

No. 33 of 2009



FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2009**

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ADJOURNMENT

MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 33 of 2009

Sitting of Thursday 26 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)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION
NHDC ESTATES – REHABILITATION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Rs280 m. earmarked for the rehabilitation of the NHDC estates, he will –

- (a) state the source of the Rs280 m., giving details thereof and the different uses to which same will be put, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd. –
 - (i) details of the contracts awarded to date for water proofing and associated works and electricity and water network repairs, indicating their schedule of works;
 - (ii) information as to if changes in sewerage fees are envisaged, and
 - (iii) information as to how Syndics will be set up where they are non-existent.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to, first of all, thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for this Private Notice Question which I presume is a follow up of his last PNQ addressed on 12 May this year.

I must say I am very pleased when matters pertaining to NHDC are raised in this august Assembly as it gives me the opportunity to share with hon. Members my concern and the concern of this Government - in fact, it should be the concern of everybody - regarding the situation. To my mind, we are also being provided with the opportunity of lifting ourselves above party politics and contribute to the meaningful and long-term solutions to this thorny issue. In fact, we may then crack the toughest of nuts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in the reply I made to the PNQ in May, one of the very first things I did was to carry out site visits in many NHDC Housing Estates to personally take stock of the general conditions of the housing units and the living conditions of the inhabitants therein. I also made mention of representations made to me, by some hon. Members from both

sides of the House and from inhabitants of these housing units concerning mainly sewerage, water ingress, leakages and damaged electric meter cabins.

Subsequently, I requested the NHDC to undertake a complete survey in all NHDC housing estates, to make an estimate of the costs of all remedial actions to be taken.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are to date 106 NHDC housing estates out of which there are 44 which are governed by the “*Règlement de Co-propriété*”. Out of the 44 housing estates, 33 are high-rise apartments whereby construction started as far back as 1992.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the report made reference to a series of repairs and rehabilitation works that needed to be carried out. These included –

- Water proofing works at La Caverne, Beau Vallon, La Tour Koenig, Camp Le Vieux, Vallée des Prêtres and Plaine Verte.
- Repair to electrical installations at Camp Le Vieux and La Tour Koenig.
- Repairs to common CEB meter cabins which had been damaged through sheer acts of vandalism in no less than 15 housing estates.
- Reinforcement of concrete works mainly at Beau Vallon.

The estimated cost of undertaking all these rehabilitation works was around Rs235 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has, at one point in time, held the portfolio of Finance. We all know that funds are instrumental to any project. Consequently, the list was perused by technicians of my Ministry and the NHDC list the works in order of priority with regard to potential threats of short circuit, electrocution and serious inconveniences. A list of works to be carried out in priority was therefore established and the estimated costs were around Rs70 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to lay emphasis to what I consider to be very fundamental issues concerning NHDC housing estates. First and foremost, I am informed that these housing units are constructed by construction firms following tender procedures in accordance with prevailing pieces of legislation. This has been the case since 1992 to date. Construction works are supervised by competent officers from the NHDC. The point I want to make is that these housing units contrary to what is generally perceived, are delivered in good conditions with no defect whatsoever. These houses are sold to beneficiaries in good, habitable and sound conditions.

Second, the purchasers become “*propriétaires de plein droit*” of their housing units even though they may be paying for these houses on instalments. Whenever applicable, therefore, that is, where there are “*parties commune*” as in the case of 44 housing estates, it is the sole and entire responsibility of the co-owners to ensure a good living environment and conditions in and around these blocks as well as the “*parties privatives*” of their respective apartments. It is also the entire responsibility of the co-owners to elect a Syndic to handle those issues.

Third, it is not and can never be the responsibility of Government to upkeep, maintain or even repair housing estates which are private properties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is and there should not be a correlation between the fact that Syndics are simply not existent or inefficient wherever they do exist, and that of Government having to substitute itself to exercise the role of a Syndic. However, as I have mentioned, this Government is a caring one. It has at heart the interest of those who are at the lowest rungs of the social ladder. Irrespective, therefore, of the lacunas and difficulties and the legal responsibilities and liabilities of co-owners, this Government will unhesitatingly come to the assistance of our citizens who are really in need. Inhabitants of NHDC housing estates are a case in point.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a), consultations were held with the Ministry of Finance & Economic Empowerment and in his Budget speech in May 2009, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced that Rs100 m. is being earmarked from the MID Fund to co-finance a Rs280 m. programme with the CEB, CWA and WMA to clean up the NHDC housing estates and rehabilitate the water, electricity and wastewater infrastructure. I wish to inform the House that Rs100 m. from the MID Fund are being transferred to the Social Housing Development Fund and discussions are being held with the CEB, CWA and the WMA with regard to the modalities of financing the works.

In regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed by the NHDC that -

- (a) tenders for the waterproofing works at seven housing estates were launched on September 24 and have been awarded to Jurassic Waterproofing Enterprise in respect of five sites to the tune of Rs38.01 m. and to SNB Construction Ltd in respect of 2 sites to the tune of Rs10.89 m.

Works on five sites have started in November whereas in the two remaining sites works are expected to start in December. Completion of the waterproofing works is expected around May and June next year.

As regards the ancillary works, tenders were launched in September and the contracts have been awarded in respect to 9 sites as follows -

- (a) for three sites – Plaine Verte, La Caverne and La Tour Koenig (Alpha) to SND Construction Ltd for a contract value of Rs17.5 m.;
- (b) for four sites at Vallée des Prêtres, La Tour Koenig (Malaysia 1), Camp Le Vieux and Vuillemin, to Nissi Construction Ltd for a contract value of Rs 51.5 m.;
- (c) for two sites, Beau Vallon and Rose Belle, to Modern Jurassic Construction Enterprise Ltd for a value of Rs10 m.

All works are expected to start in December and completed in June 2010.

In respect of repair works to electricity cabins, the contract has been awarded to Mauritech Ltd for a total value of Rs21.2 m. covering 15 sites. Again, works are expected to start in December and completed in June.

As regards repairs to water networks, 13 housing estates have been identified whereby rehabilitation works need to be undertaken. A detail survey is being carried out to finalise the scope of works and subsequently, tender is expected to be launched by end of December 2009. The estimated cost of the project is around Rs80 m.

In regard to sewerage works, I am informed that procedures have started for the Wastewater Management Authority to take over the sewerage infrastructure on all the NHDC estates after the completion of rehabilitation works being carried out thereon with the assistance of the former.

I am further informed that residents of these estates will be charged wastewater rates as per the existing tariff. According to information provided to me, 33 NHDC housing estates are currently being billed in respect of their wastewater charges.

I am also informed that in accordance with the Sector Policy Letter for the wastewater sector, no increase in wastewater tariffs is envisaged until 2011. More importantly, the number

of house connections to wastewater network is one of the key performance indicators for disbursement of funds under the EU budgetary support programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is fully conscious of the problems which result in the absence of syndics in most housing estates or inefficiency thereof, wherever they exist. To be conscious is the easiest part of it whilst to be concerned and to find implementable long-term solutions is another matter.

This Government will nevertheless stand this challenge as it has so far many challenges including the economic crises.

In this context, a Ministerial Committee has been set up under the Chair of the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier Duval and comprising no less than 4 Cabinet Ministers including myself and relevant officials of concerned institutions. The committee has met on several occasions and is looking for various ways and means to tackle this problem which is not easy. However, the inhabitants of the NHDC estates must realise that they are *une partie incontournable* to the solution and they must make an effort especially when Government is spending no less than Rs280 m. on their private properties.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, on the first part of my question and on the last part of the answer, the hon. Minister has confirmed the figure of Rs280 m. immediately made available, but has repeated the sum of Rs280 m. Can I know from which sources the balance, that is, the Rs180 m., will come and an indication of how many years they will be spread upon?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the fund will be made available by the Ministry of Finance as and when they are required. Most of the work will probably be finished by mid 2010, but there are some which might just go beyond, especially when we have to deal with the sewerage problem.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the Rs280 m. – first the Rs100 m. that has been transferred to the Social Housing Fund - are for NHDC estates in general or only for the 33 high-rise apartment blocks?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the works have been prioritised according to the urgency. So far, we have identified, as I mentioned, the 33 housing estates but, as we proceed, we will also extend the repair works where they are most needed.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, within that sum of Rs280 m., is it expected that the Wastewater Authority, the CEB and the CWA will be contributing in that sum from their own budgets?

Dr. Kasenally: I don't think so. The way in which their financial situation is in a precarious condition, unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot bank on them, but my Ministry will find funds definitely to sort this out.

Mr Bérenger: I will have to look at the schedule of works and the different contracts that have already been awarded or are being awarded. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether all the 33 high-rise blocks of apartments will be included in those rehabilitation works?

Dr. Kasenally: A list has been established for the priority work that is needed in these 33 housing estates. Unfortunately, I cannot give the detailed list, but I can communicate it to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We will go ahead as we proceed to tackle the most serious part. For example, sewerage and ingress of water is a top priority and we will have to tackle it. In fact, I must say, my hon. colleague, the Minister of Tourism has helped considerably in clearing the environment and trying to landscape a fair number of these housing estates.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that the contracts are being awarded and that there are competent officers at the NHDC to supervise the works themselves. This has been the case in the past, as the hon. Minister has said. Does he not feel that there is need to reinforce the team at NHDC possibly with consultants so that there will be, as tight as possible, control on the quality of the works?

Dr. Kassenally: I agree entirely with the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, what happens and what I have been trying to do is to impress upon these officers at the NHDC to deliver, because I was not really satisfied initially and, although it is a private company, but at the end of the day, it is Government who has to assume its responsibility - and I have had regular working sessions and we have to see what is their output; I even have to ask them to see what is the work they are performing every week with the help of my staff, but I agree with you. If they cannot really cope, when they are putting a full day's work, we are certainly going to step in and ensure that we have other professional services available because we want each and every rupee be spent properly.

Mr Bérenger: I will move to the syndic problem, the toughest one later on. Now works are starting – works have started in certain high rise blocks of apartments. Does he not feel that leaving the syndic issue apart for the time being that the *forces vives* should be as far as possible associated with the works and the control of the work in general?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, I will welcome any help and we are going to encourage the *forces vives* to ensure that everything is done properly according to plan because we cannot allow to have people going around and sitting around the corner when we are pouring money in. In fact, they will act as a feedback and here I have impressed upon the NHDC to pull their socks up and kept going with the business.

Mr Bérenger: I agree with the hon. Minister that there is urgency and that works have started specially as far as waterproofing is concerned because there is threat to life in certain blocks but, although this is the urgency, is Government and the Minister and the NHDC going to look seriously at the possibility of moving the water tanks from where they are at present, that is, on top of these high-rise blocks, with all the leakages problems and so on, and building properly designed towers next to the building blocks so that the water tanks should not be placed over the high rise apartments?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact the problem themselves is not due to the water tank up there. The leakage is due to interference with the waterproofing. Lots of these high-rise apartments were given *antenne commune* for television but because again the syndics did not do their jobs each and every individual have been putting their antenna and, unfortunately, in the process there has been drilling over the roof. In fact, as far back as in 2000, there was waterproofing carried out in some estates and once damage is done to the waterproofing, invariably there is ingress of water through and this is the main problem. However, as far as the water system is concerned, I think it is important to try to find out a solution whereby you can have a common tank and then use water pump to pump the water throughout. Again, these water pumps have to be regularly maintained.

Mr Bérenger: If I put that question on sewage fees, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I read carefully the speech of the hon. Minister only a few days back and at one point he said –

“Now that the sewage system will be rehabilitated like every citizen of this country sewage fees will have to be paid also by the NHDC inhabitants.”

That got me worried, but what I think I heard the hon. Minister say reassured me. Are we in agreement that, in fact, as far as the high-rise blocks of apartment are concerned they are already paying and that there will be no change in the sewage fee that they are already paying?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, I was overtaken by events. I no longer look after the wastewater authority, but they had already started paying and this is what is going to continue, according to what they are doing. There is not going to be special fees or, whatever it is, for the upgrading. They will pay wastewater as per regulation.

Mr Bérenger: The last part of my question relates to that toughest nut that, we all agree about, must be cracked one way or the other, that is syndic. But before I move on to that, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will agree with me that the Minister and the NHDC should be very careful to treat correctly the existing syndic. I agree that there are not many, but there are a few and they are doing good work and they feel that they are a bit *le dindon de la farce* in all this, because they have taken care of this or that problem, they are putting a lot of themselves in that and now priority is given, as it should be, to the areas where there are urgent and serious problems. Can I ask the hon. Minister - I am sure he will agree with me - that these few functioning syndics must not be allowed to feel like *les dindons de la farce*, they should be given due consideration by the Minister, the Ministry and NHDC?

Dr. Kasenally: Of course, yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact they are only 7 syndics which are semi-operational. Even among these 7 syndics there are only about 25% to 50% of the owners who are contributing. In fact, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we are trying to attack the most important problems where they are serious problems. In fact, I agree with him, we have to take all of them under our wings. I know that there has been a bit of bitterness by one of the *Syndic* and who has aired his views on the private radio, apparently, I did not receive him and hon. Duval received him and he was well received. The problem is that when I got something from him, it irritated me. He says out of these Rs100 m. how much am I getting? This irritated

me and perhaps I have gone over that and I will get all of them and get them to come up in our fold and try to solve the problem.

Mr Bérenger: If we are not careful all this money put into rehabilitation will be wasted down the road for a few years from here, if syndics are not set up. This must be done now. I see that in his speech the hon. Minister said this matter of syndic is receiving my full attention. Will the hon. Minister agree with me that there must be – if necessary from this fund of Rs280 m. - money put at the disposal of syndic or syndic to be at the level of each high-rise block, either directly through some system or through the NHDC, we should have the social arm to take care of such *formule*. Does the Minister agree that there must be a financial effort to help the syndic to take off, because otherwise they will not take off, and we will be back to square one in two, three, four, five years' time?

Mr Kasenally: I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that if syndics do not assume their responsibility there may be some problem. But as far as funding is concerned, there are very strict and tight rules and my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, has got set rules which I cannot contravene. But, however, having said that, we are sitting in the steering meeting and we will try, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, if we don't do anything, the money will go down the drains and, therefore, we must not waste money.

Mr Speaker: Three more questions from hon. Dayal, hon. Bhagwan and hon. Mrs Martin.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened very attentively to the answer of the hon. Minister. Dagotière has nowhere been mentioned. Is the hon. Minister aware that the roof at the NHDC at Dagotière is not only leaking, but it has been damaged? If you look at the ceiling, you will see the sky, not the blue one, but grey as it rains most of the time. The roof has been damaged to such an extent that the inhabitants have to place plastics to contain water and this causes great suffering and hardship to the small kids. Therefore, my prayer to the hon. Minister is, despite the several surveys which have been conducted with the officials of his Ministry, myself and hon. Pravind Jugnauth, that fast action be taken, matters be sped up, tenders be launched and work starts immediately.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, I have heard his prayers and we have already invested quite a substantial amount of money for the sewage at Dagotière where we have spent millions of rupees. Do you know what happened? They have even stolen the manhole covers. We have put them now.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, you made a request to me that you have to go a bit early, I am trying to accommodate that.

Dr. Kasenally: I will send a team there to see how priority it is?

Mr Bhagwan: One of the main problems, apart from the problem of infrastructure, is *l'état d'insalubrité de ces blocs d'appartements*. There was an ongoing programme which was being *piloté par le ministère de l'environnement* concerning the uplifting of the environment of the NHDC estates. Works were completed at Camp Levieux and at Atlee and the priority was for Baie du Tombeau. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this programme is being reassessed; whether the ministerial committee is relooking after the priorities so that Baie du Tombeau, where there is really an immediate problem, works can start?

Dr. Kasenally: We will look into it and my hon. colleague will give us a hand.

Mrs Martin: The same thing as hon. Dayal has mentioned, in my Constituency, also there is also NHDC Atlee which is a high-rise building. There are many problems there as well, including roof leakage and walls which have cracks because of the water leakage. May I know from the hon. Minister whether these problems have been identified there and if they are on the priority list as well and when the works are scheduled to start, if there are any repairs which are supposed to be made there?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact there are priorities. The priority is the whole NHDC from beginning to end, but I will ask the NHDC to reassess Atlee, as the hon. Member has mentioned.

Mr Bérenger: My last question will be a suggestion. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to consider that. We have talked about syndics, but they are active at the level of individual high-rise blocks, individual units. Mauritius, for quite a while, has developed certain institutions because these people want not only to see things done, but to be heard when they have complaints, when they have suggestions. Therefore, in the recent past, we have had quite a number of institutions where the representatives are elected through the Electoral Commissioner's Office, the Sugar Investment Trust, the Fishermen Investment Trust, the people from the Chagos, on a yearly basis, two-year basis, three-year basis, there are elections because legislation has been approved by Parliament in each of these cases. Is the hon. Minister prepared to give consideration to the possibility of setting up such an institution for the NHDC housing estates owners through legislation; setting up a Fund with an elected body of persons that would be the voice of all those high rise and others living on these NHDC housing estates who have very specific problems?

Dr. Kasenally: I have listened carefully to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I shall invest myself together with my colleagues and the Government to come with a solution.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

Mr X. L. Duval rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

*Second Reading***THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL
(NO. XXI OF 2009)**

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

Question again proposed

(12.04 p.m.)

Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, this is our fifth Budget in four and a half years. It is always a pleasure to intervene and analyse the contents. It is a continuation of the past Budgets with new concepts, bold measures to foster economic developments. These developments in all fronts will shape Mauritius of tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we made many promises and we made many strides too. We dared and we acted. If you believe in something, you can achieve it. You should have an imagination of how you want to see Mauritius in future, then that imagination is achievable. You must have a vision of Mauritius of tomorrow. This is how you can fulfil that vision, you can make it true, you can make it real. We had the vision. We had the imagination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the first part of my intervention would be on the macroeconomic policies of the Budget and the second part of my intervention would be on the state of my Constituency No. 6 – Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or. There are so many macroeconomic policies stated in this Budget.

Let me start with the first one - one of the components of our national income is consumption. Mr Speaker, Sir, according to records, our consumption is 74.3% of GDP in 2008. If we have such a high percentage, it just means that we have this consuming power to be able to consume that much. 74.3% was in 2008 and what happens till now in 2009, it has increased to 75.2%. What is consumption? Why has it increased so much? Consumption is directly

proportional to our income. It is so simple. If you have a high income, our consumption is going to go up and we are talking of disposable income, that is, income after tax. For people to be able to spend that much of GDP, they say the health of Mauritius is alright. Since you are consuming more, my friend, hon. Nando Bodha, stated some cases where prices went up, it is very simple in economic terms. If demand increases some prices will increase. If the demand of goods and services starts increasing due to scarcity, we will have to pay a certain high price. But you can see that the prices have not increased in general because, according to the Central Statistical Office, it predicts that for the six months till December 2009 the rate of inflation is just 1.2%. We have brought it up to 1.2%. They are saying that the prices are increasing, that's not true. Now there is a very strange phenomenon happening in Mauritius actually. Our consumption has increased up to 75.2%. The savings must decrease. If consumption is going up by that much, savings should have decreased. This is not the phenomenon that is happening in Mauritius, even savings is going up. I am going to prove it to you because consumption and saving have an inverse relationship and if this one goes up, the other one goes down, but in Mauritius it is not. History has shown that we, Mauritian people we save, we save for future investment, for a rainy day, if consumption is increasing and, at the same time, savings also is increasing, I conclude that the health of the economy is fantastic, great. We should keep on going on that trend. Therefore, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, surprisingly savings too shows an increase, just generating enough liquidity to meet investment needs because if we have no saving then we do not have anything to invest, but since we have savings we know that there is an increase in saving which is generating enough liquidity. What is the reason behind it? I have just said it is our tax system. Mauritius is one of the rare countries where we have the lowest number of tax payers. Yes, that is true. It is one of the rare countries in the world where we have less tax payers. Our tax system leaves enough disposable income for consumption and savings as well. This is the reason. Our tax system leaves so much money in the pocket of the people that they can consume 75.2% plus they can save at the same time. What I want to say is we do not see after tax income sinking. In many countries Mr Speaker, Sir, tax income sinks so low that there is a new generation of working poor. You can see somebody getting Rs100, but if I tax you about 60% you become poor, working poor, but our system does not have this method. We leave enough money for people to be able to consume and to save. I just explained only one or two parts of this macroeconomic policy. I can conclude just from this, conclusion of this analysis, low inflation,

fiscal stability are essential foundation for the security of employment and growth. Now, if we talk of consumption and savings which are very co-related, we cannot not talk about saving and investment. We can see how they are linked together and when we talk of saving and investment there is the other factor which is the rate of interest because investment goes up if the rate of interest goes down and if the rate of interest goes up, investment definitely goes down. So, we will have to talk about the second part of this macroeconomic policy.

I just read from the speech page 9, section 55 –

“The savings-investment gap is also reflected in the current account of the Balance of Payments. But the impact of a low saving on the overall Balance of Payments has been countered by the surge in FDI. Nonetheless, we believe that the declining trend must be monitored. The surest way for the saving rate to recover is to grow our GDP at a faster pace, which is what this Budget is seeking to achieve. Indeed, the national saving rate is forecast to rise in 2010 and beyond. And the way to ensure that our Balance of Payments remains viable is to continue to attract FDI. This is exactly what our openness policy is doing.”

I am not going to talk again on the foreign direct investment. We know how many billions and billions are coming in and that is very important for the growth of this country. Consumption, saving, investment, I will just go briefly on Government expenditure. Mr Speaker, Sir, after putting order in the cupboards, most of them off budget transactions amounting to an unbelievable Rs6 billions, after bringing down the budget deficits the Government had set aside Rs11 billions in various funds to address major development issues. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I talk a bit about the consumption, savings, investment and Government expenditure set aside. If I go into the details of all this, it might take quite a long time. Let me now come to my constituency, I hope this time hon. Dulloo is still here.

(Interruptions)

You should shoulder some of the blames too. You know grief is coming. Sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir, he is feeling it already.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a parliamentarian who is the representatives of the people must be and should be like an eagle flying up in the sky, watching carefully, scrutinising all the movements and to pound on earth when time comes to attack fiercely and fearlessly, that's what the eagle

does. So, flying high like an eagle and from an eagle point of view with the eagle eye, I am looking at my constituency. I am going first to go to the village of Roche Terre, flying over, going in that direction converging to those regions.

There is a new primary school nearly completed. In Goodlands, we have the new Secondary School (Boys) completed. Congratulations to the hon. Minister; *felicitations, M. le ministre*. But, there is another primary school, namely the Moosun Government School, and 22 props used to support that school. The state of that school was there for many, many years, when I came, when the ‘Eagle’ came...

(Interruptions)

I will make a request to the hon. Minister. It is already one year and, before I came to the House in the morning, I paid another visit, and everything is still in the same state.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the village of Grand Gaube, I would like here to congratulate the hon. Minister, Xavier-Luc Duval, who has used about a million from his Tourist Fund. Nearly every Monday, in *l'Express*, you can see pictures of Nelson Road and the accumulation of water. People are scared to walk along that road. He injected money from this Fund and, today, the road is practicable. He injected money for the children playground in Grand Gaube; he injected money for the uplifting and lighting of the stadium in Grand Gaube. I thank him.

But, again from the ‘Eagle’s’ point of view, the village of Poudre d’Or has been completely forgotten. I asked questions in this House “taking into consideration the literary aspect of Bernardin de St Pierre in ‘Paul et Virginie’ and the historical aspect, as to whether that place could be embellished.” Nothing has been done yet for that village. I will take some two or three minutes to go to the history of that village. In that village, we have a hospital; we have a Police station, which was, long time ago, the Railway Station - it has been converted.

If we go back to history, Poudre d’Or was one of the villages in the North, which had all the activities, and people had to go to the hospital over there. My grandparents had to take the train over there to come to Port Louis. But, when the outbreak of Malaria came in Mauritius, many of the people had to leave that region; it is marshy land. When we have heavy rainfall, there is flooding, *inondations*. The Local Infrastructure Fund, which is also a recipient of the

NRPT, has a lot of projects - Rs1.1 billion put aside. I would request the hon. Minister that some of the funds be used to alleviate the only problem, that is, flooding. If it is possible, Poudre d'Or badly needs a waterfront, plus the upliftment of the Paul et Virginie monument. I will humbly make a request. At page 29, it is said that –

“The Land Drainage Programme was set up to control flooding and to accelerate water evacuation to reduce proliferation of vector-borne diseases such as Chikungunya and Dengue Fever”.

So, I will humbly request if Poudre d'Or could be added on the list.

Now, we come to Pereybère and Vale, where we have pavements, *trottoirs des deux côtés*. When we fly over to those places, it is fantastic and great. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should see the state of the beach, *avec tout ces transats*. Worst, they started with stop shops everywhere three years ago! They are not yet completed, and are all in an abandoned state. It is already an eyesore on the beach of Pereybère! I will humbly again ask the Tourism Authority if the work could be completed.

(Interruptions)

The Beach Authority has not been able to do anything. This is why I am asking the Tourism Authority to look into it. Nothing has been done for three years; everything is still in an abandoned state.

Keeping flying, a dream comes true! The Ring Road, the by-pass of Goodlands! People talked about that road for about 20 to 30 years, but nothing could be done. I congratulate this Government, which has been able to nearly complete the work. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have the other side of it; we have many roads in villages that badly need to be tarred. It should be immediately done. There are some roads that are impracticable. The ‘Eagle’ flies. Here, I will like to point out something, Mr Speaker, Sir. We asked for the tarring of a road in my constituency, and that road was called the Balkan Road. We can give any name to a road, but this one is called the Balkan Road. The District Council North went there and, instead of tarring the Balkan road, they tarred another one. I took the whole team over there, together with the President, the Chief Executive Officer, the Engineers and everyone. I asked them which road was Balkan Road, and the answer was: ‘they said this road’. Then, I asked them: ‘Well, when are

you going to complete it?" Because they had started it a year ago, and after one year it was half done.

The answer was very blunt, we do not have money, and we will not do it. I told them, why are you losing my time? I asked them to come; all of them came over and they told me that they do not have any money. I thank the hon. Minister of Environment & NDU who have taken the responsibility to complete it, but the worst part of it is that we'll have to go back again, to 60 years ago, when everywhere there were bushes and sugarcane fields. But one guy went with his wife and kids to stay there. After 20 or 30 years of agglomeration, other people came in. When they started the road, they left that 100 mts road and then they started the other side of it. All these people came to see me just to ask me why. I have promised them that hopefully, it will be completed soon. When I hear things like 'this is considered to be a new road, this one is an existing road', or what not, I do not want to go into all this. I want that road to be completed. That's all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the reasons why hon. Nando Bodha left Calodyne to live somewhere else would be probably because of this.

(Interruptions)

The regions of Calodyne, Camp Malheureux, Bain Bœuf, parts of Pereybère and Grand Bay, des terrains abandonnés, des terrains qui sont le refuge des voleurs, des voleurs et des bandits. I am not going to talk about the case of the guy who was just caught living in Melville et tout ce qu'il avait fait. *Il est difficile d'habiter dans la région.* I still remember because I could see that problem in 2005. I asked a question in this House as to whether the District Council of the North has any map under its jurisdiction with all the lands around, just to say which plot of land belongs to whom. The answer I got from the hon. Minister was: on n'a pas de cadastre. It is to be completed very soon. I congratulate the hon. Minister. In the region of Calodyne, you cannot walk alone, it is frightening.

(Interruptions)

We had a meeting. We have to change the rules, regulations and laws. Just clean up these lands belonging to whomever it is, but all the cost of that cleaning should be sent to the District Council or the Ministry. The guy will have to refund that money, plus the interests before he can develop that piece of land. This piece of law should be implemented. It is with a

deepening sense of fear that one walks around. One should see the state of these bare lands and its environmental degradation. It is a 'No Man's Land'.

(Interruptions)

I think this is one of the reasons why the hon. Member left there. They should have had the courage to stay and help.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, both hon. Guttee and myself, we raised...

(Interruptions)

Be serious! If you come in the constituency, you should not be invisible. You have to stand up and dominate...

(Interruptions)

As I am dominating and flying high! Both hon. Guttee and myself talked about the Health Centre of Goodlands in this House. Goodlands is a big village, with a high population density. I thank the hon. Minister who visited the place, but the inhabitants are still waiting for some changes over there. Mr Speaker, Sir, a week ago, from the CAB office of Goodlands I phoned an officer of the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups. I asked him to submit the list of all the applications he has received from my constituency and the number of beneficiaries. Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is still being compiled. It is not possible that some people are still waiting for three years for corrugated iron sheets and wooden poles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise another matter. We have our poor brothers and sisters who go to the University of Mauritius. When they get admission they have to pay around Rs15,000 for the cost of books, libraries and so on. This sum incurred is to be refunded by Government. I make an appeal to the hon. Minister not to let those people wait for at least one year, because to pay the Rs15,000 these people have to borrow from neighbours, friends or relatives and they are expecting the refund after two or three months, but, the year after they have to borrow again to pay for the other one. I, myself, have intervened several times but it still takes a year to be refunded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Constituency No. 6 has traditionally been a land of farmers and fishermen. We have small planters and sugarcane planters there. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are thousands of acres of lands which are abandoned in the region of Melville. Why? It is because of no irrigation, no derocking in that region, the price of insecticides, pesticides,

insecticides, fertilizers are unaffordable. I made a survey myself to know why this derocking problem is not attended to in that region. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am the son of a sugarcane planter, I have noticed that sugarcane planters and farmers have an attitude of 'stubbornness' - because I did ask them to group together to be able to benefit from this derocking scheme. I did a survey; nobody wants to be grouped together. The very simple answer is: *pas touche mo la terre, pour moi sa.*

It is very difficult to inculcate in their mind that if they group themselves, they are going to benefit from all these facilities. So, most of the lands in the region of Melville and St Antoine on that side are already abandoned and it has been abandoned for years and years. It is not now that they have abandoned it for many years because no help has been able to be given to them. I'll repeat a sentence from hon. Nando Bodha from the common agricultural programme of the EU –

"Il faut le maintien de l'activité pour le maintien de la communauté des planteurs. »

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a last point to raise and that last point would be – very recently, two or three years ago, there has been a huge sale of agricultural land in the region of St Antoine and those lands were sold per *arpent* because they were agricultural. There were no amenities because they were agricultural and they were sold quite cheap. *Un arpant terrain dans la fourchette de R 700,000 à R 1 million. Un arpant – 100 perches.* Roughly, *R 10,000 perches.* C'est bien! Some people have been able to buy it. I am glad for them, but the question that I am asking is when I go by that region, you can see people constructing luxurious houses, inside in the sugar cane field over there. I asked one question in this House in 2005/2006 whether the hon. Minister has officers who go and check all the constructions that are made whether they have a valid building permit. There is no water, there is no electricity, there is no road and you can see those luxurious houses. I cannot afford any one of them. Because they paid Rs1 m. for that land, they are going to apply to the CEB and the CEB is going to say: all right, it is going to cost Rs500,000 for electricity, what does it matter if it even costs me Rs1 m.. They pay it and they get their electricity. They are going to apply to the CWA; he is going to ask for Rs500,000, what does it mean? I am going to pay Rs1 m. He can afford it, but there is something wrong somewhere. The land was sold on agricultural basis for less than a million and this is how it has been converted. We have to dig out something somewhere. Because I know, I had a piece of

land somewhere where I cannot do anything because it is first, agricultural, second, irrigation phase II, so, no permit is to be awarded. So, if you compare, there is something fishy somewhere.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to end with a prayer and my prayer is – most of us know the prayer.

“Oh God, grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference”.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(12.45 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):
Merci, M. le président, de me permettre de prendre la parole après l'honorable Rucktooa. Je vais essayer de prendre au vol ses arguments afin de développer les miens.

M. le président, c'est en toute modestie et en toute humilité que je vais partager avec vous mes impressions sur le budget que l'honorable ministre des finances a présenté il y a quelque temps de cela. C'est le dernier budget de ce gouvernement avant les élections générales. C'est un budget qu'on qualifie très souvent de « budget bilan » où le gouvernement, à travers le ministre des finances, énumère ses réalisations. Mais c'est aussi le moment où un gouvernement vient partager le gâteau national avec la population après quatre années de sacrifice. Or, le budget n'est rien de tout cela, M. le président. C'est un budget qui laisse un très mauvais goût, car, après quatre budgets amers et difficiles - dans ce budget, le ministre des finances a essayé d'ajouter une pincée de douceur avec la compensation salariale, mais, malheureusement, ce budget dans son ensemble reste pour la plupart des mauriciens d'un goût amer.

Pour ma part, je qualifierai ce budget, M. le président, d'un extraordinaire *hold-up* intellectuel. Continuer à prendre l'argent des travailleurs afin de donner au patron pour qu'on puisse préserver l'emploi reste un exploit. Ce *hold-up*, M. le président, est basé sur un nouveau concept, un concept que le ministre des finances a introduit dans notre pays depuis quelques temps. C'est le concept des travailleurs pauvres, M. le président. Même que la personne travaille, il reste dans un état de précarité, M. le président.

Avec les quatre budgets de l'honorable Sithanen, malheureusement, on a donné une nouvelle définition à l'équité dans ce pays. Permettez-moi de partager avec vous cette définition. Aujourd'hui, une situation équitable est définie comme telle dans notre pays. C'est-à-dire une situation dans laquelle les riches peuvent gagner beaucoup pourvu que le sort des pauvres s'améliore un peu. Aujourd'hui, l'équité dans notre pays consisterait à ce que les miettes de la table des riches servent à atténuer la faim des pauvres, M. le président. L'État se désengage d'une façon rusée et subtile et je vais retourner à cela à travers le *Corporate Social Responsibility*.

Au fil des budgets que le Dr. Sithanen a présentés, le terme 'justice sociale' s'est dévidé de tout son sens.

Oui, vous vous vantez d'avoir créé du travail depuis que vous êtes arrivés au pouvoir, mais vous en avez fait des travailleurs pauvres. Combien de ces pères de famille qui travaillent dur, mais nous disent qu'ils n'arrivent pas à construire une maison pour leur famille ! Combien parmi eux peinent à payer l'éducation de leurs enfants ! Combien de mères de famille qui bossent dur, mais vous disent qu'elles n'arrivent pas à arrondir leur fin de mois !

When we talk on unemployment rate, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would refer to page 8 of the Budget Speech. I think this is not correct because the Minister says that the unemployment rate is now sliding below 8%. When you look at the latest figures published by the CSO for the second quarter, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clearly stated that the unemployment rate for the second quarter of 2009 is estimated at 8.3%. It cannot be sliding below 8% if it is estimated at 8.3%, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Qu'a-t-on dit depuis un bon bout de temps aux travailleurs de notre pays ? « Ne vous plaignez-pas, au moins vous avez un emploi, même s'il est minable, partiel ou temporaire. » Mais, n'oublions pas, M le président – et cela est important – un travail qui fait de vous un travailleur pauvre vaut mieux que rien du tout. Et cela est vrai. Mais, comment peut-on, M le président, valoriser le travail si on dévalorise une grande partie de nos travailleurs ? Par exemple, les deux lois que ce gouvernement a passé tout récemment sont toujours décriées par les syndicats et les travailleurs de notre pays. Malheureusement, M le président, cette pauvreté laborieuse contribue à la désespérance du pays dans son ensemble, pas seulement ceux qu'elle touche, mais toute la population. Les travailleurs d'aujourd'hui ne sont plus comme les travailleurs d'autrefois. Ils sont résignés ; ils se sentent seuls aujourd'hui, M le président. On est

loin de cette époque des travailleurs prolétaires, bien organisés, combatifs, parce que trop souvent on leur dit que s'ils en sont là, c'est de leur faute.

Depuis le premier budget de l'honorable Sithanen nous avons senti venir cet état de chose. On n'est pas contre le concept d'ouverture de l'économie, ce concept de faire du business autrement, mais elle ne doit pas se faire au détriment de nos travailleurs.

Je vous donne un exemple – et cet exemple est à vérifier. Nous savons que le tourisme passe par une crise assez difficile et ceux qui sont employés sur une base saisonnière dans les hôtels sont très souvent licenciés. Il y a un restaurant à Grand'Baie qui est géré par un étranger et on me fait savoir que même les barmen sont des étrangers dans ce restaurant. Vous vous imaginez un barman saisonnier qui perd son emploi dans un hôtel et qui voit qu'un étranger est en train de faire le travail que lui il aurait pu faire, M le président. J'apprends qu'il y a d'autre cas. Je l'ai dit, on n'est pas contre la main d'œuvre étrangère. Du reste, on les voit, aujourd'hui, sur les chantiers de construction, sur nos routes et dans les usines. Oui, ils aident à développer notre pays, ils contribuent à l'économie de notre pays, mais cela ne doit pas se faire au détriment de nos travailleurs.

(Interruptions)

Non, je protège les Mauriciens. Je suis un Mauricien et je protège les Mauriciens. C'est pourquoi il y a quelques temps de cela, dans un de mes discours - on parlait de croissance - j'avais dit qu'il faudrait savoir à qui profite cette croissance, M le président.

On constate, M le président, que malheureusement, ces derniers temps, les riches deviennent de plus en plus riche et les travailleurs de notre pays deviennent de plus en plus pauvre. Est-ce cela le changement que le peuple attendait ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No argument, please.

Mr Lesjongard: *L'écart se creuse entre les salariés modestes et les salariés élevés, M le président. Nous avons vu ces derniers quatre ans une érosion par le bas ...*

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. Now that he is embarking on a new argument, we will break for lunch. We will resume at quarter past two.

At 1.00 the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.22 with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

Mr Lesjongard: Merci, M le président. Je disais, avant que nous levions la séance pour le déjeuner, que notre société est restée une société de trois-tiers avec des niveaux bien distincts.

Il est vrai qu'il y a eu des changements. Le premier tiers regroupe les élites économiques et intellectuelles. La haute bourgeoisie est restée inchangée. Mais, par contre, les deux autres niveaux, c'est-à-dire, le second et le troisième tiers, le second regroupant la classe moyenne qui, aujourd'hui, il faut l'admettre est menacée par une certaine précarité. Cette classe moyenne qui, très souvent, pèse lourd dans la balance électorale, s'est retrouvée, au fil des années, dans des situations bien difficiles. C'est pourquoi je ne comprends pas l'entêtement du ministre des finances, surtout sur deux items dont on a entendu parler à plusieurs reprises. Le premier est la taxe sur l'épargne, et le second est le *National Residential Property Tax*. Il faut l'admettre, et je ne pense pas que je sois le seul, M. le président. C'est le cas pour plusieurs membres de cette Chambre qui vont dans leur circonscription. Je prends l'exemple des habitants – je cite de mémoire – de Montagne Longue, de Crève Cœur, de Congomah qui viennent nous dire comment c'est difficile des fois de payer cette taxe ; taxe qui est basée sur la propriété, M. le président. Et nous savons tous que, dans ces régions, c'est après beaucoup de sacrifices, après beaucoup de dur labeur qu'ils arrivent à devenir propriétaires de ces terres. C'est pourquoi je dis, M. le président, qu'on aurait au moins dû faire l'effort sur ces deux taxes, principalement la *National Residential Property Tax*, que nous trouvons tous injuste - je ne vais pas aller dans les détails - la façon dont ces personnes sont taxées.

Le dernier tiers, M. le président, qui regroupe les salariés qui sont faiblement qualifiés, et qui eux vivent dans une vraie précarité. Ils ont beaucoup souffert dans leur dignité, M. le président. Ils sont résignés aujourd'hui. C'est une classe de personnes de notre société qui, aujourd'hui, vivent au jour le jour. Très peu parmi eux aujourd'hui pensent à leur avenir. Certains ont un repas le matin et, très souvent, le soir, ils n'ont pas de repas. Les moins jeunes, il faut le dire, sniffent très souvent de l'essence comme coupe-faim, M. le président. Les jeunes s'adonnent au trafic de drogue, et nous savons tous ce qui se passe par la suite.

M. le président, la plupart de ceux appartenant à cette classe de notre société viennent d'une communauté très spécifique, c'est-à-dire, la communauté créole, communauté métisse qui souffre toujours des séquelles de l'esclavage avec, pour beaucoup d'entre eux, un niveau d'éducation très faible. De par ce niveau d'éducation très faible, ils sont souvent manipulables.

Permettez-moi d'ouvrir une parenthèse et de partager avec vous des observations qui, je pense, sont très pertinentes, M. le président. Nous sommes à quelques mois des élections générales dans notre pays, et je dois avouer que nous assistons en ce moment à une prolifération des défenseurs de cette communauté. Cette communauté, M. le président, n'a pas besoin des Robins des Bois des temps modernes, qui viendraient sur leurs grands chevaux à la veille des élections pour leur promettre monts et merveilles, et disparaître par la suite, pour apparaître à la prochaine joute électorale. *Enough is enough!* Y en a marre, M. le président ! Ce dont cette communauté a besoin, c'est des modèles, des *role models*, comme on dit, qui vont leur redonner confiance, faire leurs enfants croire en leur capacité, et leur faire croire qu'eux aussi peuvent avoir un avenir meilleur.

M. le président, j'ai écouté, avec attention, l'intervention du vice Premier ministre et ministre du tourisme, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, sur les travaux d'embellissement à travers l'île et, plus particulièrement, dans la région de Roche Bois. Et je comprends sa démarche, M. le président. Mais, chaque gouvernement fait son lot de travaux d'embellissement, et c'est tout à travers l'île, du village de Panchavati à Grand Gaube, dont on a entendu parler ce matin, à Plaine Verte, Rivière Noire, Mahebourg, et j'en passe, M. le président. C'est le devoir de tout gouvernement d'embellir l'environnement. Mais, il ne faut pas faire croire à ces habitants qu'en faisant ces travaux on est en train de leur faire une faveur, M. le président. Tel n'est pas le cas, et c'est cette politique de main gauche, main droite, que je condamne, M. le président. Je profite de l'occasion pour dire - et je ne vais pas polémiquer moi - qu'il y a eu aussi une déclaration concernant la brutalité policière, il y a quelque temps de cela, et qui a créé pas mal de polémiques ; déclaration qui, malheureusement, ne fut pas soutenue par les chiffres. Mais, par contre, j'ai trouvé des chiffres qui vont vous faire frémir, M. le président. J'ai en ma possession un rapport *on the treatment of offenders in Mauritius of the year 2007* qui a été publié tout récemment. Ce rapport ne parle pas de la brutalité policière, mais de la population carcérale, c'est-à-dire, ceux qui sont dans nos prisons. Ce qui a attiré mon attention, c'est qu'il y a une classification du nombre de prisonniers par religion. A la page 16, il est stipulé que la population totale est: *male 2,626 and female 87, that is, a total 2,713. Like I said, it is classified on the basis of religion. Out of those 2,626, 1,326 male are Christians; out of 87 female, 65 are Christians, that is, in the case of male, more than 50% and, in the case of female, more than 75%*. C'est là

où il faut attirer l'attention de tout un chacun, et c'est là où il faut tirer la sonnette d'alarme, car c'est précisément là où il faut faire l'effort ; l'effort dès l'enfance. Je suis sûr que tout un chacun sera d'accord avec moi que le seul moyen, c'est l'éducation.

Mais le chemin est long. Il y a eu beaucoup d'efforts faits par plusieurs gouvernements. Tantôt on a eu de bons résultats, tantôt pas ; mais il ne faut pas baisser les bras. Je vais prendre un exemple - et j'espère que cette année nous aurons de bons résultats. Au niveau principalement des écoles ZEP, je prends l'exemple de la Briquetterie *Government School*, qui, l'année dernière a eu un taux de réussite de 9%. M. le président, sur presque cent élèves vous avez 91 qui seront sur le pavé. Vous vous imaginez, M. le président, combien de ces 91 vont se retrouver parmi ces 1,326 prisonniers. Les avocats qui sont à l'intérieur de cette Chambre savent de quoi je suis en train de parler. Chaque année, nous votons un budget énorme pour l'éducation. Il faut qu'on se pose la question : combien parmi ceux dont j'ai mentionnés bénéficient vraiment de ces dotations budgétaires ? Je reconnaiss l'effort que fait actuellement le ministre de l'éducation. Je salue au passage l'ancien ministre de l'éducation, M. Steve Obeegadoo, qui, sous le gouvernement MMM/MSM, avait apporté des réformes avant-gardistes. Autre signe positif dans le secteur de l'éducation, c'est tout le travail qui se fait autour de notre langue maternelle, c'est-à-dire la langue créole afin quelle soit utilisée comme un moyen d'enseignement.

Autant on peut accepter que certains de nos cadres supérieurs touchent des salaires mirobolants, que les *businessmen* de notre pays font des millions de roupies dans un contexte mondialisé, où la création de l'emploi est importante, mais autant on est révolté par cette injustice sociale qui prend racine dans notre pays. Il ne faudrait pas qu'on oublie que la justice sociale est le ciment de toute société. C'est pourquoi on comprend que ces dernières années notre société passe par des difficultés énormes. La moralité fout le camp, le gain de l'argent facile prend la place du gain de l'argent par le travail et, malheureusement, la population pense que le gouvernement contribue à ce gain d'argent facile en permettant la prolifération des maisons de jeux. Il y a eu pas mal de débats à l'intérieur de cette Chambre. Des deux côtés, il y a eu des critiques, des commentaires. Si vous me permettez, je vais citer la question d'un honorable membre de l'autre côté de la Chambre, où elle vient dire, en se référant au ministre des finances, je cite -

«L'honorable ministre est un homme très intelligent et il sait trouver des solutions ingénieuses à beaucoup de choses. *I have disturbing information, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the owner of this casino has said that he has the power of money and nobody will ever be able to get him out of there. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he will personally see to it that the power of money will not supersede the power of the people?*”

Malheureusement, M. le président, nous assistons à certaines situations où, dès que nous rencontrons des gens, ils font des critiques. Par exemple, personne n'est contre 'Le Loto', mais posons-nous la question. Quelqu'un est venu vers moi pour me rapporter - et c'est à quelques mètres de là où nous sommes - que nous avons une machine à billets de 'Loto', à quelques 100 mètres, qui se trouve dans une pharmacie. Pas plus loin d'ici, nous avons une machine qui se trouve dans une librairie. Est-ce un endroit pour mettre ces machines ? Moi-même j'ai été témoin. Aujourd'hui, quand vous allez dans les hypermarchés vous ne voyez plus des queues au niveau des caisses, c'est devant la machine de 'Loto' que vous voyez une longue queue, M. le président, ce qui vient confirmer que les mauriciens n'ont pas de l'argent pour s'acheter à manger mais, par contre, ils achètent des billets de 'Loto'. C'est pourquoi quand j'avais fait mon discours, j'avais signalé l'importance d'un observatoire des jeux à Maurice parce qu'il faut suivre ces joueurs. Nous avons des joueurs à problèmes aussi. Il faut avoir une autorité qui puisse suivre ces joueurs parce que, très souvent, nous avons des pères de famille ou des mères de famille qui dépensent leur argent, peut-être très souvent leurs salaires aux jeux.

M. le président, je disais tout à l'heure que nous sommes très loin de cette justice sociale. Un ancien Président de la République de notre pays a fait des observations sur cette perte de justice sociale. En 2006, quand je suis intervenu sur le budget j'avais cité ce que l'actuel Premier ministre avait dit dans son programme électoral - et c'est très juste, je le reconnaiss - et je cite -

« *Notre société est en crise, elle a perdu ses repères, elle est fragmentée ; elle a peur de la difficulté de vivre au quotidien, peur de l'insécurité, peur de l'avenir. C'est pour cela que – je le sais- vous avez compris mon message que je ne cesse de vous répéter depuis quelques mois déjà. Je ne vous propose pas seulement un changement d'homme. Je sais ce qu'il y a dans notre pays, c'est un changement radical de notre société* ».

Je ne vais que prendre une phrase du Premier ministre : « peur de la difficulté de vivre au quotidien, peur de l'insécurité, peur de l'avenir. Peur de la difficulté de vivre au quotidien, - j'en ai parlé - surtout ceux se trouvant au bas de l'échelle, comment très souvent c'est difficile d'arrondir les fins de mois mais peur de l'insécurité, M. le président, allons le reconnaître. J'ai avec moi le rapport du *Central Statistical Office* en date du juin 2009, *that is, Digest of Crime, Justice and Security Statistics 2007*. Si vous allez à la page 24 de ce rapport – table 1.12, *that is, on percentage of people not feeling safe in various places, that is, within the Republic of Mauritius* vous avez pas mal d'endroits et ce qui choque *is insecurity in public transport at night. For male it is 36.8% and female 55.3% and for both sexes it is 45%*, Mr Speaker, Sir. Again, *not feeling safe in the neighbourhood at night, for male it is 27.5% and female 44.8%, that is, an average of 35.2%*. Now if we go by age group in public transport - pour les jeunes de 15 à 24 ans c'est 42.5%. Pour ceux de 25 ans à 39 ans c'est 43%; 40 à 59 ans: 46.3%, 60 and above 54% et nous avons les mêmes chiffres *for those in the neighbourhood at night, Mr Speaker, Sir. We feel unsafe in this country today, Mr Speaker, Sir*, et les raisons on les connaît, l'avenir est incertain. Beaucoup de nos enfants partent à l'étranger. Les raisons évoquées très souvent sont la méritocratie, le salaire bien bas. Permettez moi de corriger, M. le président, une remarque que j'ai faite. J'ai dit qu'il y a beaucoup d'étrangers dans le pays. On n'est pas contre les étrangers mais, malheureusement, est-ce qu'on connaît l'incidence de ces étrangers sur la population mauricienne ? Aujourd'hui les gens se plaignent, eux ils touchent un gros salaire et nous non. Nous avons les mêmes qualifications et pourquoi eux ils doivent avoir un gros salaire et nous non ? Ce sont les parents mauriciens, ce sont les enfants mauriciens, qui disent cela M. le président.

Je vais maintenant, M. le président, parler encore une fois sur l'insécurité qui est palpable. J'ai aussi des chiffres qui vont confirmer ce que je suis en train de dire. Aujourd'hui l'atrocité des crimes montre une autre forme de violence dans notre pays. Les auteurs de ces crimes sont de plus en plus jeunes, M. le président et j'ai avec moi des chiffres, encore une fois, du *Central Statistical Office, on selected offences from 1999 to 2003 and from 2002 to 2006 Mr Speaker, Sir*. In 1999, larceny with violence amounted to 1026; in 2000 – 1039; 2001 – 791; 2002 – 774; 2003 – 710; 2004 – 769; 2005 – 984; 2006 – 887. Now with regard to larceny night breaking, it started in 1999 – 1651; 2000 – 1630; 2001 – 996; 2002 – 912; 2003 – 827 then in

2005 it started again - 1385; 2006 – 1329, that is, the trend is on the increase, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Je vais faire encore une fois une autre comparaison, une comparaison très pertinente, M. le président, concernant le trafic des psychotropes dans notre pays. Là aussi il faut voir the *trend*. On a attiré mon attention là-dessus. Si nous prenons l'héroïne en premier, *reported drug related offences* en 2004 – 1768; 2005 – 1828; 2006 – 1242; 2007 - 1170, mais si nous allons vers les psychotropes, M. le président, *reported drug related offences* en 2004 – 195 ; en 2005 – 473; en 2006 - 1172 et en 2007 - 1608 cas, M. le président. Here again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you can see the trend.

J'avais fait mes commentaires un peu plus tôt concernant le *Corporate Social Responsibility* en disant qu'aujourd'hui pour le logement, pour les artistes, pour les sportifs, on fait appel à la *Corporate Social Responsibility*. Est-ce que quelque part on n'est pas en train de faire une solidarité forcée ? Et nous savons tous que la solidarité est basée sur la réciprocité. Je ne vais pas aller long dessus parce que d'autres orateurs en ont parlé. Déjà nous voyons une réticence du secteur privée. Nous entendons des voix qui viennent nous dire: est ce que tout va être fait dans la transparence ? Est-ce que cet argent ne va pas servir à des fins politiques, M. Le président ? Le ministre des finances nous a rassurés mais il faudrait qu'on arrive au stade d'implémentation pour savoir vraiment de quoi il en ait, M. le président. Je vais prendre deux sujets spécifiques; *one is with regard with the SMEs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have passed legislation and I have had ample time to deal on the subject, but I still believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that what is being said in the Budget and what is said in a Memorandum from the SME submitted to the Ministry of Finance does not tally at all.* Les mesures énoncées dans le dernier budget, les commentaires du SME sont durs, M. le président. Je prends l'exemple d'un état des lieux des SMEs où la fédération vient dire “*the situation is desperate for the SME sector as the promised lifeline is still at the stages of good intentions, but tainted with bad faith, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.*” Ce n'est pas moi qui dis cela, c'est la fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises. And it is said, it is really unbelievable to make such *un état des lieux* in such un état d'urgence économique and when we go to the measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are the remarks – ‘mechanism for the transitional support to private sector for firms with turnover below Rs5 m.’ total failure. Mechanism is unrealistic and unachievable, micro-financing scheme for

women ‘total failure’, unnecessary duplication as similar schemes exist at DBM under the booster scheme, rescheduling of loans at DBM ‘failure, poor response’, renovation, refurbishment scheme for small hotels and restaurants ‘total failure’, scheme not operational as only consultancy is provided. Mauritius Business Growth Scheme ‘total failure, not operational’, Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme, again the same remarks, and I can go on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Je pense que le gouvernement a de bonnes intentions mais quelque part il y a blocage. Est-ce que le blocage se situe au niveau de l’institution responsable des petites et moyennes entreprises parce que la plupart des commentaires que j’ai partagés avec vous fait référence *that things are not ready yet*.

We’ve voted that budget six months ago and how is it that six months later, we still do not have things ready at the SEHDA? That is why when I intervened during the debate, I said “are we just changing names from SEHDA to SMEDA?” Is the problem with the gentleman at the head of that institution? Nous savons qu’il y a eu des problèmes dans le passé mais ce n’est pas possible qu’un gouvernement arrive avec plusieurs mesures budgétaires et cela n’arrive pas vers les petites et moyennes entreprises. Donc, je pense qu’il faudrait revoir tout le fonctionnement de cette institution parce que le gouvernement a fait de ces entrepreneurs leur cheval de bataille.

We all hear everybody in this House saying this is the backbone of our economy. They are creating so many jobs in our country and these are not the remarks that we should be reading in this House. The remarks should be that they are very much satisfied with what they are getting from Government.

Autre remarque avant que je termine concerne le logement. Je ne vais pas aller dans les détails. L’honorable Navarre-Marie *has dwelled lengthily on the subject yesterday and because there are many squatters in my constituency*, je demanderai au gouvernement d’avoir une attention particulière pour ces personnes. Il y a eu des promesses faites. La promesse n’était pas de livrer de l’eau à ces familles. La promesse était de régulariser leur situation. Nous arrivons à la fin de cette année. Ces gens auront à fêter la Noël et le nouvel an. *I make an appeal to Government to get things done fast before the end of this year.*

I will end with Maurice Ile Durable. I believe in that concept, mais les moyens qu’on donne ne nous permettent pas de réaliser cette Maurice Ile Durable. Dans le secteur de la

production de l'électricité, nous avons parlé de *small independent power producers, but then there are no incentives. Instead of removing tax on large screen TVs, we should have removed more tax* sur des équipements à pouvoir fabriquer de l'électricité solaire ou à partir du vent, M. le président. We are still waiting. I thought I would be hearing that maybe later when the Minister would intervene, what are the results with regard to summer time. Have we saved electricity? Have we saved money? Are we going ahead again with the project? I hope when the Minister will intervene, we will hear more on that subject.

Permettez moi, M. le président, de terminer avec la même conclusion que j'avais faite l'année dernière. J'avais cité mon modèle, Martin Luther King and this is what he had to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, in his famous speech 'I have a dream' and I quote –

"When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights of Life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness". It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of honouring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds". But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice."

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the poor of this country cannot and will not accept a bad cheque marked "Insufficient funds" especially when it is painfully clear that the funds are there. We should not wait for the rich to come to our rescue. We should make our stand in the face of official arrogance and neglect.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(3.00 p.m.)

Mr M. Peetumber (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very unfortunate that when some politicians are in the Opposition, they speak one language and when they are in Government, they speak a totally different language altogether and that is why the people of the country, intelligent as they are, they censure the politicians for their double standards and this is what has been happening in this country in the last four elections, starting from the by-elections in Constituency No. 7, then in the general elections of 2005, the Municipal elections that were organised just after the general elections and recently the by-elections in Constituency No. 8. So, these politicians - for the double standards that they demonstrate, for the two double languages that they use, they have been censured by the population. I am sure and certain that in the forthcoming elections as well, they will be censured once again by the same electorate, by the same people for their double standards.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member who preceded me highlighted the dearth of social measures proposed by Government, by the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. It is a pity that some people suffer from some kind of eclectic blindness or some kind of myopia. Despite the fact that they have eyes, they can't see; despite the fact that they have ears, they don't hear. When they decide to read certain documents, they purposely overlook those portions of the document which are meant for the poor people, for those at the lowest rung of the social ladder. I don't remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, any Government which has come forward with so many measures to run to the rescue of the poor people, the orphans, the widows, the sick, of those people who live in deprived areas, and to empower them through all these means. He was talking about a dearth of social measures. I am sure he has taken cognizance of the fact that free transport to around 280,000 students was given by this Government as soon as we came to power. I remember that hon. Pravind Jugnauth, before the elections, was held in utter disbelief that such a measure could be implemented. He himself said in his statements to the press that this was not possible, and that the country did not have the means to be able to fund such a project. I don't mean any harm to him. From memory, I am just recalling what the situation was when we announced this measure to the people of Mauritius. This was the reaction from hon. Pravind Jugnauth – after one week, just as a damage control exercise, he also came forward and

announced the same measure. What I want to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we believed in something, we announced it to the public, and we executed it. On the eve of the elections, when we were campaigning, we signed a pact with the people of Mauritius. We had a contract with the people of Mauritius. This was a commitment. The Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Ramgoolam and the Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance went round the island and campaigned on this project, namely that, as soon as we would come to power, we were going to keep our commitment, we were to keep our word. We said we would give free transport to all the students' community, including the secondary school students, the tertiary students and, as soon as we came to power, we found the means to implement this decision to the satisfaction of the entire population and also of those who were directly concerned with this measure. 280,000 students were directly concerned with this measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And he finds a dearth of social measures! When we take measures, we don't consider where the ethnic origin comes from, to which section of the population they belong to, on the basis of caste, community or whatever. We recognise human beings; we recognise the intrinsic worth in human beings. There is no discrimination whatsoever. The Prime Minister wants an inclusive society, where every community, every citizen finds his rightful place. It is a Government that cares for every community, for all sections of the community, especially for those people who are poor, who are at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, free transport was not only extended to the 280,000 students, but to all the senior citizens. Earlier, they were paying 50% of the fare, and when we came to power in 2005, as measure solidarity, we wanted to extend it to the economically weak sections of the community; we decided to extend this measure to around 120,000 people. I must also highlight the fact that the 50% rebate that was given earlier was again the doing of the Labour Party. We came back to power in 2005, and we reinforced this concept of helping people at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

In the same breath, I would like to inform the House that it was we who restored the universal pension to the senior citizens. Today, they are speaking a totally different language, as if they have become the champions of the poor people, the poor workers, the pig breeders, the fishermen, of all those who have got no means to make both ends meet. They threatened to do away with universal pension to the senior citizens. They subjected these people to all kinds of

humiliation, harassment, *harcèlement*. The hon. Minister, at that time, had to present his apologies to an entire population in public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we talk of helping not only the poor people, but the population at large. We don't single out one chunk of the population. We take decisions to help the entire population, because we basically believe in an inclusive society. We have given 35% shareholding in the cane industry to the small planters. Government is paying 20% of cess money, and that amounts to around Rs60 m. This measure touches around 20,000 small planters. We have also earmarked Rs300 m. to help the pig breeders. I am sure that, when the Minister of Agro Industry will intervene, he is going to dwell upon this aspect in details, especially following the swine fever, the pig population depleted from 18,000 to 4,000. Following a series of measures that were taken jointly by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agro Industry, the pig population has again risen to 15,117. I had a word with the Ministry's officials, and they are very hopeful, very positive, very optimistic that this pig population will increase, and will even surpass the 18,000 that was there before the swine fever struck.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, measures have been taken to make 20,000 owners of CHA houses become owners of the land on which stand their houses. According to a survey carried out by the Ministry of Housing and Lands officials, the total amount of land that is involved is assessed at the value of Rs5 billion. So, this Government has decided to give, as a gift or an incentive to reinforce the concept of inclusive society, Rs5 billion to 20,000 owners of CHA houses. Whereas, what did they do? They gave Rs5 billion to six families through the famous Illovo deal. So, when they were in power, they decided to empower people who are already powerful, people who are already rich and they gave Rs5 billion to six families, but see what this Government is doing! This Government has given Rs5 billion to 20,000 owners of the CHA houses. Everything is crystal clear about who is on which side. It is true as the Minister of Finance usually says - very often your stand depends upon where you sit. When you are on the Opposition benches, you have one perspective, reaction or philosophy and when you are in Government, you have a totally different philosophy altogether. But we, the Labour party, we the *l'Alliance sociale*, whether we are in the Opposition or in Government, we speak only one language. We speak the language of the masses. We are the champions of the poor people in this country. Go and see all the measures over the years that the Labour party has taken, all the measures which have benefited the poor people, are measures taken, in fact, by the Labour party

over the years. I just mentioned about free transport. We talked about free transport for the student community and for the senior citizens.

The hon. Member was talking about education being a powerful means to empower and help people, to go to the rescue of those people who are having difficulties in their daily life. So, who gave free education? Once again, it was the Labour Party following a decision that was taken in 1976 and which was executed in 1977 and I don't see any bigger or more powerful measure to be able to help those people at the lowest rung of the social ladder. I don't see any measure that has been taken by any Government so far which has benefited and empowered poor people to such an extent. This brought about a revolution in the country. There were so many children who could not afford to go to secondary schools at that time because their parents did not have the required amount of money. What did these young people do? They went to work in the sugar cane fields or as apprentices to become tailors or mechanics and many of them remained jobless. When this measure was taken, we gave the possibility to the children of poor people to go to school, the secondary schools and the tertiary institutions. They have become holders of S.C. and H.S.C. Certificates or they have become degree holders. These are the people that you see wherever you go, be it in the private or public sector. These are the people who today have become professionals, accountants, lawyers or teachers. This is called liberation and empowerment. This is what we mean by helping poor people.

He was talking about dearth of social measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He should be aware that the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance made a provision of Rs1.3 billion as subsidy on flour and cooking gas. This is done precisely to help those people who have got difficulties to make both ends meet.

As far as sale by levy is concerned, there are so many champions of the victims of sale by levy. But when they were in power, they did not do anything to help those victims of sale by levy. They did not even raise a finger, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to run to the rescue of these unfortunate people. When we arrived in power, we realised the plight of these people, we realised that they were really in trouble, that they were in distress and that something had to be done to help them. We decided to help them. A sum of Rs100 m. was voted to be able to help those people.

Never in the history of this country did a Government produce such a range of instruments to alleviate and fight exclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately it is a sad story, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they always signal to turn left and be with the people, but, unfortunately, they always turn right. This is what we call *La Gauche caviar* or *la Gauche champagne rosé*. Examples abound. When they were in Government, they increased VAT by 50%. Today, they are shouting from the roof tops that the purchasing power of people has gone down. But, when they decided to increase VAT by 50%, didn't they realise, at that point in time, that they were reducing the purchasing power of the poor people?

Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that 40,000 people, mainly women, lost their livelihood in the textile and clothing sector? It was because of their incompetence and I can say that this sector has got a new lease of life now. It has revived following the series of measures that have been taken by Government.

(Interruptions)

No squabbles! I am sure that many of you will get the opportunity to take the floor after me and, of course, you can come with all arguments that you perhaps have in your arsenal. It is fine.

I do not want to become very personal, but this is something that has crossed my mind just now and I would like to share it with Members of the House. He was talking about '*Budget amer*', about the bitterness in the minds of people outside, but I am sure that he must have been bitter himself when the leaders who accommodated him in the party, held his hand and helped him through his staggering steps in politics, groomed and trained him but when he was taking the floor for his intervention...

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the hon. Member here. I think he is straying outside the realm of the Budget. I would like him to come back to the Budget. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

No comment, please!

Mr Peetumber: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was simply an observation.

The Deputy Speaker: No, we have to come back to the Budget, please!

Mr Peetumber: Thank you very much, I will abide by it. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is bitterness.

The Deputy Speaker: We are speaking about the Budget here.

Mr Peetumber: Budget has to do with everything in the country. So, bitterness is everywhere, bitterness is in the House, and bitterness is outside. I was just referring to one kind of bitterness that prevailed in the House some time earlier.

The Deputy Speaker: No, not that one.

Mr Peetumber: No, I am not going to repeat it. I am going to abide by your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. At the very outset, I would like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and

(Interruptions)

I was just rebutting his arguments. I now come to my main speech. I would like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance for having steered us clear of the economic downturn that has caused the crash of the economies of several countries in the world. In the same breath, I would like to make a strong appeal to the Opposition to lift the blinkers from their eyes and pay heed to all the international, financial organisations reports on the good health of our economy in times when many countries have had to close business and lay off thousands of workers.

As a matter of fact, Mauritius has experienced growth in these tempest-tossed times, because of the foresight and courage of the Government. This Budget shows the blend of the same virtues of strategisation, risk management and foresight. Never has the State in the past been seen in its best parenting role as has been highlighted during the worst of the financial crisis where thousands of workers were threatened with joblessness. That is precisely why it is apt to find in the Government of the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. N. Ramgoolam an echo of the highest aspirations of the people.

Civilization has very few examples of such epoch when a Government is at the greatest communion with the people and we are living such an epoch now in Mauritius. The fact that the Government of the *Alliance sociale* has succeeded in cruising through the crisis, with almost no collateral damage, is already an achievement that needs to be acclaimed as an event of unusual distinction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, I have been struck by the wilful ignorance of the Opposition who deliberately practised an eclectic blindness or myopia towards the achievements of the Government. And, of course, I would like to set the record straight. The gist of the intervention of one hon. Member from the Opposition side was that the *Alliance sociale*

Government has done nothing for the country and the people of this country. He framed his main idea in the form of a rhetoric question and he said: what has the *Alliance sociale* Government done for this country? What has this Government done for the people of this country? Government wanted to place people at the centre of development. We talked about development for the people. I am going to set the record straight.

(Interruptions)

It is good that we refresh the memory of the hon. Member of what the *Alliance sociale* Government has done during the four and a half years for this country. I am referring to hon. Bodha.

(Interruptions)

I am very honest. I must concede that he is a nice and sweet orator. He has a grip over his language and I have always told him that. I appreciate when he talks.

Hon. Members of the House will recollect that when we assumed power in 2005, the country was in threads and tatters and the people were on the verge of despair. We had to reconstruct the country by initiating bold reforms in various sectors of the economy. In fact, a socio-economic revolution has been initiated and sustained by the *Alliance sociale* Government since 2005. We have successfully managed to drive the economy out of the danger zone and are solemnly taking the challenge to pursue this process of betterment and prosperity of the fellow countrymen and all this within the framework of an all inclusive society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the *Alliance sociale* Government has rehabilitated the image of Mauritius on the international scene as a role model whose success story looms large, so much so that the position Mauritius has attained makes the envy of the leading nations of the world. The reference, whether it is the Mo Ibrahim index for business facilitation, Mauritius has set an example for others to follow. Due to our realistic and bold decisions, we have propelled the country into a position of prominence, even with the league of newly industrialized countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we afford to suppress mention of what Senator Hilary Clinton had to say while talking about the reforms initiated by this Government to attract investment, protect investors and promote business. I quote –

“They have made it easier”

‘they’ meaning the Government of Mauritius, meaning the *Alliance sociale* Government.

‘to launch start-ups, to access credit and to register property. They have demonstrated a commitment to transparency, accountability and good governance. Now the people of Mauritius have been the primary beneficiaries of these reforms.’

And I would like to repeat: The people of Mauritius have been the primary beneficiaries of these reforms. What I find strange, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that people, who live thousands and thousands of miles away from the shores of Mauritius, have realized what this Government is doing, to bring about prosperity while Members of Parliament on the Opposition side do not realize this, or it is very possible that they realize it, but then they don’t want to acknowledge; they don’t want to concede. There is shamming on their part, there is that double standard which I referred to earlier. This is what this Government has done for the people of Mauritius. This Government has, indeed, placed the people at the centre of development, and examples abound, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This Government has extended free transport to over 120,000 senior citizens and 280,000 students in line with the philosophy of the Mauritius Labour Party, along with the other parties in the *Alliance sociale*. We have restored universal old-age pension and given free school materials to 6,600 needy students in the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the aegis of the Eradication of Poverty Programme, this Government has resorted to the Integrated Community Development, benefiting some 291 families. Through the Pre-primary School Project, Government has taken charge of 511 children from poor families, who are now regularly in classes with free lunches, free transportation, free medical facilities and free school materials. This is what Government is doing for the people. About 20,000 owners of CHA houses can now become owners of the portions of land on which stand their houses. 6,000 of them have already done so, following an aggressive campaign launched by the Minister and the officials of the Ministry of Housing and Lands and, through this measure, the *Alliance sociale* Government has broken all economic chains that had so far manacled and fettered them for years on end. Now they have become the proud owners of their houses as well as the land which they can offer as security to financial institutions to borrow loans for development purposes. This is real liberation. This is empowering people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. On top of that Government is investing Rs200 m. for the rehabilitation of the housing estates. The Government is leaving no stone unturned to improve and modernise road infrastructure in the country in order to ease the flow of traffic and

ensure the security of road users. I have extracted all these from the intervention of hon. Anil Bachoo while he was summing in the context of the new Bill that was canvassed in Parliament. The Triolet bypass to the tune of Rs225 m., the Goodlands bypass at the cost of Rs300 m., the Riviere du Rempart-Poudre d'or bypass, the Flacq bypass, the Camp Thorel by-pass, the dual carriage way from Pamplemousses to Forbach, the road from Wooton to Belle Rive among several others highlight Government commitment to do away with the thorny problem of road congestion. Needlessly to mention the ring road Phase I and the harbour bridge, the construction of which is likely to start very soon. This is what the Government has done and is still doing for the country and the people of Mauritius. The construction of the new passenger terminal and the new runway at the SSR Airport to the tune of Rs12.6 billion is another milestone in the development and modernisation of infrastructure in the country. The reconstruction of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital to the tune of Rs2 billion is the jewel in the crown.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to give some of my views on the education sector. Government has invested massively to improve infrastructure at Primary and Secondary school levels. During the last four years, toilet blocks have been constructed or upgraded in, at least, 60 primary schools. Maintenance works have been completed in some 115 primary schools to the tune of Rs170 m. I am pleased to announce that several schools in my Constituency, namely those in L'Escalier, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac have benefitted from this scheme. Additional classrooms, computer rooms have been provided in some 50 primary schools, many other infrastructural improvements are envisaged in the year 2010. Changes at schools are occurring, not only on the physical count, but also in the school curriculum. A new curriculum is being implemented in our schools. The curriculum at secondary level is being modernised with the inclusion of new subjects in order to make education become more relevant to the needs of society. Science and Technology constitute an essential part of the curriculum. At tertiary level universities are offering courses that expose our youth, to state-of- the-art skills and knowledge. There is a silent metamorphosis taking place in the country through the Education and Human Resource Development.

The penetration of the information technology in the class is taking place imperceptibly and the schools today is being geared at becoming an intelligent building, with a plan to use more and more technology in the teaching and learning exercise. The strategic plan of education lays the foundation of a rich period of re-engineering of the objectives of education in order to

provide a system that is responsive to the changing needs of the new century. We need to bring remedies where the ailment lies. The weaknesses of education are derivative of the problems that are universal, worldwide and endemic. Most of the problems we have in education in the country are related to poverty. No Government has done more to eradicate poverty than the *Alliance sociale* Government. We talked earlier about free education, free transport and the concept of ZEP in the deprived areas and that was also a concept introduced by the Labour Party before 2000. The impact of poverty on educational achievement is far reaching and it takes a long time to reform mindsets to place education as first priority in the hierarchic of needs.

The Ministry of Education through a number of measures has been able to reduce absenteeism in ZEP schools. Of course, the Ministry wants to have as many children as possible registered and enrolled for this preschool. On the eradication of absolute poverty programme the Ministry is providing functional literacy and numeracy to those who have missed the opportunity earlier in life because Government believes strongly in providing opportunities to those who do not have it, in helping them to find a place for themselves in society.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to dwell upon the projects that have been executed in my Constituency. I am particularly very emotional about one project in Bois Cheri because it was the crying need of the people in Bois Cheri to have a reservoir and two filter plants. They have been pressing their demands for almost 20 years and to give vent to their discontent, frustration and anger, they even stage demonstration earlier before 2005. They burned tyres in the streets. Hon. Rama Valayden, hon. Arvin Boolell and myself were there just to sympathise with them and to pacify them at the same time. However serious is the problem, however deep are the discontent and the frustration, people must not resort to violence, because violence is not a means to solve problems. So, it was a long awaited project and I must say that I am very thankful to hon. Abu Kasenally who was, at that point in time, the Minister of Public Utilities, who initiated this project upon the insistence of the three Members of the National Assembly and I have the pleasure to announce that the project is almost ready. I had a word with the Director General of the CWA, he has reassured me that early in January we are going to resort to the inauguration ceremony of the reservoir and the two filters.

I would like to place on record my gratitude and thankfulness to the hon. Minister of Finance and the hon. Minister of Local Government for the budgetary provision made in the Local Infrastructure Fund, for the construction of the market fair in Rivière Des Anguilles to the

tune of around Rs50 m. Once again, I thank the hon. Minister of Finance and hon. Minister Seebun for having salvaged the Women Empowerment Centre project at Rivière du Poste to the tune of Rs22 m. This gives me immense pleasure that hopefully sometime in February or March, we will start the project in Rivière du Poste. I am equally grateful to the Minister of Environment, hon. Lormus Bundhoo, for having identified Souillac as one of the coastal villages to develop and implement the new concept of eco-village with a budgetary provision of around Rs40 m.

Coming to this thorny problem of drains in the south, the other day my good friend hon. Moutia highlighted this very thorny and serious problem in the south of the country.

The topography of the land being such in constituency Nos. 13, 12, and 11 that severe flooding is provoked each time there is a heavy rainfall. The roads are submerged, the premises of people are inundated; even the houses of people are over flooded causing a lot of damage to their personal belongings. This also represents a threat to the lives of those people and their children.

So, our priority of priorities in constituency No. 13 was the construction of drains in those flood-prone areas. I'm very pleased for all the support extended to us and to the people in constituency No. 13 regarding the construction of drains in all those flood-prone areas by the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Rashid Beebejaun, the present Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, hon. Anil Bachoo, and also the hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit.

The NDU and the MPI have constructed as many as six drains in Bois Chéri only, another six in Grand Bois, 4 in La Flora and several others in Rivière du Poste, Riche Bois, Camp Diable, L'Escalier, Tyack, Batimarais and Souillac to the tune of an astounding Rs200 m.

Other projects spread over the various nooks and corners of the constituency consist of the resurfacing of roads, the construction of new roads, the upgrading of sports infrastructure, upgrading works at cremation grounds and cemeteries, the construction of bus shelters, the construction of footpaths, the provision of street lighting brackets, fencing of school premises and also the creation of green corners.

I would like to convey my thankfulness to the former Minister of Youth and Sports, hon. Sylvio Tang Wah Hing - unfortunately, he is not around – for the upgrading works executed at the Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac playgrounds. I am equally thankful to my good friend,

hon. Devanand Ritoo, the current Minister of Youth and Sports for acceding to my request of opening a youth centre in Bois Chéri with a number of sports facilities extended to the youths in this region.

I would also like to place on record my gratitude and thankfulness to the former Minister of Education and Human Resources - luckily he is around – for the upgrading works carried out at the Government Schools of L'Escalier, Souillac, Rivière des Anguilles and Britannia. I thank hon. Gokhool from the bottom of my heart. I have got a special word of thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Rashid Beebejaun and the present Minister of MPI, hon. Anil Bachoo for several drain projects in Bois Chéri, Grand Bois, La Flora and Rivière du Poste. I also appreciate the construction of a retaining wall at the ex-Police station for road safety and another retaining wall at La Baraque Road in Rivière des Anguilles by the RDA.

To round it off, I must be honest enough to concede that most of the projects realised in this constituency have, in fact, been initiated by the Ministry of Environment and the National Development Unit. I have got the pleasure and the honour to place on record my thankfulness, my gratitude to the two Ministers who are present in the Assembly, hon. Anil Bachoo and hon. Lormus Bundhoo for the fantastic jobs they have done not only in constituency No. 13, but throughout the country.

(Interruptions)

I owe the realisations of these projects to hon. Anil Bachoo who was Minister of Environment and National Development Unit till September 2008 and to the present Minister, hon. Lormus Bundhoo who have been very understanding, indulgent, generous and always ready to help. I thank them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, I stand in this august Assembly with a sense of legitimate pride, elation and satisfaction. I have a sense of pride to have been part and parcel of a Government which has during the course of 4½ years removed this country from the brink of collapse and disaster and place it back on the track of recovery and economic growth where hope and optimism is the order of the day. I manifest a sense of elation because I got this rare privilege and honour to work under the able leadership of a Prime Minister who is at his very best in the field and the envy of one and all both at the national and international levels.

I am equally proud that I was able to rub shoulders with one of the finest Ministers of Finance ever. I express extreme satisfaction over the excellent team spirit and camaraderie that

has prevailed in the ranks of Government since 2005. I feel fortunate to have had two very understanding and collaborative colleagues to work with in my constituency. And in all honesty, I must add I am impressed by the oratory skills of several hon. Members in the House, including Members on the Opposition side as well. Congratulations! They are going to recognise themselves. There have been very, very good orators.

I am sorry, I am getting slightly emotional. I feel honoured, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I got to serve the country as Member of the National Assembly and also to have concretised a number of important projects in a few constituencies, especially in constituency No. 13 as Parliamentary Private Secretary making, in the same breath, my own contribution to the noble task of nation- building.

Before I round off, I would also like to place on record my appreciation over the impeccable and impartial manner in which the Speaker has presided over the debates in the House.

(Interruptions)

The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker. Though I concede that occasionally the Speaker lost his composure but only to restore the composure of the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we started our journey in 2005, we made bold steps towards our destination. The journey demanded sacrifice and a strong measure of renunciation. We could not afford excess and inordinate generosity. We have never weaned ourselves of the care and sympathy of the victims of poverty. Today, the journey has reached a decisive stage of progress. We have been able to attain a point of equilibrium between progress, empowerment of our citizens and care for the weak. Our country needs this equilibrium. We have reached only half way. A new era of progress awaits to be inaugurated and we hope that the same *Alliance sociale* Government will return to power after the next general elections and will continue the work that we started in 2005.

Thank you very much.

(3.50 p.m.)

Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): M. le président, après avoir écouté le discours de plus de deux heures du ministre des finances, l'honorable Rama Sithanen, comme tant d'autres mauriciens, j'ai cru que nous allions enfin passer au cap '*Change ou la vie dans 100 jours*'.

Mais, hélas, M. le président, j'ai été déçue, principalement par certaines mesures réchauffées. Comme à l'accoutumée, le ministre des finances a fait le portrait d'une réussite totale et les chiffres positifs. Ce budget, M. le président, est démoralisant ; pas uniquement pour la population mais aussi pour bon nombre de membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the early harvest following bumper crop as announced by the hon. Minister of Finance, in his previous Budgets, suite aux grands sacrifices consentis par les travailleurs et la population dans son ensemble, afin d'aider le pays à traverser et surtout à sortir de multiples crises, nous nous attendions quand même à un soulagement.

M. le président, les travailleurs, les pensionnaires, les étudiants, bref la population avait le droit de s'attendre à ce que ce budget leur retourne les fruits de leur patience, leurs efforts et leurs sacrifices. Oui, M. le président ! J'insiste à dire que c'est leur droit légitime d'attendre un soulagement car le fardeau qui leur a été imposé par l'honorable Dr. Sithanen depuis la présentation de son premier budget est devenu insoutenable.

M. le président, après tant de sacrifices, après tant d'opérations '*serre ceinture*', la population avait droit au bonheur et à l'épanouissement. Mais, hélas, M. le président, l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen n'a pas su, une fois de plus, rétablir l'équilibre entre l'économie et le social. L'honorable ministre des finances n'a pas permis aux travailleurs de rattraper leur perte de pouvoir d'achat. La population en est restée sur leur faim, M. le président.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the majority of the Members of this august Assembly will agree that it is right time to get rid of measures such as the NRPT, the tax on interest, the abolition of subsidies of SC and HSC fees for every student, indistinctement. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is crystal clear that the hon. Minister of Finance has kept his visière and looked only on one side of the problem. La preuve y est, M. le président - la prolongation du *Stimulus Package* pour quelques uns et rien que 3% de compensation pour d'autres. Car, ce n'est un secret pour personne que notre pouvoir d'achat a été frappé de plein

fouet par un taux d'inflation à double chiffres pendant deux années consécutives. Bien que l'honorable ministre des finances nous annonce un taux d'inflation de 2% cette année-ci, il doit reconnaître et admettre que nous payons toujours notre fromage à R65, notre lait à R180 et sans oublier notre sucre qui a subi une augmentation de plus de 300%.

M. le président, je voudrais bien relever quelques items de ce budget que je considère des aveux d'échec de l'honorable ministre des finances. L'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen, nous annonce un taux de chômage de 14% parmi les femmes, sans en parler du *zero rate* chez les hommes. L'honorable ministre, Dr. Sithanen, nous annonce aussi la création de 19,000 emplois pour les femmes durant les quatre dernières années. Mais, attention, il ne pipe mot sur le nombre d'emplois perdus durant la même période.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it would be surely interesting to know the number of women who have been registered with the Business Registration Office and the number who have effectively started a business. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that it is this Government policy to remove any person registered at the Business Registration Office from the unemployment list irrespective of whether they have started the business or not. Comme toujours, le grand Argentier a un art consommé de jongler les chiffres. Car, n'oublions pas lorsqu'il avait demandé de comptabiliser les 8000 bénéficiaires du VRS1 comme chômeurs alors que les 6,000 bénéficiaires du VRS 2 sont exclus. Quel art!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with reference to the 2007/2008 Budget Speech, especially the section relating to creating opportunities for women, I would like to remind the House of some measures announced. 1000 jobs for women in the construction industry. 2000 direct jobs at Tianli. 500 women were to be trained through IVTB Capacity Building Programme. Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, today, while debating the 2010 Budget, it is obvious as to the "*effets d'annonce*" of many of the measures I have mentioned. We all know that the construction industry has, in fact, not employed any woman. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, women entrepreneurs of this country are still waiting for their business incubators at Phoenix and Triolet. Women Entrepreneurs are still waiting for the famous tourism villages to market their products.

Aujourd'hui, M. le président, c'est triste de voir toutes ces femmes qui sont obligées d'arpenter les rues de la capitale en tant que marchands ambulants afin de vendre leurs produits, sans oublier le harcèlement quasi quotidien de la police. C'est triste, M. le président, car ces femmes ont cru aux promesses du Budget et aujourd'hui elles se retrouvent endettées auprès de

la DBM malgré leur bonne volonté mais sans assistance technique où les facilités de marketing promises, ces entrepreneurs en herbe risquent gros.

M. le président, malheureusement, ces femmes ne peuvent bénéficier du *Stimulus Package* car elles ne sont pas nées sous la bonne étoile, surtout celle qui éclaire l'honorable Dr. Sithanen. M. le président, les difficultés auxquelles font face les femmes entrepreneurs me ramènent au secteur des PMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I sincerely believe that the SMEs sector should spearhead our policy of job creation. Unfortunately, the past two years we have witnessed at SEHDA, the sad operation *lev paké allé, lev paké vini*. How can we expect this Government to manage such an important sector when they are not being able to manage even the institution responsible for the sector?

Mais, M. le président, il faut aussi admettre et reconnaître la bonne initiative du ministre de tutelle, l'honorable Gowressoo qui, malheureusement n'est pas présent, de faire revenir le Directeur de la SEDHA, Monsieur Vijay Ramgoolam, qui a une bonne vision pour le secteur. Mais il s'avère aussi, M. le président, que malgré la bonne volonté du Directeur, il faut impérativement que l'honorable ministre des finances fasse de sorte que les décisions prises en faveur des PMEs ne restent pas sur papier mais sont mises à exécution le plus rapidement possible afin de soulager ces entrepreneurs. N'oublions pas que le Président de l'Association des PMES, lors d'une *interview* quelques temps de cela, annonçait que l'avenir des PMEs n'était guère brillant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year we have been gratified by a series of measures for the SME's sector. However, I would very much like to know whether an audit of the previous measures proposed in the last Budget has been carried out. Have the impact of those measures on the sector been investigated? Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer to one specific measure proposed in 2008/2009 Budget relating to the availability of loans from Commercial Banks to SMEs with no more than 10% equity. Can the hon. Minister of Finance inform the House how many SMEs have benefitted from this measure? Can the hon. Dr. Sithanen let us know the amount of loans given to the SMEs by the Commercial Banks and how many financial institutions and Commercial Banks have dedicated SME departments. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to my information and as per the declaration made by the

President of the SME's Federation, SMEs are still having great difficulties to find financing to help them come over their problems.

M. le président, je maintiens que ce budget n'est pas un budget de continuité comme rapporté par certains observateurs, mais un aveu d'échec.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to prove my point I would like to refer to paragraph 35 of the 2007/2008 Budget, where the hon. Minister of Finance extended the validity period of the Building and Land Use Permit from six months to 24 months. As per what has been said by the Minister himself, I quote-

"The delay is too short for developers to obtain bank loans and organise their work"

It is crystal clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the source of financing for entrepreneurs and developers is still a major obstacle. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in spite of all announcements, the poor of the country are becoming poorer. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Dr. Sithanen is giving assurance to the nation that our country has been able to overcome the financial crisis and that our economy is resilient.

D'après ses dires, his Stimulus Package has helped us to overcome the crisis, and the billions earmarked for recovery have successfully saved the economy.

Unfortunately, once again, I have to say that the rich are becoming richer in the country, with the great help of hon. Dr. Sithanen, where the poor are becoming poorer. This explains why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per the saying of the Minister himself, income support earners have doubled to reach the unbelievable number of 100,000 beneficiaries.

How do we explain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the number of recipients of social aid in the country is increasing alarmingly, simply because *il y a eu un appauvrissement de la société*, absolute poverty has been created. *Cela démontre que la population s'enfonce dans le gouffre de jour en jour et, le comble*, more dependent of social aid. It is unfortunate that we have moved from poverty to absolute poverty under this Government. *D'ailleurs, c'est le ministre des finances lui-même qui nous l'a révélé.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Sithanen is declaring the same right of way for wealth creation and social progress, but is clear that wealth, which is being created, is not being shared impartially amongst the population.

Laissez-moi vous dire, M. le président, nous, au MSM, avec un leader comme l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, un visionnaire, un homme de parole avec un langage de vérité, nous savons comment créer ce gâteau national et comment le partager. Surtout, veiller à ce que toute la population, indistinctement, aide à préparer ce gâteau national avant de le partager. Le leader, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth et toute son équipe croient fermement que chaque citoyen de ce pays doit absolument se sentir partie prenante du développement.

L'honorable Dr. Sithanen avait annoncé, en grande pompe, la démocratisation de l'économie, mais, navrant de devoir le dire, que même son président, qui avait eu l'occasion, lors de son intervention de faire son bilan, n'a rien pu dire à ce sujet.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Sithanen talked about “remaining focused on the core social responsibilities” of this Government. However, Sir, if we just have a look at the number of social housing estates that have been created by this Government, we will finally realise that they have failed in their duty and that, as we all know, only one social housing project in Bambous has been realised.

Today in this present Budget, hon. Dr. Sithanen is talking about the construction of 5,000 low cost housing. How is it possible, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to realise these promises, when we all know that they took four and a half years to develop only one project?

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, il faut rendre hommage à la vérité. C'est ce que prône le MSM d'ailleurs, et il est difficile pour les membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre d'admettre. If the MSM/MMM régime had not initiated low cost houses during its mandate, ce gouvernement n'aurait pas eu autant de cérémonies de remise de clefs pendant ces quatre dernières années et, pour ne pas mieux dire, “alle coupe nous ruban ”.

If you do not agree with what is being said, then, referring to paragraph 256 of the Budget, tell us how many social and innovative integrated housing programmes have been initiated out of this Rs5 billion earmarked for the Empowerment Programme?

Par pitié, je demanderai à l'honorable Dr. Sithanen : donnez-nous des chiffres, et ne nous parlez pas en termes de pourcentage, s'il vous plaît ! Toujours de belles paroles, mais l'on constate que notre société s'enfonce dans le gouffre à vitesse grand 'V' ! Et vous savez quoi, M. le président ? La démocratisation de l'économie n'est rien d'autre aujourd'hui que la

démocratisation de la pauvreté que nous vivons. La classe moyenne s'appauprit de jour en jour, et on risque de se retrouver avec peu de très riches et beaucoup de très pauvres, si on continue sur cette même voie.

J'ai l'impression que la politique du ministre des finances est de laisser sur la touche une bonne partie de la population, qui doit attendre à ce que le gouvernement leur donne quelques miettes pour vivre.

Aujourd'hui, une bonne partie de la population mauricienne doit dépendre, pour ne pas dire obligée de dépendre, des *social aids*.

Mais, M. le président, nous sommes bien en 2009, et nous approchons à grands pas de l'année 2010. C'est inacceptable ! Car un pays qui aspire à un développement soutenable dans le temps, ne peut créer une situation d'exclusion pour un si grand nombre d'habitants qui deviennent dépendants de l'aide sociale.

M. le président, je pense que le rôle du gouvernement est de créer l'opportunité pour chaque individu de notre société multiculturelle et, plus encore, de lui donner la possibilité et la chance de s'épanouir dans la dignité.

Oui, M. le président ! Je crois fermement que chaque individu de notre société a droit au travail et a un toit et, non pas, avoir toujours recours à l'aide sociale.

D'ailleurs, où en est l'honorable ministre des finances avec son projet "Un Toit pour Toi" ? Là, M. le président, je voudrais saisir cette occasion qui m'est offerte aujourd'hui, pour expliquer l'attachement, l'engouement et la détermination de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth et du MSM à l'éducation. Si nous mettons beaucoup d'emphase pour que chaque enfant de ce pays ait accès à l'éducation, sans que l'argent ne soit un obstacle, bénéficie des subsides pour les *fees* d'examens de la SC et de la HSC, c'est que nous voulons que chaque jeune puisse réussir dans l'avenir et devenir indépendant. Nous ne voulons pas que ces jeunes qui sont l'avenir de demain, par faute d'accès à l'éducation, deviennent des assistés de la société.

M. le président, le grand argentier a échoué, encore une fois, sur le plan social, et je ne peux m'empêcher de faire mention du dossier NPC. Après deux années de tension sociale, de traumatisme et d'humiliation des travailleurs et des syndicalistes, l'honorable ministre finances a enfin réalisé qu'il avait tort, et que la NPC n'avait pas sa raison d'être, comme l'a toujours dénoncé haut et fort l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth.

M. le président, en me référant au paragraphe 415 du budget, et je cite –

"Concerning timing, I have decided to make the alignment now. I am, therefore, taking the necessary action to award compensation to all employees in the private and public sector on 01 January 2010."

Il est évident que la décision d'en finir avec le NPC et d'accorder une compensation salariale à tous les travailleurs à partir de janvier 2010 est une décision personnelle de l'honorable Dr. Sithanen. Cette décision personnelle, il aurait pu la prendre bien avant, et éviter au pays un conflit social inutile pendant deux ans.

M. le président, il est aussi évident que le principe de la responsabilité collective n'est appliqué par le Dr. Sithanen que dans les décisions impopulaires, telles que la NRPT ou la taxe sur les intérêts.

Aujourd'hui, par certaines décisions du ministre des finances, on réalise que beaucoup de mesures annoncées dans les budgets précédents n'avaient pas leur raison d'être.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, very often we are blamed for criticising measures taken by this Government. However, Sir, I would like to lay emphasis that I am talking about measures that have been proposed, acclaimed and, even more, approved by the majority of the Members of this House, but which have neither been implemented nor adhered to.

I feel, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this is my duty, as a responsible Member of this august Assembly, to react when same measures are being presented in the Budget year after year without any follow-up action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not want to waste the time of this House by commenting on the 430 paragraphs. As we all know, most of it was pure literature. Just as was the case for the SME sector, as well as for fishermen, where measures are being announced but not implemented.

Good initiatives for the artists, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but, once again, there have been some measures taken last year, but not implemented. Good it is to talk about orchestre symphonique. On a le droit de rêver, et tout le monde en profiterait. Oui, ce serait quelque chose de merveilleux. Mais, pourquoi ne pas parler de choses qui peuvent se faire dans l'immédiat ? Je ne veux en aucun cas être pessimiste. Je pense qu'il faut commencer à faire de petites choses simples d'abord et, par la fin, venir avec quelque chose de grand. Je m'explique. Jusqu'à l'heure, malgré maints appels faits dans cette Chambre, une femme constable n'a pas été recrutée dans le Police Band actuel et, maintenant, on nous parle d'orchestre symphonique. Donc, je fais un appel. Il faut commencer par là d'abord.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a decision announced in the Budget by the hon. Minister of Finance was contested publicly by his colleague, my friend hon. Devanand Rittoo, the Minister of Youth and Sports. I am not saying that we should not go forward with such a project, but I am pretty sure that hon. Rittoo a ses propres raisons à lui pour objecter à un tel projet. Je parle ici du Stade Anjalay auquel les artistes de ce pays auront droit pour faire leur concert. Mais, moi, je dis qu'il faut aller de l'avant, il faut leur donner une place pour qu'ils puissent perform. Mais le comble, M. le président, c'est que le ministre des finances n'a même pas pris la peine de consulter son collègue pour lui en demander son avis. Le mercredi, le ministre des finances l'annonce dans son budget et, le lendemain, publiquement, le ministre des sports désapprouve ce projet. In those circumstances, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, combien de ministres se retrouvent dans la même situation que l'honorable Rittoo? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we take seriously the decisions announced?

Concernant les pêcheurs, M. le président, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots à l'égard de mes amis pêcheurs car bon nombre réside dans la circonscription No. 1. Cela me peine de voir comment ces pêcheurs doivent se battre corps et âme non seulement pour gagner leur pain quotidien, mais aussi pour que l'honorable ministre des finances mette en concret les propositions faites dans plusieurs budgets. Certes, il faut reconnaître qu'il y a beaucoup de bonnes intentions, mais action zéro.

Mention est faite, M. le président, de la progression dans le *seafood hub* et, dites vous bien, c'est un autre secteur dont la paternité est usurpée. Mais la grande question est: où se retrouvent les pêcheurs dans cette progression ? Hélas, tout comme pour les PMEs, budget après budget, des dizaines de mesures d'accompagnement, assorties de telles conditions

insurmontables qui sont de véritables barrières empêchent les pêcheurs d'en profiter pleinement. Là-aussi, il semblerait que les bénéficiaires sont les gros poissons.

Il faut le reconnaître que tout récemment les enfants des pêcheurs ont obtenus des bourses et des facilités pour leurs études, mais qu'en est-il de ces pêcheurs qui doivent constamment se battre pour avoir leur dû. Pour avoir leur *bad weather allowance*, ils doivent manifester pour l'obtenir. Je demande à l'honorable ministre des finances de laisser ces gens de mer respirer la vie et de ne pas leur rendre la vie plus amère et plus difficile. Déjà, ils doivent régulièrement faire face aux caprices de dame nature.

M. le président, permettez-moi de venir sur ma circonscription. Je voudrais faire quelques propositions pour les habitants de ma circonscription. Je ne suis nullement une députée *over-dramatised*, comme on veut le faire croire, mais une députée de proximité, responsable, qui tient à cœur les problèmes de mes mandants et qui honore fièrement la confiance placée en moi par les habitants de ma circonscription. Les croix que j'ai obtenues pour les élections sont sacrées pour moi, M. le président. Si je soulève un problème de ma circonscription dans cette Chambre, ce n'est rien que pour le bien-être de ces habitants afin qu'ils vivent dans un environnement sain. Cela va de soi, M. le président, si j'étais dans le gouvernement je l'aurais fait moi-même, ça c'est sûr. Mon souhait le plus cher c'est que le projet de Bagatelle Dam, annoncé dans le budget, se concrétise au plus vite et ne reste pas lettre morte comme tant d'autres projets de ce gouvernement.

M. le président, nous sommes tous conscients que nous allons faire face à un *full-fledged water crisis* car le gros problème d'eau qui nous guette est bel et bien là. L'eau est source de vie. Il ne faut pas se voiler la face et attendre que le problème surgisse pour prendre des actions.

M. le président, une bonne partie de la capitale souffre d'un manque aigu d'eau courante depuis un certain temps. Je pense ici particulièrement aux habitants de Pailles, Camp Mouroum, Cité Dargahed, Cité Michael Leal, Cité St Louis entre autres qui subissent un vrai martyre et doivent tous les jours impérativement faire face à un manque aigu d'eau. Et le comble, la distribution est quasiment irrégulière. Des fois c'est six heures, des fois c'est sept heures et des fois c'est huit heures et ça reprend à trois heures de l'après-midi, des fois cinq heures. Ce n'est vraiment pas possible.

Nulle doute, le développement accru des zones industrielles de cette région a rendu le réservoir de Montebello inadéquat en termes de capacité. J'espère, M. le président, qu'une solution puisse être trouvée dans le plus bref délai et, bien entendu, dans le long terme avec la création du Bagatelle Dam.

Un autre projet annoncé en page 33, Réf. 241. Je souhaite sincèrement que la région de Pailles puisse en bénéficier. Je parle ici de la Rivière St Louis et le lieu plus connu sous le nom de Bassin Loulou qui nécessitent une attention particulière en termes d'assainissement de l'environnement. Car, M. le président, c'est malheureux, il y a quelques semaines de cela, un jeune de 16 ans y a laissé sa vie en raison de l'état délabré et insalubre de la berge de cette rivière. Cet incident m'est venu à l'esprit au moment où j'ai pris connaissance de ce projet et je souhaite du fond du cœur que ce projet se concrétise car je suis sûre et certaine qu'il y a d'autres berges à travers le pays qui sont dans le même état que la rivière St. Louis.

Toujours en ce qui concerne ma circonscription, la région de Pointe aux Sables. *I refer to page 33, again paragraph 243 – upgrading of public beaches.* Je fais un appel pressant au ministre de tutelle afin qu'il prenne en considération l'état déplorable et dangereux de la jetée et l'état de la plage connue sous le nom de La Pointe. Ce lieu est très fréquenté par les habitants de la région, mais aussi par beaucoup d'autres personnes de l'île ainsi que des touristes. Donc, il y a une urgence dans la région.

Last but not least, M. le président, lors du dernier budget, la décision avait été prise pour la réhabilitation des appartements de la NHDC. J'espère de tout cœur que les appartements de la Tour Keonig y sont inclus et les habitants puissent aussi bénéficier du rehaussement dans l'environnement des alentours avec la plantation d'arbres et le renouvellement des équipements des jardins d'enfants afin d'être en harmonie avec la politique de *Green Mauritius*.

Les jeunes de la circonscription attendent beaucoup en ce qui concerne l'éclairage de nos terrains de foot ainsi que les boulodromes. Je fais aussi un appel au nouveau Lord Maire ainsi que le *District Council* de ne pas enlever les lampes déjà placées sur les boulodromes et les mettre sur un autre, puisqu'il faut l'admettre, ces derniers temps il y a eu un système « *déshabille St Paul, habille St Pierre* » rien que pour le plaisir de certains. Mais tous les boulodromes et les terrains de foot ont besoin d'éclairage et doivent être pris en considération.

M. le président, pour conclure, je dirais que ce budget n'a pas été un plaisir pour la population de l'île Maurice. Ça, c'est sûr! Mais, heureusement lorsqu'on réalise que cela a été le dernier budget de l'honorable Dr. Sithanen, ça par contre, c'est un vrai plaisir.

Merci, M. le président.

At 4.21 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.07 with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

Dr. R. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the budget constitutes a special exercise in the life of the Parliament. It is a time when all Members of this august Assembly are given the opportunity to take the floor to speak either for or against the budget, to speak about their constituencies, to bring up bottle up feelings, to settle accounts, in short, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they can talk about many things as long as they are within the parameters of the Standing Order of the House. It is a gift given by parliamentary democracy to the representatives of the people in the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, year 2009 is a special occasion because during this year there has been the presentation of two budgets and hon. Members are being allowed to take the floor twice in a year to express themselves. It is also a special year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because history will recall that we are breaking away with an old colonial tradition when budget period used to start on the first day of July of one year to finish on 30 June of the next year. It took us 41 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after our independence, to break up with this shackle of colonialism.

It is also true, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this was done because in the olden days sugar was the backbone of our economy and we had to wait for the revenue from sugar to plan a budget whereas today the revenue from sugar constitutes only about 3% of our revenues in this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't go into the details of all that has been written in the Budget Speech. Many Members before me have taken many of those items. Many Members, from the other side of the House, have criticized, but I have asked myself a few questions and the first one I asked myself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that despite or whatever has been said within this House against this Budget - how is it that from 2005 to date at the end of 2009, this Government has been able to change the course of our economic progress? I surely won't talk about the legacy left to us by the outgoing Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I won't talk

about cupboards and skeletons and all the rest of it. And if we think about this, we say to ourselves something must have happened to change the course, the destiny of this country. According to me, in my very humble opinion, one and probably the best thing this Government could have done was to change course and the Prime Minister and his team of Ministers, especially the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, had realized that time had come for them to change an obsolete development pattern and they had to re-think to come up with a new economic model to face the new challenges that face us and to prepare the future for our children and grand-children.

And, more than this, Mr Speaker, Sir, within a short span of time, this new model has been put to test and it has been put to test because, unfortunately, the whole world went into a recession and we managed to stay away from this recession. And all this happened because the Prime Minister had the guts – and there is no other way to say it – to do it, he had the guts to change the economic model, he had the guts to take bold decisions, unpopular decisions, which, as hon. Moutia rightly pointed out, yesterday, in his speech, even Members on this side of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, didn't feel very happy about.

But, today, we must thank and the Prime Minister and the vice-Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for the effort they put in. We must also thank the whole population of this country who agreed to make the necessary sacrifices to go - and I agree with everybody in the House - through a rough time, but, today, we are proud to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that thanks to our efforts, we are starting to reap the fruits of our efforts and as a result, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this also teaches us a lesson that a progressing democracy has to go on evolving till the fruits of the labour of the people go back to the people and, today, I am proud to say that the results have started coming, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We've heard, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of criticisms; the same expressions we heard over the last four Budgets, *emballage*, repackaging, *des gâchis* and so many expressions have been used to qualify the previous Budgets and this one also. Yet, I ask myself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second question. Personally, I've heard criticisms mostly inside this House from Members of the Opposition. I have not heard much of criticism outside and thank God the criticisms came from inside the country and from inside this august Assembly. What we have heard, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are compliments from all over the world, from international institutions, from countries from almost all the five continents, and I'll make you laugh, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir. I was talking to my friend, hon. Dr. Husnoo, the other day. I was telling him how Mother India was happy that Mauritius had taken a new course in its economic development and he said to me: Don't forget father China, they also are happy Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we've taken a new course in the development of our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are times in the history of a country where you have to take bold decisions, you cannot hesitate, you cannot dilly-dally because otherwise you will miss the train and once you miss it, it takes a very long time to catch it back. I wish to thank the population of this country who understood that and we know that they are with us and they are going to stay with us. It is unfortunate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that during the presentation of previous Budgets, I wish I could be wrong, I had the impression - and I must concede, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - that some persons were wishing that we have a food shortage in this country. Some were dreaming - the prophets of doom - were wishing probably that this country goes into a recession and the only reason for this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was that craze to get power again. This would have made this Government less popular and this would have been the only opportunity for them to come back to power again.

We have heard a lot of childish debates about the paternity of projects, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We've heard so many things about the ICT, the Oceanic Industry and about the new pillars of our economy where there was a fight over the paternity of these pillars. I shall advise my hon. friends to remember the words of Mr Shiv Khera and he said -

“Successful people do not do different things, they just do things differently.”

This is what this Government has done. This is why the Cybercity has grown so fast within the last four years. This is why some people call it a mini New York when you go by this area, when you travel from Curepipe to Port Louis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also heard from the other side of the House, a lot of criticism and I can understand the feeling of hon. Members on the other side of the House. *Apart les mots gâchis, repackaging, too little too late, démoralisant, et qu'est-ce qu'on n'a pas entendu, M. le président, tout au moins on a entendu une chose, sur beaucoup de projets*, many Members said - it is good but... meaning they wanted to have something more. And I wish to draw the attention of Members and, I think, everybody is aware of it that the preparation of the Budget demands a holistic approach. It demands a global vision of the whole package after you finish the work and this is what has been done by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. It would have been

good, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everybody would have been happy if instead of giving a 3.5% compensation, we had given 10%. The only people who would have been unhappy then would have been the Members of the Opposition because in that case, they would have said that it is a political bribery. They would have said: *faire la bouche doux*. This shows you that in whatever you do, you will always get people to tell you that it is wrong and this is where I congratulate the Prime Minister. We know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of what mettle he is made. It is 'mettle' and not 'metal'. We know what sort of man he is and I am proud to have a Prime Minister like him. When he gives his word, he sticks to his guns and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *on le sait tous aujourd'hui que notre Premier ministre a l'étoffe d'un Premier ministre pas seulement au niveau national, M. le président, mais aussi au niveau international*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I asked myself another question. Which Government has ever prepared a concrete programme on the eradication of poverty? To my humble knowledge, no Government before thought of preparing a complete programme on this issue and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know very well that poverty and absolute poverty did not start after July 2005 when we took power. It has existed all the time and we know also that in spite of all our efforts, it is a problem very difficult to tackle and there are very few countries in the world where poverty has been eradicated completely. Nevertheless, we are making an effort and we've given the proof of what we are doing. It is a pity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - this is my personal feeling - when some hon. Members in their speeches, in the way they address this issue, this painful and sad issue, tend to take it on a communal basis. I shall make an appeal to everybody. It is a national problem. It is a problem which concerns the whole of Mauritius and we should be careful not to give this problem of poverty a connotation which might be considered as being communal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And let me say one thing more, Mr Deputy Speaker, on this issue, I am sincerely of the opinion, and it would appear to be right, that many Members on the other side of the House, have only come to take stock of the problem of poverty when they are sitting in the Opposition there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, otherwise how to explain when they were in power they did not attack the issue then. And today, when this Government is trying its best to face the problem, to find solutions to it, we get a lot of criticisms from the other side of the House, saying that we are not doing enough, and these are the questions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which I have been asking myself. My good friend, hon. Lesjongard, said something which I am proud of and we all know it, that the only solution to exclusion today is education. We all

agree on that and we have got to thank the Father of the nation first who started to give free education to the children of this country. Primary education was free; I think in 1977 education became free at the secondary level. The Father of the nation did that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and the son has given free transport to the students to go to school, to college and to university today. This is why I say that the development of this country has always been linked with the philosophy of the Labour Party and when we talk of *justice sociale*, when we talk of this will to make everybody go up the social ladder, this is what we mean in the Labour Party. This is what the Prime Minister means, and I am happy that we have been able to go up to that length, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Empowerment and education are the two pillars on which we have to continue to work to solve this problem. We have to be careful and I said it in one of my previous speeches, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have also to be careful *parce que c'est important pour le futur de ce pays, pour l'avenir de ce pays, qu'on ne créé pas une mentalité d'assistés parmi les mauriciens. Il faut les aider. Il faut trouver des solutions à leurs problèmes, mais il ne faut surtout pas créer une mentalité d'assistés parce que cela nous fera du tort à l'avenir, M. le président.*

We also heard about crimes, rapes, teenage pregnancies and so many of the problems we are facing. It seems there also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it all started after July 2005. It never existed before. This is why I say during the speeches on the Budget, we can do a lot of politics, and we can exploit certain institutions to sound popular to the people outside, but let us be frank towards ourselves within our conscience first, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before we open our mouth to talk. When we come to these problems, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are also problems that we have to face, we are trying to face. I don't say we have succeeded, but I have faith, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I believe that we are on the road to success. This is an issue which not only concerns the Government, but also all the hon. Members of this Assembly and it concerns the whole population of Mauritius. You will agree with me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Government is giving free education and free transport, the Ministry for women is putting in so much of effort, but Government cannot replace the parents at home, Government cannot be with the child, when he leaves school at 3.15 p.m., to go home to impart to him moral values which we, I am proud to say, in our days, used to get at home from our parents, our father, our mother, our aunties, our uncles, our grandmothers and our grandfathers. These are the people

who set, and made sure they set, in our minds those moral values which have made of us what we are today, because I don't see anybody round here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who was born a multimillionaire. We all come from humble families, medium class or poor families, and we toiled hard, but we kept in our mind these moral values which have made us become what we are today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Talking about values, I cannot, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but make reference to what my friend, hon. Bhagwan, talked about when he was talking of sports. He was utterly angry because the football team of Mauritius lost the match and the expression he used, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *ene médaille ferraille aussi pas fine gagné*. Do you know why I felt sorry? I did not feel angry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I felt sorry. I said to myself what are sports for?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it started in Greece, it started in the Roman period and I recall the expression - *mens sana in corpora sano* - a sound mind and a sound body. When you do sports, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, be it athletics or football or volleyball whatever sports activities, you don't have necessarily to win, but you have to develop that sporting spirit. *C'est un esprit sportif que le sport doit apporter. Ce n'est pas seulement l'activité physique, c'est pourquoi vous voyez qu'il y a une dégénération dans le sport de nos jours. Vous entendez que les athlètes sont dopés que ce soit les cyclistes, que ce soit les nageurs, les nageuses mais on a perdu la valeur même de ce qu'on appelle le sport* and it is a pity that the hon. Member also does not understand what is the meaning of sports. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as was worried about medals, but he conveniently forgot that Bruno Julie, for the first time in the history of this country, brought in a bronze medal. He conveniently forgot that and this shows you the way the mind works. What you want to do is make people believe and they seem to think that you can go on fooling the people all the time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Une défaite, M. le président, est parfois une bonne chose dans la vie. C'est salutaire si on prend la défaite sportivement et si on apprend à apprendre de ses erreurs. C'est cela le symbolisme de la défaite.*

A defeat in elections also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is sometimes good. It helps us to learn from our mistakes, but, unfortunately, some Members on the other side will never learn. They stick on to the old stories, they stick on to their old guns, *venir dans la Chambre ici avec une attitude pour faire croire, faire des choses pour la galerie. Mais ce qui se passe dans les coulisses, avant qu'on ne vienne faire le théâtre, M. le président, est très différent parfois. Nous*

savons ce qui se passe dans les coulisses de nos jours parce que nous aussi nous avons nos oreilles un peu partout, nous savons ce qui se passe dans les coulisses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am proud that for the first time in the history of this country, we have been able to do what we wanted to do before. Today, for example, the Local Authorities are getting Rs900 m. for projects, whereas in 2007, 2008 they were getting Rs45 m. only. I am also proud, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that investment in infrastructure, which we need as this is the problem that every one of us has in our Constituencies, that Rs700 m. has been voted for the NDU to do work for us. I won't go into the details of investment, but I am proud, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are investing in people because when you invest in education, you are investing in people. When you invest in health, you are investing in people, when you invest in sports, you are investing in people, when you invest in artistic values and cultural life, you are investing in people. This is what we mean by 'Putting People First', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is what many hon. Members do not understand. When you put people first, it does not mean that you take a pay packet or a big roll of notes and put them into their pockets, but that you take care of them. You improve their abilities, you make them become more responsible citizens and you make them become Mauritians of whom everybody should be proud the next day and in the future. This is the dream of this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

It is a pity also, but it is never too late that 41 years after our independence, at long last, we have been able to plan something on the artistic and cultural life of this country. I think this is also a first time in the history of our country. We have all heard of people talking of Mauritius as a big garden with different flowers and different perfumes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I hope that we succeed in this *et qu'à l'avenir, les fleurs seront de belles fleurs, des fleurs bien parfumées. Aujourd'hui on est en train de mettre des engrais dans les plantes en espérant qu'on pourra éventuellement avoir un bouquet multicolore avec un parfum unique, un mélange des essences de ces fleurs et ce sera cela, M. le président, notre national symphony orchestra.*

True it is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Budget is the last one which Government is presenting. It is equally true, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that writings are already on the wall as to the outcome of the next elections. We do not have to go and consult political pandits, *encore moins regarder dans une boule en cristal pour savoir qui va gagner les prochaines élections, M. le président.* History will recall that we have always been associated with the development of this country, starting from giving free health care, free education, free transport for students, old age

pension, equal opportunities. These are milestones, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that will never be forgotten even if some people try to rewrite the history of this country. From birth to death, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Labour Party has set milestones.

Sorry to say it, but we have talked about birth, free health facilities, and it goes on to the primary, secondary, university levels, the ability to get jobs in the Civil Service, old age pension, social help.

Mr Deputy Speaker, even if somebody reaches his last day in life today and if the person does not have the finance, Government helps him to go and rest in peace. So, from your birth till your death, Government accompanies you and these are the milestones set by the Labour Party.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a human being judges himself on what he thinks he can do, but others judge him according to what he actually does. The same applies to a Prime Minister and the same applies to a political party. We are doing our jobs and we are not talking of doing. We are walking the talk. The population will decide when the time comes for them to choose.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before resuming my seat, I would like to talk a little bit about my own Constituency No.15 represented hon. Chaumière, hon. Kasenally, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, hon. Soodhun and myself. It is the third biggest constituency in the country today. If the new outline as given by the latest report of the Electoral Commission is approved, Constituency No.15 will become the biggest constituency of the island with about 53,000 voters. I must say that within human limits we have tried to do the maximum in this constituency. As far as drains, roads and infrastructure are concerned, in the beginning, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was difficult as the outgoing Government, as we all know in 2005, had spent a total sum of Rs400 m. to tar new roads on the eve of the elections and financial provisions had not been done for that in the Budget. The incoming Government in 2005 had to pay these Rs400 m. before we could really start development. But I am glad that there has been a lot of development and I wish to thank the Ministers concerned, hon. Anil Bachoo with whom I had a big fight a few weeks back, hon. Lormus Bundhoo who is the new Minister for Environment and NDU, hon. Dr. Beebejaun who was the Minister of Public Infrastructure. We have tried to do things for our people and I am proud of it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Today, Cité La Caverne has a multi sports complex which I believe *est un bijou, M. le président*. It was inaugurated some two or three weeks back. What we are trying to do in constituencies No15 and No. 16 - I am talking on behalf of hon. Bappoo, and on your behalf

also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - is to bring facilities closer and closer to the people's houses. This proximity is going to help them to become healthier, as they have access to a gymnasium, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You won't realise it, but the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix, in the next two/three months, will be having under its responsibility about 16 or 17 football grounds and about 14 to 15 gymnasiums. Vacoas and Phoenix was the poorest of towns and municipalities, but we have caught up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I hope we carry on along this line. I will also like to thank hon. Pradeep Peetumber, our PPS. I have been pestering him a lot, but I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that work has been done. We are having right now, the enlargement of Nalletamby Road and I believe the road from Phoenix is in the pipeline. Actually, I see in the speech that has been delivered, it is written Phoenix to Beau Songes. But, in my opinion, it is a trunk road from Phoenix to Palma; it is not to Beau Songes. And here, I would like to make a request to the Government, to the Minister of Public Infrastructure, the RDA, and to the hon. Prime Minister, because we have a road which is still private, which exists between Hollyrood and Beau Songes. This belongs to the sugar estate.

I will make a special request to the hon. Prime Minister when he negotiates with the people from the sugar sector next time, because they had promised that, on top of the 2000 *arpents* that they are going to give for development, they are also, when needed, going to give land for infrastructural purposes. Right now, only workers on the estate are allowed to use this road, and I believe any other person who uses this road has to pay a sum of about Rs1,500 a year. This will be the real shortcut to the eastern coast. When you come from Curepipe, from the South and even from the East of the country, you will not have the usual problem that people have when they go through Palma and La Louise. I hope that this will materialise in the near future, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With these words, I wish to thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for your kind attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you!

Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River): M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de remercier l'honorable Husnoo qui a gentiment agréé à ma demande et m'a laissée prendre sa place.

M. le président, mercredi dernier, le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances délivrait son discours à la nation, où, très fièrement, il mettait l'accent sur les mesures budgétaires précédentes prises par lui, et qui ont permis à nos entreprises et à notre économie de résister à la crise sans précédent, il faut l'avouer, qui a secoué le monde financier mondial. Il a énuméré ensuite, pendant deux heures, les nouvelles mesures qui ne seront, en fait, jamais mises en application, car leur mandat se termine dans quelques mois ; mesures qui devraient, selon lui, contribuer à continuer à *put people first*.

En écoutant cette semaine et, aujourd'hui encore, les députés de la majorité et les ministres, en prenant conscience avec quelle légèreté et quelle arrogance pour certains, ils osent dire que tout va bien, je demande vraiment sur quelle planète ils vivent. Pour les membres de l'Alliance sociale, les mauriciens vivent mieux aujourd'hui qu'avant 2005. Ils sont persuadés, ou du moins veulent faire croire qu'ils le sont, que ce gouvernement a façonné ces quatre dernières années, un pays modèle, un pays riche, solidaire et propre. Pourtant, M. le président, notre pauvre république vient de vivre deux drames humains, qui devraient certainement nous faire réfléchir et qui devrait forcer certainement les autorités à revoir leur copie et être certainement plus modestes quand à la justesse de leur action. Car, ces deux drames, M. le président, illustrent trop bien, hélas, l'état de santé réel de notre pays, l'état de santé de notre société. Je veux évidemment parler de l'assassinat atroce de Marie-Ange Milazar, et la découverte du cadavre du chauffeur de taxi, Mohunsing Koolaputh mais, surtout, les circonstances de sa mort. N'est-ce pas là une sonnette d'alarme ?

Le premier, le crime, l'assassinat de Madame Milazar illustre, hélas, l'extrême pauvreté dans laquelle vivent presque 30% de nos concitoyens. Pauvreté qui force certains à se prostituer au péril de leur santé et au péril de leur vie ; pauvreté et désespoir qui poussent d'autres à la violence.

Le deuxième crime, M. le président, illustre une autre facette, encore plus insidieuse, encore plus inquiétante, car il illustre une société décadente, une société qui a perdu ses valeurs, même la plus essentielle, celle du respect de la vie. Elle tire la sonnette d'alarme, car elle montre

qu'une partie de notre jeunesse, M. le président, est à la dérive, sans scrupules, prête à tout pour assouvir ses plaisirs. Une jeunesse sans foi ni loi. Mais, au fond, M. le président, doit-on s'étonner de cette situation ? Ne sommes-nous pas responsables ? N'avons-nous pas, nous-mêmes, avec notre système d'éducation, privilégié la compétition au détriment de la solidarité, au détriment des valeurs ? Dans notre obsession à créer une élite, n'avons-nous pas façonné deux générations de jeunes sans cœur, égoïstes et désabusés ? Ce système d'éducation, encore, qui, chaque année, jette des milliers d'enfants à la rue, sans espoir, sans avenir.

En 2001, M. le président, le ministre Obeegadoo, avec détermination, a apporté une réforme majeure dans notre système d'éducation. En éliminant le *rat race*, et en créant des écoles dans les quatre coins du pays, il a redonné à chaque enfant l'espoir de gravir les échelons de l'échelle sociale, et l'espoir d'un avenir épanouissant. Il a mis en place des écoles ZEP pour effacer les retards et réduire les inégalités. En 2005, arrivé au pouvoir par fanatisme, hélas par communalisme, ce gouvernement a tout arrêté. Et on est revenu avec le *rat race*. Ce crime contre nos enfants ! Et voilà, encore, une génération de sacrifiée. Voilà le résultat, M. le président. Comment disait-il hier ? Résultat sur résultat ? Les résultats, c'est violence, viol, prostitution, et décadence. Mais, peut-on encore s'étonner, M. le président, quand les trafiquants de drogue passent par le *VIP lounge* à la demande de députés, et que les trafiquants et les récidivistes vont se refugier chez le '*boss*' ? Résultat : le *subutex* fait ravage dans le pays, et a fait une avancée fulgurante depuis 2006. Notre jeunesse est débauchée. Pas un hasard ! Le premier ministre lui-même donne sa bénédiction au Loto. Les maisons des jeux poussent comme des champignons après la pluie dans les quatre coins du pays mais, pire, à proximité des écoles. Quel message veut-on envoyer ? Est-ce la culture du travail, est-ce la culture de la discipline, ou est-ce plutôt la culture du *zougadère* et de l'argent facile ? Le ministre du travail et le ministre des finances s'étonnaient dernièrement que les mauriciens rechignent à travailler. Est-ce un hasard ? Sans compter la luxure affichée du chef du gouvernement ; voiture de luxe ; Aston Martin ! La corruption, Air Mauritius, STC, Banque de Maurice, passe-droit, favoritisme, copinage ! Comment voulez-vous que notre jeunesse soit saine ? L'exemple vient d'en haut, M. le président.

M. le président, je vais m'arrêter ici sur ce sujet, car ma colère est grande et le dégoût m'étouffe. Je ne vais pas non plus continuer ce discours en énumérant et en décortiquant les mesures énumérées dans ce discours de deux heures, car, 90% de ces mesures ne seront jamais

mises en application. Pour preuve, le discours du budget délivré en juin ; tous les projets sont encore à l'état de projet. La seule mesure qui sera appliquée- et c'est tant mieux, et nous la saluons - c'est la misère compensation salariale qui devra être payée en janvier. Je dis 'misère', puisque, rappelons, M. le président, que la population, en quatre ans, a encaissé un cumul d'inflation de 35%, et n'aura reçu en termes de compensation salariale, en quatre ans, inclus celle-ci, que 16.7%. Quelle générosité ! Quelle solidarité ! *Put people first ; nous fine change ou la vie !*

J'aimerais plutôt, M. le président, si vous le permettez, m'appesantir sur le concept 'Maurice Ile Durable'. En analysant les actions du gouvernement depuis quatre ans et demi dans le domaine de l'écologie, j'ai beaucoup de doutes quant à la sincérité de ce gouvernement à respecter ce concept.

Permettez que je souligne quelques contradictions flagrantes et soupçonneuses. Le ministre de l'environnement veut promouvoir le compostage, par exemple. Mais, le premier ministre, lui, soutient un projet d'incinérateur et un projet d'énergie à base de 100% charbon ; l'énergie la plus polluante. Lors de l'inauguration de la fameuse semaine 'Maurice Ile Durable', où les promoteurs de l'incinérateur étaient conviés et présents, il déclare, répondant à une question d'un journaliste, et je cite-

« Maurice doit avoir une approche réaliste par rapport à cette question, parce qu'on ne peut compromettre la croissance économique ».

et il ajoute -

« Il faut chercher le juste équilibre ; il faut un débat dépassionné sur la question. Nous ne pouvons manifestement pas décider de notre politique sur la base de manifestations de rue ; manifestations qui sont basées sur des informations erronées. Il y a l'intérêt national. Si nous devons faire tout ce que les gens de la rue demandent, nous n'en finirons pas ».

Le projet, aujourd'hui, heureusement, fait l'objet d'une injonction en cour. Mais, je n'ai aucun doute, M. le président, que, si par malheur, ce gouvernement revenait au pouvoir, ce projet ira de l'avant.

Autre exemple d'incohérence, on distribue depuis quelques années - deux ans, je crois - les ampoules économiques. Mais, on ne fait pas provision pour le traitement de ce déchet rempli de mercure. Et, pire, on ne fait aucune campagne d'information pour expliquer au public les précautions à prendre pour la manipulation des ampoules brisées et, comble de contradiction, on diminue les taxes sur les grands écrans qui consomment trois fois plus d'énergie qu'un écran classique.

On affiche une soi-disant volonté de diminuer notre émission de CO₂, mais on baisse la taxe sur les grosses cylindrées. On parle du reprofilage des plages, mais on tolère le pillage des concombres de mer.

La congestion routière : dossier brulant et urgent ! Elle devait être résolue par des actions énergiques. Au lendemain de son arrivée au pouvoir, le premier ministre a déclaré, lors d'une conférence de presse : « Avec moi, fini les comités ! Action ! Dans quinze jours, les coups de pioche ! » Quatre ans et demi après, on annonce le *bus lane* pour 2012. M. le président, il ne suffit pas de peindre les arrêts d'autobus en vert, ou de prendre quelques mesures cosmétiques et de lancer un slogan pour adhérer au concept 'Maurice Ile Durable'.

La première action désastreuse a été de démanteler le travail accompli par Rajesh Bhagwan entre 2000 et 2005. On peut peut-être ne pas aimer le personnage, mais il faut reconnaître qu'il a réussi à mettre la protection de l'environnement dans le *mainstream* des idées et des préoccupations des mauriciens. Il avait réussi, et a allumé chez les mauriciens la flamme écologique et le respect de l'environnement. Aujourd'hui, tout ceci est à l'eau. La police de l'environnement est aujourd'hui, noyautée par un petit groupe de nominés politiques et ne fait plus son travail - Je corrige : de protégés politiques. Les parcours de santé - il en a parlé dans son discours - sont à l'abandon, et la collecte de déchets est aléatoire. Le ministre Duval en a parlé lui-même, hier. Car, les conseillers sont trop occupés à vendre les étals de la foire ou organiser des festins entre eux, aux frais des contribuables, ou à voyager.

Nos îlots sont distribués aux petits copains. M. le président, soyons sérieux. En parlant d'îlot, je vais faire une petite parenthèse. Hier, le ministre de l'environnement a parlé d'Agaléga, et il dénonçait, dans son discours, le projet IBL sur Agaléga. Mais, à ma connaissance, il y a un groupe sud-africain qui a soumis un projet similaire. N'est-ce pas là du *Mauritian bashing* ? 'Maurice Ile Durable' ne serait qu'un slogan creux, M. le président, si elle n'était pas

accompagnée de mesures visant aussi à un développement équitable. Quelle est aujourd’hui la stratégie de développement de ce gouvernement ? Quel modèle économique ce gouvernement a-t-il privilégié ? N’est-ce pas une stratégie économique ultralibérale qui a agrandi le fossé entre les riches et les pauvres ? Le nombre de pauvres a doublé depuis quatre ans ; chiffre officiel du CSO. Et, plus dangereux encore, M. le président, la classe moyenne est en train de disparaître. Ses acquis fondent aussi rapidement que les glaciers de l’Arctique.

Aujourd’hui le ministre des finances a baissé les taxes sur les grands écrans. Il a voulu certainement séduire la population à la veille de la coupe du monde, mais surtout à la veille des élections. Il a peut-être réussi son coup ; je n’en doute pas. Mais, sait-il combien de mauriciens ont du mal à payer leur note d’électricité chaque mois ? Vous êtes tous députés. Vous prétendez être sur le terrain ; je me demande bien parfois si c’est à Maurice, d’ailleurs, tant que vous êtes aveugles ! Dans ma circonscription, M. le président, chaque jour, j’ai une personne qui demande de l’aide pour payer sa note d’électricité. D’ailleurs, un des mes mandants m’a téléphonée, après le discours du budget, en demandant si j’allais prendre la parole, et il m’a demandée de plaider pour que ces fameux grands écrans soit installés dans les *village halls*. Car, dans son petit village, plus de quinze familles ne peuvent payer régulièrement leur note d’électricité, et dix familles squattent encore, attendant vainement, depuis quatre ans, la légalisation de leur petit lopin de terre.

M. le président, je vous rappelle que nous avions hérité 4,500 *squatters* en 2000 et nous avions réussi à légaliser la plupart d’entre eux, après enquête bien sûr, sur leur éligibilité. Malheureusement, pour ces dix familles, leurs dossiers n’avaient pas eu le temps d’être finalisés avant 2005. Résultat, ils sont toujours dans l’illégalité, sans électricité, sans eau. L’eau, parlons-en ! Le même mandant m’avait aussi demandé de plaider pour le retour des fontaines publiques dans les villages, car idem nombre de familles ont souvent leurs compteurs d’eau déconnectés, car ils ne peuvent payer la note. Et quid de la distribution, peut-on vraiment, M. le président, parler de ‘Maurice Ile Durable’ quand on est incapable de gérer la distribution d’eau ? Pourtant, le pays obtient une pluviosité des plus favorables. Quatre millions de m³ en moyenne par an, mais la gestion est inefficace. La *surface run off* représente 60% et notre réseau de distribution perd encore 40% à cause des fuites dans les tuyaux. Résultat : pénuries, coupures ! Les gens doivent se lever la nuit pour remplir des seaux d’eau, pour avoir de l’eau pour cuisiner, laver ou se baigner, car les coupures sont programmées pour économiser, non pour donner un service aux

contribuables. Après quatre ans et demi on annonce la construction d'un nouveau barrage dans le sud !

Au niveau de l'énergie, quand on parle d'énergie, on pense à l'électricité, mais pense-t-on à l'énergie humaine. On fait la promotion d'un *pool* économique, mais on ne ménage pas l'énergie de nos concitoyens, surtout les plus défavorisés. Peut-on vraiment parler de 'Maurice Ile Durable' quand on permet, par exemple, qu'un malade doit se déplacer trois fois pour une intervention chirurgicale, parce qu'il n'y a pas d'anesthésiste? Pour voir un médecin, pour faire une analyse ou une radio, un patient passe presque toute une journée à l'hôpital. Pour obtenir ses résultats, il doit encore se déplacer et perdre une deuxième journée. Pour voir le médecin avec ses résultats c'est une troisième journée qu'il perd et encore une quatrième journée pour avoir les médicaments quand ils sont disponibles, bien sûr. Pour obtenir l'aide sociale, une personne, qui a déjà du mal à trouver de l'argent pour payer son transport, doit se déplacer des fois cinq fois pour compléter son dossier, idem pour l'obtention d'un logement social. Le demandeur d'un logement social, aujourd'hui, doit se déplacer dix fois pour compléter son dossier, parce que les critères ne sont pas clairs, mais surtout changent à la tête du client.

M. le président, le concept 'Maurice Ile Durable' n'est qu'un slogan, je le répète, s'il n'est pas accompagné d'un développement durable. Peut-on parler d'île durable quand on distribue des îlots aux petits copains et aux bailleurs de fonds? Rappelons-nous l'île au Gabriel et l'île aux Bénitiers. Peut-on parler d'île durable dans un pays où, d'après les chiffres officiels du CSO, 12% des personnes ne se sentent pas en sécurité dans leur propre maison, 35% des personnes se sentent menacées dans leur voisinage et 45% se sentent menacées en insécurité dans les transports publics ? Et on parle de promouvoir le 24/7! Quelle farce!

M. le président, le concept 'Maurice Ile Durable' n'est qu'un slogan s'il n'est accompagné d'un développement durable. Le ministre du tourisme parlait hier lors de son discours de son ambition de classifier les hôtels par rapport à leur contribution à la protection de l'environnement, mais plus que les hôtels, la destination île Maurice devrait être une destination durable. Mais ceci implique une nouvelle approche, revoir nos modes de production et nos modes de consommation. Pour cela il faut un consensus et le consensus s'obtient dans le dialogue et implique l'ensemble de la population, les décideurs politiques, les acteurs économiques, publics, privés et parapublics, tout le monde. Un développement durable recherche

des solutions aux problèmes de la société, vise à éliminer les inégalités et à promouvoir la justice sociale, développe le capital humain en assurant santé, éducation, logement, loisir, mais aussi dignité et respect; préserve l'environnement en utilisant avec respect les ressources naturelles et préserve la qualité de l'air et de l'eau, favorise enfin un système économique où la personne humaine serait au centre du développement. Le développement durable se définit en un développement qui répond aux besoins du présent, mais sans compromettre la capacité des générations futures à répondre aux leurs.

M. le président, nous ne sommes que des locataires, que des passeurs sur cette planète et nous avons une responsabilité vis-à-vis de nos enfants et de nos petits enfants.

Je voudrais terminer en faisant deux petites suggestions, si nous sommes sincères, créons un ministère de l'environnement et du développement durable qui aurait pour tâche de développer des indicateurs de développement durable approprié pour le pays. Deuxièmement, inscrivons la charte du développement durable dans notre constitution, puis nous pourrons parler de 'Maurice Ile Durable'.

Merci, M. le président.

(6.06 p.m.)

Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Speaker, Sir, after listening to the hon. lady, I am a bit surprised. I was just going to ask myself: who was in Government from 2000 to 2005? Who was running the country at that time? Was there no water problem at that particular time? There was no prostitution, no drug problem, no rape at that time? Everything starts happening now, in 2009? I am a bit surprised. It is so easy to make this kind of cheap remark, cheap accusation, whilst they have been in power for five years, from 2000 to 2005. I can ask the same question: what have they done? Was there no rape at that particular time? Everything was all right, education was alright? Was there no problem with education? Excuse me! The ex-Minister of Education is not here, but did everything start with Mr Obeegadoo? The Labour Party did not do anything for education? Who gave free secondary education, free transport, now is giving children books, school bags, shoes, everything to encourage the children to go to school, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

But it seems as if they were not in power before. Talking about Subutex and drugs, who started the Syringe Exchange Programme? Were there no drug addicts before? Who started the methadone treatment? It is this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir! They are talking about drugs treatment. It is this Government that started this. It is so easy to criticise when you are not in power.

Hon. Barbier, yesterday, asked me about my *bilan* pour Roche Bois. Unfortunately, he is not here. I was going to ask him: firstly, he was upset about the green space that has been created in Roche Bois and hon. Joe Lesjongard just mentioned it as well what hon. X. L. Duval is doing. I get the impression they are upset about what he is doing. This is not coming to give something just on the eve of the election. This green space is going to last for generation in a place like Roche Bois which was neglected for years, years and years; at long last, they are getting something decent on a place that was a rubbish dump. Now, we are converting this into a green space with a football pitch, opening on the beach to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of Roche Bois. Is that wrong?

As regards the sewerage programme in Roche Bois, the fact that we started it a few years ago, is that wrong? Hon. Barbier was criticising the project yesterday.

(Interruptions)

No! The hon. Member does not know what he is talking about! Nothing was started there! They started everything!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

Dr. Husnoo: The hon. Member knows everything! Is that why they did not vote for them? Is that why they threw them out?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet, please! Hon. Members, silence please! There is a ruling dating from 2001 which stipulates that cross talking is unparliamentary. I would like us to abide by that ruling. The hon. Member can continue.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it was said that I don't even go to Roche Bois. But I wonder why those people who go to Roche Bois have been kicked out in the last election? I just want to ask that question. The new block is coming at Emmanuel Anquetil Government School. Maybe somebody will say that they started it! The new knowledge-based training centre at

Route Nicolay, was it they who started it as well? How many poor children are being trained in this knowledge-based training centre? They are being given a good training at different levels from CPE failures up to HSC - NTC course, diploma course and all types of courses at different levels are being given, Mr Speaker, Sir. Did they start it?

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Dr. Husnoo: The new Dr. Jeetoo Hospital is coming at the cost of Rs2 billion. Who started it? Did they start it? Were there no health problems in Port Louis all this time? The Bagatelle Dam is coming. Since we came here, we talked about the problem of water. Did it not exist when they were in power? We will open the Medi clinic in Plaine Verte soon.

(*Interruptions*)

Cinq ans! But what did they do? They were there for five years! What did they do?

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Husnoo: At least, we are doing it. They were there for more than five years, what did they do?

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Husnoo: This Government, across the board, has improved the quality of life. And housing! Did they not know that there were so many people in *Cité Roche Bois*? What has this Government done? We have made them become owners; we have given them the pride of owning their land and their house.

(*Interruptions*)

Did that not exist before? As far as education at pre-primary, primary, technical education and health programme are concerned, this Government has been doing everything to improve the quality of life. I will not talk about the whole country, but I am going to stick to the inhabitants of Constituency No. 3 and Port Louis. We did it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come back to my speech. As the world, Mr Speaker, Sir, is coming out of the worst financial crisis it has faced since the great depression, let us ask ourselves how had Mauritius fared in the last few years? If we compare the statistics in 2005 and 2009, we see that Mauritius has done remarkably well. Despite everything that has been said by

the opposite side, the unemployment rate which was about 10% has come down to around 8%. Male unemployment rate has come down to 4.6 percent compared to 5.8 percent in 2005. The female unemployment rate has come down to 14 percent as compared to 16 percent in 2005. Unemployment among the youths, that is, from 16 to 24 years, has come down from 26 percent to 19 percent. Across the board, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And yet, they said that this Government has not done anything to solve the problem of unemployment. They did everything.

The inflation rate for the year 2009 is going to be 2.6 percent and for the last six months of 2009, it is going to be 1.2 percent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Concerning FDI, we know what it was between 2000 and 2005. The FDI is expected to be Rs9 billion this year despite the fact that the major economies have not quite got out of the financial crisis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As we have seen, all the indicators have improved and here we have to thank the Minister of Finance for the way he has managed the economy for the last four and a half years.

Whatever criticism we may level against the Minister of Finance, I think we should all be honest to agree that he has done a marvellous job since 2005 considering the different crisis we have been facing, namely –

- The dismantling of the Multi Fibre Agreement;
- The 36 percent cut in the price of sugar;
- the massive increase in the price of oil;
- the soaring food price on the world market;
- the worst world economic crisis we have had to face since the great depression.

Despite all these crisis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he managed to steer the ship with a steady hand. During the crisis and after, he did his utmost to safeguard jobs. As you are aware, his last Budget, six months ago, was about saving jobs, protecting people and preparing for the recovery. We have to agree that despite the crisis, he did all the three tasks remarkably well. With the stimulus package, he managed to save a number of jobs which were at stake while, at the same time, despite the difficult economic situation, he tried to protect the poorest segment of the society. He was proactive in his approach and did not wait for the world economy to pick up, but rather has taken measures to prepare ourselves to ride the crest of the wave as the economy picks up. In this present Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he has continued on the same line, that

is, shaping the recovery, consolidating the social progress and working towards a green Mauritius.

To maintain the recovery, he has embarked on a massive development across the country. He has firstly maintained the Additional Stimulus Package until 2010 to help the industries in difficulties. He has embarked on a massive infrastructural development, firstly, to build roads across the length and breadth of the country, starting a road development project never seen in the history of the island, which is going to cost about Rs15 billion. And somebody just said that nothing is being done about traffic congestion. Other projects include modernisation and expansion of the airport which cost about Rs13 billion with new passengers terminal, new runway and a new taxiway which will accommodate the latest generation of large planes and they said that nothing is being done. In Port Louis, the Container Terminal is being expanded. Rs2 billion are being invested to raise the capacity of the Victoria power plant and the new city of Highlands is moving forward as the Jin Fei Project. Still, they say that this Government is not doing anything.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other Members have spoken about poverty and working towards a green Mauritius. I would like just to say a few words about job creation. This, in itself, is one of the best ways of fighting poverty, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. After passing the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority Bill last month to help the SME, the Minister of Finance has taken about 20 additional measures to help this sector.

As you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the SME sector contributes to about 20 percent of our GDP, 18 percent of our total growth output and 45 percent of total employment. In fact, this sector has been the main source of employment creation during the recent crisis. It amounts to about 100,000 enterprises which employ about 45 percent of the workforce now as compared to 36 percent in 2005.

As mentioned above, the Minister of Finance has taken about 20 measures to help the SMEs. Firstly, again, the Stimulus Package will be maintained till 2010. This is not only to help the major industries, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but it is also there to help the small and medium enterprises. The Minister of Finance provides incentives to any entrepreneur from the conception of his project to formulation, getting loan, acquiring building, mentoring and consultancy facilities and marketing of the project. For the start up, besides the industrial estates at Phoenix, Terre Rouge and La Tour Koenig Government is going to set up 10 sites of about 5

arpents each where the SME can lease the land and construct its own industrial building. Obviously, this site will be provided with all the necessary facilities, road, water and electricity.

Government will soon launch the World Bank Funded Mauritius Business Growth Scheme project. This \$12 m. project aims to support the enterprise productivity, competitiveness, technology acquisition, skill development and marketing with a view to expand the market shares. The unemployed and the retrenched women can get loan from the Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank under a partial risk guarantee scheme. This will provide micro-credit up to Rs40,000 to an individual and up to Rs400,000 to a group. The booster loan at the DBM which was Rs50,000 in 2006 has gradually been increased to Rs150, 000 this year. One of the main problems faced by the small entrepreneur is the cash flow Mr Speaker, Sir. For example when they sell their product to a supermarket, it takes about 90 to 120 days for the supermarket to pay them and during this time they are in real trouble. To help them over this cash flow Government is trying to get bank to support them during this period at a minimal cost.

The Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme has already disbursed about Rs127 m. in favour of 49 projects in different sectors. Government is now expanding the scheme to cover all productive equipment including goods vehicle for SME's. Two new projects that Government is setting up to help the SME's which I think are very important are the SME portal and the permanent trade fair. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very difficult and costly for a small enterprise to set up individual website. Now the SEHDA in collaboration with the National Computer Board is setting up a comprehensive website. This will help the individual enterprise in many different ways. The SME can advertise their product to the local and the international market; make any application on line; any buyer can log in that website if they want to buy any good manufactured in Mauritius by the SME, be it children clothes, agricultural products, furniture; any other service provided can even contact the SME's to offer them any course on management or finance to improve the service. Another important tool for the SME would be the permanent trade fair. One of the major problems of the SME nowadays is the lack of visibility. People are not aware of the range and the quality of goods provided by our SME's. Last October, about 50 to 60 thousand people attended a trade fair organised by the SEHDA. In this context, Government is setting up a permanent trade fair which would be easily accessible to the public. The SME's will be able to expose their products in this trade fair for about two to four weeks on a rotational basis and this will provide a good visibility for their products and if we have about

100 small stands at that permanent trade fair, you can imagine how this is going to help the small industries to sell.

Another point which I think is worth mentioning is the Rs22 m. which is being provided by the Minister of Finance to the Minister of Industry to improve the linkage between research, technological advance and industrial application. This will be a good opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to raise our SME's on a different level. We can train our graduate in Agriculture, IT even engineering in Business Management and help them to set up their own business in the future. Cash from the World Bank funded Mauritius Business World Scheme has been earmarked to fund the emergence of these high potential start up companies that used technological innovation. Previously most of our graduate in Agriculture, IT and even engineering were waiting to get a job in the Government service. If we can train these graduates and other diploma holders in Business Management and provide them with the necessary work experience in the related industries, I am sure we can take the necessary shift in the development of the SME in Mauritius. This eventually will create a different breed of entrepreneurs as well. This is what, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew did in Singapore after independence. He identified the different niche for industrial development, groomed his graduate, help them with the necessary work experience and finance and, Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know the result. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can do it in Mauritius as well. With emphasis on education, free university education, free technical education and with the help of SMEDA, I don't see why we cannot rise up to the challenge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to make a few points about poverty alleviation. My other friends have talked about poverty alleviation. I've got one or two questions which I would like to ask. We all know the problem associated with poverty: malnutrition, social problems, law and order breakdown, not to mention drug and prostitution. This Government is trying very hard toward solving this problem, it is not easy, but the Minister of Finance has been trying hard for the last few years. My main concern is about the different bodies that we have to deal with poverty in Mauritius. We have the empowerment programme, Trust for integration of the vulnerable group, eradication of the poverty programme, the CSR programme.

This Government is spending billions of rupees to fight poverty. By my main concern which I would like to share with you is: do we have a coordinated programme? Do we have a plan, an integrated approach or is it anybody doing their little bit in an uncoordinated manner?

What about the audit of this programme? The Empowerment Fund is spending about Rs5 billion. CSR would spend about Rs1 billion. I am not against this project. Who can be against fighting poverty, but I feel we must have a proper audit of this programme more so when public money is involved. Do we have a list of the project? Do we know the project value and who are the beneficiaries? I understand the MRC has a poverty observatory. Are they doing an impact assessment of all these projects? As I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is putting a lot of money to fight poverty and I think it is very important to have an audit of what we have done so far, where we are going and what is the result.

Again on a different issue Government is spending a lot of money on housing programme. Here again I have one or two questions. In some projects, however good and well planned they are, we are putting only one community in one particular housing project. Is this the right thing to do, Mr Speaker, Sir? Are we not going to create communal ghettos in the future? Don't get me wrong, I realise that some community suffers from poverty on a much larger scale than other communities, but is segregation the right answer, Mr Speaker, Sir? Again Government is coming with 5,000 housing units for families with monthly income not exceeding Rs5000; 5000 housing units for families with monthly income between Rs5000 and Rs10,000, 600 core houses of 38 square metres, 300 core houses of 57 sq metres. Again my question is the same, Sir. Are we not going to create segregation by putting all the poor people in one area and the less poor in a second area? I don't know. I'm just asking this question aloud so that we can have a debate; so that we don't land ourselves in problems in 25 years' time after we have created a ghetto. I know it is a difficult problem. It's not easy, but I am just asking myself this question loudly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to talk about the developments in my constituency and in Port Louis in general. Firstly, as I have mentioned earlier, the new Dr. Jeetoo Hospital is costing the Government more than Rs2 billion. Many of us in this august Assembly have worked at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. We all know how bad the facilities were at the hospital before, but despite this, the staff is doing a good job and I would like to congratulate them. I am very happy that the new Dr. Jeetoo Hospital construction has started and I am sure that they will contribute to provide a still better standard of care over the years to come to the people of Port Louis and the surrounding areas. It was an essential development and I am glad that, at long last, *l'Alliance sociale*, this Government, has taken the step to do this hospital.

Secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is the Bagatelle Dam. I think it was in my speech of 2006 that I raised the problem of chronic water shortage in Port Louis and its surrounding areas. I am glad again to see that the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has allocated money for the start of this dam which will provide water to Port Louis and the lower Plaines Wilhems, maybe, for the next 50 years, Sir.

And, thirdly, I mentioned it earlier, but I think I have to mention it again: the Knowledge-based Training Technical Centre in Port Louis. There was a high need for technical education for the inhabitants of the suburbs of Port Louis, be it Plaine Verte, Roche Bois, Vallée des Prêtres and Cité la Cure. For all the suburbs, there was a great need for technical education. I am very happy, at long last, the centre has become operational despite protests from the other Members; I am surprised to say it. Now they are helping to provide good quality technical education to our youth. I must mention it, for both the Knowledge-based Technical Centre and the Bagatelle dam there were lots of objections. I don't understand why. To provide education, to provide water there were objections, but this Government sticks to its gun and gets the project going.

Before concluding, Sir, I would like to make two requests: firstly, a sports complex in Plaine Verte. As mentioned by the hon. Minister of Health, a couple of days ago, Mauritius has the second highest rate of diabetes and cardiovascular disease in the world. And in Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my constituency has the highest rate of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

(Interruptions)

I know it's biryani and Pepsi. I know that. I know it's genetic as well. It involves the lifestyle as well. 75% of men and 90% of women, as mentioned by the hon. Minister, do not do any exercise, that is why I make an appeal to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Youth and Sports: 'Please, make sure we have a sports centre in my Constituency'. I mean a true sports centre worth its name, to help the young, and not so young male and female to practice a sport, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is well known, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that exercises prevent the onset of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

My second request would be the Attorney General. Recently, these last two days, '*Rezistans ek Alternatif*' has brought a case to the United Nations Human Rights Council against the obligation for a candidate to write his ethnic group or religion on the nomination papers for the general elections. The main aim eventually is to abolish the best loser system in a circumvented, if not surreptitious manner. As you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the best loser system has been introduced in our political system to safeguard the rights of all the communities – the minority community as well as the other communities. This is why Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, in his wisdom, introduced the best loser system in our Constitution. He has given an adequate and fair political representation to all the communities in the island. He has also provided the necessary stability for the country for the last 40 years, Sir. A true democracy is not just the rule of the majority, Sir, but it also entails safeguarding the right of the minority as well. The United Nations also recognises the rights of the minorities to participate effectively in all aspects in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life. I would just make an appeal to the Attorney General to take a stand and to defend the Constitution on that issue. I would also like to appeal to the Prime Minister, to the Minister of Finance to get the help of a constitutional lawyer to take up that issue at the United Nations when it comes up again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I would like to thank the Vice-Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for the marvellous work he has done over the last 4½ years. During the economic crisis, his management of the economy even won him praise from many distinguished people overseas. He has managed to place the economy on a sound footing. He starts work to improve the overall infrastructure of the island, support the local industries to create more jobs for the unemployed. He starts a relentless fight against poverty and the building of a green Mauritius. I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his leadership, and again, I would like to congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Hats off to both of them!

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.37 p.m.)

Dr. K. Babajee (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the chance every time I intervene you are sitting in the Chair. I think this brings me some luck.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I consider myself, today, deeply privileged, very honoured to have been given the opportunity once more to participate in a Budget debate. Only six months back, we still remember what we said. While debating the 2009 Budget, you may recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that this country should be considered blessed to have given birth to a son like Dr. Rama Sithanen.

Today, while debating on the 2010 Budget, I am convinced that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is one of the finest Economists this country could have produced. Why do I say this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It's to analyse, to see clearly where we were in 2005 and where we have reached today. In a few months before the general elections there is such a Budget, a Budget *non électoraliste*. This is not in the habit of the Labour Party.

We see the reality; we have been up to now, as far as possible, very realistic. We don't want '*casse di sucre lors la tête ek faire la bouche doux*'; we do not believe in this. I am happy that my colleague, hon. Dr. Hawoldar, said it just now: we want to build a strong nation. We don't want people to be *des assistés*, we want to change this mentality.

You will concur with me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a Budget is the very lifeblood of a country, an exercise which commands lots of farsightedness, reflexion, analysis, and judgement on the economic and financial status of a country. When we debated on our first Budget in 2006, what was not said in this House! What nickname was not given to our Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, '*l'homme du FMI, l'homme du secteur privé, l'homme qui n'a pas de cœur*'! In 2007, it was the same, Sir. In 2008, and now 2009 and 2010, you hear the same story. Everybody nowadays in Mauritius can see that change happening in our country. We should not forget, we do not have the right to forget and, it is our duty on the Government side, to keep on reminding the population of Mauritius where this country was in June 2005.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ‘*anou redresse nou pays*’. I will not talk about the Illovo saga as this has already been canvassed. They wanted to put Mauritius as ‘*le pays le mieux géré du monde*’, but they finished this country up. They confessed it themselves. We are not saying what they did; they said it themselves four months before the general elections of 2005. They said it! *Situation dramatique sans précédent, indicateurs économiques en alerte rouge, perte d'emploi à une vitesse vertigineuse.* You know what hon. Bhagwan said the day before yesterday when he took part in the debate. He said: ‘*l'usine ti pe fermé*, what can we do? This was not our problem.’ How could it not be the problem of the then Government?

Nowadays, when a few of our sisters are losing their jobs in very rare cases, what do they say? We are to be blamed as we are not doing our job! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is something that we should understand. I want to make a comparison and a contrast between the period 2000-2005 and the period 2005-2009, up to today. We are leading this country to progress. We have taken this country out of a *marasme économique sans précédent* and we are leading this country to prosperity and to the wellbeing of our population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not worried at all, nor are we by what the Members on the Opposition side are saying because we know what is going on out there. They have known, as our hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance always says, ‘*l'école couillon ine fini fermé depuis longtemps sa*’. They think that, as they were doing 30 or 35 years ago, cheating people, they will continue to cheat these people. This won’t work anymore! The people know where seriousness is, where responsibility is and where amateurism is, bringing this country on an amateur way of life, they know it now. They have already made their decision. That is why today, when I listen to the hon. Members on the Opposition side talking, I know that they are taken aback. They are taken by surprise. Hon. Nando Bodha just raised his head that is why I am saying it - he gave a very nice speech as in June 2009, he wanted to be the eye-opener. I agree with Dr. Hawoldar, he said the same thing, that he gave a very nice speech. But there are many things which are happening that he does not know and, as it has happened a few times, today we are going to open his eyes. He wanted to be an eye-opener for us, I am afraid even hon. Rucktoo said it this morning; we will do a few things that will open his eyes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the philosophy of this Budget is what we have to understand. When we listen to the hon. Members of the Opposition side, *rien ne va bien*. But they know inwardly, because I had a word with one hon. Member, who is a friend of mine, in the corridor

yesterday - for discretion sake, I won't mention his name. I was asking him why do you keep on criticising like this, is it true that this Budget is not good at all? He told me: no, my friend, it is our job and we have to criticise. You are giving Rs420 this is a lot of money. But, we have to say that it is not enough. If you gave Rs1,000, still we would have said that this is not enough and that you should have given Rs2,000.' Well, they are doing their job. But to be honest to ourselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think that any Government could have done better than what this Government has done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to go into details, but we should never forget where we started in 2005. We had a choice to make in 2005. We were on the crossroad, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we had a choice to make to choose which way to take. We did not take the easiest way, as they did between 2000 and 2005. The easiest way to increase the VAT by 50%, then nobody talked about social and the poor people, nobody talked about purchasing power! When they inflicted the 50% of VAT on everyone in this country, what did they do to the population? Hon. Nando came the other day and mentioned only four products in which the prices had gone up. He mentioned four, not to mention all of them. We campaigned on the soaring of prices in 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You know this as you campaigned as well. Hon. Bhagwan showed a list. Yes, we campaigned on this. He was saying that milk has gone up. We know the food crisis. He came with *gros pois* in the National Assembly. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have campaigned on this and I have said it in all the meetings and *réunions nocturnes*.

A mother in Riambel could not buy milk for her son of 1½ years old; he was drinking *dité pir*, black tea. That is why when we came with *changement*, all the people came with us. They said: yes, we will go for *changement*. So, I was saying that we had an easy and a more challenging way. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Babajee: ... knowing the sense of responsibility on our side, knowing the capacity of our hon. Prime Minister, knowing the competency of our hon. Minister of Finance, we chose the most difficult way. We refused to take the easiest way. What did we not hear? *Des prophètes de malheur!* We will see and we will be here. Next year, we will see, there will be floodgate, people will be dying. We heard all that, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we made the way along. We chose the most difficult way because we were prepared to dare. We wanted to dare. This

difficult way entailed *inter alia* lots of hard work, boldness, and sacrifice from one and all in this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, I am proud to stand up and say that we have turned everything around. We have chosen the right way, we have done our job and today we want to share that gain. Today, I am proud to say that I belong to this team. Just look around you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, almost all the Members and Ministers are here and look on your left side, there are only one, two, three, four.

From this, you know who is responsible and who is living on an amateur basis, who take things seriously and who is joking about life. This is enough to tell you something, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and from that situation *dramatique sans précédent, une économie en état d'urgence, tous les indicateurs économiques en alerte rouge et une perte d'emplois à une vitesse vertigineuse*. Today, we are proud to say that we have succeeded à *remettre le pays sur les rails* and this despite three external shocks as soon as we took office, despite an unprecedented world financial crisis, despite world food crisis, chikungunya, AH₁N₁ influenza pandemic which hit our country. People are asking themselves questions outside. What would have happened to this country - thank God it did not happen - if that same Government of 2000 to 2005 happened to be in power in 2005? What would they have done with this population at a time of crisis because when there was no crisis, they chose to increase the VAT?

From 2000 to 2005 - since hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing has said it, I have to repeat it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - the Government chose the easiest way to manage this country. Instead of *redresse le pays*, they drove it to that *marasme économique*, thus leading us to claim '*bizin changement*'. And *changement* our Government endeavoured to bring it and pledged to consolidate it further.

As soon as we came to power, as promised, as it has been canvassed, we gave free transport to all the students, to all our elderly and we restored universal retirement pension. If we make a small calculation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this only enabled each family in Mauritius to save, at least, Rs2,500 per month. When our hon. Prime Minister said '*change zot la vie dans 100 jours*', is it not true that saving Rs2,500 per month changes the life of so many people in this country? We continued to set the stage for a robust growth that was followed, which culminated also in an early harvest and then we had the bumper crop. We managed to save jobs and to protect our people against unemployment. Now, we want to shape that recovery, we want to

consolidate our social progress and sustain the Green Mauritius. That was, once more, distributed to our people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everything that we are harvesting out of the efforts of this Government, we are distributing it to our people.

Just imagine, first time in the history of Mauritius, the PRB was paid in *toto*. First time in the history of Mauritius, the public officers are getting two compensations in one year. They just got a compensation, they are getting another one as from January. So far, things are being done which have never been seen in the history of our country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We wanted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to change Mauritius. That's what we said. We wanted to change the lives of its people, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that we have succeeded to change the world. We wanted to change our country and we have succeeded in changing the world. We have succeeded in changing what people think of Mauritius today. We have succeeded – just to mention what the U.S Secretary of State, Mrs Hilary Clinton, recently said on Mauritius and on the Government - in changing the opinions of world leaders of our country.

Our Government, under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, has worked hard to enhance our international diplomatic image, consolidate our relations with Commonwealth countries and, right now, when I am talking about this, our hon. Prime Minister is assisting the Summit of the Commonwealth countries. Contrary to the previous Government, we still remember at one moment when the then Prime Minister, when he got angry '*mone en colère là, nu bizin sorti dans Commonwealth*'. He threatened to move out of. He insulted the Republic of France when one of his colleagues did not become the Director General of WTO. We know what George W. Bush said of him, I do not have to repeat it. You see the difference, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This Government is trying to enhance the image of Mauritius internationally; it is re-establishing our diplomatic relations with all the countries. The recent visit of the President of the People's Republic of China is a vivid example of the privileged friendship and relations that we have with China.

Mauritius has won the esteem of world leaders so far, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and this is not just *du hazard*. *Ce n'est pas tout simplement tombé du ciel*. There is some work done behind this. It is the result of so much of political stability, our unity in diversity and the good governance nurtured by this Government. Furthermore, the massive amount of FDIs is an undeniable proof of the regained trust in our country. We should not forget that Mauritius, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not only the beautiful girls around. Nobody owes us anything; nobody is forced to come and invest in Mauritius; it is only our unity, our stability, our good governance that will be able to attract foreign investors.

After having listened to some of the Members on the Opposition side, I feel a bit sad for that. One of them talked of '*budget amer*', the other one talked of '*je suis déçu*' and '*un budget décevant*', but, let's see what people outside are saying, what famous economists are saying about this Budget, what the members of JEC are saying about the Budget, what the trade unionists said on the Budget? For instance, just to quote, Mr Sadien, he said –

'C'est un budget, on ne peut pas faire mieux que cela.'

And the well-esteemed, Père Henri Souchon, said –

'This Budget brings about a feel good factor.'

One Member of the Opposition said that not a single house has been constructed up to now by our Government. Let me remind him that only in my constituency, Constituency No.14, more precisely in Bambous, 109 low-cost houses have been constructed and 70 at La Valette and 78 NHDC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, please allow me now to mention some of the major projects implemented in my constituency. Of course, first on the list is the Macondé Bridge. I cannot morally forget the Macondé Bridge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. New roads have been tarred and others resurfaced. Drains, footpaths, pavements and handrails have been built in all the regions in my constituency, lighting of football playgrounds, volleyball pitch and upgrading of the Bambous Social Welfare Centre. The people of Bambous told me that since 20 years they were expecting to upgrade that Social Centre and today thanks to the Minister of Social Security, hon. Sheilabai Bappoo, you should see the work done there. And they are so happy about it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are some roads that we have tarred. People came with tears in their eyes. They said since so long they were trying to have this road resurfaced or tarred and it had not been done. And people say that this Government is not doing anything! There is a saying that goes, we use it very well in medicine – 'The eyes cannot see what the mind does'. This is exactly what is happening with the Opposition right now.

We have constructed many bus shelters and children's playgrounds in so many villages. We have keep-fit equipments, etc., Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If I have to say all of them, I will never finish. I don't want to quarrel with hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. She is not here. I do not have

the habit of talking behind the back. She said that the squatters of Case Noyale are still waiting to move. I beg to differ with what she said, but allow me to inform her that the squatters do not want to be relocated elsewhere and these same squatters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - it is good to go down on record - just before the election of 2005 were supplied with electricity and water. You know why. They do not want to be relocated elsewhere. She also said that fishermen in Macondé are facing a lot of difficulties, but, as far as I know, the fishermen do not fish there. The Minister of Fisheries replied to a Parliamentary Question recently whereby he said that their activities have not been affected at all. On the contrary, their catch has increased.

Concerning the sad and tragic death of a two-year old child recently in Le Morne, I wish to inform her that I already talked to the Minister of Public Infrastructure and the Road Development Authority, the RDA, which is now the RDC, one month before that sad accident happened. I am so sad for this child, I am so sorry for him, but this work is going to be done. I have told the RDC to install handrails all along the main road of Le Morne.

Yesterday, hon. Barbier said that there is only one ethnic group enrolled in the ZEP schools. This is not fair. We have to be honest, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is not true at all. He wanted to *communaliser cette affaire*. I will advise him to go and visit the ZEP schools.

I will now make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life and the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the construction of a general hospital in the western coast of our country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the region of Black River people suffer a lot. When they are sick they have to hire taxis, they have to take their cars to go to Victoria Hospital or to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and this takes a long time, passing through the traffic jam of La Louise, Quatre Bornes, they spend a lot of time. The East has got its hospital, the South has got its hospital, the capital has got a general hospital and even the North has got a general hospital. It is our dream in the west to have a general hospital one day. I would make an appeal to the Minister of Health, to the Minister of Finance and to our dear Prime Minister to make an effort to give the inhabitants of the West a general hospital where medical assistance can be made easily accessible to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this goes in line with the policy of the WHO which is the construction of country hospitals to make medical care easily accessible to the people. It is what we call 'Health for all by 2010'. So, I would be very happy if due consideration will be given to

this earnest request of the people of Black River, of the West, in general, and by myself, of course. This request goes to all the Ministers and all the departments concerned.

A lot has been said so far in this Budget. We all know that this is a very responsible Budget. It has been positively welcomed by so many people, trade unionists, members of JEC, as I said just now, Père Jocelyn Grégoire, what he said about it. Even from some of the Members on the Opposition side, this Budget shows that the cake has grown bigger, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and our Government is distributing it equitably to the whole nation who so dearly deserves it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the entire Mauritian population for their trust, for their support, for their solidarity and for having accompanied us in this long and tough journey. Without them, maybe we would not have achieved what we have achieved until now.

To conclude, I would like to quote a few words of Walter Reuter. I quote –

“There is no greater calling than to serve your fellowmen, there is no greater contribution than to help the weak, there is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well.”

May God bless the Mauritian nation!

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.10 p.m.)

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Dr. Hookoom): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is one week already since the 2010 Budget was presented to this august Assembly by hon. Dr. Sithanen. This Budget was prepared under the able guidance of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. This Budget has been presented on a calendar year basis.

It is common that during the period preceding Budget presentation, people start expecting *monts et merveilles* when times are good or when the Government nears the end of its mandate. People do also apprehend measures prompting them to *serre ceinture*.

I have listened to my friend, hon. Lesjongard, with much interest, but he is not here. He has mentioned *une extraordinaire holdup intellectuel*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find this nothing more than an argumentation. It seems that he is not living in the present time. Between 2000 and 2005, the sea was calm, the sky was blue, still they ended up with skeletons in the closet, even VAT was increased by 50%, between 2000 and 2002 (*de 10% à 15%*) when hon. Bérenger was Minister of Finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should not forget that we are rising from a global crisis that has brought economic superpowers down on their knees. Our economy is still performing; we are resistant and resilient and we have been broadening the circle of opportunities for our citizens.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to congratulate both the Prime Minister and the Vice-Prime Minister for the vision and direction within which this Budget has been presented. I would like to inform the House of the fact that I have been meeting regularly, almost daily, my constituents after the 2010 Budget presentation and I have been pleased with their reaction. I am sure it is the same for my colleagues on this side of the House. There has been no uproar in the aftermath of the Budget presentation, but rather the contrary.

Our friends across the floor in the House referred the other day to some sort of hype in the country when a Budget is presented. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, there is no hype. People have already accepted the 2010 Budget. This Government has reviewed the Automatic Pricing Mechanism which palliates the shocks to which Mauritians are subjected to at Budget presentation time. People have not hoarded any retail outlet as we have succeeded in avoiding *une psychose*. We all know that the *vibration* he has spoken about will not occur as we are not selling dreams. In fact, we believe in the reality perspective and people in this country are increasingly exposed to and aware of the economic realities be it on the local, regional and international front. A hype situation occurs if the Budget does not meet the aspirations of the people.

I am not surprised at all with the statement from the other side to the effect that there is not even an electoral excitement. The reason is that, on this side, we are not worried to face our people in elections. For us, the Budget exercise is a very serious one and this explains the personal commitment and involvement of the Prime Minister. The result is obvious. This Budget has already been rather well accepted by the different stakeholders including workers' representatives and employers in the private sector. Therefore, I would ask my good friends on the other side not to expect any hype or excitement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I live in my constituency and meet people every day. I may inform the House that people at grass root level trust this Government for the pragmatic economic management, for the sense of direction and for the sincerity of purpose *depuis que nous avons été reconduits au pouvoir*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the people have been with us all the way over the past four years. I am bound to agree with our friends on the other side of the House only on one count for having said some time back that we have *un peuple admirable*. In fact, we have a very sensible population. They trust this Government and they are continuing to have faith in our actions as we have been consistent. We inherited what we all know by now. The country was declared to be *dans un état d'urgence économique* by the present Leader of the Opposition who was the former Prime Minister. The country was set to be admitted in the ICU of the IMF. They had brainstormed exhaustively, but fell short of ideas to innovate. They failed in their programme ‘*anou redresse nou péi*’ as it was not as simple and easy as ‘*anou alle la mer*’ or ‘*anou alle cinema*’.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the time came for them to *anou alle faire face le pep*, we are all aware what was the outcome. On this side, we succeeded in our objective of *anou crée ène bon l'équipe* and we are here.

We set to task avec *toute rigueur nécessaire dans une situation catastrophique*. We have overhauled the economic system. We have given the right remedy, in adequate dosage and the necessary *convalescence*. Is it a mere coincidence that we have so many doctors on this side? We have succeeded in rehabilitating the economy after its *convalescence* in a deteriorating international context.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, economic experts across the world are left dumbfounded in the face of the unpredictability and volatility of the world economic situation.

We are also aware that the longstanding sources of vulnerability may suddenly become the focus of more severe economic and financial crisis. We will have to constantly re-evaluate, modify or even abandon some of the ways of doing business. We need to walk out of our *sentiers battus*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius will need to steer the changes in a direction that will be advantageous to its growth and development. But, this would be possible only if we have a properly tuned and consistent new trade, regional and global strategy which is part and parcel of our responses to the global challenges and new developments. Our endeavour is to bring Mauritius closer to international best practices and thus ensure that the economy keeps functioning optimally in the face of change. This is precisely what we have been doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have already started a whole process of comprehensive reforms to

introduce greater flexibility and agility in every sector of Mauritian economy. We are reforming the education and training system, to create a new breed of agile and skilled workforce.

The industrial sector is being revamped, to create greater preparedness within the business community, to respond more effectively to the challenges of the phasing out of the preference-based sheltered environment, be it through vertical integration or moving to the upper end of the market.

This Government has proved to be proactive, and we are transforming the whole business environment to effectively service economic operators and respond to the needs of a more demanding Mauritian society for cost-effective, timely and quality service. Bureaucratic procedures with regard to investment approvals are being further streamlined.

A new framework that provides a highly attractive regime for foreign and national investors has been developed. A second generation of reforms has been proposed to make the regulatory environment more transparent and less burdensome. Government's policies in this domain comprise facilitating issue of permits, simplifying appeals process, enhancing labour market flexibility, attracting skilled workers, and developing the knowledge hub in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 'Doing Business 2010', the latest flagship report from the IMF and World Bank, Mauritius has moved up the world's top 20 economies in the overall ease of doing business.

This Government has a programme and a mandate, but without the collaboration of our people, we might not have succeeded in covering so much ground in so difficult circumstances. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the citizens of this country deserve our admiration. In June this year, they collaborated with Government when those drawing salary above Rs12,000 had to forgo the salary compensation. Some of our friends on the other side have acknowledged in close quarters that this Government has been correct in taking bold decisions.

Our appreciation should also go to workers' representatives who have been sensitive to all our economic reforms, and they have collaborated to keep the working class at bay. We have successfully protected workers.

This year, our responsible trade unions agree that this Government should not deviate from the medium term goals, because of short term electoral gains. They agree that our reform initiatives initiated in 2006 should be sustained.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even the spokespersons of the private sector have not resisted the amount of salary compensation that they will have to pay, over and above the contribution towards the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very extraordinary case. I would say a unique situation. Those with a minimum level of honesty do concede that there may not be any country in the African continent, and even in other continents where Government, workers and the private sector happen to agree in the national interest. We should not forget that we have succeeded in creating a social cohesion, which is both visible and palpable, where others have failed. This is no little achievement, when we take into account the economic downturn due to the global credit crunch, and the adverse effects on insular economies relying on exports, tourists and foreign direct investment. Saying the contrary would amount to *un enfantillage politique*. Most of what I have heard from the other side seems to be just an argumentation. Nothing more!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can our friends deny these truths? When desperate workers in major economies are committing suicide, when major economic operators and industrial production units across the world are exiting from the playing field, when job insecurity is the order of the day, our small island economy has succeeded in saving jobs, protecting people and preparing for recovery. In this Budget, we propose to shape the recovery to accelerate job creation, consolidate social progress and sustain the Green Mauritius initiative.

We are realising all our goals, because we are ahead on the recovery path. And people in this country know that we will not back out. With a Prime Minister in the person of Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, this Government will not give precedence to any political agenda. Let others be with their politics in this special country where some people talk of *des élections anticipées* immediately after the proclamation of election results! We are sailing, and we have a captain on board! Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam is our captain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is sustaining all programmes initiated by us, and we are going towards an inclusive society. As I said last year, on this side, we have *un gouvernement qui a le 'coeur'*. All our bold economic measures are accompanied by a

comprehensive package of social measures, to protect those who happen to be off the mainstream for any reason. The people will appreciate that this Government will not leave them alone. The country knows that each time when Government is led by the Labour Party, schemes have been introduced to provide an adequate safety net for further consolidation of the Welfare State.

Similarly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this Budget we are again increasing provisions for the social protection for the elderly, widows, orphans and the disabled. We are not forgetting the poorest segment of the population, as we have innovative job placement and empowerment schemes that are being sustained in the interest of those unemployed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can anyone in this House recollect when, in this country's history, do we have had funds waiting for NGOs to come and collect on the basis of smartly presented projects for poverty alleviation? This Government has succeeded in creating the right dialogue with partners in the private sector. This partnership has generated some Rs700 m. It is available for use, provided we have good social or community development projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I note with much appreciation that this Budget makes mention, amongst other localities, of one poverty pocket in my constituency, known as "*lors pont*". Some 22 families of children of former workers of the Mon Loisir Sugar Estate have been living in precarious conditions for many long years. They are, in fact, squatters on land belonging to the sugar estate. It is this Government that is regularising their situation, and they will soon be proud owners of their house with all necessary amenities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the crisis is behind us now but, still, not too far behind. We cannot afford to sit back. The scars it has left in its wake will take time to heal, and this is why we need to continue the prescribed treatment until complete recovery. This Budget comes with the shoring up of key sectors of the economy, improving project realisation capacity in the public sector, business facilitation, employment relations, and good governance. To make the recovery a reality, public officers are being called upon, more than ever, to facilitate economic growth, and provide better and quality services to all our citizens and other stakeholders.

Before I proceed on what my Ministry has achieved during the year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to reiterate that this Government has been fair towards its employees, even when the economic tsunami was threatening our shores.

We have been true to our words. We implemented the recommendations of the PRB report in *toto* and paid end of year bonus in full.

My Ministry has introduced the Performance Management System, a strategic reform initiative which aims to improve the overall management of public organisation so as to improve delivery of public service to our citizens. The PMS ensures that the vision, mission and objectives of each and every Ministry and departments are clearly communicated and cascaded down to officers at various levels of the organisation so that there is a common sense of purpose and set the goal to achieve. PMS, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir is a key reform initiative that has been introduced by my Ministry cautiously after due consultation with stakeholders. It has required in depth sensitization and a change in mind set. With improve understanding as to its benefit; it has seen a growing commitment of officers at all levels across the Civil Service for its implementation. Slowly and surely it is going to make its way and will bear fruits in the years to come for the benefit of the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the same breath and in line with the vision of Government to develop a modern and efficient Public Service my Ministry has been promoting and encouraging Ministries and Department to adopt strategies which focus on improving good governance practices and ensuring an efficient high performing and customer oriented public service. These strategies are base on a total quality management frame work centered on building an ethical culture, a quality culture and quality customer care culture in the Public Service. In this context in May 2007 my Ministry came up with a revise *Code of Ethics* for public officers which explicitly sets down the standards of correct conduct expected of them. It seems to promote an ethical Civil Service by sensitizing public officers on their roles, responsibilities and obligations particularly with regards to the interaction with Members of the public.

This documentation is a vital tool for a modern Civil Service that aspires for greater accountability and transparency. Moreover, an ethics on line corner has been put in place to sustain this initiative. The ethics on line corner is an informative and focal point on ethics and provide easier access to an array of reference materials on ethics integrity management, corruption and other best practices. It is on my Ministry's website. To foster a quality culture within the civil service my Ministry has been providing assistance and guidance to public service organisations to achieve certification according to MS 9001, 2008 Quality Management Standards. So far, 28 public sector organisations have been certified to operate as per ISO

standards including critical public service delivery organisations, such as the Passport and Immigration Office and the companies division. Now passports are delivered within one week and company's registration certificates are delivered within 48 hours.

My Ministry is also actively implementing a scheme to enhance the level of customer services particularly at the level of Ministries and departments that deal directly and extensively with members of the public. User friendly guidelines on providing quality counter customer service have been published and widely distributed to public officers serving at counters in Ministries or departments. These have also been posted on the website of my Ministry for easy access and consultation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under this scheme since 2005 my Ministry finance some 52 projects to the tune Rs5.3 m. Projects included *inter alia* the setting up of an electronic search room for improved search facilities at the Registrar Generals Department, improving the counter services of the companies division and the re-organisation of the application and delivery sections of the main Civil Status Office at Emmanuel Anquetil building. As a monitoring mechanism to evaluate the level of public service delivery my Ministry introduce the Mystery Shopping Exercise as from August 2007. The key aspect of customer service such as staff behaviour, physical environment, the waiting experience and the actual service delivery are assessed. The main objective of this exercise is to improve these services. Our strength and weaknesses have been identified through the Mystery Shopping Exercise. The latter are addressed and customaries training parted to officers. The Mystery Shopping Exercise has already been conducted within 11 organisations providing critical services such as the Registrar Generals Department, the National Identity Card Unit and the Passport and Immigration Office. My Ministry has also launched the public service excellence award to encourage innovation and excellence in the delivery of public services. This award recognises innovative approach in the management and delivery of services at organisational level. This award is now a much awaited annual event to which all public organisation look forward. The public service excellence award 2009 has been launched this week in line with the *Maurice Île Durable* concept. The theme for the 2009 award is Sustainable Development Through Organisational Excellence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, organisational excellence cannot be sustained without capacity building. My Ministry has left no stone upturned in this area. Capacity building is an integral element of this process to ensure its successful implementation. Capacity involves both the

organisational and mental support to facilitate change in a sustainable way. It provides not only the necessary managerial competencies as well as the best practises but also create an enabling environment to begin the institutionalisations of a work-related performance culture in Government agencies.

We have since 2005 trained some 12 000 public officers from a wide range of grades in different areas. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with good governance being up held my Ministry has not neglected the area of welfare, health and safety. We all know that stress can have adverse effect on the health and performance of the worker. My Ministry through the public officer's welfare council organises each year a series of recreational, cultural, literary and social activities for the welfare of public officers and their families. The Health and Safety Unit of my Ministry is being reinforced to provide advice and training on health and safety issues right across the Civil Service. Furthermore, we have in line with Government commitment to bring greater transparency and accountability in the system set up, the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal that will provide opportunities to aggrieve public officers to make appeal against decision of the relevant services commissions. This has been possible by the passing of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal Act which has becomes operational since 1st June 2009. The establishment of the tribunal is another stalk evidence of this Government commitment to uphold good governance principals in the public administration.

A forward-thinking public service has been instrumental in devising policies which have allowed foreign investment, the lifeblood of the economy to flow in. Although it is not an easy task for a country like Mauritius to have been successful in attracting foreign direct investment to the tune of Rs30 billion following reforms in 2006 as stated by the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in his Budget speech with the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders, Mauritius has been able to improve its rank in ease of doing business in the world as stated earlier.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before ending, I would like to congratulate both the Prime Minister and the Vice-Prime Minister for having succeeded in coming up with a Budget that paves the way for stability in the medium term. This is a responsible Government and we are bent on providing for the right legacy for generations to come. We do, in fact, put people first.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Ms Deepalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. David rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Monday 30 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr X. L. Duval rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTER RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

(7.42 p.m.)

PRIEST PEAK TRACK – REINSTATEMENT

Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Husnoo, only a few minutes ago talked about the serious problem of diabetes in Mauritius in general, particularly in Constituency No. 3. I have received a request - hon. Dr. Husnoo has a copy as well as Minister Dulull - from a group of social workers from the area of La Paix Street to the effect that the Priest Peak track be reinstated. Hon. Bhagwan made a lot of efforts for the Dauguet as well as the Priest Peak. It is a jogging track where people can walk along these streets for improving their health. The request of the NGO is that the jogging track be reinstated so that they can benefit again; *c'est dans un état de décrépitude totale.*

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would look into the matter, but I would like to draw attention to vandalism in the area. There is no remnant of anything that we have done. I have visited the places myself. Everything has been stolen, so we have to start again.

At 7.45 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 30 November 2009, at 11.30 a.m.