

**No. 32 of 2009**



**FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION  
WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2009**

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**MAURITIUS**

**Fourth National Assembly**

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**FIRST SESSION**  
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**Debate No. 32 of 2009**

**Sitting of Wednesday 25 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)*

**MOTION****SUSPENSION OF SO 10(2)**

**The Ag. 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.

**Mr X. L. Duval rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**PUBLIC BILL**

*Second Reading*

**THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL**

**(No. XXI of 2009)**

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

*Question again proposed.*

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been an honour and a privilege for me to serve in the Government of Mauritius for the last four and a half years and I wish to thank the population of Mauritius for having allowed my colleagues and I, from the Alliance Sociale, to do so. I wish, at the outset, to thank and congratulate my colleague and friend, hon. Rama Sithanen, for not only this Budget, but all the five Budgets that he has, in fact, presented to this House over the last four and a half years. In fact, if I were to take - obviously, I won't be able to take all the points - three points which have particularly pleased me over these years, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would talk firstly of the halving of income tax rate for the population and, especially for business, because it has given a new dynamism, a new impetus to the industrial and commercial sectors of Mauritius and has above all permitted, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius to gain from this tremendous surge in foreign direct investment as we have had over last three years. One of the things that has resulted in that is the substantial fall in the rate of income tax from 30% to 15% and, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should congratulate and thank the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for that and also for his continuous efforts at getting rid of

red tape and facilitating business in Mauritius, especially if we take into account the revolution that the Occupation Permit has brought into plain Mauritius where a foreigner, within three days, can get his work and a residence permit in one document just by going to the Board of Investment. This also, Mr Speaker, Sir, has changed the look that foreigners have given to the perception of Mauritius overseas. Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, on these three points, I will take, what I would call, a stroke of genius - because I have not thought of it myself - that is, the CSR. I think this will bring, over the years to come, a great change in the way social work is carried out in Mauritius just by giving firms the opportunity to put 2% of their annual profits in social and other works, Mr Speaker, Sir. It will cut a lot of red tape. We have good intentions in Government. We vote Rs60 billion a year or so for Government. Much of it goes into the administration and to wastage. For every Government, it is the same thing. Whereas now, in this way, a substantial part of this money can go directly to the people in need, to the organisations in need and will create the necessary facilities. I think this is wonderful, Mr Speaker, Sir and again, in the years to come people will be thankful to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister for having created the CSR and allowed firms to spend 2% of their profits directly on social and other works. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for the four and half years of stable and steady Government that we have had. I don't think that there has been any other Government with so little turbulence and dissidence. We have lost only one Member of Parliament and we have been more than compensated, I would say, with the arrival of hon. Allet. This has particularly pleased me. I think this is a record. If we look back into history, over the last four and a half years, we have not had such a stable and steady Government. Besides, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been provided with a vision throughout the four and a half years that we have been in power.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the civil servants who have worked for us for the four and a half years, my two PSs who have been there all through four and half years; all those who have worked for us in the civil service and especially all the political nominees who have been appointed by us in the various departments that I have looked after. We often criticise these political nominees, but they do not deserve it because they have done a wonderful job in my Ministry as well as in many other Ministries, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is an opportunity for me to thank all the people who have put themselves at the disposal of the Government and of the country for the last four and a half years.

For my part, Mr Speaker, Sir, I find the four and a half years very rewarding. It is by far my longest stay in Government. Last time I think it was nine months, the maximum that I could do; this time I have been there for four and a half years. I find it very rewarding and have had really a lot of satisfaction. At the Ministry we have been able to do some things in so many areas which have been particularly pleasing. We may not have done them 100% right, nobody can do that, but I think, and I do hope, that the population realises what has been

done. The things that we have done have been very well accepted by the population and have had a popular appeal.

I would like to talk of a few things which have particularly pleased me. One of the things that we have done at the Ministry of Tourism: its involvement in the various cultural festivals of our country, in particular, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had the heave of the fourth edition of the Festival International Kreol, something which had never been done for the last 40 years since Independence. Nobody had thought of it, nobody had wanted to do it, or perhaps nobody had dared to do it because maybe they thought that they could not get the whole population to agree that this should be done. We had done that over the past years. We had been criticised by some sections of the population because through the last three years we had managed to involve all artists and the whole population in the Festival International Kreol. It is also good to mention that *la créolité* is not a physical attribute, it is not because you look this way that you are a Creole, this is not the Festival International Kreol. We are talking about culture and it is whether you feel that you a Creole that you participate. All of us whether we like it or not, have a bit of *créolité* in one degree or another. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Festival International Kreol has got off the ground, *a pris son envol*. This year, it will be bigger and better than ever with the involvement of a lot of people from the civil society which we did not have before. I do sincerely hope that all Members of Parliament will come to the opening by the President of Mauritius, this time – the Prime Minister is not in Mauritius – on Saturday and then we will have on Sunday the *Grand Régate* in Mahébourg and so on and so forth. It is a popular thing and I hope everybody will come because it is not a political platform.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Festival International Kreol was necessary, because we need to create showcases of our culture, because we need to put more depth in our destination, also, because a large part of the population did not feel that we were giving sufficient value to their culture and I think that is important. If you get up in the morning and you feel that your culture is somehow less valuable than somebody else's culture, then you are not going to fight for your rights, you are not going to fight for your children, you are not going to fight for your family and you will not be able to succeed in life. It is so important that every culture in Mauritius is encouraged and given value by Government and by the people of Mauritius. This sheer diversity of culture that we have is the beauty of Mauritius. Within Port Louis itself, within half an hour drive, you have the Kaylasson, the Pagode, the Great Mosque, the Cathedral, all the temples, just within us. Yet, we don't take the time often enough. How many people go and visit the Pagode. We don't take time to learn about each other's culture and there is sometimes this *méfiance*. We look down on it because we don't take time to do it. If we can and Government gives the chance to people to see how beautiful these cultures are, I think that it is good for national unity and good for our country, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is why we were very happy to participate in

Divali and it was an outstanding Divali. Apart from what the Minister of Culture did in Mahebourg, actually with the help of the *Mairie de Lyon*, we did some wonderful things in Curepipe and Caudan. In Curepipe, what was particularly wonderful – there was some hesitation – we persuaded the Catholic Church to put the St. Therese Church at our disposal and we had been able to illuminate St. Therese Church for Divali.

*(Interruptions)*

Every night I went there. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition will agree, a whole population went on that Municipal Square during that week - white, yellow, whatever you want. Everybody was there, everybody participated in Divali and that is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was so pleasing. We did an Islamic fair last week and this is something that we think of doing in April next year during Varusha Pirappu, We want to offer this showcase to the Tamil community, which is a proud community, proud of its culture, proud of its contribution to this country ...

*(Interruptions)*

Rightly so, my colleague is saying. Mr Speaker, Sir, in April next year, we will be holding a *Festival de la Culture Tamoule...*

*(Interruptions)*

I think it is good also that we are offering to Mauritians and to our visitors an agenda/a yearly calendar so that they'll know. They will not come to Mauritius just when the season is right. They will come to Mauritius also when there are things happening and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a gradual change that we are bringing to our tourism offering in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another thing that has been particularly pleasing for us is the way that we have been able to use funds from tourism to alleviate poverty. We all know that the fact that tourists come to Mauritius is an excellent way to alleviate poverty. Unless I am mistaken, this is the first time in our history that rupees directly arise from tourism to alleviate poverty and help the most needy in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am speaking obviously of the intervention of the Tourism Fund in deprived areas of the country. Previously - that was a decision of the previous Government - most or all of that money would go in the building of roads at Bel Ombre. Fair enough! There is a beautiful site at Bel Ombre, which was the choice of the previous Government; in fact when we took over there was a negative Rs80 m. in the Tourism Fund. That was the situation. Mr Speaker, Sir, we amended the regulations and we decided that the Tourism Fund should be able to intervene in more areas than that. We have done many beautiful things, Mr Speaker, Sir, with that money. In particular, Mr

Speaker, Sir, I would like to stress on what we've done in Roche Bois. We have done many other things. Roche Bois is very visible, because nobody had done anything before, but if you went in other areas...

*(Interruptions)*

It is true. I maintain what I am saying. That is why it is so visible in Roche Bois. We went in Dubreuil, in Mahebourg, in Goodlands, in Vallée des Prêtres, in Curepipe, in Quatre Bornes, everywhere, but Roches Bois was such a deprived area. I went there this morning. Sometimes I go there two or three times.

*(Interruptions)*

No, I don't want to make politics out of it. I really don't want to do that. It is true, I went there one night, I saw how it was and I said within three months we will start to do substantial work to rehabilitate, because they are Mauritians and they should be able to work and live in decency; and that was the reason. It is not a political reason. I am not going to stand there for the elections to say why I was interested in Roche Bois.

*(Interruptions)*

So, we have intervened in Roche Bois. I don't want to say every day, but every week, at least two people from Roche Bois come up to me, phone me or use Facebook or something like that to say: 'Thank you Xavier for what you've done for us'. I am telling the truth. That is the truth we have rehabilitated. How many people, amongst us, knew that there exists a beautiful beach in Roche Bois. That's enough to say, nobody knew – I did not know – that there existed a beautiful beach in Roche Bois. The sanctuary there was *délaissé* and we have redone it. The roads were terrible, the place was downtrodden. It is not perfect, but it is much better now. We are working with a firm called Manser Saxon. I would like to thank that particular firm for the extraordinary and tremendous help; it goes beyond the normal, which it has given, through us, to Roche Bois. There is, in particular, the construction of a leisure park which we have done together with the Ministry of Local Government. It is going to be a beautiful leisure park. It is going to be an activity area where you can do skateboarding, you can do exercises. There is a volleyball pitch. It is beautiful. Give us a few more months and you will see. Anyway I don't know if hon. Barbier does not agree with me, but I have spoken from the heart, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have said what I feel. A last thing on Roche Bois what I like best is that I went there this morning before coming. It remains spotlessly clean, because the feeling in Roche Bois is: you clean it and it will become dirty again. If anybody wants to go there, he will see the roads clean, there is no litter. People appreciate what we have done and they are maintaining the area to a very high standard; and that is fantastic.

We have worked in many areas all over the island, not only in Roche Bois, we have worked in Goodlands, Dubreuil, Quatre Bornes *bien sûr*, Mahebourg, Curepipe, Port Louis, Vallée des Prêtres, Madame Azor. We have done so many places.

Another area where we've worked - and I know this is topical - with my colleague, the Minister of Housing, is on the NHDC estates. That is an issue which I raised. You know who started the NHDC, it was a big mistake. Never in Mauritius should we have constructed high-rise. Never! At the time when these were constructed, these were the same types of buildings which were being destroyed all over the world. I remember I raised it here and the Government of the day did not listen to me. Fair enough! Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have major problems at the NHDC that we are struggling to solve. I am happy, Mr Speaker, Sir, a sum of Rs200 m. is being used for major problems like infrastructural works that need to be done. We, ourselves, again, through the Tourism Authority, have worked for the general cleaning of a number of NHDC estates namely La Caverne, Palm Court in Palma, Baie du Tombeau, Vallée des Prêtres, Camp Levieux; some work has been done at La Tour Koenig; and soon we will start at Beau Vallon and Forest Side. We haven't done enough because we don't have enough money to do more, but we have changed the lives of the people working there, and I just wish that we'll have enough time and enough money to do all the rest because these people are working in difficult situations, be it for the stray animals, the rubbish collection, the water seeping through, the electricity connection amongst others. There is a big problem, and we have to be careful. I agree with the people who say that there is a problem at the NHDC, and we need to sort it out. In fact, there is a committee which is looking at this issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, there is this objective of the tourism industry to come directly to the help of the needy people as well as support the destination itself. We were very pleased to have received the "World's Leading Island Destination" award. Often, hotels like St Géran and Touessrok receive prizes. I am happy for them, but very rarely does a destination get a prize. This is why again we must support what the Tourism Authority has been trying to do, because the destination is important. Those rich tourists, so stressed who, when coming to Mauritius, only wanted to sit in the hotel and not move, are few and far between. Nowadays people want to move; they have an active life and when they come to a country, they want an experience, but would they go out of their hotel which is fantastic like in Disneyland, to see that outside it's not nice, it's dirty, and people are poor? They would not come out of their hotels so we have to encourage them to come out of their hotels to spend time and money with the population. We have worked a lot on the destination, Mr Speaker, Sir. All the signboards that you see - we have been talking about it since 20 years – white on brown are from the Ministry of Tourism. We put them all around the island. These are excellent signboards, Mr Speaker, Sir. The "*décoller pas coller*" was a big success, and the Opposition participated fully with that. We can hardly see now

any illegal posters around. The new programme that we did - “*to jeter to tasser*” - has not been that successful yet. We are not going to give up, because it is essential. To be truthful, the bad habit that Mauritians have to litter, even in front of their own house, remains. This has not been sorted out, and we will pursue on that. We have worked with AHRIM and the Minister of Environment. There is a new programme around Trou d’Eau Douce where Securiclean (Mauritius) Ltd, one of the companies being paid by the hotels, will do the cleaning. We will do the same thing in the North of the island where, again, the hotels will pay for the northern coast to be cleared. Then it will be the turn of Flic en Flac and Mahebourg, but we cannot do everything. The Local Authorities have to assume their responsibilities, and I know that my colleague, the Minister of Local Government, is looking closely at that so that we can get a litter free country.

*(Interruptions)*

No, no, this speech is not controversial! We need to get, Mr Speaker, Sir, a litter free country to do justice to the beauty that God has made Mauritius. How can we do otherwise? This is what we have to do, and I know we will receive the help from all the people of Mauritius to get this done. Besides we have put buoys all around the island to protect swimmers. We have done lots of things of which we are very proud.

One thing I need to mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, is our involvement in improving the security of the tourists and Mauritians at the same time, because when we talk of cleanliness, it is not just for the tourists; Mauritians will benefit also. When we talk of safe seas, it is for the safety of not only the tourists, but the Mauritians too.

We need to talk about security. We co-finance, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the police, to the tune of Rs25 m., the installation of the 70 cameras in Flic en Flac. This is working beautifully and it has had a beautiful effect on crime prevention in Flic en Flac. Yesterday, Mr Speaker, Sir, started the installation of 38 hi-tech cameras in Quatre Bornes, and it is going to be all over Quatre Bornes. Some are revolving, some are fixed, and I must say that most of these cameras were given free to the Government by a company called Secu-Tech Ltd. under its CSR. I would like to thank them for that. We paid for the installation and the rest; it’s quite a lot of money. These cameras, linked by Internet to the monitoring station at police headquarters, will transform the law and order situation in Quatre Bornes, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the way forward. I am pleased that we have been able to make of Quatre Bornes *une ville phare* as far as security is concerned. Hopefully, Mr Speaker, Sir, with what has been said in the Budget, we will go forward to Port Louis, Grand’ Baie and other places. Mr Speaker, Sir, in London, there are six million cameras installed. This is the future and this is how we need to go forward. We are fully supportive of the efforts of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to install these cameras, with the collaboration of the police - and it is always handled by the police - to create the surveillance system.

Some people are upset because we are watching them, but it is for their own good that we are doing that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a little point. I would like to say - whatever I have been able to do for the last four and a half years - one thing, in particular, which has touched my heart. That is the connection of water to the 45 squatting families in Vallée des Prêtres, Cité la Cure. Mr Speaker, Sir, they are on the side of a river bed and, if the water comes up, they are in danger. So, Government decided, with the help of the Minister of Housing, to move the squatting families on an opposite piece of land, but this may take six months. When we went there, Mr Speaker, Sir, we could see children bathing in the river. I don't know what water they were drinking and whether they boiled it or not. That was the situation. With the help of Ireland Blyth this time, we have been able, at no cost to Government, and with the permission of the Ministry of Housing, to connect, not directly, but to provide huge water tanks with clean drinking water to 45 families, mums, dads and many small children. That has touched my heart, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

I am particularly pleased that this has been done. It's a small number of people, but they get direct help. This is the beauty of CSR, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as squatters are concerned, we are pleased to have put into practice something that we promised jointly in the 1999 Government. With the help of the Attorney General and the Prime Minister, what had supposedly been impossible before has been rendered possible. People owners of their CHA houses, who were renting the land, have become full freehold owners of their land. That is wonderful, Mr Speaker, Sir, because it offers a new sphere of not only their presence and their feeling of being Mauritians, but also the way that they can actually live, do business and borrow money. Up to date, Mr Speaker, Sir, although 10,000 Letters of Intent have been issued, 6,129 families have actually obtained their title deeds, and are now almost fully owners of their CHA houses.

*(Interruptions)*

That is beautiful, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have done so many other things in that mood like the Equal Opportunities Act which needs to be promulgated now; *La Commission Justice et Vérité*, and the inscription of *Le paysage culturel du Morne* to the *patrimoine mondial*.

Another thing which we have been able to do, Mr Speaker, Sir, relates to Air Mauritius. Much has been said about Air Mauritius being bankrupt. When I took over, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Prime Minister, about a year ago, asked me to look more closely into the file, I received e-mails stating: 'Don't take it Xavier, it is a

trap. *Méchanceté ça; don't take that file*'. I believed in what I was doing, with the support of the Minister of Finance and with the great support of the Prime Minister. We have been able to turn the airline around. That's a fact! When I was saying a few months ago that Air Mauritius was out of the red, there was a lot of talk. They said: "what is he talking about?" I am an Accountant, and I can tell when something is in the red or not, especially with the Labour Party. It is not difficult; it is out of the red.

During the last six months not only have they made operational profits of Rs700 m. but, Mr Speaker, Sir, nearly Rs200 m. of profits, after taking into account the hedging loss. Isn't this wonderful? So, the tides turned round. I can tell you now that it is no longer in danger. Of course, the Euro has helped, everything has helped, but we have also done the work. I am thankful to the management and staff of Air Mauritius for having enabled the saving of the airline. What were we not told at that time? We talked about selling this and that. How could we sell some airplanes? Air Mauritius has been saved at minimal cost; no asset has been sold. Why? It would have been a distress sale at a time of economic downturn, so we did not sell. Nobody was fired save for some contracts that came to an end as for a pilot. We are one of the few airlines that fired no one. Still, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have recovered from this terrible hedging problem that we have had and which probably other airlines have had. Mauritius, being a small country, was like a big volcano but every single country, every single airline had its hedging disaster. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have faced it and we have been able to survive. The airline is back on its track. Air Mauritius had to cut its unprofitable routes, but as from April next year it will increase its offer of seats by 10%. That's good news for the tourism industry. Air Mauritius will become financially strong again to come to the assistance of the country, of the tourism industry, and, of course, let's not forget the free zone. Air Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, is definitely out of the red and *Insha Allah* it will stay this way - I hope so anyway.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we've done everything we could in that direction. There has been an increase of 25% tourists during the last three months in Rodrigues Excellent! I think we have every reason to be happy. I must say that the MTPA has done a great job, not only with regard to the fall in fares which have had an effect, but also MTPA has had intensive campaigns in Mauritius and overseas and this has helped to sustain the arrivals in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll now come to branding. There have been many ups and downs with this branding. Some people adore it like the Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frédéric François, the Deputy Mayor of Lyon. They love it and say: 'keep it, don't do anything with it'. Some people dislike it, but I hope we will get used to it. We have been very attentive to whatever has been said in this House. It is in our nature to be very attentive to what is being said in the House and outside.

We have passed on all the comments to Acanchi Ltd. They think we should stick to it; they may be proposing some fine-tuned adjustments. We'll keep in mind the idea. Of course, the idea is to have something beautiful of which we will all be proud. It is a first step and, hopefully, we will go in that direction. I'll say it again, it is not a logo exercise, it is not a caption exercise, it is a branding; it is much bigger, it will incorporate the whole nature of the country, what we all stand for, our strength and our weaknesses, on what we should work at in order to reduce our weaknesses and increase our strength. We will be coming to that in the months ahead.

Mr Speaker, Sir, quickly on the port side, our cruise jetty has been finalised. Today, it will be handed over to the port authorities which will handle it. Some more works will be done like the fencing, etc and we hope that by 15 January, the first crew ship can dock at the cruise jetty. That will be a great new product for Mauritius to offer. Never before have we been able to get into the cruise tourism. Every year, there is a bigger ship, this time it is the Costa Romantica - I don't know if the hon. Members have reserved cruises on that ship, but it's here. It is now the season. If it works for Costa *Croisière*, it will definitely work for others – hopefully the pirates will give us a break.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the port is concerned - I'll go on that very quickly - I am very pleased with its performance. You will remember, at the start of this legislature, every time there was a cruise, there were many problems at the port in terms of waiting time, productivity, etc. The article in "*l'Express*" by Mr Bernard Saminaden was not accurate by the way. He got it wrong as usual, maybe. Now we hear no more complaints. Why? We talk of crane productivity, growth moves per hour has increased by 50% over the life of this Government from 14 moves per hour to 21 growth moves per hour. Even more, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is less waiting time ranging from a high of 48 hours to a very low of 3 hours. When a ship comes to Mauritius, first it may wait before docking, and when it docks over the sea it has to be worked on, containers are taken to and from. Productivity, when it is at dock, has increased substantially.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a substantial change in the environment for ships travelling to Mauritius. Government has increased the stevedoring and the shore charges by 18% recently. We were ridiculously cheap that is why we did it, but, even with this increase, we are the cheapest port in the region and by far the most secured one. We are upgrading to service a whole new range of trade ships that come to Mauritius. This increase of 18% is good and, as I said, it is going to have a very minimal impact on the cost of living. Would you believe it, there has been no increase as far as the shore charges are concerned for the last 30 years and no increase in the stevedore charges for the last 10 years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, we've had a very good four and a half years. In the tourism sector, we have had the misfortune of getting the Chikungunya which is a very bad disease and, at the same time, there had been the world financial meltdown. In the space of these four years, as Minister of Tourism, I have had to deal with two major crisis but, nevertheless, as far as, tourism is concerned - I'll come to that - we are at about minus 8 (-8) insofar as arrivals are concerned. I was particularly happy to note that in October there was a big change minus 2 (-2) compared to October last year when there had been a big fall. For November - I get the figures from the airport – it is the same as last year. It looks like we are coming out of recession, at least as far as the tourism industry is concerned. The UK market is very good. There has been a 20 to 30 percent increase in the UK market over December last year; France has always been good, it is has always been positive. Corsair has just opened its flight from Nantes and, as from April next year, it will come from Marseille, so there is a big dynamism in the French market. The other markets are more difficult, they still need to be worked on, but we have a plan. As soon as things start to pick up we will be very aggressive on these markets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been able to do some beautiful things even during the crisis. The *Mauritius no passport* advertising campaign was hailed all over our markets and even Seychelles copied what we have done. That is good, Mr Speaker, Sir. Concerning the "Escale Mauriciennes" we did after the *Chikungunya* there had been a lot of criticisms. We did the "Escale Mauriciennes" all over France - I went there - and it had a tremendous effect. Another thing that we have done with the help and advice of the Prime Minister is to relax a number of the visa requirements which, in fact, were not necessary at all, from Russia and Middle East. This has given an impetus to the market.

Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have liberalised air access and we have done so at the detriment of Air Mauritius. I forgot to mention that Air Mauritius still has to work a lot to improve its service, its efficiency, but, at least, it is there and it is serving the country. As soon as we liberalised, Virgin Atlantic has come again to Mauritius, maybe it will be for the season or for the whole year round. Corsair is increasing its flights. As I mentioned, it is not coming only from Paris which was our main basket before, but we are actually spreading our wings all over the regions of France. That was one of the conditions when we actually accepted Corsair in Mauritius. Euroflights have come from Italy, Emirates are doing nine flights a week and, I understand, it is always full. What is the beauty of Emirates? It is open to the whole world. If you want to come from Greece, Turkey, India, Russia, you just jump on an Emirates flight – I don't want to do its publicity, but it does open the whole world to Mauritius. Even for Mauritians who want to travel, there is no need to change flights from Europe. We have liberalised, Mr Speaker, Sir, and that has helped. From South Africa, we have now British Airways & Comair.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the end of the year promises to be good, I am very optimistic as the feedback on the market is good. Because the airlines are back, Air Mauritius will increase its offer next year. For the immediate future, Mr Speaker, Sir, FIFA Nashville has reserved 3,200 rooms, not beds, over the FIFA World Cup 2010 period. That should account for about 20,000 tourists. Mr Speaker, Sir, when there is a promotion and we spend Rs1m. to Rs2m., people criticise, that is normal because it is public money, but if this exercise is successful, we will bring some 20,000 people to Mauritius during that period, we will bring into Mauritius Rs1.2 billion. You have to spend money in order to get more, otherwise you do not receive. We have not completely finalised, but we are nearly there. There are some problems which we are trying to sort out. I do hope that through Nashville and FIFA, Mauritius will, in a way, be able to participate directly in the FIFA World Cup 2010. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are also liaising with the Minister of Sports to get some teams for the pre-training camps. I have been invited for the draws next week, but because of budget time, this may not be possible. Nevertheless people will go from Mauritius and we want to use that as a platform to get some teams for pre-training camps in Mauritius. They will come with their supporters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that this will happen. For next year, we have the Nashville; the FIFA pre-training camps. We are talking of the Miss World organisation and maybe we will get part of the Miss World contest here next year. We hope that this will happen. Again, I have been invited to the Miss World contest, but I will not go to this one. This will take place in December, but we hope that afterwards we will get part of that. That is very glamorous. We are trying to do two things: keep Mauritius as a glamorous destination with Miss World. My predecessors went to Cannes; it goes in the same line of thinking.

Something may be of interest to a lot of football fans. I have kept the best for the last. We are having talks with two football clubs not *tipti, tipti*, the Chelsea Football Club and the Manchester United football club. I have the letter here. They are both interested in partnering with Mauritius as a destination partner. There are conditions attached, there are things to pay. For both Chelsea and Manchester United football clubs, we are looking about the same conditions, the same advantages, tickets, team members coming with the possibility to use the stadium, to advertise during the matches with electronic billboards around the stadiums; with their players coming during our events overseas. There are a lot of things, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a three-page document which we are looking at. We are seeing whether we can afford. It is not that much money, but we are looking at it. I would not have thought that Manchester United football club and Chelsea football club would have been interested in Mauritius. Maybe they know they have so many supporters there. There are different advantages as well as disadvantages with the Manchester United and Chelsea football clubs. Manchester United football club has got the bigger brand. It has got the bigger worldwide appeal, but Chelsea football club has got a very rich clientele. Chelsea football club speaks for itself, has a different clientele and a different corporate

following than Manchester United football club. We have to look at both, but I think I will keep that little bit for the end of my speech, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In future, Mr Speaker, Sir, eco-classification of hotels. The environment now is paramount; the planet is in danger. We know that in Mauritius, but Europeans know ten times more than us about the endangered climate. People will not take their holidays, Mr Speaker, Sir, in destinations where they feel these are endangering the planet. They will not do so, I am convinced of that. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are soon launching expressions of interest for consultants to help us in the classification of our hotels so far as the ecological environment impact is concerned. We want to know how much damage or otherwise each hotel is causing. I don't agree with this 4-star, 5-star classification. That is gone now. We want to classify our hotels on the basis of its impact on the environment. If a hotel is 2-star whereas the next door hotel is 4-star in terms of ecological impact, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the 4-star guy will be able to tap this for its marketing and the 2-star guy will want to upgrade his footprint so that he can use it for his own sustainability. I think you will agree that the environmental impact of our hotels is essential for Mauritius, and we will be launching and asking for a tender, for expressions of interests and interests from firms that are going to help us classify our hotels, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think I have come to the end of what I needed to say.

Perhaps I should also say how much we have worked tremendously as a team in Government, with all my colleagues Ministers, MPs or PPSs. The population has been right to trust us. I think we have delivered. The slogan we had before, Mr Speaker, Sir, *résultat lor résultat*, applies, even more to all of us here and Government. Whatever the future may hold in store for our country, I think the population, the electorate knows fully well already Mr Speaker, Sir, that their future and the future of their children is safe in our hands.

Thank you, Sir.

(12.29 p.m.)

**Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River):** M. le président, après avoir écouté notre collègue, l'honorable Xavier Luc Duval, le ministre des finances sera très déçu de ce que je vais dire. Ce budget est décevant car on s'attendait après tout à ce que chacun reçoive sa part du gâteau national, surtout après les mots du ministre des finances, surtout après un *early harvest* et quelque temps après, un *bumper crop*. Malheureusement quand le temps de partages est arrivé, ce ne fût rien. Les riches se retrouvent encore une fois plus riches et les pauvres, plus pauvres.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, besides the salary compensation on which the Minister of Finance has had to backpedal on the implementation date and the hundreds of jobs which have been created in the civil service, the 2010 budget is, unfortunately, nothing, but a repetition of what was said before.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will address three main issues today, namely: women, agro-industry and problems affecting my constituency. I will also make some brief remarks on Corporate Social Responsibility, but before coming to these issues, as a former civil servant, I wish to ask the Minister of Finance the logic behind his giving a salary compensation as from 01 January and fixing the incremental date for civil servants as from 01 April. I cannot understand his logic. We all know that the NPC has become a gimmick in the hands of the Minister of Finance and the NPC has been totally ignored when fixing the salary compensation, but what about consultations regarding the fixing of the incremental date. Can I ask the Minister of Finance whether he has had consultations with the respective unions? Has he consulted the State Employees Federation? Has he consulted the Federation of Civil Service Employees? Mr Speaker, Sir, it was imperative to consult these two Federations as they are the ones which sit on the Central Whitley Council, but the Minister of Finance has deemed it fit to ignore them and fix the incremental date to 01 April. The Minister of Finance may come up with all sorts of excuses, the performance appraisal, for example, but this also can be done throughout the year. It is now a modern trend to have performance appraisal done throughout the year. He, himself, is the architect of changing the financial year making it start as from 01 January; he cannot say that he could not find time to engage in discussions with the respective Unions. *Gouverner c'est prévoir*, but he has simply decided to ignore these Federations. Mr Speaker, Sir, according to me, the incremental date should have been 01 January. When the financial year started on 01 July, the incremental date was 01 July. Why is it that now the civil servants have been denied of this right? This is unfair. I am making an appeal to the Minister of Finance to restore dialogue with the respective Federations and also to restore the acquired rights to the civil servants.

Having said this, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now highlight some women's issues which, according to me, are extremely important and which are not being given the attention they deserve. Mes remarques seront pertinentes, M. le président, étant donné qu'on célèbre aujourd'hui la journée internationale pour l'élimination de la violence à l'égard des femmes, *but I deplore the fact that, maybe, the Minister of Women's Rights has other commitments and she is not here.*

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, she is celebrating, but she is not addressing the issues that need to be addressed. A lot of money is regularly being voted to combat domestic violence and I have noted in the Programme-Based Budget good intentions, nice words and I quote –

“Social cohesion and harmony is achieved through family focused, economic and social policies and family values that are gender equitable, child’s supportive and non-violent.”

Now in the Programme-Based budgeting there is a rating that is given for the performance and it is also mentioned on the rating of the performance that 100% of reported victims of domestic violence have been provided with timely and adequate assistance. In 2009, 70% of the recommended actions of the National Plan to fight against domestic violence have been implemented. These very beautiful words are found in the Programme-Based Budget, but let us look at what is going on.

Statistics show that there is an increase in domestic violence, yet we still see women being battered to death, women being burnt alive and what is most serious is that these things happen when they are under a protection order. Has the Minister of Women’s Rights pondered on the source of the problem? In reply to a recent PQ, in June this year she stated that in 2005, there were 1,056 cases of domestic violence, in 2006: 1,041 cases, in 2007: 1,948 cases, in 2008: 2,246 cases and in 2009, from January to June: 979 cases. On being questioned further, it came out that no in-depth study has been carried out to have an insight into why the number of cases is on the increase. Furthermore to a supplementary question which I asked on the number of cases where there has been a breach of the protection order, the Minister replied: 1,469. So, in spite of a protection order being issued by the court, 1,469 women have been subject to further aggression and what is saddening is that four of them have lost their lives.

This is very serious, Mr Speaker, Sir. We do not criticise only, we make suggestions as well. We say that there should be an in-depth study to the root causes of the problem and in spite of the fact that the Ministry of Women’s Rights has worked out a national plan to combat domestic violence, why are the required results not forthcoming? Unfortunately, the Minister does not seem to welcome the suggestions, but keeps on repeating the numerous sensitisation programmes carried out by her Ministry. The hon. Prime Minister also replied to a Parliamentary Question in March this year and stated. I quote –

“One of the strategic objectives of the national action plan to combat domestic violence is improving legislation on domestic violence and strengthening the justice system.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are certain flaws in the law which have to be remedied urgently. I will elaborate so as to justify my arguments. The Domestic Violence Act makes provisions for three types of orders: the protection order, the occupation order and the tenancy order. In the case of the protection order, the perpetrator is under warning. He is under warning, but he can stay under the same roof as the victim. What happens is that very often the house where the couple lives is very small, more often than not, a one-bedroom house. The perpetrator, therefore, sleeps in the same room. He nurtures the grudge that the matter has been reported to the

Police and he has all the opportunities in the world to rape, to batter, to kill or to set fire to the victim. It is only on the third time that he is remanded to police cell and even then the next day he is out on bail. The court gives a protection order but no counselling is provided to the perpetrator at the same time. What the law says is that for counselling to be administered, both partners should be agreeable, but this has to be remedied, Mr Speaker, Sir. The perpetrator's therapy is essential and the law should be amended to make it mandatory.

Now, regarding the occupation order, we take it in the Mauritian context. That piece of legislation may be a very good piece of legislation, but yet the flaws in it have to be remedied. In the case of the occupational order the court orders the perpetrator to leave the house and not to approach the victim. Where the house belongs to the couple, there is no problem, but, very often, the couple leaves in an extended family system. In Mauritius, this is very common. Quite often also the house belongs to the in-laws. Taking it in the Mauritian context, can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether in a typical extended family system, the in-laws will accept without retaliating that their son has to leave the house *et qu'ils vont cohabiter avec la belle-fille qui a rapporté le cas à la police*, especially if the house belongs to the in-laws. In the Mauritian context, this does not work. Moreover, police enforcement becomes difficult.

Now there is the tenancy order where the court orders the perpetrator to move out, but he should continue to pay the rent and the main weakness here is that the perpetrator, who is often the husband, stops paying the rent simply because he is not living there and that makes things still more difficult where the women have children *sur les bras*. What I want to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that violence against women requires a holistic approach. Domestic violence is a social issue, but it is not only a social issue, it is also an employment issue, a housing issue, a childcare issue and also a legal issue.

*(Interruptions)*

That is what the hon. Minister said, but an in-depth inquiry has to be carried out so that we know whether the problem is alcoholism or not. So, it requires a balanced effort: preventive, reactive and curative. As I just said the root cause of the problem should be tackled. The perpetrator's therapy is essential and, I think, the Ministry of Women's Rights should be able to go about that perpetrator's therapy. Women, who work and go to the shelters temporarily, are not allowed to go out because of their abusive husbands who may be somewhere around. Those shelters should provide the necessary facilities to these women to continue their employment. They should be provided with transport and security, and they should be able to reintegrate into society without depending on anybody financially. So, much Government funds have been spent. I would like to ask the Minister how many women, victims of violence, have been assisted and are today enjoying economic independence. However, I should congratulate the hon. Attorney General. He has been able to put the Family

Court in place. Since long we have been pressurising for that Family Court. It has now been set up with two full-time Judges.

There is also the question of alimony which is a very thorny problem. Though there may be a Court Order, husbands do not respect it. They use all sorts of tricks to avoid paying alimony. They go to any extent like changing their address, or even stop working just to avoid paying the alimony. How can wives, *qui ont des enfants sur les bras*, earn a living?

*(Interruptions)*

*Ce que la sécurité sociale donne est très peu, ce n'est pas suffisant.* Special schemes should be worked out for these women. If we can bring work at home for these women, that could solve the problem, but this should be allowed especially for those women who are in need.

The second issue I will address concerning women, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the women centres. Women centres *poussent un peu partout comme des champignons. C'est bon, les centres de femmes*, but this year, again, we see that Rs6,6 m. have been earmarked for the construction of women centres. Now, we should ask ourselves this question. Are these women centres actually fulfilling their objectives? Mr Speaker, Sir, these women centres are still being run on the same basis as when they were created in 1982. In 1982, the objectives were different - the Ministry for Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare had to help women leave their traditional role and face the world of work. From 1982 to date, the women centres have served their purpose, but it is high time that these centres be revamped, their roles should be redefined and the whole concept of the women centres should be looked at again. I will not have time to dwell on this too long, but I'll give one single example. The women centres continue to be opened only from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. That was good at a time when women were at home during the day, but today most women work. They cannot have access and benefit from the various programmes and activities that are run out in these centres. The Minister should have been farsighted so as to see that these women centres should be opened, at least, till 9.00 p.m. to respond to the modern women's needs, otherwise I do not see the point in opening more women centres.

Now, I come to the National Women's Council. I see in the Budget that an amount of Rs58 m. has been earmarked for the National Women's Council which was set up in 1985. Hon. Mrs Bappoo knows very well because we both worked on that piece of legislation. I can tell you that since the setting up of this National Women's Council till to date, the membership has remained the same, that is, women's associations and *les troisièmes âges*. With time, there should have been a critical analysis done and the membership should have been re-dynamised. These women's associations are given a monthly grant to enable them to organise social events. I am not saying that this should not be done, but time has evolved and so have women's issues. The

National Women's Council is supposed to be an executive arm of Government. Government enunciates the policies and it is the duty of the National Women's Council to implement them in such a way that these decisions trickle down to the grassroots. Well, it seems that the National Women's Council does not address women's issues properly. I am asking the question to this august Assembly: how many times have we heard the National Women's Council pronouncing itself on retrenched women, on training for women, on prostitution, on abortion, yet Rs58 m. for a calendar year will be spent on the National Women's Council. Well, I have the impression that the biggest chunk of this money is going to the staff of the National Women's Council rather than to the women themselves.

It is the same thing for the National Women Entrepreneur Council. Rs8,2 m. have been earmarked for the calendar year and the Minister of Finance has, once more, mentioned in his Budget. I quote –

“We have launched a scheme that includes mentoring services to support unemployed and retrenched women.”

Does he know that this was also mentioned in his last Budget? It is only now that the post of mentors has been advertised! Six months have passed without any action taken. At Phoenix, incubators have been set up to provide women entrepreneurs space to produce and sell. The initiative, I should say, is very good, but, who are those selected to enjoy these kick-off facilities? Has the Ministry reached those women who are really in need? What has been done to help them market their products? Are they doomed to rely on only *ad hoc* fairs? Have discussions been held with the MTPA? What has been done to ensure quality of products? Many questions, Mr Speaker, Sir, need to be answered before we allow so much money to go down the drain again.

I am now going to talk on agriculture. Mr Speaker, Sir, I was really surprised to hear the first paragraph of the Budget Speech on agro industry - page 20, paragraph 142. *Au fait, pour l'agriculture, nous avons eu droit à du réchauffé et des mesures remplies de contradictions.* Let me take paragraph 142 which says, and I quote –

“To enable planters and breeders to optimise their revenue, AREU is setting up an agricultural production and marketing information system. It will provide planters with real time market intelligence on crop production and prices by using mobile phone technology and posting information on a central website.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this measure was contained in the non Sugar Sector Strategic Plan of 2003, which, for obvious reasons, was shelved. *C'est regrettable, M. le président, qu'on ait perdu presque cinq ans, et qu'on se retrouve, aujourd'hui, avec cinq ans de retard.* I can read to you what was in the Plan *qui fut élaboré par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth en tant que ministre de l'agriculture.* I'll quote page 158 of the report. *Je sais que la vérité blesse, mais on ne peut pas effacer les écrits.*

“Along the same line, for timely availability of information within the food sector, a study was commissioned by AREU in April 2002 on the setting up of the market information system and a communication system”.

In fact, it says –

“The findings of this study, which was submitted in May 2002, would be instrumental in setting up the mechanism for the proposed market intelligence unit and in providing the framework for organising production in the sector and aligning it with respect to demand”.

This is the Plan which hon. Jugnauth had prepared for the non sugar sector. This has been copied, almost eight years afterwards. AREU knows fully well that work had already started. The structure for the market information system had already been worked out; the scheme of service for the post of the Marketing Manager had already been approved by the Civil Service Affairs. The post was already advertised. *Maintenant on a droit à du réchauffé.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the same thing for the Food Crop Insurance Scheme, which the Minister of Finance mentioned in his last Budget Speech, but, I have three observations to make. Maybe, the Minister of Finance *n'est pas à blâmer, car il ne sait pas*. Maybe, the Minister of Agriculture also is not to be blamed *mais il y a trois possibilités à moins que nos décideurs à l'agro industrie soient à court d'idées*. So, what do they do? They remove, once again, our plans from the drawers, and they come, one by one, *au compte-gouttes, avec les idées que nous avions énoncées. Ils sont à court d'idées. Deuxièmement, soit l'hypocrisie règne. Ne pas accepter ce qui a été fait par le précédent ministre de l'agriculture, malgré le fait qu'on accepte que ces idées soient vraiment valables, extrêmement excellentes. Il y a la troisième possibilité que quelqu'un, quelque part, est en train de jouer un mauvais tour au ministre de l'agro industrie et au ministre des finances, ou les trois possibilités peuvent aussi être vraies.*

This brings me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to biotechnology, which is recognised by the international scientific community to be an essential and increasingly important element in order to achieve future food security. The non Sugar Strategic Plan of 2003 makes provision for the setting up of a Mauritius Agricultural Biotechnology Institute, whose priority would be to address the needs of the local planting and farming community, and whose longer term objective would be to make Mauritius emerge as a centre for excellence for high calibre research and application of biotechnology. The whole project, Mr Speaker, Sir, had been worked out. The land had been identified, the architectural designs were ready, and the funds were identified. At that time, the Mauritius Agricultural Biotechnology Institute would have cost us only Rs350 m. *Mais, une fois de plus*, because it was conceived by the previous Minister of Agriculture and, I would say, following the lobby of certain pressure

groups which had their own interest at stake, the Government has deemed it fit not to proceed with the project. However, much to my surprise, I see, in a yearbook 2008 which had been published by the Government, with much pride, the Government states that the Commission for the Democratization of the Economy has engaged into discussions with Aadicon Biotechnologies Ltd. in India. In a reply to a PQ last year, the Minister of Agro Industry confirmed the information. He said, and I quote –

“The approval of Government was obtained in September 2006 for the lease of 60 *arpents* of State land at Piton du Milieu to Aadicon Biotechnologies Ltd.”

The Minister of Agro Industry confessed that he was not aware of the discussions concerning biotechnology. He also confessed that he was concerned only with one aspect of the project, that is, the request for land. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Agro Industry is not involved in discussions concerning biotechnology! This is very serious. What about his only concern about land? Why is it that it is the Commission on the Democratization of the Economy which has to negotiate concerning biotechnology? Does democratisation mean giving our country’s land to foreign companies? *M. le président, il me semble que la commission pour la démocratisation de l’économie veut avoir une mainmise sur l’agro industrie.* The creation of a Cane Democratisation Fund is sufficient proof, Mr Speaker. Planters, artisans already had 20% shares in the milling companies, which were managed by the Sugar Investment Trust. Last year, the Minister of Finance stated that the right vehicle had not yet been found to administer the 35% shares made available to planters, artisans and labourers. Now, he comes up with a Cane Democratisation Fund when, according to me, there was no need for it. Can he justify why the SIT, which is an organisation that has proved itself, which has been existing for years and which has been successful, cannot administer these funds? *Je vais reprendre ce qu’un hebdomadaire a si bien dit.*

“*La Cane Democratisation Fund ne constitue nullement une invention sortie du laboratoire idéologique de l’Alliance sociale. C’est plutôt l’avatar version 2009-2010 du SIT créé par Sir Anerood Jugnauth en 1994”.*

La tentative, M. le président, de s’approprier de cette initiative est bien là.

M. le président, le ministre des finances n’a pas hésité au paragraphe 149 de son discours à dire, I quote –

149. Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the major achievements of our Government during this mandate has been the historic deal in December 2007 by the Prime Minister to open shareholding in the sugar industry to planters, labourers and artisans.

‘Open’ This is very misleading. *Cette déclaration de sa part est surtout navrante, M. le président.* Let us be candid about it, to take the words of the Minister of Finance, is it now that we are opening shares to artisans and labourers in the sugar industry? *Non, non! Je vois que c'est navrant.* Had this been done on purpose? Hon. Ms Deerpalsing is saying ‘yes’, but has this been done on purpose to wipe off the initiative taken by the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth? Somebody, who does not know the history of the sugar industry and reads this Budget Speech, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be totally misled. I don’t know whether the Minister of Finance is creating a Cane Democratisation Fund so that the workers and planters of the sugar industry would one day forget about the contribution of Sir Anerood Jugnauth to their well being. *C'est navrant!*

On this same Democratisation Fund, the Minister of Finance states that Government will provide a grant equivalent to one third of the price of the shares. We had received money from the European Union. We received around Rs11 billion. The millers have received their fair share of this money, but where is the share of the small planters? It was a golden opportunity to give to the planters their fair share. Instead of contributing only one third and asking the small planting community, already indebted, to take a loan once again of one third of it, the whole thing could have been paid for the small planting community.

*La démocratisation*, does that also mean taking agricultural land from the small planters and giving it away to the millers? I will take the example of the *métayers*. The *métayers* are a clear example of land, they have toiled this land for around 60 to 70 years and now this land, which has become a strategic agricultural land, is taken from them and given to the millers once again for peanuts. Is this democratisation? Now about the regrouping, - *la democratisation*: does that mean that the small planters, to benefit from free derocking and irrigation facilities, have to regroup themselves. The one *sine qua non* condition imposed on them is to leave their land in the hands of the millers? *Mais dans quelle direction? C'est la démocratisation?* Obviously, there is movement in one direction. Agricultural land is moving away from the small planters’ hands into those of the millers. In the days of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and in the days of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the word ‘democratisation’ had its true meaning. Today it has acquired a totally different meaning.

Another big scandal is the derocking programme. Rocks are removed from the planters’ fields and are being sold by the MSA without any control and without the planters being informed of the volume of the rocks which are being removed, the price which is obtained for them and where the money goes. I would ask the Minister of Agriculture to open his eyes on this issue and I think that if an audit inquiry is carried out, a big scandal will come to light.

This brings me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the VRS which was undertaken again by hon. Jugnauth when he was the Minister of Agriculture. *Pour les travailleurs de l'industrie sucrière, c'était un rêve devenu réalité.* Big

compensation equivalent to 2 or 2½ times was what they would have received if they retired at the age of sixty plus seven perches of land. *C'est cela la vraie démocratisation. C'est cela ‘Putting People First’*, taking money and land from the millers and giving them to the workers. *A cette époque en 2003, les propriétés sucrières ont eu à prendre des loans pour financer le VRS.* In spite of this, we got numerous criticisms from the then Opposition. Hon. Dr. Boolell, himself, criticised us a lot on this VRS issue. What did he do? He too became an adept of the VRS. He did exactly the same thing with the exception that, in our time, the sugar barons had to take money on loans to finance the VRS. When hon. Boolell did the VRS, he took money from the European Union. So the millers did not have a single cent to spend on this. *J'ai lu l'intervention de l'honorable Cader Sayed-Hossen. Il a parlé du VRS, BPML, SIT, etc., bien sûr qu'il a parlé dans le contexte de l'Ilovo deal, il crée la confusion.* That term ‘VRS’, we should remember, had been coined in the context of the sugar reforms in 2003 by no other than hon. P. Jugnauth. That was the ‘VRS’.

As regards the Food Security Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether this fund still exists or it has disappeared.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. I suspend for lunch for one hour!

*At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.08 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair*

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have only some ten minutes left, or a bit less.

I will take now the Food Security Fund. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must confess that, on the Food Security Fund, I do not know whether this Fund still exists or whether he has disappeared.

This Fund was created with great pomp, as it was done for the other Funds, to the tune of Rs1 billion. In the last Budget, at paragraph 55, the Minister of Finance said that he is drawing from this Fund an amount of Rs350 m. and now in the 2010 Budget, at paragraph 88, he says, and I quote –

“I am thus restructuring the Funds established in May 2008 to stimulate the economy.”

The Minister of Finance, *fidèle à ses habitudes, crée la confusion.* What has he done this time? He puts two Funds which are not linked at all together - the Food Security Fund and the Social Housing Fund. He is transferring Rs1.6 billion from the Food Security Fund to the Social Housing Fund.

In reply to a previous parliamentary question, the Minister of Agro-Industry said that only Rs27 m. had been spent under this Fund. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is good to point out that this Fund was set up in a special context of food security when the world was starting to experience a global food crisis. The Minister of Agriculture could have been foresighted and could have started immediately the implementation of the non-Sugar Strategic Plan which we had prepared. Instead, precious time was lost in the preparation of another plan where, besides land preparation and the revolving fund for onions and potatoes, nothing has been achieved.

Now we may well face another more serious food crisis because some days back producing countries stated that there would be a shortage. They have witnessed a low crop in rice, maize and corn. There are indications that prices of food will go up and that these will contribute once more to high food inflation in Mauritius. Can I ask the Minister of Agro-Industry whether due consideration is being given to this problem? I do not think so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In the agricultural policy, I note that there are still a lot of contradictions. Whilst, on the one hand, the Minister of Finance is talking of food self-sufficiency at paragraph 148; on the other hand, in his 2008/2009 Budget, he stated that he would remove customs duties on a wide range of items ranging from chicken and eggs to fresh and canned vegetables and food. How can we expect our agri-business to develop? How is he protecting our local industries?

Another contradiction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is, whilst at paragraph 148 of the Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance states that 60 arpents of land at La Rosa have been confined to livestock instead of helping breeders, the Minister of Agro-Industry chooses to close down the Livestock Feed Factory. *C'est de la contradiction pure et simple!* Although he says that he is providing a subsidy of Rs200,000 per tonne, the price is still very high compared to what it was when the Richelieu Livestock Feed Factory was in operation. 1400 cow breeders and 500 pig breeders are at the mercy of two local manufacturers *qui sont en train de faire la pluie et le beau temps!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been witnessing the slow death of small planters, and now we are witnessing the slow death of small breeders. Unless there is a re-thinking of the strategy, *ce sera toujours la loi du plus fort qui prévaudra*. What we need is a re-orientation strategy to promote a transition from traditional practices towards a more sophisticated technology based approach. We have focussed on attaining a certain degree of self-sufficiency - we cannot say 100% self-sufficiency - and optimising export opportunities. This is the only way forward. It will encourage youngsters to develop an interest for agriculture.

At the same time Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just wish to mention that, several times, I have drawn the attention of the Minister of Agro industry to the huge extent of abandoned agricultural land, and to the problems

which are being faced by planters in the regrouping process, but I appeal to him once more to give due consideration to these issues.

At the beginning, I said that I was going, time permitting, to address the issue of CSR, but I don't think I'll have time so I will talk of my Constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *La circonscription numéro 14 a été négligée, M. le président.* The problems of the squatters of Case Noyale have not been solved. Only yesterday, during question time, the issue was raised again on the eradication of absolute poverty. Four and a half years have gone by *et les problèmes des squatters de Case Noyale sont restés les mêmes.* Yet, land is available, land was identified by the previous Government. *Je ne peux pas dire si c'est parce que les trois députés élus sont dans l'opposition que la circonscription numéro 14 est négligée et que le problème des squatters de Case Noyale reste entier.*

I also raised the issue of fishermen of Baie du Cap some time back, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. These fishermen are facing hard times, especially since the construction of the Macondé Bridge. I'll give the devil its due. Let's say that the construction of this bridge was essential, but I drew attention to the fact that these fishermen used to get their natural bait in Macondé. Besides the hardship caused, besides the fact that they cannot fish in the surrounding, they have to use more petrol to go further, they have to spend money in purchasing bait also. They have told me that the interest rate on the loan given to them for the purchase of motorboats by the DBM has been increased from 3% to 9%. Can I ask the Minister of Finance to look it because these are vulnerable people who need help?

With regard to Le Morne village, I drew the attention of the Minister of Public Infrastructure some time back - and he will no doubt recall it - on the need for handrails and *ralentisseurs* along the main road. Up to now I think nothing has been done. Some months back, a two-year toddler had met with a fatal accident and died. *Les Forces Vives* of *Le Morne* have already written a letter to him; they have asked for an appointment. I am making an urgent appeal to the Minister not to wait for another fatal accident to take place and to take appropriate action accordingly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to conclude. Allow me to say that people of this country are nostalgic of the years when the country was under the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. The country had known unprecedented growth and development, and this could be seen and felt in each and every household. The MSM still hold the same vision and, with our determination and our sincerity of purpose, we, on this side of the House, are convinced that there can be and that there should be *un second miracle économique.* We do not only criticise; our vision, our programmes is known to all today, even though some Members of the House prefer to pretend not to be aware of it. Nevertheless, we have our objectives, and we are sure that we will,

without any hindrance, be able to implement them for the betterment and improvement of the life of our fellow citizens.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**(2.15 p.m)**

**The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this morning, I have been listening to the hon. Member, Mrs Maya Hanoomanjee. Indeed, I have known the hon. lady many years back, as a civil servant of high calibre, when she was with me as former Minister for Women's Rights, for more than a decade, but, today, things are different. I know she sits on the Opposition side. I do understand that, many times, all of them have to oppose to many of our Government policies, but she has also very brilliant ideas that she shares with this august Assembly, especially listening to her talking this morning on the issue of domestic violence. I have taken good note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which I will certainly pass on to my colleague, the Minister for Women's Rights, Mrs Indranee Seebun, who is also struggling very hard to combat this issue and on a series of other programmes and projects related to women and domestic violence.

Today, 25<sup>th</sup> November, the more so, is - and it is also a coincidence - the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women. I know that, since this morning, my colleague, the hon. Minister, many women outside, social workers, NGOs are commemorating this event, that is, Elimination of Violence against Women. In itself, it is a social disease which needs to be cured, the more so, that this event today coincides with the recent murder of late Marie-Ange Milazar, an eight months' pregnant sex worker. Of course, on both sides of the House, we are indeed concerned by such acts of barbarism. We need to help our society, to help our country, that is, we need to take bold measures. With regard to the other issues, I leave it to my colleague, the Minister of Finance and, of course, the Minister for Agro Industry to make their comments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would wish to congratulate my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Dr. the hon. Rama Sithanen, for coming once more - that's his fifth Budget - with a Budget that geared to shape recovery, consolidate social progress and sustain green Mauritius. He has come up with a Budget which aims at mitigating the adverse impacts of global economic slowdown; supporting the economic and social sectors and allowing them to stand up the future challenges. Basically, the Budget remains a powerful instrument for social and economic changes, and gives a strategic direction to the country. Our economy has proved, as it has been said several times, its resilience, and more opportunities, of course, will be availed when growth will bounce back.

To stimulate economic development; to bring along structural reforms and support measures, and to give us and the whole nation the drive to sustain our development process, come also from the overall vision of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, whose relentless effort has focussed on consolidating our development strategy that aims at sharing the fruits among the citizens of the country. The comments received from various quarters on the Budget provide testimony to this effect.

Mais nous avons eu, durant ce présent mandat, une opposition à la dérive parce qu'elle a fait montre depuis 2005 d'ignorance des valeurs de justice sociale et d'absence de conscience éclairée pour comprendre le sens profond de ce que fait le gouvernement. Si elle avait utilisé la faculté de raisonnement et de discernement, elle aurait compris les réalisations de ce gouvernement au-delà de l'éphémère et des apparences. Faute d'arguments solides, la chansonnette choisie cette fois-ci a été : 'les quatre budgets amers', 'effets d'annonces', 'du *repackaging*' et 'du réchauffé'. Finalement c'est le discours du *Leader* de l'opposition qui tourne en un discours réchauffé.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to reply first on three main issues that have been made by hon. Members. Firstly, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, on Saturday last, stated that the previous Government had already taken on board the problem of the ageing population since 2004, that is, by the targeting policy towards the old-age pension and that, today, Government has not given to the pensioners what is expected. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once more we do understand that the only policy and only solution to tackle the problem of ageing population is to apply the targeted policy for the Basic Retirement Pension as it was done in 2004/2005.

Et là je lance un appel à nos *senior citizens* de prendre bonne note et de se mettre en garde contre tous les risques d'une réapparition du *targeted approach* si par inadvertance cette Opposition reprend le pouvoir. Que Dieu nous garde de cette mésaventure! We all know how this measure has traumatised our pensioners when the former Government went so far as to send la fameuse lettre, les menaçant d'emprisonnement s'ils ne dévoilent pas leurs revenus, leurs intérêts à la banque. Tout ce chamboulement, toute cette mascarade politique du précédent gouvernement, c'était pour ôter la pension à 3,000 personnes de la liste des bénéficiaires et pour économiser que R 30 millions entre décembre 2004 à juin 2005 sur un budget de plus de Rs3.3 milliards. Les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes comme si le pays serait banqueroute si le paiement de la pension aux 3,000 bénéficiaires était maintenu.

*(Interruptions)*

It is a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that to sustain the contribution for old-age pension, it requires high investment. It is a fact, we all know about it. Out of a yearly budget of Rs10 billion, the payment of BRP during 2008/2009 is estimated to be Rs5,32 billion. Nous savons que le paiement de la pension universelle

relève de la vision et d'une décision politique de feu Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam en 1955 lorsque la pension était payée au taux de R 20 par mois pour passer à R 675 en 1995. Le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, l'a augmentée de 56% en 1995/96 pour la porter à R 1,055 sous son premier mandat et à R 1,400 en 1999/2000. C'est toujours sous son deuxième mandat que la pension fût restaurée en juillet 2005 sur une base universelle profitant ainsi à 126,384 personnes. Il faut savoir que le Premier ministre s'est aussi prononcé, à plusieurs reprises, depuis ces 4 années et demie, sur la pension universelle de nos aînés et qu'il fera de son mieux pour augmenter la *old-age pension* chaque année et non la supprimer.

Ceci dit, M. le président, hier, j'ai suivi avec beaucoup d'attention l'intervention de mon ami, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed sur deux points importants: premièrement, c'est la pension des veuves et deuxièmement, l'accessibilité des handicapés dans les bus.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, to say that, following lengthy discussions held at the level of my Ministry with several stakeholders and the State Law Office with regard to widow's pension which is linked with the issue of religious marriages being celebrated between 1987 and 1990, I wish to inform the House that this is indeed a very, very sensitive issue which is not solely linked to the issue of the National Pensions Act, that is, to pension. As such, it contains various implications which should be looked into from an integrated approach. The hon. Member, who is, himself, a well respected lawyer, is not without knowing that this issue cannot be solved simply through an amendment to the National Pension Act. In fact, in view of the provision of the Code Civil Mauricien, the correct way to proceed is to amend the Civil Status Act. However when it comes to the issue of payment of pensions, specifically when the hon. Member was referring to the settlement of arrears since 1980, we should be very careful as this would definitely have a huge budgetary implication. This issue needs a policy decision by Government and not simply put it on the shoulder of the Ministry of Social Security and its officers turning down the request of the widows concerning the pension.

The second point concerns the accessibility of disabled persons to buildings and buses. The Building Act, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been amended and the Building Accessibility Regulation has been promulgated in August 2005 to ensure that all public buildings are accessible. My Ministry has, on the other hand, carried out sensitisation campaigns in collaboration with the Mauritian Association of Architects. Henceforth it is for the local authorities to ensure that the design for new buildings be made disable friendly before issuing permits.

Regarding transport, my colleague, hon. Anil Bachoo knows perfectly well about it. A sum of Rs250 m. has been earmarked in the MID Fund for the introduction of low floor buses in Mauritius. An American Consultant was recently here to work on the specifications of these buses and another one is coming in February

next to sensitise bus operators on the mode of operation of low floor buses on our roads. I believe that we are on the right track as from now and that MPI will be there to pursue its work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *retournons maintenant au budget*. We all know that the situation we have inherited since July 2005 was so much catastrophic and painful.

*(Interruptions)*

Je sais que bien souvent cela blesse certains, mais nous, au gouvernement, nous ne raterons aucune occasion pour le dire très haut. When this Government came to power, the country was in an *état d'urgence économique* as acknowledged by the hon. Leader of the Opposition himself. The country was confronted with *une crise sans précédent*. *La situation était dramatique* with low economic growth, rising unemployment, high budget deficit and public debt. All these compounded with pessimism and *squelettes dans les placards*.

*(Interruptions)*

Ce n'est certes pas de la 'rengaine habituelle' car la population s'est rendue à l'évidence de sa performance de 2000 à 2005.

*Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of trash and rubbish have been uttered with the sort of inspired solemnity about the Budget*, tels que, 'du renouveau, c'est du réchauffé', 'new packaging', etc. Comme je le dis c'était la chansonnette du moment à ce budget. Même si le produit est bon, l'opposition essaie de le faire passer comme mauvais à la population. Elle évolue toujours et encore dans cette atmosphère caractérisée par la démagogie, si ce n'est que de la mesquinerie politique and *what nonsense is being built up from old days*. In spite of the very poor legacy, this Government has been able to turn the economy, which was in bad shape, in a more resilient one to allow the country and the population to prosper and we shall continue our march to hire sustainable prosperity with the social justice. The broad-based and inclusive strategy underpinned by empowerment and expanding the circle of opportunities has benefited to a large number of population during the four recent years. The reform process in the first Budget of my colleague, the Minister of Finance, has set the stage to provide our country with a unique opportunity to enter a new phase of socio-economic development while protecting the weaker sections of the population. These reforms have put the country on a higher and robust path from which the whole population has benefited immensely. Employment was being created at a higher rate than before, that is, more than 40,000 jobs created during the past four years and the FDI was rising to the tune of around Rs8.5 billion every year since 2005, compared to only Rs1 billion annually for the two decades ending 2005.

Today, this fifth Budget of Government - the Government of *Alliance Sociale* - is another outstanding and skilful act in policy formulation in spite of the world economic downturn and its adverse effect on our

economy. It pursues with added vigour the course charted out in the previous four Budgets and, at the same time, distributes to people the economic gains obtained so far. These four and a half years have also yearned for greater social justice and a more companionate society. History will have it that this Budget is fully in line with our development strategy aimed at sharing the fruits of economic growth among the population while at the same time shaping the recovery and consolidation social progress. On this line, the hon. Prime Minister said, I quote-

*“ C'est le mariage du social et de l'économie qui constitue une priorité du gouvernement de faire la balance entre l'efficience économique et la justice sociale ».*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to mention some of the concrete measures taken to share the fruits of growth and consolidate social progress during the four and a half years, ces quatre années et demie ont vu un véritable essor de prestation sociale, du jamais vu, je peux certainement le dire tout haut. Nous avons pris notre rôle de réformateurs responsables dans le domaine de la protection sociale. This Government made a pledge to the nation to democratise the economy; broaden the circle of opportunities for all Mauritians; promote social justice and ramp up support for our elderly population. These remain high on our social agenda. Consistent with our vision to create an inclusive society, the Budget 2010 pursues its effort and makes a further provision of Rs1 billion for the social security sector, an increase of 12% over the previous year from Rs8.9 billion in 2008/2009 to Rs10.8 billion down to only Rs6.7 billion in 2005/2006 and this represents an increase of 46.6% from 2005 to 2010.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2010 contains as many as 17 new measures to be implemented by my Ministry, that is, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions. There is an increase of 3.5% to all beneficiaries of the Basic Retirement Pension, the Widow's Pension, the Basic Invalidity Pension, the Basic Orphan Pension and to all beneficiaries of social aid. There is also the increase of 3.5% to all recipients of income support which, at present, is Rs115. The other measures are namely: the payment of school examination fees for students whose families have a revenue not exceeding Rs8,500; motorised wheelchairs for students with disabilities for use at the compounds of the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology; the full refund of taxi fares for university students with disabilities; the research centre will study the ageing population phenomenon and make recommendations; the elaboration of a Carers' Strategy and Action Plan to address the issues relating to the needs of the elderly population for carers services; the setting-up of a section at the *Cité des Métiers* to facilitate the senior citizens in their search for carers and other services; the training of carers which will provide certification and allow them to register as professional carers to the Ministry of Social Security. A Get Together Programme will be set up to give to our

elders, who live alone and are on social aid, an opportunity to socialise. There will be an investment of two low floor buses for senior citizens for outings from the recreation centres for the elderly at Belle Mare and Pointe aux Sables. These buses will be labelled Senior Citizens Tours. A Keep Fit Programme will be run in the recreation centres at Pointe aux Sables and Belle Mare and provision is made for equipment and coaching services.

More importantly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the additional monthly allowance is extended to persons suffering from incontinence to bed-ridden beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension aged 75 yrs and above; Social Aid is extended to the beneficiaries of Basic Invalids and Basic Widows Pensions (BIP and BWP) who live alone, pay rent and have no other income apart from pensions. The monthly child allowance in respect of children whose parents are in receipt of other basic pensions, that is, BRP/BIP/BWP/Basic Orphans Pensions is extended. Free vaccination programme is extended to the elders aged 60 years and above to protect them from the normal and regular flu and, of course, the new Recreational Centre at the cost of Rs120m. and with a swimming pool, will be inaugurated at Belle Mare on 06 December.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has also, in this Budget, further reinforced the current policy of social security and social welfare. The Budget will provide the overall increase of 3.5% to all the beneficiaries to demonstrate further Government's commitment to provide greater protection to the elder people and to show solidarity and compassion to the needy. Year in year out, since August 2005, we have increased social benefits and basic retirement pension from Rs2,200 in 2005/2006 to Rs3,048 as from this coming 01 January 2010.

Comme annoncé dans le Budget de 2010, le gouvernement a pris la décision d'aligner la compensation de 3.5% aux travailleurs à partir de janvier 2010 en même temps que les bénéficiaires des pensions. Ce qui veut dire en termes clairs que les retraités vont bénéficier eux aussi de deux augmentations. L'une est de 5.1% pour les derniers six mois de 2009 et l'autre est de 3.5% à partir de janvier 2010 ramenant le taux à 8.6%. Ce n'est pas comme veut le faire croire l'opposition que le gouvernement a empiété sur le National Pay Council. Le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a bien expliqué la décision du gouvernement. Somewhere, somehow, Government needs to decide on its policy as to when to apply the compensation as our calendar year now is from 01 January to 31 December. Government is the only responsible authority to decide on such policies, that is, when to apply this realignment and, rightly so, Government decides as from 01 January 2010.

This new Budget innovates further in improving the quality of life of our senior citizens. Those aged from 60 to 89 will benefit an additional sum of Rs103 from Rs2,945 to Rs 3,048. The age group 90- 99 years

will obtain an increase of Rs306, that is, from Rs8,780 to Rs9,067 and *les centenaires* will henceforth benefit an additional sum of Rs340, that is, from Rs9,944 to Rs10,292 and this will take effect as from 01 January.

The budgetary outlay in 2005-2006 represents the highest percentage of benefits in the history of Mauritius. It allows for an increase of 15.7 percent just after the *Alliance Sociale* came to power. Another largest and unprecedented direct support to beneficiaries of old-age pension was effected as from the first mandate of the Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, when he made provision for an increase of 55%. It should be noted that during more appropriate economic conditions and very far away from the global financial crisis, payment of the Basic Retirement Pension recorded an average of only 6% under the MMM/MSM Government. *Voilà l'exemple d'un MMM qui se proclame grand défenseur de la justice sociale pour les pensionnés, les retraités, les veuves, les orphelins mais arrive difficilement à protéger ces groupes vulnérables.*

A higher stage of social development is being triggered for this Budget for appropriate provision towards the disabled people, the widows and the orphans.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new measure taken in this Budget is to extend social aid to beneficiaries of BIP and BWP. C'est une nouvelle mesure prise par le ministre des Finances pour les plus vulnérables. Auparavant, seulement les bénéficiaires de la pension de retraite, qui vivent seuls, n'ont pas d'autres sources de revenus et paient un loyer, avaient droit à l'aide sociale. A partir de janvier 2010, cette mesure sera étendue aux bénéficiaires de la pension de veuve et d'invalidité. Ces derniers doivent aussi répondre aux critères établis plus haut comme je viens de les mentionner.

In addition, it is also proposed to extend the monthly child allowance in respect of children whose parents are in receipt of social aid to all those parents in receipt of basic pension, that is, the retirement pension, the invalidity pension and the widow's pension. *C'est une autre initiative innovante. Cette nouvelle mesure fait provision pour l'extension de l'allocation aux étudiants de 20 à 23 ans pour leur permettre de poursuivre des études tertiaires; aux bénéficiaires de la pension de retraite, d'invalidité et veuve, qui en l'absence de la pension de base auraient été éligibles à l'aide sociale. Il faut se rappeler que les orphelins, fréquentant l'Université de Maurice, bénéficient déjà, depuis juillet 2009, d'une allocation jusqu'à l'âge de 23 ans et à partir de janvier 2010, ils toucheront R 2,798.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, measures proposed for further assistance to the most vulnerable show a clear orientation towards our broad based inclusive strategy for an integrated society. The vision of Government is that every citizen can live a life of dignity, self-respect, decency and hope. This Budget places great importance on social inclusion and measures to address emerging challenges posed by the ageing population. No way out, an ageing population will obviously push up pension, healthcare costs and other public spending in terms of

new programmes and policies. That is the reason for putting up a research centre to study the ageing population phenomenon, the elaboration of a carer's strategy and in so doing, this nation is seeking to take its place on the high table of countries to realise its responsibilities towards elderly persons.

Having said so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, caring for an ageing population does not depend only on financial support, that is, only on pension; there are other accompanying measures such as health, family environment, leisure, combating loneliness, ageing associated to disabilities, security, protection, welfare activities, day-care activities, residential homes, recreation centres, carer's policies and policies for the elderly who are living alone. In reply to the Leader of the Opposition, all these issues have been attended to during the past four years to improve the daily life of our elderly people. This Government initiated two significant decisions in favour of our elderly namely the provision of free bus transport and the reinstatement of the universal basic pension coupled with the implementation of a series of welfare schemes. My Ministry has worked out an updated national policy on ageing and an action plan based on the Madrid International Plan of Action which adopts a development approach to population ageing through the mainstream of older persons into national development plans and policies across all sectors. It stresses the need to adopt a gender perspective to the ageing issues, for example, older women have specific health-related needs which are different from older men.

A carer's strategy for the elderly will be implemented to provide training for formal and informal carers. This will meet the increasing demand for formal carers and informal carers on the basis of our elderly population.

The protection of the elderly persons has given full satisfaction. We are providing support to families who need assistance and protection for the elderly and thus endeavour to prevent acts of abuse on elderly persons. The number of complaints of abuse received from October 2006 to October 2009 was 3,178 cases, out of which 3,090 have been cleared, representing 97.3%. Even in Rodrigues, there have been 168 cases of complaints reported and 167 have already been cleared. Here, I must pay tribute to the marvellous job done by the volunteers and members of the Elderly Watch across the country and Rodrigues.

The new centre, 'Foyer Trochetia' in Petit Verger, Pointe aux Sables is in operation since last year. This is a modern set up which is run on a public and private partnership with trained carers and it caters for the elderly persons with severe disabilities, but unfortunately it can only accommodate 32 residents.

The new Recreational Centre project at Belle Mare has been closely monitored by my Ministry. As far as its construction is concerned, there has been an investment of Rs120 m., with the help of my colleague, hon. Bachoo, of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for its implementation. I personally closely monitored the

projects announced in all the four previous Budgets because I want actions and results *et parce que je suis totalement contre le concept d'effets d'annonces. Je me rappelle bien. Le Premier ministre, après sa conférence de 100 jours, après notre mandat en juillet 2005, a parlé de ce projet en terme d'un centre de cinq étoiles pour les ainés. Bien sûr, il va procéder à l'inauguration de ce centre le 06 décembre.* This will be the jewel on the crown and the Christmas gift to all the elderly of our country. *Ce centre témoigne une aspiration à une gestion plus moderne de l'espace de loisirs pour nos ainés.* The Centre will be named Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Centre for the Senior Citizens in recognition to his invaluable contribution for the welfare of the elderly, and our Senior Citizens will thus be enjoying two such centres, one at Pointe aux Sables and the other one at Belle Mare.

We are having MoUs signed with countries based on mutual interest like India and recently with the People's Republic of China. These will privilege exchange programmes focusing much more on the strengthening of capacity building in the field of welfare of the elderly and soon the next MoU will be with the Republic of Egypt.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now say a few words on the disability sector. Mauritius now stands among the league of countries that place persons with disabilities at the heart of its commitment towards an inclusive society. As a nation of reformers, we want to do more to empower the people with disabilities. We have worked hard to translate this vision into reality through legislative action, new programmes and new policies during the past four and a half years. A national plan of action was launched on disability. Architects, engineers and local authorities are being sensitised on the issue of accessibility for disabled persons. I really concur with my friend, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, who yesterday talked about accessibility of disabled people in buses. I just gave some details about this forthcoming project. With the collaboration of my colleague, the Minister responsible for transport, hon. Bachoo, we have completed the setting-up of a database for persons with disabilities. We have launched a pre-primary school for the visually impaired children at l'École des aveugles, Beau Bassin with the help of the *Centre de la ressource pour les déficients sensoriels à La Réunion* en ce qui concerne la formation des professeurs. This is another *grande première* to better integrate *la petite enfance malvoyante dans notre société.* We want disabled people to be more self-employed, self-reliant and to participate in the development process of our country. Obstacles, stigmatisation, 'look down' attitudes are no longer *à l'ordre du jour.* A gamut of measures has been taken to expand the economic and social space of the disabled people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I should also say that yesterday has been another proof of Government's commitment towards an inclusive society. *Une grande première* happened in Curepipe when the Municipality of Curepipe, *ville des lumières*, elected as new mayor Mr Coomara Payendee, a visually impaired

barrister. *C'est du jamais vu! Du jamais entendu! C'est une grande première d'abord à Maurice et dans le monde entier.*

*(Interruptions)*

*Jamais dans le monde ! Pas de maire ! Voilà, c'est dit par mon collègue, le ministre responsable ! J'espère que le nouveau maire, malgré son handicap, apportera plus de lumière à la ville de Curepipe. Hier, j'étais avec mon collègue, le ministre de l'éducation à Curepipe. J'étais vraiment émue. C'était un moment rempli d'émotions. Le thème de son discours était sur l'accessibilité à tous pour une société inclusive. I wish to put on record the commitment of all the Municipal Councillors, who stood by his side, to support him in his new task.*

Today, disabled persons have access to information, training in partnership with the private sector, high technology as any human being, which is in line with the UN Convention for Human Rights. A Respite Care Programme was set up for the benefit of disabled persons and a MoU has been signed with Leonard Cheshire Disability of the UK for the implementation of a series of projects including a Respite Care Centre at La Marie, Vacoas. We are participating actively in the process of the establishment of a second Mauritian dictionary on Mauritian Sign Language. All these measures respond to the overall philosophy of the Convention which will enable Mauritius to ratify soon, probably next month, the UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities and the Council of Ministers has already given its approval.

With a view to facilitating the accessibility towards social progress, the Budget makes provision for motorised wheel chairs for students with disabilities for use at the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology. The refund of taxi fares for university students with disabilities is yet another well designed measure towards our vision for inclusive growth. It is to be noted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it is with much pride that the University of Mauritius has given the right opportunity to students with disabilities to pursue further education. So far some 35 physically, visually and hearing impaired students have completed their studies in various fields like Law and Management, Communication, Economics, Language, Accounting, Humanities, International Relations and Information Technology. We are proud of these students. They came out with brilliant scores and results. I pray that they can all get a decent job and be professionals in their career.

We have not neglected the reform institution and the Juvenile Rehabilitation Sector. The situation as far as juvenile delinquencies are concerned is improving. We have had amendments to our law here - the Community Service Order and the Probation of Offenders Act. They both translate our vision of liberty under the law, and that vision is also a world of democracy capable of providing its citizens with both order and

liberty and the safeguarding of human rights. Here, I have to put it on record and thank my colleague, the Attorney General, who has given his best assistance in helping my Ministry for the amendments on these laws.

We have put up also a series of reform initiatives in the rehabilitation and resocialisation of our juvenile offenders. My Ministry will leave no stone unturned when it comes to values, responsibility and discipline. We are ready to partnerise with NGOs to ensure alternative measures and to promote restorative justice. In this context, my Ministry and a regional NGO based in Mauritius whose Chairperson is Mrs Baudot - the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) - has embarked jointly on a half way home project situated in Vacoas with a view to continue the rehabilitation of young girls and women who leave institutions and have no place to reside or whose family environment is such that all positive effects acquired from the rehabilitation programs are neutralised when they go back to their family. The problem starts anew and that is what we call *des rechutes*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the Corporate Social Responsibility Programme is concerned, all NGOs and my Ministry stand committed to them so that they can benefit from the CSR Fund which my colleague has successfully set up. As he always says, money is there, but sustainable programmes and projects from NGOs need to be submitted. We will continue in our effort to respond to the needs of NGOs for capacity building programmes for participants in relevant fields such as project management, accounting, budgeting, communication, counselling and marketing whereby they can acquire core knowledge, practical skills and appropriate tools to manage effectively their organisations.

M. le président, pour terminer, permettez-moi de dire que ce budget témoigne une action de dignité humaine et de la qualité de vie. C'est là que je tiens de nouveau à féliciter le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen. Il a su mesurer et aplanir les problèmes humains liés aux familles pauvres, aux enfants pauvres, aux personnes âgées ou souffrant d'un handicap, aux veuves, aux orphelins. Il a su mesurer et aplanir les problèmes encourus par les travailleurs sociaux, les ONGs en terme d'encadrement, de protection et d'appui financier.

C'est une contribution du Gouvernement conforme à sa vision, à sa vocation de solidarité et d'aide aux groupes sociaux vulnérables. C'est aussi sa contribution à montrer la voie vers une société inclusive.

Je dois remercier le personnel de mon ministère, les cadres administratifs comme les techniciens qui travaillent bien souvent sous beaucoup de pression. Nous avons bien souvent un public très exigeant qui débarque tous les jours, bien souvent à la radio, et qui commente sur le ministère de la sécurité sociale mais je sais que les officiers font de leur mieux pour donner satisfaction à ces demandeurs d'assistance et de protection sociale. Pour ma part, M. le président, vous me connaissez tellement bien, on est ensemble dans la

circonscription. Je mène et pratique avec votre participation une politique de proximité - vous êtes mon compagnon dans la circonscription - envers ces personnes âgées en signe d'engagement, de respect, de solidarité et de reconnaissance. Je sais combien nos aînés sont contents et satisfaits du progrès apporté par le gouvernement à travers mon ministère, résultant aussi de l'attention et l'affection particulière de notre Premier ministre, le Dr Navin Ramgoolam envers ces personnes âgées. Je peux vous dire, M. le président, vous le savez aussi bien, que ces gens ne cessent de remercier le Premier ministre pour l'attention qu'il porte à nos personnes âgées. Le gouvernement veut que la population de ce pays participe pleinement au processus de développement en ligne avec notre *motto*: «placer le citoyen au cœur de notre développement» c'est-à-dire «Putting People First». Ce budget 2010 augure bien pour l'avenir car il est porteur de grands espoirs.

Merci M. le président.

**(3.02 p.m)**

**Mrs M. A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West):** M. le président, n'en déplaise à l'honorable ministre qui m'a précédée, nous, au gouvernement de 2000-2005, avions traduit dans la réalité notre valeur de justice sociale en terme de compensation salariale, logements sociaux, d'accès à l'éducation, *fees* HSC/SC et j'en passe. La ministre nous parle de projets pour les vieilles personnes, elle parle de *targeting* mais elle ne dit pas comment le gouvernement berne ces mêmes vieilles personnes. On parle de centre de loisirs très bien et de piscine encore mieux mais elle ne dit pas que le taux pour être admis dans le centre de loisirs à Pointe aux Sables a été augmenté de Rs200 à Rs500 par personne. C'est la même ministre de ce même gouvernement qui a supprimé la pension de 25,000 personnes. C'est la même ministre qui parlait de l'augmentation de prix du pain de 20 sous mais aujourd'hui elle ne pipe mot sur les différentes augmentations de prix sur les denrées de base.

M. le président en écoutant le discours du ministre des Finances mercredi dernier je ne pouvais m'empêcher de me dire que j'ai déjà entendu le même discours tous les ans depuis quatre ans et demi. Encore une fois le budget de ce gouvernement n'est qu'un discours de bonnes intentions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget is at its essence about the generation and use of public resources. Traditionally, national Budgets attempt at performing several economic and social functions. They allocate resources; provide basic social services; improve income and wealth disparities; stabilise prices and generate economic growth and employment. Budgets reflect the vision of economic and social development of a Government and more generally the values of society. They also reflect the choices that Government has to make to realise their social and economic agenda. The examination of Budgets through debates and

Parliamentary Questions tells us whether Government's allocations of resources are in line with the commitments they have made. I will endeavour to examine the Budget with a poverty lens to show what those, who are at the lower rung of the ladder, got out of the economic pie or rather did not get with particular attention to low cost housing. I will also talk, *en passant*, of the management of parastatals which lack in transparency and good governance and which suffer presently an institutional crisis because people have no confidence in them.

Successive Budgets presented by this Government show that resources are not actually put to use in the ways stated. The different Budgets presented by this Government are not people-centred. Le logement social, par exemple, ne semble pas être une priorité de ce gouvernement. Cet item ne figure pas sur son agenda, malgré de nombreuses déclarations d'intentions. Dans le budget 2006-2007, le ministre des finances parle de *Empowerment Programme* au paragraphe 270, il dit ceci -

“270. The Empowerment Programme will address the issue of housing for families with modest income. To this end, it will acquire around 2,000 to 3,000 Arpents of land across the country near existing agglomerations. Part of the land will be developed into serviced housing lots of 50 to 60 toises to be sold at affordable costs after infrastructure development. In this new scheme, landless families earning less than Rs 8,500 a month will become owners of these serviced lots on a cost recovery basis.”

Et il continue.

“MHC will provide a special loan at subsidised rates as in the Government Sponsored Loan scheme, for construction of a housing unit.”

Or, M. le président, en réponse à une question de mon collègue, l'honorable Ganoo, sur le montant déboursé par la MHC de 2003 à 2008 et le nombre de bénéficiaires les chiffres sont les suivants - en 2003, 2271 bénéficiaires pour un montant de R 500 millions; en 2004, 2274 bénéficiaires pour un montant de R 654 millions, et en 2005, 2718 bénéficiaires pour un montant de R 882 millions. Or, à partir de 2006, le nombre de bénéficiaires diminue et il est au nombre de 1922 pour un montant de R 603 millions; en 2007, encore une baisse du nombre de bénéficiaires à 1338 pour un montant de R 452 millions déboursées. Le nombre de bénéficiaires de janvier à mai 2008 est de 483 pour une somme déboursée de R 160 millions. Un petit calcul pour trouver la moyenne sur l'année nous donne 1152 bénéficiaires pour R 320 millions.

Supposons, maintenant, que seulement 500 arpents sur les 3000 arpents aient été utilisés pour les *serviced lots* cela nous aurait donné 10,000 lots de 50 toises or il n'en n'est rien. Supposons toujours que le projet a pris effet immédiatement après le budget et supposons aussi que la MHC a déboursé de l'argent uniquement pour ce projet, cela voudra dire que de juillet à décembre 2006, il y a eu 961 bénéficiaires ; de

janvier à décembre 2007, 1338 bénéficiaires et, en 2008, 1152 bénéficiaires. Ce qui aurait fait un total de 2619 bénéficiaires. Nous sommes encore loin du compte de 10,000 bénéficiaires sur 500 arpents seulement.

Dans le budget 2007/2008, aucune mention n'est faite sur le logement social sauf que le ministre annonce l'injection de R 150 millions à la MHC. Dans le budget 2008/2009, le ministre parle de la réalisation du projet de Bambous, mentionne que 1592 *Firinga type* ont été livrés durant les trois années précédentes et d'un batch de 533 maisonnettes à travers l'île. Je crois qu'il avait peut être oublié de dire quand les constructions allaient commencer.

Dans le budget de 2009, le mini-budget, il parle encore une fois de Bambous. Il répète la même chose. Au paragraphe 184 du mini-budget 2009, il dit ceci –

*“ inspired by the success of the Integrated Social Development Project at La Valette Bambous, a second project concerning some 30 vulnerable families is being implemented at Cité Lumière, Grand Baie. The pilot village at La Valette Bambous has relocated the first batch of 71 families and the remaining 127 families will move in by the end of the first year.”*

C'est ce qu'il dit dans son budget de 2009.

M le président, pour obtenir une maison du type logement social, au gouvernement nous avions toujours encouragé les gens à l'épargne. Il y avait également des critères spécifiques pour l'obtention des ces maisons. On donnait également priorité aux victimes d'incendie et aux locataires ayant reçu un *eviction order*. Or, qu'est-ce qui se passe aujourd'hui? Personne ne le sait. Les critères changent au gré de la NHDC. On vous dit qu'il faut telle ou telle somme. Lorsque la personne arrive, avec beaucoup de difficultés, à amasser la somme demandée, là on vient vous dire que vous n'êtes plus éligible en donnant pour raison l'âge. On vous raconte n'importe quoi, mille raisons sont données pour vous faire comprendre que vous n'êtes plus éligible dans le seul but de vous décourager. La vérité c'est qu'il n'y a pas suffisamment de maisons. Le gouvernement n'a pas construit de maisons. L'offre ne répond pas à la demande. Le ministre l'a confirmé en réponse à une question parlementaire de l'honorable Allet, en date du 25 novembre de l'année dernière. A une question de l'honorable Allet, le ministre répondait que pour 54 unités de maison à Chebel il y a eu 1492 demandes même s'il n'y a eu que 1467 qui étaient finalement venus pour l'interview.

Vous imaginez la liste d'attente pour les autres régions, M le président. Je connais une ouvrière d'usine de 48 ans qui a économisé R 80,000. Ce n'est pas facile pour une personne qui travaille à l'usine d'économiser R 80,000. On lui avait dit au départ qu'il lui fallait R 40,000. Lorsqu'elle amasse R 40,000, on lui dit: 'Non, ce n'est pas suffisant. Il vous faut R 80,000.' Maintenant on lui dit qu'elle a dépassé l'âge. S'il est vrai que le gouvernement a déboursé de l'argent pour le programme *casting of roof slabs*, cela ne veut pas dire qu'il y a eu

une hausse dans le nombre de nouveaux propriétaires. Loin de là, M le président, car les bénéficiaires de ces facilités, de ces *grants*, sont déjà propriétaires de leur terrain soit ils habitaient une maison CIS (*Corrugated Iron Sheet*) ou alors ils ont fait un rajout à leur maison existante. Le programme *casting of slabs* ne veut pas dire plus de maisons, mais il consiste plutôt à un *upgrading* des maisons existantes.

Maintenant avec la compensation salariale et les augmentations dans les prix des matériaux de construction, est-ce que le *threshold* de R 8,500 pour être éligible va être augmenté? Nul ne le sait. Le ministre ne l'a pas dit dans son discours.

M. le président, le gouvernement a non seulement failli dans sa tâche de logements sociaux mais décourage également ceux qui pouvaient le faire à savoir la petite et moyenne bourgeoisie. Les gens construisent moins car il n'y a plus de déduction dans l'*income tax*. Avant l'arrivée de ce gouvernement aux affaires du pays, les gens étaient encouragés à construire car ils bénéficiaient d'un abattement fiscal sur les emprunts à la banque à cet effet mais, aujourd'hui, à quoi bon construire, il n'y a plus de déduction. De plus, ils ont encore à payer le NRPT. De ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons à plusieurs reprises fait le point sur cette taxe injuste. Nous avons dénoncé en plusieurs occasions combien cette taxe est injuste. Une personne, qui habite à Baie du Tombeau, par exemple, paie la même taxe que celle qui habite à Floréal. Le terrain à Baie du Tombeau coûte dans les R 6,000 la toise alors que la toise est à peu près R20,000 à Floréal. Donc ce n'est pas juste. Il y a également la taxe sur les intérêts, sur les petites épargnes qui sont faites à la banque. Tout cela, c'est pour décourager les gens, surtout la petite et moyenne bourgeoisie, à devenir propriétaires de leur maison. Pour revenir à la construction des logements sociaux, M. le président, je l'ai dit, cela n'est pas la priorité du gouvernement. En quatre ans et demi rien que quelques centaines de maisons ont été livrées et encore la plupart de ces maisons avaient été construites sous l'ancien régime, il faut le reconnaître, alors que ce gouvernement avait fait croire qu'on allait construire un millier de maisons de ce genre par an. Le ministre, dans son dernier discours, le budget bilan qu'il a fait mercredi dernier, consacre 26 paragraphes sur le logement – page 41 à 42 – dont le paragraphe 303 qui se lit comme suit :

“303. The NEF has completed an innovative pilot programme to house 198 homeless families whilst providing employment opportunities and ensuring that children attend school.”

Fort de ce bilan, le ministre annonce son intention de construire le modeste nombre de 47 maisonnettes basées sur le modèle de Bambous. Je fais ici une petite parenthèse pour dire que, s'il est vrai que ce concept est nouveau, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que les habitants et résidents ne sont pas encore habitués à ce concept. Ils auraient, selon mes renseignements, l'impression qu'on leur impose une série de restrictions et cela selon la nature, le contenu même du cahier des charges. Il m'a été rapporté, par exemple, qu'on leur interdit d'accorder

l'hébergement à une personne ne vivant pas sous le même toit pour plus d'une nuit au risque de se faire éjecter de la maison. Certains se sentent harcelés et sont traumatisés. Je ne suis pas en train, M. le président, de porter un jugement de valeur sur la gestion de ce village mais je dis qu'à Maurice nous avons certaines valeurs familiales, une manière de vivre, une certaine culture qu'il est donc important de préserver mais en parallèle il est tout aussi important d'éduquer sur tout nouveau concept de vie en communauté. Cela s'applique également pour le concept de syndic des appartements de la NHDC - c'était une petite parenthèse. Pour revenir au discours du budget, je disais que le ministre annonce son intention de construire 42 maisonnettes, basées sur le modèle de Bambous, à Grand'Baie et à Rivière du Rempart. Le paragraphe 307 dit ceci, je cite -

307. About 2,300 families have benefitted from NHDC housing units.

C'est la grande arnaque, M. le président. Sous ce présent gouvernement, il n'y aura eu que quelques centaines de nouveaux acquéreurs de maisons, sans plus, alors qu'on parlait de milliers d'arpents acquis pour le logement social sous le National Empowerment Programme. Si ce n'est pas de l'arnaque cela lui ressemble étrangement. Et de continuer avec une panoplie d'intentions au paragraphe 317, le ministre déclare fièrement sur le projet pilote de La Valette, Bambous -

'317. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is now time to turn these endeavours into a national programme to deliver:

Firstly, 5,000 housing units for families with a monthly income not exceeding Rs5,000. (...)'

Donc, c'est l'heure maintenant de livrer 10,000 maisons du type *core houses* et 2,500 service plots. Qui le gouvernement veut-il berner, M. le président? En quatre ans et demi le gouvernement n'aura livré en tout et pour tout que 2,498 logements. Et c'est nous qui avions fait construire, ils ont livré. Est-ce qu'en six mois - enfin on lui donne six mois - ils pourront faire construire et livrer 10,000 maisons? Je savais que le ministre était un prestidigitateur de chiffres, mais j'ignorais ce talent de magicien. Dans le Government Programme aux paragraphes 185-186, on peut lire ceci -

185. My Government will protect the rights of every family to a house (...).

186. Government will therefore lay emphasis on the construction and development of social housing.

M. le président, avec le projet de ring road à Port Louis, le ministre n'a fait aucune mention du projet de *relocation* des habitants de la région: Vallée Pitot, Cité la Cure, Sainte Croix, etc. Donc qu'en est-il? Qu'est-ce

qui va se passer? Est-ce que ces gens-là auront une portion de terrain, une maison ? Où et quand? Est-ce qu'ils ont été informés de ce qui va se passer? Rien n'est dit dans le discours du budget.

M. le président, mon collègue, le *Leader* de l'opposition, avait parlé sur la nécessité de réhabiliter les NHDC complexes. Le gouvernement annonce une dotation budgétaire de R 280 millions. Je me demande quand est-ce que les travaux vont commencer? Je parle pour ma circonscription. Est-ce que ce sera à la veille des élections générales? Est-ce que ce sera pendant la campagne électorale?

M. le président, je me souviens que lors de la campagne électorale du candidat de l'Alliance Sociale dans notre circonscription – aujourd’hui ministre – il avait promis des ascenseurs dans les appartements de la NHDC, mais rien de tout cela n'a été fait. Les résidents attendent, avec impatience, de lui retourner l'ascenseur. Qu'est-ce que l'Alliance Sociale n'avait pas promis, M. le président? On avait promis la suppression des *rates* sur le *wastewater/sewerage*. *Sewerage, pas pou payer! Pé faire ou paye pou dilo pourri* - pour ne pas dire *lotte la!* L'Alliance Sociale avait promis une baisse des prix sur les denrées. On faisait croire à une baisse de la TVA or, il n'en est rien ! Que de la poudre aux yeux ! Au lieu de tout cela, nous n'avons vu que scandales après scandales. Mon collègue, l'honorable Bhagwan, en a longuement parlé hier lors de son intervention. Gaspillage à la MBC - *Pepsi Hungama!* La *STC*, le *hedging* mal calculé, *Air Mauritius*, Banque de Maurice, la non-transparence dans la gestion des corps paraétatiques. Les mauvaises pratiques dans les collectivités locales - *Municipalities/District Councils*; des allégations de corruption contre des conseillers. Un conseiller avait même dû faire des travaux communautaires et il était présent, hier, lors de l'élection du maire, et j'en passe. Les gens ne font plus confiance aux institutions, M. le président. Il existe, aujourd’hui, une crise institutionnelle. L'île Maurice souffre d'une crise institutionnelle. Quand il y a un problème ou quand une chose ne marche pas, ou pas assez vite, les gens préfèrent se tourner vers les radios privées. Savez-vous que tous les jours, dans pratiquement tous les ministères ou corps paraétatiques, il y a des personnes qui sont là spécialement pour écouter les doléances des enquêtes en direct à la radio pour pouvoir intervenir ou réagir à temps et ne pas subir de blâme du public. C'est à travers la radio que les problèmes sont résolus ce qui n'est pas normal, M. le président. Vous voulez un fauteuil roulant? Vous avez fait une demande en bonne et due forme et cela tarde à venir? Vous n'avez qu'à passer à la radio! Le *District Council* ne répond pas à vos lettres? Vous n'avez qu'à passer à la radio! Une pension? Passez à la radio! Les ordures ne sont pas enlevées? Passez à la radio! Toujours la radio, M. le président! Ce n'est pas normal et les étrangers nous rient au nez. A quoi servent les institutions? A quoi sert le *Citizens Advice Bureau*, M. le président? C'est pour vous dire que la population ne fait plus confiance à nos institutions. Les institutions sont en crise par manque de transparence et d'*accountability*. Il y a du gaspillage à n'en plus finir dans ces mêmes institutions comme le diner aux frais des contribuables ou les édiles de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill en compagnie de leurs épouses dans un chic restaurant de la ville. Qui en font

les frais? Les contribuables! De l'argent jeté par la fenêtre, R 42 millions pour un slogan qui a fait de nous la risée des étrangers alors qu'avec beaucoup moins que cela, une firme mauricienne aurait trouvé un meilleur *branding*. Il y a toujours cette mentalité que les étrangers peuvent mieux faire que les mauriciens. Je ne suis pas xénophobe, M. le président, mais patriote, et je pense qu'un fils ou une fille du sol aurait dû avoir la possibilité de faire preuve de ses compétences. Encore une occasion ratée et du gaspillage de l'argent public. De la corruption, n'en parlons pas! Mon collègue, l'honorable Bhagwan, avait parlé de l'argent trouvé dans le cabas d'une conseillère à Quatre Bornes, sur la plage de Flic en Flac ou je ne sais plus où. Devenir riche le plus vite possible en moins de temps, c'est devenu la règle du jeu. Rien d'étonnant quand le Premier Ministre avait lui-même déclaré que son ambition est que tout le monde devienne riche, mais il n'a pas dit comment. Au dépend de qui? De la population? Au dépend de quoi? De nos valeurs, M. le président. Mon collègue, le *Leader* de l'Opposition a parlé des méfaits des maisons de jeux d'autant plus - et c'est sérieux – que c'est plus prononcé chez nos jeunes. Tout le monde sait que les mineurs jouent malgré l'avertissement à ce sujet. L'argent facile devient inquiétant. Récemment, j'ai lu dans la presse que trois jeunes d'une quinzaine d'années avaient été arrêtés, après un cambriolage, avec une somme de R 500,000 à Souillac ou Riambel. Un autre jeune mineur a gagné R 11,000 au *pool* et son père touche un salaire bien en-dessous de cette somme. Qu'est-ce qu'il va penser ce jeune homme-là? Est-ce plus facile de s'asseoir, de jouer aux loteries et de toucher gros, que de travailler? Il y a aujourd'hui le Lotto, les courses de chevaux - excusez-moi honorable Allet - le pari sur le football et tout le reste.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Government from 2000-2005, our objectives translated in successive budgets have been: eradication of poverty through low-cost housing and other measures; a more equitable distribution of income, the preservation of the environment, the strengthening of public services as well as transparency and the creation of a more sustainable and peaceful Mauritius. We have been able to achieve this and we are proud of it.

M. le président, nous avions réglé le problème de squatters, héritage du précédent gouvernement de l'Alliance Sociale qui avait encouragé les personnes à squatter les terrains appartenant à l'Etat, à squatter les maisons de la NHDC à Camp Levieux, à la Tour Koenig et également dans notre circonscription. Nous avions, nous, réglé le problème de squatters. La situation pour certains d'entre eux était sur le point d'être régularisée - ce matin l'honorable Madame Hanoomanjee en a fait mention. Pour Case Noyale le terrain avait déjà été identifié sous l'ancien gouvernement, le plan était déjà prêt. Mais que s'est-il passé avec l'arrivée du nouveau gouvernement? Nul ne le sait. Nous leur avions également donné de l'eau et l'électricité. Nous avions également construit un *Dockers' Village* à Baie du Tombeau – un vrai bijou. Ce projet avait figuré dans le Programme Gouvernemental de 1995. Le *Dockers' Flat*, M. le président, c'était des appartements datant du

tout début des années 60. Les appartements étaient dans un état de décrépitude, la tuyauterie était pourrie, les éviers également, tellement que les asticots - 'moutouc' s'en donnaient à cœur joie et cela faisait pitié à voir. Ce n'était pas hygiénique du tout, c'était mauvais pour la santé. De même pour les longères de Richelieu datant des cyclones Gervaise ou Firinga à Pointe aux Sables, nous avions fait construire de petites maisonnettes dignes de ce nom avec une jolie cour pour ces personnes. Ceux, qui vivaient dans des longères à Baie du Tombeau, Batterie Cassée, Camp La Colle, Rivière Noire, étaient également relogés dans les maisons. C'était du joli travail avec mon collègue, l'honorable Lesjongard, à la tête du ministère du logement. Je dois aussi préciser que l'honorable Bérenger s'était rendu sur les lieux le lendemain des élections générales de 2000, que ce soit au *Dockers' Flat*, à Richelieu ou ailleurs, pour se rendre compte de la situation dans laquelle vivaient ces personnes. Il avait promis de les reloger et il a tenu promesse, car nous sommes convaincus que le droit à un logement est un droit sacré pour la dignité d'une personne - un logement digne de ce nom – aussi bien qu'un emploi.

M. le président, avant de terminer, je voudrais dire deux choses. Tout d'abord les Chagossiens: j'ai toujours dit que nous devons faire de notre mieux, quel que soit le gouvernement au pouvoir, pour la communauté Chagossienne. Cette communauté a depuis trop longtemps souffert de différents problèmes et ils font de leur mieux pour s'en sortir. Ils essayent de mettre beaucoup d'accent sur l'éducation et la formation. En ce moment, ils ont deux projets de construction de Centre Polyvalent à Baie du Tombeau et à Pointe aux Sables pour leurs activités mais les dotations budgétaires, qui leur sont allouées dans ce présent budget, ne sont malheureusement pas suffisantes. Ils essayent d'être autonomes, *empowered*. Donc, je fais un appel au gouvernement pour montrer plus de solidarité vis-à-vis de cette communauté déracinée qui essaie de se mettre sur ses pieds.

Deuxièmement, nous avons tous été choqués, et indignés, par l'acte barbare et atroce commis sur madame Milazar, qui a été torturée à mort avant d'être jetée dans les égouts, et de surcroit cette femme était enceinte. L'un des agresseurs voulait même l'éventrer pour voir son bébé. L'atrocité de cet acte nous a profondément marqué or la ministre des droits de la femme n'a pipé mot de cette tragédie. Comme je n'ai rien vu dans la presse, M. le président, je me suis dit qu'elle allait se rattraper lors d'un *statement* à la Chambre ou alors lors de son intervention sur le budget d'autant plus qu'aujourd'hui nous commémorons la journée internationale sur la violence à l'égard des femmes et il y a toute une série d'activités qui sont présentement organisées par son ministère. Jusqu'aujourd'hui je n'ai rien entendu. Vendredi - dans deux jours - il y aura une veillée au Jardin de la Compagnie pour dire non à la violence contre les femmes. J'ose espérer que la ministre sera présente. Je remercie le *Speaker*, le *Deputy Speaker*, de même que l'*acting Leader of the House* pour avoir accepté d'annuler la session parlementaire qui devait avoir lieu ce jour-là afin de permettre ce rassemblement.

Le problème de la violence à l'égard des femmes est inquiétant. Il faudrait des mesures fermes pour une meilleure protection des femmes sans pour autant oublier les agresseurs qui sont principalement des hommes. Ces agresseurs-là devraient se faire soignés car ils sont, en quelque sorte, eux aussi victimes d'une société malade. M. le président, nous avons appris que les agresseurs ou du moins l'un d'eux est un enfant des rues. Il avait des problèmes graves. Un travailleur des rues d'une ONG se serait inquiété de son cas et aurait porté l'affaire à qui de droit mais comme ce programme d'enfants des rues a été démantelé par ce présent gouvernement, les autorités n'ont pas réagi. M. le président, je fais un appel pour que ce programme soit réintroduit. C'est un drame et cela est une conséquence de la pauvreté.

*Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unless the scourge of poverty is adequately addressed,* là on parle de CSR, c'est vrai que c'est bon mais il y a eu des craintes exprimées par des ONGs et la société civile, à l'effet que ce fonds ne soit utilisé à des fins politiques surtout à la veille des élections générales.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, unless the scourge of poverty is adequately addressed, the various measures will come to naught. The interests, rights and welfare of the population cannot be pursued in isolation. The advocacy of *Maurice île Durable* would certainly remain hollow when people's basic rights are denied, such as a decent dwelling and enough food to eat. The pursuit of strategies that address the question of poverty must be adequately translated in practice.

I would like to end with one quotation from the Dalai Lama, who said –

*"If you want others to be happy, practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion."*

Ce gouvernement en a bien besoin, merci.

(3.46 p.m.)

**The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr M. Gowressoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the honour and privilege to talk on the Budget and I would like to congratulate the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment for the presentation of 2010 Budget. Under the guidance of our hon. Prime Minister, we are now coming at the end of our mandate with the satisfaction of leaving a legacy of which future generations will be proud.

Four and a half years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there have been five Budgets. There has been the Additional Stimulus Package Bill. We are proud as our *bilan* will act as a springboard to bring us to power again and continue the good work we have undertaken. We have put the economy on rail, the development train is gathering speed and I am sure we will be back for the next five years to make it run at full speed.

This Budget is a *maillon* in the work undertaken by the Labour Government since the Father of the Nation took the reign of the country. Each time the Labour Party has been in power, the country has leaped forward in all fields. This Budget is in line with the philosophy of the Labour Party, namely creating wealth and distributing it equitably among all sections of the population with a special attention for the most vulnerable group. The 2010 Budget has been developed, bearing in mind all these principles on which the Labour Party has always adhered strongly-

- a shelter for everybody;
- a decent living and providing job opportunities to all;
- a caring society where the weaker sections of the population are not excluded from the main stream of development;
- equal educational opportunities;
- free access to quality health;
- increasing the national cake to ensure a better distribution, and
- preservation of the environment.

The 2010 Budget is daring, highly imaginative and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the population. It contains substantive measures to address key economic concerns in the light of the global downturn in saving jobs and helping viable enterprises.

The 2010 Budget is the most proactive and responsive budget Mauritius has ever witnessed. It has bolstered the confidence of all economic operators and “shows business that we mean business”.

This Budget will help enterprises, particularly those who have viable business models, to ride out of the storms. It will also benefit the economy as a whole in the longer term by allowing us to get back on our feet more quickly to take the advantages or opportunities when they appear. The Budget also shows clear and real concerns for our youth, elders, workers, sportsmen, artists, planters and women despite the challenges posed by the economic crisis. The Budget has a unique caring approach that one should always adopt when drafting and implementing social community policies with a passion to help the people. This Government cares for the needy and vulnerable through concrete measures. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Alliance Sociale Government has made a difference. Five years ago the country was in a chaotic state and all indicators were in the red. We took quick decisive and innovative measures. We initiated reforms and introduced measures to accelerate the development process. We succeeded in putting the country on the growth route despite external shocks like the

dismantling of the Multi Fibre Agreement, the 36% reduction in sugar prices, the rising of all prices and the food crisis. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thanks to our farsightedness and bold measures aimed at stimulating growth we have been able to shelter our economy from the global economy meltdown. We were well ahead of the curve to provide solutions before our businesses met with even more headwinds due to the Rs20 billion Stimulus Package to support our enterprises in saving jobs. We came out without being much hurt, we have prevented job losses but, more importantly, some 40,000 new jobs have been created when people around the world are losing their due to recession. We have saved the country from economic chaos and social upheaval.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has brought a revolution in the SME sector. Today, in every nook and corner we find new SMEs operating and existing while flourishing. I am surprised to hear from the other side of the House that the SMEs have been left unattended. This is totally unfounded and pure demagogic. These *prophètes de malheur*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, did nothing for SMEs during the five years. Today, they are pointing fingers at us when worldwide we are being praised for our efforts in that sector. I would just remind the House of the Certificate of Competency given to us by the World Bank and Mrs Hillary Clinton, the US Secretary of State.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that everyone knows by now that Government's main concern in this year's Budget is to help our people retain their jobs, lower the unemployment rate, stimulate growth and help our manufacturers to ride out this crisis. At this moment I am talking, some countries are in deep economic troubles. Yet, the 'Alliance Sociale' Government is able to allocate funds at this difficult time to help our businesses invest in their workers and in so doing help all our fellow citizens indirectly. This shows that Government rational and product approach in managing the economy has made our coffers rich and abundant so that when the thunderstorm arrives we will have the reserve to rely upon. The people understand the intention of Government. All ground reactions now tell that the Budget addresses Mauritians' key concerns and aspirations. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are reaping the fruits of our good management. This has enabled us to pay a statutory compensation of 3.5% to all beneficiaries of social aid and to those workers with a salary up to Rs12,000. Rs420 will be paid to those whose income exceed Rs12,000. In addition, what we have during our present regime is unique.

We have managed to keep VAT at 15% throughout the years which no Government has done till now. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come to the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I listened to him very carefully when he said '*quatre budgets amers, fades.*' Last time, he said also '*fourre-tout*', '*budget à la FMI*' 'repackaging' 'bla-bla-bla. That is the way he said it. For this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he said that the country has benefitted from what they left in 2005. What have they left? *Heritage catastrophique! Dette*

*publique de R120 milliards*, skeletons in the cupboard, an economic growth of less than 2% when there was no recession, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Illovo deal - *cinq familles* got a jackpot of R 6 milliards. *L'état d'urgence économique* - 45,000 workers lost their jobs, industries were closing down. During their mandate, in January 2005, one Minister was invited to inaugurate a factory for the new spinning mill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and it was Arvind Overseas factory. One week later after he inaugurated the spinning mill the same Minister was called upon to close the factory, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is what they have left, maybe for that Minister *so li pied pas ti bon*. I listened to the President of the Economic Commission, *porte-parole* of the MMM on radio today. He said: *Maurice est dans l'oeil du cyclone*. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *est-ce que Maurice est dans l'œil du cyclone? No!*

*(Interruptions)*

He is dreaming, he is becoming mad, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Today, we cannot say Mauritius is in the *l'oeil du cyclone*. The growth is nearly 3% and next year it will be more than 4%, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The same president of the Economic Commission or *porte-parole* of the MMM gave advice during recession to buy gold. Does a country buy gold during recession? Even jewellers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir do not buy gold during that period. Coming to the SMEs, last time the Leader of the Opposition talked of *effets d'annonce, aveux d'échec*, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will elaborate on this later because hon. Bodha and hon. Mrs Martin also referred to *les petites et moyennes entreprises*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Bill they said that there is no one from the *Fédération des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises*, but later I will explain to this Federation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Bodha was kind enough when he accepted the Budget 2010. We all agree with him when he said: "*boeuf travay, bizin ki boeuf même manger*". When referring to the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition regarding that gold purchase, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he made a calculation of Rs20 billion loss. He also compared it with hedging. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hedging is some kind of insurance, but if we have not purchased gold, where is hedging, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also listened to hon. Mrs Martin. She talked of two sectors in the Budget: the PME, Arts and Culture.

*(Interruptions)*

Arts and culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two World Heritage sites, Le Morne and Aapravasi Ghat and it was under my ministership. I would like to congratulate the Attorney General and the Prime Minister for his blessing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When I was Minister of Arts and Culture, we brought the Telegu, Marathi and Tamil Speaking Unions and now we are coming with the Creole, Bhojpuri and Arabic Speaking Unions.

Regarding the Cultural Centres a Board has been established. She rightly said that the SME is a way to alleviate poverty, combat unemployment, create jobs. She always raised the point that one member from the Federation should be a member on the Board of the SMEDA. She also said that SMEs do not have access to markets. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are we nt organising market fairs, cooperative fairs, *Caravane de l'Entreprenariat* around the island. We are also tapping SADC, COMESA, AGOA markets, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Martin raised the point as to why we are still saying SEHDA instead of SMEDA. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, SMEDA Bill has not yet been gazetted. We have to wait for, at least, one month according to procedures in order to proclaim the SMEDA Act.

When we speak of SMEs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two types of entrepreneurs. The first one works hard, develops his enterprise, produces good quality products, finds market for his products, increases production, is a good customer of the banks, whilst the other one has time for interviews, there is no improvement in his enterprise and no repayment of loans to the banking institutions. Very often this type of entrepreneurs come to Government and ask to write off their loan, but this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is impossible.

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie raised the point that Government has increased the price of bread by 20 cents.

*(Interruptions)*

Someone from the Opposition said it. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2005, the salary of the workers was how much and today it is how much. She said that the Empowerment Programme is doing nothing, but let me tell the House that this Government has started a housing project at Bambous of 200 units. As regards NHDC houses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we agree that the previous Government had NHDC houses constructed, but there are lots of defects where we are now spending money to repair all these defects.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now comment on the initiatives that we are taking regarding the business sector, the State Trading Corporation, the Small and Medium Enterprises and the Cooperatives sector which fall under the responsibility of my Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, My Ministry is poised upon giving the best of services so as to create a hassle-free business environment. In this quest, it has been classified as the best performer on the 'Productive Classification' carried out by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment while evaluating Ministries regarding Performance Based Budgeting.

In his 2010 Budget Speech, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment rightly pointed out that this Government is pursuing an unrelenting quest for a world-class doing business environment. Our constantly improved international classifications in the ease of doing business and the competitiveness bear testimony of the efforts made and the success achieved by this Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2006, the Business Facilitation Act had greatly helped to improve licensing processes, more particularly for start-ups.

In the 2008/2009 Budget Speech, Government announced a new set of measures to simplify the processes for exports and imports where bureaucracy can be unnecessarily eliminated in many cases. Accordingly, my Ministry has chaired a Committee to review the list of products, which presently need import and export permits issued by Ministries/Departments and has submitted a report.

The recommendations of the committee which are under implementation by the different Ministries concerned are being overseen by my Ministry. My own Ministry will remove some 33 items from the list of goods requiring import permits.

With a view to facilitate the local traders, the Import Division of my Ministry is providing an electronic 24/7 service under the Trade Net Phase 5 System using the Electronic Data Interchange Technology. The applications for import permit are processed and authorisations to clear controlled goods from the customs are granted within 24 hours.

Concerning second hand vehicles, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, their importation and sale is regulated. There have been numerous complaints about buyers of such vehicles being misled by some traders who tamper with the odometer reading. The existing regulations are presently being reviewed to reinforce protection provided to the buyers of these vehicles.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Competition Commission, this Government strongly believes in fair competition. One of its priorities has always been to create a level playing field for economic agents. To that end, the Competition Act 2003, which had never been completely proclaimed and which lacked clout, has been repealed. A new Competition Act 2007 was passed. This Act enables the creation of the Competition Commission with full powers to investigate in suspected cases of anti-competitive behaviour. It is a sheer coincidence that this day the Competition Act 2007 is coming into operation through proclamation. Firms making abuse of their dominant position or resorting to restrictive business practices are warned. The Competition Commission has the power to inflict fines. All these, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are to achieve a vibrant business environment and a thriving Mauritian economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have heard several Members on the other side of the House speak of STC. They spoke of hedging. This is business. At that time, the price was increasing from US\$100 per barrel to US\$147. The experts were predicting US\$200. The STC has also taken this opportunity so that customers do not pay high prices. Since I took office, no loss has been incurred, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition put a PNQ regarding contaminated products where there was a big scandal that the STC had lost Rs200 m. on these contaminated products. I can inform this august Assembly that the STC has received a bank guarantee of USD5 m., that is, about Rs155 m. by the ST Shipping and, in the meantime, an inquiry is going on to find the defaulter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In reply to that PNQ, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I said that the product was covered by insurance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the financial situation at the STC, when this Government came to power in July 2005, the State Trading Corporation had a debt amounting to Rs1.1 billion. I am pleased to announce to the House that, after four and a half years of sound financial and responsible management of public funds and the adoption of a diligent sourcing strategy of commodities and petroleum products from overseas suppliers, all deficits have been recovered and the financial statements of the State Trading Corporation now show a surplus of Rs71 m.

On the issue of petroleum products, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our strategy to import our requirements directly from the Government of India through Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd has been beneficial to the country resulting in annual savings of Rs350 m. There has been no hidden agenda in the contract passed with MRPL and despite several invitations to Members of the House to consult the contract at the STC so far no Member of the Opposition has shown interest.

*(Interruptions)*

I say it again. No Member from the Opposition side has shown interest! Some people, it seems, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, take delight in making wild allegations and when requested to substantiate, '*ils se sauvent la queue entre les jambes*'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2008 we took the bold step to amend the APM regulations to provide for the determination of the prices of petroleum products on a monthly basis instead of quarterly. We acted responsibly to allow consumers to benefit immediately from a fall in prices but also to allow the STC to pass on increases in prices where warranted during the month the increases occurred instead of waiting for three months to do so. This has also contributed to improve the financial situation of the STC.

Further to my observation on the fluctuations in the retail price of the petroleum products, I have set up a Technical Committee to examine this issue and to come up with appropriate recommendations. The Committee comprises of two technicians from my Ministry and two others from the STC.

As regards rice, flour and LPG, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have managed to keep the prices of these basic foods very affordable through our subsidies. Last year, we brought down the price of flour and this measure immediately had an impact on the retail price of bread. As the House is certainly aware, Mr Speaker Sir, this Government has always had the interests of the “*ti-dimounes*” at heart, especially those at the lower rung of the ladder. The nation can rest assured that we will continue to do so. In our continuous quest for alleviating the hardship faced by households, this Government took the bold decision of decreasing the price of LPG, in cylinders of 12 kg from Rs315 to Rs300.

Let me come to the SME sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. With regard to Conducive Business Environment, the favourable business environment created by this Government when it assumed power in July 2005 inspired the confidence of both new and existing entrepreneurs. We made doing business easy through the Business Facilitation Act of 2006. We removed all bureaucratic hurdles and today we are reaping the fruits of these reforms.

I am surprised to see so many self-proclaimed champions of SMEs who did nothing significant when they were in power, blaming *l'Alliance sociale* Government of being incompetent. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is this very Government that has propelled the SME sector at the forefront of development today. During the past 4½ years, the SME sector registered a spectacular development. Today, we are about 100,000 small establishments providing employment to about 230,000 persons. Their contribution to GDP is around 22%, and the Gross Output is about Rs75 billion. The number of SMEs registered with SEHDA stands at 11,327 in October 2009. The results speak for themselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Action après action!*

With regard to support programmes, as the House is aware, SMEs occupy a top position on the Government's agenda, and constant effort are being made to promote and nurture them. We will continue with our support programmes, which have proved to be very successful till now. These are -

- the *Caravane de l'Entreprenariat*, which will be innovated and given a new look;
- sectoral regional fairs and the national SME fair will be held on a more regular basis;
- training courses, which have benefited some 5,000 persons till now in traditional sectors such as curtain making, fashion and design, basketry amongst others, will be strengthened and continued;
- participation in technology based fairs will be ongoing;

- re-engineering of the handicraft outlets will be continued, and new boutiques will be opened;
- intervention in enterprises, through visits and counseling, will be further intensified;
- free courses on import and export procedures to entrepreneurs will be continued;
- free driving courses to women entrepreneurs will be ongoing, and
- courses run by SEHDA, NICE, Enterprise Mauritius, University of Mauritius, AREU, National Women Entrepreneur Council and HRDC will be continued.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Budget after Budget, we have introduced schemes to spur the development of SMEs. During the July 2009 Budget, we allocated a record sum of Rs1.5 billion exclusively for the development of SMEs taking into consideration the economic meltdown. To acquaint SMEs with the budgetary measures, we conducted a '*PME - Nous l'avenir*' sensitisation campaign, both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, to invite SMEs to take advantage of these schemes. All these measures have largely helped SMEs in these tough times.

As regards the impact of Support Schemes, I will now give some concrete examples to show how SMEs are benefiting from them -

- some 20 SMEs are being assisted financially under the Mechanism for Transitional Support to Private Sector;
- the debts of 265 SMEs have been re-scheduled by DBM Ltd under the Debts Re-scheduling Scheme;
- about Rs125 m. have been disbursed to enterprises for purchase of equipment under the Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme;
- some 55 small hotels and restaurants are currently being assisted under the Renovation Scheme for Small Hotels and Restaurants;
- some 50 SMEs are benefiting from the services of mentors under the Mentoring Scheme, and
- the Mauritius Posts and Cooperative Bank Ltd has provided loans worth Rs3.2 m. to some 80 women under the New Micro-Financing Scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these schemes are showing positive results. The Government is committed more than ever to help SMEs expand and grow. We will continue on this path and intensify our efforts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, shoring the SME Sector, the 2010 Budget, with its ground breaking measures, will no doubt make our SMEs become more resilient and innovative. It is the first time that a Government has

introduced twenty measures in a Budget exclusively for development of SMEs. In the 2010 Budget, we have addressed most of the difficulties that the SMEs are currently facing on the various fronts. The new budgetary measures will, no doubt, consolidate the SME sector, and create new windows of opportunities for both new entrepreneurs and existing SMEs.

Concerning financial measures -

- As regards access to finance, we have broadened the scope of assistance offered by DBM Ltd, and made it more flexible. Financial assistance is, henceforth, being provided to SMEs, with a turnover of up to Rs15 m., and also to the existing clients regardless of the crisis.
- We are reviewing the Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme to cover all productive equipment, including goods vehicles. We are also financing up to 100% of non-VAT registered SMEs with a turnover below Rs3 m;
- The Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme is also being extended to newly incorporated companies, with the sole owner having proven track record, and
- as a Government who cares much for women, we have exempted them from payment of registration fees of 75% on the loan they can contract under the New Micro Financing Scheme. This represents a savings of around Rs2,100 for these new women entrepreneurs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Minister, what I suggest is to stop now, and then we will resume. I suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

*At 4.30 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 5.07 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Gowreesoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, to help SMEs meet their working capital requirements, we are also introducing a Mauritius Business Growth Scheme (MBGS) for those registered as sole proprietors, companies, partnerships, and societies.

An Export Credit Insurance Scheme which was long overdue is being set up and will be operational by early 2010 to help SMEs to overcome their cash flow problems.

The booster loan, which has benefited some 832 entrepreneurs till now, is being increased to Rs150,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the marketing front to help SMEs sell their products, the Budget also provides for the setting up of a permanent exhibition/sales centre for SMEs on a rotational basis. My Ministry has already started working on this project for its quick realisation.

- A SME portal, which will be based at SEHDA, will be set up to provide information on service providers in order to facilitate trade.
- Continuous support will be offered to SMEs participating in overseas trade fairs through subsidised air tickets and accommodation costs.

Land for the construction of industrial buildings – SMEs also complain of difficulties in acquiring land to build their own factories. In this respect 10 sites of five arpents each will be developed. This is the first time that land is being leased to SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, never has any Government allotted land to be developed as industrial areas for SMEs run solely by women. This is a *première* as it shows l'Alliance Sociale Government's interest to promote women entrepreneurship. About 33 arpents of land will be provided for this unprecedented and innovative venture.

Promoting the SMEs growth - this Budget also provides for the launching of the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme with a budget of Rs360 m. to increase sales performance of SMEs. Under this 50/50 cost sharing grant scheme, SMEs will be offered professional expert advice, free maintaining services and assistance for preparation of loan applications.

We are not sticking only to consultancy services to help them increase their sales in the implementation phase, we are also providing boost start ups and existing SMEs with access to finance with the SME Partnership Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to new measures to boost development of SME, I am confident that these measures will further consolidate the SME sector and attain our vision of making Mauritius an island of entrepreneurs. Let me now inform the House of some new measures that my Ministry is coming up with the forthcoming months to speed up the development of SMEs.

First, a new industrial strategy document for SMEs is being finalised and will be implemented by early next year.

Second, we have gone a long way in the creation of a genuine Mauritian handicraft label which will be launched by March 2010.

Third, we are also coming up with the National SME Award Competition to give due recognition to our SMEs.

Fourth, tourist villages to help SMEs market their products will be operational by beginning of 2010 at Ville Mare and Mahebourg.

Fifth, the SMEDA Bill which sets a new framework for both small and medium enterprises will be proclaimed soon and this will undoubtedly make our SMEs attain new heights.

Sixth, as a firm believer in actions, I have set up a committee at my Ministry to ensure the quick implementation and follow up of budgetary measures.

Seventh, as the first edition of PME - Nou L'Avenir sensitisation campaign was a real success, we are launching in early 2010 the PME - Nou L'Avenir II campaign throughout the whole island of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll now elaborate on the cooperative sector which has been given a new impetus by this Government.

Prior to July 2005, the Co-operatives Movement was seriously handicapped with problems relating to an archaic management and an aging population. There were audit backlogs of four to five years in practically all the 485 then registered co-operative societies. We had to urgently review the situation and develop new strategies for its survival.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we amended the Co-operative Act to remove impediments and thus provided a conducive legal framework for timely audit and co-operative development. All audit backlogs were urgently cleared and financial discipline has now been restored in the entire co-operative movement.

### **Capacity Building through National Institute for Co-operative Entrepreneurship (NICE)**

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been successful in creating a new breed of co-operative entrepreneurs, capable of investing in their economic activities. Since January 2006, 65 capacity programmes have been conducted by NICE for the benefit of nearly 10,000 trainees in Co-operative Entrepreneurship Development. We have proposed innovative courses such as driving, import and export and we are coming up with a few more to fully equip our co-operators for them to become successful entrepreneurs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Co-operatives have now become an important stakeholder in curbing down unemployment, especially female unemployment and in implementing food security and import substitution

programmes. The benefits of co-operation have been fully tapped in existing co-operatives such as fish, pigs, vegetables, credit unions, handicraft and sugar cane. A series of projects have been implemented to provide appropriate infrastructure to pig and cow breeders, marketing support to fishermen and co-operative fair shops for consumers. This new strategy has helped us to double the number of Cooperatives Societies to 895 with a turnover to over Rs4 billion in 2009.

The role of Co-operative Federations has been reviewed and they are now playing meaningful roles in servicing their affiliates. They are also acting as *chiens de garde* and regulating prices of farm inputs on the market. One of the federations has also pioneered in the importation and distribution of bio fertilizers.

To help Cooperative Societies increase the visibility of their products to raise sales, we have found market outlets for them. In this respect, we are holding monthly co-operative fairs throughout the island on days when regular markets and fairs are not held. Until now, 12 co-operative fairs have been organised in different regions.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I have also requested the local authorities to make stalls available in the regular markets and fairs for the benefit of our co-operatives. These measures will ensure that the Co-operative Sector is present in everyday trading activity.

### **Fair Trade Certification**

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to make cooperative societies adopt global standards and practices, I am pleased to inform the House that five co-operative societies have been awarded the Fair Trade Certification. This certificate will enable the co-operative societies to benefit from a premium of 60 US Dollars per tonne of sugar. The Government wants all cooperative societies to be fair trade certified. A scheme is being set up to advance funds on a soft term basis, ranging from up to 75% of the consultancy cost with an application fee of Rs150,000 to facilitate the certification process. The scheme will have a mitigating effect on the fall in prices of sugar and open Mauritius to the niche market.

### **Development Strategies**

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first, to ensure further development, we are laying great emphasis on transparency, accountability and good governance in the co-operative movement. Second, Co-operative Credit Unions will be encouraged to adopt prudential guidelines and the PEARL Certification. Third, good co-operative governance and business efficiency shall be the key words of all future development. Fourth, a new

scheme is being developed with the collaboration of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to encourage youngsters to join the cooperative movement. This will breed a new league of Co-operative leaders so crucial for the co-operative movement.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we came to power in July 2005, we had a dream to improve the life of people. To make this dream come true, we had to act fast. *“To think too long about doing something often results in doing nothing”*. For four and a half years, we have toiled hard and had to fight an uphill battle with the legacy we had inherited. The global economic crisis added insult to injury. However, we are not deterred. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, *“it is easier to go down a hill than up but the view is best from the top”*. We succeeded and now the whole population is benefitting from the fruits of our labour.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**(5.16 p.m.)**

**Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West):** M. le président, je constate que c'est seulement en fin de mandat de ce présent gouvernement qu'ils commencent à réaliser que le problème de la pauvreté est bien réel à Maurice. Pourquoi je dis cela, c'est parce que ce n'est qu'en fin de mandat, quand il ne reste que quelques mois avant les élections que finalement ce gouvernement a trouvé utile d'annoncer des investissements colossales dans la politique du logement, cinq ou dix milles logements. Est-ce sérieux? Je leur donne le bénéfice du doute mais on sait, M. le président, que beaucoup de ceux qui sont de l'autre côté de la Chambre étaient farouchement opposés à tout ce qui concerne l'investissement dans la politique du logement. Certains d'entre eux disaient '*logement c'est pou banne dimoune qui pas content payer, banne mauvais payeurs*'. C'était comme ce qui était dit pendant la campagne électorale.

M. le président, ce gouvernement se rend compte présentement qu'il y a un réel problème de pauvreté. Il y a beaucoup d'autres problèmes qui engendrent la pauvreté et je pense qu'à ce niveau il n'y a pas eu les efforts nécessaires pour éradiquer la pauvreté quoique pas mal de choses ont été dites dans ce Parlement à cet effet.

M. le président, la pauvreté engendre : crimes, vols, viols ou prostitution. C'est une misère, que je constate personnellement, va en ascendant ces dernières années; c'est même très accablant et très inquiétant. Il est vrai que durant la dernière campagne électorale de 2005, il y a eu une rude campagne contre le gouvernement MSM/MMM pour avoir été supposément trop généreux dans sa politique de logements sociaux, les écoles ZEP, et l'autonomie de Rodrigues. Qu'est-ce qui n'a pas été dit, M. le président, à ce propos? Concernant les écoles des Zones D'éducation Prioritaire (ZEP), ils prenaient un malin plaisir à dire '*l'école*

zèbre'. J'ai déjà déposé ces DVDs sur la Table de l'Assemblée Nationale. Visionnez les si vous ne les avez pas encore vus. On peut y voir un des orateurs avec une audience composée de certains de ceux qui sont de l'autre côté de la Chambre, traitant le dossier de l'école ZEP comme des zèbres. Vous comprenez la nuance Ils ont rit et ricané là-dessus. Allez-voir!

**Mr Speaker:** Laissez-moi dire à l'honorable membre que cinq ans ont déjà passé depuis les élections générales. Il ne faut pas aller trop loin dans tout cela.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Barbier:** *I just wanted to flashback to remind them because it is only now, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is some reaction concerning this problem of poverty in Mauritius.* C'est bon de les rappeler. Allez-voir ces DVDs! Pour moi, ces DVDs vont rester dans mes archives pour de nombreuses années encore et je les utiliserais quand il le faut et où il le faut. Donc, ils étaient traités comme des zèbres et je vais vous dire mot à mot ce qu'ils ont dit –

« Alor zot donne souliers, linges, manger, boire, tou donne zot, appelle zot banne zenfants spécials. »

Allez voir comment exactement ils étaient traités. Et l'assistance applaudissait et ricanait. *C'était ainsi. Zot tou dan enn sel communauté ça.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Let me now apply the Standing Orders! What happens outside the House cannot be discussed in the House!

**Mr Barbier:** Anyway, I have already put the DVDs on the Table of this august Assembly and anybody can check that what I am saying is the bloody truth, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, c'était la même chose en ce qui concerne Rodrigues. Encore une fois, on a eu une connotation communale par rapport à notre action pour l'autonomie de Rodrigues, le logement et les écoles ZEP. On n'a pas oublié, M. le président. Heureusement que maintenant ce gouvernement commence à prendre conscience de la nécessité d'adresser ces problèmes de pauvreté à Maurice. Ce que je voudrais dire c'est que nous ne faisons pas de la démagogie de ce problème. Peut-être qu'on nous avait mal compris dans nos actions gouvernementales à l'époque. Ils ont fait de la démagogie pure et simple. M. le président, je constate qu'il y a encore quelque uns de l'autre côté de la Chambre qui continuent à utiliser certains adjectifs malsains dans leurs remarques. Selon les témoignages que j'ai pu recueillir par rapport à la politique du logement que l'actuel gouvernement est en train de mettre en place, là aussi il n'y a pas l'unanimité. Alors, je dirais qu'il ne faut pas

traiter la pauvreté comme un problème communal mais comme un problème d'ordre national. Il y a encore cette petitesse d'esprit de certains lauréats coincés de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

Il ne faut pas oublier que ce gouvernement avait tenté d'enlever le pain aux enfants des écoles primaires. C'est ce même gouvernement qui avait terminé le contrat des travailleurs sociaux tant important pour adresser le problème de pauvreté sur le terrain. Ils n'ont toujours pas de nouveau contrat à cet effet. Ces travailleurs de rues étaient d'un secours inestimable pour la population, pour ceux qui étaient pauvres. Ils encadraient les enfants dont les parents avaient des difficultés, n'avaient pas d'emplois, étaient en prison, travaillaient dans des usines, étaient '*enflés camions*' entre autres. Ce gouvernement avait trouvé le moyen d'arrêter tout cela. Ce sont des actions concrètes prises par le gouvernement au début de son mandat pour bien démontrer qu'il ne croyait pas vraiment en ce que nous avions mis en place par rapport aux combats contre la pauvreté. Donc, il y a tous ces faits, M. le président, pour confirmer ce que j'ai dit au parlement aujourd'hui. Bref, ces enfants n'ont pas l'encadrement souhaité. Ce sont ces mêmes enfants qui sont les problèmes du jour, qui sont le mal de la société dans laquelle nous vivons aujourd'hui. Pour certains, c'était du gaspillage de fonds public. De part les conséquences des actions de ces enfants des rues, le niveau social, notre réputation et le tourisme sont en train de prendre un mauvais coup, M. le président. La misère, M. le président, comme me disait ma grand-mère, n'est pas un vice, mais un clou bien rivé. Une fois qu'on est pris au piège de la misère, c'est difficile de s'en sortir mais ce n'est pas impossible. C'est là où l'État, au lieu d'être démagogue, peut être un facilitateur précieux pour soulager et résoudre ce problème de fonds de notre société mauricienne et, par ricochet, les problèmes sociaux par le *law and order* et tout ce qui va avec. La misère est la racine de la plupart des maux sociaux. Ne faisons pas de cette affaire, comme je disais avant, une affaire communale, mais une affaire nationale.

Au niveau de l'éducation, par exemple, l'honorable Dr. Bunwaree a dû le constater car il y a eu un peu de sagesse dans son jugement ces derniers temps. Peut-être arrivera-t-il à enlever la visière du visage de ces pères pour qu'ils puissent eux aussi voir plus large que le trou du puits duquel ils n'arrivent pas à en sortir jusqu'à maintenant. Alors, c'est vrai qu'il y a certains qui ont de la sagesse et voient beaucoup mieux, après quatre ans et demi de mandat. Il y en a qui font des efforts et réalisent qu'ils avaient tort mais il y en a d'autres, malheureusement, qui continuent à avoir une approche *anti targeting* contre tout ce qui est fait pour apaiser la misère dans notre pays. Ainsi, si l'honorable Dr. Bunwaree parvient à le faire, on progressera dans l'esprit de Maurice républicaine.

Si entre deux élections, certains ont gagné en maturité politique et font moins de remarques partisanes électorales et non-fondées par respect pour eux-mêmes, vous verrez que ceux, qui sont dans le *front bench*, ne

tombent pas dans cette bassesse. Ils savent ce qu'ils disent, mais ils esquivent de temps en temps des sourires lorsque certains *backbenchers* font des remarques purement démagogiques et au goût électoraliste. Je ne comprends pas comment certains, par pure démagogie, continuent à parler du Illovo deal comme encore des actions purement communales. Si certains font des discours beaucoup plus réfléchis, d'autres continuent à faire de la démagogie à caractère communal, comme des parasites collés à leur proie car c'est leur seul moyen de survie politique. Ils n'ont pas autre chose à dire que d'aller dans une direction purement raciste sinon communale. Je dis bien certains car d'autres ont beaucoup progressé.

Combien par arpent avons-nous payé le terrain de l'*Illovo deal*? Je prends ce que l'honorable Sayed-Hossen avait dit. Je ne connais pas les chiffres mais apparemment c'était autour de R 125,000 l'arpent. R 125,000 l'arpent dans la région d'Ébène, *prime land*, terrain fertile et accessible. Si on arrive à trouver maintenant ce même terrain pour R 1 million l'arpent, on est prêt à payer. Je suis sûr qu'on ne trouverait pas R 1 million aujourd'hui. Ceux, qui ont bénéficié ces deals, trouvent qu'il faut payer très cher avec tous les ajustements. Je sais qu'en ce temps là ces terres se vendaient à R 500,000 l'arpent et, que nous, nous avions payé R 125,000, c'est un peu normal que de par ces *deals* il y ait certaines concessions à faire. Mais à qui profite tout cela aujourd'hui, M. le président ? Cela profite au pays. Le ministre des finances parle de la réussite des ICT. Sur quel terrain? Aujourd'hui, tout homme d'affaires, qui a un peu de bon sens, se bat pour avoir un lopin de terre sur le terrain d'Illovo. Qui ne souhaite pas y avoir accès aujourd'hui pour installer son business ? Presque tous les hommes d'affaires du jour essaient de se battre pour y avoir accès. M. le président, si on vient me dire que ce terrain acheté à R 125,000 l'arpent était un mauvais *deal* pour le pays en faveur des cinq familles, comme ils disent, donc, pourriez-vous, en passant, m'expliquer comment se fait-il que ce gouvernement ait acheté des terrains à près de R 600,000 l'arpent pour la construction d'un collège à Triolet? Expliquez-moi pourquoi et comment? Si R 125,000 était cher, et là-bas c'est près de R 600,000 alors que dans ce cas précis, l'évaluateur du gouvernement avait évalué le terrain à environ R 450,000 l'arpent pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement a choisi de payer le terrain quatre fois plus cher que le Illovo *deal*? Expliquez-moi, M. le président ? Je souhaiterais savoir qui était le ministre en ce temps-là. Je ne vais pas faire de commentaires, on va m'accuser *of imputing motives*. Mais c'est à vous d'en juger, M. le président ! En essayant de revenir là-dessus, M. le président, je constate que ceux, qui ont quand même progressé, ne voient que du ridicule dans l'action de certains qui est de persister dans ce même élan de politique de démagogie. Je sais que même une entreprise très proche du pouvoir aujourd'hui est en train de travailler pour avoir tous les terrains de Highlands, s'il le faut, pour pouvoir construire sa ville. Il est prêt à investir pour faire une ville *in toto* toujours sur le terrain d'*Illovo deal*. Vous savez de qui je parle.

(*Interruptions*)

Monsieur le ministre ne sait pas ! Alors, cessez de prendre les électeurs pour des imbéciles. Un peu de respect à leur égard serait tout à leur honneur, M. le président. Je vais terminer sur ce chapitre de démagogie de certains de l'autre côté de la Chambre. L'avenir nous dira, M. le président, qui a raison.

M. le président, par rapport aux pêcheurs, je ne comprends toujours pas pourquoi il y a tant d'indifférence et de rejet de cette classe de travailleurs qui contribuent énormément à l'économie nationale. Je parle de ces pêcheurs, M. le président, qui depuis quatre ans et demi, je ne sais combien de fois, ont fait des pétitions, des marches de protestation, des conférences de presse, des réunions consultatives, il y en a eu vraiment beaucoup. Les pêcheurs sont restés dans l'actualité pendant quatre ans et demi. Tout au long des ces quatre ans et demi, M. le président, les problèmes sont restés entiers. Il y a eu pas mal d'annonces sur les facilités qu'on allait mettre en place à travers la FIT. On parle toujours de fonds pour ces pêcheurs pour la construction de bateaux hors lagon à R 3 millions, à R 5 millions. Jusqu'à présent, aucune des ces organisations de pêcheurs n'a pu bénéficier de ces fonds. Quelque part il y a des macadams, des trucs qui clochent. Il faudrait qu'on arrive à trouver des solutions. Quatre ans et demi sont passés, aucune solution n'est trouvée, on attend toujours et ces fonds restent bloqués.

Concernant la FIT, l'année dernière on avait annoncé 26 bateaux ici, six bateaux par là, des bateaux qui seraient construits en collaboration avec la MEXA. Finalement, la MEXA dit qu'elle ne pourra contribuer. Ce n'était que pour un projet pilot ces six bateaux. La MEXA dit qu'il contribuera que pour un bateau et que le ministre, dans une réponse donnée à l'Assemblée nationale, nous a fait comprendre que maintenant la FIT contribuera pour quatre bateaux et qu'on aurait cinq bateaux sous peu. Plus d'un an s'est écoulé...

*(Interruptions)*

Je parle de ce qui a été dit il y a quatre ans et demi. Après quatre ans et demi, les pêcheurs attendent toujours malheureusement, et pas un seul bateau. Le *Fishermen Welfare Fund* aujourd'hui ne marche plus, les pêcheurs continuent à crier, ils n'ont toujours pas de bourses pour leurs enfants qui font la CPE. En ce qui concerne les *Bank Fishermen*, il y a toujours le problème de sécurité. Ils n'ont toujours pas à reçu leur dû pour la saison d'hiver. Supposément ils ont contribué R 2,000 au FIT et c'était je pense avec l'aide du gouvernement. Cela avait été annoncé. Donc, cela n'arrive pas à fonctionner. Jusqu'à maintenant personne n'a pu bénéficier de cette allocation. C'est clair que quelque part des problèmes bloquent le mécanisme ce qui fait que cela n'aboutit pas ; il n'y a toujours pas de solutions. Il y a le problème de la pollution du lagon, il y a eu la pose de bouées dans la mer par le ministère du tourisme sans consultation avec les pêcheurs. Cela dérange leurs activités, leurs casiers sont saccagés à la fois par la pose de bouées et par les plongeurs à caractère loisir/touristique. Concernant la *bad weather allowance*, ils ne sont toujours pas d'accord avec la façon dont *it is computed*.

Cela fait deux ou trois ans que j'entends parler d'un projet d'aquaculture à Bambous Virieux avec la SIT, les pêcheurs et les autres *stakeholders*. A chaque fois on dit que c'est pour le mois prochain. Finalement, les années passent, le projet d'aquaculture est resté figé, il n'y a toujours pas de progrès. La pêche hauturière, je n'en parle pas ! Jusqu'à maintenant, cela n'a été que des paroles en l'air, sans lendemain. L'accord avec l'Union Européenne pour la pêche dans nos zones économiques a *lapsed*, et on attend toujours d'autres négociations. En attendant, il y a des négociations privées mais aucun accord n'a été arrêté. Chacun fait un peu ce qu'il veut dans ce domaine.

Concernant la protection marine, M. le président, il est dit que nous aurons bientôt un parc marin dans la zone de Diégo Garcia qui est considérée comme un *protected marine area*. Malheureusement, nous n'avons pas trop de détails. Qui représente le pays au sein de ce comité qui a été lancé par les autorités Britanniques ? Est-ce que, en participant à un tel projet, nous ne nous mettons pas en péril, en doute pour ce qui est du projet de souveraineté sur les Chagos ? Est-ce que nous pourrions avoir des détails sur ce qui a été proposé pour savoir s'il n'y a aucun danger dans ce qui est en train d'être proposé par les autorités britanniques ? Donc, on attend toujours, M. le président.

Pour ce qui est de la pêche illégale dans nos zones exclusives économiques, selon les chiffres que j'ai pu avoir, on est en train de perdre 1.6 milliards de dollars par an par rapport aux pêches illégales dans nos zones économiques, dans nos zones mauriciennes. Pour la SADC, en général, cela fait au moins R 6 milliards. Y a-t-il vraiment une volonté pour s'occuper de tous ces problèmes qui touchent le ministère de la pêche ? Je pense que c'est impossible pour un ministre de s'occuper à la fois de l'agriculture, qui est un tout aussi gros dossier, et en même temps de ces problématiques qui se posent par rapport au ministère de la pêche. Personnellement, M. le président, je blâme ce gouvernement pour n'avoir pas jugé utile de nommer un ministre à plein temps pour s'occuper de tout ce qui concerne la pêche à l'île Maurice. C'est dommage ! Mon ami, l'honorable Maurice Allet, aurait été ravi, mais malheureusement on risque d'attendre encore longtemps. M. le président, avec tous ces problèmes qu'on a au niveau de la pêche, qu'attendons-nous pour avoir un ministre à plein temps ? Il n'est jamais trop tard pour bien faire !

*(Interruptions)*

Je vais le dire à votre Premier ministre !

M. le président, concernant les petites et moyennes entreprises, le ministre vient de parler de *schemes*, de plans et de *loans*. Malheureusement, pour y avoir accès, il y a toujours un problème. Peu de personnes arrivent à décrocher un crédit auprès des institutions financières. Les mesures annoncées encore et encore n'aboutissent jamais dans la plupart des cas. Ce n'est pas en changeant le nom du SEHDA en SMEDA que le problème sera

résolu. En fait, les problèmes dont l'organisme est supposé s'occuper sont plus bureaucratiques que pratiques. Ce sont des gens qui essayent de résoudre les problèmes derrière leur bureau mais cela ne va jamais fonctionner. Il faudrait qu'il y ait des experts qui bougent, qui vont dans ces petites entreprises pour faire un constat *de visu* sur les lieux afin de voir quels sont les problèmes, que ce soit d'ordre administratif, productif ou au niveau du *marketing*. Il y a beaucoup de bonnes intentions, mais très peu aboutissent. On voit et revoit les fonds annoncés chaque année mais, dans la pratique, il y a peu d'aboutissement. Il faudrait avoir des gens *to tackle the problem otherwise*. On va changer d'organisme, de nom mais évidemment, on n'aura pas les résultats escomptés malgré toutes les bonnes intentions annoncées dans ce budget, M. le président.

Pour aider la zone manufacturière, les petites entreprises, je pense que le gouvernement devrait abolir la TVA par rapport aux importations des matières premières pour les secteurs manufacturiers. Si tel est le cas pour la zone franche pourquoi ne l'est-il pas pour les autres secteurs manufacturiers de Maurice! Ces facilités pourraient baisser le coût des matières premières et, ainsi, on pourrait améliorer la compétition, parce qu'il y a un problème par rapport aux prix pratiqués dans des pays tels que la Chine et autres. On pourrait améliorer à ce moment-là aussi les salaires, parce que les travailleurs dans ce secteur des petites entreprises sont très mal payés ; ils ne sont pas encouragés. Ils ne sont pas sûrs de leur avenir; ils travaillent pour un temps parce qu'ils ont besoin de se nourrir, mais ils n'ont pas confiance. Ils travaillent pour très peu d'argent mais ils n'arriveront à rien avec cela. Si on n'arrive pas à baisser le coût de la production, donner un meilleur salaire, encadrer comme il faut, et faire aussi la formation dans ce secteur, on peut attendre encore longtemps. Il y a beaucoup de chômeurs à Maurice. A chaque fois que je passe dans les rues, je les vois par groupes. Ils sont au bord de la route, sous les arbres, à côté des boutiques ; ils ne travaillent pas. Ils m'ont dit qu'ils n'ont pas de travail alors qu'on est en train d'employer plus de 20,000 étrangers à Maurice dans le secteur manuel. Quelque part, il y a un paradoxe. Il y a un problème qu'il faut *tackle*. Il faudrait faire quelque chose dans cette direction il n'y a aucun effort qui est fait.

M. le président, il y a trop d'entrepreneurs à Maurice qui font presque la même chose. Une fois que quelqu'un a réussi dans un secteur, tout le monde essaie de faire la même chose. Finalement, il y a un *over production* mais pas assez de marchés. Ce secteur devrait se diversifier et se lancer dans d'autres domaines commerciaux et manufacturiers. Le SEHDA peut faire tout cela mais, comme je l'ai dit, il faut qu'il y ait des personnes ayant cette volonté. Mon impression est que les personnes au SEHDA sont plus intéressées par leur promotion qu'à la promotion des petites entreprises. Au sein de cet organisme, il n'y a pas de volonté réelle, de culture, de mission pour favoriser l'épanouissement de ces entreprises. Il n'y a aucune stratégie pour faire aboutir les objectifs fixés par la loi au sein de la SMEDA. Il y a encore beaucoup à faire. L'argent en soi ne suffit pas, et ne résoudra pas le problème. Il y a beaucoup de choses qu'il faudrait revoir.

M. le président, au chapitre des petits éleveurs, je voudrais moi aussi faire un appel au gouvernement pour rouvrir le *livestock feed*. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi cela a été fermé. Voilà une production d'alimentation pour le bétail: cochon, vache, poule, canard entre autres. Malheureusement, le gouvernement n'a pas jugé utile de garder cela. Certes, il y a des problèmes partout ; il y a de mauvaises gestions ; il y a des gens qui abusent mais ce n'est quand même pas une raison pour arrêter la production de nourriture pour bétail.

Ces éleveurs sont en difficulté, et le prix sur le marché est vraiment cher. Ils n'arrivent pas à s'en sortir, maintenant qu'ils n'ont plus la nourriture pour le bétail qui était subventionnée pendant tout ce temps par l'Etat. Je pense qu'il faudrait revenir là-dessus et donner un coup de main aux éleveurs de ce pays, pour qu'ils puissent, M. le président, relancer leurs différents élevages à Maurice.

Avant de terminer, par rapport à ce que le vice Premier ministre, mon bon ami, l'honorable Xavier Luc Duval, a dit concernant Roche Bois, j'aimerais ajouter quelque chose. M. le président, je suis un natif de Roche Bois. J'y suis né, grandi, allé à l'école et marié. Je suis, aujourd'hui, dans cette Chambre, grâce à mon parti, qui est le MMM. J'ai été Lord Maire de cette capitale grâce au MMM. Je ne suis pas le seul parmi les habitants de ce faubourg de la capitale à avoir eu cette chance, cette occasion à travers le MMM. La liste est longue. A côté de moi, il y a mon amie, l'honorable madame Navarre-Marie, qui a été ministre, conseillère municipale, députée. Quelques uns me viennent à l'esprit, comme Jérôme Boulle, Mathieu Laclé, Luc Marie, Gérard Grivon, Michel Gérard Nina, Moorgesh Veerabadren. Ils sont tous des gens qui habitent ces localités où l'honorable Duval vient de découvrir qu'il y a des problèmes. Mon bon ami, Xavier Duval, oublie qu'il a été député de cette région avant moi! Il a été député dans la Circonscription No. 4. L'honorable Allet pourra le confirmer. Pourquoi est-ce maintenant qu'il découvre subitement que Roche Bois existe, M. le président?

*(Interruptions)*

Enfin, je le comprends, il a tellement fait le tour qu'il a lui-même oublié qu'il a été ministre dans tous les gouvernements : bleu/blanc/rouge, rouge/bleue, etc. Il a travaillé sous Sir Anerood Jugnauth, sous l'honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Ce n'est que maintenant qu'il découvre Roche Bois. Tant mieux pour nous, les habitants de Roche Bois! J'aimerais les rappeler que j'ai moi-même débuté comme conseiller municipal 25 ans de cela. Ce qu'a été Roche Bois par rapport à aujourd'hui n'a rien de comparable. Je ne vais pas citer tout ce qui a été fait par rapport aux routes, aux drains, à l'éclairage, mais simplement quelques points forts me viennent à l'esprit.

M. le président, aujourd'hui, on peut se demander qui a fait faire le Stade Kaya où ils vont chanter et danser en l'honneur de Mario Ramsamy - un autre enfant de Roche Bois? Le boulodrome de Cité Roche Bois, le jardin public, M. le président ? Le gymnase 1<sup>er</sup> fevrier est aujourd'hui un symbole fait par le MMM. Tous

ceux-là ont été faits alors que j'étais moi-même conseiller et maire à la mairie de Port Louis. Volley pitch, dispensaire, station de police, école maternelle et crèche à la rue Balisage, nurserie, centre pour la formation informatique, les drains, le *sewerage* et j'en passe. Il y en a tellement. Récemment, quand l'honorable Lauthan était là, il y avait un problème dans cette région – Shell. Ce sont les dernières régions, il ne restait que la rue Desbouchers mais cela a été fait récemment. Comme je vous l'ai dit, rien de tout cela n'existe avant. Ce n'est que lorsque j'étais conseiller municipal, avec l'aide du MMM, des militants de la région, des différents maires et députés du MMM que nous avons pu faire autant pour la région.

M. le président, je constate que le vice-Premier ministre et Ministre du Tourisme, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, découvre Roche Bois maintenant. Il fait réparer les murs qui sont tombés en lambeaux. Il fait planter quelques petites fleurs ici et là. Je ne vais pas être méchant pour parler des *dummy cameras*.

*(Interruptions)*

Non, je ne vais pas en parler. Je voudrais tout simplement *set the record straight* et dire que je suis content qu'enfin il y ait quelqu'un qui s'occupe de Roche Bois.

*(Interruptions)*

Je viens de vous donner la liste ! Il n'y en avait pas durant votre mandat. Je viens de vous donner la liste de ce que l'on a fait *grossso modo* quand nous, nous étions là. Aujourd'hui, on attend toujours les résultats du Dr. Husnoo et de l'honorable Dulull. On attend toujours, après quatre années et demie, de voir le bilan de l'honorable Dulull, M. le président. Pour vous dire que quelqu'un de la Cité Roche Bois a fait une demande auprès de l'honorable Dulull, ne serait-ce que pour un dos d'âne, et au bout de quatre années et demie d'attente, il est toujours en train d'attendre. Il y a aussi cette foire que l'on attend toujours. Donc, il y a pas mal de problèmes encore. Il y a un terrain que le gouvernement d'alors avait acheté pour un projet...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Barbier:** M. le président, j'ai oublié de mentionner le terrain de football à l'Allée Tamarin et le Centre de Jeunesse. Tout cela a été fait quand nous étions au pouvoir. Il n'arrive pas à faire aboutir un projet sur un terrain que le gouvernement MMM/MSM avait acheté pour la construction d'un Centre de Jeunesse. Le terrain *is still lying idle*; pas un seul coup de pioche durant ces quatre années et demie. Maintenant le ministre Xavier Luc Duval '*essaye vine couvert frais*', c'est tant mieux pour les habitants! M. le président, je dirais au gouvernement de ne pas prendre les habitants de Roche Bois pour des imbéciles.

Merci M. le président.

(5.55 p.m.)

**Mr S. Moutia (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle):** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had ample time to take stock of the provisions of the 2010 Budget and of the comments made by every section of the country. The overwhelming factor is the favourable response, much to the consternation of those political and economic pundits who had predicted the worst as regards our economic performance. To every right-minded person, the country has emerged from a state of economic emergency only a few years back to that of a fairly healthy economy where all indicators allow hope to be optimistic for the years ahead.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that what had to be said has already been said, but I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to add my humble voice to express my satisfaction and pride to sit on this side of the House and share the feeling that the job has been done, neat and clean, as we are at the near end of the present mandate with assurance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we can boldly face our constituents with a certificate that the present Government of *l'Alliance Sociale* has lived up to expectations in spite of the rough seas it had to navigate over the past years with unforeseeable stocks that rock even the strongest economies worldwide, not only how we weathered the storm but the evidence is that we come out of the global recession less battered than many countries that dwarf us. True it is, there were some casualties but much less significant than those experienced by many countries, including the economic giants. All these were not the consequence of luck, but the result of the vision of the hon. Minister of Finance, with the blessing of the Prime Minister who, through a series of bold, courageous and innovative measures over the years, has broadened the base of our economy to make it less vulnerable to extraneous forces, that is: introduced a series of packages to show up the weaker sector of the economy, provided a string of incentives to boost the performance of many sectors, provided a series of relief and assistance to the more vulnerable. Today, the economic outlook appears unquestionably brighter thanks to the vision of the present Government which took the appropriate measures, although painful at times, to steer the economy slowly but surely to the safe side of the fence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must confess that - in fact, everybody knows it - over the past years, when some painful measures were announced, many on this side of the House raised eyebrows, including myself and some even openly criticized the Minister of Finance, but the man stood firm and showed his moral fibres by pursuing undeterred his tasks of reforms, modernisation and consolidation to accommodate our economy to the new realities and emerging challenges. Now that we are no longer in the red, we must all admit that he was right and that his major worry was the well-being of the country. Somehow it is an easy task to say that not so much has

been done in this or that sector; that this should have been in such a manner. These are to me the reactions of those embarrassed by the gloomy predictions that have not come true.

As the Minister of Finance rightly pointed out in his speech, reforms, modernisation and consolidation are continuing processes that never end. No Government anywhere in the world can, in just one single exercise, address successfully all the problems, consolidate every sector of the economy, correct all social inequalities, improve the standard of living of all sections of the population, create new avenues of opportunities and the like. We can see that what has been achieved in just a few years is simply formidable, the more so, when we realise on what footing the present Government started its mandate and what was the economic heritage left by the previous Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance has demonstrated reasonableness in recommending a compensation at a reasonable level while he could have easily succumb to the temptation of recommending a higher level now that we are nearing the general election. Demagogic is not a style, unfortunately so. There are budgetary measures that are dictated by pragmatic considerations and economic realities. Whatever may be said by our detractors, the economic performance of the present Government against a hostile international backdrop has been correct, a fact acknowledged even by international institutions of renown. I am here tempted to say: 'Congratulation to Dr. Sithanen, the country stands to gain if you were to hold the strings of the purse for many years to come'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the creation of jobs has been the main concern of this Government since it came to power. In every Budget, the Minister of Finance has introduced appropriate measures to create jobs. In this Budget also, the Minister of Finance has enlarged economic space for existing and future entrepreneurs. He has broken grounds besides maintaining the Additional Stimulus Package which has proved its effectiveness in saving jobs and consolidating the previous measures taken by Government. There will be a 'Work from Home' BPO scheme. This will greatly open opportunities for women who desire to perform part-time jobs from their homes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance has also come up with a factoring scheme for SMEs in order to tackle this issue of late payment of invoices by customers rather than wait for the payment on trade credit terms which can take up to 120 days. SMEs can receive the money within two working days through this scheme. This measure will further encourage SMEs to supply their products to supermarkets and hypermarkets. Moreover, in order to help SMEs acquire a competitive edge technology and even good vehicles, the Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme (LEMS) will provide 100% lease financing at a subsidised rate. Mr Speaker, Sir, the SME sector has come on the forefront with revolutionary measures taken by this Government. This

sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a very promising one as we have already created 24,000 jobs with varieties of incentives and facilities. I am confident the SME sector will be the most important one where our citizens will find productive jobs.

As for the social aspects of the Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance has, in spite of tight economic conditions, given a boost up to improve the conditions of living of the poor and vulnerable groups of our society. The special scheme for social housing needs to be highlighted, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister of Finance is providing funds for 5000 low cost housing. With its implementation, people of the lower income group, who are looking for a house, will have a roof. This is the vision of the Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir. He wishes every citizen of this country to have a roof on his or her head. Never in the history of Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, did a Government do so much like the present one for uplifting the economic and social conditions of the citizens especially the needy ones. The amount of resources being deployed and the imaginative and multi dimensional approach towards this end are really impressive. The Empowerment Programme, the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Programme, the Trust Fund for Integration of Vulnerable Groups and the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund amongst others are effective vehicles designed to play a specific role in further promoting an all-inclusive society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is undeniable that this Government, under the determined leadership of the Prime Minister, has brought a remarkable improvement in the physical and social architecture of this country. In line with the declared vision of the Prime Minister to sustain green Mauritius, the Minister of Finance has provided the necessary financial means to implement various measures in a very comprehensive manner. This demonstrates our commitments to secure the prosperity of the future generation and also to contribute to the betterment of the people. The inculcation of a green culture at schools and the development of an ECO-Village in Mauritius in Mauritius have to be underlined, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last, but not the least, as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am proud. The Minister of Finance has increased the budgetary allocation of the National Development Unit from Rs500 m. to Rs700 m. There is a clear recognition that the NDU is considered as a major tool that has successfully buttressed national efforts to improve the quality of life island wide by providing necessary amenities and facilities that have manifestly upgraded the physical living environment. Not many people are fully aware of the important role played by this organisation where we put people first, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is my fervent wish that the NDU continues to dispose of adequate financial means to pursue its laudable mission which, at the same time, expresses my concern. There is need for additional manpower both in terms of numbers and competency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few words on my Constituency No. 11 - Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle. This Constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir, has witnessed considerable developments in all villages from Nouvelle France to Deux Frères. Here I must thank my two hon. friends, hon. Dr. Jeetah and hon. Dr. Boolell. It is with their support that so much work has been materialised. Though I am the PPS of the Constituency, yet there has been a team work as usual. Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the economic recession, the Government - and especially the National Development Unit - has significantly invested in the infrastructural projects such as proper drains, good roads, modern sports infrastructure, multi complexes and other amenities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2005, I have spoken of the famous market fair at Rose Belle, one of our major projects. Last year, on the 12 of November, the laying foundation stone ceremony was performed by the Minister of Finance and I am proud to say today that, by the end of this year, the market fair will be completed and fully operational.

*(Interruptions)*

The market fair of Rose Belle is the biggest one ever constructed in Mauritius. I must thank the Government, the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance for providing the necessary fund of more than Rs100 m. from the LIF fund for the construction of the market fair. I must also thank my two hon. friends, namely Dr. Jeetah and Dr. Boolell, for their relentless efforts to negotiate with the Rose Belle Sugar Estate for the land. This market fair comprises more than a thousand stalls and provides space for a vegetables/fruits market, a meat section, and a food corner among others. By the end of this year or early next year, the market fair at Rose Belle will be inaugurated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another major project implemented in the Constituency is the relocation of the inhabitants of Mare Chicose. The hon. Prime Minister, who was the Leader of the Opposition in 2005, promised to the inhabitants of Mare Chicose that, once back to power, he would do his best to relocate them from the landfill of Mare Chicose. He kept his promise. After the election, the Minister of Finance provided more than Rs100 m. for the relocation of the inhabitants at Balisson. They will be relocated in the village of Balisson near Rose Belle.

A new village, so to say, has been created with modern infrastructure such as good roads, proper drains, a playground for children, a social hall among other amenities. Infrastructural works on the site at Balisson have been completed, the inhabitants will be compensated and resettled soon. This action is, in itself, a landmark in the history of Mauritius and this shows the commitment of this Government, especially of the Prime Minister, towards the welfare of its people. This is what we call 'Putting People First'.

During my intervention on the Budget Speech, I made a request to the Minister of Finance to provide funds for two major projects in my Constituency, namely one at St Hubert-St Hilaire and the other at Rivière des Créoles. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must thank the hon. Minister of Finance for providing some Rs10 m. from the LIF Fund for the construction of the multi-purpose complex in the village of Rivière des Créoles. The actual village, which is a very old one, more than 100 years old maybe, will be pulled down for the construction of a new one. The contract has already been awarded by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council and works are due to start soon. I must also thank the hon. Minister of Local Government, who is not here unfortunately, for his usual support in the preparation of plans and bids for the project. Concerning the project of St Hubert-St Hilaire, I make a humble appeal to the Minister of Finance to provide funds for the construction of a multi-complex at St Hubert-St Hilaire which is long overdue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, flooding is a major problem in our Constituency. Under the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme, this problem will be taken care of on various fronts. More than Rs6 m. have been spent for the dredging of the natural drains and rivulets in the villages of Grand Sable, Cluny and Nouvelle France. Many existing drains have been upgraded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the NDU has spent more than Rs100 m. for the construction of new drains in the villages of Nouvelle France, Union Park, Rose Belle, New Grove, Gros Billot, St Hubert-St Hilaire, Grand Port, Bois des Amourettes, Quatre Soeurs and Deux Frères. However, there is still much to be done in certain villages where the flooding problem is an acute one because of the topography of the land. Mr Speaker, Sir, during my intervention on the Budget Speech last year, I made a pressing appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to allocate a significant amount of money for the construction of a cut-off drain along the eastern coast of the island from Rivière des Créoles to Grand River South East. I reiterate my demand to the Minister to provide funds for this project because the villages are blocked between the sea and the Grand Port mountain range. During heavy rain, the rain water rushes down the mountain slopes to the settlement because of the absence of proper drains. There is a regular flooding of premises, crops as well as landslide and soil erosion at Quatre Soeurs and Deux Frères. Mr Speaker, Sir, I, again, make a humble appeal to Government for a Master Plan in this part of the Constituency in order to alleviate the miseries of the people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the Lion Mountain at Bois des Amourettes, I am pleased to announce that actually the consultant at the National Development Unit is working on a scope of work for the construction of a road on the slope of the mountain. The implementation of this project will take time and will cost a lot of money as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to thank my good friend, hon. Anil Bachoo, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping for the good work being done in Constituency No. 11 - Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle. Drains and pavements are being built in the villages of Union Park, Bananes, Vieux Grand Port, Bois des Amourettes, Bambous Virieux, Quatre Soeurs, Nouvelle France and other villages. Almost all the roads falling under the purview of the Road Development Authority have been resurfaced. During my intervention on the Budget Speech, I made an appeal to the hon. Minister for him to pay a special attention for the upgrading of the three bridges found in Quatre Soeurs and Old Grand Port villages. I have been informed that the construction of the Quatre Soeurs Bridge will start soon and the one at Vieux Grand Port is also in the pipeline.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must also thank my hon. Friend, Lormus Bundhoo, for all the support and collaboration that he is giving, as Minister responsible for the National Development Unit, to my Constituency as well as to Constituencies 16 and 20 which fall under my responsibility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not take much of your time. To conclude, I can say, with certainty, that this Budget of calendar year 2010 is what the country needs in order to be on the path of predictive and sustainable development.

Thank you for your attention.

**(6.16 p.m.)**

**The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit (Mr L. Bundhoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, please allow me to make a few remarks on the previous orator from the Opposition, especially hon. Barbier who had made some references. I have picked up 9 points which, I think, are worth replying.

With regard to housing, Mr Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand how come the Opposition and, in particular, my good friend, hon. Barbier, fails to appreciate how selling 20,000 CHA houses and making 20,000 tenants become owners is not something important. Mr Speaker, Sir, if somebody wants to have a proof of what democratisation of ownership is all about, this is exactly what it is - enable people through the CHA to become owners. More importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, when you become an owner, you can then go to the bank as an owner to negotiate loans and do whatever you want in terms of financing. This is the difference between us and them. When we came to power, we have had this brilliant idea and they didn't have it. When we do it, they are not happy. Only God knows what we have to do to make them happy.

More than this, Mr Speaker, Sir, if I am not mistaken, I speak under the correction of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, when hon. Dr. Bunwaree the then Minister of Finance introduced the Casting of Slabs Scheme; the hon. Member, himself, was a Minister at that time. For the last four and a half years, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have spent Rs800 m. to put a roof on top of the heads of these families. I honestly don't understand this. You know what is the tragedy, Mr Speaker, Sir? When we do this, they come into the House and they say that we are doing politics with the people. Putting Rs800 m. of roofs on the top of their heads is politics? Of course, it is politics; it is politics for the poor, it is politics for the needy, it is politics to alleviate poverty and we are proud of these politics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for poverty alleviation, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Rama Sithanen, earmarked Rs5 billion in the Budget. We introduced the concept of empowerment. We introduced the Bambous Village where we built the model and I hope, I pray that the Minister of Finance succeeds in replicating this Bambous Village, this Bambous Council of houses throughout the whole island. This is our dream. We want to get rid of poverty, Mr Speaker, Sir and they fail to see this. I do not know why they fail this.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, they were talking of students; they were talking of 'Putting People First'. Mr Speaker, Sir, giving free transport to the people of Roche Bois to go to school, is it not putting money in the pocket of the poor? Giving free transport to the people of Trou D'eau Douce to come to Rose-Hill to attend colleges, is it not putting money in the purse of these fisherwomen, fishermen from the village of Trou D'eau Douce? I am not being communal. When we decided to give free transport, when the Prime Minister took the electoral pledge to give free transport, I know of no time when he said that we are going to do a means test. This is communal. We said free transport for everybody irrespective of their communal background, their village background, of wherever they come from, this is it. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me tell you something else.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, order!

**Mr Bundhoo:** To give access to tertiary education, we created the University of Mauritius; we created the University of Technology. This Minister of Education, who is in front of me, has already introduced on first reading the Open University of Mauritius Bill.

*(Interruptions)*

This is, Mr Speaker, Sir, providing access to tertiary education all round the island.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Labelle, I don't know if you have already taken the floor, otherwise you will be having the opportunity .....

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my friend, hon. Barbier, spoke about the Illovo deal and I think, sometimes they believe in their own propaganda. In the context of the Illovo deal, Mr Speaker, Sir, there were 22,000 acres of land at stake. He is now telling us that if we were to sell this land now, one acre would almost be Rs1 m, but this is precisely the point of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam in the Opposition and in Government. If we were to keep all the 22,000 acres of land for that Government, imagine what would be the amount of money and land that would have been kept for Government. In fact, it was you who empowered the sugar barons when you had the opportunity to empower the poor and the needy planters of this country.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker, Sir, speaking about coastal zones and all these things, hon. Anil Bachoo is here. It is hon. Anil Bachoo who devised the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). We thank him for that, at least and we have Mr Speaker, Sir, done so much with regard to coastal management in Rodrigues and Agalega. Mr Speaker, Sir, we were not the ones who were trying to put hotels in Agalega and you know by whom...

(*Interruptions*)

now they have the guts to come to this House and speak of Coastal Zone Management. What a pity, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to some general comments which my good friend made about some of the backbenchers excluding some of the front bench with regard to communal remarks. Let me remind the Opposition that it is Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam who had the Equal Opportunities Act voted because we believe that everybody is born equal in this country and we must all be given equal chance, equal opportunities throughout our life.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker, Sir, they were talking about this and that, neglecting here and there....

**Mr Speaker:** Let me ask for some order and cool down, please!

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. Member, we instituted the *Commission de Justice et Vérité*. It is this Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who did this. I am sure everybody who is a

descendant of slave and who is not a blind follower of Mr X will applaud the Prime Minister for the courage and wisdom of setting up this Commission and this is the work of a *rassembleur*, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to the point he mentioned about small industries, how we are killing them. I wonder, how hon. Dr. Jeetah and hon. Gowressoo combined; when we took office before the year 2005 there were less than 1000 classified small and medium enterprises. Today, there is, Mr Speaker, Sir, 11,000 *petites et moyennes entreprises*, but still they are telling us that we are doing nothing for the SMEs. We voted a Bill to regulate, formulate and decide a policy strategy for the SMEs and still, we are doing nothing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my good friend hon. Barbier, spoke about pig and cattle breeding. I will tell one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thanks to Amédée Darga and the Vice Prime Minister, we have successfully re-engineered the whole industry of pig breeding in Mauritius especially after the swine fever. Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Dayal and I were Members of Parliament for Constituency No. 8 with regard to Salazie and Nouvelle Découverte. Today, in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is fresh milk in the market whereas for five years they did nothing. What we are doing for the pig breeders, cattle breeders, production of milk, agriculture is an example and we will continue to improve the lots of all the people: pig breeders, cattle breeders and milk producers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member raised only ten points and I hope he will now change his opinion and not just follow his Leader, but follow the only and one Leader, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to dwell on what we have done for the last four and a half years. The Minister of Finance has amply explained where we were in 2005 with regard to inflation, unemployment, how FDI had moved from Rs1 billion to Rs8.4 billion. He has amply explained in his Budget about the creation of jobs, and about the deficit with regard to the balance of payments which was Rs4.9 billion, but which today shows a surplus of Rs13.5 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, ‘Putting People First’, we have done exactly what we have said in our electoral manifesto. I am not going to mention what we did for students, universal pension, empowerment of the poor and the needy, what we did with regard to business facilitation and the Bill that we brought into the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the pledges that we took and, in particular, the spokesperson for finance, during the last electoral campaign at Quatre Bornes, was how we were going to reduce the number of people who pay taxes. With the blessings of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, we have successfully reduced the rate of taxes to 15%, and the number of people paying taxes today which was 36,000. It is less than 25,000 today. More importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, all of this is being done against three important backdrops: the dismantling of the Multi Fibre Agreement, a shortfall of 36% in the sugar prices and, on top of that, the combined oil and food crisis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, despite its small size with regard to environment, has a lot of objectives. Likewise, the Prime Minister, the Government and, in particular, the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit, aspire to promote Mauritius as a leader in climate change management in this part of the world. We are also aiming at placing Mauritius as an environment hub for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and, in particular, we want Mauritius to be referred as a model in sustainable development. I am convinced that all the efforts and endeavour of the Prime Minister with regard to *Maurice Ile Durable* will succeed.

Mr Speaker Sir, as I said earlier, it is a testimony to the belief and trust in Mauritius that we have agencies like the AFD which has given Euros 125 million to the Government of Mauritius, European Union Euro 3 million in terms of grant and the UNDP has given USD 5 million and, on top of that, there is the Japan Investment Cooperation Agency.

Mr Speaker Sir, this Budget proposes a Green New Deal and, funny enough, both the Minister of Finance and I have now become green; and we are very happy to be green - I mean dark green. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are on our way, in a couple of weeks, to the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

Shaping the reform is also shaping our future and the future of our children. Introducing the Green concept under the broader *Maurice Ile Durable* framework has widened the focus from renewable energy to include the human aspect. This is, Mr Speaker, Sir, thanks to the vision and the concept of the Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. With him, we know exactly where we stand. When we were in the Opposition, he firmly expressed his belief that he is not prepared to destroy the Vallée de Ferney, were are found a good percentage of the endemic forests of Mauritius. Once he assumed office, he stopped the dismantling and the dissemination of the Vallée de Ferney. This is to show our commitment to environment. Despite a Budget deficit of 4.5%, we have formulated a Budget with regard to sustainable development.

On the economic front, the measures announced will enable the business community to adapt to the current and new challenges, and to respond quickly to economic recovery; the forecasted economic growth by the CSO is 4.3% in 2010 and will be around 5% in 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the economic crisis may be receding, but what can be the worst of all crises is edging ahead: that is the climate crisis.

The Budget discussion is taking place at a very critical moment, when the whole world is looking forward to the outcome of the Copenhagen Conference.

Environmental protection is no longer an option. It is an obligation, Mr Speaker, Sir. The recent global context and future scenarios call for a paradigm shift in our development model towards a low carbon economy by creating the right synergy amongst the public sector, the private sector and the civil society. In order to achieve our goals, my Ministry has adopted the new National Environment Policy. We have, during the course of these programmes and their implementation, prepared the National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production whereby we have focused on -

- a) resources use efficiency;
- b) education and communication for sustainable lifestyles;
- c) integrated solid waste management, and
- d) increase market supply and demand for sustainable products.

We have also, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned earlier, given due attention to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Works on a 3.8 Km of coastal stretch are going on at Rivière des Galets, Grand Sable, Flic en Flac, Belle Mare, Trou aux Biches, Bain des Dames, amongst others, to almost Rs50 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, Rodrigues has not been forgotten. My Ministry has commissioned a study, Environmentally Sensitive Areas study in Mauritius and Rodrigues to the tune of Rs29 m. In terms of disaster management and preparedness, my Ministry has actively prepared and launched the people of Mauritius with regard to oil spill and also to Tsunami Response Plan. Mr Speaker, Sir, some Rs100 m. have been invested in the management and protection of the coastal zone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has recently amended the Environment Protection Act with regard to control of eyesores, banning of plastic banners, control of noise pollution, illegal affixing of posters and industrial waste audit. On top of that, we have also amended EIA process simplifying it into 27 environmental guidelines.

With regard to Sustainable Management and Persistent Organic Pollutants, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is way ahead many countries with regard to POPs. As for the protection of the ozone layer, Mauritius has been commended in the international forum for our actions and strategy. Besides concerning the national legal database, Mauritius is among the few countries to have made an inventory of its policies and environmental legislations. All this information is easily accessible through our dedicated website.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the major components of the environment is environmental education and information. Environmental education and information initiatives are the cornerstone of the work carried out by my Ministry. “Sustainability” and “climate” education should go hand in hand. To be literate in such complex

topics, we need to encourage a deeper level of systems thinking; promote attitudes and values that reflect respect for the environment, and inculcate a sense of personal and social responsibility.

In line with its continued sensitisation and education efforts, my Ministry with the assistance of the Ministry of Education will soon be embarking on a waste segregation project in all primary schools. They will be provided with the necessary bins to sort their waste, and also carry out composting.

As regards environmental monitoring, another important division of my Ministry is the National Environmental Laboratory. Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to pay tribute to the staff of this laboratory who have successfully been accredited with MS ISO/IEC 17025, thus enhancing their credibility in Mauritius.

With regard to lagoon water quality index, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is preparing a project and a plan with regard to giving and providing information on the quality of lagoon water to tourists and the general public at large.

On this front, we are further improving the quality of our ambient air through the reduction of black smoke emissions from diesel-driven vehicles. Further we are allowing the importation and commercialisation of a whole new fleet of such types of vehicles running on high quality diesel. Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to announce that Government will be introducing, by August 2010, automotive diesel with a sulphur content of 500 parts per million compared to the present diesel grade which is 2500 ppm sulphur content.

With regard to waste audit, Mr Speaker, Sir, following the Industrial Waste Audit Regulations, industries having a significant impact on the environment, have embarked in its implementation. Mr Speaker, Sir, this piece of legislation is a step forward for industries to move towards international environmental standards such as ISO certification thereby giving them a competitive edge on the global market.

Mr Speaker Sir, one of the cornerstones of this Budget is climate change, its impact and what can be done for mitigation and adaptation measures. Our development model is being largely influenced, Mr Speaker, Sir, by climate change. Not paying attention to the issue of climate change would be incompatible with our vision of an "*Île Maurice Durable*". We have, at the Ministry of Environment and NDU, initiated a number of studies, programmes and activities to address the climate change issues. I am, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, thankful to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, and, in particular, the Prime Minister, for having responded positively to my personal request, that is, to provide resources to empower my Ministry as the focal point for climate change.

In this respect, this Budget makes provisions for the creation of a Climate Change Unit which will be responsible for formulating climate change policies, programmes and projects. To do so, we expect this unit to

develop short and long term plans to manage climate change in an integrated manner at the local and national levels; develop a National Climate Change Adaptation Programme and assist in the leveraging of funds for its implementation. This unit will work on a National and Integrated National Mitigation Policy and an implementation programme. It will also act as a National Implementing Entity for the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol in order to enable access to funding from local, regional and international funds. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, this unit will liaise with international organisations for cooperative action in addressing climate change issues. The Climate Change Unit will also be responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the outcomes of the Copenhagen Climate Conference.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget, as I mentioned earlier, is almost a three-pronged Budget for - economic and finance; social and consolidation of the Welfare State and addressing the environmental issues with climate change and the impact of climate change.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Energy Efficiency Management Office, to thank the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment and the Prime Minister to have allowed the creation of such an office in order to promote the use of renewable energy resources and green buildings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like everybody in this House to give a thought to the most environmentally sound, inexpensive and reliable power plant which is the one we do not have to build because the people are embracing an energy-saving culture. This is what it is all about in this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget makes provision for the development of eco villages and sustainable urban settlements. My Ministry will implement the Eco Village Concept for integrated community development in line with our vision to create a sustainable island State. To start with, six villages are being targeted, namely, La Gaulette/Le Morne, Poudre d'Or, Trou D'Eau Douce, Pointe aux Piments, Souillac and Vieux Grand Port.

The fundamental vision of the eco-village concept is to foster environmental stewardship and a sense of community belonging among villagers for the promotion of sustainable livelihoods within their neighbourhoods and in their village as a whole. It calls for people based initiatives that seek the active participation, involvement and contribution of one and all; be it families, *forces vives*, communities, Local Government, Village and District Councils, Municipal Councils, Central Government, NGOs, Private Sectors, media, just to mention a few.

The conversion of the six villages into eco villages will be a first step towards the *Maurice Ile Durable* project, directly involving local communities that will entail the promotion of -

- energy conservation and efficiency;
- rainwater harvesting, water conservation and reuse;
- green buildings;
- upgrading of local infrastructure (by using recycled materials, for example, recycled plastic planks);
- organic farming, including local fruits and vegetables;
- creation of cycle tracks, pavements and pedestrian streets;
- maximising green spaces/landscaping and nature conservation;
- waste recycling and composting;
- manufacture and use of eco products as well as the creation of small eco businesses;
- public transportation.

The eco village project, Mr Speaker, Sir, will have a series of economic, ecological, educational and social goals. It will sustain the tourism industry, create jobs including green jobs, be a source of revenue to communities, improve quality of life and give a sense of belonging to the inhabitants. From an ecological perspective, the six villages will help to preserve natural resources, facilitate community self-reliance and promote human well-being so that each generation acts for the benefit of future generations and progressively move towards sustainability. For local communities, these villages will help maintain a community lifestyle that protects individual rights, fosters a spirit of community and facilitates activities that benefit individuals, enrich the community and promote positive relations.

Last but not least, the eco villages will serve as a life-size demonstration of the sustainable living concept for the whole of Mauritius.

Our ultimate goal is to extend this concept to the whole island, progressing from eco village to eco island. Our towns and our city will participate fully in this programme, through the MID Fund, whereby the urban landscape will be given a new look with the upgrading of town and city centres as well as important public places such as markets, community centres, squares, etc. Eventually, this eco friendly initiative will not only green Mauritius but will help us to reduce our carbon footprint. To achieve this endeavour, an amount of Rs250 m. has been earmarked to kick-start the programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to plastic carry bags, in line with Government policy to discourage unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, as well as preparing the public at large to get used to the use of alternatives bags, my Ministry is encouraging the use of eco friendly alternatives to plastic carry bags.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the upgrading and embellishment of the physical environment, my Ministry has, since June 2005, implemented some 250 projects. My Ministry has also carried out more than 115

clean up campaigns in collaboration with Local Authorities, Village Councils and Municipalities. More than 85 rivers in critical areas where there is flooding and stagnation of water have been dredged and protection works have been carried out along 5 rivers. Mr Speaker, Sir, a staggering amount of Rs400 m. has been spent to that effect since we assumed office.

Allow me to make a few comments on the National Development Unit. Mr Speaker, Sir. Besides the provision of basic infrastructure and social amenities to the population, the NDU has implemented an effective drainage network all over the island, especially on non-classified roads to address the issue of flooding in Mauritius.

Following the flashfloods of March and September 2008, Government came up with an Emergency Rehabilitation Programme whereby 146 critical sites were identified.

Works have been implemented at more than 70% of these sites at the cost of Rs385 m. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, 7 bridges has been constructed specifically at Mont Gout, Argy, Hermitage, Pointe aux Sables and Ebène, all this is to the tune of Rs115 m. Numerous drain projects have been implemented throughout the island for a total project value of Rs266 m. to address the issue of flooding at critical locations. On top of that, Mr Speaker, Sir, presently Rs13 m. have been allocated for the construction of the Topaze bridge at Pailles in Constituency No.1 and Damur Bridge at Chamouny in Constituency No.14. This is thanks to my good friend, hon. Dr. Babajee, who made the request.

### **Integrated Watershed Management**

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to implement the recommendation of the Fact Finding Committee presided by Justice Domah on the on ex-Lola Flash Flood of March 2008, the NDU has solicited international expertise through World Bank Assistance for a study on specific catchment areas not only to update the survey of the Land Drainage System of the Island of Mauritius carried out by GIBB in association with Water and Power Consultancy Services (India) Ltd, but also to address flooding problems in a holistic manner through an Integrated Watershed Management.

The study will –

- (i) come up with a Master Plan for providing a long term solution to flooding problems using an integrated approach;
- (ii) determine the level of exposure to flooding of specific locations within identified catchment areas with proposals on drainage solutions, and

- (iii) study project areas; assess the capability of existing systems and establish possible concepts for drainage system to resolve flooding problems.

The study is expected to cost around Rs5 m. and the bidding documents are being finalised. The achievements of the NDU since 2005 up to the end of October 2009 under the Land Drainage Programme is as follows:

Land Drain projects completed	-	153
Drain projects ongoing	-	36
Bridge projects completed	-	10
Bridge projects ongoing	-	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>202</b>

The costs for all these projects involve a total sum of around Rs683 m. The National Development Unit has also been sensitive to the hardships suffered by students due to flooding in the school compounds. A total amount of around Rs42 m. has been spent on major drains at La Flora Government School, Rajcoomar Gujadhur SSS at Bel Air SSS in Flacq,. Works have already been completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the Community Based Infrastructure and Amenities of the upgrading works of the existing cremation ground at Ripailles - in fact, hon. Jugnauth and hon. Suren Dayal asked parliamentary questions to the point of harassing the NDU for the completion of this cremation ground. I can now inform them that they can safely go to Ripailles because the cremation ground is now completed to the tune of almost Rs7 m. It is worth highlighting that with the appointment of the two zonal contractors more than Rs300 m. worth of new roads and resurfacing roads are underway or have been completed. Mr Speaker, Sir at the NDU we have gone into a capacity building exercise. We have successfully been able to appoint a consultant, contractors, engineers, a quantity surveyor, project managers, project officers and their assistants under contract.

I must, at this stage, Mr Speaker Sir, make a special mention in recognition to the praiseworthy assistance provided to the Ministry by Parliamentary Private Secretaries to achieve so much for the population in such a small period of time. The identification and prioritisation of projects are ably carried out by PPSs, who are in constant contact with the population. The role of the PPSs has been instrumental as they are the ones who

do the groundwork and the constant follow-up to monitor and clear bottlenecks until the projects are completed and handed over to the people. Without the PPSs there is no NDU and without the NDU there is no development in the rural and urban areas. I once again have to convey my heartiest thanks to all my colleagues Parliamentary Private Secretaries namely, hon. Moutia, hon. Peetumber, hon. Duval, hon. Mrs Juggoo, hon. Dr. Babajee, hon. Dr. Mungur, hon. Issack and hon. Guttee for their commendable work in bringing social amenities to the population to improve the quality of life in all the 20 constituencies of Mauritius and, in particular, hon. Guttee, especially when one of his colleagues deserted us for the post of Prime Minister, post which he has never got. Hon. Guttee, since his appointment as PPS, is doing a tremendous job in Constituency No. 6 and I am sure he will return from this Constituency together with the Labour Party as he is faithful to himself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, more than Rs1 billion have been spent on NDU projects. A sum of Rs600 m. has been spent on the Land Drainage Programme. Over the last four months, an amount of around Rs60 m. has been spent by the NDU for drains - only for four months - Rs32 m. for new roads and resurfacing, Rs10 m. for minor projects and Rs11 m. for community centres/social halls. Furthermore, an amount of Rs240 m. is expected to be disbursed before the end of this financial year for ongoing works.

There is another provision of Rs700 m. for the NDU and it is the first time in the history of the Ministry of Environment and NDU that the budget *dépasse la barre de R1 milliard*. I am indeed very thankful to the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for giving us a sum of Rs723 m. for enabling the NDU to implement all these projects. I would like to remind the House that Rs59 m. are being earmarked for sports facilities, Rs106 m. for upgrading of roads and Rs100 m. for construction of new roads - *lari pé vine velours*. For the Land Drainage and Watershed Management Programme, the NDU has been allocated an amount of Rs262 m. There is no need for me to mention the CABx office which is doing an efficient work.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that the vision of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam continues to inspire us. High on his agenda were eradication of poverty, free education, health services, social security and universal suffrage. All these were aimed at improving our quality of life within a development framework with the human being at its centre, whereby “Putting People First”.

The history of Mauritius bears the imprint of the Labour Party. The Labour Party is currently charting out the future. Mr Speaker Sir, we may not worry for our own future, but we cannot hand over an unsustainable world to our children and coming generations. The father of the nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, inspired us through eradication of poverty, free education and health services. You, yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been

one of the most able Labour Ministers with regard to social security benefits for having successfully introduced the pension at 60 years old to improve the quality of life of our old age pensioners. Mr Speaker, Sir, while my Ministry is paving the way for sustainable development, this Government, under the enlightened leadership of Dr the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam is shaping the destiny of Maurice Ille Durable for decades to come.

Mr Speaker Sir, the MID concept, as envisioned by the Prime Minister, is '*notre défi et notre espoir*', that is 'our challenges and our hope'. Previous budgets since this Government took office as from 2005, and this one in particular, pave the way for implementing the MID agenda. Successfully implementing this budget is our only hope for riding the successive waves of crises befalling us. At the forthcoming Copenhagen climate change conference, as a SIDS, let us hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the World Leaders will agree on an ambitious deal on which our destiny so crucially depends.

Our appeal, tiny Mauritius appeal to the world, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: responding to climate change is not a wake-up call, it is the final call.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on a concluding remark, I would request Members of this Assembly to reflect on this thought:

'The environment should be put in the category of our national security. Defence of our natural assets is just as important as our national security, that is, our very survival.'

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.01 p.m.)

**Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or):** Mr Speaker, Sir, after listening to this fine speech of the hon. Minister, I find that the Opposition is already knocked out so I won't waste my time answering them; I better concentrate myself on what this Budget contains.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand up in this august Assembly to express my views on the fifth Budget of this Government. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Members of the Opposition that this Budget has been prepared under the guidance of the hon. Prime Minister. It has been approved by the Cabinet of Government and our able hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment has presented it to the people. The most interesting part of it is that the Budget has been welcomed by the public at large: the members of the Union, the people from the economic fields and the people of the *micro trottoir*. We never heard anyone

say this is a bad budget. Therefore, we say ‘thank you hon. Prime Minister’ and ‘thank you Dr. Sithanen’. *Ce budget n'est ni électoraliste, ni amer mais au contraire c'est un budget responsable.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition is dumbfounded. They don't have any arguments against this Budget and, therefore, their only defence is to target the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment. They fail to understand the commitment of this Government, the commitment of the hon. Prime Minister and the commitment of the Members on this side of the House which is ‘Putting People First’. People voted for a change, the Government got a clear mandate to bring a new economic model and, while bringing this new economic model, the hon. Prime Minister has been watching closely that each Mauritian has the basic right to citizenship with dignity and regardless of any ethnic origin which the Opposition is trying to make us understand.

M. le président, le gouvernement sortant avait avoué son propre échec. L'économie tournait au rouge. L'état d'urgence économique s'installait. La perte d'emploi roulait à une vitesse vertigineuse. Ce sont les mots venant de la bouche d'un Premier ministre ou d'un ministre du gouvernement d'alors. On our side, Mr Speaker, Sir, what did we say? We said ‘Putting People First’. We said ‘*une île Maurice pour tous*’. We said ‘*chances égales à tous et voir l'avenir ensemble*’.

M. le président, en 2005, nous étions à la croisée des chemins. Les multiples défis nous regardaient. Nous ne nous sommes pas empressés de rénover nos bureaux avec des sommes énormes venant de fonds publics. Nous nous sommes attelés à construire le pays. Nous sommes réunis autour d'un rassembleur.

We had to reverse the trend. Today we are proud to say that the reforms have reversed that trend and we have been successful in that direction. That is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, we set the stage for more robust growth. In four and a half years, this Government comes with the fifth budget for calendar year 2010. L'opposition prend plaisir à dire que c'est le dernier budget de Rama Sithanen. Certes, c'est le dernier budget de ce gouvernement mais avant les élections et c'est aussi le premier budget d'une année calendaire mais personne ne remarque ceci et c'est le changement. This is another milestone of this Labour-led Government et *il n'y a pas deux sans trois M. le président*. The different Budgets presented by this Government are not separate ones. They are all linked one with the other. Each Budget has been a continuity of the previous one and where we could not complete; the remaining was brought forward so that for the sake of continuity, we bring whatever we have not been able to do in the last Budget. The Members of the Opposition do not seem to understand and they say there is repetition. In 2009 Budget, we said it, we should save jobs, we should protect our people and, therefore, the Additional Stimulus Package has been one of the concrete steps that prevented industries to close and people to lose their jobs. The Opposition knows this. They know that it is a fact, but they have to play their role, ils doivent faire de la démagogie.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition seems to ignore the different external shocks this country has gone through. I want to refresh their memories. Amongst so many others, we have faced the dismantling of the Multi-Fibre Agreement; the 36% cut in the price of sugar; the surging world prices and the worse is the world economic recession. These are but a few of the shocks that this country went through and yet the farsightedness of the hon. Prime Minister; the reforms of the Minister of Finance helped the country to come out of the crisis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the reforms, the average FDI of Rs1 billion from the previous Government rose up to Rs30 billion. 40,000 jobs have been created apart from cleaning the skeletons. The Welfare State has been one of the pillars established by the Mauritius Labour Party. Today, this Government is consolidating the social progress, again a new concept led by the Labour Government – the Empowerment Programme. That was set up in 2006 and, criticised by the Opposition, it is bearing its fruits today. The National Empowerment Foundation has helped 3000 unemployed women; 7640 persons have got job opportunities through training and placement. *Espace des Métiers* has helped 1052 job seekers. The Integrated Social Development Programme and the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups are functioning in line with the policy of Government. After helping families with social housing at La Valette, some 18 families from Cité Lumière are being relocated at Sottise, Grand' Baie. It is very easy just to read the words or say a few sentences, but if you go and visit the environment where the people in Cité Lumière are staying – I go there very often and I see their plight. Today, I am proud to stand here and say ‘thank you, hon. Minister of Finance, you have helped these people to come out of this tragedy. You are giving them social housing very near to where they were located.’

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the EAP, someone had to think about it, and we were the ones who thought about that. The Eradication of Absolute Poverty is a concept which only the Labour Party could think of. The outgoing Government never thought of such a humane concept. Now that this Government is bringing results through the EAP, Members on the other side of the House show their concern in making us believe that poverty started only in 2005. Mr Speaker, Sir, some 291 families are getting help through the Integrated Community Development.

Under the Pre-Primary School Project, 511 children from low income families are now attending school regularly with free lunches, free transportation, free school materials and medical examination. Under the Circular Migration Programme, people have found jobs in foreign countries, but what are we accused of? We are accused of making rich people richer. They gave Rs6 billion to the very five poor families of this country!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment has given some 15 social achievements under the Alliance Government. I am not going to enumerate all of them, but some of them are worth mentioning to refresh the memory of the Opposition. Free bus transport to some

120,000 elderly people and to around 280,000 students, restoring universal old-age pension, free school materials to some 6,600 needy students, doubling subsidy on flour and gas as well as doubling the income support of 100,000 beneficiaries are but a few examples of ‘Putting People First’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another new concept is the concept of the CSR. The Corporate Social Responsibility is another innovative concept of this Government. Profitable firms are required to either spend 2% of their profits for the welfare of the people or to transfer the amount not spent to Government. Through the CSR Programme, NGOs are obtaining direct support from companies to help fight poverty and exclusion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not dwell longer on these, because we have found where the truth lies. Before I resume my seat, I would like to say a few words on the Constituency of Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or, which I represent. Since the day I assumed duty as Parliamentary Private Secretary, together with my colleague, hon. Rucktooa, the Deputy Chairman of Committees, we have left no stone unturned to catch up *le retard dans le développement de cette circonscription*. I would like to thank hon. Lormus Bundhoo, Minister of Environment and National Development Unit, for his precious support in the resurfacing of roads, for the upgrading of crematoriums, and for initiating cleaning campaigns. We are a bit late, but I am confident that we are going to catch up with bus shelters, drain projects and *parcours de santé*. May I also thank hon. Ritoo, Minister of Youth and Sports, for upgrading the Petit Raffray football ground which is in the last phase of completion, and I hope that we will soon embark on the construction of a new football ground at Poudre d’Or village. The acquisition of land from St. Antoine Sugar Estate is about to be finalised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications for his support to the village of Grand Gaube, which is a coastal village. The Nelson Road drain and the children’s park have been restored as well as the street lightings. I will not forget hon. Jeetah, Minister of Health and Quality of Life. He has shown a keen interest to safeguard the health of the population as well. *La Caravane de la Santé* is in Goodlands actually, and a sensitisation campaign against diabetes and other non-communicable diseases is taking place. The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, deserves our thanks. Among the projects realised are the Goodlands SSS Boys, the new blocks at Roche Terre Government School, the new blocks at Sharma Jugdambi SSS and very soon, a new building at Moosun Government School.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will fail in my duty if I do not thank hon. Anil Bachoo, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping. He showed a keen interest and devoted his precious time for this constituency. The two bus lay-bys in Goodlands were realised in a very short time. The success story is that of the Goodlands bypass. On behalf of the people of that constituency, may I thank the hon. Prime Minister, the

Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment and hon. Bachoo, as they have made our dreams come true.

Hon. Faugoo, Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security, deserves our thanks. He gave the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) to the workers of St. Antoine Sugar Estate, and I am convinced that the workers of Mon Choisy Ltd. will not be forgotten.

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities, thank you for all you have done for this constituency. Sewerage works will be extended. Another very important project is the upgrading of the new Goodlands Reservoir to supply drinking water on a 24-hour basis to the people of Goodlands, Roche Terre and Grand Gaube. A sum of Rs25,000 has been allocated by the Ministry of Finance for this project and, therefore, I would like to thank hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the wheel of progress never stops turning. I still have to work hard and rely on hon. Ministers for some new projects. A new market place at Fond du Sac; a health centre and a modern market place at Goodlands, and a football ground at Poudre d'Or village are a few of the forthcoming projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to extend my thanks to the hon. Prime Minister, to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment. May I, on behalf of the small planters of that constituency, appeal to you, hon. Dr. Sithanen, to help them by removing duty on the 4x4 as they use it as an important tool and, secondly, to see how the price of fertilizer can be reviewed down so that the small planters could be eased in this misery. Hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, you have done a marvellous job, and the country is thankful to you.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your attention.

**Mr Rucktooa:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**Mr Dayal rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Thursday 26 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

**Dr. Sithanen rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

#### **MATTERS RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT**

- (i) EID-UL-ADA – WATER SUPPLY**
- (ii) ROCHE BOIS FAIR**

**Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will make two points very quickly within four or five minutes. In a meeting, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister told the Imams that they should expect a cut in the water supply on Saturday 28, a particular day for the celebration of Eid-Ul-Ada. This will give rise to a chaos because, as you know, on this occasion, people are allowed to slaughter animals at home. If there is no water, it will create many problems to so many families because of the waste, the offals and also for hygienic reasons.

My second point concerns the Roche Bois fair - my colleague, hon. Barbier, had raised the issue, and I will not go lengthily on it. In reply to a Parliamentary Question some time ago, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands said that measures will be taken to have a fair '*digne de ce nom*'. Poor people purchase a few items that they sell at the fair, but they do not want to invest as there is no shelter, no *préau* and in times of rain there is a real problem. The flooring also has to be looked into. I am asking the relevant Ministers to look into it.

**The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr A. Dulull):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that representatives of mosques from different parts of the island, especially from Port Louis met the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Beebejaun; hon. Dr. Kasenally and myself, at a meeting which was held some 12 days ago. Were also present the representative of the Central Water Authority, officers from different water regions, the officer-in-charge of the Water Crisis Management, the representatives of the Police Department, of the Ministry of Local Government, of the Fire Services, among others. Measures to give adequate water supply, continuous where possible, have already been taken for Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

Information is being disseminated through mosques and police stations about the hours of water supply. Telephone numbers in case of emergencies are also made available. Further, we have taken

precautionary measures and necessary steps with the Police Traffic Branch to facilitate the movement of lorries carrying cattle and the Local Authority will ensure a good clean up campaign.

Concerning the market fair in Roche Bois, I am informed - because I am monitoring the project - that we are in the process of acquiring land. The needful will be done to have a good market fair at Roche Bois of which the inhabitants will be very proud.

*At 7.22 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 26 November 2009, at 11.30 a.m.*