)

Oui, je sais qu'il y en a ailleurs sûrement. Mais, ce cas-là, je l'ai vécu personnellement, et j'aimerais le partager avec vous ici. Pendant sept ans, un enfant a été dans un collège de Plaine Magnien/Mahebourg. L'enfant ne peut pas bouger par lui-même et il fut transporté, tous les jours, au collège par son père, attaché à lui, sur une mobylette. Tous les deux partaient ensemble ainsi le matin et revenaient l'après-midi. M. le président, cet enfant a réussi, après sept ans, à trouver une place à l'université de Maurice sans l'aide de quiconque – on sait combien c'est difficile d'avoir une place – et rien que sur la base de ses résultats. Cet enfant, à part se mettre debout, ne peut pas marcher. C'est cela son handicap. Comment cet enfant allait faire pour s'y rendre, s'il n'avait pas un moyen de transport facilement ? On sait que le ministère de la sécurité sociale a déjà un *scheme* où on met à la disposition de ces enfants une allocation de transport. Cette allocation est basée sur le prix du bus. Mais cet enfant ne peut pas voyager par le bus, il ne peut même pas quitter sa chambre sans aide. Comment alors arrivera-t-il à se rendre à l'université ? Comme il était dans ma circonscription – ce n'est pas pour parler de moi-même – avec l'aide des *sponsors*, à travers le *CSR* qui a été mis en place par ce gouvernement et qui est structuré depuis quelques mois, j'ai pu trouver le moyen d'avoir un budget - pour les trois ans durant lesquels cet enfant devrait aller à l'université - pour assurer son transport, par taxi, qui coûte environ R 1,300 par jour, de Plaine Magnien à l'université de Maurice. J'ai été bien content qu'il ait pu avoir cette facilité. Les cours ont démarré à l'université quelques semaines de cela. Durant les premiers jours, le chauffeur de taxi qui transporte cet enfant m'a téléphoné. Il m'a dit qu'il avait quitté l'enfant à l'université, et que l'enfant était dans une chaise roulante qu'il fallait pousser – à ce moment-là il n'avait pas de chaise roulante motorisée. Ce n'est que bien après, avec l'effort du gouvernement, qu'il a eu une chaise motorisée. Donc, le chauffeur a bougé sa voiture un peu, car elle faisait obstruction. En regardant sans son rétroviseur, il a vu que l'enfant était exactement à l'endroit où il l'avait laissé, car il y avait trois ou quatre marches à franchir avant de continuer son chemin. Personne n'était là pour aider cet enfant qui était dans une chaise roulante, à franchir cet obstacle. Donc, l'enfant était venu en taxi de Plaine Magnien à l'université, et il devait attendre le bon vouloir d'un passant pour le soulever et l'aider à franchir cet obstacle. C'est au téléphone que ce chauffeur de taxi m'a raconté cela. Tout de suite, j'ai quitté mon bureau pour me rendre à l'université. J'ai fait venir des techniciens. M. le président, pour rendre l'histoire plus courte, on a décidé de faire construire des *bumps* pour faciliter l'accès aux handicapés sur chaise roulante. Ce qui a été fait.

(Interruptions)

De quelle loi vous parlez ? Vous étiez au pouvoir pendant cinq ans. C'est nous qui l'avons fait. Il faut quand même apprécier l'effort qui a été fait.

Mr Speaker, Sir, two motor-driven wheelchairs have also been made available on the University Campus and the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has made provision for

this to become a reality. The 2010 Budget Mr Speaker, Sir, will provide additional motorised wheelchairs for use, both at the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology of Mauritius, and refund for taxi fares for disabled university students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must mention the works that have been done for the revolution that is coming in schools for 2010. It is what we call the digital revolution in education. I think it is worth mentioning though I will not be able to go into all the details, because it will be too long. But, what is being provided for in the 2010 Budget Speech will make provision for necessary resources to take us on major steps forward, in a bid to revolutionise the education sector via the digital mode. First of all, there is the design and development of an e-Education portal to enable the school community to access educational materials on a 24/7 mode.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this has reached an advanced stage, which will be a reality in the coming year. Secondly, a permanent set-up for “EduWeb” (Educational Web casting) project has been successfully launched on 15 September 2009. This initiative, an unprecedented event in the history of education in Mauritius, allowed me to have a live interaction with some 500 Heads of Schools (both public and private) gathered in 28 web casting sites in Mauritius and Rodrigues. In the coming year, it is expected that EduWeb will be used as a very important platform for planning, capacity-building and communication. For example, there is the training of teachers who have to go to MIE. There are so many courses that can be run online, through the EduWeb system, where the teachers will remain in their schools and the trainers will be in the main centre at IVTB House or at the Mauritius College of the Air and run the courses, without asking the teachers to move to MIE physically.

All schools, Mr Speaker, Sir, will also have their respective websites through the Microsoft “live@Edu” facility, which will be used by the school community teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents. We are also providing video conferencing facilities in schools. Eight secondary schools will be equipped on a pilot basis with such facility early in January next year. All primary schools will also be provided with, at least, one laptop and one projector in the first instance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, 12 secondary schools will be provided with a fully equipped e-Learning Specialist Room, smart interactive board, server, projector, internet facilities to be used for teaching and learning. This will be extended to all schools afterwards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have invested in infrastructure in both primary and secondary schools sector and, today, internet facilities are available everywhere, *dans toutes les écoles primaires et secondaires du pays, ce qui est quand même un grand achievement.*

Now, insofar as infrastructure is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is worthwhile that I mention a few things. Government has attached a lot of premium to the provision of quality learning environment and infrastructure. We have invested massively in the construction, renovation and upgrading of primary and secondary schools. The budget allocated to infrastructural projects over the last five years amounts to Rs525 m. for the primary sector and Rs3.23 billion for the secondary sector. My colleague, the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, has announced an investment of Rs1.3 billion to be injected for the improvement of primary and secondary school infrastructure in his Budget.

In addition, Rs1 billion will be provided for the innovative Primary School Renewal Project (PSRP) to renovate old primary schools, which date back to more than 50 years. During the first phase of the PSRP, construction works will be undertaken in 17 primary schools. Since 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir, all primary schools throughout the island have benefited from major or

minor infrastructural upgrading works. De 2005 à 2009, some 60 primary schools have had toilet blocks constructed or upgraded. *Je dois vous annoncer que dans les nouveaux blocs qui sont construits, provision a été faite pour donner des facilités aux enfants handicapés.*

(Interruptions)

In the new ones, because in the old ones it is very difficult to provide this facility. *Mais, à chaque fois que des nouveaux blocs sont construits, cela se fait sur la base de la facilité à accorder aux enfants handicapés sur chaises roulantes afin qu'ils puissent bouger.*

Further, additional classrooms/computer rooms have been provided in some 50 primary schools. Maintenance works have been completed in some 115 primary schools, with an amount of Rs170 m. earmarked for primary in the Budget July to December 2009, *c'est-à-dire, le budget en cours jusqu'à décembre.* Additional classrooms have been provided in some 30 other primary schools. There have been maintenance works in some other 30 primary schools, toilets constructed; *tout cela encore une fois dans 30 écoles primaires.*

As from January 2010 onwards, my Ministry will strengthen the efforts towards the construction of additional classrooms and upgrading of toilet blocks in around 35 primary schools already earmarked. For the 2010 Budget, together with ongoing construction works, major infrastructural works will be carried out in all schools like Royal College Port Louis, Sookdeo Bissondoyal SSS, Regis Chaperon SSS and Emmanuel Anquetil SSS. It is proposed to construct gymnasiums in five additional secondary schools and provide play fields in five others. Mr Speaker, Sir, this clearly depicts that, over the past few years, the Budget allocated was fully spent judiciously, and show our commitment to provide a better teaching and learning environment to our children.

Let me mention a few interesting things, Mr Speaker, Sir, for specific sectors. I'll start with the pre-primary sector. As you know, this is a sector which is very important. In fact, in the pre-primary sector, we have to take into consideration the difficulties that children have. First of all, there is this problem of access. In the pre-primary sub-sector, we have sustained our efforts since 2005 to integrate the 'out of school children' in pre-primary stream. In 2005, about 5,000 children aged 3 and 4 years, and representing near 16%, were not attending pre-primary schools. I am happy to mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, although I am not satisfied that we have not reached zero, this deficit has been reduced from 15% to 9% approximately this year. Accordingly, the enrolment rate for the pre-primary sub-sector has increased from 84.9% in 2005 to 90.6% in 2009 and we are, of course, targeting 100% in the coming years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been able to achieve such a target through a host of measures and essentially sensitisation at grassroots levels, with special attention to children living in poor conditions: provision of school infrastructure facilities, capacity-building for educators and supervisors, and introduction of new curriculum. I have to say that the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme has been enormously supportive in this endeavour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a lot more to do in the pre-primary sector, but I only want to mention that, insofar as capacity-building is concerned, the MIE has ensured the training of pre-primary educators at certificate level and, for the first time, a diploma course for pre-primary is being launched. The recent finalisation of the pre-primary national curriculum framework will give a new impetus to the sub-sector, thereby enhancing teaching and learning experiences.

M. le président, il ne suffit pas seulement que les enfants aient accès à l'éducation pré primaire ; il est important aussi que la qualité de l'éducation soit bonne et maintenue. On est en train d'agir sur les deux plans. D'un côté, aider les enfants qui ne vont pas à l'école de venir à

l'école et, de deuxièmement, vérifier, grâce au travail qui est fait avec le *curriculum*, que le même *standard* est donné dans presque toutes les écoles, que se soit les écoles gouvernementales, les écoles privées et les écoles RCA.

Insofar as the secondary sector is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, two words will have to be remembered every day, I must say, especially as from January 2010: innovation and creativity, the two key words to progress.

To achieve this objective, schools are working together in clusters, and rectors and educators are teaming up to implement various strategies towards the improvement of students' performance in different subjects.

Emphasis is, at the same time, being put on the development of a culture of achievement and excellence, aiming at fostering innovation and generating creativity within learners, enhancing their critical and exploratory thinking, and providing them with values and life skills to ensure a harmonious overall development of the child.

My Ministry is working in close collaboration with Microsoft in the context of its partners in learning programme to usher in the innovative student, innovative teacher and innovative school projects in the secondary subsector.

We also very much attach to quality assurance in this sector, and we have set up a Quality Assurance Division, which is working towards putting in place a system to secure internal efficiency and quality teaching and learning. Quality Assurance mechanisms, Mr Speaker, Sir, and operational Quality Assurance processes are being developed as well as relevant norms and standards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to also mention that we are setting up soon what we call an Educator's Council. We are putting a lot of emphasis on professionalism. We thus want our educators to adopt a professional approach in fostering the learnability and trainability of the youngsters, so that the latter can easily adopt new skills, develop new competencies and adapt to existing and emerging challenges of a world in constant flux. Most of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, we want to enhance public confidence in the teaching profession. We have had some difficulties from time to time here and there, and we believe that the setting up of the Educator's Council will go a long way towards putting some order in these aspects of things.

The reform of the secondary curriculum is now well underway with the finalisation of the new curriculum framework, which is called upon to respond to the emerging needs of the economy and society. Central to this reform, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the exposure of our students to a broader curriculum and subject base, in order to better equip them to face the requirements of an increasingly multidisciplinary world of work.

Questions have been put on a few occasions as to whether we are going to render science compulsory. I wish to inform the House - because I didn't have the opportunity to reply to the question - that, in fact, it is the way of looking at things that created some confusion. We have not talked of making science compulsory like that. What we have mentioned is the project itself, which has already started on a pilot basis. It concerns the broadening of the curricular base. So, we have the 21st Century Science, which is a new subject, which has been piloted already for one year in Form IV, and will continue next year in Form V. And, then, afterwards, it will become a routine subject for a certain category of students. We are going to have an evaluation of this project next year, and then we'll decide on how to make it happen in all the other classes.

Talking of broadening of the curricular base, I must say that Travel and Tourism is already being taught in a few schools. Physical Education will be made available as an examinable subject in Forms IV and V, as well as other subjects such as Music and Marine

Science. What we want to achieve is that all secondary students who go for Science subjects, that is, who are going in HSC with Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc., in the two or three years to come, must, at the level of School Certificate, sit for a subject which is Social Science or Economics. We believe that it is important for even a Science student to be able to have some notion of Economics and Social Science subjects. And those students who are going to go for Economics or Social Science in HSC, should have some notion in Science and, therefore, there is that particular subject called 21st Century Science which is some sort of General Science, which is going to be studied by these students. They will have to sit for that subject at School Certificate level. This is what we call broadening of the curricular base.

As regards matters of discipline also, I'll have the occasion, insofar as this is concerned, to come back to the House. We are doing a lot insofar as discipline is concerned at schools. We have had, during the course of the year, some difficulties, I must admit, but I must also say that when we look back over the years, we see that, this year, these difficulties have been less than the previous years, which means that the measures that we have been taking have started to yield some good results.

It is the same thing concerning absenteeism. This also is being looked at, and we have set up a reporting mechanism for schools. We are even envisaging - my colleague, the Minister of ICT is working on that – a means by which parents would be informed almost automatically through their mobile phones or whatever of the absence of their child at school. We are also taking into consideration this problem of absenteeism. This is why we are setting up, as I have mentioned already, a *Carnet Scolaire*, where everything will be written, and children will be informed that absenteeism will be a major factor for them and might have some negative influence in their life after leaving school.

There is a National Education Counseling Service (NECS) unit at my Ministry. It is essentially for career guidance. I believe that it is not working, at least, to my satisfaction. So, we are strengthening this unit, and they are supposed to conduct counseling sessions, even home visits, sensitisation programmes for the parents and children of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. In addition, as a preventive measure, 24 counseling units have been made operational already in 24 schools, allowing students to walk in, discuss their problems and find possible solutions, thus providing a service what we can say “*à l'écoute de l'enfant*”.

I would like to say one word on the tertiary sector, Mr Speaker, Sir. Tertiary education in Mauritius has made major strides over the last four years. The present Government, fully conscious of the contribution that a highly educated workforce can make to the country's socio-economic development, has, since coming into power in 2005, sustained its efforts to making higher education a key pillar of the Mauritian economy. In so doing, it has increased and widened access to higher education, and is slowly transforming the country into a quality destination for higher education and an intelligent island in this part of the world.

To enhance access to higher education in our two local universities, namely the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology of Mauritius, student intake has been increased substantially in the last few years.

The Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate (GTER), which measures the share of the total tertiary enrolment in the population aged 20 to 24 years, has shown significant improvement since 2005. In fact, it stood at 28.4% in December 2005, and it has reached 43% this December. We need to accelerate access further in the future. *Même si on a augmenté de 28 à 43%,* we have enunciated

in the 2008/09 Budget Speech that Mauritius intends to double its GTER to 72% by 2015. We are conscious that this target is a very ambitious one, but we are going to work in such a way as to make it happen. In fact, for the past four or five years, as I have mentioned, we have already had an increase of about 13%.

We have today, Mr Speaker, Sir, as a result, a more diversified and balanced higher education sector, with 50 private institutions in operation as opposed to 32 four years earlier. The local tertiary education landscape has been enhanced in the process, with some brand name institutions from overseas joining the sector, like the Middlesex University, UK, Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology, Malaysia, D.Y. Patil Medical College which is going to start very soon in Mauritius and is going to give training for post graduate students in medical specialities, Sri Ramachandra University (Offshore Campus) and Birla Institute of Technology, India, just to name a few.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the rapid development taking place in this sector, a Regulatory Framework for Post Secondary Education has already been implemented since 2005, empowering the Tertiary Education Commission to oversee private post-secondary education institutions through registration of institutions and the accreditation of programmes, because we believe also in quality in this sector. It is not a question of getting institutions from abroad even if they are well known, but we have to ensure that the quality of teaching in Mauritius is to the standard. Side by side, the TEC has initiated action for improving assurance through an audit cycle in State funded tertiary educational institutions, namely the University of Mauritius, UTM, MIE, MGI and the Mauritius College of the Air. The first cycle of quality audits has now been completed. A second audit will start again in 2010 with the University of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measure announced by the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance concerning the award of scholarships to bright students of poor background will but complement our efforts and being deployed to ensure that no deserving student is debarred from tertiary education because of financial problems.

The proposed construction of an integrated campus was mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but we know to start something like that from the time it is mentioned in a Budget and for it to happen, it takes time. I have been myself deeply, intricately involved in the setting up of the University of Technology Mauritius, because I was the Minister of Finance then and I know how much work there is behind that. Therefore, we have to be patient. But I can assure the House that we are definitely going to set up this university. I am particularly pleased that we are already on the way of setting up a new landmark in the education history of this country with the setting up of a third university, what we call the Open University of Mauritius, we have had already the first reading in this House, and I would like to inform the House that we have done all whatever is necessary and, as soon as the Second Reading and the Third Reading are over and the legislation is passed in this House, we are going to see to it that the Commission comes very quickly because we have already made provisions to start the University within weeks as from the day of proclamation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, human resources, technical and vocational education and training also fall under the purview of my Ministry and without going into many details, I would still have to say a few words before coming to Arts and Culture. Mr Speaker, Sir, globalisation warrants that for a nation to be productive and competitive and to thrive on the world market, its people should have world standard competencies. All our people, irrespective of their level of education must,

therefore, be brought into the skills revolution bandwagon. We have no other alternative but equip all our people if we want them to participate in and contribute to the economic development of the country. We are going to continue to invest further in TVET, Vocational Education and Training so that every Mauritian has the opportunity to pursue a training programme towards employability. Our action will focus on -

- (i) increasing access to TVET;
- (ii) levelling the gender inequity in the offer of training possibilities;
- (iii) diversifying training programmes on author;
- (iv) raising the level of our training programmes;
- (v) enhancing partnership with foreign institutions of international repute;
- (vi) ensuring portability of labour ensured towards circular migration, *entre autres*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to avoiding duplication and giving a new dimension to Technical and Vocational Education and Training, the MITD, as I mentioned in the beginning, is going to take over the functions of the IVTB and the Technical School Management Trust Fund. This is already being made operational. During the year 2009, IVTB has trained some 12,000 trainees and for the coming financial year, the figure is targeted at 13,000. The pertinence of training provided by IVTB measured by the percentage of successful trainees who secured a job in 2009 - this is interesting to know - set at 75% and we are aiming at 77% for the financial year 2010, as we are moving along with the Performance-Based Budget System. These figures show the extent to which we are addressing the issue of mismatch between the jobs on offer and the labour market and also our TVET graduates. In addition, some 20% of graduating trainees of the IVTB are pursuing higher training. This is also interesting. They are trying to go higher and higher on the scale of study. At Nicolay street, Port Louis, we have opened, as we all know, the Knowledge-Based Training Centre and we have an enrolment of 692 already in 2009, which is in line with the increasing access to TVET. New diploma training programmes are being launched and a fourth programme set up in partnership with SIAST of Canada, where trainees qualify for a Canadian qualification that gives them the possibility of pursuing their study in Canada.

For the coming year, Mr Speaker, Sir, the MITD intends to open up further opportunities to our youngsters with Diploma programmes in other different areas. The list is too long for me to mention, but new areas which have not been taken on course until now. The MITD is also introducing Canadian tourism and hospitality courses. This will enhance the employability of our workforce and assist in the Circular Migration Programme, which is working very well with Canada; it already started in the course of last year.

We wish also to note the collaboration between IVTB and the NEF, the Empowerment foundation, which is giving fruitful results. I cannot not add, Mr Speaker, Sir, my appreciation of the fact that the Empowerment Foundation has closely associated itself with the programme through facilitating the placement of trainees and the injection of financial resources.

There is also the Second Chance Training Programme for which the IVTB has been assigned the responsibility of implementation. 347 trainees were enrolled both for Mauritius and Rodrigues in 2009. These trainees are being channelled for training with placement in collaboration with the Foundation in 2010. For the next financial year, provision is being made for the enrolment of 500 trainees both for Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The Civic Programme for which Rs29 m. have been earmarked is a welcome dual step towards the genuine self-empowerment of our youth and their successful future anchoring into adulthood as creative and adaptable individuals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius needs to have additional certified and qualified citizens armed with valuable qualification for employability and lifelong learning to better face the challenges of globalisation for Mauritius to develop into an education hub in the region, mutual recognition of qualifications among countries in the region essentially, but all countries in the world, in fact, is an essential feature. While a number of countries have already implemented their qualification frameworks and others are in the process of developing same, these need to be harmonised into a single regional one for easy implementation of an education hub concept.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to develop Mauritius into that education hub in the region, mutual recognition of qualifications among countries is an essential feature and the MQA has made significant headway in this direction and has developed and implemented its National Qualifications Framework.

The MQA, Mr Speaker, Sir, will continue its national campaign to disseminate information about the NQF following through with its implementation as well as development of unit standards in various sectors of the economy. The framework has already been – I have just mentioned – put into practice and it is going to continue disseminating information about it and the MQA will continue representing Mauritius also in the setting up of a National Qualification Frameworks for 32 small States in the Commonwealth. I wish to congratulate them because they are doing a marvellous job there.

There is the question of recognition of prior learning, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Mauritian model of this type of learning has been successfully launched in June 2009 in construction, plumbing, printing and hospitality sectors. I wish here to point out that several major international TVET awarding bodies have already shown interest in awarding their qualifications in Mauritius through this Recognition of Prior Learning Programme.

Mr Speaker Sir, when talking about professionalism, we have also to see that such professionalism in other sectors as well, particularly there are so many persons operating in trades, in the informal sector. Skilled and productive manpower is the backbone of our economy. Without competent and skilled people anchoring the professions and various trades, it will not be possible to realise our vision of a quality and world-class trade and service sector in Mauritius.

Taking all this into consideration, my Ministry has worked out a draft Bill for the establishment and management of the *Chambre des Métiers*. The aim is to develop professionalism in the way of working of our tradespersons who would realise the importance of work quality, the guarantee of performance, and time frame to be respected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to end with this human resource aspect, I had indicated on the last Budget that my Ministry had prepared the National Human Resource Development Plan, which gives an idea of the likely employment opportunities to be generated in the economy by sectors, occupations and education skilled categories. With a view to adapting to the changing and emerging demands, a revised version of the National Human Resource Plan has been worked out. A survey is also going has been carried out between August and October 2009 to assess the impact of the financial crisis on employment. The findings together with the revised plan will be

launched very soon in December next month. Moreover, in 2010, a Human Resource Development Audit will be carried out to find out the factors hampering the development of our system which provides the competitive advantage to local businesses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish now to come to the subject of Arts and Culture, which is under the aegis of my Ministry. We have the Division of Culture, which is performing very well. I wish to thank the vice-Prime Minister, for everyone, after the speech he delivered in the House, was talking of culture, because so much has been mentioned. Culture is, in fact, a potential pillar for our development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, never in the history of arts and culture in our country, has so much Government investment been made to boost up the culture industry by creating international *ouvertures* for our artists. We are providing opportunities to cross local boundaries and move into the international arena. This is what we have to remember if someone has to remember something in my speech concerning culture. We are providing opportunities of different types so that we can shine on the international arena. Many of our artists have already earned international repute.

One brilliant example I wish to remind the House here is our golden achievement, the First Gold Medal won at the *Jeux de la Francophonie, section culture*, because *les Jeux de la Francophonie sont attribués aux sports. Mais il ne faut pas oublier que les Jeux de la Francophonie contiennent aussi une section ayant trait à la culture. Pour la première fois cette année, un des nos enfants mauriciens*, Stephan Bongarçon, presented a dance item and a marvellous creation. He is a local choreographer and dancer, and he won the gold medal...

(Interruptions)

Yes, he works in the municipality. He won the gold medal and made the pride of our country.

(Interruptions)

Yes, he was injured during one dance in the preliminaries. Despite that fact, he went for the finals and his group won the gold medal. He was the choreographer. He was performing also, of course.

The culture Industry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is directly supporting the tourism industry and has made immense progress over the years.

Practically, every hotel has *Sega* dance today and other forms of music on their programme. With the bright perspective ahead for our tourism industry, we can hopefully expect similar perspectives for the collateral culture industries.

The borderless era now offers, Mr Speaker, Sir, more opportunities to the creative industries, which are becoming increasingly important components of modern post-industrial knowledge-based economies. They are vectors of job creation as well as vehicles of cultural diversity and cultural identity.

Culture is no more considered as a sector of marginal interest. It is attracting the attention of researchers, which has led to a growing body of analysis, statistics and mapping exercises on the relationship between culture, creative industries and economic development.

Our wish, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to become a creative hub in this region of the Indian Ocean. We have to turn talents into hits and hits into profits and see how business can make better use of creativity. We must aspire to be a golden cycle for creativity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this respect -

- the question of Intellectual Property is of paramount importance.
- Intellectual Property is the bedrock of a creative economy.
- We will soon be modernising our Intellectual Property Framework.
- This is appropriate for the digital age.
- It will enable the creative companies to get return on investment.
- We want an Intellectual Property Framework that balances the needs of the consumers, creators and businesses.
- The existing Property Rights will, therefore, be enforced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Human Resources, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund has been instrumental in the promotion of the mobility of artists in the cultural field and the circulation of all artistic expressions. A series of artistic and cultural projects have been approved and are being implemented.

The projects encompass a cross section of activities such as Training for Arts Critic, Promotion of Theatre (full-length play), Drama Activities in primary and secondary schools, Local Film Production, SLAM in schools.

Facilities are also being provided to sustain performing artists through support schemes, rental of theatre and International Development Grants Scheme.

Artists, Mr Speaker, Sir have also been requested to submit proposals for the setting up of an artistic corridor between our two World Heritage Sites. I have listened with attention what has been mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I would just like to inform him that the building of the Nelson Mandela Centre has already started and we are going to go in the line we have mentioned. We may differ in the way of thinking, but I think we agree that there should be a Centre for African Culture; Centre Nelson Mandela. I am following the project personally and make sure that it will come up very soon. Of course, I will consider the points that have been raised and see in what way we can explain what we are doing so that people will understand exactly the importance of this culture for our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the last financial year, my Ministry has undertaken a list of projects with a view to maintaining social peace, mutual sharing and understanding while targeting excellence in arts and culture.

I wish to inform the House that a total of 1,900 persons have been trained in our three *Centre de Formation Artistique* in different arts discipline. Request for enrolment is increasing regularly.

Some 182 groups representing a wide cross-section of the music industry have successfully performed for the benefit of the Mauritian public every Friday during lunchtime at the *Jardin de la Compagnie*.

The promotion of our linguistic diversity and ancestral values are being reinforced following the setting-up of three Speaking Unions, the Telegu, Marathi and Tamil Speaking Unions by way of legislation. Now, these three unions are already operational. Draft legislation for the setting-up of another five Speaking Unions, namely Arabic, Bhojpuri, Chinese, Creole and French are ready.

Following the enactment of the *Centre de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle* (CELPAC) as we say, the Committee of Management is being set up in line with the wish of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* for sustaining the development while reinforcing its existing infrastructure. A new dimension is being given to the reading culture in our population, a reading culture which is slowly dying down. I am trying to do the best I can for this reading culture to retake its importance it needs in the population. The same is being done at school concerning the development of reading culture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our national festivals are moments of joys and sharing for the population. They bring people together in a bid to consolidate our national unity. The population has been gratified recently with the performances of artists of international repute such as Talat Aziz and Kay Kay. Similarly, under our Cultural Exchange Programme there has been a movement of artists to and from Mauritius, thus giving international exposure to our performers.

Our artists have been given opportunities to perform in the 2nd Pan-African Cultural Festival held in Algeria and other festivals in Beirut, India, Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. Groups from India, Pakistan, People's Republic of China and Mozambique have performed in Mauritius. The Cultural Exchange Programme has been made a two-way traffic for artists and performers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our local artists and performers are being provided with basic facilities for the promotion of their talents. In this respect we note -

- the production of 190 CD/cassettes;
- printing of about 70 books;
- 13 short film production;
- 46 exhibitions, and
- 9 theatre groups.

They have been given help to promote our cultural industries.

A new project known as SLAM was introduced in 27 ZEP schools. In simple terms, SLAM is a special technique for writing and recitation of poetry with scenic performers. The project was successfully completed, and it had such a success that I have made provision for it to be extended to all primary schools as from January next year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures announced in the last Budget in favour of artists and performers under the Human Resources, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund have been implemented accordingly. Payment to artists performing in hotels who have been affected by the decrease in the number of performances due to the financial crisis will be made by the end of the year. All data have been compiled. Two groups have benefited from the exemption on the use

of theatre while nine artists have benefited from the International Development Grants Scheme. Artistic development is, therefore, assured and the cultural industries are taking shape. Mr Speaker, Sir, our Cultural Centres are the repositories of our heritage and values. All the Cultural Centres are operational. A number of events and activities have been organised to share common values and bring the population together in moments of joys and happiness.

Construction, as I said, has already started for the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture at La Tour Koenig. Another jewel, it will be and we will make it, is going to be added in the architectural landscape of Port Louis.

The Islamic Cultural Centre is providing facilities to students of Urdu, Arabic and Islamic studies by placing books and other reading materials at their disposal. It has also successfully organised symbolical events for inmates of orphanages of Port Louis with a view to comforting them and to share the joys for the Eid festival.

The Tamil, Telugu and Marathi Cultural Centres are fully operational. The beauty of Mauritius lies in its capacity to manage the various cultures while promoting a sense of belongingness to the nation. Our diversity is the source of our unity and solidarity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the other institutions operating under the aegis of my Ministry for the promotion of culture and heritage - I don't mention them, but all of them - have been given appropriate facilities to enable them to achieve their objectives.

They have a pivotal role to play in the promotion of culture in Mauritius and the promotion of Mauritius as a tourist destination, as Cultural Tourism is gaining impetus every day. We are preparing ourselves to receive the two million tourists with great pomp and show them the richness of our cultural diversity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to mention for the information of Members and the population that the Films Act has been proclaimed as from 01 October. The main objective of the Films Act is to put cinema films and video films, VCDs and DVDs, on the same footing with regard to importation, classification and exhibition. The video sector was functioning in a chaotic state. This Act will introduce discipline and also consumer protection. Henceforth, all VCDs and DVDs will invariably be marked with the different visas such as U, PG, 15, 18 or 18R, as the case may be. Adults will be free to view films of their choice and parents will protect their children by making the right choice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures announced by the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment in the Budget in favour of artists and the creative industry will add value to what is being done to promote artistic creativity, cultural development and the preservation of our heritage.

We are giving our artists and creators the support they deserve. They will be called upon to play a significant role to promote interest in performing arts and to help in combating absolute poverty. A lot of talents and skills are lying unnoticed or shielded by the scourge of poverty. Experienced artists will help to unveil talents and unleashed them in the mainstream of development.

The setting-up of the Mauritius Symphony Orchestra will also place Mauritius in music world *dans la cour des grands*.

The upgrading of Plaza theatre in an Opera House is yet another step towards placing music at its highest pedestal.

The Mauritian population, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been gratified with the visits of artists of international repute. The high cost charged for tickets is a hurdle that cannot be surmounted by many lovers of good music. To ease the situation and to enable our people to attend to these concerts the subsidy on two international concerts is widely acclaimed by the community of artists and the population in general. A greater number of people will get access to appreciate these performances. We are going further in this *démarche*, Mr Speaker, Sir. Facilities will be upgraded for the organisation of open-air concerts to enable maximum attendance by members of the public at a reduced cost.

The “Cultural and Artistic Boulevard” will be the meeting place of performing and visual artists. It will provide the necessary venue for them to practice their arts and to show their talents to Mauritians and tourists.

The setting up of the National Performing Arts Council will thus provide our performers with the appropriate forum to develop their arts, to discuss their problems and come up with a plan of action for the sustainability of their talents.

Our heritage, arts, culture and values, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be presented in the Virtual Arts and Cultural Museum. It will give information on the various happenings in Mauritius as well as the components forming part of the Mauritian society. This museum, Mr Speaker, Sir, will thus be in every home. Mr Speaker, Sir, before ending as says the poet, I quote -

“If winter comes, can summer be far behind”?

Especially in this country we have only two seasons. If winter comes, Mr Speaker, Sir, can summer be far behind?

(Interruptions)

So, it is nearer then!

We have faced the triple crisis with courage, and we have worked hard to surmount the difficulties. We have hopes for better days and together we shall overcome all hurdles. We have the right mix of colours to paint our life – a life of joys, hard work and sharing for the betterment of human kind.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At 4.13 p.m, the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.51 p.m with the Deputy Speaker in the chair.

Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is always a great honour to address the august assembly on the occasion of a Budget Speech and it is the fifth one for the year 2010.

I think that we have to see whether this Budget reflects the achievements of the Alliance Social Government, whether it reflects the ideals of the Labour Party and whether it is a testimony to what the Members on the other side of the House said they would do when they came with a “*bizin changement* Government” in July 2005.

I would like, in fact, to analyse this Budget as a mirror, as a reflection, of what was said and the way we have travelled through over the last four and a half years to see whether we have been “ Putting People First”, to see whether *boeuf travail et boeuf pé manzé* and to see also whether one of the very noble and lofty principles which were mentioned in their programme, the democratisation of the economy, to free us from the tenets of history, the concentration of assets, of economic power and whether today we have a broader base. That is what I would like to do. I would like to be the mirror and to see the reflection of what they wanted to do. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I am very surprised by one thing. We have had a Budget and usually in Mauritius, when we have a Budget, after the Budget, there is hype, there is some sort of a vibration in the country. There is a sort of a feel good factor, but there is none.

(*Interruptions*)

No! Except for the issue of salary compensation, which I will address later. There is no hype; there is no excitement, not even electoral excitement.

(*Interruptions*)

We go out there as well! And I am very surprised about this. In fact, the speech is very bland.

(*Interruptions*)

Flat, yes! There is nothing to say that Mauritius is out of the crisis and we are now building a fantastic Mauritius. There is nothing in this Budget which drives the stamina of the nation. It is a Budget of Rama Sithanen year in year out, but I am going to mention later *la méthode de Rama Sithanen* over the years. But, as I said, the principles on which the Government was voted in was ‘Putting People First’, was ‘*boeuf pour travay, boeuf pou manzé*’ and *la démocratisation de l'économie*. I think they were lofty ideals and principles. Where are we today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Everybody will agree that the rich are richer. Everybody will agree that the poor are poorer and we have also seen the advent of one new syndrome - the absolute poverty syndrome. Are we four and a half years later in a society where the economy is more democratically based? Are we in a country today, five years later, where the poor are better off, where the workers have a better purchasing power? No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Of course, they will say: “you would have done worse. They will say to justify this that we would have done worse, but I say: “you could have done a lot better, *parce que vous avez la marge de manoeuvre, et je vais l'expliquer tout à l'heure.*” This is an undeniable fact today Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the poor are poorer; that the working community is less well off. The purchasing power has been trimmed and the jobs are more precarious and today they are contributing for a possibility of being fired with the new labour laws. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are many brilliant ideas which came in this House over these four and a half years like *Maurice Ile Durable*. I appreciated the package given for tourism promotion, whether it is used as it should have been, this is something else. We came with this brilliant idea of funds, but the funds ended up being a mirage, but the fact that we could say, that a country could say, a Government could say that we are giving one billion of rupees for food security and the new agriculture is wonderful. The fact that Government can say that we have *Maurice Ile Durable* as a model for the whole world and we are putting one billion rupees is a formidable idea. The fact that we are saying we are spending Rs40 billion to build modern Mauritius from the port to the airport, on the roads, for the utilities. These are brilliant ideas and some great ideas have come also this time to give to the arts and culture the dimension it has never been given in a Budget.

These are brilliant ideas, but the problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is often they remain as ideas, as mirage. We just have to go over the funds and you will see what was earmarked and what was spent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Now, I come to *la méthode de Rama Sithanen*. *La méthode de Rama Sithanen* is very simple: darken the picture to present himself as *un terrible, en Cr  ole*, and as a Zorro. Darken the picture! The second thing - I am going to give two examples - is that between 1995 and 2000, when he was with us, our economic spokesperson, he gave all the figures to qualify the debt of the country which hon. Vasant Bunwaree, as Minister of Finance, had laid on the Table; that was Rs74 billion, he said so. But between 2005 and 2009, we never heard about the debt in absolute terms, it is always as a percentage of GDP, but I will give the absolute terms later. *Ca c'est la m  thode Sithanen*. Between 2000 and 2005, when hon. Pravind Jugnauth came with the brilliant idea of the VRS I and 8000 workers were made to leave the sugar industry with a good package, he added the 8,000 workers to the unemployed, they were calculated in his calculation as unemployed. So, he increased the number of unemployed, but this time we have 6000 workers for VRS II and they are not at all computed in the unemployment statistics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Yes! This is *dans la m  thode*. Let me tell one thing. I think he was out of steam because in the crafting and the drafting of this Budget we don't see much of what we had seen in the first Budget. In fact, in many cases - the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned it - there were very simple words. It was cut and paste; sometimes he went into too much detail; sometimes there were not enough details. But we can see that the crafting and the drafting has run out of steam. I am really sad he is not here, but I would like to say that, on this side of the House, we are neither impressed, nor do we believe in the figures, in the rhetoric or the rationale of the Minister of Finance over the last five years. Neither on the figures, nor on the rhetoric nor on the rationale! My question is: when did we have an early harvest. Second, when did we have robust growth? Third, when did we have a bumper crop? When did we have a resilient economy? Where are the green shoots and where is the recovery that we are shaping today? Somebody has done a very interesting exercise. He has said that when he calculated the growth for years between 1991 to 1995, the average was 5.3% with Rama Sithanen as Minister; between 1996 to 2000, it was 5.7% with Mr Bheenick and hon. Bunwaree on an average. From 2002 to 2005, it was 4.33% with hon. B  renger in the first term and hon. Pravind Jugnauth in the second term. Today they estimated 2005 to 2009 to be 4.32%. He always mentioned 5% and 6%; he never reached 6%, not even 5%. So, when we say that we had an early harvest, a robust growth, a bumper crop, a resilient economy, the green shoots, the recovery, we don't agree neither with the figures nor with the rhetoric nor with the rationale.

The hon. Vice-Prime Minister always believe that brilliant ideas cannot come from somewhere else, they cannot come from others. The only brilliant ideas which can come should come from him. But this is not true and I am going to give you two examples; the duty free concept - because the duty free concept was one which was presented by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, by this Government, and that concept would have been a revolution as it would have brought Mauritius to a new level of development. This concept has been shunned over the years by the Minister of Finance because it came from here. It is such a pity because we could have walked a lot on the path of becoming a duty-free island since 2005. Lip service was paid to such a great idea so much so that in this Budget Speech; the reference to a duty-free island is made only when it relates to protecting the local and small industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, well this concept had been shunned, as I said, if it had come from the hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen, I am sure that he would then have engaged the country in this endeavour with all the zeal that we know. Because it came from us and this is something you should not do. The second example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned it, is the purchase of gold by the Bank of Mauritius. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has explained at length the whole saga about this possibility. It is as if, again, brilliant ideas cannot come elsewhere, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It seems that we can say “*jamais deux sans trois*”.

Après le désastre d'Air Mauritius concernant le pétrole à plus de cent dollars, et le désastre de la State Trading Corporation sur la même question du pétrole avec le hedging problem, cette fois ci on peut dire qu'en matière de décision stratégique pour le pays, en 2008 il y a eu trois désastres. The hon. Leader of the Opposition put the sum at Rs20 billion, I am not questioning the sum, but it is clear that we have lost billions over the last year.

Let me take the last example again, I don't know whether we could call it *outrecuidance*, arrogance, I don't know how to call it. That one is - the subsidy to students sitting for the SC and HSC exams. He has done everything not to give that subsidy. Why? I have always said in my speeches on the Budget Speech, I want to be an eye opener to the labour rights because I want them to know whether the hon. Dr. Rama Sithanen has been a Finance Minister who upheld all the ideals of the Labour Party. I want them to know, ask this question and then answer it. They will come to the conclusion that I will naturally come to.

Let us take the case of students sitting for the SC and HSC exams. *Le ministre des finances persiste et signe, non c'est non encore une fois en 2010 c'est non!* He has raised the threshold from Rs7,500 to Rs8,000 for those benefiting from a full subsidy. The number of people who benefited from that subsidy is nine thousand, with the raising of the ceiling, I think that we can add another 1,000 and most probably it will be 10,000 people. But we have 20,000 students sitting for the SC and 10,000 sitting for the HSC, which would mean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in simple terms, that there are 20,000 thousand students who will have to bear the full brunt of the SC and the HSC exams fees. It would have cost maybe Rs100 m. or Rs150 m. *On est en train de jongler avec des milliards à gauche et à droite*, and we have put an Education and Training Fund of Rs1 billion. My question is: we are talking of a knowledge hub, why does he persist? *Pourquoi ne peut-il pas reconnaître que c'est une nécessité? C'est une nécessité parce qu'il y a des élèves qui ne passent pas une deuxième fois leurs examens parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas le faire. Ou encore, si dans une famille il y a deux enfants, on ne peut pas pourvoir pour les frais d'examens des deux enfants.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we believe that we have reached a stage in Mauritius where you have, at least, one SC holder at home in one household. Most probably we are nearing a situation where you will have one HSC holder. But Mauritius of 2010 does deserve that in each household we have one graduate. This is what we do not agree to because that threshold, obstacle or barrier would have cost us only some Rs150 m. just to remove that obstacle. It is an obstacle to this dream of ours to have one graduate in each family. If India, for example, is doing well in the IT industry, it is because of its intelligent, well-skilled and well-trained University level manpower, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I have raised the issue of growth; I have addressed the issue of the method. Let me tell the House *quelle est la logique de la réforme de l'honorable Dr. Sithanen.* First of all,

institutional – he has changed the CSO calculation of inflation by playing with the basket and he says now that the food and beverage should be of lower weight. This is not true because poorest families today are putting most of their income to buy the basic needs. What he did is that he changed the calculation of the rate of inflation. Second, he changed the calculation of unemployment registration with once you register for SMEs, you are off the list of the unemployed which means that you are off the hook in the calculation of the rate of unemployment. How many people who registered as entrepreneurs are really employed? We know that the figure does not tally. He manipulated - if I can use this word, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - the calculation of unemployment and the registration of the SMEs.

When he came to the creation of the NPC, he said that the salary compensation would be based on four criteria: (i) inflation rate (ii) capacity to pay (iii) productivity, and (iv) unemployment rate. I will come to this later because he has killed the last remnant of credibility that the National Pay Council ever had as an institution. As hon. Pravind Jugnauth said to the press, in fact, that there are three sentences where he says “I am doing this”, “I am doing this”, “I am calculating this”, which means that, in fact, the National Pay Council is just a *farce*. I will come to that when we come to the salary compensation. Let us come to the calculation of the deficit of the budget. We came here in the House twice with the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure which has an impact on the deficit of the budget and Parliament was made to vote for expenses not yet incurred. That is why I said that we do not agree with the rationale of the vice-Prime Minister’s Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (ESE) occur when you come to the House and you say that: “Instead of spending Rs100 m. we spent Rs120 m. and I am asking a vote to be able to include the Rs20 m. that we have already spent.” But he came with ESEs to vote for expenses not yet registered. How do we calculate the budget deficit then? That is why I said that we do not believe and we are not impressed by the figures, the rhetoric and the rational. When he says that the Budget deficit is 3% or 4%, should we agree? All the figures, in fact, and the computation of all the figures have been, to some extent, tampered with. I am asking again the Labour Party: do they agree? What did he do when it comes to taxes? Cut of corporate tax at 15% in two years. It was presented as a measure to boost the economy. Then, there is the tax on interests on savings and deposits. Everybody says that we should remove that tax. But, what has he done? He has kept it. He has kept the NRPT, and has just increased the ceiling. Then, there is the NPC calculation of salary compensation. As I told you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that this calculation - as hon. Pravind Jugnauth said the other day here, when we had a question on salary compensation - is just arithmetic, mathematical exercise; it is a plus only. So, why should we have the NPC, the meetings, the CSO calculating all the statistics?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question I am again asking the Labour Party is about the labour laws that have been voted in this House, just to make labour laws more flexible to hire and fire. When we go up in the doing business environment, rating, this is the criteria which has helped Mauritius to gain a certain number of places upwards. It is because of our labour laws, which are considered as being more flexible, that is, you can hire and fire. We have created a Fund, where the worker is contributing for his future unemployment, possible unemployment benefit or for his own training. *C'est ça la méthode Rama Sithanen*. This is what we have been doing over $4^{1/2}$ years Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That's why I am asking whether we are in a more prosperous Mauritius today, whether the issue of nation building has been taken care of, whether the economy has been well managed.

I am now coming to what the Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee of India said when he presented the Budget this year. He said that, in preparing the Budget, he found inspiration in Mahatma Gandhi and, in concluding his Budget Speech, he said: "Mahatma Gandhi has said this: democracy is the art and science of mobilising the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources in various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all". But my question is: when you have an Additional Stimulus Package for those who have the economic power, what is done to stimulate and shoulder those who are in the lower rungs of society? Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, he continued to say: "This is precisely what we will have to do with strong hearts, enlightened minds and willing hands; we will have to overcome all the odds and remove all the obstacles to create a brave new India of our dreams". This is what Pranab Mukherjee said on ending the speech. Can we imagine the Lok Sabha roaring? That is what I said, when I mentioned the feeling of togetherness of the Congress Party when the Minister ends his speech in this manner: could Dr. Rama Sithanen end his speech in this manner? Not all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! *Impossible! Ca ne vole pas à ce niveau-là!* Because he is all the time focusing on a certain number of figures, statistics, and on the interests of certain sectors. I will come to the Additional Stimulus Package later. That's why I am mentioning this is the end of the Budget of India. He said 'this is precisely what we will have to do with strong hearts, enlightened minds and willing hands. We will have to overcome all the odds and remove all the obstacles to create a brave new India of our dreams.' This is what you dreamt of in July 2005: putting people first. But, $4^{1/2}$ years later, I do not think that the hon. Minister could have ended his speech, saying these very beautiful words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me come to the Stimulus Package. He said that he is maintaining the Additional Stimulus Package. The International Monetary Fund put the question as to whether an Additional Stimulus Package should be extended in a country like Mauritius. What they said was that we should be very cautious and, in fact, the advice was that the Additional Stimulus Package should not be extended. But, we would have been really surprised if the hon. Minister of Finance had cut short the green shoots and cut short *le robinet* du Additional Stimulus Package. We know why.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is something fundamental which has changed. We have moved from a system where people believed in a socialist economy, where Government would be an economic stakeholder, holding shares and injecting funds in the economy. Then, it was the end of socialism and we moved to an ultra liberal system, where it is free for all, where offer and demand dictate the market. The ultra liberal philosophy led to the crisis that we have seen recently, which means that the capitalist system has foundered. What has happened? Something we never thought. Government was injecting public funds in private companies to let them breathe; give them a breathing space, some oxygen. Why did we way we would do that? To save jobs, and prevent social instability and social unrest.

I think that no capitalist thinker/economist ever thought that Government would be injecting billions of funds, public money in private companies to make them more profitable. *C'est le monde à l'envers!* We have never thought about this, but this has happened. Now, the question is: what does the private company owe Government for this Additional Stimulus Package? What have we seen in Mauritius? How has the private sector reacted?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the US Treasury Secretary, Tim Geithner, says that the Obama Administration first Stimulus Package has worked well, and that a second one is unnecessary". In the United States, the Head of the Treasury said that the combined effect of stimulus and the

efforts we took to stabilise the financial system have been remarkably effective in arresting the free-fall in economic growth, but we are not giving a second Stimulus Package. This is in the United States. What does President Obama say? He said recently that a second multi-billion economic stimulus package is not needed. This is what is happening in the United States. But, in Mauritius, did we really need the extension of the Additional Stimulus Package? That was a big question and, if we were to extend it, we should have a certain number of conditions attached to the provision of public funds to private companies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

When we had debate on the Additional Stimulus Package, I had raised a few points, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, namely that if we stimulate the economy through the private companies, we should stimulate consumption. This is what is being said now. I had said that we should stimulate consumption by increasing the purchasing power of the working class. This is what was done by Australia, Canada and UK, that is, you stimulate, you give stimulus package to the private companies, for them to do business better, to bail them out, but, at the same time, you give a stimulus to consumption by increasing the purchasing power of the working class. This is what the US Treasury Secretary had said: we cut taxes as part of recovery for 95% of working Americans and for businesses across the country, and this to encourage the purchasing power. But, what did we do, in fact, here? We gave an Additional Stimulus Package, but when it came to salary compensation, it was peanuts. This is why I said we do not agree on the rationale of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. And, again, I say that I want the Members of the other side of the House to travel through those years and to see what they have done, what they have voted for and for what they did the banging on the table year in year out, and whether they were right to do so. Today, you can see the picture, four and half years after. Where are we? What have we done to our country with all that has been said by the Vice-Prime Minister? What are the sectors doing well today? It is the ICT, the seafood hub, the IRS concept, the Real Estate and, again, these were pillars which have been established by the MSM/MMM Government. This is clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, not one single new sector has emerged significantly to broaden the economic base and to spur the development process of our country. There has been no single new pillar, year in year out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me come to something, which is very sensible, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want my friends on the other side of the House to listen to me on this. I will tell you what were the price of four commodities in 2005 and what is the price today. In July 2005, 2.5 Kg of Basmati was Rs49 and, today, in November 2009, it is Rs130; 165% increase.

(Interruptions)

I am going to come on that.

(Interruptions)

I would like the hon. Member on the other side of the House to listen. I am not rubbing salt.

(Interruptions)

No, it is not rubbish! When you travel on the political path you have taken from 2005 to 2009, these are landmarks. The Basmati started from Rs49 and, today, it is Rs 130. It is 165% increase. *Le lait en poudre de 1 kg*, Rs99, and, today, Rs160; an increase of 62%. *Le sucre que nous produisons, le sucre roux*; this was a decision taken in the reform. They took the decision, and another increase is coming. That put some millions in the coffers of the Sugar Syndicate. It was Rs5.50 and, today, it is Rs22; 300%. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *le pain maison était R 1.35 et,*

aujourd’hui, il est de R 2.35 ; 85%. Le fromage Kraft, which is a symbol of consumption, was Rs30 and, now, it is Rs65. It has increased by 116%.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the stark reality, which we are facing. We may be blind to it or we may make as if we don’t see it, but *fromage Kraft* has become a luxury.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: We have had an increase. *M. le président, systématiquement, depuis 2006, après la mise sur pied du NPC, les travailleurs ont obtenu des taux de compensation en dessous de l’inflation.* Inflation was 10.7% in 2007, and compensation was 8.7%. Inflation was 8.8% in 2008, and compensation was 8.1%; inflation was 7% in 2009, and compensation was 5.1%. *Je dois ici faire ressortir que l’inflation, le basket a été modifié - donc, on aurait eu une inflation encore plus forte - et qu’aujourd’hui, la majorité des classes moyennes et défavorisées dépensent la plus grosse part de leurs revenus pour l’achat des denrées de base ; 50% de base.* On sait qu’avec le Household Budget Survey, publié par le CSO durant les quatre dernières années, l’inflation cumulative s’est élevée à 31%, et la compensation a été de 15%. Donc, il y a un manque à gagner énorme que les syndicalistes ont estimé sur des bas salaires de R 3,000/R 4,000 à R 1,300. That is where I had said that, when we came with the Stimulus Package, we could have given the Rs10 billion, but we should have fuelled consumption, and it was the opportunity for the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to give the working class the breathing space it needed. But what did we do? This is something I want the Members on the other side of the House to know. I remember there was a PNQ, and that question was put by hon. Ganoo. When hon. Pravind Jugnauth left in 2005, for a full salary compensation, the ceiling was Rs4,300. In one year, we moved from Rs4,300 to Rs2,700 for full compensation; that year it was 5% and it was Rs135. I remember we had PNQs.

(Interruptions)

This is something else. We are still running after the Rs4,300 threshold, because even now we are Rs3,800 four and a half years later. We are still giving a full compensation to workers with Rs3,800. How many are those who get Rs3,800? A very lower threshold! Again, you can always say you could have done worst. But, I again say, you could have done better, because for the Rs4,300 if we had increased even Rs100 for the ceiling, we would have been today at Rs4,800. I will come later to the issue of poverty, because we believe that *le moment est arrivé, M. le président, d’en finir avec la pauvreté, et on a les moyens.*

(Interruptions)

L’île Maurice ne peut pas avoir des poches de pauvreté. On a les moyens. It is a national issue and a national priority and I will come to that later on. I think that you should and you can do it. We can do it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! What I am saying is that, on the one hand, we gave an Additional Stimulus Package. We have renewed the Additional Stimulus Package. The salary compensation, à l’époque, on avait dit que...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy speaker: Order! Order! Order, now!

(*Interruptions*)

Order! Order, now! It is a Saturday afternoon, please behave! Thank you!

Mr Bodha: M. le président, la compensation salariale est une condition *sine qua non* pour la stabilité sociale. La compensation salariale est une condition essentielle pour la stabilité sociale. Il faut qu'il y ait un pacte social entre le patronat et la classe des travailleurs *under the umbrella and the aegis of the Government*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you cannot give a Stimulus Package of Rs10 billion. Renew it! All that has been done on the salary compensation, - because my friends are going to talk about what has been given - now is costing the private sector only one billion. If you compare, just imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if from 2005 to 2009, appropriate salary compensation had been paid and the ceiling had been at Rs4,400, Rs4,500, I think the private sector must have saved from Rs10 billion to Rs15 billion on salary. That's why I said I want to be an eye-opener. I want my hon. friends on the other side of the House to see on what political path, on what political strategy they have lived over the four and a half years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I said I wanted to be a mirror for the reflection of what they wanted to do and what they have achieved today. That's why I mentioned the closing words - hon. Ms Deepalsing was not here, she can see from the Hansard what Pranab Mukherjee said when he ended his speech.

Let me come now to the debt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Est-ce que la dette est soutenable ou insoutenable?* That is the question. We have never been given the figure in absolute terms, but we have it in the Budget Estimates. In fact, it is Rs167 billion and we have to add Rs6 billion from the Consolidated Sinking Fund, which is no longer here. In an interview, Mr Pierre Dinan said, I quote –

“Chaque mauricien aura, dans deux ans, une dette de R 186,000. Un chiffre qui a plus que doublé en cinq ans. Il était de l'ordre de R 80,000 en 2005, et les dettes du secteur public qui comprennent des dettes du gouvernement central et des organismes parapublics totaliseront environ R 200 milliards en 2011.”

*Ce que je souhaite c'est que les honorables membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre comprennent que c'est une réalité. Qu'on le dise en termes de pourcentage du PNB, qu'on le dise en termes absolus, c'est R 200 milliards en 2011 ! So, whether it is 60% of GDP or 58% of GDP, this is not the question. The question is: do we have the capacity to repay? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we took the debt at Rs74 billion and when we ended it was about Rs111 billion. But one thing we can say is that we used that money, you could see the schools, the cyber-city, the infrastructure, the housing, the billions spent in the sewerage project. I want you to ask your vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance - he has been borrowing Rs1 billion every month for four and a half years – to please tell us, tell the country what has been done with that money. Please, show us what has been done with that money, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Because, we will agree that it is only today, this year, that major projects are starting. It is a good sign, but we are in 2009 and we have been borrowing Rs1 billion every month for four and a half years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That's why I am saying that I want my friends on the other side of the House to think, to see and not just to say that this Budget is *un bilan* of what we have seen over the last four and a half years.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to the funds now. The hon. vice-Prime Minister came with a series of ideas, brilliant ideas. As I said, when a vice-Prime Minister stands up in the House and says: I am creating six funds for one billion rupees to give this country a new boost into the new millennium, it makes us dream. It is a brilliant idea and we say it is a brilliant idea. But the question is: how are these funds working? How are they accountable and what has really happened? Let me now say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what has happened to the funds. I would like to do it in the way he does, the SJRF, that is, the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund, allocation: Rs3.1 billion, expenditure Rs399 m., 10%; Food Security Fund, allocation: Rs1.5 billion, spending: Rs27 m. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to address this issue later in the SME sector, because there is something which we could have done for the SME sector - for having been a former Minister of Agriculture. We could make a list of all that we import and then decide that we are not going to import and we are going to produce locally. In fact, we have a paragraph in the Budget which says so, which will allow us 10% to reduce 10% of our imports, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

And if we were to make a priority list which says that we import 70,000 tonnes of maize, 10,000 tonnes of potatoes, 5,000 tonnes of onions and there are so many things that we could have produced, I think, then this Fund could have been targeted to reduce the imports.

Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how much is our import for milk and dairy products? It is Rs2 billion. So, if we were to reduce only 20%, it is already half a billion rupees and we could have targeted. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the new agriculture that we need. And when we were talking about hydroponic culture ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: We have been talking about hydroponic villages since 2005. Again, it's a pilot project. That is where we needed the political will and we can show the people *la nouvelle culture de l'entreprise dans l'agro industrie*. So, I'll come back to that Fund. Food Security Fund: dépenses - R 27 millions sur R 1.505 milliards. Human Resource Knowledge and Arts Development Fund: allocation - Rs1.5 billion; expenditure - Rs74 m.

Concerning *Maurice Ile Durable, cela n'a pas duré longtemps, et maintenant on parle de Green Mauritius*. *Mais cela était un concept extraordinaire*. I had said so in the Budget. Mauritius, as a model of sustainability, it's an amazing thing that we can sell to the world. Mauritius as a sustainable island, a tourism dream destination, a land of cultural unity and diversity, a land of democracy and a land of sustainability in an era of climate change *où on doit être au chevet de l'écosystème, pour nous c'est un rêve*. It's a brilliant idea.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order, please!

Mr Bodha: Yes, but you put Rs1 billion and the expenditure is Rs157 m., and it was only on the solar heater, in fact. And we know the saga! I am not going to mention this.

Now, we come to the Local Infrastructure Fund. For the Local Infrastructure Fund, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allocation is Rs1 billion and expenditure for infrastructure was Rs272 m. only. This is something else! I will come to infrastructure later.

Let me come now to the Social Housing Fund. It was Rs1.2 billion and we spent Rs400 m. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to address the issue of poverty, but let me address this issue of housing. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from a survey, I think, 86% of Mauritian households are owners of their house. So, we are left only with 15% of households. We have 350,000 households in Mauritius. 15% of 350,000 is about 50,000 households. So, what do we need? We need 50,000 housing units in Mauritius to solve the issue of housing once for all. That's the way we have to see it.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: *Zot pe donne lakaz ki nou'nn fer.*

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: The question is that we need about 40,000 to 50,000 housing units to provide for all the households in Mauritius. And let me tell you one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The way land speculation is happening in Mauritius, the price of land is evolving; it is going to become more and more difficult for those people to have a house because we know what is happening. The price of land per *toise*, per *perche* is surging at a dramatic speed. And a lot of people are buying property as a business for speculation. This problem of housing, unavailability of land is going to be a formidable issue in the years to come and if we want to address the issue of poverty and housing, this is a very important issue. That's why I am saying that the allocation, first of all, is not enough. Second, we have to see to it that the money allocated is spent for the people for whom it was meant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we see all the funds, in fact, at the end of the day, we spent only Rs1.3 billion. There are figures which have been submitted. I think there was a question from hon. Pravind Jugnauth and the Minister of Finance himself presented those figures saying that out of Rs8.4 billion, only Rs1.3 billion were spent. My question is: how can we spend more? How can we spend the funds that are available? Just like - I will come to that a bit later - on the issue of health, we have the money today, but we don't have the service. In education, we have the money, but we have the mainstream education fighting with the scourge of private tuition. I will come to that, but what I am saying about the funds is that the funds were brilliant ideas, but nothing was put as a mechanism for the funds to be used by those who badly needed the funds, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me come now to the issue of poverty. Amartya Sen has said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it is a multi-faceted problem. Poverty is not a fatality, but what we need, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is whether we have today the means *d'en finir avec la pauvreté*. *Nous, on dit: oui, on peut en finir avec la pauvreté aujourd'hui à Maurice.* We have 20,000 households today. There was a survey which was carried out in the years 2004 and 2005 where 20,000 households were living with Rs8,000. Today, most probably they are living with Rs11,000 or Rs12,000. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we don't help these people, they will fall into the category of absolute poverty, what we call the poverty trap. Those who are in the absolute poverty trap; they can't get out of it. So, that's where we have to have a mechanism in such a manner that it could be funding, it could be direct funds. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, in the sixties, came with Family

Allowance of Rs15. I don't know whether Members remember this. When you have three children, you get Rs15 and those Rs15, in those years, saved and helped many families to provide for education. I remember, there was one Budget which was presented by hon. Ringadoo where he said they cannot pay Rs15 any more, they are going to pay Rs12, Rs3 were cut, but, in those years, they were precious. We have to find ways and means because you need *roti, kapra and makan*. You need to help them on housing, education and food.

(*Interruptions*)

Of course, we need computers.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: Later we'll come to one issue. May be it is not directly linked, but when we see an education system where 10,000 children at the age of 12 are out of the system and these 10,000 children - 5000 boys and 5000 girls - live in the least privileged areas, they have the worst housing conditions, when they don't have any skill, when they don't have any training, they can't get out of it, they can't find a job. Even if the girls try hard they find themselves either working in the Free Zone, in the industrial textile industry or working as maids and at 15 you have unwanted pregnancy, you have homeless children, you have one single parent families. And the young men what do they do? *Enflé camion, manoeuvre maçon!* But those who want to break the system fall into juvenile delinquency, petty crime and later graduate into real hardened criminals. This is a national issue and I would like to raise this in the House today. It links housing, it links education, and it links law and order, social security. *Nous avons vraiment besoin d'un observatoire de la pauvreté*, but we need also to know - I put a question to the hon. Prime Minister - about the sources of crime. When we see the two crimes which were committed recently and you see the history of the people, you see that they are drop-outs and outcasts. The whole issue is: how do we fight it? Otherwise we end up with a society which will not be inclusive. We may have – it will become like South Africa – gates, we open the gates with an automatic remote control, we close it. You have done it Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you go to the gate and then you call and then they open the gate, but this is not Mauritius. I would like the House to reflect on this, that is, we have 10,000 dropouts from our CPE system. How do they end up ten years later at the age of 18? The three criminals who committed a horrible crime in Port Louis were 18, 19 and 20. What I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the poverty issue is a very important issue and it is not a political issue. I am not saying that they are the cause of it or we are the cause of it. But Mauritius cannot continue to have this kind of poverty because it is a threat on the stability and the social well being of all the Mauritian community, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But the question is whether the Budget addresses this issue. It does to some extent, but it addresses it for education, for housing, for SMEs, but we have to think about it, because otherwise we do not want to drift into the Caribbean Island crime culture. We should all sit down and see to it that we can address the issue, at source and see to it and, I think, as I said, housing, education, social security are a very important issue.

Let me now address the issue of SMEs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I did not take the floor when we had a speech on the Bill. *Ce qui nous manque à Maurice, M. le président, c'est une culture d'entreprise* because we go as small entrepreneurs a bit like in a jungle. We try ; *on n'a pas une culture d'entreprise ou parfois on a été forcé d'avoir une culture d'entreprise, c'est-à-dire, la débrouillardise*, and I would like to make a suggestion. *La culture d'entreprise doit*

commencer à l'école, business studies should start at the secondary level, and we should encourage all the young people who have brilliant ideas. When we encourage them, *il faudra les encadrer, les financer, parce que tout le monde* sait that the rate of dropouts in small and medium industry is very high; it is about 90%, but the 10% which survive become business people and they become role models. So, we have to address these issue from the start. *Peut-être qu'on n'a pas les entrepreneurs que nous voulons avoir aujourd'hui, mais il faut qu'on puisse mettre les jalons et les assises pour les avoir dans cinq ans.* That is a student coming out from the university with an Msc in Agriculture and not wanting to work in the office. No! He should become a gentleman farmer today working with his computer, doing business and exporting *ti piments* to Germany. You know that they don't have *ti piments* in Southall, and there is a market for that. What I am saying is that the time has come for us to address a certain number of issues in a multi-faceted manner. *La culture d'entreprise il faut l'inculquer, il faut encourager les jeunes au niveau du collège, au niveau de l'université et, quand ils sortent avec de beaux projets, il faut les aider, il faut les promouvoi ;, après il faut leur donner les moyens.*

What have been the weaknesses of SMEs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? First, access to finance; second, marketing, and third, often what has happened is that *ils sont laissés au petit bonheur*. I will not go to quote a certain number of interviews where it has been said that in that area, except for figures, the number has increased. I don't think that the hon. vice-Prime Minister has done much. The Additional Stimulus Package has not touched one single SME, but the time has come to do one thing. The banking sector does not believe in the SME. It says to the SME to go to the DBM, to go to the Cooperative Bank, but these has to change and there is something else which has to change, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am linking this with housing. I saw a billboard where home loan is 6.5 percent at one bank, at another bank it is 11 percent. How is it that one bank can give a home loan for 6.5 percent and another the rate was always 11 to 12 percent unless you go to MHC or to NHDC where you have a soft loan? What I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the banking sector in Mauritius must reduce the rate of interest and accessibility of credit for housing, for SMEs we should have money which is available and the micro credit system is a fantastic system. That is why I am saying that the SMEs is the way forward in words, in rhetoric it has been brilliantly crafted. But what has been done? Not much has been done! We have to see to it where the SMEs are going to be, how we can create a market for them, how we can make finances available to them, how they can be given the backup and we should help them to survive and we should encourage those who have the brilliant ideas from the very start.

In the UK, there was a Budget speech of 2001 and they referred to small businesses; they proposed something which I am just mentioning here –

“We propose a new regime to simplify VAT for small businesses which will be of direct help to up of a half million companies there, for firms with a turnover VAT will not be charged.”

Then you have a different threshold of VAT to help the SMEs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I remember at one point in time where, I think, there was a threshold. People were going to small entrepreneurs because they were not VAT registered, because they expected to have the same service at a different rate. *Il ne faut pas qu'on fasse la confusion entre le tertiaire parasitaire et la petite et moyenne entreprise.* Le tertiaire parasitaire est un symbole de sous-développement. *C'est comme si* just when you go to Madagascar, you see somebody selling some mangoes here and you have somebody else selling mangoes just near, *parce qu'ils se débrouillent.* La petite et

moyenne entreprise devrait être une petite et moyenne entreprise moderne liée à la culture de l'entreprise. I am not going to mention about ce qu'on est en train de faire, but I am going to give an example. In my constituency, some women of 40-45 lost their job from the textile industry, but these women know about fabrics, they know about quality; they know about machines. They were getting Rs3,500. *La solution de Maurice, ce sont les niches. Il faut trouver les niches qui nous conviennent*, and that is why I say that we can do a lot, but we should target, we should know. *Dire, faire, écrire tout cela c'est bien, mais il faut que l'argent qu'on a dépensé puisse être dépensé comme il se doit.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one word on education. I think that the hon. Minister has brilliant ideas and we are fully supportive of many of his ideas. We should go for it. I have written something, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mainstream education cannot be held hostage to the scourge of private tuition mechanism. We should get out of this. We should, because we have brilliant people. As I said, mainstream education cannot be held hostage to the scourge of the private tuition mechanism because we are spending Rs11 billion and the parents are spending Rs3-Rs4 billions for private tuition. We cannot do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So go for it, for the university as well, the Open University, courses at night. We need more and more skilled people in varied areas because Mauritian people are brilliant in their country and they are brilliant elsewhere. There are opportunities. We will have the opportunity to address the Open University Bill.

On the health sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the money we are spending, but we do not have the service. Hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned it. What I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the unhealthy partnership between the private and the public sector and this has to be addressed. We cannot continue like this. *C'est un cordon ombilical qui n'est pas sain.* I am going to give an example. Major ultra sophisticated machines broken down in the public sector and public funds being used for those machines to be used in the private sector for years. We cannot continue. Why is this happening? *Entre ce va-et-vient entre le personnel des hôpitaux et des cliniques, il y a quelque chose de malsain et ça ne peut pas continuer. Il faut qu'on trouve* “the value for money” we find in the private sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I mentioned law and order. For agriculture, hon. Hanoomanjee will address this issue. What I wanted to say for agriculture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I haven't seen anything which is going to prevent *la mort lente de la communauté des petits planteurs.* *M. le président, je ne vois pas grand- chose dans le budget qui va empêcher la mort lente des petits planteurs.* They have to be taken on board in the sugar reform, in the new cane industry from the raw sugar to the ethanol en passant par l'électricité. We need the 30,000 small planters not only because we owe it to them, we owe it to them because we all come from that community. *On ne peut pas laisser symboliquement, historiquement, politiquement, économiquement, et il y a une phrase que j'ai bien aimée dans le Common Agricultural Programme de l'Union Européenne. Ils disent qu'il faut le maintien de l'activité pour qu'il y ait un maintien de la communauté.* And sugar can be sustainable, can be profitable. You just have to increase the yield and you just have to lower the cost of production, *mais les planteurs se sentent un peu perdus, et il faut les encadrer. Il faut donner autant d'attention, autant de fonds qu'on a donnés aux grands. Les grands établissements sont puissants, ils ont tout. Ils ont les compétences, ils ont les moyens, ils ont les idées. Ils sont brillants. Ils ont vécu trois siècles, M. le président. Les petits planteurs ont besoin d'être encadrés, assistés. Il faut à tout prix faire de sorte qu'ils puissent continuer à vivre, - comme on dit 'phulo phalo' – vivre et prospérer au sein de l'industrie cannière, M. le président.*

On the tourism front, I have a lot to say, but I am not going to say much. I think the branding exercise, we said what we have to say and we have asked whether the Deputy Prime Minister can give us a list of all the proposals which were made. Maybe, we can work on those proposals to come with something fantastic. I just read for Greece. Greece has come with a tag line, which says a masterpiece you can afford. Greece, a masterpiece you can afford ; 5,000 années d'histoire ; Acropolis, mais aussi les îles Corfou, la Méditerranée. It is a masterpiece you can afford.

On the tourism sector, what I would like to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we are not creating another paradigm shift. *Notre produit reste un produit franco-français. Nous avons les vols de Corsair de Nantes; demain, on aura peut-être des vols de Lille. Nous sommes en train de devenir un produit régional français.* But the future is in India ; the future is in China. We have three hundred million Indians who can travel. One Indian family who did a wedding in Maritime Hotel is worth more than 1,000 tourists coming from Lille or Nantes. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you go in the hotels, you will see that the quality of the food and the service has gone down. Why? Because ils roulent comme on dit *lors jante*, c'est-à-dire, ils sont en train de rouler pour pouvoir survivre et continuer. It will have to redefine a product which will appeal to India and which will appeal to China. We have to do that. They are totally two different paradigms. We should have a daily flight to China. We should start, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now come to the CSR. I would like to ask the vice-Prime Minister why he did not introduce the CSR when he cut the corporate tax. That would have been the right time. He came with a CSR when there was a crisis. He should have come with the CSR when he cut the corporate tax from 25 to 20 and then 20 to 15. That was the time he should have done it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I think that the CSR is a formidable tool. Mais *le gouvernement ne doit pas donner sa démission concernant la responsabilité sociale en pensant que le CSR va pouvoir quelque part remplir cette responsabilité. Non.* Government should do its own and the CSR has to be accountable. At the beginning he said that the projects had to be approved by Government. Now we have left the projects to the companies. Let me give you one example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let us take the village of Grand' Baie, the assets of the hotels are about Rs10 billion. The profits should be around hundreds of millions. Why don't all the hotels in the streets of Grand' Baie put up together a formidable project funded by themselves and partly by Government to give Grand' Baie the shop window it deserves, as *le Saint Tropez de l'île magique qu'est l'île Maurice?* That is what has to be done instead of having a company saying: "okay, I am going to give Rs2 m. to this company for a football tournament or to do a few things right, left or centre". *Non! Il faut un effort conjugué, planifié, structuré, pour faire de grands projets et non pas des miettes.* We know the mentality of the private sector. *C'est clair.* What I say is that the CSR should be in a structured manner to come up with wonderful projects to uplift Mauritius. We can do that with Grand' Baie in a year or two. Then we can do it with Flic en Flac, in Trou d'Eau Douce. The money is there and the companies are there, and it is for their benefit as well because when you walk to Royal Palm, *il y a une cité à côté; il faut arrêter avec tout cela.* So, *le CSR est bon*, but we should be bold and structured and we should have brilliant ideas, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me say one word about the *loto*. Mr Deputy Speaker, the *loto* in most countries provides funds for Government. In a lot of places, this money has been well spent. If we can well spend it, we can have a national football team, we can have a national football professional championship. I said last time that we can have ten big companies giving Rs10 m. and having ten

teams. We can have an academy. The dream is that in five or six years a young Mauritian plays for Manchester United or Liverpool. This can be done for Barcelona, you have 200 Reunion Island youngsters playing in France and all over Europe, people from Ghana, Liberia also; why can't a young man from Mauritius? The Minister is doing some good piece of work, and I think that we can have a national football team which can play in the World Cup. We are not only *les gens qui regardent*, but we live the World Cup because we have a team, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We can have a national ballet, a national Symphony. All can be done.

Let me conclude. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I started by saying what were the lofty and brilliant ideas that they put forward when they came to power; "Putting people first", 'boeuf travail boeuf manzer', democratisation of the economy. Yes, but the question is: see how far you have travelled, and whether the hon. Minister who had the most formidable instrument, which is the Budget, the economic policy, had the most formidable instrument in his hands for that journey, has done that! Because I have always tried to see what is the golden thread in his mind when it comes to his economic policy; what drives him. It is very clear. He never mentioned nation building, he never had those lofty words that the Minister of Finance had in India because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the most important dream for all of us is an inclusive society and a united nation because prosperity without inclusiveness is nothing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you have a country with different speeds, *à différentes vitesses*, it's a recipe *pour la rupture sociale*. So, I would like to read just to end up-

"The pursuit to justice for the common good and the necessity towards a moral dimension in the service of others should be the path of the politician."

I must say that the vice-Prime Minister did not follow that path. That is why I say that a formidable instrument with lofty ideals of the *l'Alliance sociale* and the Labour Party had something fantastic as potential, but he could not deliver four and a half years later.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.16 p.m.)

The Minister of Industry, Science and Research (Mr D. Gokhool): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start by thanking and congratulating the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for presenting the 2010 budget, the fifth and last Budget of the Social Alliance to the Assembly. I must also thank the Prime Minister for his guidance and for his inspiration in the preparation of this very important Budget because this is the fifth and final Budget of the Social Alliance Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Budget presentations are events which have a very special importance and this Budget is also very important, as any Budget which is presented is followed with a lot of attention and a lot of interest by people. We do have comments and observations as to what the Budget represents for people in various walks of life and also for different sectors of the economy. Indeed, the Budget is a sounding board, a barometer of the general mood, among others, and also an indicator of where the country is heading.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have read and analysed the Budget and we have also listened to comments and observations outside and now we had the pleasure of listening to the hon.

Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources and we have also listened to at least two orators from the Opposition: the Leader of the Opposition and hon. Bodha.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I think the hon. Minister Bunwaree has answered to many of the points. Of course, other orators will also comment on the observations and comments of the Leader of the Opposition.

As regards the intervention of hon. Bodha, I see that there is a similarity in terms of the intervention of the Leader of the Opposition and of hon. Bodha. The similarity is very simple. Both orators have come up with a shopping list of items, which is the gist of the exercise that they have done. They have identified a list of items and they have engaged on a number of criticisms, reservations and at times saying that there are some good ideas and also saying that many of the projects and plans were initiated by them and that we are reaping the fruits of those plans and initiatives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think – it is my view – that the Opposition has missed a golden opportunity. I said earlier that this is an important exercise, especially it's the last Budget and, after this, we all know that we will be going for the general elections. It was a golden opportunity for the Opposition to come and present to this House their vision. I mean that an Opposition is supposed to be the alternative Government. We expected that the Opposition could take this opportunity and come with an alternative vision, and outline their strategies of what they would do if they were to be in power. From that point of view, I think – from what I see now, and I hope that other speakers from the Opposition will take the cue – you never know – that the Opposition has failed to take advantage of this opportunity and present the vision of what they would like to do for the country, for the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there will be various comments and observations as to what the Budget represents to us. Let me straight away put it that this Budget 2010, in my view, is a Budget that represents a new development dawn, as stated in paragraph 10 of the Budget. I quote –

“We pledged to take our country to a new development dawn, where the economy would be on a higher growth path and social equity an inherent outcome”

We are at the dawn of a new development era. With this new development that we are going to a new paradigm after 4½ years, and it will be driven by a new mindset, new knowledge, new technology and innovation.

So, I would put it to the House *que ce budget 2010 est l'expression d'une nouvelle vision d'une Ile Maurice moderne, où la science, la technologie et l'innovation seront appelées à jouer un rôle de premier plan.* This is the way I look at this Budget. Of course, this Budget balances economic growth and social justice. It also tries to cater to all sectors of the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I elaborate on why I said that this Budget represents a new development paradigm where science, technology and innovation will have a key role to play, let me just make a few general comments about the Budget. First of all, the format and presentation of this Budget is new. We have adopted the Programme-Based Budgeting with programmes, objectives, performance indicators, and we have also moved to the calendar year, that is, as from next year, the Budget will be on a calendar year basis. This, in itself, is an innovation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the new Budget format and the adoption of the calendar year is a strong signal of modernisation of our economy, our institutions and of society itself. In

fact, the new format for the preparation, presentation and implementation, execution, monitoring and evaluation year by year is very symbolical. It is a strong message that we are on the path to modernisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the previous speaker spoke about the expectations, that is, what have been the expectations of people from this Budget. When we came to power in July 2005, we came with a pledge to the nation, and I have always referred to this, that is, we have in our Government Programme mentioned that we put people first; we put the aspirations of people first. This has been the guiding principle throughout in this Budget, that is, we want to ensure that everything that we do corresponds to the aspirations and expectations of the people. We have also, in this Budget, demonstrated where we were in 2005 and where we are today in terms of our achievements. I would elaborate about the achievements that we have realised throughout the 4½ years, and also where we are heading as from now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that we inherited an economy on its knees, and we know the situation that was prevailing before July 2005. The economy was in a bad shape, unemployment was rampant, and the country was indebted. This was the legacy and, when we look back to 2005, it was, indeed, a period of adversity for the nation. We took the country from there and, through good stewardship of the economy, we have been able to move the economy forward.

Let me give some facts and figures, to illustrate how we have been able to steer the economy from where it was and put it on the track to recovery. First of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, we have a more diversified and multi-pillar economy. We have sectors like the ICT-BPO, construction, textile, tourism. It is a multi-pillar economy that we have today. The second point is that, when we look at the growth rate, we have moved forward. In 2005, the growth rate was 2.3%; thereafter, it was 5.1%; in 2007, it was 5.5%; in 2008, it was 5% and, in 2009, it is projected to be 3.8% and, thereafter, they expect the growth rate to be 4.3% and, in 2011, 5%.

As regards investment that we have registered since 2006 to 2008, the FDI has been to the tune of Rs30 billion. Previously, the Government was able to mobilise investment to the tune of only Rs1 billion annually. In 2009, the FDI is Rs9 billion. With the Jin Fei project, we expect Rs25 billion over eight years, which means that we are attracting more foreign direct investment than the previous Government.

And the Foreign Direct Investment is much more diversified. The next point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that Mauritius is emerging as a business hub and, recently, the World Bank ranking for ease of doing business put us at the 17th position. We have also enacted the Business Facilitation Act, in 2006 and this has helped to the processing of applications and also the establishment of business enterprises faster. Our net international reserves which, in 2005, was at Rs56.3 billion stands in 2009 at Rs100 billion that is an 80% increase. We have foreign currency reserves to pay for 42.8 weeks of imports, whereas in July 2005 it was possible to pay for only 31.4 weeks of imports. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are facts and figures which clearly show that the good stewardship of the economy has enabled us to put the economy on the right track.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reference was made by the previous orator, hon. Bodha, about inflation and the difficult conditions of people with regard to the higher prices. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that, we cannot just single out inflation or prices to make general comments about the standard of living and the quality of life of people. We have to take a series

of factors to assess whether the quality of life of people has improved or not; whether they are living better or not. We know that when we look at the tax regime today, only 7% of the working population pay tax. 36,000 individual income earners have been removed from the tax net. 25,000 people pay tax at 15% instead of 30%. The inflation rate has come down. In 2008, it was 9.7% and in 2009 it is 2.6% and it is projected that the inflation rate will go down further. Insofar as subsidies on rice, flour and cooking gas, Government has maintained the subsidies on these item and this has substantially helped to keep the prices low.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has also taken a series of measures with regard to fighting poverty and this has been an important policy for this Government to ensure that the weaker section, the vulnerable groups are protected. In fact, in the Government Programme 2005-2010, we forcefully spelt out, and I quote-

“Government will ensure that there is greater synergy and coordination in its poverty reduction strategies and programmes to achieve higher efficiency and effectiveness in the national drive against poverty.”

This was spelt out clearly in the Government Programme. Poverty eradication and poverty alleviation is and will be topmost priority of this Government. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, poverty is a very complex issue and it is important to address the issue of poverty from a multi-pronged approach and that is what Government is doing. In fact, we are taking a number of measures to fight poverty and one of the best ways to fight poverty is through employment creation. This Government has created 40,000 new jobs between 2005 and now. And this is perhaps the best way to fight poverty, that is, to create jobs so that people have an income and they can, therefore, have a decent life. Out of the 40,000 jobs, 19,000 jobs have gone to women and we know that, very often, poverty has a feminine face, that is, more women suffer out of poverty. We have made a very big effort to create jobs and also to ensure that women who are more often greater victims of unemployment have jobs. Special support has been provided to unemployed women under the Empowerment Programme. We have created a microcredit scheme to provide 100% financing without collateral up to Rs100,000 for projects implemented by women. Women, children and families in distress are being paid an allowance of Rs1,000 under Social Aid Scheme. We have set up a comprehensive programme by the Ministry of Woman Rights to offer support to women and children who need assistance. Another measure that would remain in the landmark of the history of Mauritius is the National Empower Foundation Programme which has a lifespan of five years and with the major objectives of securing employment, training and entrepreneurship development and here 3,000 women have benefited from the special programme for unemployed women. 7,640 persons have benefited from Training and Placement Programme. Hon. Bodha mentioned about women who are out of jobs and was asking what are being done for them. Well, the Training and Placement Programme addresses the needs of people who lose their jobs or when enterprises cannot give those jobs, or they have difficulties in keeping the jobs, they can be put on the training and placement programme. 5,400 micro and small enterprises have benefited from the special entrepreneurship programme. 1,052 jobs seekers have obtained help from the *Espace des Métiers*. 229 families have benefited from the integrated social development programme and the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups has helped some 60,000 vulnerable men, women and children. The decentralised cooperation programme is helping 8,800 persons, including 3,000 in Rodrigues to alleviate poverty. 1,052 job seekers have obtained help, as I mentioned, from the *Espace des Métiers*. In 2008-2009 Budget, Rs1 billion has been put aside

for the Absolute Poverty Programme to finance an integrated development project within identified pockets of poverty. This programme provides assistance to poor children of school going age, finance training of parents to get a decent job and setting-up of adequate infrastructure to deprived regions. So far, some 455 children between 3 and 5 years have benefited from this programme and some 100 households have benefited from the integrated projects. In the 2010 Budget, new measures have been announced to support the ZEP schools and children with special education needs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can go on because in the Budget there are so many measures which have been spelt out in favour of the poorer section of our society. Mention was made about housing problems; even there, we have effective poverty reduction strategies that cater for the housing needs of poor families.

Since July 2006, the Casting of Slabs Scheme has benefited 16,000 persons from vulnerable groups in the construction of the houses for a total sum of Rs810 m. 3,000 poor households have benefited some Rs160 m. for building corrugated iron sheet houses. Over 10,500 tenants of ex-CHA houses have already become the owners, and 2,300 families have benefited from the NHDC housing units. We have the social housing projects in the pipeline in deprived areas like Cité Lumière, La Valette, Bambous, Chebel, Henrietta, Rose Belle, Ville Noire and Rivière des Anguilles. The Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups Fund is financing the construction of 1,100 housing units in 229 pockets of poverty over and above the 2,401 units already constructed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, poverty is certainly a major concern for this Government and we have put in place a multi-pronged strategy with a whole range of measures to address the issue of poverty. Of course, there is this problem of assessing whether we are achieving the impact through all these measures. When I listened to hon. Bodha, he was talking about poverty alleviation and what needs to be done. Let me put it to him that, not only we are spending, to deal with the problem of poverty, but we have also - and this is something innovative that we have done - set up, in fact, this has already been set up - the Poverty Observatory - which is operational since two months to assess these measures and to see whether the poor are benefiting from the various measures which have been put in place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the orientation of this Budget, the expectations of this Budget, I can say to this House that the Social Alliance Government, since July 2005, we have as a guiding principle to 'Put People First'. I have just given examples of poverty alleviation, few examples of how we have provided economic relief through the tax regime, through subsidies and also through the housing projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are many more areas in which we have tried to bring comfort to the people. Of course, we have the sectors of health, education and the investments which have been made for the improvement of our infrastructures. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2010 is a budget of achievements; it is a Budget which has held its promises and which intends to go further.

As I said, four and a half years down the line, we are now on the eve, on the threshold of moving to the next phase of our development, and the next phase of the development, as I said earlier, will be much more challenging. To have an idea of how we have to tackle these challenges, I will use the manufacturing sector as a case study to illustrate that the next phase of

development will be much more challenging and will pose many more obstacles that we have to overcome.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the manufacturing sector, which falls under the responsibility of my Ministry, remains an important pillar of our economy. In fact, Mauritius has successfully attained the status of a middle-income economy, and the manufacturing sector has played a critical role in this development. This sector maintains a prominent place in our economy by contributing 19.5% to our GDP and accounting for 22% of total employment. The export-oriented enterprises contribute to 6.8% to our GDP and within the export-oriented sector, the textile and clothing sector accounts for 78.5% of total exports, which means that the textile and clothing sector is the largest sub sector of the export-oriented enterprises.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in his intervention, referred to the state of affairs in the textile sector in 2005. I wonder whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition has forgotten the situation that prevailed in 2005, when thousands of people were losing their jobs, many enterprises were closing down and people were thrown out of jobs. In fact, the economy itself was on its knees. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the previous Government neglected the textile and clothing sector in spite of the fact that it provided direct employment to some 80,000 people and exported to the tune of Rs26 billion in 2000. It is the previous Government that allowed the AGOA derogation - we lost the AGOA derogation, which was very important for the survival of the textile and clothing sector and, of course, of the other associated sectors. During the five years, from 2000 to 2005, the sector lost around 25,000 jobs, and exports contracted by Rs5.6 billion. Can there be any better testimony of the mismanagement of the textile and clothing sector by the previous Government?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since we assumed power, we spared no time in addressing the challenges confronting the sector. We took appropriate measures to turn around the sector with the result that growth and exports picked up to reach new heights. From a negative growth of 12.3% in 2005, the sector recorded positive growth rates of 2.9% in 2006 and 8.5% in 2007. However, as we know, due to the financial and economic crisis, growth has stagnated in 2008 and is expected to shrink to a negative figure of 4% in 2009. In 2010, the sector is likely to recover, as the world comes out of the recession. Provisional export data for the third quarter of this year already indicates that the demand for textile and clothing in our main markets has picked up. This trend is expected to be maintained next year. Export and growth prospects look good for the sector. Through our Economic Reform Programme and proactive measures targeting the sector, we have been able to arrest the decline of the sector and put it on a new growth path. In this perspective, it is important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I underline the strategic importance of the AGOA derogation which we obtained and which represents a new era of our relationship between USA, Sub-Saharan African countries since its enactment in 2001. This derogation provides opportunities for African countries to have free market access in one of the world's largest economies which boasts of GDP of thirteen trillion dollars and has a population of about three hundred million.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government believes in the potential of the manufacturing sector. That is why last year, to support our enterprises in difficulty, we introduced the Additional Stimulus Package to assist them to face the challenges arising out of the global economic slowdown.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Bodha was mentioning about why we should continue with the Additional Stimulus Package and he also referred to the USA where the Stimulus Package is being withdrawn. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are two different situations. In our case, the support is not being provided to the financial sector. The Additional Stimulus Package is being provided to the enterprises which are in difficulties. The second thing is that it is not money which is being dished out. In fact, questions were asked and replies were given that these are resources which are being put at the disposal of enterprises in difficulties, and there are strict conditions where the enterprise, the bank and also the Government will participate. It is tripartite arrangement with strict conditions. There is no question of just dishing out money.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we introduced the Additional Stimulus Package and we are maintaining this, because we are not yet through the difficulties that our enterprises have been facing. What is interesting is that many enterprises have been able to restructure with their own resources and we don't have many cases of enterprises which must have recourse to the facilities of the Additional Stimulus Package.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over and above the Additional Stimulus Package to help our enterprises, at the level of my Ministry, to support the enterprises we have set up an Industrial Engineering Unit at Enterprise Mauritius which is the executive arm of my Ministry in terms of capacity building, export promotion and quality improvement of the enterprises.

We have also passed a new Jewellery Act to support the jewellery sector, which is also going through certain difficulties, but this Act provides for the harmonious development of the jewellery sector. We have established a Business Excellence Award to recognise good practices and reward enterprises, which are improving their activities and their results. MAURITAS is responsible for the accreditation of labs. These labs have to certify products and services because today when we export, we have to ensure that products comply with certain norms and standards which are required by the importers. The accreditation by MAURITAS gives greater recognition to our products and services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the manufacturing sector is very important for the economy. It is an important pillar and everything that is possible is being done to ensure the future of this sector. But globalisation and trade liberalisation pose new challenges for this sector. The present enterprise model, which is based on cheap labour, preferences, protection as well as incentives, has outlived its usefulness. The manufacturing sector remains limited to four garment items and seafood products owing to a lack of technology, science based infrastructure, appropriate and adequate training in specialised skills and low inflow of FDI in high value sectors. Our enterprises seriously lack supply side capabilities to produce innovative and quality products for markets in America or Europe under the Economic Partnership Agreement.

Knowledge of the US market is still very limited, and there is now need to provide enterprises with greater market intelligence and, of course, with necessary support so that they can access the US market which is a very lucrative market. Alongside green technology, fair trade, equal levelling, modern state-of-the art logistics, new design, branding will have to be mainstreamed to connect with international buyers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our manufacturing sector will have to be repositioned in the context of this new economic environment and it has to move. It cannot continue to be a low value-adding sector. It has to move up the value chain. That is why there is need for a new industrial policy which will focus on firstly, new growth sectors, secondly, new investment drive

backed by aggressive targeted investment campaigns, leveraging on the positives in Mauritius such as the ease of doing business, qualified workforce, quality of lives, stability, its democratic traditions and its unique strategic location as a gateway between Africa, Continent of Asia and Europe. The investment strategy should target investors who are outsourcing the activities to lower cost countries. In fact, outsourcing has created a global value chain and finding the right product to manufacture in Mauritius is a challenge. Following the shift from total manufacturing to task based production, because now production is split and we have production on a modular basis, so that if we want to capture part of this global business, we have to shift from total manufacturing to task based production. The strategy should be to identify the right products in the value chain for production in Mauritius and attract FDI in a bid to diversify our industrial base. In promoting new investment, Mauritius requires a mechanism that systematically scans regionally and globally for opportunities for development of competitive sub sectors. A new Sector Opportunity Scanning Mechanism needs to be set up to assess the relevance of new sectors in a Mauritian new development vision.

Technology acquisition and adaptation and development to move up the market and remain competitive is another prerequisite and will involve the setting up of a business innovation centre. Export promotion drive focusing on market intelligence, closer links with buyers while meeting the requirements, responding to lead time through e-commerce platform, the setting up of factory shopping mall, training for export readiness and marketing support for first time exporters. We also have to address the issue of productivity enhancement through the adoption of quality management system, innovation technology processes, improved quality of inputs, best practices in human resource development, promoting a maintenance culture and creating better synergy among institutions like Enterprise Mauritius, National Productivity and Competitiveness Council and the private sector.

In line with our green Mauritius vision, Mauritius must build the image of an eco-friendly production based. In this connection, UNIDO has proposed establishment of a resource efficient and cleaner production centre in Mauritius to promote cleaner production among enterprises. UNIDO has agreed to provide financial and technical assistance and additional local funding will be required to operate the centre. The setting up of an *observatoire de l'industrie* to facilitate technology search, access and transfer is also an important issue. Skills development for technology intensive activities through a system of tailor-made apprenticeship training for specific sectors and industries is also another important consideration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to move and reposition the manufacturing sector in order to make it more competitive and also integrate the global value chain. My Ministry has taken all these aspects into consideration, and we have elaborated a new industrial development strategy to reposition the Mauritian industry as well as the SMEs sector in the new business environment. The document is being finalised and will be submitted to Government and then will be released to the public. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, if we look at what is happening in the manufacturing sector, it is clear that we will have to remodel the manufacturing sector and make it more technology driven, more innovation driven, more entrepreneurial and, of course, there must be greater creativity in the activities of these enterprises. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why I said in the earlier part of my intervention that the new development paradigm that will drive our economy and our society, will have to be supported by science, technology and innovation. Without the contribution of science, technology and innovation, we are not going to reach there. That is, why I said that I can see in this Budget a new development paradigm, but to

make this new development paradigm a reality, we have to support it through science technology and innovation.

As regards science, technology and innovation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not only the case of Mauritius. In fact, if we look at the development of many countries - European, American, Japanese after the Second World War – they tapped on science, technology and innovation and they were able to make remarkable progress. Even today, this issue is still very pertinent. Not later than in April 2009, President Obama addressing the National Academic of Sciences stated, and I quote -

“Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment and our quality of life than it has ever been before”.

He emphasised that if America wants to ensure its prosperity and progress, then it has to promote science as an important discipline to support not only the economy, but the society at large. Peter Mandelson, UK Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform stated -

“Science is not only the ladder by which we will climb out of the downturn, it is also critical to our success in the upturn”.

I can recall when President Abdul Kalam came to Mauritius in 2006, he gave the same message to Mauritius. He said that if Mauritius wants to forge ahead, it needs to have a strong scientific base. A strong scientific and engineering base is critical for our next phase of development for a high wage, high-tech jobs of the future and to foster the next generation of scientists and engineers. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not a coincidence that in the Cabinet reshuffle in September 2008 - and it goes to the credit of people with vision, leadership and I have always thought about it. The Prime Minister happens to be a doctor and a lawyer, and he appreciates fully the importance of science in the future of our economy for our society - for the first time, there has been a Ministry of Industry, Science and Research. I think in the history of Mauritius it is the first time that a new Ministry is created to give focus and momentum to science and research, and it goes to the credit of the Prime Minister who created this Ministry; and it also goes to the credit of the Prime Minister that two important science and research institutions, the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre and the Mauritius Research Council, are under the responsibility of this Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, science, technology and innovation have played a critical role in the developmental process of newly industrialised economy. Close to us, we have Singapore, South Korea and many other countries, which have harnessed the power and potential of science, technology and innovation and have made huge strides in the economic and social fields. Overall science, technology and innovation have contributed to enhance and improve the quality of life characterised by high per capita income and more equitable distribution of income.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we want science, technology and innovation to support the new development paradigm, we have to address a few challenges. We do have a number of science and research organisations, academic institutions involved in the promotion of science, technology and innovation but there is a number of issues that needs to be addressed. First, we need to create and enabling policy environment with a strong research and development leadership, and this is one of the challenges for my Ministry: how to ensure effective coordination so that the activities can be focussed, so that the activities do not remain purely academic activities, so that the research and development trickles down to enterprises, to

markets, to society. That is one of the big challenges, and we are not yet there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is a new culture, a new development that has to take place, so that we can harness the power and potential of research and development for the benefit of our society.

It is capital, therefore, to promote, coordinate, organise and prioritise research and monitor research output. For too long, research has been carried out, but the impact of the research on enterprises, the products and the services and also on society has been very limited. It is, therefore, important to prioritise research and monitor research output. At the same time, research in humanities, arts and social sciences are absolutely essential to accompany scientific and technological progress. This is another issue. We cannot talk about science and research, research and development only in terms of the pure sciences. We have also to talk about research and development of sciences, taking on board the humanities, arts and social sciences. We have to ensure that we move from the sectoral approach to a multi-disciplinary and competence based approach.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was happy to listen to the hon. Minister of Education, Human Resource and Culture talking about the support being given for mainstreaming science in our curriculum. I think that this is important, because we need to create a love for science among our students, as these students will tomorrow become the employees, managers and they will be in leadership positions. We need to create a science culture, encourage the public understanding of science and innovation, organise activities and events to stimulate people's interest in science, technology and innovation. That is what the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre is doing through the strategies it has put in place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issue of expenditure on research and development is also very critical. In Mauritius, we spend 0.36%, which is less than 1% of our GDP, on research and development. It is very low, compared to industrialised countries, which spend 3%, 3.5%, 4% of the GDP on research and development. In the Africa region, it is far too less. Only South Africa has been able in this region to move very close to 1%. We need to make efforts, so as to increase the allocation for research and development, and this is where I am happy that the idea of promoting science, technology and research has been taken on board in the 2010 Budget. Government has provided, in this Budget, for the very first time, an amount of Rs22 m. to establish a science technology and innovation framework. The framework would contribute to produce a new generation of entrepreneurs in production of value added products and bridge the technology gap in our economic sectors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will just say quickly a few words about creativity and innovation, which are closely connected to science technology and innovation. I made a case that, if we want to move to the next development paradigm, we have to mainstream science, technology, innovation. And it is this Government which has taken the steps that need to be taken to mainstream science technology and innovation. It is in this respect that I need to mention the creation of the Fashion and Design Institute. Government created the Fashion and Design Institute to promote creativity and design. This is an institution, which, hopefully, in years to come, will develop into a Design University. It can happen. Nothing is impossible. We have taken the first new steps, and we can create a university of fashion and design in the years to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the development of another sector, which is linked to creativity and innovation, is the film industry. As you know, the Film Development Corporation falls under

my responsibility, and one of the key missions of the MFDC is to develop a local film industry. We are already taking steps to achieve this mission. A capacity-building programme has been put in place. Short film competitions have been organised, and the MFDC is promoting Mauritius as a film-shooting destination. In this context, I am very thankful again to the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for having earmarked Rs10 m. to develop Mauritius as a location for filmmakers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, the 2010 Budget can be looked at from different perspectives. I have stated that I see the 2010 Budget as a Budget which charts a new way forward for Mauritius. But this new way forward has to be supported by new knowledge, new technology, innovation and creativity. This new paradigm, therefore, needs the support of science technology innovation, creativity and, I think, the Budget 2010 is a prelude, sets the scene for the next mandate for the Social Alliance Government. We will take our country to its next of development.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Dr. Mungur rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 23 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.16 p.m, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 23 November 2009, at 11.30 a.m.