



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 21 JUNE 2021

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 18 of 2021

Sitting of Monday 21 June 2021

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENT

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – CENTRALISED SERVICES TO GOVERNMENT - VOTE

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement. I wish to make an announcement regarding the Committee of Supply. The hon. Minister of Finance has made a request for the votes in regard to the Centralised Services of Government to be called out of turn, that is, immediately after the Committee would have considered the Vote of Expenditure for the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. I have acceded to his request.

Thank you.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL

(NO. X OF 2021)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): M. le président, permettez-moi au tout début de féliciter le ministre des Finances, l'honorable Dr. Renganaden Padayachy pour la présentation d'un budget que je qualifierai comme étant sérieux et courageux. Il a su naviguer dans une situation très difficile, en ayant à la fois réussie de préserver les acquis, surtout des plus vulnérables et à mettre en place une série de mesures pour assurer la relance. Je voudrais aussi le remercier pour le choix de la thématique, 'Mieux Ensemble', 'Better Together.' En effet, M. le président, les conditions difficiles dans lesquelles Maurice se retrouve, d'ailleurs

comme beaucoup d'autres pays, démontrent clairement que la sortie de cette crise ne peut se faire que lorsque nous regardons tous dans la même direction, que nous travaillons ensemble. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, *cette relance* will only be achieved through our togetherness.

En effet, par ces temps où l'incertitude nous taraude, où l'imprévu nous guette à tout moment et où on ne sait trop de quoi demain sera avec son lot de défis et d'enjeux, il nous faut démontrer une résilience, il nous faut affirmer cette capacité de remonter la pente et de prendre ces mêmes défis et enjeux à bras-le-corps et même de les convertir en opportunités. Cela, M. le président, requiert l'appui et l'effort de tout un chacun. Avec un futur aux conditions incertaines, un effort collectif et national est de rigueur. Il nous faut affronter et s'adapter à la nouvelle normalité ensemble. La reprise, la renaissance dépendra énormément sur cette capacité de travailler ensemble et sur cette résilience.

M. le président, on ne peut plus se fier sur les modèles conventionnels pour contenir les défis du jour. Puisqu'on parle de mesures novatrices, permettez-moi, M. le président, de commenter un sujet qui a été repris maintes fois durant les débats budgétaires dans cette Assemblée. Nous avons beaucoup entendu parler des R 25 milliards qui ont été transférés de la Banque de Maurice aux caisses de l'État.

Il y a eu plusieurs membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre qui se sont prononcés sur cette démarche. Mais la question que je me pose est celle-ci, M. le président, qu'est-ce qu'on s'attendait à ce que l'État fasse pendant une crise qui a presque anéanti le monde ?

Mr Speaker, Sir, everyone agrees that the environment generated by COVID-19 pandemic causes tremendous challenges to us all, and we must also recognize that it has equally revealed the real state of vulnerability in which many people now find themselves. Government has been fully alive to this issue and has responded timeously and effectively to it. Who can downplay the importance of rapidly introducing the Wage Assistance Scheme, the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme and the elaboration of a series of other programmes and measures to offer wider range of financial support to economic operators?

Who can question the *bien-fondé* of the creation of the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund; the door-to-door distribution of pensions and food packs; the repatriation of stranded Mauritians; *la prise en charge* of the State, of the Health Emergency Response Plan? It is not fair, Mr Speaker, Sir, to shoot disparaging arrows in all directions, hoping that this would sap the determination and the will of the Government, or in the hope that the morale, the confidence and the trust that the people have placed in this Government would break, but to

those who play such a game, Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll simply ask where would the vulnerable people at the end of the socio-economic ladder have been if the support hadn't been timely? What would they have done without any revenue?

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, everyone agrees that the COVID-19 pandemic management has been really effective in Mauritius and has been managed with great dexterity. We have had, the Prime Minister himself, Mr Speaker, Sir, chairing the Committees and ensuring that all help and support be provided to each Mauritian citizen.

M. le président, la démarche qui a permis le transfert de ces milliards de roupies à l'État a permis de soutenir les milliers d'employés du secteur hôtelier, les *self-employed* pendant des mois et après le confinement et a permis à ce que de nombreuses petites entreprises puissent survivre malgré les difficultés. Ce qu'il faut réfléchir, ce qu'il faut comprendre, M. le président, c'est que si ces mesures n'avaient pas été mises en place, il y aurait probablement une dégradation sociale et même l'exclusion sociale aurait pu être très, très difficile à contrer.

Il est trop facile de venir critiquer, M. le président, mais on s'attend à beaucoup plus de sérieux, de responsabilité et d'objectivité de la part des membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre. M. le président, dans cette situation, on ne pouvait faire rien d'autre que de venir rapidement aider ces familles qui avaient besoin d'être soutenues.

Nous savons tous que s'il y avait eu perte d'emplois, s'il y avait eu fermeture des petites entreprises, tout cela aurait définitivement mener à une instabilité sociale qui aurait compromis toute possibilité de relance économique post-COVID. Donc, qu'est-ce qui a primé pour ce gouvernement, pour nous, c'était et cela restera la préservation de la paix et de l'acquis social. Et est-ce une mauvaise décision ? Au risque de me répéter, M. le président, n'oublions surtout pas que différents gouvernements à travers le monde ont adopté des mesures inédites et non conventionnelles pour faire face aux défis qui ont surgis durant la pandémie. La France, l'Inde et d'autres sont venus avec des nouvelles formules innovantes pour contrer les effets de cette crise économique.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will appreciate the reasons for which I have had to state what I just have. It is to demonstrate that this Government is a caring one, who has at heart the interests of the people, especially those who are the most vulnerable. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is our moral responsibility to hold them under protective gown of Government.

M. le président, j'insiste sur le fait que l'encadrement des vulnérables doit être notre

premier *concern*. L'équité a toujours été au centre de nos préoccupations. Le principe d'équité reste dominant dans tout ce budget. Permettez-moi, M. le président, que je prenne quelques exemples concrets pour démontrer la véracité de le dire.

Dans le secteur de l'Agro-industrie, par exemple, les petits planteurs ont eu la possibilité d'avoir des emprunts d'ordre de R 100,000 *interest-free*. Ils ont des subsides d'un montant de près de 50% sur le coût des fertilisants. Nous ne pouvons pas oublier le *grant* alloué au *SEN schools*. La possibilité d'avoir un retour de 5% de la valeur de la maison ou de l'appartement acheté par les Mauriciens.

Ceci dit, M. le président, permettez-moi d'ouvrir une petite parenthèse pour démontrer que le gouvernement a toujours eu l'intérêt du peuple et du pays à cœur. Nous avons entendu plusieurs orateurs de l'autre côté de la Chambre, venir parler de vendetta politique. Je voudrais, M. le président, faire ressortir que vendetta politique, il n'y en a point. Je ne suis pas légiste, M. le président, ni ai-je une connaissance approfondie de la chose légale mais étant une citoyenne mauricienne qui ait pris conscience du *ruling* de la Cour suprême, il m'incombe d'insister sur le fait que la résiliation du contrat de Betamax était nécessaire et dans l'intérêt supérieur de l'État. Si vous prenez reconnaissance du *ruling* de la Cour Suprême, vous vous rendrez compte que le contrat était totalement contre l'intérêt du pays. *Totally skewed in favour of Betamax against the interest of the State Trading Corporation and hence, against the interest of the State and the people of this country.*

Et c'est extrêmement important que les gens se rendent compte que la résiliation de ce contrat était dans l'intérêt du pays. Je ne reviendrai pas sur la chose de l'arbitration, je ne parlerais pas du *commercial contract*, mais c'est tout juste pour moi de faire ressortir que toutes les décisions prises ont été, en gardant en tête l'intérêt de la République de Maurice.

M. le président, je parlais il y a quelques instants, de l'équité, celle-ci trouvait un ancrage important dans le domaine de l'éducation et c'est pourquoi je félicite mon collègue, le ministre des Finances pour avoir également misé sur l'éducation comme vecteur majeur pour le développement et pour l'innovation.

M. le président, l'éducation restera le vecteur majeur pour le développement économique et pour le bien-être social du peuple mauricien. La dotation budgétaire de mon ministère pour cette nouvelle année financière passe de R 15 à R 17 milliards.

And this, Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the COVID-19 imposed budgetary cuts which is only proper and eminently justifiable. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that education is a

costly enterprise and numerous countries bark at the idea of having to invest massively in it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Ministers throughout the world normally press for increased funding for education and this has been backed by the 2021 education finance watch issue which insists that countries will need to invest more in the education systems.

Mr Speaker, Sir, je voudrais là remercier l'honorable Dr. Padayachy pour avoir malgré la situation financière difficile alloué ce budget substantiel à mon ministère afin de promouvoir davantage l'équité et la qualité dans le système éducatif.

Let me start, Mr Speaker, Sir, with learners with special education needs. *Ce sont les enfants qui ont le plus besoin de notre soutien.* This Government has come up with a Special Education Needs Authority to ensure the holistic development of persons with special education needs in line with the Conventions of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Last year, we came with one off-grant to all SEN institutions to improve their infrastructure but this year, what do we see in this budget? We see the impetus of equity with large in so many actions.

Premièrement, we have increased the grant to NGOs running SEN education institutions Rs251 m. We have also made sure that there is an increase in the daily meal allowance to ensure that specific dietary requirements of learners with special needs are met.

The setting up of five SEN Resource and Development Centres will fulfil the caveated need for paramedical services to more learners seeking therapy. And we are also coming with the provision of braille notebooks, which is yet another welcome measure to support the visually impaired students.

M. le président, nous avons beaucoup fait. The infrastructural works in respect of barrier free access have been completed in 53 out of our 63 State Secondary Schools and our records demonstrate that when adequate support is provided, improvement in performance inevitably follows.

M. le président, la petite enfance est un stade de développement crucial pour établir la fondation, le fondement pour l'apprentissage et c'est le temps de l'exploration. C'est la période cruciale où l'enfant adopte un comportement favorable à l'apprentissage et c'est une phase déterminante dans la vie de l'enfant et qui va déterminer aussi sa réussite. Et cette phase cruciale est une phase qui a été considérée par ce Budget.

M. le président, nous avons pu augmenter la somme que nous allouons par tête d'élève aux écoles pré-primaires privées. Et ça passe à R 400 cette année-ci et cela bénéficiera plus de 22,000 élèves. M. le président, nous avons *122 private pre-primary schools and we have been providing the pedagogical tools and materials to upgrade their learning environment.*

In October 2020, every Pre-primary Unit of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA), including those in Rodrigues, had been equipped with digital devices to enhance administration of these pre-primary schools.

M. le président, ce Budget permet à l'ECCA de revoir sa structure. Nous en sommes passé de 2 zones d'éducation à 5 zones d'éducation au niveau du préscolaire et nous allons avoir cette fois-ci, dix coordonnateurs de plus que nous avions. Nous allons aussi pouvoir recruter dix assistants coordonnateurs et cela, afin de promouvoir la qualité de l'enseignement. *Quality Assurance remains a very important issue in education, Mr Speaker, Sir,* et ce budget nous permet de le faire.

Permettez-moi que je vous informe que mon ministère cette semaine-ci a signé une entente avec la CONFEMEN ainsi que the Bureau international de l'éducation de l'UNESCO. Cette entente vise à la mise en œuvre des activités de l'Observatoire de la qualité de l'Education, activités qui s'articulent autour de la collecte, le traitement et l'analyse des données et cela en lien avec les déterminants de la qualité dans le monde de la petite enfance. Cela comprend également l'échange d'information et de documentation, de bonnes pratiques ainsi que la réalisation d'actions conjointes.

M. le président, c'est une reconnaissance des actions entreprises dans ce domaine à Maurice, un modèle qui sera également disséminé parmi les membres signataires de cette entente, et au-delà, aux autres membres de la CONFEMEN. C'est bien de faire ressortir, M. le président, que l'île Maurice, au niveau de l'ADEA, est le *Inter-Country Quality Node* pour la petite enfance.

M. le président, toujours animé par le principe d'équité, le gouvernement a assuré que les enfants dans les familles qui se trouvent sur le *Social Register Mauritius*, aient d'autres facilités. Par exemple, le *Free Broadband Internet facilities* a été étendu pour une autre année à tous les familles éligibles et ceux qui sont sur le SRM. Tous les élèves de ces familles de la Grade 10 à monter, ont reçu des tablettes afin de combler l'écart digital.

Free optical glasses will be provided to students up to the age of 21. Payment of MITD exam fees for Financial Year 2021-2022 will be waived. *M. le président*, free sanitary

towels will be provided to students of Grades 6 to 13. I would like to stress a very important thing. I have heard here, in the National Assembly, people making fun of this measure. I think they do not realise *la portée de cette décision*. There are so many young girls coming from deprived areas who do not have access to such facilities and it is obviously, in this spirit of equity that the Minister came up with this measure which will be there for all our students and it is worth noting that even in Scotland, this measure has been adopted, recently this year.

Mr Speaker Sir, the quality dimension is extremely important. Let me highlight that alongside equity dimension, we also place a premium on quality of education but quality is not to be gaged exclusively in terms of delivery, student performance and exams results, important though these are. But there are two other dimensions that we need to keep in view as well. One of them is the Quality of Physical Resources and the other, the Quality of Human Resources. Allow me to elaborate.

Let us take the quality of physical resources. It is very important to give a facelift to our schools, be they in the pre-primary, primary or secondary sub-sector. Lest we forget, some schools date back to the colonial era and our schools should throw into the relief and showcase modern 21st Century school environments that support modern learning approaches.

We are committed to undertake the rebranding of many schools for the overall emotional, social and physical well-being of both the staff and the students. An upgrading and embellishment of our school infrastructure is in the pipeline. Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir, this has to be adopted in a phased manner and will start this year with 20 public pre-primary schools, 70 primary schools and 30 secondary schools, this very year.

We also have some Rs800 m. for the construction of a new school in Rivière du Rempart and the extension of 15 schools over the next three years to continue our reform process. And because we are keen on sustaining a maintenance culture policy, a Comprehensive Facility Maintenance Programme, led by Mauri-Facilities Management Company Ltd is being worked upon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are talking about infrastructural transformation, allow me to highlight to the House our determination to transform an area of Côte-d'Or into an education corridor. Delivering high quality tertiary education and requiring modern state of the art infrastructure. Thus, the corridor will house new campuses, the MIE, the Open University of Mauritius, the University of Technology Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Members, on the other side of the House had been hitting the table hard and querying about the development lined up for Côte-d'Or. They have been taxing this side of the House with sinister, ulterior motives.

Permettez-moi d'apporter, M. le président, un peu d'éclairage. Pourquoi Côte-d'Or, M. le président ? Tout simplement parce que ces terres, ces terrains choisis, appartiennent à l'État. D'ailleurs, le gouvernement souhaite faire de Côte-d'Or un secteur dynamique et à Côte-d'Or, nous avons déjà *the sport facilities of high calibre*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Côte-d'Or sera un secteur dynamique avec un *Education hub*. Je viens de citer les institutions qui seront là-bas mais aussi *the Academy Of Education, Professional*. M. le président, nous voulons que notre centre de savoir soit reconnu et c'est pourquoi que le *Technology Park* de Côte d'Or abritera aussi l'UTM. Nous envisageons de nous positionner sur le plan régional, voire même international.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is unanimity across the world that the quality of education provided is directly proportional to the skills and delivery capacity of teachers. Indeed, the role of a teacher assumes great significance if we are to improve the quality of educational interventions and this delivery of high quality outcomes can only be leveraged through the building and reinforcing of the professional capacity of Teachers. We have, Mr Speaker, Sir, set up the Academy for Education Professionals and we have been starting a major training of all the education cadres. One of the sub-sectors where there is a crying need for capacity building is undoubtedly the Early Childhood Education one. Accordingly, I warmly welcome the allocation of the Budget of funds to build teachers' professional competencies and skills.

We all know that the conventional system of training imposes limitations when numbers are concerned and now we shall be embarking on a massive online professional development program, without compromising quality. Obviously, the other sub sectors are also on our dashboard. The early signs of efficacy of the Academy of Education Professionals are already there and we will build upon these early successes. We have, through the Academy, trained our heads of primary schools and several capacity building workshops have been held to enhance our school leadership.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I said at the beginning of my intervention that the Budget presented by the hon. Minister demonstrates the will of Government to consolidate the gains in the education system but to consolidate but also to add to these gains *et cela passe à travers la provision budgétaire afin de pouvoir investir dans le recrutement des ressources humaines*

comme on le dit très souvent, il devient primordial d'aligner ces ressources sur les besoins spécifiques de l'école. C'est dans cette optique qu'on va s'engager dans une mobilisation de ressources humaines dans les différents sous-secteurs de l'éducation et ainsi pour améliorer l'assurance qualité dans tout le secteur.

Au niveau du cycle primaire, le recrutement des Library Officers fait déjà l'unanimité. Comme on le sait, la bibliothèque est un centre focal d'une école et la lecture est certainement l'une des pièces maîtresse pour inculquer la connaissance et développer une culture de lecture et promouvoir une connaissance générale chez les jeunes et c'est pourquoi il ne faut guère prendre à la légère les R 500 allouées pour l'achat des livres pour les jeunes. Il y a l'effet multiplicateur qui prime, M. le président. Chaque livre acheté pourrait aussi être échangé et partagé parmi les étudiants de la classe. M. le président, l'une des mesures phares du programme de réformes, a toujours été de prévenir le cumul du déficit d'apprentissage dès un jeune âge.

Ainsi a été lancé le projet tellement bien reçu le *Early Support Programme*. Comme on le sait, M. le président, ce projet facilite le *catching up*, la remise à niveau des apprenants ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage. 211 *Support Teachers* sont déjà là, actifs dans le cycle primaire, s'occupant des jeunes élèves parce que nous croyons que le plus tôt nous arriverons à récupérer ses élèves, le mieux sera pour eux. Avec le potentiel de 235 nouvelles recrues, on va pouvoir se permettre de rendre pérenne ce programme et progressivement l'étendre à travers le primaire. M. le président, *what we are doing is to put an end to the trend of the accumulation of learning deficits that have become ingrained in the system.*

M. le président, permettez-moi de répondre à quelques points avancés par l'honorable, 2^{ème} membre de Grand-Baie/Poudre d'Or, l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad. Il nous parlé des élèves du Extended Programme qu'il considérait comme étant totalement incapable de pouvoir faire face au curriculum présenté. M. le président, il nous disait que c'était improbable que ces élèves réussissent. Il venait nous dire que rien n'a été fait pour eux. Il parlait, il brandissait devant la Chambre le rapport que lui appeler le rapport du World Bank. Laissez-moi répondre à l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad.

M. le président, ce rapport a été commandité par le ministère. Nous avons commencé la réforme et après 2 ans, il nous fallait savoir comment l'implémentation se faisait si jamais il fallait revoir certaines choses ou pas. *It was a report of a formative nature. We wanted to*

know how the implementation is going on and if ever we needed to review certain things or not.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad* was stating that –

- (a) the students were not being given support;
- (b) the report mentioned that there was no training for the teachers;
- (c) we had no connection with the parents, some of them were extremely weak, and
- (d) the curriculum had to be reviewed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, he stated that the report was in some drawers somewhere, totally incorrect, Mr Speaker, Sir! He comes here and says things but he should at least, Mr Speaker, Sir, try and get the information before coming and making statements in this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what has been done, we have had additional support as from August 2020 through the National Empowerment Fund, we have been getting additional support for students in the Extended Program (EP). We have been supporting them. As from July this year, we are having a special program to involve the parents as well in the education of the children. It has not been put in a drawer, Mr Speaker, Sir, and it has to be clear, we sought the assistance of the World Bank to follow us, the technical assistance of the World Bank to carry out this work and it was carried out by the MIE. Mr Speaker, Sir, he should have commended us for having done that. We did not come up with a reform without taking care to see whether it was being implemented correctly and this is what we have been doing. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, people need to be careful and need to do some research before coming and making statements in this august Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to come back to the Budget, let me assure the House that we want our schools to achieve their core business, that is, to become a place where learning actually takes place.

M. le président, le ministre de l'Éducation nationale de la République Française, M. Blanquer, avait trouvé à dire que l'avenir du pays se joue sur ce qui se passe à l'école et je pense que nous autres, nous sommes en train de retravailler, de réinventer nos écoles parce que nous voulons que chaque élève qui entre dans le système sorte de là avec une réussite. C'est ce que nous voulons faire.

M. le président, we must also welcome the recruitment of the cohort of 34 additional Educational Psychologists. The significance of having such personnel is obvious. These specialists are called upon to provide any psychosocial intervention needed. They provide guidance and support to learners. They will provide counselling and care to our children, those who are experiencing learning, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. *M. le président*, nous avons au ministère de l'Éducation l'Emotional and Social Well-being of the Learner Programme et nous allons pouvoir aider et encadrer mieux ces enfants.

Je dois dire, M. le président, que nous avons remarqué qu'il y a eu une augmentation dans le nombre d'élèves demandant ce soutien psychologique et surtout durant le confinement, les *Educational Social Workers*, les *Educational Psychologists* avaient beaucoup à faire pendant cette période.

Our records show that the number of cases attended by the Educational Psychologists is taking an upward trend and the additional Psychologists will be welcomed appendage to an existing professional corps. Talking of psychological support reminds me, Mr Speaker, Sir, of one of the cardinal thrust areas of our education reform agenda. We have made it a matter of huge importance to see to the enhancement of emotional, social, physical and moral wellbeing of our learners as inherent to their holistic development. I have had the opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to highlight some of them in this very House, a number of times but I would like to state, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the holistic teachers recruited in the previous Budget have been doing an extremely interesting work in the primary schools and again, to reply to what the hon. Dr. Gungapersad had stated, he was saying and wondering whether the students in our primary schools do have access or are exposed to music or to drama? Obviously he has not done his homework. Our holistic teachers have been doing that, we have introduced a communication skills in our primary schools and it is really with pride that we see our young children in the primary schools moving onto the stage and expressing themselves beautifully.

In fact, when we look at the results of the PSAC, we find that the proficiency level in languages has increased enormously. Mr Speaker, Sir, *il a aussi parlé du programme de natation scolaire*. Let me briefly edify the hon. Second Member of Grand Baie/Poudre D'or who seems to, you know, be unaware of anything that is happening in our schools. He has got it all wrong. *La Natation Scolaire* Programme is not still in the starting blocks, Mr Speaker, Sir. Quite the contrary! It had been initiated in 2017 in Grade 4 in 20 schools and it has now

been rolled out in all Grade 4 classes in all our primary schools. In education, it helps to keep oneself updated, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially if we want to comment on that sector.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is coming up with two other programmes: The 'Healthy and Supportive School Environment' initiative, which will be introduced to provide a safe, drug-free, violence-free and gender-violence-free environment in our secondary schools. Funds have been provided in this Budget to implement this initiative.

Nous misons aussi beaucoup, M. le président, sur le *Outdoors Education Programme*. Ça, c'est un programme que j'ai à cœur, parce que, M. le président, nous nous rendons compte que nos jeunes ont beaucoup d'informations à travers les réseaux sociaux, surtout de ce qui se passe autour du monde. Mais, combien d'entre eux savent vraiment ce qu'il y a chez nous ? Je pense que le *Outdoors Education Programme* va permettre à ces jeunes de développer une relation positive avec leur environnement immédiat. *And we should be clear about the significance.*

M. le président, je venais de dire qu'il y a plein de choses qu'on aurait voulu voir nos enfants connaître et qu'ils ne savent pas déjà. Ils ignorent beaucoup sur leur environnement immédiat.

The Outdoors Education Programme is meant to be an incursion that facilitates an awareness of our cultural heritage, of sites, in brief, of the patrimony that is theirs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, il est grand temps que nos jeunes arrivent à connaître la biodiversité qui existe au Black River Gorges. Il est grand temps qu'ils connaissent l'histoire du pays à travers des sites dans le pays et je pense qu'il est grand temps aussi pour que nous arrivions avec un programme pour écrire l'histoire moderne de ce pays.

I believe it is absolutely vital for our young learners to know the history of this country, that they familiarise themselves with the environmental issues that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Mauritius is subject to, that they learn about our bio-diversity, how it has to be safeguarded. They learn about our ocean and environment. Only then, will they be well-rounded individuals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to help facilitate the link between, and an understanding of the past, present and future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot today escape a glaring reality that has made in-roads in our very teaching and learning processes. I am referring here to technology-mediated

learning. I have said it in the past and don't mind repeating it: the digitalization of education is here to stay. It has proved to be more than a spin-off or an offshoot of COVID-19. It has, in fact, become the saviour. Witness the reliance upon technology across the world to ensure learning continuity.

Blended, as we also call it, Hybrid Learning is the new name of the game. My Ministry intends to introduce a blended mode of teaching and learning for students of all Grades, starting with a pilot project in Grade 7 in 2021 in some 12 schools.

On the other hand, the Early Digital Learning Programme (EDLP) project is being extended to Grade 5 and will cover the whole primary cycle in the coming years.

M. le président, laissez-moi vous dire que l'année dernière nous étions en période de confinement et que quelques retards ont pu avoir lieu dans certaines écoles mais toutes les tablettes étaient là, l'électrification de toutes les écoles était déjà prête ; alors, là aussi, je pense que c'est vraiment malsain de venir dire des choses qui ne sont pas exactes.

M. le président, we are also going to have the deployment of wireless local area network in 155 secondary schools in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Our efforts towards making e-learning a reality are bound to meet with the success they deserve.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to make a brief incursion into Technical and Post-secondary education. As the House is aware, education reform advocates a system with a diverse set of seamless pathways for horizontal and vertical mobility. The idea is to create opportunities for students to enter high-skilled and high-demand technical and technological careers.

In this context, my Ministry has, under its aegis, six Technical Education Centres and a new Bill has been introduced in the National Assembly for the establishment of the Institute of Technical Education and Technology to manage these Technical Education Centres.

The branding of Technical and Technology Education as a viable education pathway has not been forgotten. Thus, a new building will be constructed with the state-of-the-art facilities in replacement of the Sir Rampersad Neerunjun Technical Education Centre at Ebène and a state-of-the-art Technical Education Centre for a capacity of 700 seats is being set up at Beau Vallon and is expected to be completed by mid-2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd (PML) had been set up to spearhead the modernisation and rebranding of the Technical Education Sector.

Since its three and half years of operation, it has more than successfully attained its strategic goals, which was that of having more than 2,000 students by 2020. Currently, the population stands at 2,300 students.

Comment expliquer cet engouement, M. le président, c'était exactement notre but. Nous voulions que les jeunes optent pour une formation poussée. Et, je me souviens que les mauvaises langues pensaient que le système polytechnique n'allait jamais prendre son envol, vu la stigmatisation attenante. Je me souviens aussi qu'on avait que 60 étudiants en *Nursing* quand on avait démarré ce programme, et aujourd'hui nous parlons de plus de deux mille étudiants.

Egalement, une diversité de programmes a été élaborée. Ainsi, 23 diverse academic programmes have been elaborated to ensure skilling, reskilling and upskilling, and right skilling through short industry-focused programmes or internationally recognised and awarded programmes at Diploma and Bachelor's level. These programmes aim at supplying manpower to sectors that are undergoing growth or are mushrooming and need immediate skilled employees.

What matters most, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the students know that there is no such thing as a ceiling, as a dead end for technical education. They can now enjoy the possibilities that are diverse as part of their lifelong learning endeavours.

New programmes have been launched targeting students opting for technical education. With the objective of making middle-management labour force diverse, skilled and competent, courses at PML will now include the emerging clusters, namely –

- a) Health Sciences;
- b) Specialised Nursing;
- c) Ocean Sector;
- d) Precision Engineering;
- e) Aviation, and
- f) Emerging Technologies, such as AI, Cloud Computing and Game Development.

We can all rest assured that Polytechnics Education will be strengthened in line with the skill needs of our evolving economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the Higher Education context. This Government came up with a landmark policy whereby Free Tertiary Education became a reality for the first time for all those following a first diploma and a degree programme.

The House would wish to know that, from January 2019 to date, 26,451 students have benefitted from the scheme and an amount of Rs1.2 billion has already been disbursed up to May 2021.

Let it also be known that a major reorientation of the tertiary education is in the pipeline. The rationalisation of tertiary education programmes will reduce fragmentation and duplication in the sector.

M. le président, je voudrais aussi faire ressortir que la *MIE*, qui avait reçu son *Degree Awarding Status* il y a quelques années de cela, a commencé plusieurs programmes, et cette année-ci, leur *first cohort of BEd for Primary Educators* va sortir avec leur degré.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government wanted equally to democratise access to educational resources. So, my Ministry is working on an Open Educational Resources Policy. An Open Educational Resources Repository will be set up, where students will get open access to quality educational materials.

Again, to support online learning at the higher education level, the University of Mauritius, the University of Technology and *l'Université des Mascareignes* will invest in an e-Learning Management System. This has been a wishful scoring point for hon. Dr. Gungapersad, but I am afraid that, as elsewhere, he got it all wrong. Our higher education institutions have developed strong ties with the world of business and industry. The collaboration goes into the design and development of programmes, the consolidation of placement programmes and specially in inculcating the principle of employability.

Do you realise, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in many cases, at Polytechnics Mauritius, for example, work opportunities are already offered to students even before they graduate. And please, let us not hop constantly on the need to inculcate soft skills in our learners. This is already being done in practically all teaching and learning programmes. Have we not heard of something called graduate attributes and let me inform hon. Members that all students of polytechnics have a common module on soft skills.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words of the transformation of Mauritius into a knowledge hub. Working alongside the EDB, we want to promote Mauritius as a study destination for international students. The possibilities are immense, our bilingualism in 2

international languages, the safe and secure environment Mauritius provides and especially our proximity to the African continent, and to countries that carry a rich potential of young persons eager to secure internationally recognised qualifications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, many renowned universities have been working with the University of Mauritius and others to ensure that programmes can be offered in Mauritius.

What should I say about the cultural richness of Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, we offer a unique possibility for students from abroad to come and participate actively in the interculturality that exists in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the higher education sector is and continues to remain a high income generator. Countries like Australia and Canada have demonstrated their ability to leverage on higher education for boosting up their GDP. We, in Mauritius, cannot allow ourselves to pass over this opportunity. So, we are taking matters one step further. We want Mauritius to be also seen as a destination to study, work, invest and live. Already some 3,500 foreign students are studying in Mauritius. And many of them have expressed their wish to be allowed to spend a few hours' work on a weekly basis. This budget makes provision for fulfilling that wish. Thus, international students will benefit from 20 hours of work permit per week and ten year renewable young professional occupation permit upon graduation, if asked for.

There should not be any fear or apprehension about that measure. We will ensure it is a win-win situation for all parties concerned. Our DNA does not allow us to be xenophobic about this. After all we should not forget we are all descendants of immigrants. Thus, while these students will secure the opportunity to earn their keep, our country's too stands to gain. After all, we need professional expertise, wherever they come from.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need a critical mass of young people to bolster and boost our economy. The fact remains that we do have a declining and aging population and that puts at risk the capacity to replenish, if we may say so, our human pool. Our placement index level is only of an order of 1.37. But it also means that we have to attract students, attract people to Mauritius, to be able to do that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I could go on and take so many other measures that this budget highlights for the education sector. I could talk about the boost to research, the consequent development of knowledge, etc. But I would much rather briefly expatiate on some of the

major lessons we have drawn in the education sector through the unanticipated repercussions caused by COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the country has been caught in the throes of the pandemic that caused us to look for ways and means to try to come out of it unscathed. In fact, it has not been possible for us like for even other countries that are at higher level of development than we are. But COVID has taught us a significant lesson. It has developed in us the power to adapt, to be resilient and to face the odds. There are many cases that could illustrate this. Thus almost overnight, we have started depending on more and more upon digital means to work from home, to ensure educational continuity through the gradual adoption of the habit formed of learning, and to usher in e-commerce to a greater extent. The education sector was severely buffeted but we know for a fact, we had to train teachers to use digital technology for the conduct of classes and that too, during the lockdown period.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me before ending, just state two important things. We have had to review our school calendar; we have had to postpone our examinations, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have managed to do it. And I am glad to state that we did it nicely. In spite of the fact that there were some people who went out of their way to discourage our students, to ask people to desist from doing the invigilation and we know that even at the eve of the exams, some people went on radio stating that 50% of the invigilators have declined to work; stating that the computer system – the digital system at the MES – is no longer working – *toutes sortes de faussetés, M. le président*, but still we managed to do it.

They were saying that exams should be postponed. Postponed to when? No one could say. If only any one of them could come and tell me this is the right time, then we could even have thought about it. But there was so much of negative positioning, people saying all sorts of things and yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have completed the exams. We have completed the corrections. The results are out; admission for the next year has started.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to tell people who keep on coming up with negative views to think about our children first.

M. le président, nous avons toujours travaillé afin de s'assurer que les élèves sortent de là gagnants. Mais je voudrais aussi dire, chapeau aux élèves et aux parents. It was gratifying to see the trust of parents in the system. The large majority went along the way with the new parameters and the change in environment. It is this trust, Mr Speaker, Sir, that keeps us going.

On a entendu, M. le président, beaucoup de commentaires sur le système éducatif ; les gens qui sont venus nous dire que rien n'a changé, que la réforme n'a rien apporté de meilleur, que ce serait mieux de rester dans la pagaille qu'on était dans le passé. Et nous avons pu, M. le président, revoir la compétition à outrance qui existait au niveau de la CPE. We have done away with the CPE. We have PSAC; we have seen our students sitting for the NC exams without any pressure. Out of a cohort of 10,000, only 4,800 went for the competition. Il n'y avait pas de compétition à outrance. Nos jeunes avaient choisi d'aller pour la compétition et ils ont bien fait. Et en plus, nous avons vu que tous les collèges régionaux ont eu des résultats très intéressants et que les élèves qui sont passés dans les académies viennent de toutes les écoles à travers l'île ; tous les collèges régionaux.

M. le président, les académies seront fonctionnelles avec un management différent, avec un *Board of Governors*. Nous avons tellement fait. Nous voulons que le *learning outcomes improve* et nous voulons que tout le système que nous avons mis en place arrive à booster le *self-esteem* de nos élèves; les meilleurs comme les moins bons. Notre système d'académie a été décrié.

Nous voulons des académies parce que quand nous parlons d'équité, nous parlons d'équité pour ceux qui sont les plus vulnérables ; pour ceux qui ont besoin de notre soutien mais aussi pour ceux qui sont très bons et qui ont aussi besoin de notre soutien pour leur permettre d'aller encore plus loin et de faire encore mieux.

M. le président, avant de terminer, je voudrais ajouter un mot pour dire que contrairement à ce que l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad disait, le World Bank a parlé du *Extended Programme, the Credible Programme* et a parlé de beaucoup de bonnes choses, et a parlé de comment les élèves ont eu leur *self-esteem boosted*, et comment nous allons dans la bonne direction.

M. le président, c'est important que je dise cela parce que les honorables membres de l'Opposition doivent savoir que quand ils parlent des recommandations du rapport ; ces recommandations-là sont en train d'être mises en œuvre. M. le président, réformer un système n'est pas chose facile, surtout une réforme dans le secteur de l'éducation. Il a fallu que tous les maillons de la chaîne travaillent de concert afin d'établir le plan d'action et de veiller à ce que tout le monde soit *onboard* avant d'arriver à accomplir cette tâche.

De ce fait, le personnel de l'éducation a abattu un travail remarquable et aujourd'hui nous avons pu, après l'organisation des examens du *PSAC* et de la *NCE*, passer à l'autre étape de notre réforme, le début des académies.

M. le président, l'éducation de nos enfants doit rester au-dessus de la politique et on devrait éviter toute démagogie. Aujourd'hui, il est clair que nous sommes sur la bonne voie. Face à un monde qui change, il vaut mieux penser comme on le dit aux améliorations du changement, que de changer le pansement comme l'a si bien dit Francis Blanche, un acteur français. Chose qu'on a su exécuter et cela avec le support indéfectible de mes collègues et surtout du Premier ministre, qui a toujours soutenu nos efforts, qui a toujours été là de nos côtés.

Le Premier ministre, en tant que ministre des Finances initialement, au début de la réforme, nous a donné tout le soutien, tous les moyens financiers pour réaliser cette réforme. La réforme, M. le président, a été certainement un challenge pour les acteurs du secteur de l'éducation, mais je dois encore une fois les féliciter, les acteurs tout comme les parents et les enfants de notre système. M. le président, je dois dire une chose de plus, nous avons eu cette année-ci 400 demandes des élèves venant des écoles privées payantes pour qu'ils entrent dans le système public et c'est pour cela que je viens dire que tout ce qu'on nous a raconté sur le fait que la demande devient de plus en plus élevée pour les écoles payantes n'est pas vraie, M. le président. M. le président, je saisis l'occasion pour remercier tous les acteurs du secteur de l'éducation pour tout le travail effectué durant ces années dans la mise en place de cette réforme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to conclude by paying tribute to the late Sir Anerood Jugnauth for the president and Prime Minister of the Republic. He has been a source of inspiration for many of us. When I was entrusted with the portfolio of education, I knew that I had in him somebody I could rely upon to bring such an ambitious reform to fruition. And it was always his unwavering conviction that education is the most powerful leverage to take the country to new heights. To this great and noble soul, I would like today to say "Thank you, Sir," on behalf of all the children of the Republic.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo!

(12.30 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): *Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.* M. le président, mes chers collègues du gouvernement, mesdames et messieurs les députés, je constate que les débats portant sur la loi des Finances cette année, ont offerts, et je le regrette, un spectacle affligeant d'une opposition toutes tendances confondues, se surpassant dans l'art de la démagogie pour ne voir que du négatif dans le discours du budget de mon collègue, le ministre des Finances.

Mais plus encore, nous avons vécu une situation absolument grotesque, surréaliste, de par laquelle l'opposition a feignit d'ignorer les deux faits marquants de notre époque ; d'une part la pandémie de la Covid-19 et d'autre part la récession économique qui en résulte. Pratiquement, tous les discours mais je me réfère essentiellement au discours des trois chefs de file ; du leader de l'opposition, du leader du MMM et du chef de file du Parti travailliste, l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell. Permettez quand même que j'ouvre une parenthèse ici pour dire mon regret que l'alliance PMSD, MMM, Nando Bodha ait choisi de ne pas être présent ce matin.

Nous sommes dans un moment extrêmement grave pour notre pays, nous débattons de la loi des finances qui va dicter les priorités en termes de dépenses budgétaires pour la nouvelle année. Il y a, M. le président, à mon avis des règles élémentaires de la démocratie parlementaire à observer. Le devoir de la majorité, c'est d'être à l'écoute de l'opposition et samedi soir bien que le leader du MMM soit intervenu aux petites heures du matin, nous étions là à l'écouter avec attention, avec patience et aujourd'hui au moment de la clôture des débats où interviendra tout à l'heure le Premier ministre, ceux-là choisissent de ne pas être présent et je demande à l'opinion publique de les juger. C'est la culture du *walk-out* qui revient et qui fait qu'il y a une absence totale de courtoisie vis-à-vis de la majorité et un manquement grave en ces temps de crise.

Je remercie les députés du Parti Travailliste qui ont fait le choix différent d'écouter la majorité ce matin. Mais je disais, M. le président, pour revenir à mon propos, que ce qui m'a étonné c'est qu'en écoutant les discours des honorables députés Duval, Bérenger et Dr. Boolell, il n'y ait pratiquement pas mention qui est faite de la pandémie et de la crise économique. Ces mêmes discours auraient pu avoir été prononcés, il y a un an, il y a deux ans, il y a trois ans, il y a quatre ans, que sais-je et l'on pourrait ne pas remarquer que nous sommes en plein pandémie de la Covid, en pleine récession économique. J'ai demandé à mes collaborateurs de faire un *word check*, comme vous le savez, on peut le faire sur un document

Word. Combien de fois la pandémie de la Covid-19 a-t-elle été mentionnée par ces trois orateurs ?

Quelquefois par le leader de l'opposition, essentiellement dans une perspective comptable ou pour se référer à une remontée de la Covid, une seule fois par M. le député Arvin Boolell, et zéro pour M. le député Paul Bérenger. Mention de la crise économique, de la récession sans précédent que nous vivons, elle est pratiquement totalement absente des discours que nous avons entendu et pourtant, M. le président, la pandémie est une réalité qui a touché plus de 178 millions de personnes sur la planète, qui en a tué près de 4 millions, bouleversant nos sociétés, remplissant nos hôpitaux jusqu'au point de saturation.

Je ne vais que citer un éditorial paru dans *India Today* dans sa livraison du 11 janvier 2021 –

“In terms of the upheavals it has caused, Covid-19 is on a par with transformative catastrophes such as the Second World War and, more recently, 9/11. A turning point would be too mild to describe what the pandemic did to us in 2020. For behind us is a past we can never return to. The virus has, without doubt, changed forever the world as we knew it. We all walk around like masked bandits, and think nothing of it any more. 2020 is, in fact, the dawn of the Covid-19 era.”

Et même à Maurice, nous comptons, je parle sous la correction du ministre de la Santé, quelque 1700 cas depuis l'année dernière et 18 morts, des milliers envoyés en quarantaine, deux périodes de confinement condamnant au chômage forcé les travailleurs indépendants, les rendez-vous, les interventions dans nos hôpitaux reportés. Au sein de chaque foyer, les gens, je parle de 2020 surtout, allant se coucher le soir la peur au ventre. Donc, pour toute personne ayant le moindre bon sens, la moindre notion de ce qui se passe il serait évident que la donne a changé, que le contexte social n'est plus le même obligeant à repenser notre manière de vivre en tout et pour tout. Ici même, à l'Assemblée, regardons nous nous tenant à distance les uns des autres, discourant masqués, ayant interdit l'accès au public par manque de place.

Government is bluffing hon. Dr. Boolell? Ne comprenons-nous pas que nous vivons des moments sans précédent depuis plus d'un siècle que ce choc sociétale requiert de chacun de nous un sursaut patriotique pour ne plus réfléchir uniquement en tant que travaillistes, de militants, de PMSD, de MSM, mais en tant que mauricien, en tant qu'humain. En témoignant de cette obsession oppositionnelle des critiques sans cesse rabâcher d'années en années, de

budgets en budgets, avec une agressivité tentée de haine, les provocations débouchant sur une violence indigne de ce Parlement, comme en témoignent les plaisanterie de mauvais goût, les provocations de jeudi dernier à la salle à manger de l'Assemblée nationale ou alors la tentative de M. le député Armance et j'aurais préféré qu'il soit là, la tentative de faire de la politique de bas étage en formulant de graves allégations à l'encontre du député Nuckcheddy ; au lieu immédiatement de partager ces appréhensions avec vous, M. le président ou avec le secrétariat de l'Assemblée. Comment s'étonné dès lors du sentiment de dégoût au sein d'une partie de l'opinion publique, de cette désaffection par rapport à la politique.

Mais, M. le président rappelons les faits, les faits c'est que la Covid-19 a fait énormément de dégâts dans notre pays. Heureusement, qu'il y a eu la réaction vigoureuse du gouvernement mené par le Premier ministre prenant appui sur un système de santé robuste et de notre longue expérience du traçage des contacts depuis le temps du paludisme, qui est parvenu l'année dernière à stopper l'avancée du virus. S'ensuit alors une longue période qui pour les épidémiologies relèvent presque du miracle, huit longs mois sans aucun cas documenté au sein de la communauté. Mais l'espace aérien tout en étant fermé, permettait l'arrivée surtout de mauriciens en détresse à l'étranger. Entre mars de l'année dernière et mars de cette année, il y a plus de 20,000 arrivés à Maurice. Et j'aurais pris comme témoin le ministre Bodha qui a travaillé dans cet effort de rapatriement des Mauriciens, et aujourd'hui, je m'étonne qu'il cautionne les dires de M. Uteem qui vient alléguer que c'est parce que, justement, nous avons fait venir des gens, que la Covid-19 a réapparu à Maurice. Le virus est toujours avec nous depuis mars 2021 ; plus d'un millier de Mauriciens, mais heureusement un chiffre bien moindre, qui ont nécessité une hospitalisation à l'ENT et beaucoup de guéris.

Pour vous dire ce qui s'est passé, je citerai quelqu'un dont on ne peut accuser d'être de l'*Alliance Morisien*, M. Philippe Forget, s'exprimant dans le *Business Magazine* du 26 mai, qui vient nous dire –

« La bonne nouvelle est de souligner que 80 % des cas de contaminations suffisamment graves pour requérir une admission à l'hôpital proviennent des personnes non vaccinées soit d'individus rendus susceptibles par des comorbidités. De plus, deux tiers des cas de contaminations identifiées n'affichent que de simples symptômes ou aucun symptôme du tout. »

Donc, la politique du gouvernement est en train de marcher, les statistiques de l'OMS sont éloquentes à des fins de comparaison le nombre de cas, allons dire les cas de décès est

calculé par millions d'habitants et Maurice serait, à partir des données qui me sont disponibles, parmi les meilleurs. Par millions de cas de la Covid-19, Maurice compte 14 décès en comparaison avec –

- (a) 244 pour la Réunion ;
- (b) 978 pour l'Afrique du Sud ;
- (c) 1,693 pour la France, et
- (d) 1,876 pour la Grande-Bretagne.

La gestion de la crise sanitaire pilotée par le Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal est saluée par tous sauf l'opposition, bien évidemment. Les statistiques de l'OMS démontrent une performance nous plaçant parmi les pays les plus sûrs au monde. Des facteurs de succès outre un système de santé doté d'infrastructures et d'un nombre de soignants digne d'un pays développé, accessible à tous, la gratuité des soins dans le public, outre cette longue expérience de traçage à laquelle j'ai fait référence, Maurice a bénéficié d'une action prompte et résolue de la part du gouvernement mené par Pravind Jugnauth.

Qu'en dit l'OMS –

“Mauritius is among the few countries in the world which has been able to contain COVID-19.”

Qu'en dit le FMI –

“Mauritius has been successful in containing the COVID-19 pandemic so far thanks to strict health measures. Building on the country's strong public health, your authorities were able to rapidly contain outbreaks by implementing extensive testing, robust contact tracing and strict isolation of all suspected and confirmed cases and maintaining masks requirements in all public places.”

Qu'en dit la Banque mondiale ? –

“It is a cruel historical irony that Mauritius reached the High-Income milestone during one of the worst years in its history. Mauritius delivered a highly successful health response to the global COVID-19 pandemic through a hard lockdown and subsequent quarantine measures and as a result has been effectively ‘COVID-19 free’ from April 2020 to March 2021, when a second outbreak occurred. With a total of

1246 cases and 17 deaths, Mauritius has so far been able to avoid the large-scale health crisis observed in many other countries.”

Le *Senior Country Economist* de la Banque mondiale s'exprimant dans *Business Magazine* nous dit –

« Je pense que les Mauriciens méritent d'être félicités pour la gestion sanitaire de l'urgence de la Covid-19. Maurice a surmonté la pandémie mieux que la plupart des autres pays du monde. C'était impressionnant dans être le témoin direct au cours de l'année dernière. »

M. Pitot, au nom de l'AHRIM, l'Association des Hôteliers, est venu nous dire en janvier, publiquement, que les hôteliers réalisent que le gouvernement avait raison dans sa stratégie l'an dernier. Et donc je souhaiterais, ici, saluer tous ces héros de la santé publique et leur capitaine le Dr. Jagutpal pour le travail extraordinaire accompli face à cette pandémie. *Is the Government bluffing, Dr. hon. Boolell?*

Deuxième fait marquant de notre époque, à la suite de la pandémie de la Covid-19, notre pays connaît une récession économique sans précédent. Selon le FMI, la production mondiale a connu en 2020 une chute de 3,3 % et que cette récession au niveau mondial est deux fois plus sévère que celle de la récession de 2008-2009, il y a en conséquence une contraction du PIB dans pratiquement tous les pays au monde. Alors que durant la grande crise de 1929, 20% des économies nationales étaient épargnés. Voilà la dure réalité au plan mondial. *Government is bluffing, Dr. hon. Boolell?* Et non seulement Maurice n'a pas été épargné, mais compte comme la quatorzième économie la plus affectée parmi 194 pays recensés au monde.

Selon la Banque mondiale aucun autre pays d'Afrique n'a autant perdu en terme économique à cause de la pandémie et cela s'explique bien évidemment de par notre économie extravertie, de par le poids considérable du tourisme dans notre architecture économique et les mesures justement qui ont permis de contrôler l'an dernier l'impact de la Covid-19 en sauvant des vies dans notre pays. Donc depuis 2020, nous sommes en mode défensif et la priorité des priorités du gouvernement exprimé par le Premier ministre et mon collègue le ministre des Finances, aura été de préserver les acquis sociaux des décennies passées, de préserver notre *Welfare State* et de faire preuve de solidarité. Les mesures de soutien, nous dit le ministre des Finances, nous place à la quatrième position au monde puisque 32 % de notre PIB y a été consacrés. 450,000 Mauriciens bénéficiant de R 23

milliards de soutien direct à travers le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*.

Le *Senior Economist* de la Banque mondiale nous dit, le gouvernement a réagi avec un solide programme de soutien ; l'un des plus larges au monde. Cela a permis d'éviter une crise secondaire dans le secteur financier et des licenciements massifs. Alors cela, pourquoi l'Opposition ne la reconnaît pas ? Pourquoi cacher la vérité à leurs partisans et aux Mauriciens en général, et ensuite venir nous faire la leçon pour ce qui est de la transparence et du parler-vrai ?

Le déclassé de Maurice par Moody's, dont a fait état, entre autres, M. le député, Paul Bérenger, évidemment que c'est sérieux, évidemment que personne ne l'aurait souhaité, mais c'était tout à fait prévisible car cela découle directement de la récession, avec une décroissance combinée de 14,9 %, la détérioration du *fiscal matrix*, c'est-à-dire tous les chiffres de la dette, suite aux mesures du soutien social. Combien d'autres pays non pas en parallèle étaient déclassés, au moins une quarantaine à travers le monde. Et tenez-vous bien, le niveau moyen de la dette, du rapport dette au PIB au niveau mondial, la moyenne est de 98 %. Donc si le ministre des Finances nous dit que nous en sommes à 95 %, c'est encore plus que la moyenne mondiale. Maurice est un petit pays avec peu de *leverage* par rapport aux grands pays. Ce qui occasionne un déclassé par Moody's ne tiendrait pas pour un grand pays, nous le savons tous. Néanmoins, c'est sérieux. Monsieur Bérenger vient nous parler du risque d'un deuxième déclassé. Évidemment qu'il y a toujours un risque de déclassé, mais ce risque serait réel si la dette continuait à accroître, mais c'est peu probable ce déclassé, parce que, rappelons-nous, le déclassé de Moody's anticipait sur les tendances à venir en termes de la dette, et de par nos prévisions budgétaires, il est clair que nous prévoyons une réduction de cette dette.

Je m'étonne que l'Opposition s'évertue à faire croire aux Mauriciens que notre pays se soit fait blâmer par les institutions de Bretton Woods, pour ce qui est de la gestion de la crise. Je vais citer le rapport du FMI –

“The authorities have successfully implemented a large and comprehensive set of stimulus measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economy, including a wage subsidy and income support (...).

The mission... ”

Parlant de la mission du FMI.

“...supported the authorities overall fiscal policy response and advised them to continue the accommodative fiscal sums during the reopening phase with prioritized and targeted expenditures (...).”

Et j’ajoute –

“The mission supported the monetary policy response to the crisis and advised the Central Bank to maintain accommodative monetary policy in the near term.”

Et tant d’observateurs qui nous disent la même chose, Pierre Dinan à qui l’on ne peut reprocher d’avoir un parti pris politique, qui vient nous dire, ‘personnellement, cela ne me dérange pas que la dette publique augmente car l’important c’est de savoir si cette hausse est justifiée. Cela ne me dérange pas de dépenser pour sauver les gens, comme l’on a fait avec le *Wage Assistance Scheme* ;’

Qui vient nous dire, le *MIC* était nécessaire, etc.

Donc, je pense que les observateurs sont unanimes à reconnaître, d’une part, la réussite dans la gestion de la pandémie et, d’autre part, à saluer les actions fortes prises par mon collègue le ministre des Finances et le gouvernement, quitte à ce que cela ait donné lieu à un accroissement de la dette. Mais je viens à ce budget que le pays attendait avec espoir et appréhension parce que nous savions tous qu’il nous fallait un budget pour l’avenir, et c’est ce que nous a offert notre collègue, que je salue, un budget tourné vers l’avenir, résolument optimiste, se donnant les moyens de ses ambitions, et ramenant la confiance en notre avenir. L’impact de la pandémie, de la récession est sans précédent, même si l’on a pu éviter le pire en termes de licenciement ou de dépôt de bilan par les entreprises, et je souhaiterais que l’Opposition au moins reconnaisse le fait que cette récession, cette crise économique est la plus grave que nous ayons connue depuis que les indicateurs économiques, les statistiques économiques sont compilés dans d’autres pays, bien plus grave que celle de 1979-80, bien plus grave que celle résultant de la crise pétrolière au début des années 70. Jamais dans l’existence d’aucun d’entre nous, ici, avons-nous connu une crise économique d’une telle ampleur. Les choses ont changé. Les données ont évolué. Cette année n’est pas une année normale, et cela je ne le sens pas, je ne le perçois pas dans toutes les interventions de l’Opposition. Notre PIB a reculé de 14,9 %, alors qu’avant la Covid, l’on attendait une croissance de 3 à 4 %. Nos exportations ont été affectées, la consommation des ménages a été affectée, l’investissement a été affecté, malgré tout le soutien de l’État aux ménages et aux entreprises. Donc, c’est un véritable défi que nous sommes appelés à relever en termes de

croissance, une croissance que nous voudrions inclusive, comme cela a été le cas dans le passé à Maurice. Il faut bien évidemment confronter ce que la Banque Mondiale a appelé des '*structural cracks*', des problèmes de fonds pour notre économie. Évidemment qu'il nous faut débloquer les investissements productifs. Évidemment qu'il nous faut restaurer la compétitivité et, bien sûr, le moyen de faire tout cela, c'est d'assurer la croissance économique et la création d'emplois. Des déficits immenses et sans précédent, mais le budget précisément vient orchestrer une contre-attaque sur différents niveaux, d'abord au niveau sanitaire, parce que la clé de voûte demeure la vaccination au-delà des gestes barrières qu'il nous faudra préserver pour longtemps encore parce que la vaccination demeure le meilleur moyen de nous protéger et le seul moyen de retrouver une certaine normalité, il faut nous faire vacciner.

Donc, aujourd'hui, quand le budget nous permet d'entrevoir la réouverture des frontières ; c'est fort de notre expérience réussie de la gestion de la Covid en 2020, c'est fort des avancées scientifiques, c'est fort de l'amélioration du système si essentiel qui consiste à tracer, tester, isoler, c'est fort d'une prise en charge médicale améliorée, qui fait qu'il y a bien moins de fatalité parmi ceux atteints de la Covid. Et où en sommes-nous, M. le président ? À samedi après-midi, ceux ayant reçu une première dose du vaccin anti-Covid, donc ayant atteints un premier palier d'immunité, se montent à 452,057 Mauriciens, c'est-à-dire, plus d'un tiers de notre population, ou puisque ceux ayant moins de 18 ans n'ont pas le droit, pour l'instant, ne sont pas vaccinables, nous en sommes à 47 % de tous les adultes Mauriciens. Donc, un adulte sur deux à Maurice se retrouve dès à présent vacciné. Pour mettre cela en perspective au jour d'aujourd'hui, nous ferions mieux que l'Australie, que la Nouvelle-Zélande, que le Japon, que la Corée du Sud, que la Russie, et un adulte sur quatre a déjà reçu les deux doses vaccinales. Qui dit mieux dans l'Opposition! *And Government is bluffing, hon. Dr. Boolell ?* Toutes les ressources disponibles sont mobilisées. Et ce n'est pas mon collègue, l'honorable Dr. Jagutpal qui me contredira. 16 centres de vaccination dans nos villages et dans nos villes, 5 hôpitaux régionaux pour le personnel hospitalier, les malades, les patients, ceux atteints de comorbidité, les personnes handicapées. 5 équipes mobiles, l'*International Vaccination Centre*, le dispositif de vaccination rodriguais auquel s'ajoute une dizaine de cliniques privées à Maurice. Voilà ce qui nous permet ces jours-ci de vacciner en moyenne plus de 14,000 Mauriciens chaque jour, M. le président et voilà ce qui nous permet d'affirmer, n'en déplaise à l'opposition, que les vaccins sont là, que les vaccins seront là pour vous permettre d'atteindre l'immunité collective dans quelques mois.

Vu l'iniquité de l'approvisionnement vaccin au niveau mondial, cela constituera une réussite exceptionnelle et je tiens ici à saluer aux côtés du ministère de la Santé, le ministère des Affaires étrangères, mon collègue le ministre des Affaires étrangères et nos ambassadeurs qui réalisent un travail remarquable œuvrant d'arrache-pied pour que les vaccins nous parviennent.

La relance économique évidemment comme le disait le ministre des Finances, c'est l'investissement, c'est le début des réformes structurelles, c'est restaurer la confiance.

Le secteur du tourisme, déjà R 8,5 milliards déboursées pour 50,000 personnes ; la promesse, *the Wage Assistance Scheme, the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*, au besoin, se poursuivant jusqu'à fin septembre. A court terme, c'est le tourisme qui sera le facteur déterminant pour la reprise et pour la croissance, et nous savons tous que les défis sont considérables. Il va falloir attirer à nouveau les touristes, qui nous viennent de loin. Maurice n'est pas aux portes de l'Europe. Il va falloir réactiver tous nos réseaux de marketing par rapport au marché traditionnel, le marché européen représentant bien plus que la moitié des touristes qui nous viennent. Je ne parle que de l'Europe de l'Ouest. Il va falloir explorer les nouveaux marchés. Il va falloir s'adapter à un monde transformé que nous maîtrisons encore mal. Je parle du monde du tourisme et c'est ainsi que la réouverture va se faire en deux temps. Le 15 juillet, nous allons accueillir uniquement des touristes vaccinés dans un certain nombre d'hôtels, peut-être une quinzaine. Pour ce qui est du *resort tourism*, cela veut dire quoi le *resort tourism* ? Ce qui veut dire qu'ils demeureront dans l'enceinte de l'établissement hôtelier jusqu'à la fin de leur séjour à moins qu'ils restent plus de 14 jours.

Et pendant ce séjour ou alors ce séjour ils effectueront dans uniquement les établissements qui seront *COVID vaccinated*. C'est-à-dire tout le personnel qui sera déployé, aura été au préalable vacciné et pas seulement le personnel mais aussi les familles se vivant sous le même toit que ce personnel. Voilà la condition pour le *resort tourism* de mi-juillet à fin septembre et ce sera pour nous une expérience parce qu'après au 1^{er} octobre, moyennant que nous ayons atteint l'immunité collective en vaccinant les 60 % au moins de la population, moyennant que cette première expérience soit réussie, moyennant que l'évolution de la Covid sur le plan mondial et à Maurice, soit positive, nous envisagerons le 1^{er} octobre donc la réouverture totale autorisé. Cela est un impératif économique bien évidemment mais c'est aussi, c'est aussi quelque chose que nous envisageons en prenant toutes les précautions sur le plan sanitaire, sur la base des progrès scientifiques, par exemple, l'analyse des variants, du danger posé par les variants et il va falloir continuer à expliquer et à communiquer comme

nous le disait le ministre de la Santé. Ce n'est pas vrai du tout que dire qu'il y a des tas de variants Alpha, Bêta, Gamma, Delta qui circulent dans la communauté. Nous avons des cas importés qui sont pris en charge, qui sont traités et guéris. Nous sommes toujours au niveau de la communauté à Maurice avec le - je ne peux pas appeler ça un variant mais le Covid historique. Donc, voilà, le tourisme c'est le défi majeur et on va devoir travailler dans le partenariat parce que ce qui est bien, M. le président, c'est que depuis des mois s'est mis en place un partenariat avec les opérateurs du secteur du tourisme pour redéfinir les cibles stratégiques, pour adapter le produit touristique, pour se donner les moyens en adéquation avec ces nouvelles ambitions et revoir la structure même de l'Industrie. C'est un travail à court terme, à moyen terme et à long terme. Et je voudrais ici saluer l'attitude positive des hôteliers, des petits opérateurs dans le secteur du tourisme et de tout le personnel de nos hôtels qui attendent avec impatience l'occasion dès le 15 juillet de relever ce défi et de travailler ensemble à la renaissance de notre industrie du tourisme et en cela contribuer à la relance économique du pays.

Le travail ne va pas s'arrêter là parce que le tourisme, c'est aussi un des secteurs où les réformes structurelles en profondeur vont s'engager dans le partenariat. Par exemple, repenser notre tourisme en termes d'une part accrue pour le tourisme local, domestique, pour le tourisme régional, pour développer un tourisme durable, un tourisme vert, pour plus d'inclusivité dans le tourisme, pour la digitalisation, le tourisme médical, le tourisme éducatif attirant, comme le fait le ministre des Finances dans son budget, des tentatives d'attirer des universités, de grandes institutions étrangères et pourquoi pas peut-être des *boarding schools* attirées vers Maurice. Des personnes dans le domaine éducatif et puis le *benchmarking*, bien sûr, et un *branding exercise* pour retravailler sur l'image de Maurice face aux défis nouveaux. Évidemment, il faudra un suivi sanitaire rigoureux mais comme l'indique l'expérience des Seychelles, les risques sont là mais les risques sont là surtout pour les non-vaccinés.

Si le leader de l'opposition avait été là, j'aurais pris la peine de répondre aux critiques concernant *l'invest hotel* mais vu les contraintes de temps et son absence, je ne m'attarderai pas dessus. Donc, le tourisme, un facteur clé dans la relance mais aussi l'industrie du savoir, je viens de parler de la venue d'université, je pourrais parler de la promesse d'une formation qualifiante pour 10,000 personnes avec la création, voire l'agrandissement d'institution lié à l'enseignement technique et à la formation professionnelle. Je voudrais aussi parler de la révision du dispositif pour *l'occupational permit* annoncé par le ministre des Finances.

And, here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the Leader of the Opposition has been completely wrong about opening the country to foreign talent. I mean, we all know that Mauritius is itself a migration State. Not only do we receive foreign labour, but we have a large diaspora, Mauritians continuing to move abroad, some permanently, some to build skills and then to return. And what is wrong about bringing in foreign talent? The academic literature on migration suggests that countries that are more open to foreign labour specially qualified labour, have better economic outcomes. Singapore has 40% foreign-born residents, Dubai over 18%, Ireland 17%, London as an International Financial Centre 37%, in the UK as a whole there is 14%, Australia 30%, Canada over 21%. In Mauritius we have just over 2%. If we are to expand the international value change and are to increase the complexity and value added to our exports, we need to open up to foreign talent and this is what the Minister of Finance is proposing.

The OECD points out that, migrants make important contributions to improve the labour market, public finances, and economic growth. Migrants accounted for 47% of the increase in the work force in the US and 70% in Europe over the 10 years to 2014, filling important niches, contributing to labour market improvements. They also contribute more in taxes and social contributions. They contribute to economic growth by boosting the working age population and we know that one of these structural difficulties, challenges identified is our ageing population and migration provides skills that contribute to human capital development of receiving countries. They contribute to technological progress as our own history in tourism, in textiles, in financial services attest to.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues need to understand that their information as to the impact of migration is economically unfounded and he misquotes, in fact, the policies of Australia, Canada and UK. These countries have much more open and generous policies that offer the majority of migrants, including many Mauritians, the security of permanent residents with a pathway to citizenship. The short-term work permits that he cited are for the minority who do not wish to avail themselves of the options for longer term residents and work permits.

Donc, évidemment, M. le président, nous allons nous assurer qu'une ouverture aux talents étrangers ne se fasse pas au dépend des talents mauriciens qui demandent à être reconnus ce qui passe par la formation continue and *more exposure to international know-how*.

M. le président, je veux aussi saluer ce qu'a réalisé le ministre des Finances. Je disais que nous étions dans une posture défensive mais il nous a permis, il nous a offert de recommencer à avancer sur le plan social. Prenons le budget conséquent alloué à l'éducation. Savez-vous que cela va nous permettre de favoriser le développement de notre langue 'le créole mauricien', dans l'équivalent des grades 10 et 11, ce qui était sans précédent ? Savez-vous que ce Budget va permettre à ma collègue, la ministre de l'Éducation, de continuer à innover sur le plan de la mixité scolaire que personne ne semble reconnaître?

Cette année, il y a des filles qui intègrent le collège Royal, il y a des garçons qui intègrent le *QEC*. La mixité scolaire que beaucoup d'observateurs demandaient, eh bien nous le faisons grâce aux dotations budgétaires. La subvention mensuelle pour les petits fréquentant le pré-primaire privé, j'étais au gouvernement avec M. le député, Dr. Arvin Boolell, en 1996 quand cette mesure fut introduite pour la première fois et depuis, c'est 25 ans plus tard que grâce au gouvernement de Pravind Jugnauth et le ministre des Finances que nous allons doubler cette somme pour rendre le pré primaire, le préscolaire accessible au plus grand nombre.

L'augmentation de 10 % de la dotation budgétaire pour les écoles s'occupant de ceux avec des besoins éducatifs spéciaux, divers initiatives annoncées dans le Budget pour les handicapés, les autistes, les malvoyants. Les nouvelles infrastructures de la santé publique - là c'est le Budget de la Santé - permettant l'élargissement de l'accès, donc de l'équité pour ceux ayant besoin de soin non-disponible dans le public ou à Maurice. L'allocation d'incontinence, le Budget de la sécurité sociale, presque doublée et étendue à toutes personnes alitées et dieu sait dans nos circonscriptions, combien de personnes venaient vers nous pour nous dire qu'il n'y avait pas d'argent pour les couches. La pension des orphelins qui est augmentée, l'accès élargi au SRM, les allocations revues à la hausse et pour les enfants du SRM, l'accès à des lunettes, pour les filles à des serviettes hygiéniques gratuites. Nous sommes en période de crise en termes de récession. La récession la plus grave et malgré cela le Budget nous permet d'avancer sur le plan social. Et ce bon de R 500 pour tous les collégiens et lycéens alors que nous savons que les manuels coûtent chers, passé le Grade 9.

Ah hon. Dr. Boolell, vous osiez déclarer samedi dernier, Government does not understand the meaning of morality. What better meaning to morality than to stand by the weak and vulnerable and poor, hon. Dr. Boolell? Pas un mot de l'Opposition par rapport à tout cela, comme-ci leurs convictions idéologiques étaient à géométrie variable, dépendant si le Premier ministre s'appelle Pravind Jugnauth ou Ramgoolam ou Bérenger ou Duval.

Le logement, on vient nous reprocher qu'on n'a pas construit 12,000 maisons. En une année où nous avons eu la Covid-19, en une année de pandémie. Mais, je demande à mes amis de l'opposition, lequel d'entre vous, en un an, qui prend la décision en juillet de construire les maisons, va trouver les terrains, va trouver les architectes, va finaliser les plans d'architectes, les plans d'ingénieurs et va entreprendre la construction de sa maison en pleine situation de Covid-19 et y habiter dans l'espace d'un an? Vous nous demandez de faire ce qui est impossible, à qui que ce soit.

Voyons ce que nous dit l'OCDE, *the OECD*,....

(Interruptions)

Exactement!

L'OCDE nous dit -

"The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic undermined the real estate sector throughout the world. Containment measures involved total or partial shutdowns of construction sites in many countries ..."

Ce n'était pas le cas à Maurice!

"...and the associated income and revenue losses for households and enterprises adversely affected the outlook, depending on the timing and stringency of confinement. Construction output fell by 40% in April 2020 in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the number of housing starts, or new residential construction projects, collapsed by more than 30% in April in the United States."

Et, on s'étonne que tout n'ait pas été possible mais malgré cela, savez-vous, M. le président, que sous ce gouvernement depuis novembre 2019, près d'un millier de maisons de la *NHDC* ont été livrées ? Une période affectée par une pandémie de la Covid-19 et je ne cesserai de dire, ceux qui, en 2011 et 2014 n'ont livré que 548 maisons, prétendent nous faire la leçon et le ministre des Finances a annoncé les chiffres. Dans la prochaine année financière, nous nous engageons à livrer près de 1300 maisons et plus de 2000 seront mises en chantier durant la prochaine année financière, sans compter les 12,000 maisons de la *NSLD*, qui seront livrées d'ici 2024.

M. le président, avant que je ne quitte la *NSLD*, je voudrais m'attarder deux minutes par rapport à ce qu'a dit, M. le député, Osman Mahomed. J'avais voulu dire mon ami parce que c'est quelqu'un pour qui j'éprouvais beaucoup d'estime et de respect puisqu'au

Parlement, généralement, il n'est pas des plus démagogiques dans ses interventions mais il s'est permis, pour la première fois de ma carrière politique, de mettre mon intégrité en question et à cela, j'objecte avec force, M. le président.

Donc, laissez-moi lui dire que la *NSLD* a engagé toutes les procédures pour la construction des maisons, sans aucune intervention de ma part. Je m'assure simplement que toutes les procédures sont suivies, y compris la consultation avec le *Central Procurement Board* pour que tout se fasse dans les normes et dans les règles. Si M. le député a quoi que ce soit, permettant de m'accuser, je l'inviterais à aller en public, non pas sous couvert de l'immunité parlementaire, allez-le dire publiquement.

Deuxièmement, il y a eu allégation de sa part....

(Interruptions)

I will not give way.

Mr Osman Mahomed: On a point of order!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will not give way. This is not a point of order. Yours would be a point of clarification.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, point of clarification.

Mr Speaker: No.

The Deputy Prime Minister: No, I am not giving way.

Mr Speaker: Please! You have the right to raise a point of order, not a point of clarification. For this, we should have the permission of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not giving way. The hon. Member will have his point of clarification later.

Il y a eu une deuxième allégation.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Why not...

Mr Speaker: Don't interrupt!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Look at your Standing Orders, my friend!

Mr Speaker: Please, don't interrupt! My ruling is final!

Mr Osman Mahomed: What the hon. Deputy Minister...

Mr Speaker: My ruling is final! Go and read your Standing Orders!

The Deputy Prime Minister: La deuxième allégation, c'est qu'un certain monsieur – je crois qu'ils avaient dit M.L.S. –, supposément conseiller au *PMO*, aurait participé à des réunions au ministère du Logement. J'ai été enquêter ; cela n'est pas vrai. Et encore une fois, j'inviterai M. le député à faire ces allégations en public. Tout cela vise à empoisonner l'esprit des gens pour faire accroire que nous sommes tous ici des pourris ; que nous sommes tous des incompetents; que nous pataugeons dans la corruption! Allez le dire dehors, à l'extérieur ! Ce n'est pas dans mes habitudes de lancer des défis, mais là, oui, M. le député, je vous lance ce défi.

M. le président, je vais tacher de terminer dans les dix minutes qui suivent. Le budget du ministre des Finances fait aussi quelque chose de fondamental. Depuis que je suis ministre du Logement, je m'efforce d'expliquer que le marché du logement est dysfonctionnel. Ce marché n'arrive pas à produire par le jeu de l'offre et de la demande suffisamment de terrains, de logements, d'habitations pour ceux qui en ont besoin, même pas pour la classe moyenne, qui en aurait théoriquement les moyens. Et bien ce budget, vient pour voire à hauteur de R 2 milliards pour des mesures de soutien aux particuliers dans l'achat de terrain ou de maison ou d'appartements ainsi que pour la construction de maison par le biais de dons, de financement direct ou indirect, cela aussi c'est une réforme structurelle et qui va changer les choses dans le domaine du logement à Maurice.

Il n'y a qu'à voir tous les *property developers*, tous les professionnels du secteur de construction qui attendent avec impatience que le budget soit voté, que les mesures annoncées soient mises en œuvre mais encore une fois dans le domaine du logement comme du tourisme, nous allons tout faire dans le partenariat en consultant, en écoutant et ainsi j'espère avant pas très longtemps annoncer la conclusion du *New National Land Development Strategy*. Ces réformes structurelles ne concernent pas uniquement le ministère des Finances, le Tourisme et le Logement mais beaucoup d'autres ministères vont entreprendre ces réformes. Il y a le tournant écologique que prend le pays avec ce budget mais je voudrais me tourné rapidement vers ce que nous avons entendu de l'Opposition. Première ligne d'attaque, l'endettement du pays.

M. le président, le temps fait défaut mais il est clair qu'il fallait emprunter. L'alternatif à l'emprunt aurait été un budget d'austérité. Il fallait en emprunter, il n'y avait pas 50

solutions ni dissolutions. Le ministre des Finances et le gouvernement a fait ce qu'il fallait. Nous avons emprunté pour soutenir les firmes et les individus.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons une décroissance de 14 pratiquement 15% de notre économie, tout le monde comprend qu'il fallait soutenir ce qui était en danger et que cela aurait un effet sur le *Debt to GDP ratio* à Maurice et augmenterait le déficit budgétaire. Mais ce qui est important et c'est là que je citais tout à l'heure Pierre Dinan, qui disait que –

« Cela ne dérange nullement que la dette augmente. Ce qui importe, c'est la soutenabilité de la dette. »

Et le ministre des Finances a donné tous les détails concernant le *debt service ratio*, combien ça nous coûterait en termes de pourcentage du PIB. Nous misons donc sur un taux d'intérêt qui reste bas et la croissance à venir.

Le député Uteem est venu nous dire que nous placions sur la tête des enfants - une dette énorme, mais il n'arrive pas à comprendre, c'est qu'il y a une différence entre les ménages et le gouvernement. Les ménages ont un horizon limité. Un gouvernement n'a pas d'horizon limité, l'état n'a pas à rembourser toutes ces dettes.

What it does is to roll over public debt. It pays the interest, d'où l'importance du debt service ratio et des taux d'intérêts and then it rolls over its debts, it invents new instruments. Que fait le Département du Trésor américain? C'est ça la normalité et en ce qui concerne le taux d'intérêts, M. le président, en 2017-2018, il était de 10.8%. Il a augmenté à 12.9%. Je parle de *interest payments as a percentage of revenue*. 2020-2021, nous prévoyons une baisse à 8.1% et puis 9.8% 2021-2022, qui est toujours plus bas que le taux en 2017-2018.

Donc, *it is a fallacy to say that our debt, by incurring a debt, we are doing something that is unsound.* J'ai cité la Banque mondiale et le FMI –

“There is no problem as long as Government's economic policies are credible and lenders are willing to respond to calls for financing.”

Nous n'avons eu aucun problème à ce sujet. La clé c'est la croissance économique d'où les ambitions de ce présent budget. Donc, l'essentiel - je n'arrive pas à comprendre cette perspective uniquement comptable d'un budget, l'essentiel ce n'est pas comment comptabiliser cette dette. Il y a eu beaucoup de débats, est-ce que c'est une dette ou ce n'est pas une dette, comment ça va être comptabilisé? L'essentiel c'est comment cet argent est utilisé, comment la dette devient soutenable, c'est ça la vraie question. Pareil pour l'emploi, ils

nous ont dit que les chiffres concernant l'emploi n'étaient pas appropriés. *But the key is that we remain consistent.* Il y a différentes façons de mesurer l'emploi *but we just need to remain consistent and in this regard, the measure of unemployment quoted in the Budget speech is consistent with the unemployment measure used in previous Budgets by Ministers of Finance.*

La croissance on nous dit qu'elle est surestimée, nous avons des défis à relever, M. le président. *We are banking on a rebound* après une contraction de 15 % et c'est vrai que le ministre des Finances nous fixe des objectifs ambitieux. Nous ambitionnons de réaliser une croissance de 9%, quel mal y a-t-il à être ambitieux; moyennant que nous nous donnons les moyens de réaliser nos ambitions et c'est ce que fait le ministre des Finances. Les réformes structurelles et M. le député Boolell et le leader de l'Opposition et M. Bérenger viennent nous parler de mesures structurelles recommandées par la Banque mondiale. Mais c'est normal! Quel rapport de la Banque mondiale et du FMI ne recommande pas des mesures structurelles? C'est dans leur rôle!

J'ai été à la Banque mondiale, c'est le rôle de la Banque et du FMI d'aiguillonner les gouvernements à toujours aller plus loin, à faire mieux en terme de compétitivité, à nous positionner pour l'avenir mais ces réformes structurelles ne peuvent pas se faire en une année! Il faut commencer quelque part et je vous citais toute une série d'exemples –

- (a) *opening to foreign talent,*
- (b) *pursuit of new sectorial ventures like the setting up of a pharmaceutical industry,*
- (c) *the greening of Mauritius, and*
- (d) *rationalisation of the number of investment support schemes.*

Ce budget c'est un début et puis par ailleurs, M. le président, ces réformes auxquelles nous sommes enjointes sont souvent complexes, sont souvent politiquement et socialement très délicates et qui auraient idéalement demandé un large soutien au sein de la société civile mais aussi de l'Opposition et cette Opposition qui nous blâme pour ne pas aller plus vite et plus loin en termes de réformes structurelles, si nous l'avions fait, qu'elle aurait été l'attitude de l'Opposition? Elle aurait été la première à se jeter sur nous pour nous blâmer pour les réformes à faire. Donc, soyons raisonnable, M. le président.

Je vais conclure en disant que nous sommes dans un état de guerre. Nous faisons face au défi d'une part du vaccin pour tous, de continuer à gérer correctement la pandémie. Nous

avons, d'autre part, le défi économique de la relance face dans un climat d'incertitude aujourd'hui et d'incertitude demain.

J'en appelle, M. le président, à un sursaut de patriotisme ; un sursaut de patriotisme, imposant des responsabilités à nous tous, ici, du côté de la majorité, mais aussi du côté de l'Opposition ; un sursaut de patriotisme parmi toute la population, pendant 1 an, 2 ans, le temps de réussir cette relance économique qui importe à tout le monde.

Je demande à l'Opposition d'abandonner ses visières partisans, la petitesse d'esprit, du tout négatif, du tout mauvais, ou comme le faisait, M. le député Bérénger, mise en garde, pessimisme, c'est trop beau pour être vrai. Nous sommes condamnés à être ambitieux. Nous sommes condamnés à positiver pour sortir de la situation dans laquelle nous sommes aujourd'hui.

J'en appelle au patriotisme de tout un chacun et, par pitié, Mesdames et Messieurs de l'Opposition, abandonnez ce 'trumpisme' qui, dès après les élections, vous a poussé à empoisonner l'esprit des gens, à haïr, à inculquer le doute de tout, de nos institutions démocratiques, de voir le mal partout, la corruption partout. Avec un langage de haine et de violence avec ces excès de, comment on appelle ça, BLD, BZD ? C'est ce que j'appelle le 'trumpisme', la violence et la haine comme base de la politique.

Donnez une chance à ce budget, à ce pays. Pensez au jugement que l'histoire portera sur vous. Tout comme aujourd'hui dans les pays démocratiques, dont on se pose la question, mais autant de la Grande Guerre, quelle était l'attitude de l'Opposition en 39-45 ? Les générations futures, les historiens vont se dire, pendant que ce pays traversait la pire pandémie de son histoire, la pire récession économique de son histoire, quelle fut l'attitude du Parti travailliste qui compte parmi les bâtisseurs de notre pays ? Quelle fut l'attitude du PMSD, qui est le parti qui a été le plus au gouvernement depuis 1968 ? Quelle a été l'attitude du MMM, les spécialistes de l'Opposition ? Les historiens se poseront la question et vous poseront la question, vos enfants, nos enfants vous poseront la question. Donc, prenez garde au jugement de l'histoire. Je vous demande d'être prêts à soutenir la relance.

Pour notre part, nous pensons que ce budget - et je félicite encore une fois mon collègue et ami, le ministre des Finances - a posé les jalons d'une reprise, d'une relance économique. C'est dans un élan de patriotisme que nous allons mobiliser toutes nos forces, toutes les énergies de ce pays pour faire de la prochaine année financière, l'année de la

relance, l'année de la reprise, nous permettant d'avancer à nouveau sur le plan social aussi pour le bien de notre peuple et de notre pays.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.30 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.09 p.m., with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated. Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am addressing the House and the Nation today on the Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill with a great sense of pride and satisfaction. Proud because remarkably and despite these unprecedented times of economic distress, the Minister of Finance has managed to deliver a Budget that will continue to shield the most vulnerable sections of the population against the impact of the COVID-19, while presenting a roadmap to take the national economy out of the current difficult situation and move us towards a positive and resilient growth based on investment, revamped traditional economic pillars, new avenues of development, and a renewed sense of confidence.

And to support this confidence and to silence those doomsayers, the Minister of Finance is neither increasing current nor adding new income taxes and the Budget 2021-2022 refrains from tax burdening further the income of the population and the business community.

M. le président, du côté du gouvernement, les ministres, les *PPS*, les députés sont intervenus longuement pour expliquer, tout d'abord, les différentes mesures du budget, pour commenter sur leurs secteurs en ce qui concerne les ministres et, bien sûr, pour faire part de leurs opinions concernant les sujets qui ont été l'objet de débats, surtout de la part des membres de l'Opposition. Ils ont fourni à la Chambre beaucoup d'informations. Ils ont réfuté les arguments de l'Opposition, surtout les informations erronées, et je dirai certaines faussetés, et se sont souscrit entièrement à ce qui a été dit de ce côté de la Chambre, et de ce fait, je ne vais pas faire des répétitions. Mais, évidemment, je vais faire des commentaires concernant la situation qui prévaut au pays en ce moment et, bien sûr, certains aspects concernant mon ministère.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the battle against COVID-19 is far from being over. As a nation, we must not let our guards down and must remain vigilant and disciplined in our fight against COVID-19. We must not be under any delusion. COVID is here and will be present in some

form, and I will say for ever. But, the war will be won by vaccination, for this is how, as with many other diseases, mankind has moved forward against pandemics and other such similar health crisis.

The arrival of vaccines gives us the ability to give our population a long-term innate protection against COVID-19. It is only with this protection that we can re-open our borders, return to a more normal way of life and try to restore economic activity and growth.

This Government has worked tirelessly to procure internationally approved and WHO approved vaccines and set up a system of national vaccination. And I am glad to share that, in the coming days, we shall have about 40% of the population vaccinated with their first dose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me take this opportunity to again encourage our population which remains unvaccinated to avail itself of the free vaccination that Government is providing. It is critical for the population's safety and health, as well as for everyone else's, and also critical for the economic well-being of all, given that this Budget rests upon the country to achieve 60% of its population vaccinated by September, the watershed target which allows for a safe reopening of our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget represents a turning point in our fight against the coronavirus. It has been quite a fight, a fight which we fought hard and which is still on. In March last year, when COVID-19 hit our shores, there was no textbook which told the world how to handle it. In fact, we had to write our own textbook. I, as Prime Minister, with my Government had to take very difficult decisions such as closing our borders and totally locking down the country. These were guided by the first principle that the health of our population was paramount, for without health, nothing else would make sense. Supported by the population and our frontline health and police services, we managed to push the COVID-19 from our country in 6 weeks. And for the next 10 months, while most of the World and even the most developed countries, suffered waves of COVID-19 and deaths by the hundreds of thousands, Mauritius stayed safe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these actions were, however, very difficult, and combined with the global economic chaos engendered by COVID-19, Mauritius went through the most significant recession since its Independence, a recession which has wiped out nearly the last 5 years of our economic growth.

And in these very challenging economic times, our principle was to maintain the economic fabric of our country. Through careful macroeconomic management, many jobs

have been saved. We averted the worst, prevented deep economic scarring and permanent impairment of our economic fundamentals. We have helped businesses, self-employed, workers, households and the needy people of our society over this difficult period while never diverging from putting people's health first.

Our response, as evidenced in last year's Budget, added a plethora of measures to those in place since the onset of the COVID-19 and played a critical role in helping us contain the impact of the crisis. The House will surely recall that I said we will do whatever it takes to help our people and businesses through this crisis. And we did just that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was somewhat inevitable that COVID-19 would come back to our shores, given the insidious and persistent nature of the virus. As mentioned earlier, we did extremely well to keep it away for 10 months. This gave us time to stay safe while medical science came forth with vaccinations.

Our second wave of COVID-19 began in March of this year and has been managed, I must say, in a much more balanced way, with much less economic disruption. We saw that vaccinations were already available and started to be applied in Mauritius while having gained much insight on how to contain and manage the virus in our first fight against it. And this evolution in managing the COVID-19 is what Budget 2021/2022 is about.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me to use what may be a football analogy, our first play against COVID-19 was purely defensive. A correct play against a dangerous opponent whose tactics we do not know. Today, we know it better and have the vaccine. It is now time for us to play more offensively. Thus my call for vaccination earlier to ensure we take control of the health play. And this Budget kick starts our offensive play to restart our economic recovery. We have a clear plan to put us in a position to build back better from the pandemic, creating an economy that is stronger, safer, and greener. It builds on our philosophy that has guided us since many years; that the economy must be fair; that wealth must be created for all and that the benefits of economic development must be as inclusive as possible.

The Budget, therefore, has 3 core axes, namely Recovery, Revival and Resilience, and reflects that, post the severe COVID induced recession, we must first recover the lost ground, then ensure the revival of all of our economic sectors, and then ensure we build new dynamism through new areas of development while all the time building strength and resilience so as to better face the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no better way to rebuild an economy than to invest in its infrastructure. This not only strengthens and improves our physical economy but also boosts our growth through employment and the related multiplier effect. This Budget will trigger an unprecedented investment of Rs 65 billion for the next 3 years in a host of projects which will dwell on our promises of building a modern, strong, inclusive, and resilient Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs22 billion will be invested in improving our land infrastructure. This investment will be in roads and the Metro Express, and will thus build a more modern economy. It is of interest to note that this sum covers the extension of the Metro network from Rose Hill to Réduit.

Our resilience to the ever-increasing uncertain climatic conditions will be reinforced by an Rs11.7 billion allocation to a National Flood Management Programme. 12,000 social housing units will be built at a cost of Rs12 billion. And again, that is why I started by saying that I shall not repeat the arguments of my colleagues, hon. Ministers, because earlier, I also listened carefully to the explanation of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. And I do not want to repeat what he said because houses are not built on the very next day that you announce a measure. And I shall say that, at the end of the mandate we shall, of course, come forward with our *bilan*, and only then we can be taken to task as to how many houses have we been able to build.

Further investments in building inclusiveness will be made as Rs5.7 billion will be allocated to Community Development Programmes. The Economic Recovery Programme investment of Rs4 billion will further push development in many areas spanning from roads, to sports amenities, and physical embellishment and upgrades, the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam and its treatment plant at a cost of Rs9.4 billion together with a Rs3.2 billion in water storage and treatment facilities across the island, will cement the consolidation of our water supply.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have shared with you the key elements of Government driven construction and infrastructure development.

This Budget goes much further as it also supports significantly the promotion and stimulation of construction in the private sector while at the same time supporting inclusiveness. The Rs2 billion to support the purchase and construction of residential land and property by individuals is also a strong example of the will of Government to boost this sector, whilst at the same time democratising access to land and property for all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget also announces the opening of our borders. As shared earlier, predicated on the planned success of our vaccination programme to reach 60% of the population by end of September, we are beginning a soft opening of our borders to vaccinated tourists as from 15 July and then a full opening by 01 October. A full set of health protocols will accompany this opening to ensure that the health of our people remains paramount, and this marks the recovery of a sector which was brought down to its knees by the impact of the COVID-19 as the world also shut down its borders in response thereto.

This Government has already massively supported this sector by providing Rs8.5 billion through the Wage Assistance Scheme. In this Budget, this will further be done till end of September. Other schemes, such as deferring payment of leases to alleviate the economic burden of the operators will be continued to June 2022.

The Global tourist market is in upheaval, and our key traditional markets are opening up gradually. We are therefore planning a slow but sustained recovery in tourist arrivals and our aim is, of course, to try to attract 650,000 visitors for the next twelve months. To support this volume of traffic, this Budget is allocating Rs420 m. to the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) to market our country and to remind our key markets that we are back in business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we must also be aware that the global COVID pandemic has changed travel and tourist habits. We must be sensitive to this, and be ready to anticipate a new and different type of demand in tourism. We are being helped by the UNDP to deepen our understanding of these changes.

One of the new trends is that of longer term stays, and to build on this, the Budget is announcing an amendment of the Invest Hotel Scheme to allow for longer stays by the owner, up to 80% sale of units in a project and reducing the minimum price of a standalone villa from USD500,000 to USD375,000.

Furthermore, the EDB has set a target of convincing 50,000 retirees to choose Mauritius as their destination in the next year, and, in order to achieve this, it will jointly market with the MTPA the attractiveness of Mauritius while setting up a one stop shop to provide information and to facilitate their trip.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in building better together, reinforcing our manufacturing sector will be of a paramount importance. We have already set clear priorities to shape the digital future and support the transformation and modernisation of our industries. The Industrial Financial

Institution will be called upon to manage a Modernisation and Transformation Fund of Rs5 billion. A Trade Development and Intelligence Cell (TDIC) is also being set up at the level of EDB to help boost exports and look for new markets.

Our manufacturing companies must adopt a modern manufacturing strategy, and it is time for Mauritius to scale up and capture income in high value areas of manufacturing where Mauritius has either established its competitive strength or its emerging priorities.

The EDB will be more outward-looking in searching relentlessly for footholds in global markets and we are providing incentives to attract manufacturing companies through affordable and reliable energy, lower taxes, training and skills development, cutting red tape, and infrastructure investment in business parks. We are already developing the Data Technology Park at Minissy, Moka and a Pharmaceutical Village at Rose Belle. All of these are to support manufacturing for it to remain a key pillar of our economy.

Our practical strategy has three components. First, create a business environment where our manufacturers can be more competitive. Second, align resources to build scale in areas of competitive strength with the support of the Industrial Financial Institution. And third, secure markets through trade agreements with EDB's support. And we shall be providing specific industry incentives under the Premium Investor Certificate, over and above what we shall be doing in tax, energy, infrastructure and the like, to back our plan.

Against that backdrop, we shall be able to attract businesses in areas of food and beverage manufacturing, medical products, clean energy and recycling, precision engineering, digital technology, and research.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the same time, we are cementing our position so as to be attractive to companies so that they choose Mauritius as an investment location, with a package of incentives that will be given under an Investment Certificate in various sectors and activities. We want to attract more professionals and talented people, with an improved occupation permit process for professionals. It is important that Mauritius remains open to foreigners as the country is facing a serious demographic challenge with no population growth in the last couple of years, a falling fertility rate and an ageing population with longer life expectancy. As such, there is insufficient Mauritian workforce to meet industry demands, especially in the manufacturing, ICT, and hospitality sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget has addressed the much-awaited strategy for development of new pillars of the economy.

Government is laying focus on the green energy industry, a future engine of growth, to create new opportunities for our country and to reaffirm our commitment to sustainability. Announced measures will contribute to nurturing and harnessing the growth of the green economy.

A green energy industry would encompass an ecosystem of its own, including vertical integration and supporting technologies, service providers and expertise. The biomass framework will be a key driver of this industry. We have announced a historic decision for the sugar cane industry with a guaranteed purchase price of Rs3.50 per Kilowatt Hour of electricity produced from bagasse, from presently a minimal price of 17 cents. This will bring additional revenue of Rs3,300 per tonne of sugar to planters and moreover, we are maintaining a guaranteed price of Rs25,000 per ton of sugar for small planters producing up to 60 tons. With these measures, we are providing a golden opportunity for planters to cultivate abandoned lands anew. Furthermore, with the establishment of an agro-processing zone at Wooton, Mauritius can leverage on its experience to make a difference.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through this year's Budget, Government is also reaffirming its will to develop the pharmaceutical sector. The measures announced in the Budget will contribute to Mauritius positioning itself in the pharmaceutical sector and gear its efforts towards attracting the African and international markets. We now have a strong and growing pharmaceutical research industry acting as partner to internationally renowned biotech and pharma companies.

Most importantly, this Budget is putting Rs1 billion of seed capital through the Mauritius Institute of Biotechnology to be available for the setting up of a manufacturing plant for COVID-19 and other vaccines as well as other pharmaceutical products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, like many countries, we in Mauritius have devoted significant resources to preserve lives and livelihoods in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic but what will continue to distinguish Mauritius is illustrated by our investments for the future. We shall invest in our people so that they can bounce back and be ready for opportunities that arise, and we shall invest in our businesses, so they can innovate, develop capabilities and seize growth opportunities, and this is why Rs17 billion is being allocated for the education sector.

My Government has always planned for the long term and remains committed to improve the business environment. To foster economic development, a customised set of

incentives will also be provided under a new Premium Investment Certificate with a view to attracting innovative activities.

Last but not least, The 'Silence is consent' principle will be also applied to licenses and permits as may be prescribed to provide a conducive framework towards the boost of the ease of doing business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government's philosophy has always been to put people at the heart of its strategy. That is why this year's Budget again favours a high social agenda. We are giving to the people of this country what they deserve from a caring Government. We have always put the people first.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are, therefore, reviewing the threshold for eligibility under the Social Register of Mauritius, which means more families will benefit from the numerous monthly allowances, facilities, grants, income support and school material allowances, amongst others.

Underpinned by the principles of care, we are also increasing the provision in respect of the grant-in-aid to Special Education Needs students and NGOs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, we shall reap the rewards of the investment that we are making today in our youngsters for the future. Young Mauritians need our support, and they will get it. We are opening doors to more training and work experience opportunities to the youth for more empowerment and a dynamic productive community. This will also mean expanding their own ability to coordinate their activities through an empowered National Youth Council which will lead the transformation of the current youth centres into modern youth hubs. These hubs will be community focal points which will deliver programmes, advice and sports to enhance their lives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have talked extensively about the green economy in this Budget, and I am pleased to share with the House that this does not only cover the transiting of our energy into sustainable sources but also directing major resources into ensuring that our environment is clean. Rs2.2 billion is allocated to the National Environment Fund to ensure that our country preserves our environment, embellishes our coast lines, and supports the circular economy which will drive the effective management of waste. To ensure the effective coordination and planning of the country's cleaning across the various stakeholders, the National Environment Cleaning Authority is being set up under my Office.

Let me now come to the Mauritius Police Force. Like us in Government, the Mauritius Police Force faced many challenges last year but it delivered on its duties brilliantly and effectively. I seize this opportunity to thank and congratulate all Police Officers who did not leave any stone unturned to help the population during the COVID-19 confinements while maintaining law and order and ensuring compliance with confinement laws, issuing Work Access Permits, and supporting the arrangements for the smooth-running of the vaccination programmes. It is also fitting to once again thank all the other frontliners who were steadfast in their duties and who never let the population down.

In order to improve the efficiency of the Police Force, to meet the needs of the population and ensuring safety and security, several projects are being implemented. These include the –

- (a) acquisition of a new Dornier aircraft;
- (b) renewal of the fleet of helicopters;
- (c) purchase of 12 Light Armoured Personnel Carriers;
- (d) setting up of a Disciplined Forces Academy;
- (e) construction of new Police Stations, and
- (f) recruitment of 4000 new officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government is also committed to ensure that the Prisons Department is properly manned and equipped, and its officers adequately trained, to guarantee a targeted and effective rehabilitation of offenders and their successful re-integration into the community. Since 17 December 2020, the Prisons Department is equipped with 170 new Digital Two-Way radios for enhancing communication among Prison Officers for rapid decision making and intervention. A new CCTV System with 47 CCTV Cameras is operational since 26 November 2020 at the Richelieu Open Prison. Installation of 110 CCTV cameras at the Women Prison has been completed and once testing and commissioning is over, the system is expected to be operational in July 2021. Moreover, procedures have been initiated for the rental of 450 CCTV surveillance cameras at the Eastern High Security Prison with the option to upgrade same. Furthermore, provision has been made in the next year's budget for the installation of 273 additional cameras to further reinforce security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall very quickly highlight a few other major developments and projects in areas that fall under the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Port sector, various projects are envisaged to modernise this sector and increase productivity, taking into account the growing need for more adapted infrastructure as well as safety and security concerns, which remain high on the agendas of port development.

The major projects include –

- (i) construction of Breakwater Structure and Infrastructural Works at Fort William, involving the construction of a new shipyard, a dedicated coast guard facility, a fishing harbour, port-based logistics and support industries to the fishing harbour and logistics, storage for Liquefied Natural Gas and petroleum products for bunkering activities;
- (ii) the completion of the construction of a Cruise Terminal Building by end 2021, and
- (iii) implementation of a CCTV and Access Control System comprising 300 intelligent HD cameras capable of analysing live CCTV footages through advanced analytics and generating alarms accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the Aviation sector is concerned, it has been severely affected by the pandemic. In such a context, the business orientation and development strategies for our airport have been promptly reviewed to mitigate the dramatic financial impact resulting from the drastic drop in passenger and air traffic. Necessary action has also been initiated towards ensuring the operational preparedness and compliance of the airport in the new normal era.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened to the intervention of the hon. Members of the Opposition on the Budget, and I shall respond to a few things that they have said.

First, they allege that Government will deliberately be underspending on capital projects to build up sufficient amounts of money for political purposes, and to build a war chest in order to thwart democracy at the next General Election. I must say we have yet to see what will happen with regard to the past democratic exercise that the country held in 2019; we shall see. But I must say that, for me, the facts are simple. Sums allocated for capital projects in a Budget year have not been spent entirely and these unspent amounts have

been rolled to the next Budget year. I must say that their attempt to transform this straightforward fact into a Machiavellic scheme is ridiculous and childish.

Let me reassure the population that we have been delivering on our promises all the way since December 2014 and, of course, it is for the electorate to judge us in 2024 on the basis of our achievements, not on fake and erroneous information and utter demagoguery. Our war chest in 2024 will be the population, as it has been, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2014, in 2019.

The second thing I wish to reply to is the accusation that we are manipulating the rate of unemployment and inflation. Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not think I need to be long on this matter. Our measure of unemployment and inflation stems from Statistics Mauritius. Statistics Mauritius is an independent and reliable institution. And I shall only say this: let us rely on its integrity rather than on that of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also took note, I must say, with some considerable astonishment and surprise, that the Opposition raised the issue that I and my Government are insensitive to the people's purchasing power.

I must say this comment, to me, is not only laughable; it is cheap and false and, of course, it forces me to reply.

Let me remind the House of what happened to this economy during the time it was under the Labour Alliance of 2005-2010. The then Finance Minister, Dr. Rama Sithanan pushed ultraliberal policies and set the stage to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. And who said that? Not the Opposition at that time! Members of the Labour Party themselves, in this very House, were saying it. So much so that pensions increases were neglected and school children's meals were cut while taxation for the elite was kept at a record low.

International institutions remarked that for the first time since the economic miracle of Sir Anerood Jugnauth's leadership, Mauritius' GINI coefficient started to slide back towards inequality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this unequal approach is completely against my deepest principles and values.

In fact, my approach to economic development is radically different from those ultraliberal policies. While, of course, appreciative of the market economy and capitalism's potential to create wealth, I do not ascribe to the concept of trickle-down theory where wealth is expected to percolate down to those at the bottom purely by market mechanisms.

My fundamental belief is that proper economic growth must ensure development for all, for this balance is not only just, but also the basis of a long-term health and stability of our economy. And if the market skews this, the Government has the responsibility, as the only player who can, to restore that balance.

It is worth remembering that I became Minister of Finance and Economic Development in 2016. I kept the portfolio of Minister of Finance while becoming Prime Minister in 2017. And in 2019, as Prime Minister, I appointed my friend, colleague Minister, hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy as Minister of Finance and Economic Planning and Development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I began implementing my philosophy of economic development - I am taking only recent times - since 2016. I do not want to go back to 2010, 2011. The measures that I have taken to reverse, I must say, the unfair, the unjust, the inhumane measures that have been taken by the then former Alliance at that time - since 2016 when I assumed the responsibility as Minister of Finance, I have continuously kept this principle and have translated it into action. The philosophy is being carried out, I must say, by hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy. What have been the results? We have provided more than Rs100 billion of additional revenue to our fellow citizens by increasing the old age pension from Rs5,000 to Rs9,000, given salary compensation well above inflation year after year, established the minimum wage - a historic decision - and introduced a Subsistence Allowance and Negative Income Tax, amongst others. By so doing, we increased the purchasing power by more than 40% and built social resilience.

And, as a caring Government, we have been supporting the population ever since the first cases of COVID-19 were registered in March 2020. A sum of Rs23.5 billion has already been disbursed to assist some 450,000 individuals through the Wage Assistance Scheme and Self-Employed Assistance Scheme. We have, thus, protected jobs and enterprises and shall continue to do so as stated in the Budget Speech. That explains why, despite the impact of COVID-19, social resilience, although under immense pressure, continues to prevail. This is one of the biggest achievements of this Government amidst the pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also put the Rs2 levy on petroleum products into perspective. I believe it is clear from my previous comments on the critical importance of vaccination. Vaccination against COVID will apply to all and will be a part of all our lives for the conceivable future. It is, therefore, appropriate that a levy on something which is consumed

by all is used to drive the revenue needed to make vaccines part of regular purchases of Government. I say it clearly, without ambiguity, because some people want to make this population believe that you can provide, you can spend, and you can give without earning any revenue. I do not know what kind of economics is that. I have never been to that school of economics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, as I have said, it is sad to see the response of the Opposition with regard to the vaccine levy. In fact, this response seems to characterise the manner in which the Opposition operates now, which is to attempt to put down any action of Government, irrespective of the implication. This was seen in the case of vaccines. First, came the criticism that vaccines were not ordered. They were talking about pre-ordering; ordering well before. I do not know how they would have done it. When the vaccines came, it was that they were not WHO approved. When the approval came, the Consent Form was raised to put doubt on vaccination itself. This escalation was spread everywhere, especially on social media and by acting, I must say, like school children in a schoolyard, they put the country's health and economic progress at risk while only keeping the Opposition in the news. And I do not know how the *Alliance de l'Espoir*... Sometimes, I do not understand. There are three Leaders.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Four!

The Prime Minister: Four? Maybe! I am referring only to vaccines because I do not want to go into all the contradictions of the Leaders of *l'Alliance de l'Espoir*. Talking about vaccines, you would remember, Mr Speaker, Sir, initially the first campaign was 'do not sign the Consent Form; do not go for vaccination'. But then, they signed the Consent Form! They were vaccinated, but they were telling people this Consent Form is illegal! There was a video by one of the Leaders, Mr Roshi Bhadain. Anyway, he seems to be going in one direction and I do not know if the other Leaders are going into different directions. And I note, by the way, that recently, there was Press Conference and they could not sit together! I do not know whether it is a sign of taking distance, but, anyway, I do not want to depart and go into politics.

(Interruptions)

This is politics!

(Interruptions)

Yes! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, what I am saying is that there is contradiction within your alliance. There is a lot of incoherence on vaccines. Anyway, Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that people will understand what this Opposition is up to. Its Members are simply acting like doom mongers, and that, I must say, is very regrettable, especially at this time, at this juncture, and that was well said by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to point out that this demagogy has also been led by a very senior Member of the Opposition who has made a career in the Opposition; a career resulting from his constant, shifty and backstabbing moves. Building on his manipulative and unprincipled nature, he has not only pushed the Press into extremely biased and demagogic rhetoric. He has also repeatedly pulled Members from across the floor, only to be used, and then disposed of into the trash can of politics. And this behaviour has recently resurfaced again. And history, I am afraid, will prove me right once again. Let us see what happens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also take note of the shrill cries of the Members of the Opposition with regard to the deterioration of our debt to GDP ratio. They remind me of the petulant wails of the damsel in distress, who, when being saved by the woodcutter from the big bad wolf, complains that the woodcutter has muddied her clothes. Let me put forward to the House some facts. According to the World Economic Forum -

- Falling revenues combined with costly pandemic relief measures have increased global debt by 20 trillion US dollars since the third quarter of 2019.
- By the end of the year, economists expect global debt to reach 277 trillion US dollars, or 365% of world GDP.
- Excluding the financial sector, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio increased by nearly 80%, the highest of any developed country.
- Singapore! Singapore is a reference for so many, including for us also. Singapore debt has reached - and I was reading the last figure - 131% of its GDP.
- Japan debt has risen to 200% of its GDP.
- Our debt has not gone past 100% and is at around 95% of GDP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the facts I share reflect a harsh reality. Namely, in the unprecedented economic crisis caused by COVID related measures, Governments all over the world have had to borrow massively in order to support their economies. Aided by their Central Banks, they have pumped in the necessary liquidity to ensure that their economies do not collapse before the restoration of some normalcy and a consequent return to economic

growth. And the world's best economists have praised this action as the only way out. Furthermore, these economists have stressed that such high borrowings are quite manageable when they are made in the country's own currency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, the country's debt to GDP has increased. But thanks to the foundation of our past fiscal good management, these levels are completely manageable and much less than those of our peers, as evidenced in the data I have just mentioned to this House. Furthermore, I can confirm that that more than 3/4 of our debt is in rupees. Let the House be thus reassured and note that the economy is in good hands. We have saved the economy, by navigating through the economic cyclone of COVID. And through the actions and decisions as outlined in this Budget, our prudent and wise hands will take us to safe port.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition has dared to say that, in the Budget, there is nothing on the fight against drugs. I would have expected them to at least recognize the massive amount of efforts that are being made since 2015 to fight the drug scourge. These have resulted in seizures of large quantities of drugs and the arrests of many persons. And I must refer hon. Members of the Opposition to Paragraph 326 of the Budget Speech, which reiterates my Government's zero-tolerance approach in the relentless fight against drug trafficking and criminality. It is mentioned at Paragraphs 329 and 330 that a sum of Rs10.3 billion is being devoted to the Police Force, representing an increase of Rs1.9 billion over the provision for 2020-2021. And at Paragraph 331, amongst other priorities of the Mauritius Police Force, it is mentioned that special vehicles and equipment will be acquired for the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit. Indeed, the operational and intelligence gathering capabilities of ADSU will be enhanced and, obviously, these will contribute to pursue even more effectively the battle against the drug pedlars and their accomplices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also heard the Opposition saying that not a word has been mentioned in the Budget Speech on the Wakashio incident and that it was a huge *manquement* for not announcing what was being done to prevent such incident happening again. Well, again, had the hon. Member gone through the Budget Speech, he would not have made such an untrue statement. Let me refer again to Paragraph 331 of the Budget Speech where it is clearly mentioned that the Coastal Radar Surveillance System will be replaced and that the National Coast Guard's intervention capability will be enhanced through the acquisition of high patrol vessels. We shall invest in a new Coastal Radar Surveillance System that is the latest available in terms of state-of-the-art technology, and thanks, again, to a grant from the Government of Japan, which I heartily thank. Mr Speaker,

Sir, we are certainly not shirking away from our responsibilities and we shall do whatever is required to prevent another Wakashio-like situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition has also raised issues with regard to the GRA. My answer is simple. The only agenda is to do away with the dodgy practices, situations of conflict of interest, collusion, discrimination that have been going on for too long. The setting up of a Horse Racing Division at the GRA has been recommended in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius that was submitted in March 2015. That Division will be responsible for the regulatory and governance functions of horse racing. I shall not now go into the reason why some are very critical about the setting up of this Division later on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the population has been watching with interest the petty antics of the Opposition and I, for one, firmly believe that *la masse silencieuse* will deliver its ruthless and unequivocal judgment when the time comes.

Government is pursuing its efforts to enable Mauritius to fully exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. In 2019, following the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, Mauritius initiated proceedings against Maldives under the UN Convention for the Law of the Sea for the delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two countries and in January last, a Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea gave a historic judgment, in which it confirmed that Mauritius has undisputed sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and it is the coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago.

The Special Chamber also ruled that it has jurisdiction to proceed with the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and the Maldives in the region of the Chagos Archipelago. In this regard, Mauritius has recently made its first round of written submissions to the Special Chamber on the merits of the case. During the next financial year, Mauritius is expected to make its second round of written submissions. Government will continue to take appropriate actions in other international and regional fora to assert the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago and its sovereign rights as a coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to pay a special tribute to late Sir Anerood Jugnauth for his personal involvement in addressing the Chagos Archipelago issue with a

view to ensuring the complete decolonisation process of Mauritius. His achievements on this particular subject have been written in golden letters in the history of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has been very sensitive to the plight of our Rodriguan brothers and sisters who were stranded in Mauritius due to the suspension of flights to Rodrigues. We have been working in close collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the early repatriation of the residents of Rodrigues. And this process is being looked into by my very able Deputy Prime Minister who is chairing the Committee for further repatriations of Rodriguans.

Also and most importantly, this Budget provides for the construction of a new airport terminal at Rodrigues for an investment of Rs4 billion.

Furthermore the Mauritius Investment Corporation will provide for Rs1 billion to improve the water infrastructure of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this year's Budget has outlined our plans to continue to tackle our immediate challenges and to emerge stronger in what we all call now, that is, the new normal, to re-open safely our borders and sustain the momentum of our recovery, to provide greater support for families who need more help, to boost private sector investment and to make Mauritius Green and Sustainable, and do our part to deal with climate change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our people rallied together to support one another, to observe sanitary measures in these trying moments and to keep each other safe. Businesses have been doing their best to adapt and retain workers. Our healthcare and frontline workers have displayed great courage and dedication. Many charities and volunteers have stepped up their effort for those in need.

I shall now end, Mr Speaker Sir, by saying thank you to all those who are supporting and who are giving a helping hand to those who are in need, vulnerable, but also to enable us to face this pandemic. And in these very difficult times, to work and to present a Budget is normally not easy, but especially in such times, unprecedented times, it is even much, much more difficult. That is why my thanks will go to the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, and his team. I have also been working together with that team for so many years. I must congratulate them on their hard work and dedication that are reflected in the Budget.

This Budget has charted a clear direction on how we intend to move forward. That shows our vision and our avant-garde decisions. We are convinced that we are doing our best

for our motherland and for our people. We all make choices, but, in the end, our choices make us.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Applause)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

(4.17 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, c'est pour la seconde fois, et avec toujours le même sens du devoir, que je me présente devant cette auguste Assemblée pour clôturer plus d'une semaine de débats autour de la présentation du budget 2021-2022.

Avant toute chose, je souhaiterais adresser mes remerciements les plus sincères à l'ensemble des orateurs, et tout particulièrement au Premier ministre ainsi qu'à mes collègues le *DPM*, les *VPM*, les ministres, les *PPS* et les parlementaires.

Le soutien témoigné par les membres du gouvernement atteste des valeurs que nous portons si fièrement de ce côté de la Chambre. Dans le sillage de la vision de notre Premier ministre pour le développement socio-économique inclusif de Maurice, ce budget 2021-2022 constitue notre feuille de route pour une sortie de crise rapide et réussie.

Croissance économique, résilience sociale et développement durable sont au cœur de notre matrice budgétaire. Nous sommes en effet rassemblés derrière un même objectif, celui de la relance économique, de la justice sociale et du verdissement de notre écosystème.

M. le président, le budget 2021-2022 « Mieux Ensemble » est un budget ambitieux qui ouvre la voie à des jours meilleurs. À en juger par la réaction de la population, des opérateurs et des commentateurs, il ne fait aucun doute que nous avons su répondre à leurs attentes, qui nous le savons, sont nombreuses et pressantes. Nous nous donnons les moyens de nos ambitions et cela pour atteindre notre but, celui d'une reprise robuste et inclusive.

Nos concitoyens ont largement pris la mesure du défi auquel notre pays est confronté. Ils ont, sans le moindre doute, saisi les enjeux et le caractère exceptionnel de la situation. Ce faisant, les mesures annoncées dans le budget 2021-2022 ont été comprises et favorablement reçues. Pour cela, nous remercions les Mauriciens pour leur appui indéfectible.

Nous devons, maintenant et tous ensemble, travailler à l'implémentation de cette stratégie. Il s'agit de continuer à soutenir la population, à protéger les vies, à préserver les moyens de subsistance et surtout à relancer la machine économique pour se remettre au plus vite du choc de la pandémie.

M. le président, ce sont les grandes périodes qui font les grands hommes. Nous pouvons être fiers de nous tenir au côté du Premier ministre pour traverser cette tempête et entrevoir la lumière au bout de ce long tunnel que nous avons parcouru ensemble.

Si le volontarisme du gouvernement et le support de la population constituent l'assise du solide partenariat qui assurera notre réussite, il est regrettable d'observer comment l'Opposition se renferme dans toujours plus de médiocrité. S'opposer pour briser la chaîne de confiance, contredire pour immiscer le doute, tel est leur projet démoniaque. Ils s'enlisent dans un statu quo démagogique et destructeur.

Ce gouvernement a fait des 3 «R» -

- (a) Redressement,
- (b) Renaissance, et
- (c) Résilience.

Son crédo pour restaurer la confiance. Eux, ils se sont armés des 3 «D» -

- (a) Démoniaque;
- (b) Démagogue, et
- (c) Destructeur.

pour installer la défiance. Mais soyez rassurez, les Mauriciens ne sont pas dupes.

Face à une Opposition capitularde, soumise aux diktats de la loi du plus fort, nous ne céderons jamais devant la politique de l'injuste. N'en déplaise aux détracteurs de la patrie, nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, formons un gouvernement progressiste, au service de l'intérêt de la population.

Il nous a été confié une grande responsabilité. Celle de protéger les intérêts économiques et sociaux de tous nos concitoyens en veillant tout particulièrement à améliorer les conditions de vie des plus vulnérables. Ce n'est pas pour rien que nous avons pris la décision d'étendre le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* pour le

secteur du tourisme et les PME. Ou encore, que nous continuerons à prendre en charge la compensation salariale d'un montant mensuel de R 375 pour les PME.

M. le président, l'équité est un combat de tous les jours que nous avons décidé de mener pour ceux qui n'en n'ont pas les moyens. Avec ce budget, c'est précisément ce que nous faisons. Et il ne s'agit pas seulement de ce que nous, en tant que gouvernement, pensons être la bonne marche à suivre, mais aussi et surtout de donner corps aux aspirations de la population en apportant des solutions concrètes.

En effet, le budget 2021-2022 a été préparé suite à la tenue de larges consultations avec l'ensemble des parties prenante et s'en est dégagé un large consensus autour de l'importance d'un plan de sortie de crise et de la réouverture.

Il s'agissait de formuler les politiques publiques adéquates pour relancer les secteurs productifs de notre économie, créer de nouveaux axes de croissance et s'assurer d'une plus grande résilience dans notre économie, notre société et notre environnement.

Les trois « R » - Redressement, Renaissance et Résilience - constituent le trio gagnant qui empêchera notre pays de sombrer dans le marasme.

Ce marasme, c'est le chômage, les faillites et la misère économique et sociale. Tels sont les écueils dans lesquels Maurice aurait pu tomber; 100 000 chômeurs et 30% des entreprises en faillite. Nous ne pouvons pas rester les bras croisés et attendre que la tempête passe. Un *caring Government* se doit d'agir, d'être proactif et de se tenir prêt à toutes éventualités. Le tout d'une manière juste et responsable.

M. le président, c'est exactement l'essence du budget 2021-2022, et cela tout d'abord, au service de la relance économique. Ainsi, permettez-moi de revenir sur les principaux axes de notre stratégie. Bien entendu, nous œuvrons avec acharnement pour renouer avec une croissance positive. Mais il ne s'agit pas seulement de revoir nos indicateurs économiques passés au vert.

Plus que tout, ce dont Maurice a besoin, c'est d'une reprise économique qui –

- crée des emplois qualifiés pour les jeunes ;
- contribue durablement à la baisse du taux de chômage ;
- augmente le revenu par habitant d'une manière significative et inclusive ;
- améliore la compétitivité de notre économie, et

- diversifie encore davantage notre base économique en mettant l'accent sur une production qui se substitue aux importations, sur la promotion de l'économie verte et des nouvelles technologies.

Tels sont les principaux objectifs de notre plan de relance économique, une croissance oui, mais robuste et durable. C'est aussi une reprise qui regarde au-delà de la Covid-19, pour préparer un meilleur avenir commun.

M. le président, la reprise économique que nous façonnons s'appuie sur une nouvelle architecture économique. Il est évident qu'une reprise rapide et solide exige que nous encourageons plus d'investissements dans l'économie. Et, plus précisément, que le coup de pouce donné à l'investissement proviennent à la fois du secteur public et du secteur privé.

Alors, comment y parvenir ? De façon très pragmatique, en s'appuyant sur les grands leviers de croissance suivants. Nous prévoyons premièrement une augmentation substantielle des investissements du secteur public au cours des trois prochaines années. La plupart de ces investissements seront consacrés au développement des infrastructures, ce qui ouvrira de vastes possibilités de création d'emplois, notamment dans le secteur de la construction.

Je m'attarde quelques instants sur le grand projet des 1,500 drains à travers l'île, ainsi qu'à Rodrigues que nous allons lancer.

Afin de réaliser cet immense chantier dont les bénéficiaires sont autant économiques que sociaux, nous introduisons le *National Flood Management Programme* sous la supervision de la *Land Drainage Authority*. Au regard des récents épisodes de crues soudaines, ce projet est d'une importance capitale pour le pays. C'est pour cela que nous débourserez un montant de R 11,7 milliards sur les trois prochaines années. Nous débuterons les travaux par les zones à haut risque d'inondation. Et personne ne sera oublié. Ce n'est pas un exercice de professeur de géographie comme certains s'amusent à dire, mais un projet d'envergure qui permettra à des centaines de milliers de Mauriciens d'être mis à l'abri du danger. Nous, dans la majorité, nous pensons à tous les Mauriciens.

Et je le dis avec beaucoup de fierté, mieux vaut enseigner la géographie aux enfants plutôt que de leur ôter le pain de la bouche comme ils l'ont fait en 2006. Pourtant, en 2006, la croissance était une des plus fortes depuis l'indépendance : 5,6% de croissance économique. Nous n'étions pas affectés par des chocs externes et malgré ça, avec froideur et mépris, tout a été retiré aux plus démunis par l'Opposition qui était alors au pouvoir.

Imaginez donc quelle aurait été leur politique s'ils étaient aujourd'hui aux responsabilités ? Le pays aurait été à feu et à sang. Ils auraient sans nul doute –

- enlevé la pension de retraite à 60 ans ;
- remis en question la gratuité de l'accès aux services de santé, ou encore
- rendu l'école payante.

Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous faisons ce que nous avons dit et nous n'enlevons rien. Nous n'avons rien retiré de ces acquis sociaux et jamais nous ne le ferons.

M. le président, en plus des R 4 milliards de *l'Economic Recovery Programme* qui serviront à la modernisation des routes, des infrastructures d'éducation et de santé, des équipements communautaires ainsi que des réseaux d'égouts, l'approvisionnement régulier en eau est un engagement que nous avons pris pour le bénéfice de la population et de notre économie. Pour ce faire, trois grands projets seront engagés. Il s'agit premièrement de la construction du barrage de Rivière des Anguilles et de son usine de traitement des eaux. Pour ce projet qui permettra d'assurer un approvisionnement fiable en eau dans la région du Sud, nous investirons quelque R 9,4 milliards.

Deuxièmement, notre grand plan d'investissement public comprend le déboursement de pas moins de R 3,2 milliards au cours des trois prochaines années pour mettre à niveau et étendre nos installations de stockage et de traitement de l'eau. Enfin, et comme cela a été mentionné dans le Budget 2021-2022 de Rodrigues, un projet d'approvisionnement en eau pour Rodrigues est en marche, pour un montant d'un milliard de roupies. Ce projet sera mené par l'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues en partenariat avec la *Mauritius Investment Corporation*.

A ce propos, permettez-moi de rappeler aux honorables membres de l'Opposition que s'opposer farouchement à ce projet comme ils le font pathétiquement, équivaut à se positionner contre le développement de Rodrigues et l'amélioration des conditions de vie de nos frères et sœurs Rodriguais. Si je suis leur raisonnement, j'en déduis qu'ils sont donc contre le fait d'investir dans notre économie locale pour assurer le futur de nos enfants. Ils préféreraient sans doute que ces milliards de roupies soient investies à l'étranger et ne rapportent strictement rien ni au pays ni aux Mauriciens.

Quel manque de vision ! Quel manque de patriotisme !

Et alors que j'entends un honorable membre, nouveau porte-valise de l'Opposition, se fendre d'être l'héritier de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, j'en tombe de ma chaise. Au lieu de

prétendre être ce qu'il n'est pas, et ne sera jamais, je lui recommande vivement de se remémorer avec quelle force et patriotisme SAJ a toujours défendu les intérêts du pays. Souvenons-nous de sa détermination lorsqu'il avait tenu tête aux organisations internationales alors qu'elles voulaient nous imposer des mesures antisociales, tels que la remise en question de la gratuité de l'accès à l'éducation et à la santé ou encore le retrait des subsides sur les biens de nécessité.

Si le pays avait obtempéré sans prendre en considération l'intérêt premier de la population mauricienne, nous aurions plongé dans les méandres d'une société en panne aux inégalités croissantes.

M. le président, ce gouvernement est convaincu que notre reprise économique passe par un rebond de l'investissement privé. C'est bien pour cela que le Budget 2021-2022 fait la part belle aux opportunités dans le secteur de la construction. L'accès à la propriété pour tous les Mauriciens est l'une des priorités de nos priorités.

Nous voulons que l'immobilier soit le secteur annonciateur de la réussite de notre relance économique. Une stratégie de « gagnant-gagnant » qui portera ses fruits dès les prochains mois. Pour y parvenir, nous avons alloué un montant de R 2 milliards. Le gouvernement s'engage à rembourser 5% du coût d'acquisition d'une propriété ou d'un terrain résidentiel ainsi que du coût de la construction d'une résidence dans le pays jusqu'à un montant maximum de R 500,000. Avec pareille mesure, nous nous attendons à un véritable boom du secteur de la construction.

M. le président, en plus de notre plan historique d'investissement public et des facilités mises en place pour encourager l'investissement privé, nous créons également les conditions favorables au développement de nouveaux pôles de croissance. Il s'agit premièrement de l'industrie des énergies renouvelables. Elle générera des milliards de roupies de nouveaux investissements au cours des dix prochaines années.

Ce budget transcende la poursuite du seul essor économique en l'accent sur la croissance verte comme pilier de la relance. Les mesures que nous prenons dans le cadre de ce budget respectent le concept de durabilité environnementale telle qu'il est défini par la Commission mondiale sur l'environnement et le développement des Nations unies. Je cite –

« La durabilité consiste à agir de manière à garantir que les générations futures disposent des ressources naturelles nécessaires pour bénéficier d'un mode de vie égal, voire meilleur, comparativement à la génération actuelle ».

Le présent Budget 2021-2022 adhère pleinement à ce point de vue et va même au-delà. Alors que la principale source d'énergie utilisée pour la production d'électricité à Maurice provient du fioul et du charbon, le gouvernement s'est engagé à inverser la tendance. Nous revoyons complètement notre mix énergétique pour atteindre un objectif de 60% d'énergies renouvelables d'ici 2030, au lieu des 40% fixés précédemment. L'utilisation du charbon sera elle progressivement remplacée jusqu'à son élimination complète dans moins de 10 ans. C'est-à-dire avant 2030. En tenant compte du potentiel déjà existant de l'énergie solaire, de l'éolien et de la biomasse, cet objectif est, je le maintiens, réaliste et réalisable. Le principal catalyseur de cette stratégie est la rémunération de la bagasse à R 3.50 par KWh.

C'est un progrès très concret qui résulte à la fois des convictions environnementales de ce gouvernement ainsi que les nombreuses consultations que nous avons eues à ce sujet avec les opérateurs de secteur cannier. En effet, la valeur majorée de la bagasse, associée au *National Biomass Framework* qui sera mis prochainement en place, favorisera fortement le développement de cette matière en tant que source fiable d'énergie renouvelable.

M. le président, une fois que le CEB aura finalisé sa tarification concernant les différentes sources d'énergies renouvelables, les entreprises et les particuliers seront autorisés à fournir de l'énergie renouvelable directement au CEB si le prix est inférieur au tarif maximum fixé. C'est une avancée majeure.

Ce Budget prévoit également un certain nombre de mesures pour faciliter l'intégration de projets d'énergie verte, combinant l'utilisation de l'énergie éolienne, de l'énergie solaire et de la biomasse. Ainsi, le CEB investira dans l'augmentation de la capacité d'absorption des énergies renouvelables intermittentes en augmentant la capacité des batteries et en modernisant les sous-stations pour améliorer la fiabilité et augmenter la part des énergies renouvelables.

Grâce à l'ensemble des mesures annoncées dans le Budget 2021-2022 au profit de l'augmentation de la part des énergies renouvelables dans notre mix énergétique, ce nouveau secteur d'activités aura un impact majeur sur l'architecture même de notre économie. L'industrie des énergies renouvelables permettra en effet de -

- relancer les investissements privés dont la plupart seront locaux;
- rendre Maurice plus indépendante énergétiquement;

- permettre à notre pays d'économiser des milliards de roupies chaque année en termes de devises étrangères tout en améliorant la balance de notre compte courant;
- créer de nouvelles opportunités d'emplois qualifiés pour nos jeunes diplômés;
- dynamiser notre secteur manufacturier; et enfin
- d'obtenir une source de revenus supplémentaires pour les entreprises et particuliers participant à la fourniture d'électricité.

M. le président, l'industrie du savoir et de la digitalisation sont un autre pôle de croissance sur lequel nous misons avec raison. Les mesures et projets annoncés dans le Discours du Budget 2021-2022 pour ce nouveau secteur d'activités visent à -

- d'une part, guider la transition du pays vers une « *Smart Nation* » axée sur l'innovation en s'appuyant sur la recherche et l'adoption de technologies émergentes, et
- d'autre part, accélérer la transformation numérique du Secteur Public pour améliorer les services rendus aux citoyens et aux entreprises;

Pour parvenir à remplir ce double objectif, le *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC)* aura des mandats plus larges pour encourager la recherche et l'innovation. Ainsi, le *MRIC*, en plus de son rôle actuel de promotion de la recherche appliquée, entreprendra des recherches sur les domaines prioritaires nationaux identifiés. A cet effet, je rappelle qu' -

- un pool de 300 chercheurs sera mobilisé au niveau du MRIC;
- une somme de R 125 millions sera affectée au financement de projets de recherche pour les ministères et les départements; et
- un montant supplémentaire de R 50 millions sera injecté dans le *National Research and Innovation Fund* au cours du prochain exercice financier pour contribuer au financement de projets, de programmes et d'événements au bénéfice du secteur privé et notamment des *start-ups*.

Par ailleurs, la mise en place de l'*Emerging Technologies Council* contribuera à la consolidation du paysage de la recherche, en particulier dans les nouvelles technologies telles que le Blockchain, l'Intelligence Artificielle et l'*Internet of Things*.

M. le président, le secteur pharmaceutique ne sera pas en reste. R 1 milliard comme capital de départ. C'est le montant que nous avons alloué pour faire de la production de médicaments et de vaccins sur notre territoire une réalité. Sur le plan mondial, cette activité génère plus de 1000 milliards de dollars annuellement. C'est dire le potentiel de cette industrie.

À travers le Budget 2021-2022, le pays se donne les moyens de ses ambitions afin de capter une partie du marché. À l'instar du textile à l'époque, nous allons déployer tous les facilités nécessaires pour attirer les leaders mondiaux du domaine. Non seulement nous offrons à ceux qui viendront s'installer chez nous des conditions extrêmement avantageuses mais nous permettons aussi aux Mauriciens de saisir d'excellentes opportunités professionnelles dans une industrie pharmaceutique en pleine expansion.

Nous avançons rapidement et je suis fier de pouvoir annoncer que l'*Economic Development Board* a déjà lancé un appel à manifestation d'intérêt auprès des fabricants internationaux de vaccins, notamment ceux contre la Covid-19.

M. le président, le Budget 2021-2022 présente également une feuille de route très claire pour maximiser les opportunités que les récents accords commerciaux signés avec la Chine, l'Inde et l'Afrique apportent à notre économie en termes d'extension et de diversification de nos exportations. A cet effet, une *Trade Development and Intelligence Cell* sera mise en place au niveau de l'*Economic Development Board*. Elle fonctionnera comme un guichet unique pour toutes les questions liées au commerce.

Pour améliorer la préparation et l'implémentation de la stratégie d'export des entreprises mauriciennes, l'*Export Development Programme* va prochainement être introduit tout comme le e-Export Directory de l'EDB qui permettra aux opérateurs locaux de présenter au reste du monde les produits qu'ils fabriquent.

Enfin, et c'est important de le rappeler, le *Freight Rebate Scheme* est prolongé jusqu'en juin 2022. L'ensemble de ces mesures permettra sans nul doute de profiter pleinement de l'accès à plus de 5 milliards de consommateurs à travers le monde. L'ambition est grande, les opportunités sont là. Il revient maintenant aux entreprises mauriciennes, avec notre soutien, de les saisir.

M. le président, pour assurer notre relance économique et faire face aux défis démographiques, notre pays doit maintenir et accélérer sa politique d'ouverture sur le monde. Dans cette perspective, le Budget s'attaque à l'une des contraintes les plus sévères à

l'investissement, à savoir la pénurie de certaines compétences sur le marché du travail. Nous avons l'ambition d'attirer des investisseurs de renom ainsi que les compétences et les talents nécessaires pour transformer notre économie.

Dans ce contexte, nous avons revu les critères pour l'octroi des *Occupation Permits*. Ainsi, la durée de validité de l'*Occupation Permit* pour les professionnels passera de 3 à 10 ans. Les épouses des détenteurs d'un *Occupation Permit* qui souhaitent investir ou travailler à Maurice, n'auront plus à faire une demande d'un *Occupation Permit* ou d'un *Work Permit*.

Il est certain que cette politique d'ouverture nous permettra d'attirer plus d'investisseurs étrangers, de professionnels et de talents. Cela ne fera que booster l'activité économique, créer des emplois et contribuer à la richesse de notre pays. Nous en avons besoin.

M. le président, le Budget 2021-2022 apporte également les ajustements nécessaires pour continuer à améliorer notre climat des affaires, qui est déjà reconnu internationalement. Notre ambition est de faire prochainement partie du *Top 10* du classement *Doing Business* de la Banque Mondiale.

Dans cette perspective, un *Regulatory Impact Assessment Bill* va prochainement être porté devant l'Assemblée. Avec cette législation, il sera nécessaire de soumettre un rapport d'impact lorsque des règlements concernant l'environnement des affaires seront introduits. Dans la même lignée, nous sommes en train de rationaliser plus d'une quinzaine de programmes incitatifs pour les regrouper sous trois catégories, à savoir *Investment Certificate*, *Export Development* et le *Premium Investment Certificate*.

M. le président, enfin et surtout, ce Budget apporte un soutien considérable aux entreprises mauriciennes, pour les aider à surmonter la crise et leur permettre d'envisager l'avenir avec optimisme et envie. Nous voulons que nos entreprises se modernisent et se transforment. C'est dans cet esprit que nous avons annoncé la création du *Modernisation and Transformation Fund*. Avec un capital d'investissement de R 5 milliards, il sera géré par une nouvelle entité, *Industrial Financial Institution*, et sera essentiel pour relancer le développement industriel dans notre pays. Je pense en particulier au secteur manufacturier, à l'agriculture ou encore à l'industrie de la pêche. Grace à la mise en place de ce fonds, les projets éligibles bénéficieront de la facilité de crédit à un taux préférentiel de 2,5 % par an sur une période prolongée allant jusqu'à 9 ans. Et cela en parallèle de la révision à la baisse des taux d'intérêt annuels sous l'actuel *Leasing Equipment Modernisation Scheme (LEMS)*. Cet

ensemble de mesures va, j'en suis convaincu, permettre à notre structure économique de se renouveler, rendant notre appareil de production davantage compétitif.

M. le président, les PME font l'objet d'une attention particulière car elles jouent un rôle essentiel dans la création d'emplois et la résilience sociale. C'est pour les accompagner dans ces temps difficiles, que nous avons introduit un corpus de mesures d'assistance.

Je parle ici -

- de la prolongation du paiement de la compensation salariale de R 375 par mois pour l'ensemble de l'exercice financier 2021-2022,
- de l'exemption des frais commerciaux pour 5 ans, ainsi que
- de l'amnistie accordée sur les frais commerciaux et les pénalités et intérêts y afférents.

En plus de ces programmes de soutien aux PME, la DBM accordera également une remise de 30% sur les frais de location aux PME du secteur manufacturier pour les 3 années à venir. Nous voulons enfin que les PME qui produisent localement intègrent pleinement la chaîne de valeur. C'est dans ce but que nous avons mis en place des incitations ciblées pour que les grandes entreprises s'approvisionnent auprès des PME.

M. le président, l'ensemble de ces mesures va se déployer parallèlement à la réouverture de nos frontières par phase, à partir du 15 juillet prochain. C'est un élément déterminant pour transformer l'essai. Nous connaissons les attentes à ce sujet et avons mis en place l'écosystème et les protocoles nécessaires pour assurer la reprise du secteur touristique alors que le programme de vaccination se poursuit.

Au fur et à mesure que les investissements croissent et que nous procédons à l'ouverture de nos frontières, je ne doute pas que l'économie puisse atteindre un taux de croissance du PIB de 9 % au cours de l'exercice 2021-2022, comme nous l'avons annoncé dans le Budget.

M. le président, certains s'inquiètent d'une estimation des recettes de TVA à R 39,5 milliards qui serait trop élevée. Permettez-moi de rassurer l'Assemblée : ce n'est pas le cas. Nous prévoyons que le PIB nominal pour l'année fiscale 2021-2022 s'élèvera à environ R 499,8 milliards et que les dépenses de consommation totales dans l'économie atteindront environ R 466,3 milliards. L'estimation des recettes de TVA sera en fait égale à environ

8,5% des dépenses totales de consommation dans l'économie. C'est un objectif tout à fait réalisable.

M. le président, pour terminer sur le volet économique, permettez-moi d'ajouter que le Budget 2021-2022 nous permettra d'atteindre des objectifs multiples et ambitieux sans mettre à mal la soutenabilité de nos finances publiques. L'approche que ce gouvernement a toujours adoptée en matière budgétaire est celle de la responsabilité et de l'équité, envers les contribuables mais aussi entre les générations. Je me dois ici de réitérer notre objectif de mettre le niveau du déficit budgétaire et de la dette du secteur public sur une trajectoire descendante. Notre but, du point de vue de la consolidation fiscale, est d'améliorer la soutenabilité de notre dette à mesure que nous avançons sur le chemin de la reprise économique.

Je souligne également que malgré ce qui a été faussement soutenu par les membres de l'opposition, notre dette est en très grande majorité domestique. A hauteur de 79 % pour être très précis. Il est donc tout à fait erroné de dire que nous sommes dépendants de l'étranger pour le financement de nos dépenses et projets.

Bien au contraire, les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes. Le leader de l'opposition nous accuse de manipuler les chiffres. Comment le croire alors que selon ses propres calculs les 28 milliards de contribution de la Banque de Maurice au gouvernement correspondraient à 30 % de notre PIB. Venant d'un expert-comptable, une telle incompétence dans le maniement des chiffres interloque ! Nous comprenons maintenant pourquoi son leader, qui est tout le temps derrière lui, le traite de pire ministre des Finances.

M. le président, notre objectif est de ramener le niveau de la dette publique en deçà de 80 pour cent du PIB d'ici fin juin 2025 et à 70 pour cent d'ici fin juin 2030. La dette de notre secteur public a en effet augmenté pour faire face à la hausse des dépenses liées à la Covid-19 alors que nos revenus ont eux diminué. Cela étant dit, je tiens à rappeler que la récente mission du FMI au titre de l'article IV considère que la dette de notre secteur public est viable compte tenu de sa structure, de son profil et de sa composition. Plus encore, le FMI soutient la stratégie entreprise par Maurice pour limiter l'impact de la crise sur notre économie et sur notre société. Permettez-moi à cet effet de citer un extrait du Communiqué de Presse émis par le FMI suite à l'Article IV conduit en avril et mai 2021 auprès des autorités mauriciennes –

“The authorities have successfully implemented a large and comprehensive set of stimulus measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economy, including a wage subsidy and income support for the self-employed, to support firms and households while preserving financial stability.

The mission supported the authorities’ overall fiscal policy response and advised them to continue the accommodative fiscal stance during the reopening phase with prioritised and targeted expenditures to set the stage for resilient growth.

The mission recommended prioritising programs that are consistent with medium-term development needs and broader social and environmental goals, such as digitalisation, inclusion, and climate change mitigation during the recovery phase.”

Par ailleurs, je tiens à souligner que le niveau d'endettement de Maurice post-Covid-19 se compare encore favorablement à celui d'un certain nombre d'économies développées et cela malgré la crise. La dette publique à la fin décembre 2019, c'est-à-dire avant le début de la crise, d'un grand nombre de pays que nous considérons comme des références était déjà à un niveau bien supérieur au niveau de la dette mauricienne et cela en pleine crise de la Covid-19. Pour faire taire les contradicteurs de la Nation, je prendrai ici deux exemples précis –

- Celui de Singapour dont la dette publique s'élevait à 111 % du PIB à la fin de l'année 2019, avant la pandémie ; et
- Celui du Japon, dont la dette publique s'est établie à 238 % du PIB pour la même période.

M. le président, pour en venir à l'approche adoptée quant au niveau de notre endettement, je recommande aux membres de l'opposition, en particulier à son Leader de lire les travaux d'Olivier Blanchard, Professeur d'économie à Harvard, à la *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* et aussi Chef Économiste du FMI entre 2008 et 2015. Olivier Blanchard a expliqué de manière irréfutable qu'être obnubilé par la réduction de la dette publique est une erreur. Il a fait la démonstration qu'il est contre-productif de se focaliser sur le ratio de la dette par rapport au PIB, plutôt que sur sa soutenabilité, c'est-à-dire *in fine*, sur le coût de la dette. Il expose, je cite, que –

« Les taux d'intérêt bas, plus bas que le taux de croissance dans la plupart des pays, changent complètement la problématique. Le coût budgétaire de la dette devient quasiment nul. Supposez qu'un gouvernement émette de la dette et décide de ne pas augmenter les impôts.

La dette augmentera au rythme du taux d'intérêt, mais la production augmentera au rythme du taux de croissance économique. Si le taux de croissance économique excède le taux d'intérêt, le rapport dette sur PIB diminuera au cours du temps, sans avoir jamais besoin d'augmenter les impôts. La dette a cependant un coût en termes de réduction du capital disponible pour les entreprises. Mais, là encore les taux d'intérêt très bas indiquent que le rendement du capital, ajusté pour le risque, est faible, et donc que la réduction n'est pas très coûteuse.

D'où ma conclusion : la dette est coûteuse, mais pas catastrophique. Être obnubilé par sa réduction, au prix de dépenses d'infrastructures réduites ou de chômage plus élevé, est une erreur. »

Dans le sillage de ces propos, et quoi qu'en disent les détracteurs siégeant dans l'opposition, nous avons choisis la voie de la responsabilité et celle de l'efficacité. Ensemble, nous nous avançons. Ensemble, nous, nous nous relevons. Ensemble, nous nous renouons avec la croissance.

M. le président, l'implémentation des mesures budgétaires annoncées nous permettra d'atteindre une croissance économique de 9 % pour l'année fiscale 2021-2022. Cela signifie que notre PIB atteindra le seuil de R 500 milliards. Pourtant, depuis plus d'un an, une crise d'une magnitude jamais observée nous a frappé de plein fouet. Dois-je rappeler que nous avons subi une contraction de l'économie de 14,9 % ? Cette crise nous a poussés dans l'abîme de l'inconnu et malgré les circonstances, au prix d'efforts partagés et sacrifices consentis, nous sommes, aujourd'hui, en passe de réussir notre sortie de crise. Au *business as usual* qui nous aurait conduit tout droit à la catastrophe, nous avons choisi des mesures certes non-conventionnelles mais incontestablement efficaces. À l'étroitesse dogmatique d'un conventionnalisme d'antan, nous avons tout simplement choisi le pragmatisme.

M. le président, l'autre grand axe du Budget 2021-2022 concerne la cohésion sociale. Les politiques publiques que nous prônons et qui visent à améliorer notre résilience sociale témoignent de l'engagement puissant et intact de ce Gouvernement à préserver l'harmonie de la société mauricienne et à réduire les inégalités parmi ses membres constitutifs. La Covid-19 a mis en lumière l'impératif de renforcer les mailles de notre tissu social. Les mesures sociales introduites au travers du Budget 2021-2022 sont fondées sur les valeurs et les principes que nous partageons tous en tant que nation d'espoir et d'avenir. Notre engagement envers la population est clair et limpide.

Sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, nous agissons de sorte à ce que chaque voix soit entendue. Concrètement, cela signifie que nous prenons des actions tangibles pour répondre aux préoccupations légitimes de la population car lorsque chaque Mauricien est pris en considération à sa juste valeur, nous construisons une société plus solidaire, plus juste, plus inclusive, en un mot, meilleure.

M. le président, personne ne doit être laissé pour compte. Personne ne doit être oublié ni dénié d'opportunités. À ce titre, le Budget introduit des mesures progressistes dans tous les domaines qui façonnent le parcours de nos concitoyens et déterminent leur qualité de vie. L'éducation est la clé d'une meilleure qualité de vie. C'est pourquoi nous avons mis l'accent sur l'accès, la qualité et l'inclusion dans notre politique d'éducation, non seulement à court et moyen terme, mais aussi à long terme. Nous veillons à ce que notre système éducatif corresponde à notre vision à long terme. Il en va de même pour la formation et les compétences. Pour le développement personnel de nos jeunes, j'ai eu le plaisir d'annoncer que le gouvernement donnera à chaque enfant âgés de 15 à 18 ans un bon de R 500 pour qu'il puisse découvrir ou renforcer son goût pour la lecture.

M. le président, dans le domaine de la santé aussi, le Budget reste fidèle à nos valeurs. Nous voulons que chaque citoyen puisse bénéficier des meilleurs soins, traitements et équipements auxquels nous pouvons lui donner accès. A cette fin, plusieurs centres de soins de santé spécialisés seront édifiés au cours des prochaines années. Je pense notamment au nouveau centre de cardiologie qui sera prochainement construit pour fournir des traitements de pointe aux malades.

En termes d'équipements et d'offre de services, ce gouvernement est déterminé à poursuivre son effort de modernisation et de diversification. Nous allons donc pourvoir nos hôpitaux d'équipements médicaux modernes et de haute technologie, tels que le *CT Scan*, le système de radio-chirurgie robotique *Cyberknife* pour traiter le cancer et des dispositifs d'hémodialyse.

Pour améliorer le quotidien et la prise en charge de l'autisme, des services de soins de jour vont être mis en place dans tous les hôpitaux régionaux afin de faciliter la réhabilitation des enfants autistes. Cela permettra à de nombreuses enfants et à leurs familles de vivre moins difficilement avec la maladie et c'est bien pour cela que nous sommes aux responsabilités, pour faciliter le quotidien de ceux qui souffrent, quelque que soit les difficultés.

M. le président, un plus grand nombre de patients pourront désormais bénéficier des aides du Gouvernement dans le cadre de l'*Overseas Treatment Scheme* puisque le critère d'éligibilité du revenu du ménage passe de R 50,000 à R 100,000. C'est une avancée sociale majeure pour les Mauriciens. Grace au relèvement du seuil, ce sont désormais 83% des ménages mauriciens qui deviennent éligibles à ce programme d'aide. Les patients pourront également bénéficier de traitements adéquats dans les établissements privés si ces derniers ne sont disponibles dans les hôpitaux publics. Le Gouvernement œuvre enfin pour faciliter la venue de médecins étrangers à Maurice pour prodiguer les soins nécessaires.

M. le président, notre politique envers les plus vulnérables est ce qui guide l'action du Gouvernement. L'humain est la pierre angulaire de toutes nos prises de décision. Je l'ai dit et je le répète, sous le Leadership de notre Premier ministre, nous nous assurons qu'aucun mauricien ne soit laissé-pour-compte. Chacun d'entre nous doit avoir la possibilité de se réaliser en tant que personne, professionnel et citoyen.

C'est dans cette optique que nous apportons tout notre soutien aux enfants issus de familles inscrites au *Social Register of Mauritius* –

- En les exemptant du paiement des frais d'examen du *MITD* pour l'année financière 2021-2022;
- En mettant gratuitement à la disposition des jeunes filles des Grades 6 à 13 des serviettes hygiéniques, et
- En fournissant sans frais des lunettes de vue pour les enfants âgés jusqu'à 18 ans.

Nous sommes convaincus que de telles mesures ont le potentiel de changer la vie et les perspectives futures de nombreux de nos jeunes. Ces jeunes, vulnérables, ont besoin d'être protégés et épaulés pour grandir et s'épanouir. Nous croyons en eux, nous voulons les voir réussir. Jamais, nous ne les abandonnerons. Et je suis fier de pouvoir rappeler que, malgré les dires de l'Opposition, les inégalités se sont réduites de façon remarquable dans le pays. Et cela depuis que le Gouvernement a pris les rênes du pays. En effet, je tiens à souligner que sous l'ère Travailleuse/PMSD, le Coefficient de Gini était ainsi passé de 0,388 en 2006 à 0,42 en 2015, impliquant une hausse conséquente des inégalités.

Grâce aux mesures implémentées par ce Gouvernement, nous avons pu inverser la tendance pour aller vers plus d'égalité, et de justice sociale. Ainsi, le coefficient de Gini est

passé de 0,42 début 2015 à 0,342 en 2020, en pleine crise planétaire. C'est la résultante, en particulier, de la mise en place du salaire minimum et de la hausse de la pension vieillesse de 3,623 roupies, en 2014, à 9,000 roupies, en 2020. Grâce, à la volonté du Premier ministre.

Permettez-moi d'illustrer ces faits à la lumière du *Country Economic Memorandum* de mai 2021 de la Banque Mondiale –

« Social protection in Mauritius plays an important role in mitigating poverty and income inequality and maintaining social cohesion.

Overall, the system is effective in mitigating poverty. In 2017, the poverty headcount ratio would have been 15.1 percent, but thanks to social transfers it declined to 9.2 percent.

The Gini index of pre-fiscal income was 40.0 and declined to 34.2 after direct and indirect taxes and transfers and subsidies are accounted for. »

M. le président, cette résilience sociale n'est pas fortuite. Elle est le résultat des efforts constants et cohérents entrepris par le Gouvernement depuis son élection en décembre 2014 pour combattre la pauvreté et améliorer les conditions de vie des plus vulnérables, que ce soit par le biais du *Negative Income Tax*, du salaire minimum, du rehaussement de la *Basic Retirement Pension*, des subventions sur les biens de nécessité et de la gratuité de l'éducation tertiaire, entre autres.

La cohésion sociale est essentielle à la croissance économique. Sans progrès social, il n'y a pas de progrès économique. La réciproque étant tout aussi vraie.

M. le président, le Budget 2021-2022 est également un plaidoyer de la République de Maurice en faveur du développement des îles éparses et du bien-être de nos frères et sœurs qui y vivent. Il envoie un message fort : Maurice ne relâchera jamais, je dis bien, jamais, ses efforts pour finaliser le processus de décolonisation.

Nous devons mener à bien l'entreprise entamée par Sir Anerood Jugnauth pour l'archipel des Chagos. Ni le temps ni les difficultés ne pourront entacher cette grande mission sacrée que nous sommes déterminés à poursuivre avec succès.

M. le président, le Budget 2021-2022 s'est rangé du côté de ceux qui sont dans le besoin. Ensemble, nous faisons mieux. A la lumière de la période que nous traversons, il y a tant de leçons que nous pouvons retenir des Grands Hommes qui ont fait l'Histoire. Avec pugnacité et créativité, ils n'ont jamais cédé face à l'adversité. Le Président Français,

François Mitterrand, avait si justement dit : « *dans les épreuves difficiles, on ne franchit correctement l'obstacle que de face.* » C'est dans cet esprit que le Budget 2021-2022 a été composé pour saisir les opportunités de la reprise. Cette vision, elle est aujourd'hui incarnée par notre Premier ministre.

M. le président, nous de ce côté de la Chambre, nous parlons le langage de la vérité. Parole donnée, parole sacrée. Nous avons été portés aux responsabilités pour défendre ceux qui ont le moins et ceux qui ont besoin. Telle a été et restera notre ligne de conduite.

Car à la démagogie, nous choisissons le parler vrai.

A la noirceur, nous choisissons la lumière.

Au défaitisme, nous choisissons l'espoir.

A la paralysie, nous choisissons l'action.

A l'impasse de la crise, nous choisissons la voie de la reprise.

De l'autre côté de la Chambre, ils n'ont jamais hésité à appliquer une politique punitive et antisociale envers les plus faibles.

Puis-je rappeler que sous l'ancien régime Travailleuse/PMSD, dont le trio de la décadence et du désespoir comprenant les honorables Duval, Boolell et Mohamed faisait partie, le Gouvernement d'alors n'avait eu aucun scrupule à –

- arracher le pain de la bouche des enfants;
- introduire la *National Residential Property Tax*;
- abolir le mécanisme des tripartites pour le paiement de la compensation salariale;
- faciliter les licenciements;
- retirer les subsides sur le riz et la farine;
- ôter les subsides sur les frais d'examens de *SC* et *HSC*;
- retirer les exemptions fiscales pour les contribuables sur les prêts logements et les personnes à charge;
- réduire le seuil d'exemption de la TVA de 3 millions de roupies à 2 millions de roupies pour les PME;

- introduire un impôt sur l'épargne, et cerise sur le gâteau,
- tailler sur-mesure un *Stimulus Package* pour le gros capital et les petits copains du régime Travailleiste/PMSD.

M. le président...

An hon. Member: *Ti cokin grand cokin!*

Dr. Padayachy: Ils n'ont eu de cesse que...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Padayachy: ...d'abreuver les riches et d'essorer les pauvres.

Mr Speaker: Order !

Dr. Padayachy: Nous, nous prenons soin de nos compatriotes ; de tous nos compatriotes. Les membres de l'opposition parlent de gaspillage des fonds publics...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! He is speaking!

Dr. Padayachy: Rendez-vous compte ! Mais de quoi parlent-ils vraiment ? D'un côté, l'Opposition critique avec véhémence la mise en place de réformes fiscales nécessaires et courageuses permettant de consolider notre trajectoire fiscale et d'assurer plus de justice sociale dans le pays. Et de l'autre côté, ils affirment que les mesures déployées pour protéger les entreprises, les travailleurs et ménages mauriciens en réponse à la crise de la Covid-19 ne sont que du gaspillage. Et qu'elles ont inutilement entraîné la hausse du niveau de la dette. Laissez-moi rappeler quelques faits essentiels -

- R 23,5 milliards pour le paiement du *Wage Assistance Scheme*, du *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et du *One-Off grant* ;
- R 11,3 milliards pour l'augmentation du *Basic Retirement Pension* ;
- R 8,8 milliards déboursées dans le cadre de quelque 43 programmes de soutien aux entreprises en difficulté ;
- R 3,7 milliards pour les dépenses de santé et la fourniture de colis alimentaires aux personnes dans le besoin, et
- R 395 millions déboursées pour les *frontliners*.

Peut-on déceimment appeler cela du gaspillage ? Non. Ces dépenses ont été effectuées dans le but de protéger les moyens de subsistance de notre force vive, de sauvegarder les emplois et de maintenir la continuité des activités.

M. le président, notre considération pour tous les Mauriciens n'est à l'évidence pas du gout de tout le monde. Il y en a même un qui a affirmé que ce Budget lui a donné envie de vomir. Soutenir les plus vulnérables, lui donne envie de vomir. Une telle violence envers les plus faibles n'a pas sa place, ici, dans le temple de notre démocratie. Et ce n'est pas tout. Le Leader de l'opposition et son prédécesseur, s'en sont également pris au Secrétaire Financier et aux fonctionnaires de mon ministère en les accusant de manipuler les chiffres. Le Premier a pourtant été ministre des Finances lui-même et avait comme Secrétaire Financier, le même qui est présent aujourd'hui. Il connaît parfaitement le professionnalisme et la valeur des officiers du ministère. C'est une insulte qui leur est faite. Jamais, je dis bien jamais, je ne laisserai les équipes du ministère des Finances qui ont travaillé d'arrache-pied sur ce Budget se faire manquer de respect.

Pour conclure, M. le président, mon mot de la fin sera confiance. Confiance du Premier Ministre au travers de son soutien indéfectible. Confiance de mes collègues ministres, PPS et parlementaires au travers de leur engagement sans pareil. Confiance des équipes du ministère au travers de leur dévotion sans faille et enfin confiance des Mauriciens au travers de leur support inestimable.

M. le président, la confiance, c'est nous. Dans la tempête comme dans les jours meilleurs, nous sommes mieux ensemble.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

Mr Speaker: At this stage, I'll suspend for 30 minutes.

At 5.21 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.08 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – VOTE ITEMS – TIME ALLOCATION

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that an indicative time allocation has been worked out and agreed by the whips in regard to each vote item. As we proceed, the time allocation in respect of each vote item will be announced. I will exercise some flexibility whenever the need arises. We will proceed page by page for the orderly conduct of the Committee of Supply. I wish to draw your attention to Standing Order 73 (3), which reads as follows -

“Discussions at the Committee shall be confined to the details of the Estimates and shall not refer to the general principles of Government policy and administration.”

I also appeal to hon. Members to be brief in their questions and hon. Ministers to be brief in their replies. I rely on your collaboration.

THE APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL 2021

(NO. X OF 2021)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Vote 1-1 Office of the President was called.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like some clarification on item...

The Chairperson: Hon. Member, page by page. Page 5? Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Chairperson, Item 21110.001 – *Basic Salary*, I see an increase of nearly Rs4 m. in basic salaries whereas there is very little number of staff additionally. I think it is cash in lieu of leave.

The Prime Minister: Well, can I reply? The increase in provision is due to payment of yearly increment and filling of two additional posts.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, can I ask what is this for and why the increase between this year and next year?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Provision for payment of allowances that is, duty allowance for President, Rs71,085 monthly. *Ad hoc* Allowance to Aide-de-camp, Rs4,750 monthly. Allowance to 11 Police riders, Rs3600 each, monthly and Acting allowance

payable to staff and On-Call Allowance for ESD Staff. The increase in provision is due to payment of responsibility allowance to officers shouldering higher responsibilities.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Chairperson, on page 5, Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, there is an amount of Rs5.8 m. May we have the breakdown, the details of it?

The Prime Minister: Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, there are uniforms. I can circulate for which officers. The increase is due to provisions made for specific items, thermal cold gloves, thermal full sleeve jackets, aprons for household unit and laundry and then another item of personal secretariat of retired President and Governor General. This provision is made for the payment of salaries to secretarial staff, telephone privileges, air tickets, medical expenses and other services to former Presidents. And then, there is provision for benefits also which is met by the Office of the President. There is a long list which I can circulate. This also consists of hospitality and ceremonies and then, there are miscellaneous expenses and conferences, seminars, and workshops.

The Chairperson: We move to page 6.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Chairperson, on page 6, Item 31111.408 – *Upgrading of State House*.

The Prime Minister: Which Item?

Mr Bhagwan: Item 31111.408 – *Upgrading of State House*. The project value is Rs120 m. Can I know from the Prime Minister whether it is a whole contract, work has started and whether it is being done in-house by the Government itself or it has been allocated to a contractor. Can we have some details?

The Prime Minister: The project value is Rs120 m. out of which Phase 2, Consultancy Services, Rs13 m.; works Rs107 m. The provision of Rs12 m. has been made under Consultancy Services for the upgrading of the State House for Phase 2. Rs5 m. will be disbursed for Consultancy Services, out of which Rs7 m. is for works. At the moment, it is still at the level of bidding exercise which is in progress.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 31111.401 – *Upgrading of Quarters & Barracks*. Well, the project value is Rs8.2m., if we could be apprised how

the money is being spent, to whom contract has been allocated and whether the upgrading is ongoing?

The Prime Minister: There is one barrack which will be refurbished at the cost of Rs5.2 m. The barrack is presently occupied by the SMF team posted to the State House on a 24 hour basis. The roof of this barrack is in a deplorable state, which needs heavy repairs. In addition, one quarter will be renovated to be used for archive. The cost of renovation is Rs1.5 m. Survey has already been carried out by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and the scope of works has been submitted to my office. The work will be entrusted to a District Contractor.

The Chairperson: Page 7!

Vote 1-1 Office of the President (Rs85,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.17 p.m.)

Vote 1-2 Office of the Vice-President was called.

The Chairperson: Page 8, hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Yes, item 22030 - Rent. Can I know the reason why the rent was increased from Rs855 m. to Rs1,705,000, which is an increase of 100%?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is for the renting of new office space depending on the location, the premises, quality of the building and services available. Bidding document is under process and tender will be launched shortly.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Item 21110.005 - Extra Assistance - Rs1,250,000 may we have the details of this figure?

The Prime Minister: Extra Assistance - The provision for payment of salaries, duty remission on car allowance, refund of unspent leave, travelling allowances, bonus and contributions to National Savings Fund at the rate of 2.5% of basic salary to 1 Adviser, 2 Household Attendants and 1 Gardener/Nursery man, employed on contract as follows –

- Mr G. Vydelingum, Adviser - Rs61,325;
- Mrs Anne Marie L. Barbe, Household Attendant - Rs11,970;
- Ms Anne Marie Tayelamay, Household Attendant - Rs11,970, and

- Gardener/Nursery man – I understand that the post is vacant. Normally, the incumbent would have been paid Rs11,970.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22040 – Office Equipment and Furniture, there has been a massive increase, will the hon. Prime Minister explain why?

The Prime Minister: Office Equipment and Furniture - The provision is made for the purchase of PABX and other office equipment. There is also provision made to purchase office furniture, to refurbish a waiting room lounge, the Vice-President's Office, conference room and kitchen cabinets. The increase in provision is to cater for the purchase of equipment and furniture necessary to refurbish the new office space to be rented and also to meet the relocation costs in respect of existing furniture equipment and the dismantling of existing facilities.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Already asked, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Item 21110.004 – Allowances, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister what does it entail?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of –

- i. House allowance - Rs9,500 monthly;
- ii. Duty allowance - Rs48,300 monthly for the Vice-President;
- iii. Allowance – Rs3,600 monthly to Aide-de-Camp;
- iv. Police Riders attached to the Vice-President, and
- v. Acting and responsibility allowances for staff.

The increase in provision is to meet payment of a monthly ad-hoc allowance to one Confidential Secretary for performing the duties of Personal Secretary and to a General Worker on loan from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for cleaning of lavatories.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 9.

Vote 1-2 Office of the Vice-President (Rs15,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.22 p.m.)

Vote 1-3 National Assembly (Rs267,000, 000) was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to item 22060.005 – IT Equipment, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister who has obtained the maintenance contract for these IT equipment?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for maintenance of IT equipment –

- (a) Maintenance of control room and other associated equipment – Harel Mallac - Rs8 m.;
- (b) Robotics cameras- Harel Mallac – Rs4.5 m.;
- (c) Wi fi - Mauritius Telecom – Rs1 m.;
- (d) Ipad and software - iSpace & Co. – Rs1 m.;
- (e) Digital recording systems and servers - Harel Mallac – Rs2 m;
- (f) Pre-Press Unit equipment – iSpace & Co – Rs0.5 m.;
- (g) Heavy duty printing machine – CBE & Co – Rs0.4 m, and
- (h) Maintenance for other equipment – Rs0.6 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mohamed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Item 22030 - Rent, for which is appears we did not have any expenditure last year but this coming year, Rs1.9 m., can I know what is it for?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of newly rented office space at Newton Tower, part of fifth floor to house the Offices of the Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition Whip and Chairman of PAC. The duration is for a period of 5 years, that is, from 22 March 2021 to 21 March 2026 at a monthly rent of Rs138,736 plus VAT and I must say I am informed that it is a very nice Office. A Leader of the Opposition, the Whip and the PAC also must be able to work in a proper environment.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: The question has already been asked by hon. Osman Mahomed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 10, the last item 22120.041 - MCML Transmission Fees - Rs4,830,000, is it in relation to Parliament TV? May we have the details of this figure?

The Prime Minister: MCML Transmission Fees - Provision for payment of transmission fees to MCML for live broadcasting of the sittings of the House at the rate of Rs402,500 per month. It is quite costly but it is worth it for democracy.

The Chairperson: Page 11. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Under *Item 31112.442 – Upgrading of Building (b) Repairs of Old Parliament House* for a project amount of Rs38 m., can we know if the contract has already been awarded, if so, to whom?

The Prime Minister: Major repairs to Old Parliament House to prevent water infiltration. Provision is for preparation of tender documents and floating of same by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development. The works would consist of repairs to floor and roof of the veranda, to teak shingles on roof, repairs to roof; roof drainage system and the finishing works on the wall.

Dr. Gungapersad: *Item 22900.980 – Expenses icw Parliamentary Gender Caucus* and *22900.981 – Expenses icw Youth Parliament* respectively, here we find that the figures have gone down, may we know why?

The Prime Minister: There is a decrease in provision as less workshops will be organised in Financial Year 2021-2022; that is, for the Caucus. Regarding Youth Parliament, there is a decrease in provision as other ways are being explored for the organisation of the event due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: *Item 31112.442– Upgrading of Building, (a) Upgrading of Parliamentary Security.* Can we have details about this term of Parliamentary Security, security means what, and very specific details on that vote of the Rs6.7 m.?

The Prime Minister: The project has been rescheduled for Financial Year 2021-2022; tender documents are being prepared and bids will be floated in the Financial Year 2021-2022. Well, this is what I have. It will consist of measures to enhance security in the vicinity of Parliament.

The Chairperson: We move to page 12.

Mr Bhagwan: When the Prime Minister told us that it is concerning security, has provision been made for the installation of cameras, at least, to see the whereabouts of MPs, and also...

(Interruptions)

... of yourself!

The Chairperson: I am with you.

The Prime Minister: I need to have the details of the kind of parliamentary security. So, upgrading of perimeter wall, Rs1.5 m., provision of bollards in front of the Chamber, Rs2 m.; provision of fire resistant carpets in the Chamber, Rs4 m. Bids documents already finalised and to be floated and provision of a timber door near the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Rs0.1 m.; provision of access control and key locks, Rs1 m.

The Chairperson: Page 12! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 12, something is very strange there. Well, not so strange because there might be a reason to that. Under Vote 1-3 National Assembly under 'Members of Parliament', it is 29 that are being funded for this year and 32 for 2022. Is it the fact that you are already accruing that the Opposition will win the Electoral Petition cases and the number of MPs will increase?

The Prime Minister: Let me reassure you that I believe this will not be the case, but, it follows the resignation of 3 Ministers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed? None?

Vote 1-3 National Assembly (Rs267,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.33 p.m.)

Vote 1-4 Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, *Mr Chairperson*. A l'item 22120 – Fees, R 4.5 millions, R 3.4 millions, R 300 millions, peut-on savoir du Premier ministre en quoi consiste ces *fees* ?

The Prime Minister: It is provision for the payment of legal fees to Barristers and Attorneys for representing the ESC and EBC in Court; 22 petitions contesting the results of

the National Assembly Elections in 2019 have been filed before the Supreme Court, and can be called for hearing at any time. The Court cases, amongst others, are Surendra Dayal against Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and Others; Anil Kumar Baichoo against Sudheer Maudhoo and Others, Lormesh Bundhoo and Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal and others also.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: *Item 21110 – Personal Emoluments*, under Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission. Can I know from the Prime Minister, with regard to the last report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, when it is being received, whether the fees have been paid and where matters stand concerning the publication and the implementation of that report?

The Prime Minister: This is Personal Emoluments, Mr Chairperson. The hon. Member cannot ask question, he can ask details about the Personal Emoluments but not about whether they have done such work or not and what has been the outcome of the report.

Mr Bhagwan: We have worked on the report.

The Prime Minister: We know that the report has been submitted. In fact, it has been laid, I believe, before the National Assembly. So, now it is for Government to decide when and how to react to the report.

The Chairperson: I think we are going on policy matters. Sorry, for that issue. Let me move to the next question. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: On the same page, *item 22120 – Fees*. May we have the breakdown of the amount paid to each and every legal representative of Government, since the Prime Minister has given the details of the cases?

The Prime Minister: Sir Hamid Moollan, QC GOSK and Mr Rajah, Senior Attorney, normally represent the Commissions. I have mentioned the cases. As you are aware, there is a series of cases. I do not have the breakdown for each case. I believe because the cases are now being heard, so the fees would be claimed at the end of the cases.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Page 14 has already answered. I have on page 15.

The Chairperson: Okay. Page 15.

Mr Uteem: On page 15 under item 3 - Secretary, Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission, there is no provision for funded position for Secretary.

The Prime Minister: No financial provision has been made for the post of Secretary as one Assistant Permanent Secretary from the Prime Minister's Office is performing the duties of Secretary against the payment of an allowance.

Vote 1-4 Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission (Rs5,700,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.38 p.m)

Vote 1-5 Office of the Electoral Commissioner was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22120.016 - *Fees icw Elections*, Rs185 m. have been earmarked. Is this, Prime Minister, an anticipation of a snap election?

The Prime Minister: Fees in connection with elections. Provision to meet the cost of expenses in connection with the Municipal Council elections and Rodrigues Regional Assembly elections such as payment of election fees. But with regard to general elections, I can assure you that it will not be so soon.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The question has already been asked. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: With respect to item 22120.015 – *Fees icw Registration of Electors*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, the number of persons involved in registration of electors and if he has information as to the criteria for selecting those persons?

The Prime Minister: Provision of payment of fees to canvassers for house-to-house enquiry to be held in January, February 2022: Rs20 m., travelling allowance: Rs300,000, registration of electors to be held in May 2022: Rs50,000 and printing of electoral registers: Rs1.2 m.

Now, how they are selected, I do not have this information. Maybe, if I can get a note on that; how they are selected. Senior Officers with experience are selected by the Electoral Commissioner after approval of the Electoral Supervisory Commission.

The Chairperson: We move to page 17. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Under item 26210.188 – *Reseau des Compétences Electorales Francophones*, can we have some details with regard to this organisation, please?

The Prime Minister: *Reseau des Compétences Electorales Francophones* based in Québec which we joined in 2015. Membership fees amount to €2000 annually. And the increase is due to fluctuations in exchange rates, RECEP. Now I can try to get further information. I do not know what the organisation is about. I am informed it is a networking of electoral commissions.

Vote 1-5 Office of the Electoral Commissioner (Rs263,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.42 p.m)

Vote 1-6 The Judiciary was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. A *l'item 22120.005 – Fees to Witnesses*, Rs12,500,00 – Rs10,000,000, *peut-on savoir du Premier ministre?*

The Prime Minister: Fees to Witnesses refer to provision for payment of witness fees of Rs105 to public officers, citizens who attend Courts, and Rs200 for professionals who attend Courts as expert witnesses. A travelling allowance is also paid to the witnesses to attend Court. The decrease is based on actual trends of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same vote item 22120.005 – *Fees to Witnesses*, out of the budget of Rs12.5 m. voted last year, may we know how much has been spent?

The Prime Minister: As at end of May, Rs9,244,000 have been spent.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item 22060.001 – *Maintenance of Buildings*, there is a substantial increase from Rs4 m. to Rs12.2 m. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister who has won the award for maintenance of these buildings, and which buildings are we referring to here?

The Prime Minister: It is a long list. There is provision for the maintenance of all District Court buildings; for the maintenance of rented buildings to suit specific needs in relation to the services provided by the Judiciary, and the maintenance of the operations of the new Supreme Court building.

Provision also includes painting costs, purchase of materials, payment for treatment against rodents, termites and other pests at the old Supreme Court and other District Courts for which tender will be launched shortly.

The actual contractor is Eradicators Ltd, for the period 06 November 2020 to 05 November 2021. New tender will be launched shortly.

There is provision for treatment against rodents, termites and other pests at the new Supreme Court.. Tender will be launched by the third week of June 2021. There are other non-recurring expenses and then maintenance of the new Supreme Court; contract for an amount of Rs11,400,816.87 for period 15 June 2021 to 14 June 2022 has been awarded on 17 May 2021. The new maintenance contractor is Rey & Lenferna.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Under item 22030 – *Rent*, we see that there is a decrease from Rs8 m. to Rs3 m., can the Prime Minister say why such a decrease?

The Prime Minister: For rent?

Ms Ramyad: Yes.

The Prime Minister: Decrease is due to all offices from Astor Court having moved to the New Supreme Court Building since October 2020. The rent of Astor Court was Rs4,990,000 yearly.

The Chairperson: I now move to page 20. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to Item 27210.010 - *Legal Assistance in "in forma pauperis"*, can the hon. Prime Minister inform us why this decrease in the sum budgeted from Rs3,500,000 to Rs2,000,000?

The Prime Minister: Decrease is based on trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 31112.415 - *Renovation work to house the Children Court*, Rs15 m. earmarked for the year 2021-2022

and Rs350,000 planned. Can I ask the Prime Minister where matters stand as to whether the contract has been allocated, if yes to whom, please?

The Prime Minister: Renovation work is to house the Children Court at old Supreme Court including electrical works. The requirements have not yet been finalised but they include the ground, the first, the second floors of the extension block, the installation of two passenger lifts, the relocation of generator set and replacement of electrical, air conditioning and fire alarm system in accordance with the new layout. These will cost approximately Rs8 m. and there are associated costs which will be around Rs7.35 m. So, in all, estimated cost is Rs15.35 m. I am informed that further details will be submitted in due course in respect of the associated costs.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: For Item 31122.802(d) *Revamping E-Judiciary - Commercial Court*, we see for a project value Rs12 m., Rs1 m. was allocated last year and this year it is Rs3,700,000. May we get details about the phase where it reached?

The Prime Minister: 31122.802(d) *Revamping E-Judiciary - Commercial Court*. The contract was awarded on 05 December 2018. Part one of the project went live and the contractor is Agileum Ltd for a contract amount of Rs8,296,435.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 27210.010 - *Legal Assistance in "in forma pauperis"*, which is legal aid to those people who cannot afford legal counsel. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many people did benefit from this scheme for the year ending June 2021?

The Prime Minister: For legal aid and legal assistance, I have information about the type of civil cases, and about what was paid to barristers and attorneys, but I do not have information about the number of people who have benefitted. This may be circulated later on.

The Chairperson: Time is over! So, we move to page 22.

Vote 1-6 The Judiciary (Rs665,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.52 p.m.)

Vote 1-7 Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Page 23, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 23, the first Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*, there has been a huge increase from Rs58 m. to Rs82 m.; that is almost Rs24 m. When I checked on page 25, there are numerous posts that are being created like Manager, Human Resources; Assistant Manager, Human Resources; Senior Human Resource; Human Resource Executive; approximately some 32. May I ask the Prime Minister what is the reasoning behind the recruitment of all these people?

The Chairperson: Would not that be like a general policy, administration of the Government? So, more specific questions?

Mr Ameer Meea: Being budgeted! Rs24 m. is being asked additionally to be voted for next year! It is not policy.

The Chairperson: It is up to the Prime Minister to say if he has the information.

The Prime Minister: I can say that the increase in the provision is due to payment of yearly increments to eligible officers and for filling of 32 vacant posts. The 32 officers of the HR Cadre who were already posted at the Public Service Commission will henceforth be paid from the budget of the PSC, the DFSC instead of the budget of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120 – *Fees*, there has been an increase; it is in which respect these fees?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision to cater for consultancy services in connection with the setting up of a new recruitment system.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I appeal to the Prime Minister - we are sitting here, we are working, I think everybody. I have been going to the records at the Library. For the past years, you are the only one who has been circulating replies. Other Ministers have not done it. So, here I am appealing to the Prime Minister, at least, to make sure that other Ministers who take commitments here in the House - we are working and we accept that the reply will be circulated. I can ask you to go and check for the past years, other Ministers have not circulated the reply, the commitment they have taken in the House. So, right at the start, I am appealing to the Prime Minister, at least, if he can give directives to the Ministers who take

commitments in the House with regard to circulation of replies, that they do adhere to the commitment taken.

The Chairperson: You made your point, hon. Bhagwan. So, it is up to the Ministers. Page 24, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.802 - *Acquisition of IT Equipment of which Acquisition of Automatic Scoring Machine*. Can we have some details with regard to this machine?

The Prime Minister: The provision for upgrading of server Rs1.5 m. and acquisition of an OCR Automatic Scoring Machine Rs8 m. on a phase-wise basis. The scope of the project is to enable the commission to conduct online examinations as well as pen and paper examinations. It proposes to digitalise its operations by introducing an Automatic Scoring System which will include a software development, a web based information system, a computer based testing software and also an automatic selection software. It is proposed to host the ASS at the Government Online Centre and to implement the project in two phases. The first phase will focus on pen and paper examinations, printing of multiple choice question papers through the computer based software and perform the correction of the paper-based answer sheet through OCR scanners or any other mechanism and storing the data into the system. After correction, the marks will be stored and compiled by the Automatic Scoring System. The Commission is also proposing to install a video conferencing system for interviewing candidates who are abroad and consideration may be given in the future for the conduct of online interviews for all candidates.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Under same item I was asking for item 31122.802 - *Acquisition of IT Equipment* has increased from Rs730,000 to Rs8 million. Is it because of the upgrading?

The Prime Minister: I have just answered on the acquisition and installation of those software and IT equipment.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Mr Chairperson, under the same item, the hon. Prime Minister did not state the person, the Contractor who won the award to implement this.

The Prime Minister: It is not yet awarded, I believe. No, not yet awarded.

The Chairperson: We move to page 25.

Vote 1-7: Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission (Rs133,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6:59 p.m.)

Vote 1-8 Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal was called.

The Chairperson: On page 26, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the item 21 – Compensation of Employees, can the hon. Prime Minister give us the figures of the number of cases that has been heard this year by the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and the number of cases that are standing?

The Prime Minister: The number of cases, yes. I have the information. The number of appeals received since setting up in 2009, is 1,690. Out of 1,690 appeals, 112 are still pending.

The Chairperson: We move to page 27.

Vote 1-8 Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal (Rs15,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7:00 p.m.)

Vote 1-9 Office of Ombudsman was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, page 28, item 22030 – *Rent*, there is an amount of Rs2 m. or so being budgeted, maybe he has the details about what is being rented, where, and also the area in terms of square metre, what is being rented?

The Prime Minister: Rental of building from Société City Screen for office space, area of 325 m² amounting to Rs155,069 monthly for a period of 5 years. The provision also includes rental for additional office space area of 64.5 m² for the sum of Rs27,545 monthly from the same Société for a period of 4 years. The owner is Société City Screen represented by Haji Abdullah Abdul Sattar Adam Ali Mamode.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 26210 – Contribution to International Organisations*, can we have an idea which organisations we are talking?

The Prime Minister: Provisions for contribution to International Institute of Ombudsman: €375; Association des Ombudsmans et Médiateurs de la Francophonie : €900 and African Ombudsman Association USD1,000.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Already canvassed, Sir.

The Chairperson: Hon. R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Already replied.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Yes, thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of item 22170 – *Travelling within the Republic*, although it is not a substantial amount – Estimates 2021/22: Rs225,000. Can the Prime Minister apprise us what is the purpose of travelling within Mauritius, is it to sensitise the public at large as to the relevance and importance of the Office of the Ombudsperson?

The Prime Minister: Provision for cost of two working trips to Rodrigues for the Ombudsman, the Senior Investigations Officer and Investigations Officer. The increase in provision was to cater for the cost of air tickets and accommodation for one additional technical officer.

The Chairperson: We move to page 29.

Vote 1-9 Office of Ombudsman (Rs15,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7:04 p.m.)

Vote 1-10 National Audit Office was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item 21110.001 – *Basic Salary*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, the number of vacancies currently at the National Audit Office?

The Prime Minister: 27 vacant posts.

The Chairperson: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: À l'item 21210 – *Social Contributions*, R 1.1 million; R 1.3 million; R 1.3 million, on peut savoir du Premier Ministre ?

The Prime Minister: 21210 – *Social Contributions*: provision for payment of contributions to the National Savings Fund for staff of the National Audit Office at the rate of 2.5% of the monthly salary up to a ceiling of Rs498/per month, per employee; and the increase in provisions is to cater for the contribution of NSF for additional staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Yes, Mr Chairperson, under the Recurrent Expenditure it has increased from 157 million to 172 million. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us more information about this item, why it has increased?

The Prime Minister: I have to circulate the information, Mr Chairperson, because there is a long list. It will take the time of the House for me to give the whole list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 21110.006 – *Cash in lieu of Leave*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide some details for this item - Rs6 million.

The Prime Minister: Provision has been made for refund of Cash in lieu of Leave for the year 2021 to eligible staff. It is Cash in lieu of Leave. Those who want to avail themselves of this will then have to be refunded.

The Chairperson: We move to page 31.

Vote 1-10 National Audit Office (Rs172,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.07 p.m.)

Vote 1-11 Employment Relations Tribunal was called.

The Chairperson: Page 32! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. In regard to the Tribunal, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many cases have been successfully handled by the Employment Relation Tribunal this year?

The Prime Minister: Number of cases lodged, 01 July 2020 to 31 May 2021: 155; total number of cases disposed, including pending cases: 192; number of cases pending as at 31 May 2021: 84.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you. Under Item 22040 - *Office Equipment and Furniture*, a sum of Rs190 m. has been earmarked, whereas last year it was Rs90 m, can we have more information on that?

The Prime Minister: The increase in the provision is to cater for office equipment in respect of one additional staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to item 22120 – *Fees*, can we know to whom the fees are being paid?

The Prime Minister: It is fees to Chairperson and members of the Boards and Committees. The monthly fee for the President is Rs29,925 and Rs890 per sitting per member. There are also fees for training and legal fees in case Tribunal cannot be assisted by the State Law Office, when a judicial review application is made against the decision of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson: We move to page 33. Any question?

Mr Ameer Meea: On Basic Salary, that is, the first item, 21110. 001- *Basic Salary*, there has been a decrease of Rs370,000, but at the same time, the number of positions funded has increased by one. So, may we know the reason of this decrease in the basic salary?

The Prime Minister: Decrease in provision is due to the difference in basic salary and transfer of officers with lower basic salary.

Vote 1-11 Employment Relations Tribunal (Rs23,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.10 p.m.)

Vote 1-12 Local Government Service Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you. Mr Chairperson. Under Item 21110.001 *Personal Emoluments, Basic Salary*. Can I know from the Prime Minister, the present composition of the Board, when it has been set up, and what is the amount paid to the Chairperson and members on a monthly basis, whether this is included in that Vote?

The Prime Minister: The composition of the Board –

Chairperson:

Mr Bhanoodutt Beeharee; salary, Rs146,000 plus salary compensation.

Members:

Mr Georges Clancy Charles

Mr Pritivirajsing Munrakhun

Mrs Punima Devi Rawoteea

Mr Dharamveer Gokool

The members are paid Rs66,650 plus salary compensation, and then, there are benefits also.

Mr Bhagwan: May we know whether the appointment has been renewed...

The Prime Minister: For the Chairperson?

Mr Bhagwan: Yes.

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson, date of appointment, 13 March 2020 for a period of three years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Mr Chairperson, under item 22060 – *Maintenance* where an amount of Rs1,070,000 is earmarked for Financial Year 2022-2021, can we have a breakdown of that amount, please?

The Prime Minister: It is provision for maintenance and repairs of air-conditioners, lift, photocopier, fax machine, high pressure cleaner. There is a list; I can circulate the list.

The Chairperson: Hon Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item 21. Is the hon. Prime Minister able to tell us the number of post advertised and considered by the LGSC for the year ...

The Prime Minister: Number of posts advertised?

Mr Uteem: ...that were advertised and filled in by the LGSC.

The Prime Minister: Number of vacancies filled by promotion, 17; number of vacancies filled by advertisement, 1; number of vacancies filled by change of posting, 4; number of selection exercise in process, 38.

The Chairperson: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: Under item 31 - *Acquisition of Non-Financial Assets*, peut-on avoir quelques détails sur le pourquoi de ces montants ?

The Prime Minister: For non-residential buildings; the construction of office building, the project value is Rs33.5 m. The project comprises the construction of an additional floor and the renovation of the existing building. The project is to provide for more conducive office environment for staff, members of the Commission and proper interview rooms, as well as to upgrade the condition of the existing floors. The project value of Rs33.5 m. includes provision for furniture, equipment and for additional floor area.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Not yet, it is coming.

The Chairperson: So, we move to page 35? Hon. Armance, you have one?

Mr Armance: At page 35, Mr Chairperson, *item 31132.801 - Intangible Fixed Assets*, under *Acquisition of Software*, may we have some more details on the status of this acquisition and the need for the two acquisitions.

The Prime Minister: This project comprises the Implementation of a Document Management System which will enable the creation of central digital repository of all files and will also allow files to be channelled and processed digitally on the system. The system will, in fact, improve Intra-Office Systems and Procedures and will allow the office to shift to a more productive work process and a paperless environment, and will as well provide the option to work from home. The contract is awarded to Harel Mallac Technologies Ltd for an amount of Rs4,906,126.29, with 20% of the contract price as down payment in respect of electronic document management system.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: The question has been canvassed.

The Chairperson: Page 36.

Vote 1-12 – Local Government Service Commission (Rs55,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.16 p.m.)

Vote 1-13 – Independent Commission Against Corruption was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. Item 26313.026 - *Staff Costs*, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why is there a substantial increase from this year, which is Rs170 m., to next year Rs194 m., and then two years after, Rs238 m. being budgeted for the ICAC?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision is mainly due to payment for 22 additional posts and other operation costs.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 26313, Rs223,500,000 for staff costs, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister, with regard to the Board of ICAC, its composition, how much is paid to the Director General, his monthly emoluments in the Budget we are being asked to vote, and when his contract is coming to an end; whether it has been renewed; whether it is in the process of being renewed?

The Prime Minister: Can another question be asked in the meantime until I get the information?

The Chairperson: Yes. The next question would be from hon. Assirvaden.

Mr Assirvaden: *Mr Chairperson*, j'aurais aimé retourner sur la question de l'honorable Osman Mahomed concernant le *Staff Costs* que le Premier ministre a répondu. R 170 millions pour R 241 millions en hausse, M. le Premier ministre. Peut-on avoir un peu plus en détails pourquoi autant de recrutements ? C'est par rapport aux recrutements qu'on a plus de R 70 millions ?

The Prime Minister: As I said, there are 22 additional posts and then there are other operation costs.

May I also remind the House that there is a Parliamentary Committee that normally oversees and monitors the operations of ICAC. So, questions can be asked at the Committee with regard to staff and to how much is being paid.

Mr Assirvaden: Vous avez un breakdown de ces R 170 millions ?

The Prime Minister: No, but I have already said it is provision for payment of 22 additional posts.

Mr Bhagwan: My question?

The Prime Minister: The Board is composed of Mr Navin Beekarry, Mr Peerun and Mr Namdarkhan. The contract of the Director General of the ICAC is ending end of June.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Mr Bhagwan: What about the monthly salary of the Director?

The Prime Minister: The monthly salary? I shall get the information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Item 26313.026 – *Other Operating Costs* of the tune of Rs27,585,000, can the hon. Prime Minister give us a breakdown of other operating costs?

The Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, let me say that there is a Parliamentary Committee in which Members of that Committee can ask all those questions with regard to...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Order!

The Prime Minister: I cannot reply questions when the law makes provision for a Parliamentary Committee to which the ICAC is answerable. The process here is that we vote for a budget.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Order! Order! No discussion, no debate!

Mr Bhagwan: On a point of order. We are not Members of that Committee, and this is Parliament. This is why we ask questions and we expect replies. Parliament is sovereign. We are asked to vote.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member should understand that his party has a membership on the Committee.

The Chairperson: Let me give my ruling on this.

The Prime Minister: Look, as the Opposition is represented on that Committee, it can get the information from it.

The Chairperson: Let me give my ruling on this, hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Let me give my ruling! Any Committee is an emanation of Parliament, and the case is closed. Next question, hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: It has already been canvassed. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: No, I am not hiding. You can ask these questions...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26323 – *Extra- Budgetary Units*, I find Rs2 m. becoming Rs1.5 m. and nothing for the next 2 years for ICAC. May I know why?

The Prime Minister: It is a computerisation project and the provision is made for support and maintenance of the case management system, and for additional cyber security measures and controls.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: With regard to Item 26313, can we know if ever the Director General has travelled and if there has been any amount paid as *per diem* and travel cost?

The Prime Minister: Again, this question can be asked at the level of the Committee which will provide the information.

The Chairperson: Next question, hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Mr Chairperson, I just want to find out about the salary that was raised by hon. Bhagwan and, in addition, I would like to know whether there are any allowances and fringe benefits attached to the position of the Director General.

The Prime Minister: We are coming back, round and round, on the same thing; on the same issue.

The Chairperson: Any further question?

Vote 1-13 – Independent Commission Against Corruption (Rs225,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.24 p.m.)

Vote 1-14 – National Human Rights Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Mr Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: With regard to the National Rights Commission, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister the number of cases lodged, heard and disposed of within the year ending June 2021?

The Prime Minister: The total number of complaints are 117; resolved, 94, and ongoing 23.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 26313.060 – *National Human Rights Commission*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the composition of the Human Rights Commission and fees paid to its members and Chairman?

The Prime Minister: For the Human Rights Division, the Chairperson is Mr D. B. Seetulsingh; the Deputy Chairperson is Mrs L. Y. Lam Hung, and the members are Mr S. Lautan and Mr J. J. Ravat.

For the National Preventive Mechanism Division, the Deputy Chairperson is Mr M. I. Torabally; the members are Mrs N. Gaya-Teeluckdharry and Mr J. G. M. Vieillesse.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mr Uteem: Also for the fees, not just the composition.

The Prime Minister: Fees for the Chairperson, Mr Seetulsingh, Rs176,000 per month plus salary compensation and there are some other benefits. For the Deputy Chairperson of Human Rights Division, Rs140,000 per month plus salary compensation and other benefits. And for the two members, an all-inclusive monthly allowance of Rs74,350 per month.

For the National Preventive Mechanism Division, the Deputy Chairperson, Rs140,000 per month plus salary compensation and other benefits and for the two members, salary of Rs110,000 per month plus salary compensation and other benefits.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can we know from the Item 26323.060 – *National Human Rights Commission*, the number of complaints received and resolved?

The Prime Minister: Number of complaints, as I have replied, I think. 117 complaints received, 94 resolved and 23 ongoing.

Vote 1-14 National Human Rights Commission (Rs27,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.28p.m.)

Vote 1-15 Office of Ombudsperson for Children was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Item 22900.903 – *Awareness Campaigns (Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Children in the Republic of Mauritius –EU Funded)*, I can see that the figures keep decreasing year after year. May we know why is it that the figures are decreasing?

The Prime Minister: Item 22900.903– *Awareness Campaigns (Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Children in the Republic of Mauritius –EU Funded)*. It is an EU Project for a duration of 3 years, starting November 2019. The project is not scheduled according to Financial Years but rather with funds being disbursed by the EU and the implementation of the project in accordance with a scheduled Action Plan. An amount of 85,000 Euros was disbursed on 10 December 2019. The balance as at 31 May 2021 stands at Rs2,890,231.55. Another instalment is expected to be disbursed in December 2021, following expenditure of 70% of the total amount disbursed initially. The estimate expenditure for period July 2021 to June 2022 and 2022-2023 is indicative and that may vary according to the current situation due to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 - *Rent*. I see a substantial increase, 100% if not more. Can the Prime Minister apprise us whether the Office has been relocated elsewhere and this explains the substantial increase in rent?

The Prime Minister: The increase in rent is due to the relocation of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to Ebène Heights Building at Ebène as from October 2021.

The Chairperson: I move to page 40. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Mr Chairperson, Capital Expenditure, Item 31112.401 – *Upgrading of Office Building* at a project value of Rs6 m., can we know from the Prime Minister what are the upgrading works that will be carried out?

The Prime Minister: This is Provision for the relocation of Office. An amount of Rs6 m. was allocated in Financial Year 2020-2021 for fit-out works for the new building proposed to be rented. No amount was used as renting of new building was not finalised. Now following the unsuccessful bidding process for relocation of the office, the 5th floor of Ebène Heights, NPF Building has been identified for relocation of the Office as from October 2021. The fit-out works are expected to start in July 2021.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Page 41.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 41 first. You have the floor.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you. I would like to know the number of complaints received and number of cases solved by the Office of Ombudsperson for Children.

The Prime Minister: Let me give these details -

For August 2018 to July 2019 -

(a) Total number of cases reported	- 440
(b) Number of cases disposed of	- 355
(c) In progress	- 32
(d) And awaiting report	- 53

For August 2019 to May 2020 -

(a) Total number of cases reported	- 267
(b) Number of cases disposed of	- 171
(c) In progress	- 44
(d) Awaiting report	- 52

For July 2020 to May 2021 -

(a) Cases reported	- 289
(b) Disposed of	- 201

- (c) In progress - 21
- (d) Awaiting report. - 67

Vote 1-15 Office of Ombudsperson for Children (Rs25,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.34 p.m.)

Vote 1-16 Independent Police Complaints Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: In regard to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, the number of cases that have been referred to it and successfully solved so far, within this year.

The Prime Minister: 01 July 2020 to 15 June 2021-

- (a) Total received – 2,216
- (b) Number of complaints disposed of after investigation – 944
- (c) Number of complaints still under investigation – 1272.
- (d) Number of complaints withdrawn – 183
- (e) Number of complaints referred to DPP – 18
- (f) Number of complaints referred to the DFSC – 5
- (g) Number of complaints settled by conciliation – 58

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same item, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister, who is the Chairperson and the members of the Commission and the salaries and allowances drawn by them respectively?

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson is Mrs Devianee Bissoondoyal, monthly salary Rs164,000 plus salary compensation. And there are other benefits. Full time member, Mr Phalraj Servansingh, monthly salary Rs110,000 plus salary compensation and other benefits. Part-time member, Mr V. Ramchurn, monthly all-inclusive allowance of Rs74,350 comprising gratuity, cashable leaves, passage benefits and end-of-year bonus.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: The question has already been canvassed, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Last line - Other Operating Costs, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what these costs relate to?

The Prime Minister: Other Operating Costs? I need to have this information. There are, in fact, other staff costs including travelling, overtime, staff welfare, training, missions and capacity building and other administrative costs, and incidentals, IT, hospitality, publications, postage, stationery, sensitisation, office equipment and furniture.

Vote 1-16 Independent Police Complaints Commission (Rs13,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.38 p.m.)

Vote 1-17 Financial Crime Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Can I come to the recurrent expenditure - Financial Crime Commission, I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether this body has been set up or will be set up because it is supposed to be the Apex Body to wage war on white-collar crimes, fraud and corruption and if it is going to take over the ICAC?

The Prime Minister: It has been announced in the Budget that it will be set up and it has not yet been set up. Anyway, there is the need to come with a Bill in the House for legislating on the Financial Crime Commission.

Dr. Boolell: Can you speed up matters?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry?

Dr. Boolell: Can you speed it up?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we shall speed up matters.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister how the sum of Rs10 m. will be used, can we have the details thereof? Because it has been an

Estimate since 2020 and if we go up to 2023, it is only Rs10 m. that is being earmarked. Can we have the details thereof, why it is a constant sum Rs10 m.?

The Prime Minister: We normally indicate an amount. This is the provision for the running costs, and as I said, we need to come with the Bill. The Bill has to be voted and then provisions will be made by the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for setting it up.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Although the Commission has not been set up, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if we can have an idea on the terms and conditions of the Head of the Commission? Will it be appointed by the Prime Minister or the President of the Republic in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: This is a question in anticipation!

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: It has already been canvassed. I have one question on the next page.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regards to item 22030 – Rent, I see Rs5,075,000 for last year and Rs4,075,000 for this year, a significant reduction, can we know why?

The Prime Minister: Which item?

The Chairperson: Which item are you referring to?

Mr Juman: Item 22030.

The Prime Minister: Page 22030?

Mr Juman: Page 44.

The Chairperson: We are still on page 43. If you do not mind, we will finish it.

The Prime Minister: You are going too fast.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: I will wait for the Bill, Mr Chairperson.

The Prime Minister: For the Bill or for the pill?

(Interruptions)

Vote 1-17 Financial Crime Commission (Rs10,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.41 p.m.)

Vote 1-18 Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: With regard to item 21110.005 - Extra Assistance - increasing from Rs1.5 m. being doubled to Rs3.3 m., can I ask the hon. Prime Minister the reason for this?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is because the Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services has planned to be fully operational with the recruitment of 12 technical staff on contract this financial year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Item 21111.002 – Travelling and Transport, I find that there is an increase for Rs400 m. to Rs1,020,000?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision is due to the filling of the post Ombudsperson for Financial Services and recruitment of staff on contract.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Same question - 22030 to the hon. Prime Minister, why rental costs has reduced from Rs5,075,000 to Rs4,075,000? Can we have details of the rental agreement?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the payment of rent in respect of office space. The Office is actually occupying an extent of 256m² on Level 8 of SICOM Tower at Ebène, so, the lessor is SICOM Ltd. The Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance has a lease agreement for a period of 10 years from 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2025, which includes the space temporarily occupied by this Office. Accordingly, part of the rent is met under our budget.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister the name of the Ombudsperson for Financial Services and his salary package?

The Prime Minister: Dr. Mitrajeet Dhaneshwar Maraye has been appointed Ombudsperson for Financial Services on 26 February 2021 for a period of 4 years. The terms and conditions – salary is Rs140,000 monthly and there are other benefits like transport, allowance and leave.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Mr Chairperson, page 44, item 22040 – Office Equipment and Furniture, the amount for financial year 2021-2022 has doubled compared to the last financial year. Can we know why?

The Prime Minister: Provision for a local access networking system, a photocopy machine and other office equipment and provision is made for the purchase of office tables, office chairs and filing cabinets, an increase in provision also for 12 additional staff to be recruited on contract.

The Chairperson: Page 45! Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Coming to item 31122.802 - Acquisition of IT equipment, may I know who has been awarded this contract, if it has been?

The Prime Minister: No, it is provision for the purchase of IT equipment to be allocated to staff to be recruited on contract.

The Chairperson: Page 46!

Vote 1-18 Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services (Rs21,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.46 p.m.)

(The Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and external Communications and Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Island and Territorial Integrity)

Vote 2-1 Prime Minister's Office was called.

The Chairperson: Page 50! Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to *item 20100 – Annual Allowance* and *item 21110 – Personal Emoluments respectively*, can we know the number of advisors attached to the Prime Minister’s Office and their names and pay package?

The Prime Minister: This provision is meant to pay the salaries, bonus, and refund of leaves of Advisors attached to the Prime Minister’s Office. There is a total of 14 Advisers, out of whom four provide the services on a *pro bono* basis, without any fee or salary. I shall circulate the list of Advisers. I have it among my papers, but there are so many pages here.

The Chairperson: We move to page 51. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: *Item 26313.025 - Independent Broadcasting Authority, Rs3.5 m.* Can we know the composition of the Board, what is the monthly pay package of the Chairperson and allowances paid? And also, all the other members, their terms of contract, and when the contract of the Chairperson is coming to an end?

The Prime Minister: The present composition of the Board –

Chairman: Mr Rajkumarsingh Bhooneswar with a total monthly fee of Rs68,200;

Member: Mr Dheerendra Kumar Dabee, Rs24,167 and for all the members it is the same amount.

The other members are: Mr Satydanand Aujeet, Mrs Kushmunda Fulena-Boodhoo, Mrs Marie Anne Janick Jaunbocus, Mr Dick Christophe Ng Sui Wa, Mr Anirood Pursunon, Mr Sachin Jootun and Mr Sohun Neerunjun.

Mr Bhagwan: I asked about the contract...

The Prime Minister: For the Chairperson’s contract? The date he was appointed, 23 January 2020. I need to check when it comes to an end. I believe it is for three years. Term of office is normally for three years. So, it is for three years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. *Item 22900.985 – Expenses icw Chagos Archipelago*, where we are very proud that the ruling given by the International Court of Justice establishes our legitimate claim over our sovereignty. Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he would be able to give us a breakdown in connection with Chagos Archipelago over the Rs50 m. earmarked?

The Prime Minister: Provision required for a visit to the Chagos Archipelago to conduct an assessment mission for resettlement, hiring of lobbyist, and other expenses.

Dr. Boolell: Circulate the breakdown.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have the breakdown, I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 22120.017 – Legal fees.* May I know from the hon. Prime Minister who are the legal advisors and details of the breakdown of this Rs40 m. earmarked, please?

The Prime Minister: Fees to be paid to our external lawyers and reimbursement of the out-of-pocket expenses for advice in respect of the Chagos Archipelago and a case against Maldives. As for advice provided to Government in respect of the Chagos Archipelago, our external lawyers have to be paid at an hourly rate up to a cap of 250,000 pounds for work done during the year 2021. The external lawyers are Professor Philippe Sands QC, Mr Paul Reichler, Professor Pierre Klein, Ms Alison Macdonald QC, Mr Andrew Loewenstein, Mr Yuri Parkhomenko, Ms Christina Hioureas and Mr Remi Reichhold.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Aumeer! Hon. Nagalingum! Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 22060.001 – Buildings,* where a sum of Rs28 m...

The Chairperson: Excuse me, which page?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Page 51.

The Chairperson: No, we have not reached...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: You are not following.

The Chairperson: Yes, one time, you got me.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: So, *Item 22060.001 – Buildings,* where a sum of Rs28 m. has been earmarked for the year 2021-2022, whereas this year it is Rs2 m. Can we have more information on that?

The Prime Minister: Because of major leakage problem, the provision is made for waterproofing at the new Treasury Building and repair of part of the roof, including

replacement of broken shingles. The increase is due to major repairs of the roof, and the detailed scope of work is in preparation.

The Chairperson: So, we move to page 53. At page 52, I don't see anybody. Hon. Nagalingum? So, we move to page 53...

(Interruptions)

The Table is confused.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but there are also 53, 54 on the sheet of paper I received.

(Interruptions)

Please! Please! On the sheet of paper I received, there is nobody on page 52. So, you take page 52. Please, go ahead!

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: You do not have questions? Page 52!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 52 item 22900.901 – *National Day Celebration*, this year an amount of Rs20 m. was budgeted. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how much has been utilised because there was no official National Day Celebration?

The Prime Minister: Sorry, page 52, which item?

Mr Ameer Meea: Item 22900.901.

The Prime Minister: You will have to bear with me because the pages in my brief are not in the same order, Mr Chairperson.

For the National Day Celebration, the decrease in provision is because less activities will be organised due to prevailing pandemic and social distancing. Official ceremony, including logistics, flags for children and other activities: Rs8.5 m. and cakes and refreshments for school children: Rs6.5 m.

Mr Ameer Meea: This year how much has been spent since there was no celebration.

The Prime Minister: How much has been spent? Actual expenditure as at May, none.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: At the bottom of the page 52, item 22060.001 – *Maintenance Buildings*, can I know from the Prime Minister who has the contract for maintenance of these buildings?

The Prime Minister: Who has the contract, I need to get the information,

I am sorry, Mr Chairperson, as I said, there has been a wrong pagination on my brief. Which one is it about?

Mr Uteem: 22060.001 – *Maintenance of Building*, Rs28 m. earmarked for this current year. So, I just want to know who has won the contract for maintenance.

The Prime Minister: Provision made for maintenance of equipment, electrical equipment, lift and air conditioning systems, maintenance contract for UPS, fire-fighting and contractor for maintenance of electrical equipment is KC Electricals Ltd for a value of Rs1,529,500, inclusive of VAT.

There is a contractor for heating, ventilation and air-conditioning. *Maintenance Technique Conditionnement d’Air* for an amount of Rs1,690,500, inclusive of VAT. There is a contractor for maintenance services of lifts, Elevator/Escalator Services, and the contract value is Rs140,553, inclusive of VAT.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 53!

Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: A l’item 22120 – *Fees of which Restructuring of the Mauritius Police Force* mais que R 10 million. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut nous donner des détails concernant ce titre très flatteur mais que R 10 million pour la restructuration de la *Mauritius Police Force* ?

The Prime Minister: 53?

The Chairperson: Page 53.

The Prime Minister: Consultancy services to further improve the efficiency of the Mauritius Police Force. We intend to recruit a Consultant with regard to the restructuring of and advising on how best to improve the Police service.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Under item 31132.114 – *E-Passport Project*, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister to provide us some details on this project?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made to meet initial cost of the implementation of a new e-passport which offers enhanced security features to prevent fraud and tampering.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect to item 22900.909 – *Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit*, I see a substantial increase in the running cost of the Counterterrorism Unit, if the Prime Minister would be kind enough to give us a breakdown as to how this money is being spent and to the activities of this Counterterrorism Unit, what have been its activities?

The Prime Minister: This is provision for the running cost of the Counterterrorism Unit. The hon. Member, having been in previous Governments, would surely appreciate that it is not appropriate to provide much details as asked for.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 31122.999 – *Other Machinery and Equipment (c) National Security Services*.

The Prime Minister: Sorry, which item?

Mr Bhagwan: Under item 31122.999 at page 53 - *National Security Services* (NSS), there is an increase from Rs3 m. to Rs35 m., can we know whether these votes for the NSS which follows us everyday...

The Prime Minister: No, if that was the case, I would know where you would be going. So, I do not know.

Mr Bhagwan: I suppose not. Rs35 m., is this for the running of the NSS? Because from Rs3 m. it is Rs35 m.

The Prime Minister: Provision for replacement of the 3 lifts at the New Government Centre. The contract was awarded on 16 April 2021 to Manser Saxon Elevators Ltd for an amount of Rs15,249,575. There is a retention money of 10% payable in 2022 and 2023 and the provision of Rs5 m. also made for the installation of CCTV camera at the Government Centre.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Under item 31122.805 – *Acquisition of Security Equipment*. Can we have more details from the hon. Prime Minister, please, as to the security equipment being acquired?

The Prime Minister: As I have already replied, it is not appropriate to give any details with regard to this. It is for security reasons.

The Chairperson: Hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: It has already been canvassed.

The Chairperson: So, we move on to page 54! Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: I would like to know the composition of the EOC and their salaries, please.

The Prime Minister: Sorry? The composition of EOC Board? The president is Mr Henry Denny Vellien: an *ad hoc* allowance of Rs27,000 monthly; and the members are Mr Kader Lautun: Rs16,000 per sitting of the Tribunal; another member, Mrs Mohini Bali: Rs16,000 per sitting of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.04 - *Media Trust Fund*, it is planned Rs3 m. again. Can we have a break down as to how this money is being spent and then who are the members of the Media Trust Fund?

The Prime Minister: I need to have that information. Maybe we can take another question. Mr Rama Krishna Veeramundar has been appointed by the Public Service Commission as Director of Information Services on a contract basis for a period of two years with effect from 15 January 2020. The salary is Rs92,000 per month with benefits.

Dr. Boolell: With all due respect to you, Prime Minister, I think you have been given the wrong reply. Question put is in relation to Media Trust Fund.

The Prime Minister: The Board of the Media Trust Fund was last reconstituted on 30 September 2019 for a period of 2 years with the Chairperson Mr Chayman P. Surajbali and the members, Mr Pradeep Goburden, Mrs Geerisha Devi Nunkoo-Moorut, Mr Taluck Beeharry, Mr Jean-Christophe Michael Francois, Mr Jac Daniel Jean Claude Le Roy, Ms Fateema Bibi Capery and Mr Jean Marie Gangaram.

The Chairperson: We move to page 55. Hon. Osman Mahomed first!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. With regard to Item 22100.005 - *Public Notices*, I noticed that this year there was a provision for Rs10 m. but subsequently going to Rs1 m. in subsequent years. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to provide us the details and the breakdown and how much was actually spent during the year?

The Prime Minister: *Public Notices* – provision is made for the payment of Government Press notices in newspapers. The amount earmarked for the Financial Year 2021/2022 is Rs1 m. only because each Ministry is paying for its own Press communiqués now.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: On the same item, Mr Chairperson, *Public Notices*, can the Prime Minister at least provide us with a breakdown of the Estimates 2020 and 2021, of the amount paid to the written Press, the radios, the electronic newspapers and a breakdown for the Financial Year 2021 and also the estimates which we are given, only Rs1 m. for 2021-2022. What would be the total amount?

The Prime Minister: I need to get that information as it is not in my brief.

The Chairperson: Can we move to another question?

The Prime Minister: Expenses on public notices for July 2019 - June 2020 - Rs6,278,078.25 and I can circulate all the details about each media.

The Chairperson: Mrs Navarre-Marie, page 55.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: It has been already canvassed.

The Chairperson: So, we move to page 56. Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31132.102 - *Revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Card System* to the tune of Rs40 m. Can the hon. Prime Minister elaborate on this item?

The Prime Minister: The revamping of the project, Rs40 m. will represent 20% of the contract value for Financial Year 2021-2022. In preparation is technical specification for March to July 2021. The procurement exercise, 10 months, August 2021-May 2021. With a view to ensuring the timely implementation of the project, the Technical Committee under the Chair of the SHA has set up four subcommittees as follows -

1. The Legal and Policy Committee under the Chair of the Prime Minister's Office.
2. The Infrastructure Committee chaired by Central Informatics Bureau.
3. The Application and Card Usage under the Ministry of TCI.
4. The HR and Logistics Committee under the Chair of the Civil Status Division.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: In regard to the same item - *Revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Card System*, the project is to cost Rs230 m. There was a Cabinet decision for that Technical Committee to look into whether to go ahead with this project. Can I take it from the Prime Minister that the Committee has decided that the Identity Card Project should be revamped and is going to cost taxpayers Rs230 m.?

The Prime Minister: We have no choice! I am surprised that the hon. Member is asking that question because it has a life and it is coming to an end. So, we are bound to do so, otherwise we shall start to have problems with the card.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Chairperson, on page 56, item 28211.015 - *Muslim Family Council*. This year an amount of R1 m. was budgeted and next year Rs1.8 m. Can I ask the Prime Minister whether the council has been functional this year and how many times have they met?

The Prime Minister: I need to get the information. The activities at the newly constituted MFC under the Chair of Mr I. C. Lalloo, from 11 January 2021 – 08 March 2021

–

(i)	New Nikahs registered	– 200
(ii)	Request for Islamic divorces and mediation new cases	– 26
(iii)	Number of hearings for 8 sittings held	– 49
(iv)	Talaqs given during hearings, the file close	– 5
(v)	Dissolution to be pronounced by council at next hearing	– 4
(vi)	To reschedule for next hearings	– 32
(vii)	Application from Imams approved by council	– 4

- (viii) Files closed at the request of parties – 2
- (ix) To call for witnesses so as to proceed for dissolution – 2

The Chairperson: Hon. Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Still on item 28212.007 *Transfers to Households - Savings Culture Campaign*, can we know what the Savings Culture Campaign is?

The Prime Minister: The provision to meet payment of Rs200 per child born in line with the Savings Culture Scheme introduced by Government since January 1997. The scheme is implemented through MauBank Ltd and the actual expenditure as at April 2021 is Rs527,800.

The Chairperson: We move to page 57. We move to page 58. We move to page 59.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Can we have the qualification of the Director, Information Services and the Principal Information Officer?

The Chairperson: Which page?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: 59.

The Chairperson: 59. Good! Page 59.

The Prime Minister: I have the information. You are talking about GIS, right? As I said earlier, Mr Rama Krishna Veeramundar, but I need to get the qualification. Academic background –

- (a) *Diplôme de Français, Professionnel Affaires Niveau C1 ;*
- (b) *Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris, France ;*
- (c) *Diplôme de Français Professionnel Affaires Niveau A, B2 – Mention Très bien, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris, France ;*
- (d) *Diplôme D'études en Langue Française Niveau B2, Centre International D'Études Pédagogiques, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, France ;*
- (e) GCE A Level; School Certificate, Cambridge;
- (f) Certificate of Attendance and Training by Thompson Reuters Foundation;
- (g) Certificate of Attendance and Training by African Union.

And he has also attended a number of training courses.

The Chairperson: Page 59, any question?

We have reached page 60.

Vote 2-1 Prime Minister's Office (Rs1,225,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(8.19 p.m.)

Vote 2-2 External Communications was called.

The Chairperson: Page 65, Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Yes, thank you Mr Chairperson. Page 65, item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultants*, an amount of Rs8 m. was earmarked for last financial year. Can we have a breakdown of this amount?

The Prime Minister: Sorry, which item? Can you repeat, please?

Mr Quirin: Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultants*, Rs8 m. was earmarked for last financial year, can I have a breakdown and can the hon. Prime Minister tell us to whom these fees were paid?

The Prime Minister: Fees to Consultants, there is a provision of €500,000 which was provided under an EU grant for the conduct of a study on improving productivity and efficiency at the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. for a sum of €460,000 and for the implementation of a report for a sum €40,000. The study has been completed and the final report submitted in June 2021, Rs2 m. has been provided for its implementation during Financial Year 2021-2022.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22040 – *Office Equipment and Furniture*, I found that there has been a significant increase in the amount, may I know why?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to renewal and replacement of office equipment and furniture which was postponed to Financial Year 2021-2022 due to budgetary constraints. There are purchases of a heavy duty photocopier machine, printers, laptops, fax machines, communications equipment, like videoconferencing facilities, replacement of old PCs, replacement and purchase of office furniture, cabinets, racks and shelves.

The Chairperson: Let's move to page 66.

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 65, item 22030 – *Rent*, there is an amount of Rs4.1 m. May we have the details of this rent, to whom it was paid, and the surface area rented?

The Prime Minister: Provision required for payment of rent on the first floor of Newton Tower, lessor is Belem Ltd, owners are Mr Teck Yan Chan Sui Ko and Mr Michael Chung Kai Shing, for 6,225 square feet at the rate of Rs40 per square foot, excluding VAT and the office rented on renewable contracts since 01 March 2011. The contract makes provision for an increase of 15% on rental upon renewal which has not been claimed and contract has been renewed on 01 March 2020 for 3 years without the 15% increase.

The Chairperson: We move to page 66.

Vote 2-2 External Communications (Rs22,800,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, given the time, I will suggest a break for one and a half hour.

At 8.24 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.02 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

The Chairperson: Please, be seated.

Vote 2-3 Civil Aviation was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22120.008 - *Fees to Consultants - Advance Passenger Information System*, may the hon. Prime Minister give some details regarding the Advance Passenger Information System?

The Prime Minister: For fees to consultants, a contract of Rs32 m. was awarded to PricewaterhouseCoopers for consultancy services for the implementation of the Advance Passenger Information System for the Government of Mauritius in July 2017. The contract is due for completion in Financial Year 2021-2022. An amount Rs7 m. is being provided in Financial Year 2021-2022 to cater for the final payments and three months' defect liability period.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Item 21110.002 - *Salary Compensation*. Will the hon. Prime Minister tell us about the increase from Rs1.5 m. to Rs4.8 m.?

The Prime Minister: There is increase in provision due to payment of salary compensation of Rs375 per month as from January 2021 to Officers drawing a monthly basic wage or salary up to Rs50,000 and for filling of vacant posts.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: At page 67, under item 22060.002 *Maintenance – Other Structures*. There has been an increase of Rs12 m., from Rs54 m. to Rs66 m. Do we have the details of these other structures and why there has been an increase?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is mainly due to increase in exchange rates and two additional maintenance contracts awarded, that is, for CCTV and the Land WiFi Systems.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: At page 67, item 22120.020 - *Inspection and Audit Fees* where Rs46 m. has been budgeted. May we have the details of whom these fees are being paid?

The Prime Minister: It is provision for payment of resident inspectors and per diem as follows –

- (i) The Bureau Veritas – 342,708 Euros
- (ii) *Organisme Pour la Sécurité de l'Aviation Civile* – 310,500 Euros
- (iii) Air Navigation Services Inspector – USD 300,000, and then, per diem, Rs2 m., making a total of Rs46 m.,

And the increase in provision is due to fluctuation in exchange rates.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Under item 22060.005 - *IT equipment*, may we know the supplier, please?

The Prime Minister: 22060.005 - *IT Equipment*, relates to the software of the e-Authority and to renewal of licence fee and once yearly payment which is under process. The increase in provision is due to fluctuation in exchange rate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bérenger!

Ms Bérenger: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: Then we move to page 67. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 21110.006 - *Cash in lieu of leave*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details?

The Prime Minister: Regarding 21110.006 - *Cash in lieu of Leave*, the provision is made for the payment of unutilised sick leave for the year 2021 to eligible officers, and the increase is in provision as unutilised sick leave was not payable last year as decided by Government.

The Chairperson: We move to page 68. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Mr Chairperson. In respect of Capital Expenditure 31112.999 - *Replacement of High Frequency Communication Equipment* with a project value of Rs173 m., Rs18 m. earmarked for 2021 and then there is a quantum leap to Rs138,400,000. Can I ask the Prime Minister because we are talking of a sophisticated High Frequency Communication Equipment which has, I take it for granted, a very high frequency range. And we have to make sure also that the atmospheric condition will not affect the propagation of signals. So, I want to hear from the Prime Minister in respect to this project value which entails a massive cost, what kind of equipment is it, to whom have the contract been awarded and what is the range of this High Frequency Communication Equipment?

The Chairperson: *Sa ene PNQ hein!*

Dr. Boolell : Non, non !

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: The High Frequency Communication Equipment forms part of the communication system to provide air to ground communication between aircraft and air traffic controller within our Flight Information Region. The existing equipment has reached the end of its lifetime and provision is being made for its replacement. The project value is Rs173 m. The project is at a valuation stage at the Central Procurement Board.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28217.001 - *Insurance*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the reason behind the increase from Rs6 m. to Rs11 m.?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for a third party Airport Liability Insurance Cover. The premium is payable for third party Airport Liability Insurance and a new contract was awarded, amounting to 261,317 USD for period July 2021 to June 2022. The increase in the provision is due to increase in premium to be paid and also because of the fluctuation in the exchange rate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: The question has already been answered.

The Chairperson: Oh my God! Hon. Bérenger!

Ms Bérenger: Already answered.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes thank you. Item 31112.999 (f) – *Upgrading works for VSAT Station at Agalega and St Brandon*, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister some more details about it because it is going to be implemented as from this year?

The Prime Minister: The VSAT Stations of St Brandon and Agalega were constructed in year 2000, and the provision is for extended VHF/AM coverage within the Mauritian Flight Information Region. The existing security perimeter fence of the stations has been severely corroded and needs to be replaced. There are also minor civil works such as waterproofing and painting of the stations. There is also requirement to install a generator set for the Non-Directional Beacon Station of Agalega. The NDB is used for take-off and landing of Dornier at the airstrip of Agalega. The project comprises the replacement of security fence and minor civil works for the VSAT Stations at Agalega and St Brandon which is estimated at Rs5 m.

Now, a provision of Rs4.7 m. is being made in financial year 2021-22 and Rs300,000 for 2022-23 as retention money.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan! So, we move to page 69. Page 70.

Vote 2-3 Civil Aviation (Rs502,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(10.13 p.m.)

Vote 2-4 Government Printing was called.

The Chairperson: Page 71. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 71, Item 22060 - *Maintenance*, an amount of Rs6,075,000 was earmarked for last financial year. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us a breakdown of this amount, and as well as the name of the company to whom the contract has been awarded, please?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made to cater for repairs, plumbing and electrical works in office and workshops. The decrease in provision is due to relocation to the new building and no major repairs are being carried out in the existing buildings. As for maintenance of plants and equipment, provision for maintenance and purchase of spare parts for machinery and equipment, that is, alarm system RSA Trading, the contract period 01 December 2020 to 30 June 2021 at Rs70,420 monthly.

The existing contract is being renewed on a month to month basis pending new award for the new building. The air conditioner contract was awarded to Easy Cool Limited for period 25 November 2020 to 21 November 2021 pending maintenance agreement with the service provider for the new building.

Mr Chairperson, we have a long list - uninterrupted power supply, we have the passenger goods lift, we have generator to Powersure Limited, termites to Hardy Henry, rodents to Alpha Pest Control, water purifier, purchase of spare parts, including payment for labour cost to main service providers which include mainly Intergraph limited and EO Solutions and then there are other minor expenses.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Item 22100.001 - *Paper and Materials*, may we know the name of the supplier or suppliers? There are many.

The Prime Minister: For 22100 - *Publication*, provision is made for the items of paper, namely white bond paper 70gsm and 80gsm. Suppliers of papers -

- (a) Ramtoola Papers Ltd for a total amount of Rs6,775,225.
- (b) Another Company, Psion Ltd, Rs519, 225.
- (c) Master Printing and Stationary, Rs1,983,750.
- (d) Raffray Brothers Co Ltd, Rs4,838,970, and
- (e) Federal Trading Ltd, Rs152, 375.

The Chairperson: We turn to page 72. Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Item 31112.001 – *Construction of New Building*. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us some details on the building and the expected date of completion please?

The Prime Minister: The project value is for Rs512,800,000 construction cost. We have acquisition of new furniture, relocation and transfer. The total amount paid to-date is Rs365,912,449. There is a balance outstanding on the project including new furniture and transfer of cost of Rs146, 870,551 less the defect liability of Rs10,870,551 payable in the year 2022-2023. The total provision with regard to the financial year is Rs136 m. The contractor is Hyvec Partners Ltd and K. Chady.

The Consultant is Design Forum Ltd. The Director is Ms N. Rughoo. The date of handing over of the site was 04 May 2019 and the date start of works was on 24 May 2019. The original date of completion was 28 August 2020 but the completion date has been extended to May 2021 due to lockdown. We now expect new extended completion date to be September 2021.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 31132.801 – *Acquisition of Software*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister which software are we talking about and who is the contractor developing that software?

The Prime Minister: Provision is required for the acquisition of a new software called the MERP Solutions to computerise the whole process system in the Government Printing Department from administration to production. The objective is to modernise the existing procedures in order to provide a better quality and more efficient service. The project was spread over two years with a provision of Rs8 m. for the first year and Rs8 m. for the second year.

Vote 2-4 Government Printing (Rs281,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(10.21 p.m.)

Vote 2-5 Police Service was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Which page?

The Chairperson: 77 first. You do not have one? Hon. Juman, page 77.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us with regard to Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, the number of officers on contract, their salaries and allowance?

The Prime Minister: The officers on contract are -

1) The Commissioner of Police, Mr Khemraj Servansingh.

Date: 03 May 2021- 02 August 2021

2) Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr Heman Jangi.

Date: 03 June 2020- 02 June 2022

3) Mr Jugdish Fokeera, Advisor VIPSU on one-year contract, renewable annually.

I am informed that they are paid in accordance with PRB 2016.

The Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 77, under heading Recurrent Expenditure, Item 28 – *Other Expense* has risen from Rs350,000 to Rs2.5 m. Can we know from the Prime Minister the reasons that explain that rise in Other Expense?

The Prime Minister: Recurrent Expenditure, what Other Expense? No, this is Total Expenditure.

Mr Doolub: On page 78, Sorry. It is under Item 28217.

The Chairperson: We are on page 77, hon. Doolub.

The Prime Minister: This is Total Expenditure. If the hon. Member can refer to me a specific item, I can then provide the information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Page 77, Sub-Head 2-504 – *Support to Community*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, which amount is allocated to the Family Support Unit?

The Prime Minister: But again, this is the Sub-Head. Mr Chairperson, you can provide guidance because questions must refer to any specific item so that I can provide the information. Because there are Headings and Sub-Headings, and if I have to provide the information with regard to the headings, it will contain everything. It must relate normally to an item.

The Chairperson: Page 77, Sub-Head 2-501.

The Prime Minister: Yes. That I can.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Under Item 21110.006 - *Cash in lieu of Leave* - Rs35 m. Can we have some details?

The Prime Minister: For Item 21110.006 – *Cash in lieu of Leave*, provision is made for the payment of unutilised sick leaves for the year 2021.

The Chairperson: Page 78.

The Prime Minister: It is still the same Sub-Heading, 2-501.

The Chairperson: I am suspending the sitting for a few minutes.

At 10.26 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.35 p.m. with Mr Chairperson in the Chair.

Mr Chairperson: Please be seated. So, I will go page by page as I have announced before. We are on page 78.

Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900.973 – Expenses in connection with Safe City Project, may we get more details on the sum being allocated of Rs700 m. and the component of the introduction of the facial recognition technology software, the amount that it will cost within that budgeted sum, please.

The Prime Minister: Provision made to pay Mauritius Telecom for the installation of –

- (a) 4,000 intelligent video surveillance cameras;
- (b) 300 intelligent traffic surveillance cameras;

- (c) 4,500 trunking smart handsets;
- (d) 350 vehicle-mounted radios,
- (e) 150 static radios,
- (f) an Emergency Response Management System, and
- (g) a command and control centres as per the lease agreement with Mauritius Telecom.

You have asked about the face recognition, but, as I have said, I have replied to a PQ earlier in this House and I said that it was not yet installed, it was not yet ready and it is in the process and I believe that it will record such data as those for habitual criminals and for those people who are missing, but there will be data of the whole population.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: For item 22900.955 – Gender Mainstreaming, Rs200,000 has been allocated last year, may we know how it has been used and this year’s Rs200,000, how will it be used if there is any plan?

The Prime Minister: Gender-responsive budgeting initiative which is a rationale within which the vote item 22900.955 Gender Mainstreaming was included. Funds to be used to conduct training of new recruits on the gender concept and the importance of mainstreaming gender in service delivery and to undertake a study to identify the gender gaps within the Police department.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 22060.005 – IT Equipment from Rs50 m. to Rs95 m., can we know some details of this increase?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of maintenance agreement for the passport personalisation system turnkey solution for immigration and border control, for the maintenance of IT equipment, both hardware and software, in foreign currencies, purchase of spares for Line Barracks, Police Executive Services, Airport Police and Passport and Immigration Office and IT equipment for crime occurrence tracking system phase 2 and I am informed that the increase is due to provision wrongly made in financial year 2020-2021. In fact, the actual amount payable for maintenance IT is Rs95 m. in financial year 2020-2021.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under 22900.973 – Expenses in connection with the Safe City Project, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House if Government is ready to consider the upgrading of storage capacity.

The Prime Minister: If we have to upgrade the storage capacity, it will mean that we shall have to incur more expenses because additional storage will mean that we have to pay Mauritius Telecom for additional works. This is not being envisaged for the time being, but later on, we shall see.

Mr Chairperson: We move to page 79. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson - Item 31132.401 (b), Automated Fingerprint Identification System which has a project value of Rs86 billion, Rs77,400,000 estimated for financial year 2021-2022, can the hon. Prime Minister enlighten us on this as to whether the biometric identification card is coming to an end and whether new tenders are or is going to be called for? If the Prime Minister could enlighten us, please.

The Prime Minister: The existing AFIS was implemented in the year 1999 and upgraded in 2004; both hardware and software have become obsolete and do not meet the actual requirements. It will yield better detection rate and improve investigation, and live scanning will be available to provide rapid and instant service. It will also reduce the use of ink, of fingerprinting and moreover the system will be compatible with the latest hardware and software.

The tender was launched in November 2020 and evaluation has been carried at the Central Procurement Board. The Bid Evaluation Committee has completed the evaluation exercise on 10 June 2021. CPB is actually reviewing the evaluation report and in case of a responsive bidder, it will award the contract that will be issued thereafter. The amount requested in the Budget for 2021-2022 is Rs86 m.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31121.801 – Acquisition of Vehicles, can the hon. Prime Minister please provide some details on the number of vehicles that are going to be acquired?

The Prime Minister: For 31121.801, the proposal is for the acquisition of vehicles for an estimated amount of about Rs100 m., I have a list of double cabs, microbus, minibus, which I can circulate.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Already canvassed.

Mr Chairperson: We move to page 79. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Item 31112.049 – Construction of Mauritius Disciplined Forces Academy, Rs1.7 billion has been of the project value, Rs300 m. has been earmarked for this year, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details when the project will start and whether the contract has already been launched?

The Prime Minister: For Item 31112.049 – Construction of Mauritius Disciplined Forces Academy, the training of recruits and service members of the Force is presently conducted at Police Training School. The existing Police training establishment no longer meets the training needs arising out of the new demands and challenges; hence, the construction of the Mauritius Disciplined Forces Academy. The project has been designed to accommodate the main administrative block. I do not want to go in all these details but the project value is for an amount of USD42.5 m. I do not need also to go into the scope of the project, but it is the present status which is important. The project monitoring team at the level of the Police has been set up for the planning, monitoring and coordination of the project and to ensure timely implementation.

The contract for Project Management Consultant was signed on 11 April 2019 with NBCC (India) Ltd for design and construction. The inception report and concept design have already been worked out by NBCC (India) Ltd; detailed project report completed and submitted to PMO for onwards submission to Exim Bank for vetting. A final design and tender documents have been completed by the Consultant and same have been forwarded to MNI for vetting. The project is expected to start by December 2021. Application for clearances from different authorities such as EIA, WMA, CEB, CWA and Forest Department are in progress and the project will be undertaken phase wise.

Mr Chairperson: We move to page 80. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112.012 (i) – with regard to *Cité La Cure/Vallée des Prêtres* Police Station, can we have a status of this project and whether the amount mentioned here includes the land acquisition as well. Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The setting up of a Police post is already complete; the levelling of ground in the close vicinity and embellishment work are still pending, but it is

envisaged to construct a new concrete structure. I am informed that the project value is for Rs12 m. The plot of land has been vested and a small prefabricated metal structure was erected to house the Police post. It is found to be inadequate in terms of space, and a new concrete structure will be constructed. MNI will be requested to carry out the design.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: *Item 31112.012 – Construction of Police Stations, (e) Vallée Pitot Police Station*, where a sum of Rs20 m. has been earmarked for this project. Can we have some more details about it, please?

The Prime Minister: Actually, the contract for geotechnical test has been awarded on 07 January 2021. I also understand that the architectural design has been completed; structural design is in progress and, as I said, we are waiting for the geotechnical analysis report for design of foundation.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: *Item 31112.013 – Construction of Police District Headquarter – Abercrombie*. May we know the expected date of completion?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the construction of new Metropolitan Headquarter at Abercrombie, 95% of the project is completed. The project value is of Rs70 m. I know that it is expected to be fully completed by end of July of this year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 31112.012 - Construction of Police Stations, at (f), Bain des Dames Police Station*. May we have more details on that because there is already a Police Station at Bain des Dames? Is this a new project?

The Prime Minister: I have a note here indicating that there is scarcity of land in this region and the Ministry of Social Integration has been approached to include a Police Post in its project, which is at design stage.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Sorry, Mr Chairperson. I do not understand because I was saying there is already a Police Station at Bain des Dames. Is this a new project? Is Government going to build a new Police Station there?

The Prime Minister: It looks like it is going to be a new Police Station because the Police Station is presently housed in a rented building, which is not appropriate to house a

Police Station. As I said, there is scarcity of land in the region, and that is why we have approached my colleague Minister to consider including a Police Station in its Multipurpose Complex. I understand that the design is in progress. So, it is going to be a new Police Station. Of course, there cannot be two Police Stations.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: *Item 31112.012 – Construction of Police Stations (l) Quatre Bornes Police Station.* We know that we already have one Police Station at Quatre Bornes next to La Louise and another one at Sodnac, Quatre Bornes. Is that a third Police Station? Where will it be situated, please?

The Prime Minister: No, there is not going to be a third one. It is provision made for the construction of a new building to house the Police Station which will be constructed in the existing compound. It will cater for adequate spaces and will meet the requirements of the Police Station. The new building is at planning stage. The project value is Rs20 m.

The Chairperson: The last question here would be from hon. Lobine.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 31112.012 – Construction of Police Stations, (j) Phoenix Police Station.* Will there be a new Phoenix Police Station, because we already have a building? Will it be renovated or will it be a new Police Station constructed in another place at Phoenix, or is it at the same place, and when is this project being started?

The Prime Minister: Architectural, structural and MNA design completed. We are waiting for the specifications and the scope of works and cost estimate from MNI; bidding documents are under preparation by a QS. It is going to be a new building.

The Chairperson: There was a question on page 81. So, I take a question from hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: I had on page 80, but you did not give me.

The Chairperson: On page 80? Okay, page 80!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. In fact, on page 80, *Item 31112.013 – Construction of Police District Headquarter – Abercrombie*, I wanted to ask the Prime Minister, if he can check his notes, because for the construction of Police District Headquarter, Abercrombie, there was a project of Rs108 m. and the Prime Minister informed the House that the project has almost been completed for this year. Can he clarify on this issue because I am not sure if this is the right information?

The Prime Minister: No, 95% of the project is completed and, as I said, in July of this year, the project is going to be completed. I shall invite you for the inauguration at Abercrombie.

The Chairperson: Page 81! Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 22140 – Medical Supplies, Drugs and Equipment.* Can the hon. Prime Minister provide us more details with regard to the medical supplies and the equipment?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the purchase of urine preliminary drug testing kits in order to combat driving under the influence of drugs; 500 units per year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Richard Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Under *item 31122.999 - Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment.* Can the hon. Prime Minister provide a list of machineries and equipment that will be acquired?

The Prime Minister: Purchase of photocopying machines, fax machines, air conditioners and for procurement of hardware and software for storage of data.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 22060.005 – IT Equipment.* Last year, the sum was Rs1 m. and this year it is Rs2.5 m. Can the hon. Prime Minister give a breakdown?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to yearly Software Maintenance Agreement and Oracle licence for IDLMS servers. It had been paid under Sub-Head 020501 for the last two years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to *Item 22060.004 – Vehicles and Motorcycles,* Rs14 m. Can the Prime Minister table a list of vehicles repaired and the amount paid for?

The Prime Minister: For maintenance, I have here, for repairs, to meet cost of servicing and spare parts for 14 vehicles, but I need to get the details of those vehicles. We have the list of agents: ABC Motors, Access Ltd. E.A.L Man Hin, CFAO Motors, Emcar. I have a long list and I shall circulate it. Do you want me to circulate it?

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item *31132.401 – Intangible Fixed Assets – e-Government Project*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what this project is about and whether this contract has been awarded and the total contract value of this project?

The Prime Minister: The implementation of e-business plan for Traffic Branch, provision made for –

- implementation of an integrated driving licence management system at Traffic Branch headquarters which comprise development of a cumulative road traffic offences management system;
- implementation of a new audio-visual test system, and
- a new practical test system.

We are also awaiting amendment to the Road Traffic Act. A provision of only Rs1 m. is being made awaiting amendment of the Road Traffic Act.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Question has already been canvassed.

The Chairperson: We move to page 82! Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item *31121.801 – Transport Equipment – Acquisition of Vehicles* for Rs3 m., can we know from the hon. Prime Minister about the type and how many vehicles are being acquired?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for acquisition of vehicles in Sub-Head 2-501 and 2-505 only. The decrease is due to some specialised vehicles already acquired in year 2021.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: At page 82, under item *22900 – Other Goods and Services*, there is an amount of Rs8,100,000. May we have the details and breakdown of this figure?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for medals, prizes, rewards and hospitality and ceremonies and miscellaneous expenses.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I do not know if it is on the item 21110.004 – *Personal Emoluments – Allowances*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there is any amount budgeted for reward to informants being given that we are talking about combating of drugs?

The Prime Minister: This is under the item 22900. But this is normally not disclosed, and you would understand why.

The Chairperson: We go to page 83! Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you. Item 31112.036 – *Non-Residential Buildings – Construction of SMF Buildings*. Can we know if this is a new project? If yes when it will be completed and if there is any amount earmarked here for a heritage impact assessment?

The Prime Minister: Sorry, which item is it?

Ms J. Bérenger: 31112.036 – *Construction of SMF Buildings*.

The Prime Minister: I do not have it here. I need to get the information.

Construction of new gymnasium and allied facilities; project value Rs37.9 m.; amount paid Rs19.2 m.; completion date is September 2021. The building is being constructed on the ex-SMF Married Quarters. 35% of the project is completed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under capital expenditure, item 31113.023 – *Other Structures – Construction of Training Grounds/Structures (a) Gallery Range – Midlands*. May we know the status of this project?

The Prime Minister: I need to get the information.

The project is Rs54 m. First phase of the project completed with the levelling of ground and construction of mantlet. And due to space problem and provision of the Environment Act, there is a need for the construction of training ground for *maintien d'ordre* and close quarter battle range and public order policing infrastructure far from residential area. Same to be located near Gallery Range, Midlands.

The design nearly completed, the close quarter battle range; previous contract cancelled as contractors did not take over the site. So, there is a re-launching in progress. A miniature range at Rodrigues complex.

The Chairperson: Hon. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under capital expenditure, item 31121.801 – *Transport Equipment – Acquisition of Vehicles (Light Armoured Personnel Carriers)*, I can see a budget of Rs65 m. being earmarked for 2021/2022 and then for 2022/2023, it has nearly quadrupled. Any further details as to why?

The Prime Minister: A provision made for the procurement of 12 Light Armoured Personnel Carriers to complement the fleet of existing vehicles so as to meet the country's expectation in terms of internal security, riot control, disaster management, airport security and any other contingencies that may arise.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Under item 31113.436 – *Upgrading of SMF Minor Structures – (b) Perimeter Lighting at Gymkhana Track and Playground*, there is a three times fold earmarked for this year. Is there upgrading or special project which is underway?

The Prime Minister: I need to get the information.

The Chairperson: Maybe we will take another question meanwhile. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Again under capital expenditure, same item, 31113.436 – *Other Structures – Upgrading of SMF Minor Structures – (b) Perimeter Lighting at Gymkhana Track and Playground* if the hon. Prime Minister could give us information whether it will be the SMF personnel who will be conducting the works or will it be contracted to private contractors?

The Prime Minister: The project value is Rs35 m. The building is being constructed. I have supplied this information before, but I have not been provided with further information on that.

It is an in-house project.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 85 I have, not now.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.999 – *Other Machinery and Equipment – Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment*, there is an increase of Rs3 m., can we know what is causing the difference?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for acquisition of one grown ballistic shield, diving equipment and suits, chainsaws, telescopic limping saws, engines for inflatable rescue boats, thermal imaging camera, rotary rescue saw, battery-operated hydraulic bolt, cutter and hydraulic pneumatic shoring bolt cutter; aircon at SMF guard rooms and offices; ride on mower for Gymkhana and Sodnac Wellness Park and for a few places; fire alarm system in accordance with recommendations submitted by the Mauritius Fire Rescue Service respecting issue of fire certificates, and fire alarm system at Bigara Explosive Magazine.

The Chairperson: We move to page 84. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of subhead *Coastal and Maritime Surveillance, Search and Rescue*, Item 22060.008 – *Ships*, I see a quantum leap from Rs55 m. to Rs110 m. If the hon. Prime Minister could please enlighten us whether it relates to the acquisition of patrol vessels, renewal of new ships.

The Prime Minister: For ships?

Dr. Boolell: Yes.

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision is due to the refit of the CGS Victory. The provision is made for spares and maintenance of ships.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Item 22060.008 – *Ships*. May we have the number of ships acquired; the number of vessels which are operational; and the number of those which are laying idle?

The Prime Minister: I just answered. This item is for the refit of the CGS Victory.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Same item of *Maintenance*, 22060.009 – *Aircrafts*, we are asked to pay for maintenance of aircrafts. So, I would like to know how many aircrafts we have for the Police Force for the Coastal Maritime Surveillance.

The Prime Minister: I shall have to find out, but, for this item, the provision is made for the maintenance and purchase of spares for the Dornier Aircraft. But I can supply the information to the House.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to Item 22030 – *Rent*, I can see we spent Rs5,800,000 for 2020-2021 and now it is raised to Rs7,705,000. Can we have details of the building rented and rental contract details?

The Prime Minister: For rentals of office space, we have the NCG at Deux Frères at the rate of Rs42,350 per month. The owner is Sunassee Curpen, and there is a three-year contract.

For Poudre d’Or NCG, at the rate of Rs34,500 per month, and the owner is Sohan Haumdut. It is a two-year contract.

Then, we have the Floor Custom Landing Station, Port Louis Waterfront, at the rate of Rs44,069.15 per month. The owner is Landscape Ltd and it is a five- year contract.

The office placed at MPA *Capitainerie* BLD at the rate of Rs2,000 per month; the owner is Mauritius Port Authority and it is a yearly contract.

The Poste La Fayette NCG at the rate of Rs40,000 per month; the owner is Mohammed Khalid Peeroo, and it is a two-year contract. NCG Headquarters at the rate of Rs131,250 per month; the owner is Mauritius Cane Industry Authority on a two-year contract.

The increase is due to provision made for rental of land and a provision of Rs1 m. made for arrears of three years to be paid for rental of fish auction market building.

The Chairperson: Page 85. Hon. Ameer Meea.!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 85, Item 31121.803 - *Acquisition of Patrol Vessels (b) High Speed Boat*, Rs115 m. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can shed light on this acquisition and, at the same time, if I may, Mr Chairperson, a word of caution so that we get value for money and do not repeat the error of the past? Having said so, I have in mind the boat *Le Vigilant*.

The Prime Minister: This is a heavy duty boat. The Japanese Government has provided a grant to the Government of Mauritius for the procurement of six patrol speed boats for the National Coast Guard. Crown Agent Company Ltd was appointed by the Japanese Government in January 2020, and the agreement was signed by Crown Agent and the Mauritius Police Force. It was decided to go for items which are commercially available on Japanese market and as closest to the requirements of the NCG and within the allocated

budget. So, it was agreed to procure two 15 Nauts high speed boats and four 30 Nauts high speed boats.

The agreed technical specifications were signed on 13 May 2021 and tender was floated on Japanese market. The bid opening date is scheduled 23 June 2021. Let me just highlight the schedule of procurement, delivery and payment – the main milestones. In June 2021, bid opening; June 2021, evaluation of bids; July 2021, award of contract; and April 2023, delivery of items.

I understand that 8 out of the 13 heavy duty boats are not in use due to operational defects. These boats will improve the speed of intervention at sea.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.815 - *Acquisition of Coastal Surveillance Radar System* for the project value of Rs410 m. Can we have more details on the project, the amount of grant from the Government of Japan, and the status of the project? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: It will be replaced with the latest state-of-the-art technology that is being acquired from Japanese grant and will include new radars, AIS, latest software and other associated equipment. The project value is Rs424 m. and the amount provided in the Budget for 2021/2022 is Rs113 m. But I understand it will be wholly financed by the Government of Japan.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.805 - *Acquisition of Security Equipment*. I can see a budget of Rs18 m. for this financial year. Can the hon. Prime Minister, maybe, table a list of those security equipment and how it will be distributed around the island? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: This provision is made for the National Coast Guard Marine Commandos. It is acquisition of intervention equipment for National Coast Guard Commando to replace old and unserviceable equipment and to cater for new intakes and security equipment for NCG Commando, that is, weapons for MARCOS to cater for replacement of BER ones. These are technical terms; I am just informing the House what I have been provided with –

1. Submachine gun – 25 units

2. Assault rifle – 20 units
3. Sniper rifle – 2 units

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 85, under Capital Expenditure item – 31121.804 *Acquisition of Aircraft – (a) Acquisition of Advanced Light Helicopter*, a budget of Rs782 m. have been earmarked. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us whether he is aware of any details regarding night vision facilities, its make and its passenger capacity in need of rescue? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: I shall confirm that, but I know that one of the helicopters will be able to be used at night but I shall confirm.

The Chairperson: So we move to page 86.

The Prime Minister: Let me add that this is the only helicopter which can carry up to 14 passengers and is effective for night operations over the sea.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Page 86, *Vote 2-5 Police Service*, out of the 13,581 posts, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, how many vacancies are there currently?

The Prime Minister: Unfortunately, there have been some pages which have been mixed with others and it is a bit difficult for me to retrieve those pages.

The Chairperson: No problem, maybe we take page 87, if you do not mind.

Page 87, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in respect of page 86 at sub head 28 – Woman Police Constable? Why is the number so low when compared to Police Constable? Is that going to be revisited as far as Financial Year 2021-2022 remains to 88?

The Prime Minister: I need to get that information from my officers. Out of the 185 vacancies for the post of Woman Police Constable, 89 temporary Women Police Constables will be recruited on 05 July 2021 and the remaining 96 funded vacancies of Woman Police Constable will be filled in January 2022, together with recruitment of Police Constables. Total Police vacancies is 1,674.

The Chairperson: We move to page 88. Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: *Sub-Head 2-502: Crime Control and Investigation, (12) – Police Sergeant*, there are actually 482 and it is estimated that there is 1,233 posts to be filled this year. May we know the dates that have been earmarked for these promotions?

The Prime Minister: It is proposed to fill the 801 funded vacancies of Police Sergeant, Women Police Sergeant from the grades of Police Corporal, Women Police Corporal during the course of the Financial Year 2021-2022, in two batches of about 400 depending on the number of funded vacancies that will exist at the time of promotion.

The Chairperson: Let's move to page 89.

We move to page 90.

And we move to page 91.

Which page?

Mr Juman: 91.

The Chairperson: Go ahead!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us, out of the 13,581 officers, the number of suspended officers?

The Prime Minister: I have replied to a PQ; I have furnished this information, but I need to have the information again.

Vote 2-5 Police Service (Rs10,400,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.23 p.m.)

Vote 2-6 Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 92, item 22900.984 – *Other Goods and Services of which Expenses icw National Drug Secretariat*, 9.5 million was earmarked for 2020-2021, can the hon. Prime Minister give us a breakdown of this amount?

The Prime Minister: For 22900.984 – *Other Goods and Services of which – Expenses icw National Drug Secretariat*, provision is made for the running expenses under the Ministry and to carry out a National Media Campaign, training programmes, research and survey. The decrease in provision is mainly owing to the fact that one project is being co-

financed by the United Nations agencies. I have a list of the projects which have been financed, and I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Léopold!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. It is page 93, item 25110.011 – *Special...*

The Chairperson: We are still on page 92. You have any question for 92?

Mr Léopold: No.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: For item 22900.099 – *Other Goods and Services of which Climate Smart Agriculture (Global Climate Change Alliance)*, there was Rs10,900,000 earmarked but this year there is nil. Is it that the project has been completed?

The Prime Minister: No provision has been made for Financial Year 2021-2022 as an amount of Rs10.9 m., representing contribution of Rodrigues Regional Assembly has already been disbursed in year 2021 and credited to projects bank account.

Mr Speaker: So we move to page 93. Hon. Léopold!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. The item 25110.011 – *Subsidies - Special Rodrigues Holiday Package*, can you explain why there is an increase and why the 20% reduction on maritime freight does not fall under this item?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for *Special Rodrigues Holiday Package* was introduced on 01 August 2019 as a temporary stimulus package, with a view to boosting the tourism sector in Rodrigues. This has allowed more Mauritians to go to Rodrigues as tourists. The increase in provision is based on an expected rise in travel by Mauritians.

With regard to the other item, the cost of freight between Mauritius and Rodrigues, the Ministry of Finance is liaising with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly regarding mechanism to be put in place to ensure that consumers benefit from the decrease in freight rates.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26323.070 - *Outer Islands Development Corporation (Agalega)* – Rs14 m., may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the amount budgeted for construction of houses out of these Rs14 m.?

The Prime Minister: I see here that there is construction of fish landing station, dispensary, office block, library, gym, containers. It is a project by the Ministry of Housing. So, when the time comes, my colleague will answer.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 93, Item 26313.024 - *Extra-Budgetary Units, Chagosian Welfare Fund*, has increased from Rs6 m. to Rs6.5 m. Can the hon. Prime Minister explain why?

The Prime Minister: It is provision made for the running expenses and the Chagosian Welfare Fund as follows –

- (i) Staff costs for 12 staff – Rs3,280,000 .
- (ii) Administrative expenses – Rs1,530,500.
- (iii) Welfare activities – Rs1,000,000.
- (iv) Maintenance and running of the Community Centres at Pointe aux Sables and Tombeau Bay – Rs689,500.

And the increase is to cater for the activities of the Chagosian community.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Chair. Item 26323.070 - *Outer Islands Development Corporation (Agalega) - Construction of Library at Village 25* – Rs6,100,000. Can I know whether the contract has already been awarded and where matters stand?

The Prime Minister: Bidding documents are being prepared by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 93, Item 26323.070 - *Outer Islands Development Corporation (Agalega)*. In fact, there are seven small projects: (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g). Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he can give us an update on those projects in terms of completion and coming into operation?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the construction of the fish landing station, the bidding process is ongoing; construction of dispensary at La Fourche, North Island, no provision made as the medical unit operated by Afcons Ltd will be handed over to OIIC; construction of office block, the bidding process is ongoing; construction of the library at Village 25, bidding documents are being prepared by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development; construction of gym at Village 25, bidding documents are

being prepared by the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development. There is also acquisition of containers; the provision for the purchase of eight containers for shipment of food provisions in order to avoid payment of demurrage fees. There is also equipment for plucking of coconuts; a provision made for the purchase of boom lift elevator to be used for plucking of coconuts.

The Chairperson: We move to page 94.

Vote 2-6 - Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity (Rs4,745,000,000) was on question put, agreed to.

(11.32 p.m.)

Vote 2-7 Reform Institutions and Rehabilitation was called.

The Chairperson: Page 95, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Yes, thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Last item, 28211.050 - *Probation Hostel for Boys*. It is good that there is a quantum leap, an increase by almost 400%, but what I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister is how this is going to help in rehabilitation and resettlement policy. I think this is very relevant and I would like the hon. Prime Minister to tell us how this will improve resettlement and rehabilitation.

The Prime Minister: No, as per Standing Order, I am not able to comment on the policy, but I can explain why there has been this provision. It is to meet the running expenses of two Probation Hostels for Boys. Expenses include payment of salary and allowances, travelling, provision of food, fees to Chairperson and members of the Managing Committee. The increase is due to the cost to be incurred with one additional Probation Hostel in view of the implementation of the Children's Act.

Dr. Boolell: I mean, we are not here to define policy, but it is important that in relation to rehabilitation and resettlement, the utmost is done to improve rehabilitation and resettlement because this is a big issue.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Under Item 28211.049, details about *Probation Home for Girls*.

The Prime Minister: Provision to meet the running expenses of two Probation Homes for Girls, and the expenses include payment of salary, allowances, travelling, rent,

provision of food, fees to Chairperson and members of the Managing Committee. The increase is due to the cost to be incurred with, again, one additional Probation Home in view of the implementation of the Children's Act.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same item 28211.049 - *Probation Home for Girls* and 28211.050 - *Probation Hostel for Boys*, I would like to know the accommodation capacity of the Home and Hostels and the actual number of inmates presently.

The Prime Minister: The maximum occupancy rate of the Probation Home for Girls is 9 and the maximum occupation rate of the Probation Hostel for Boys is 20. As at date, there are four girls at the Probation Home and one boy at the Probation Hostel, and these are expected to increase with the implementation of the Children's Act.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22030 – *Rent*, there has been an increase from Rs3 m. to Rs5 m. Can the hon. Prime Minister explain?

The Prime Minister: The increase in the provision is mainly due to the rental of CCTV cameras at both the RYC (boys) and (girls) at the rate of Rs125,000 per month.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: I would like to come back on the figures which the hon. Prime Minister has stated under Item 28211- *Probation Home for Girls* and *Probation Hostel for Boys*. We are asking for the total number of boys and girls who are actually in those hostels and home. Surely, there cannot be only 4 or 20 as the hon. Prime Minister just stated; the total number of girls in the probation home and the total number of boys currently in the probation hostel.

The Prime Minister: Yes, this is the figure actually; 4 girls at the probation home and 1 boy.

(Interruptions)

Sorry?

Mr Uteem: Spending Rs2 m. for 4 girls?

The Prime Minister: Well, how much has been spent, I must have a look. Surely, I must have the figure.

The Chairperson: We turn to page 96. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 96, Capital Expenditure, Item 31111 – *Dwellings, Upgrading of Rehabilitation Youth Centres*, can we have some details with regard to this project?

The Prime Minister: Sorry. Can you repeat? Are we still at page 95?

Mr Quirin: No, 96.

The Prime Minister: Oh sorry.

Mr Quirin: Item 3111.404 - *Upgrading of Rehabilitation Youth Centres*. Can we have some details with regard to this project?

The Prime Minister: Provision is required for the construction of small home within the RYC building. The decrease in provision is owing to the fact that the implementation of the project will be spread over two financial years. The estimated cost of the project is Rs14,097,000, including VAT.

The Chairperson: We now turn to page 97.

Vote 2-7 – Reform Institutions and Rehabilitations (Rs108,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.40 p.m.)

Vote 2-8 – Continental Shelf and Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Mr Chairperson, at page 98 under Item 22130 - *Studies and Surveys*, can the Prime Minister give us the details of how many studies and surveys have been conducted? And why the budgeted sum has been reduced from Rs5 m. to Rs3.7 m.?

The Prime Minister: So, first of all, the provision was made for the following projects –

- Sustainable development of the joint zones of the Mauritius and Seychelles extended Continental Shelf in the region of the Mascarene Plateau;
- the extension of the maritime zone claimed for extended Continental Shelf to the United Nations Commission on the limits of that Continental Shelf;

- delimitation of exclusive economic zone, territorial seas and contiguous zone boundary;
- elaboration of a Marine Spatial Plan for maritime zone administration and use;
- the survey of maritime zones and elaboration of a Near Shore Survey Plan for potential resources in the waters of Mauritius;
- the regulation of Underwater Cultural Heritage activities, that is, marine surveys, capacity building and development of a management plan;
- development and promotion of an offshore extractive industry hydro-carbon;
- and develop and encourage an offshore extractive mineral.

The decrease in provision is owing to the fact that some projects and activities have been postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: For the Item 31122.828, *Acquisition of Non-Financial Assets - Acquisition of Survey Equipment*, once the budget has decreased, can we know the reason, and secondly, what are survey equipment that have been acquired?

The Prime Minister: For *Acquisition of Survey Equipment*, the provision has been made for the acquisition of a hand-held X-ray Rock Analyser. Provision has been made based on cost estimates of the equipment.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. I would like to come back again on the Item 22130 – *Studies and Survey*. The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned a list of survey being carried out. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any exploration contract has been signed with anyone to explore the possibility of the presence of petroleum products in the continental shelf?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether it falls under this one but I know we have an agreement with the Seychelles. Now, let me see! Mauritius has launched a Request for Proposal to undertake multi-client seismic geotechnical surveys. Three companies responded. The Bid Evaluation process has been completed. And the contract has been awarded to *Compagnie Générale de Géophysique* in February 2020. The CGG has requested additional time to conduct its marketing phase due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson: Let's move to page 99. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 1 – *Director-General*, may we know who is the Director General of this Unit, please?

The Prime Minister: We do not have the name of the Director here. Hope I can find it in my notes. The Director, Dr. Badal. That is the name. *Il est là?* Here you are! Nice to meet you!

The Chairperson: You are done?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Vote 2-8 – Continental Shelf and Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration (Rs25,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.46 p.m.)

Vote 2-9 – Forensic Science Laboratory was called.

The Chairperson: Page 100. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Yes. Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 100, Item 22140 – *Medical Supplies, Drugs and Equipment*, an amount of Rs35 m. was earmarked for the last financial year and for the next financial year, we see that there is Rs45 m. which is being earmarked. Can we know why this huge increase?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the purchase of consumables, special kits and reagents required for DNA profiling in case work, special reagents and reference materials for chemical instrumental analysis and helium gas for chromatography-mass spectrometry analysis. The increase in provision is to cater for the rise in the quantities of consumables required.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22060.003 – *Maintenance of which plant and equipment*, an amount of Rs10 m. was earmarked last year and it has increased to Rs16.5 m. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister why this increase?

The Prime Minister: The provision is required for maintenance of furniture, fixtures and fittings. And for IT equipment, the decrease in provision is based on actual trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to Capital Expenditure, Item 31122.804 –*Acquisition of Laboratory Equipment*, I can note that Rs50.8 m. was earmarked last year and Rs34.5 m. next year. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us details as to which type of laboratory equipment with regard to FSL?

The Prime Minister: We have laboratory balances, thermo shakers, upgrades of the LIMS, grinder, Genetic Analyser, upgrade of DNA Analysis Software, server for STR Lab and CODIS, Laboratory glassware washer and evaporator.

The Chairperson: We move to page 101. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112.019 – *Construction of the Forensic Science Laboratory*, project value Rs515 m. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether tender has been launched? If yes, where is the Forensic Laboratory going to be built?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for the payment of consultancy fees and for construction works for a dedicated building to house the FSL at La Vigie.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Mr Chairperson, the point has already been canvassed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: The issue of *Construction of the Forensic Science Laboratory*, what is the time frame that we are looking at, in terms of completion eventually and coming into operation?

The Prime Minister: I need to get the information for time frame. Bidding documents are in the process of finalisation and early in financial year 2021-2022, the tenders will be launched for the construction works. That is all I can say for the time being.

The Chairperson: Page 102!

Vote 2-9 Forensic Science Laboratory (Rs255,000,000) was, on question put, agreed.

(11.51p.m.)

Vote 2-10 Prison Service was called.

The Chairperson: Page 105, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 105, Item 22030.004 – *Rental of CCTV Cameras*, Rs15 m., can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why is it that we are renting cameras instead of investing in a sophisticated camera system? Because Rs15m. is budgeted this year and the coming years and we all know that rent money is dead money. So why is it that we are renting camera instead of purchasing it?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is a policy decision of Government. I beg to differ with the hon. Member because we have seen from past experience, when we have acquired cameras that we do not have the capacity to maintain those cameras. In fact, they are not in working order and they stay just like that for years. And I strongly believe that it is for the benefit of the Institution, but to rent at an affordable and reasonable price. We have seen cases. The hon. Member himself has asked questions about the Eastern Security Prison. *Ça a été un massacre. Je dirai une catastrophe.* So, I believe that we should go for renting of those items of equipment. Of course, we need to have a good maintenance contract for them to keep those cameras in good working order. But again, I must say that whatever price we have to pay should be reasonable market price.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22060.005 – *IT Equipment*, from Rs700,000, it has become Rs2.8 m. Can the hon. Prime Minister explain why?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to maintenance cost for the hardware and the software of the e-Prison Project.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to Item 22060.003 – *Maintenance of which Plant and Equipment* Rs15 m., can we have details of the Rs15 m., whether it includes the maintenance of existing CCTV Camera?

The Prime Minister: For Item 22060.003 - *Maintenance of which Plant and Equipment*, the provision is made for maintenance of plant and equipment, that is, repairs of plant and equipment in mechanical and industries workshops, the bakery. Maintenance contract for office equipment, such as photocopiers, printers and so on.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 106. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of Capital Expenditure, Item 31121.801 – *Acquisition of Vehicles*, there has been an increase from Rs2

m. to Rs6.8 m. for financial year 2021-2022. Can the Prime Minister give us a breakdown in respect of the acquisition of vehicles to be made?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is to meet the cost of vehicles for various prison institutions and the vehicles are light truck, 15-seater vehicles for prisons transport, one van 15-seater for EHSP, one double-cab van for ROP, one 2X4 for GRNW and one 15-seater van for the CERT.

The Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item *31112.411 (b)* with regard to *Upgrading of Other Prisons*, can we have some details on the concerned prisons and the upgrading of works?

The Prime Minister: Construction and maintenance of the following that is, repairs of security wall Grand River North West Prison, the Upgrading and reinforcement works, the construction of watchtower, PVP and maintenance and upgrading of the prisons. The increase is due to the implementation of the new projects.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to item 31122.805 - Acquisition of Security Equipment, can we have more details please as to why the budgeted sum has been reduced and what type of security equipment are being acquired?

The Prime Minister: For *31122.805 - Acquisition of Security Equipment*, there is provision of drone, arms and ammunition security equipment, protective equipment, equipment for training of dogs and jammers. The decrease in provision is based on actual trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. The point has already been canvassed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Under the item 31132.401– Intangible Fixed Assets e-government projects - Prison Management Systems, can we know the status of the Prison Management Systems and it is used for which purposes?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the development of e-Prisons projects. No provision has been made in this financial year.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 107. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Out of the 1,415 funded positions, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many vacancies are there currently?

The Prime Minister: Number of vacancies not yet filled is 13, as follows –

- Hospital Officer: 2;
- Assistant Superintendent of Prison: 8;
- Prison Pharmacy Technician: 2, and
- Principle Prison Officer: 1

However, number of posts filled also is 29.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 108.

Vote 2-10 Prison Service (Rs864,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.00 a.m.)

Vote 3-1 Housing and Land Use Planning was called.

The Chairperson: Page 114! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: If you do not have questions on page 114, I move to page 115? Thank you.

On page 115, item 22030 - Rent, there is an amount of Rs32 m., may we have a list because I know that the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning rents several floors in Ebène in different buildings, if we can have a complete breakdown and the details of the rent.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, the provision is made for rental of the building at Ebène Tower and renting of parking slots at Ebène. There is Ebène Tower, 2nd to 7th floor, 4,893 m², Rs2,300,133.55 cents monthly.

Does the hon. Member want the location, the floor area, the contract period, it could take some time, so which is it?

Mr Ameer Meea: Is it only this one?

The Deputy Prime Minister: No we have three. We have –

- Ebène Tower, 2nd to 7th floor;
- Ebène Tower, 1st floor, which is a different owner, and
- Ebène Tower, ground floor.

I think these are the three different contracts that we have and then there is also a rental of parking slots. If that is acceptable to you.

Mr Uteem: Under item 22060 – Maintenance, may I know from the hon. Minister, there was Rs3 m. earmarked for last year and now it is Rs1.8 m., can we know what is this for?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand that in the present financial year, provision of Rs1 m. was made for partitioning works on the ground floor to accommodate the Land Monitoring and Research Unit and the Planning Unit. These works have now been completed, hence the decrease in the required sums.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 28222.012 – Casting of Roof Slab Grant Scheme, may we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister how many people have benefited from this scheme up to now in this financial year?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Sorry, on which page are we?

Mr Lobine: Page 116.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Have we finished with the *sub head 3-101*?

The Chairperson: You asked for page 115?

Mr Lobine: No, I asked for page 116.

Mr Chairperson: No, we have not reached there.

Let us move to page 116. Hon. Ramyad!

Ms Ramyad: Under item 28222.013 – Other Expenses - Transfers to Households – Rehabilitation of Infrastructure of NHDC Housing Estates, may we know how many housing estates have been earmarked for this year and how many were done last year?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My understanding is that for last year, the hon. Member would like to know the different sites?

Ms Ramyad: The numbers and yes why not, the different sites as well.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I see there are 5 sites –

- (a) Rose-Belle Exim Shell.Firinga IV;
- (b) Bambous Exim Firinga I;

- (c) St Pierre;
- (d) Vieux Grand Port, and
- (e) Highlands.

The amount disbursed in fact was only Rs8.72 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am sorry if I may correct this, it is Rs26.4 m.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 116, Item 28222.012 - Casting of Roof Slab Grant Scheme, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, how many people have benefited from this scheme in this financial year?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My understanding is that for the financial year 2020-2021, out of Rs100 m. budgeted, some Rs76.3 m. has been disbursed to assist 1,015 families in the construction of their housing units.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Item 28222.013 – Rehabilitation of Infrastructure of NHDC Housing Estates.* Can we know the name of the company to whom this contract has been allocated, please?

The Deputy Prime Minister: According to the information I have, the contractor for all the five sites was Square Deal Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 28222.015 – Transfer of Title deeds of ex-CHA Houses,* can we know from the Deputy Prime Minister how many beneficiaries have been able to get their title deed?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The amount spent in fiscal year 2020-2021 concerns 35 families and the amount spent is Rs86,500.

The Chairperson: Let's move to page 117. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 117, *item 22060.013 – LAVIMS.* We know that LAVIMS has cost some 20 million USD, that is, Rs800 m. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister if LAVIMS is fully operational? Because, every year, we spend Rs50 m. on its maintenance

and, even this year, we have seen that the Director of Audit has criticised its operation, that is, there are components of LAVIMS which are not working, like the valuation component? So, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister if he can enlighten the House on this issue?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I shall try, Mr Chairperson. I suppose we are referring to *item 22060.013 – LAVIMS*. This amount is meant for LAVIMS maintenance support. The support and maintenance services to the LAVIMS computer system are provided by Airbus Defence and Space Limited. The user departments are at the Registrar General's Department, the Valuation Department and the Cadastre Unit. The maintenance agreement is renewed yearly at a monthly rate of 95,044 US dollars, per month I believe, that is, inclusive of maintenance visits; this concerns basically maintenance cost for the LAVIMS computer system.

Mr Ameer Meea: My question was in relation to the valuation component, because at the inception of the project, which was some 10 years back, 20 million USD, it was supposed to have the valuation component included in the Cadastre Unit and, as I told you, this was criticised by the Director of Audit this year again.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, let me see if I can be provided with the relevant information. What I have been told is that at the present time, out of some 560,000 estimated plots, for 360,000 there are transfer deeds. So, that is what LAVIMS would try to capture. If there is specific information on valuation, I hope to be provided that information. In the meantime, I could take another question, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 22120.008 - Fees For Consultant*. I can see that as from this year there is an annual Rs3 m. budget which is earmarked. Can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister the name and the scope of supply of this consultant?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We are talking of item 22120.008?

Mr David: Yes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand this Rs3 m. is provided for the Project Manager of *LAVIMS 2.0*. Provision is made for payment for the enlistment of a Project Manager, following award of contract for the implementation of *LAVIMS 2.0* to monitor progress, evaluate performance, and provide guidance for the successful implementation of the *LAVIMS 2.0* project. So, on the basis of what I have been provided, it would appear that

the consultant has not yet been appointed. That is why the sum is budgeted for the next fiscal year.

The Chairperson: So, let's move to page 118.

(Interruptions)

So, you come here. You come here next time. Page 118? Go ahead!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 118, *item 31132.101 – LAVIMS Project (c) LAVIMS 2.0 Phase 1 Project*, the project value was Rs185 m., again this year Rs40 m. is being budgeted and having said that, I will take you to page 113, which is in relation to what has been written, that is, the number of Municipal/District Councils provided with accurate and up-to-date digital data relating to immovable properties; for this year the target is 1. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister which Municipal/District Council is being targeted?

The Deputy Prime Minister: If you will bear with me, let me first go back to your previous question. So, I am informed that, as regard to valuation component of LAVIMS, the valuation enhancement is in process to make it fully operational. And, that the valuation optimisation has already been carried out. That is the information I have. If the honourable gentleman wants to come back at a later stage with a Parliamentary Question, I will be very happy to try and retrieve more information. That is what I have been provided with, so far. Next question was, which local authority, I understand it is Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Page 118, the very last line, *Item 31410.801 – Acquisition of Land*, there is Rs500 m. earmarked for acquisition of land in the coming year. So, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister where would be the land acquired and for what purpose?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand provision has been made for the acquisition of land for major government projects, including Metro Express Phase II. For 2021-2022, this would include for the Metro Express project - St Jean Quatre Bornes, along Sivananada Avenue Curepipe to Vacoas and also Trianon. I understand that this is the first element.

Second element would relate to proposed Urban Terminal Projects. So, in Curepipe, there is the acquisition of the Narco Site, also proposed acquisition of ex- Europa Hotel,

Curepipe, which, as you know, is an eyesore. Everybody is being hoping to get rid of that since very long; also the urban Terminal and Market Fair at Quatre Bornes.

The proposed acquisition of CEB premises in Rose Hill, the Atrium Complex in Rose Hill and the proposed acquisition of land from *Société White Rose* in Rose Hill for the purposes of the urban terminal in Rose Hill.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 119. We move to page 120.

Vote 3-1 Housing and Land Use Planning (Rs2,197,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(12.17 a.m.)

Vote 3-2 Valuation Department was called.

The Chairperson: Page 121! Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Capital Expenditure, item 31122.802 – *Other Machinery and Equipment – Acquisition of IT Equipment* from Rs100,000 to Rs4.1 m. can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister give more details?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Chairperson, this relates to the PABX system. I am informed that the software of the present PABX was purchased in 2002, nearly 20 years ago. It is deemed to be completely obsolete and cannot be repaired as it is. So, provision is being made for the procurement of a new PABX in the next fiscal year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Mr Chairperson, I do not know whether the Deputy Prime Minister has replied to the question on item 31132.801 – *Intangible Fixed Asset – Acquisition of Software*. Is it to this question that he has replied, if not, my question is: an amount of Rs24.7 m. was earmarked for this item. Can we have some details with regard to this item?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Certainly, Mr Chairperson. The provision was made for payment of 10% retention money in relation to –

- (i) valuation module enhancement, and
- (ii) database optimisation.

Now, this project will be completed by the end of fiscal year 2020/2021.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22030 – *Rent*, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister give us details about the rental of office or whatever it is, Rs15,692,000?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We are talking of 22030?

So, provision has been made for the payment of rental of the building at NexTeracom Tower 2 and refunded payment parking slots to eligible officers who have to attend meetings in Port Louis. The reduction in provision pertains to refund of parking in line with the trend of expenditure. There are two components, rental of building, we are referring to Level 3 to 5 of NexTeracom Tower 2, NexTeracon Ltd and the rent payable is Rs1,229,270 and then as I referred to earlier, rental of parking slots, this is for the officers of the Valuation Department who had to attend – they are based, of course, in Ébène and they need to attend committees, Tribunals and Courts in Port Louis.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. under item 22120 – *Fees*, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, these fees relate to what and are payable to whom?

The Deputy Prime Minister: So, these are fees payable to the Chairperson of Boards and Committees, fees for training and refund of subscription fees to professional bodies. The reduction is in line, of course, with Government policy to curtail expenditure. The committees here would include the Departmental Bid Committee, the Bid Evaluation Committee, and the Objection Unit.

Fees for training concern, of course, continuous professional development in accordance with the PRB report 2016; fees to professional bodies would include, for instance, what has to be paid by professional valuers of the Department to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

The Chairperson: Page 122!

Vote 3-2 Valuation Department (Rs128,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(12.22 a.m.)

Vote 3-3 Tourism was called

The Chairperson: Page 126! Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mr Uteem: I would like to know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, under item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance* where Rs2.5 m. were earmarked last year and Rs2.8 m. earmarked this year. So, what does this item relate to?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, I am informed that this relates to payment of allowances, salary compensation, contribution to CSG, travelling allowances and bonus.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo! Page 127! Hon. Mrs Tour!

Mrs Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item under capital expenditure, item 26323.089 – *Extra-budgetary Units – Tourism Authority – Revamping of Integrated Information System* under the tune of Rs14 m. May I have some information on this integrated system?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am sorry. So, this would be item, 26323.089? I understand this is a new provision for capital project relating to the revamping of the Integrated Information System. I shall try and find out if I have any further information, Mr Chairperson.

So, I understand that the Central Informatics Bureau was approached by the Tourism Authority to provide assistance to prepare a tender document because the Tourism Authority wants to revamp its Integrated Information System to offer online services to both its internal and external customers, and retrieval of key information from the system through an improved and efficient process. Now, the existing e-licence system was not fully implemented and operational, and was not working end to end. So, AGILEUM Ltd which was the consultant for the computerised system agreed to stop the existing computerised project. So, the online application in the system was stopped; it was difficult to continue receiving online applications. Therefore, a project charter was signed between the Tourism Authority and the Central Informatics Bureau in December 2020.

So, there would be consultancy services provided by the CIB covering consultancy design preparation of RFP, procurement evaluation, award of contract and implementation. And the scope of the project is supposed to include the revamping of the e-licensing platform with e-payment facilities, HRMS, finance system, transport system, procurement system, payroll system, electronic attendance system, document management system, complaint management and ticketing system, and mobile application development.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 127, Item 26313.027 - *École Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval (MITD)*. May we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister as to why there has been a reduction in the budgeted sum?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, for the next fiscal year, the amount budgeted is Rs3 m. This provides for the purchase of training equipment, purchase of IT and office equipment, the purchase of furniture and fittings for a new building. This is what I can state.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Mr Chairperson, at page 127, Item 26313.047 - *Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (b) Promotion and Destination Support*, there is a decrease in the budget of MTPA in the Promotion and Destination Support. Can the hon. Minister give us more information about that?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, it is very simple, if the hon. Member would go up to the Item 26 – *Grants*, she will note that the sum budgeted here includes the MTPA. Rs60 m. have been budgeted for operating costs for the MTPA. This is what is found under that specific item. There is an additional amount of Rs360 m. that is budgeted for under the National Resilience Fund and the hon. Member will find relevant information at page 486 of the budget.

The Chairperson: Let us move to page 128.

(Interruptions)

No it is done. There is time allocation, I am following that. So, page 128!

Vote 3-3 Tourism (Rs308,600,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

The Chairperson: I was waiting for somebody to move for postponement. So, are you moving?

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I beg to move that we do report progress and ask leave to sit again.

The Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 22 June 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

Dr. Padayachy seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 00.31 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 22 June 2021 at 11.30 a.m.