



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2023

CONTENTS

MOTION

BILL (*Public*) - The Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE CABINET**(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)**

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo, GCSK	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daareeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 16 of 2023

Sitting of Tuesday 13 June 2023

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 10.00 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPER LAID

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Paper has been laid on the Table.

Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

The Annual Report and Report of Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority for the year ended 30 June 2019.

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 Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2023-2024) BILL

(NO. IX OF 2023)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2023- 2024) Bill (No. IX of 2023).

Question again proposed.

(10.04 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the floor to address the chair and give my take on the budget presented by the hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Renganaden Padayachy.

And keeping the several measures enunciated therein, Mr Speaker, Sir, can anyone be surprised that the Minister of Finance should have been acclaimed as the African Minister of Finance of the year. The prestigious African Business Leadership Awards 2023.

Let me also seize the opportunity to thank all those who have worked, along with the Minister, to prepare this budget. I would also like at the very outset to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his leadership and guidance in ensuring that this budget strikes the right balance between the economic priorities and our social inclusiveness policy.

The Prime Minister has always, Mr Speaker, Sir, put the welfare of the people very high on his priority list and I must congratulate him for having always ensured that his vision be translated into concrete actions. Let me also, Mr Speaker, Sir, congratulate my

colleague, the Minister of Finance for having made sure that *la vision gouvernementale soit reflétée dans les mesures budgétaires*.

Mais, M. le président, que dit l'Opposition de ce budget? Qu'est-ce qu'on n'a pas entendu? Tantôt un budget électoraliste, tantôt populiste, tantôt *la bous dou*, tantôt diabète! Qu'est-ce que cela peut bien vouloir dire, M. le président ? Tout simplement que ce budget est fort apprécié par le peuple mauricien ; que c'est un bon budget qui fait la part belle au social à travers une panoplie de mesures solides pour soutenir solidement ce peuple.

M. le président, cette population nous a fait confiance et nous a plébiscités. Malgré ce que dit notre opposition disparate, la population dans son ensemble sait que ce gouvernement est et restera toujours à l'écoute et prendra les meilleures décisions possibles pour le peuple et pour la République. La population, M. le président, n'est pas dupe. Elle sait sciemment bien que c'est ce gouvernement dirigé par l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth qui a eu le courage et la détermination d'améliorer son sort alors que ceux de l'autre côté de la Chambre ont eu l'occasion dans le passé d'en faire autant mais n'ont démontré nullement la volonté, ni la capacité de le faire.

D'ailleurs, M. le président, ils ne se retrouvent même pas là aujourd'hui dans l'Assemblée. Nous avons, nous autres eu le courage de les écouter, de les entendre, dire un peu n'importe quoi certes mais on était là pour les écouter mais aujourd'hui cette Assemblée vide l'autre côté de la Chambre démontre clairement leur position, démontre clairement leur *commitment*, M le président. *Yes, Mr Speaker Sir, they are not here because they are very well aware that this budget has indeed put the welfare of the citizens above all other considerations.*

M. le président, l'argument de l'Opposition que tous les efforts que le gouvernement a consentis de faire à travers ce budget provient de la poche des consommateurs mais si ce n'est pas de la démagogie, M. le président, c'est pur et simplement de l'hypocrisie. C'est un secret pour personne que les revenus de l'État viennent de la taxe. Mais il semble que c'est quelque chose qui dépasse *the* possibilité de comprendre, c'est *beyond the scope of their mind*, M. le président.

M. le président, notre Premier ministre et notre ministre des Finances, c'est deux, ont eu le courage et la volonté de recentrer les actions gouvernementales, de réorienter les ressources vers le peuple pour le bien-être de ce peuple. *This is what it takes to bring relief to the people of the Republic. This is what it takes, Mr Speaker, Sir – la compassion, la volonté et le courage. To dare to care requires all that.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, *la pandémie et la guerre Russo-Ukrainienne ont impacté l'économie mondiale et par conséquent, a apporté une montée des prix de produits de consommation.* The prices of goods and services are on a rising curve. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, this worldwide phenomenon is due to reasons beyond our control. However, our government has and is still trying hard to ensure that prices of basic commodities remain affordable for each and every one and this through massive subsidies. Je ne vais pas faire la liste, mes collègues avant moi, en ont parlé suffisamment. This has been possible because we wanted it to be so. It has been possible because Government decided that it would be so.

Mr Speaker, Sir, social inclusiveness is an important pillar of this budget. This budget creates conditions to effectively support each and every component of our population. *Et aujourd'hui, cette panoplie de mesures rend heureux notre peuple. Mais, permettez, M. le président, que je revienne sur ces mesures plus tard au cours de mon intervention.*

A ce moment précis, j'aurai souhaité prendre le temps de la Chambre pour m'attarder sur le secteur éducatif, dont j'ai la charge. Je suis bien sûr heureuse de voir les efforts consentis par le ministre des Finances en ce qu'il s'agit le bien-être de nos enfants.

We, members on this side of the House recognize that our most valuable asset is our children, the future of our nation. In this budget, the Minister of Finance has allocated substantial resources towards their support and well-being. The aim is to ensure that every child has access to quality education, quality healthcare, quality nurturing environment that allows them all to thrive. Investing in our children today, will most definitely yield fruitful returns for our society tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, education remains a national priority. Supporting each child of the Republic to achieve his or her full potential is the ultimate aim of our government. We are providing numerous support strategies up to the age of 3, then free education at pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. We also have established avenues for life-long learning. At the outset, let me state briefly our philosophy of education. We want all our children, all of them, to grow holistically.

M. le président, nous voulons que nos enfants reçoivent une éducation complète, qu'ils soient éduqués mais pas seulement instruits. Nous voulons qu'ils aient des connaissances, c'est-à-dire, le savoir mais aussi le savoir-faire. M. le président dans ce pays comme le nôtre, le savoir-être et le savoir-vivre ensemble reste primordiale. Nous

souhaitons développer chez nos enfants leur confiance en soi, leur *self esteem*. Nous voulons qu'ils soient conscients de leur potentiel et de leur capacité de réussir.

M. le président, c'est précisément pour cela, pour cette raison que nous sommes venus avec le *Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education*. Nous avons apporté une transformation dans le système éducatif. Je reviendrai plutôt là-dessus.

Nous travaillons pour le développement intégral de nos enfants, avec l'esprit d'équité en tête. Nous avons voulu que tous nos enfants aient les mêmes chances, les mêmes chances à être touché par la technologie, les mêmes chances à développer leur talent.

I have been holding the rudder of the education sector for the last nine years, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I have no hesitation in stating loud and clear that the system has seen major, even momentous transformations. New institutions have been created. New structures have been put in place and new policies spearheaded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are on the subject of policies, allow me to say a few words on the Extended Programme, *tant décrié par certains*.

M. le président, permettez-moi de rappeler à la Chambre les propos tenus par le leader de l'opposition alors qu'il était, lui, ministre des Finances durant son discours budgétaire de 2014 et vous verrez, M. le président, que la teneur de ses propos dépend de qu'elle côté de la Chambre il se tient, de qu'elle côté de la Chambre il se retrouve. Voyez ce qu'il avait lui-même décrit comme un *Historic Policy Change* en 2014. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me quote hon. Duval then, Minister of Finance –

“587. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now announce a historic policy change.

588. Mr Speaker, Sir, the history of our nation has many defining moments. Many of them have been created by our forefathers and stand forever as their proud legacies.

590. All our children enter school with a range of abilities. Yet our school system examine them on a narrow set of subjects at the CPE level, decides on their education path and even their future when they are still at the tender age of 10 years old.”

He went further, Mr Speaker, Sir –

“594. Mr Speaker, Sir, the intelligence, talents and abilities of children should not be stifled.

595. Instead we need a system that allows all our children to nurture their talents and aptitudes so that they can choose their educational path.”

They can choose their educational path. Mr Speaker, Sir, he went on to say –

596. That is why I am extremely pleased to announce that Government, after wide consultations by my colleague the Minister of Education and Human Resources with the steadfast support of the Prime Minister, and after deep reflections at the “Assises de L’Education”, has decided that no child should be branded as a failure at the CPE level.”

597. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government has decided to introduce NINE YEAR SCHOOLING in our education system.”

M. le président, cette même honorable Membre trouve moyen aujourd’hui de se contredire d’une façon éhontée.

Celui qui disait qu’on ne devrait pas mettre une croix sur un enfant de 10 ans parce qu’il n’a pas réussi son examen de fin de cycle primaire, qu’on ne devrait pas décider de son future à l’âge de 10 ans ; aujourd’hui vient me dire qu’il faut mettre fin à L’Extended Programme et retourner au *Prevoc*. Il préconise, M. le président, d’envoyer nos enfants à apprendre un ti peu de jardinage, un ti peu de plomberie et il a décidé que ces enfants ne peuvent faire rien d’autre.

Par contre, M. le président, nous, nous avons un tout autre projet pour les enfants de notre République. M. le président, malgré qu’il ait fièrement annoncé à l’Assemblée nationale l’introduction du *Nine Year Schooling*, après profondes réflexions et soulignant –

« ... that no child should be branded as a failure at CPE level. »

j’ai la forte impression, M. le président, qu’il n’a absolument rien compris de la philosophie du *Nine-Year Schooling*.

Quel est le but du *Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education* ? Nous voulons que tous les enfants mauriciens puissent avoir la possibilité d’avoir 9 ans d’éducation de base continue et par la suite, être en mesure de suivre le parcours de leur choix, M. le président.

L’idée est que tous les enfants mauriciens puissent être exposés à un curriculum de base et là, les enfants de l’*Extended Programme* ont eux aussi le droit à cette éducation de base, M. le président. Nous voulons leur donner la possibilité d’être encadrer et de couvrir ce programme d’étude. C’est ça l’idée. J’ai entendu le leader de l’opposition dire que nous

étions au courant que ces enfants n'aller pas réussir et qu'il propose de retourner ces enfants vers un système qu'il n'a même pas évalué. Je lui demanderai –

- (a) Qu'est-ce qui lui pousse à dire cela ?
- (b) Est-ce qu'il a fait une évaluation du programme Prevoc ?
- (c) Est-ce qu'il sait ce qui c'est passer avec ces enfants ?
- (d) Est-ce qu'ils ont pu couvrir leur programme ou pas et, par la suite
- (e) Ont-ils pu suivre des cours à la MITD ?

Non, M. le président, aucune évaluation n'a été faite. Personne ne sait ce qui c'est passer et il n'y a jamais eu des suivis. Par contre, M. le président, nous avons fait une évaluation.

M. le président, le rapport que l'honorable leader de l'opposition se réfère comme étant un rapport de la World Bank a été commandité par moi, par le ministère de l'Éducation, par mon ministère et la World Bank n'a fait que soutenir la MIE pour cette évaluation.

Il me semble, M. le président, que le leader de l'opposition n'a pas compris l'objectif d'un rapport d'évaluation. Il n'a pas compris ce que c'est qu'un *Mid-Term Review*. C'était un *Mid-Term Review*. Pour information, M. le président, nous avons, au ministère de l'Éducation des rapports d'évaluations des projets en cours afin de nous permettre de mieux comprendre les enjeux et les difficultés et dans le seul but, M. le président, de mieux servir tous nos enfants et le leader de l'opposition disait qu'on était au courant que les enfants n'allaient pas réussir.

Mais bien sûr, M. le président, parce que nous sommes en train de les suivre et nous savons qu'elles sont les problèmes mais il n'a rien compris parce que nous autres, nous pensons qu'il est important que ces enfants soient à l'école. Il peut y avoir des *late developers*, ils ont besoin du temps et vous avez d'autres qui peut être, c'est vrai, n'arriveront pas à avoir le NCE mais ils auront un *Certificate of Attainment*.

Au cours des neuf ans, ils auront développé des connaissances, des compétences qui leur permettraient par la suite de mieux construire leurs apprentissages futurs ; *to build on their the future learning, Mr Speaker, Sir*.

Ils auront grandis, ils auront atteint une maturité leur permettant de choisir le parcours qu'ils voudront prendre, être en mesure de choisir la filière ou autres qu'ils voudraient entrer ou ils pourraient choisir aussi d'entrer dans le monde du travail. Nous avons élaboré des passerelles, M. le président, des *pathways*, leur permettant de continuer

leurs parcours, d'aller à la MITD ou à L'ITET, les polytechnics ou même l'université. Je reviendrai là-dessus plus tard.

M. le président, ces messieurs de l'opposition semblent avoir oublié que le but primaire de notre système éducatif est de récupérer nos enfants. Certains s'offusquent que j'ai trouvé satisfaction quand 71 élèves de l'Extended Programme ont pu réintégrer le *regular stream*.

M. le président, même s'il s'agissait d'un seul élève, on a pu récupérer un enfant, on a pu refaire sa vie, on a pu le permettre de continuer mais ils ne comprendront pas tous cela parce que eux, ils ne viennent que faire des commentaires sans vraiment aller dans le fond du sujet.

M. le président, 71 enfants ont pu être récupérés, le reste ils ont eu le temps de grandir, ils vont pouvoir choisir s'ils veulent aller pour l'enseignement technique ou s'ils veulent aller pour l'emploi. Ils sont grands, ils sont plus forts et ils peuvent choisir, ils ont développés des compétences, ils sont prêts pour le monde du travail.

M. le président, j'aurai voulu attirer l'attention du leader de l'opposition ainsi que l'honorable Bodha, l'honorable Dr. Gungaparsad, que notre but est de remettre nos enfants sur les rails. Ce n'est pas pour faire de la politique, je n'ai jamais fait de la politique sur les dos de mes enfants, je ne le ferai pas, M. le président.

I believe that all our children have a right to quality education. We all also agree that a child cannot decide on his career path at the age of 10 or 11. Besides, vocational training today is not solely about basic skills but it is also about the acquisition of higher order skills, higher end technical skills. These children have got the potential and we should give them all possible chances and opportunities and no one can also deny, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is equally vital for our learners to be literate, numerate and equipped with knowledge and competencies, the foundation on which they can construct their future learning.

Besides, too early an entry into the vocational education can only be detrimental to the interest of learners and this is backed by several research carried out worldwide. We must not forget how school closure induced by the pandemic has adversely impacted education worldwide and the students of the extended programme even more but then, for sure, they have received support of their teachers and the entire school ecosystem, to learn more, to grow more confident, to build on their self-esteem and to equip them with competencies to engage in further education and training.

We cannot overlook the hard work and commitment of the teachers, facilitators and heads of schools who have cared for these students and walked the extra mile to ensure that they get the support they so much needed. I would like to thank them for their commitment and dedication, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I believe truly in the potential of these students and we, in Government, shall support them in their progress even if it may be a small step at a time. They are the children of our Republic, they deserve the best. Let us not sap their spirit and their moral. They are the last one to deserve that.

I would earnestly plead to all hon. Members on both sides of the House, to provide as much support as possible, and above all, to enhance our children's tenacity and resilience, use kind words of encouragement instead of challenging their self-esteem through the adoption of a contemptuous attitude by trying to hit at Government. Do not miss the target and hit on our children, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, maintenant, de répondre aux propos de l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad, *who kindly promised not to be toxic. So, will I be. He chose to quote from the Hansard my intervention in 2012 and 2013. Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand by what I have said then in 2012 and 2013, and this is what I am saying today. I have remained consistent* dans l'opposition comme au gouvernement, M. le président.

He went further to say, what have I done since 2014 à ce jour? M. le président, let me give him an insight of what has been done. First of all, we have ensured that all our children get the best. On a travaillé pour leur développement intégral. Nous sommes venus avec toute une série de programmes au niveau des écoles. L'Early Digital Learning, mais le plus important de tous, the Early Support Programme. Nous avons pu recruter plus de 488 Support Teachers. Ceux qui vont être à l'école, avec les professeurs de la classe pour aider les enfants qui démontrent des learning deficits, qui démontrent des difficultés d'apprentissage. On les prend, on les remet sur les rails en se servant des pédagogies innovative.

Alors, M. le président, il ne faudrait pas que Dr. Gungapersad fasse l'erreur de demander ce qui a été fait ? Nous sommes venus avec l'Early Digital Learning Programme. Nous sommes venus avec communication skills, nous sommes venus avec la natation scolaire, l'after school sports, the outdoor education programme. Tout cela, il n'a rien vu. Il se demande ce que nous avons fait ?

On est arrivé avec 460 Holistic Educators pour assurer que tous les talents de nos enfants soient tapped out. M. le président, communication skills, voyez un peu comment

nos enfants dans les écoles primaires maintenant peuvent se mettre sur *on a stage* et démontrer leurs compétences.

M. le président, quand on est venu avec l'*Early Support Programme*, c'est pour rassurer que les élèves en arrivant en 6^e, n'échouent pas. On les reprend tôt, *we catch them early*. C'est pour cela que nous pensons qu'à la longue, nous aurons de moins en moins des élèves qui seront dans l'*Extended Programme*. Plus d'élèves réussiront. On assurera aussi qu'il y a moins de décrochage.

M. le président, nous avons même introduit le *coding* à l'école primaire. Après tous cela, M. le président, on vient nous demander ce que nous avons fait ! On vient me citer comme si je viens de dire le contraire de ce que j'avais dit dans le passé. Contrairement à vous, j'ai gardé le même langage. *We in Government believe that what we are doing, in what we are doing and we are proud to stand by our words.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we engaged in this programme, we did not leave; we didn't do it without carrying the evaluation. On a rien fait au petit bonheur, et je ne vais pas retourner là-dessus. Nous avons fait le travail qu'il fallait parce que nous pensons que chaque enfant mauricien a le droit de grandir et de contribuer positivement dans la république de Maurice.

M. le président, if there is one expression we wish to obliterate from the education sector, it is the dead end. There is no place for dead end in our system. We believe in lifelong learning. We have created pathways, des passerelles pour assurer que les jeunes puissent développer leurs compétences et contribuer positivement et efficacement à l'économie. Nous avons permis qu'il y ait un changement vraiment très important dans ce qui est de l'enseignement technique.

It is today agreed that technical and technology creation is a major engine of development, of social equity inclusion and sustainable development *et nous savons que tous les pays industrialisés, que ce soit le Singapore, l'Allemagne, la Corée du Sud, l'Inde, they are transforming their ecosystems to facilitate the transition, and advance technological and skilled basic economy. Even our economy has been gradually moving towards hi-tech and knowledge based activities. We have introduced fundamental reforms in the technical education segment and Government has and is investing massively in this area in terms of infrastructure, equipment, and human resource.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, to drive our island's nation towards the next phase of development, towards the high income status, there is a pressing need to establish clear skills sets and resulted career pathways across all occupations in the labor market

including emerging sectors of the economy. The Polytechnics have evolved, to broaden access and widen participation and serve local and regional needs of liners and industry alike.

Today, Polytechnics are melding high quality career and technical education with holistic and 21st century skills, challenging their assumptions that there is only one past to gain for and productive employment in the labour market, the university.

In line with the vision of Government, the Polytechnics have drafted a unique space in the high education ecosystem, attracting students with less than 5 credits as much as the traditional good students who have preferentially opted for more niche, specialised and shorter programs that directly responds to the changing and future needs of the industry.

From Internet of Things to Big Data, from robotics to cyber security, and game development, from leisure management to architecture studies, from oncology nursing to health care assistance, from industrial logistics to sports, coaching and recreation management, programmes are as varied as their relevant and fit for purpose and forged with international institutions of high repute from Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, Switzerland and South Africa. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, Polytechnics regroups more than 3,645 students across its five campuses including Rodrigues.

Qu'est-ce qu'on n'avait pas entendu dans cette Assemblée, M. le président, quand on parlait du Polytechnics ? On venait nous poser la question, est-ce que ça va réussir ? Qu'est-ce qu'on ne disait pas à l'époque ? On venait nous demander c'est qui on va employer ? Qui seront les gens qui seront sur le *board* ? Mais aujourd'hui, quand c'est une réussite, personne n'en parle.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to mention that we have been working all the time for the benefit of our children, for the benefit of the pupils of this country. *M. le président, permettez-moi de retourner sur les propos du leader de l'opposition. Le leader de l'opposition a déclaré que les collèges privés souffrent d'une politique 'dominer du ministère' et qu'on les asphyxie.*

M. le président, on vient nous dire que nous sommes en train d'asphyxier des écoles ? C'est de la désinformation, M. le président! *I would go further. It is disinformation and misinformation, and this should never be allowed in the education sector.* Sachez, M. le président, que nous n'avons en aucun cas réduit les ressources attribuées aux collèges pour leur fonctionnement. Bien au contraire, nous avons durant ces dernières années, augmenté la compensation pour l'utilisation des *school premises* de

50%. Par contre, nous avons seulement exigé des écoles pour plus de transparence, plus de recevabilité dans l'utilisation des *grants*.

Cela m'étonne d'entendre le leader de l'opposition se servir du terme '*dominer*' alors qu'on ne fait qu'exiger que toutes les écoles adoptent les principes de la bonne gouvernance, incluant de la transparence. Je l'ai déjà dit, M. le président, quand il s'agit de *public funds*, de *tax payers money*, on a le devoir de s'assurer que les *grants* sont utilisés pour les *intended purposes*.

We cannot disburse public funds without ensuring accountability. I cannot do that, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are here talking about public funds, tax payers' money and the State has disbursed more than Rs5.14 billion to the private secondary schools. And this, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot be termed as being *dominer* to the private schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs5.8 billion has now been budgeted in this year's budget for the same schools. Am I expected to provide such grants without requiring and insisting their adherence to the principals of good governance? *M. le président, les bénéficiaires de l'argent public doivent impérativement souscrire aux procédures de déboursement prescrites.*

M. le président, je rencontre les membres de la Fédération des Managers des collèges Privés et des collèges Confessionnels, tout comme les représentants des syndicats à chaque fois qu'ils me font la demande.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry aims at ensuring that each and every child of this Republic gets quality education. And we shall continue to provide resources and support to private secondary schools to that end. This budget provides for additional resources for the private secondary schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *le Leader de l'opposition a été plus loin* and at some point of his intervention, he adopted a derogatory attitude towards our public universities. *Il a choisi des termes que je qualifierais de dénigrant à propos de nos universités. Il a même parlé de faillites des universités Mauriciennes.* Let me say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this indisputably the most fallacious statement that could be made regarding our public universities. And this with the intention of manipulating and misguiding people – disinformation again, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Does he know that the University of Mauritius is now ranked in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking, a highly prestigious ranking institution? It rates

universities on their commitment to the SDGs and it is among universities which met the ranking, is among the universities which meet the stringent criteria. We are speaking here of more than 20,000 recognised universities in the world.

Let me give a further information that the Leader of the Opposition *a préféré passer sous silence*. Today, the University of Mauritius is among the top 5% universities in Africa. These are verifiable facts, Mr Speaker, Sir. As for the ranking of UTM, the Leader of the Opposition's ranking model is based on the popularity of the institution website – Webometrix Ranking model, it appears, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, what is also unfortunate is the disparaging remark made by him when in his vain attempt to cast aspersion on the universities, he states and I quote –

« Et après, on se demande comment il y a le chômage à Maurice, comment il y a du under employment à Maurice et comment il y a un skills issue chez nos jeunes.. »

And he continued by saying –

« Personne ne s'offusque ».

M. le président, je m'offusque, devant cette grossièreté de jeter la boue sur la mission même de nos institutions de l'enseignement supérieure. S'il prétend de ne pas le savoir, permettez que j'éclaire sa lanterne, M. le président.

Our graduates from our local universities have been instrumental in fostering the socio-economic development that Mauritius is internationally recognised for. Local qualifications are recognised worldwide and our local graduates have successfully carved a professional niche for themselves in different parts of the world. Would this have been possible if the qualifications were below par? No, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of international benchmarking that takes place before courses and programmes are delivered. And there is also a powerful network of these universities with the world of Business and Industry both in course designing and delivery. So, for honesty's sake, let us not blame our public universities. On second thoughts, I wonder, is there an ulterior motive here? Or is that criticism a dig at Public Universities just so to give an edge to private institutions?

Mr Speaker, Sir, it would perhaps be salutary for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to carry out a visit to the universities concerned and to see the work taking place in the engine rooms there! These Public Universities would gladly open their gates to him as they have for thousands of alumni who have made a success of their careers and lives and are to this day contributing to the uplift of our country.

M. le président, nous avons le *Higher Education Commission* et le *Quality Assurance Authority*. Ces sont des personnes qui s'y connaissent mais je ne me laisserais pas influencer par des gens qui ont font de la politique sur le dos de nos enfants.

M. le président, je viens maintenant sur quelque chose d'extrêmement important. I was stating earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, the corrective measures to improve learning and that we should take them and they are best taken right from an early age. In fact, learning gaps start right from the pre-primary level and we have to ensure that these get plugged as from that stage onwards.

L'accès équitable à une éducation de qualité pour la petite enfance reste le moyen le plus efficace de donner à chaque enfant un bon départ dans son parcours scolaire. On parle souvent des 20% d'élèves qui ne réussissent pas à la fin du cycle primaire. Mais est-ce qu'on s'est rendu compte qu'il y a peut-être 20% de la population des enfants qui n'arrive pas à avoir l'encadrement voulu au préscolaire et que très souvent ce sont ces mêmes enfants qui ont des difficultés durant leur parcours scolaire ?

Notre Premier ministre l'a toujours dit, les moyens ne devraient pas être une barrière et que tous les jeunes doivent pouvoir accéder à une éducation de qualité. Il a toujours pris les actions dans ce sens. D'ailleurs avec les universités gratuites depuis 2019, cela a permis à environ 40 000 élèves à accéder à une qualification universitaire.

Et aujourd'hui, M. le président, the Prime Minister has given the country the means for making the wheel of free education come full circle, Mr Speaker, Sir. We know now for the first time in the history of education in Mauritius, we are going to witness the spread of free education across the different subsectors. We can now say that education is finally free from pre-primary to tertiary. Free preprimary education will take on board children as from three years of age.

M. le président, j'ai entendu souvent dans cette Chambre les gens venir dire 20 % des enfants ne réussisse pas, je viens de le dire, ce sont souvent des enfants qui n'ont pas eu les mêmes chances. We are among the relatively small number of countries providing free access to quality pre-school education in keeping with international recommendations. Free pre-primary education is in fact, directly in line with UNESCO's recommendation for countries to provide at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education. We are going one step further by providing one additional year. *M. le président, cette mesure viendra changer la donne car nous le savons tous, que tout se joue avant six ans et c'est cela qui nous motive.*

International research, Mr Speaker, Sir, carried out by Nobel prize winning economist James Heckman pointed out that for every dollar invested in quality early childhood programmes, there is a powerful return on investment of 4 to 16 dollars. *Et cela, M. le président, mènera à une situation extrêmement positive avec une réduction importante du décrochage scolaire, une meilleure performance et aura un effet bénéfique à la longue sur la société dans son ensemble.*

We will all recall that the hon. Prime Minister announced, on the occasion of the celebrations of the 55th anniversary of Independence, that pre-primary education would be free for children aged 3 to 5 and that this measure would take effect as from January 2024. This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, now formalises this historic decision.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not there to insist on *l'école unique*. We haven't done it in the past and we have no intention of doing it in the future. Private operators will all be obviously invited to join in the system.

However, those schools not willing to join the Free Pre-Primary Education System Scheme will continue to operate as fee-paying institutions. I am pleased to inform the House that the Committee at the level of my Ministry has already started working on the grant-in-aid formula for the sector. Let me once again thank the hon. Prime Minister for his vision and the hon. Minister of Finance for making provision in this budget for this laudable measure.

M. le président, la portée sociale de cette mesure ne peut être sous-estimée. Elle aura un impact extrêmement positif sur tous les enfants de la République. En effet, l'éducation de nos tout petits reste incontournable un puissant facteur d'équité. A travers cette mesure, on peut facilement imaginer le soulagement des parents qui n'auront plus dorénavant à dépenser pour l'éducation de leur enfant, leur permettant ainsi d'utiliser leurs ressources à d'autres fins. N'oublions également pas ce soutien en grande demande aux écoles dites petites et qui n'ont malheureusement pas suffisamment de ressources. Nous le savons, M. le président, le fossé qui existe entre les pourvoyeurs d'éducation scolaire, préscolaire. Nul ne peut nier l'existence des disparités entre les institutions et cette mesure tant attendue rehaussera le niveau de ces écoles.

Allow me now to briefly expatiate, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the fact that the budget comes with a series of other measures. I will go very briefly on these, Mr Speaker, Sir.

On a toujours été motivé de ce côté de la Chambre, M. le président, par l'inclusion et l'équité. Et c'est bien pour cela que nous sommes venus de l'avant avec le *Special Education Needs Authority*, avec notre politique de *rights approach* quand il s'agit des

enfants aux besoins spéciaux. Aujourd'hui ce budget prévoit une augmentation conséquente du budget du SENA permettant une meilleure prise en charge de nos enfants aux besoins éducatifs spéciaux. En permettant à ce que les ONG reçoivent un soutien important dans leurs tâches d'encadrer nos enfants. Nous sommes venus avec les normes à être respectés, nous travaillons sur la formation des éducateurs et des *carers*. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, 459 enseignants des *SEN Schools* ont reçu un *scholarship* du *Commonwealth of Learning* et ils ont été formés. Nous avons aussi eu des experts qui sont venus pour leur parler et pour promouvoir l'empathie chez le personnel des *SEN Schools*.

Je voudrais attirer l'attention de l'honorable Dr. Gungaparsad, que le nouveau budget prévoit que tout le personnel de ces établissements reçoit le salaire minimum. On a même prévu que les tous enfants des *SEN Schools* bénéficient d'un repas chaud. Tout cela est prévu dans ce budget, M. le président.

Nous sommes aussi venus avec les R 10 000 pour les écoles secondaires, pour qu'ils achètent des livres écrits par des auteurs locaux. This measure will serve to revive and promote further the reading culture. A boost will also be given to reading since these are books written by Mauritian authors and therefore present a context that is familiar to the Mauritian reader.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the further benefit that accrues from this measure is that it is a tacit encouragement for local authors to go for creative writing and thus enhance the corpus of local literature. *Et cela permettra non seulement l'enrichissement de notre culture mais aussi une diffusion de la culture mauricienne au-delà de nos frontières.* This may also prove highly useful to motivate authors to write in any language spoken in Mauritius.

M. le président, nous avons aussi prévu un budget pour les *Evening Classes*. Nous sommes revenus sur le ratio of *teacher to pupil ratio* dans ces classes. Nous avons aussi eu la décision d'aider les jeunes couples pour les enfants de moins de trois ans avec une allocation. Cela permettra aux jeunes de penser à fonder une famille, ça les aidera.

Believe me, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I say that all the measures taken here will contribute greatly to making the lives of people in Mauritius better. For a society like Mauritius that prides itself on its multilingualism and on its multi-cultural entity, it would be a disaster to let go of what acts as a mainstay of its identity. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are now happy that we have managed to come up with *Kreol Morisien* in the School Certificate, that we have put up the National Examinations Board.

M. le président, dans ce budget, le Ministre des Finances a aussi abordé la question du Revenu minimum garanti. Nous croyons que des revenus justes et viables sont essentiels pour valoriser notre main-d'œuvre et réduire les inégalités. Je suis contente de noter aussi que pour embaucher des femmes dans le service, ce sera maintenant possible à travers la mesure pour employer les femmes. Pour les aider, on arrive avec les Primes à l'emploi et aussi toutes les mesures qui ont été prises.

Permettez, M. le président, que je fasse un survol des différentes dispositions –

- L'augmentation des pensions que ma camarade l'honorable Jeewa-Daareewoo a tellement bien illustré ;
- Les prix des denrées essentielles qui ont été gardées bas grâce aux subsides.

M. le président, on n'a pas cessé de dire de l'autre côté de la Chambre qu'il fallait à tout prix baisser le prix de l'essence. Maintenant qu'on l'a fait, on en parle plus.

M. le président, les 8000 logements sociaux en 18 mois et l'augmentation des *grants* pour la dalle sont tous là des mesures pour le bien de la population. L'investissement dans les infrastructures routières, sportives et autres drains, on le sait tous que le développement du pays passe toujours par la qualité et la durabilité de ses infrastructures.

M. le président, à chaque coin de l'île, vous voyez des chantiers. En ce qu'il s'agit de l'augmentation du prix du carburant, je vous en ai déjà parlé. L'introduction de la taxe progressive, M. le président, ces gens de l'autre de la Chambre disaient que ce n'est pas une taxe progressive. Dans ce cas-là, il va falloir leur demander d'écouter et d'aller entendre, de voir ce que l'honorable Doolub a si bien décrit dans son intervention.

- Le changement dans la structure des impôts ;
- La pension a augmenté ;
- Le *minimum wage* qui a été revu à la hausse ;
- L'augmentation dans les allocations pour les enfants sur le SRM ;

Et pour cela, je dois remercier le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances pour le soutien indéfectible qu'ils ont apporté à la population.

Last measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, that goes straight to the heart is the decision to ensure the complete *prise en charge des soins aux jeunes enfants qui sont atteints d'un cancer*. Government will now cover the full cost of treatment for young patients, even those requiring medical treatment not available in the country. Mr Speaker, Sir, *c'est de la*

compassion qu'a démontré le ministre des Finances. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the heartfelt cry of parents has not fallen in deaf ears and that is certain. And then, it has always been the deep-seated conviction of this Government that no one should be denied medical care due to financial constraints. So, allow me to insist that this budget is a huge step towards achieving universal healthcare especially when it comes to our children.

M. le président, the social dimension of the 2023/24 Budget presented by hon. Dr. Padayachy has been already been well canvassed. And rightly so, I tend to look at it from this perspective. In the past, a parent would never have known what is in store for his/her child right from day one, a whole lot of unknowns, indeed. For the first time, we get the impression from this Budget that the child is protected and cared for right from the word 'Go'. A lot of support in the initial three years of his existence, the promise of enjoying free education across the several levels, from pre-school to University, a facilitated entry in the world of work, a slew of social and health benefits. To provide this whole panoply of support over the lifetime of individuals takes some daring and the hon. Minister of Finance has clearly demonstrated that he can dare to meet that challenge because he cares, because this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, cares.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo!

(10.52 a.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Merci, M. le président. Je suis heureux de constater que tout au moins certains membres de l'Opposition aient rejoint l'hémicycle pendant que ma collègue s'adressait à la Chambre.

M. le président, vous me permettrez quelques remarques d'ordre général. Cela fait plus de 20 ans que je suis député ; disons que j'ai servi comme député pendant plus de 20 ans.

Et pouvoir m'adresser à nouveau cette année à mes collègues, et je vous salue, M. le président, ainsi que mes collègues membres du gouvernement et tous les députés, pouvoir le faire, est un grand honneur et un grand bonheur aussi. Connaissant les aléas de la politique, c'est avec humilité, comme toujours, que je m'adresse à la Chambre.

Cela me peine souvent d'entendre, de témoigner de l'agressivité des uns et des autres, des coups bas, de la démagogie quand nous savons que toute notre histoire politique nous enseigne que nos adversaires d'hier sont nos alliés d'aujourd'hui, et que nos

adversaires d'aujourd'hui seront peut-être nos alliés de demain. Pas parce que comme le disent certains commentateurs, nous sommes, nous les politiques, des gens sans principes. Mais parce que la réalité de l'économie mondiale nous offre une marge de manœuvre très limitée en tant que petit pays insulaire cherchant à développer son économie et à assurer la prospérité de son peuple.

D'ailleurs, il n'y a pas grand-chose qui nous sépare sur le fond, je me réfère au consensus social-démocrate qui a guidé ce pays depuis l'indépendance, qui a guidé tous les gouvernements, même si évidemment, il y a des différences de personnalité, du style de gouvernance, du mode d'organisation et de fonctionnement des différentes parties. Mais sur le fond, nous devrions d'une part être assidus dans notre présence à l'Assemblée, et je me suis moi-même excusé pour une absence prolongée inhabituelle hier. Nous devons aussi faire preuve de courtoisie et tenter d'être constructif plutôt que de verser dans une opposition catégorique les uns vis-à-vis des autres des deux côtés de la Chambre.

Cela dit, M. le président, je voudrais dire que ce budget pour moi est d'abord et avant tout la confirmation qu'après le cataclysme du Covid-19, l'économie mauricienne est *back on track* et que nous pouvons désormais avancer très vite, retrouver le niveau de croissance pré-Covid. Donc, c'est le premier message fort qui à mon avis ressort de ce budget. D'autre part, ce budget est aussi la confirmation d'une philosophie économique qui est celle de notre Premier ministre et qui est celle aussi de notre ministre des Finances, une philosophie économique basée sur le concept de la redistribution et de la croissance. Mais je vais débiter par un rapide survol de la situation économique en rappelant le contexte historique.

M. le président, sur la base du dollar, valeur 2023 constante, en 1968, le PIB réel par habitant équivalait à 2,377 dollars américains, dollar d'aujourd'hui, avant de passer à 13 000. Pour passer à 13 000 dollars en 2017 et frôler les 14 000 dollars en 2019. C'est ce qui nous permet d'accéder, n'est-ce pas, au rang des pays à hauts revenus. Ensuite, il y a la chute occasionnée par le Covid, mais déjà - et c'est important - les projections économiques nous disent qu'en 2023, nous allons retrouver le PIB par tête d'habitant d'avant le Covid et dépasser les 14 000 dollars américains en présumant, bien sûr, le taux de croissance de 5 % auxquels nous nous attendons pour l'année calendaire 2023.

Le choc du Covid a été terrible, pire que la récession de 1980. En 1980, on connaît une décroissance de 10 %, mais on va retrouver la croissance toute suite après en 81 avec une croissance de 6 %. Cette fois-ci, cela a été beaucoup pire avec une décroissance de

presque 15 % en 2020 et nous nous efforçons de retrouver la situation pré-Covid. La Banque mondiale nous dit –

“The government’s swift response to the COVID-19 shock was successful in controlling the public health emergency and protecting livelihoods, but it came at a high fiscal cost. Public debt spiked (...)”

Je le dis pour le rappeler à nos collègues de l’opposition qu’à la base des difficultés, des défis économiques, il y a le Covid-19 que nous ne pouvons oublier, qui a fait exploser la dette publique. Déjà, c’est une dette publique dont le profil s’améliore, comme l’a annoncé le ministre des Finances.

L’inflation - on en a beaucoup parlé dans cette Chambre. L’inflation, initialement, baisse au premier impact du Covid avant de passer à 12 % pratiquement en 2022 bien au-delà des projections de l’avant-Covid. Mais ce qui importe, c’est qu’aujourd’hui *we are back on track*. Dans son excellent discours, mon collègue, le ministre Mahen Seeruttun, a fait le survol des indicateurs économiques pour démontrer que désormais, ces indicateurs étaient passés au vert.

D’abord, la croissance - cette croissance de 8,7 %, et nous ne sommes pas peu fiers du rôle du tourisme. La Banque mondiale nous dit, croissance *supported by the strong tourism recovery*. La Banque commerciale nous dit, croissance *‘driven essentially by a pick-up in tourism which accounted directly for over 15% of the economic growth outcome,’* et qui va se poursuivre *‘supported mainly by a further upturn in tourism and the continuing good performance in financial services and ICT.’* Les indicateurs tournent au vert, l’inflation, dette publique, déficit budgétaire, déficit fiscal, réserve de devises et l’emploi – *‘unemployment fell by 5,200, labour force grew by 30,000 and employment increased by 35,200.’* Donc, là aussi, les indicateurs sont au vert.

Je vais rapidement commenter quelques critiques de l’opposition. L’essentiel de la critique tient à la dépréciation de la roupie, à l’inflation, et hier encore, différents intervenants ont parlé d’illusion monétaire. Mais, soyons clairs, certains ont même dit que fait ce budget par rapport à l’inflation. M. le président, la multitude des transferts sociaux annoncés par le budget vise précisément à aider les plus vulnérables à faire face à la vie chère en rehaussant le pouvoir d’achat à travers ce que Jean Claude de l’Estrac, observateur indépendant, appelle des mesures nécessaires et pertinentes que présente ce budget. C’est vrai qu’avec l’augmentation des taux d’intérêt, l’inflation a augmenté. Nous sommes une petite économie ouverte et nous ne pouvons absolument rien faire pour empêcher, pour résister à l’impact de l’inflation mondiale, comme le rappelait hier mon

collègue, l'ancien Premier ministre adjoint, M. Collendavelloo, le fait que nous importons l'essentiel de ce que nous consommons.

Unlike many Governments in other countries, this Government has been and continues to be committed to redistribute the benefits of growth through its actions rather than empty words. We cannot by magic make inflation and the associated high interest rates disappear.

But what we can, we have and will continue doing is to ensure that the population receives the income support it needs to deal with these global issues. *Alors, pour être très concret*, for those earning between Rs15,000 and Rs25,000, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Rs2,000 income supplement represents an increase in purchasing power of between 8 and 13% which should be sufficient to offset our imported inflation. For those currently earning less than Rs15,000, they will be even more strongly supported against any inflation by the large percentage increase with the guaranteed income of Rs15,000. For an earner at the minimum wage, Rs11,500, they will receive an income transfer from Government, equivalent to almost a quarter of their income. *Donc, cela c'est notre réponse à l'opposition* - look at the volume, the dimension of the transfers and compare it to inflation.

Deuxième critique : c'est un budget pour les riches parce que la réforme du régime fiscal comporte certains avantages pour les plus fortunés. Je regardais hier un article de *Business Magazine* qui résume parfaitement notre argument. La réforme fiscale comble le déficit d'attractivité de Maurice vis-à-vis de ses concurrents. What does it say? To support redistribution, which is our priority, we need growth and growth requires foreign investment and to be a hub for business that serves Africa and India, we need competitive taxes. In this context, we require a tax regime that is attractive when compared to the 24% top personal income tax in Singapore, the 15% in the Seychelles and the UAE which has no income tax at all. So, the tax reform will benefit to a certain extent high income earners just as it will benefit all wage earners because we need to attract investors to grow the economy and pay for the social measures this government is committed to. But what is important is that the extensive social package that we introduced ensures the benefits of wealth creation will be shared by all. So, my friends of the Opposition, in judging whether the policy package is progressive or regressive, as serious analysts, which I hope you are, I would invite you to consider the totality of taxes and transfers which are expected to improve our Gini coefficient by considerably more than the 6.5. improvement of the Gini coefficient achieved in 2017.

Here again, the Opposition is disingenuous in arguing at the same time that we need new pillars which will rely on foreign investment and then opposing a tax reform that enables us to attract such investment. They are also modeled in their thinking and arguing that at the same time, they say we must diversify our economy, new poles of growth, new sources of economic growth and then saying that our tourism accounts for less, a lower share of GDP than the Seychelles. Obviously, we want to have a healthy and growing tourist sector but we also want economic diversification which such that is not possible for smaller island states like the Seychelles.

Finally, another myth that is being perpetrated by the Opposition is that we have exhausted our borrowing capacity. Firstly let me remind the House that Moody's has maintained Mauritius at investment grade with a stable outlook which makes Mauritius an attractive country for lenders to finance. This is confirmed in a recent article of The Economist on 20 May 2023 which categorises African States potential borrowers in three categories and Mauritius is one of only two countries categorised as Emerging African State that can easily borrow on capital markets. So, today all our development partners including the World Bank, yesterday Mr Bérénger referred to the World Bank and the African Development Bank are willing if we require them to do so, to provide us with loans to support our socio-economic policies based on inclusive growth through redistribution.

A few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards tourism. Encore une fois, je crois qu'un rappel historique est très utile pour démontrer en réponse au député Boolell qui nous disait hier ou quelques jours auparavant que l'État-providence comme le développement du pays n'est pas le monopole d'un seul parti. Vous avez raison, il a raison, M. le président. Je pense que en regardant l'histoire du tourisme, il faut convenir que tout le monde, tous les gouvernements ont joué leur rôle. Nous sommes passés de 3 350 touristes en 1959 à un peu plus de 15 000 au moment de l'indépendance ; en 1977, on dépasse la barre des 100 000 touristes ; en 1987 la barre des 200 000 touristes ; en 1991 la barre des 300 000 touristes ; en 1994 nous parvenons à 400 000 touristes ; en 1997 à plus de 500 000 ; en 2000 on dépasse la barre des 600 000 pour passer à 700 000 dès 2003 ; à 900 000 en 2007 ; toucher la barre d'un million de touristes en 2014, et là il y a eu une accélération extraordinaire qui fait que nous passons, nous frôlons 1,4 millions de touristes en 2018. Je voudrais rendre hommage ici à tous les ministres du Tourisme qui ont servi le pays dans cette période cruciale de 2014 à 2018 qui nous permet d'arriver à pratiquement 1,4 millions de touristes.

Mais au même titre, je demande à l'opposition de reconnaître l'impact du Covid-19 qui fait qu'en 2021, nous tombons à moins de 180 000 touristes. Nous sommes revenus aux années 1970, M. le président. Le tourisme en 2021 représente 2 % du PIB mais en 2022, nous sommes pratiquement à 1 million de touristes. De janvier à mai 2023, nous avons accueilli plus de 500 000 touristes, ce qui fait que le taux de récupération pour les cinq premiers mois de l'année est de 92 % comparé au pre-covid mais pour les mois d'avril et mai, nous avons fait mieux qu'avant le Covid, plus de 100 % de récupération. Et tout cela, M. le président, est sans doute dû au départ, au soutien financier extraordinaire offert par l'État au tourisme, à l'hôtellerie durant le Covid avec les plus de R 12 milliards de *Wage Assistance Scheme* et les R 350 milliards et quelques de *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*.

En tout cas, aujourd'hui où en est-on ? Le tourisme poursuit sa reprise. Les recettes touristiques sont de l'ordre de R 62 milliards, à peu près, pour la période juillet à mars contre R 47 milliards pour la période pre-covid équivalente. Là j'aurais bien évidemment voulu souhaiter que le Leader de l'opposition soit là, il a disparu après la PNQ d'hier, il n'est plus jamais revenu, je pense après le PNQ d'hier et lui qui nous disait que tous ces progrès dans le tourisme ne compte pas à cause de la dépréciation de la roupie. M. le président, sachez qu'en 2022, en euros constants, tenant compte de l'inflation et de la dépréciation, les revenus du tourisme en 2022 ont augmenté de 5 % comparés aux pre-covid et je mets au défi qui que ce soit de contester ces statistiques.

Donc, nous n'épargnerons aucun effort pour soutenir la reprise du tourisme en cours sur la base d'un partenariat public-privé très fort et d'une stratégie à trois volets consistant à développer les marchés d'opportunités, améliorer et diversifier le produit touristique qu'offre Maurice et la promotion d'un tourisme résilient et durable en améliorant la connectivité bien sûre.

Comme l'a annoncé mon collègue, le ministre des Finances, il y a une réforme institutionnelle en cours, la réforme de la *Tourism Authority*, la redéfinition du mandat de la *Tourism Authority*, création d'un bureau de développement du tourisme au sein de mon ministère et comme je l'avais annoncé l'an dernier, un plan sur 10 ans préparé avec le soutien de la Banque Mondiale et de l'Organisation Mondiale du Tourisme.

Vous savez, M. le président, j'ai entendu encore des critiques nous disant que le tourisme aux Seychelles a fait mieux qu'à Maurice. C'est vrai, le tourisme aux Seychelles a repris plus vite qu'à Maurice pour une raison que nous connaissons tous que les Seychelles ont ouvert les frontières bien avant nous. Nous avons fait le choix, comme la

dit souvent notre Premier ministre, de privilégier la santé publique et la vie des mauriciens. Que nous disent les statistiques de l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé ? L'incidence du Covid pour 100,000 habitants –

- (a) Maurice - 1,194 ;
- (b) Maldives - 15,660 ;
- (c) Seychelles - 21,470.

Le nombre des décès, M. le président, pour 100,000 habitants –

- (a) Maurice - 6 ;
- (b) Maldives - 43 ;
- (c) Seychelles - 116.

Voilà, M. le président, ma réponse à l'opposition.

On a fait un choix, on a payé le prix fort certainement sur le plan économique, on a utilisé nos réserves pour protéger notre peuple et maintenant, nous sommes en train de rebondir après cette catastrophe du Covid mais je voudrais aussi rappeler, je ne dis rien contre les Seychelles ; c'est un pays ami, c'est un peuple frère. Il est condamné à agir autrement parce qu'il dépend énormément du tourisme, beaucoup plus que nous. Nous avons la chance d'être plus grand et d'avoir une économie diversifiée mais surtout, nous avons investi dans le développement humain. Je voudrais vous parler du *Human Development Index*.

Mauritius, and this is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, overtook Seychelles to be the top African country on the Human development Index since 2016 and in 2020, we ranked 62nd out of 191 countries surveyed. Mauritius is the only African country to be classified in the very high human development category.

M. le président, la deuxième dimension de ce budget, c'est la confirmation de notre philosophie économique, de celle du Premier ministre dès son arrivée à la tête du gouvernement et qui s'est poursuivi, qui s'est développé avec mon collègue Kishen Padayachy au Finances. Nous croyons, M. le président, que la redistribution des richesses, le combat contre la pauvreté et la réduction des inégalités sont la voie de la croissance indiquée pour notre pays. C'est évidemment le rejet de la Théorie du Ruissellement, cher aux libéraux et aux néolibéraux ; Comme certains l'ont dit hier déjà. Même le FMI, même des économistes néoclassiques, comme Krugman, reconnaissent qu'un niveau élevé d'inégalité est un frein à la croissance et que la redistribution peut être bonne pour l'économie. L'économiste français, Jacques Généreux, nous rappelle que la croissance n'est qu'un instrument tandis que la justice est une fin et que la loi du partage efficient

nous dit, nous indique l'effet positif et significatif de légalité de la distribution des revenus sur le taux de croissance à long terme et que finalement, la seule finalité légitime de l'économie et la qualité de vie des hommes et des femmes à commencer par celle des plus démunis.

C'est la philosophie économique et je me permets, M. le Premier ministre, de dire que c'est votre philosophie économique et c'est celle qui nous inspire toutes et tous de ce côté de la Chambre et j'aurais osé espérer aussi de l'autre côté de la Chambre au-delà des divisions, des antagonismes partisans.

Ce budget est donc un budget de solidarité vis-à-vis des moins fortunés de la société et je voudrais rapidement parler de deux choses ; de la pauvreté et des inégalités. Vous me permettrez de passer de l'anglais et au français, mes notes préparées à la hâte sont parfois en anglais, parfois en français.

The latest World Bank Report I have seen is the macro-poverty report of April 2023 which has this to say –

“Poverty is falling again after COVID-19 reversed recent gains.”

I think we have got to be opened and honest about this.

Si on considère le seuil de pauvreté des pays à haut revenu qui est de 6.85 dollars par jour, Maurice passe de 19 % de pauvres en 2012, *and this is a very high standard, the poverty threshold of high income countries*, 19 % en 2012 à 11 % en 2019; un progrès remarquables.

We reduced the numbers in poverty for higher income countries by almost half en 2019, *puis va remonter à cause du Covid*. According to the World Bank, there is obviously, as in any other country, an increase in poverty due to COVID-19 to 16% by 2020 and then it drops again to 13% by 2022.

Donc, nous revenons graduellement au niveau du pré-Covid et nous continuons à avancer vite but let me go back to the Gini coefficient which is, as we know, the standard measure of income inequality and these facts are objective because it is based on the household budget survey that comes out every five years and is made public. Historically, the figures we have go back to 1962, that is used as a base here and we know that income inequality improved up until 1975 because of the labour intensive development strategy with decrease in unemployment but then, after 75, the situation changed and the figures plateaued between 87 in 2007.

We remained, more or less, at the same level of economic inequality and then, as from 2007, the Gini coefficient deteriorated again until 2012. So, the household budget survey of 2012 shows a deterioration in terms of economic inequality and it's in 2017 that those figures are reversed. So, what I want to say is that between 2001 and 2015, according to the World Bank, irrespective of whatever Government there was; 2001 à 2015, the gap between the incomes of the poorest and the richest in Mauritius, the richest being defined as the top 10% of households, the gap increased by 37%.

So, what happened is that the model we had since independence, this socio democratic I referred to earlier, which all governments believed in, stopped working at a certain point in time. This is where the Prime Minister and the new economic philosophy come in, and this is where the work done since 2014, the social transfers have an impact.

In 2017, Mr Speaker, Sir, we were the 45th most equal country amongst 157 countries with an improvement in Gini coefficient, significant improvement from 2012 to 2017. In fact, inequality in Mauritius is defined as in the relatively reasonable income gap of 30-40 countries. Only 17 countries across the world are in the better relative equality group. Now, this good performance on equality reflects the economic philosophy of the regime since 2014 which continues with the present Government and the present Minister of Finance.

In 2017, Government transfers improved Gini coefficient by 6.5 points. Without Government action, our Gini coefficient profile would have been much worst. In 2001 to 2002, when we were in government, the impact of government intervention only improved the Gini coefficient by 3.3 points and in 2012 by 4.8 points which demonstrates clearly how much more emphasis, the government, since 2014, has placed on social development and an appropriate trade-off between growth and ensuring more inclusiveness as regards the benefits of growth.

I want to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that to the extent that we had to give up a little of growth perhaps for the sake of more social harmony, less inequality and elimination of absolute poverty, this trade-off has been worthwhile. We only need to look at the deteriorating economic inequality in developed countries in the United States, in Western Europe to see what I mean.

Donc, le palmarès de ces alliances mené par le MSM depuis 2014 est connu. Le *negative income tax*, *minimum wage*, *Worker's Right Act*, *Amendment of Portable Gratuity Fund*, *the guaranteed redundancy payments*, tous ceux dont a parlé longuement mon collègue et ami, le ministre du Travail hier même, il a fait la liste de toutes ces

avancées, sont éloquentes. Le résultat, M. le président, c'est que *according to the projections in 2020, after 2020, the Gini coefficient is expected to improve as never before since 1962.*

Income inequality will recede in a manner that is unprecedented since 1962 as we are awaiting the results of the next household budget survey. But yesterday, Minister Callichurn gave us some figures. He was comparing the calculations he has of the Gini coefficient from 2016 to 2020 and to 2022 to show the marked improvement. According to the World Bank, I go back to this report on poverty of April 2023 –

« Le pourcentage des pauvres sous le seuil de pauvreté des pays à haut revenus, c'est-à-dire 6.85 dollars par jour, devrait revenir au niveau de 2019 cette année avant de décroître pour atteindre un record historique de 10% d'ici 2024. »

If that is the case, it would mean that despite COVID-19, we would have halved the numbers in poverty since 2014.

Just one last indicator to prove my point, the total subsidies and transfers to households in 2023 as compared to 2014 shows an increase of 306%. This is the proof as they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When you compare those figures to whatever you may say about the inflation of its spike, it is objectively established that the lot of the poorest and most vulnerable has improved.

Aujourd'hui, ce budget nous permet d'avancer encore plus vite. Dans un discours remarquable, le ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports me remémorait le concept fondamental de l'État providence. What do we say, Mr Speaker, Sir? We say that the state must be with its citizens, invest in its citizens, offer social insurance to its citizens from cradle to grave, and this is what my colleague explained. He started by explaining how, in fact, before a child is born, the free and quality anti-natal care offered by the State. Then, the child is born and the new budget now provides for direct income transfer, support to households for children below the age of 3.

Je ne vais pas refaire le discours de mon collègue, et il nous a montré étape par étape comment l'État va accompagner les citoyens jusqu'au jour, malheureusement, où il quitte cette terre comme nous tous. Et même là, n'est-ce pas, ma collègue, la ministre de la Sécurité sociale vous le dira que pour les familles qui ne peuvent pas offrir des funérailles convenables aux défunts, l'État intervient pour les soutenir. Nous, les députés des deux côtés de la Chambre, le savons, car souvent, nous sommes sollicités et nous nous assurons que la sécurité sociale fait ce qu'elle doit faire dans ces cas.

So, this is extraordinary. I regret it that even those positive, I mean, when I was in the Opposition, I used to say that in every budget, there is some good and some bad. I think I must commend hon. Lobine. He is the only one on the Opposition benches that I heard saying that there are positive measures in this Budget.

C'est un budget extraordinaire. Je dirais à mon collègue, le ministre des Finances, que c'est de mieux en mieux. Chaque budget, chaque année, nous permet cet approfondissement de l'État providence dont nous parle tout le temps le MMM - approfondissement de l'État providence - eh bien, on le fait, de mieux en mieux chaque année.

Vous savez ce qui m'a frappé, M. le président ? Les critiques de l'opposition ne traitent pas de la pauvreté et des inégalités sociales. Ces critiques traitent essentiellement de la gouvernance. Parce qu'ils ne peuvent rien dire, qu'il s'agisse du taux de croissance de l'économie, la reprise économique, le travail qu'a fait le ministre des Finances et le gouvernement pour remettre l'économie sur les rails, ils ne peuvent rien dire qu'en à la réduction des inégalités sociales, le soutien tangible, concret aux plus vulnérables, aux plus pauvres. Donc, le débat politique se déplace dans le seul domaine de la gouvernance.

Mais moi, je le dis à mes anciens camarades du MMM, nous socialistes, et je le dis aussi aux amis du Parti travailliste, les progressistes d'hier et j'espère d'aujourd'hui, peut-on faire abstraction dans le débat politique des progrès socio-économiques que réalise le pays ?

Ce dimanche, je lisais la presse dominicale, et un des titres d'un journal dominical bien connu, m'a frappé.

Le titre c'était : 'Après l'intermède politique du budget, on en revient aux allégations contre la police,' etc. Donc, le budget de la nation qui permet d'introduire pour la première fois dans notre histoire un revenu minimum pour les plus pauvres, pour les plus vulnérables, pour les veuves et les orphelins, ce n'est qu'un intermède politique dans la campagne de l'opposition pour renverser le gouvernement. C'est ça qui compte, c'est le plus important. Briser la confiance dans la police, dans les institutions électorales, dans la justice. Tout le reste n'est qu'un intermède politique – l'intermède politique du budget. Toutes les mesures positives, progressistes sont qualifiées d'électoralistes.

Hier dans un brillant discours, le ministre Ramano a répondu à cette critique pour dire : ça veut dire quoi électoraliste ? Je ne vais pas répéter son discours mais juste sur ce point fondamental, M. le président. Électoraliste ou populiste, ce qu'entend l'opposition, c'est que nous cherchons à plaire au plus grand nombre, à la majorité des gens. Mais pour

plaire au plus grand nombre, il faut répondre aux attentes du peuple ; il faut offrir au peuple ce à quoi il aspire. Et il aspire à quoi ? Une meilleure vie, une protection contre la vie chère, des moyens de mieux faire vivre sa famille. Eh bien, si c'est cela être électoraliste ou populiste, oui, nous l'assumons, M. le président. Nous sommes électoralistes et populistes si cela veut dire se tenir à côté du peuple et des pauvres de ce pays !

The Prime Minister : Dès le lendemain des élections !

The Deputy Prime Minister : Dès le lendemain des élections ! Absolument!

This is a budget for the many and not for the few. Et nous n'en sommes pas peu fiers.

M. le président, le temps court, je voudrais dire quelques mots à propos du logement. Malgré le Covid-19 qui nous a paralysés pendant presque deux ans, qui a fait exploser le coût de la construction et cela ce n'est pas mon ami le député Osman Mahomed qui me le contredira. Malgré cela, la NHDC a livré de novembre 2019 jusqu'à présent plus que la totalité de maisons livrées entre 2005, 2006 et 2014. Malgré le Covid-19 ! Et ce n'est pas fini, là depuis juillet 2022, 582 maisons livrées à Mare Tabac et à Wooton. Plus de 1 100 bénéficiaires de *Roof Slab Grant* durant la dernière année financière. Déjà nous entretenons la construction de 8 000 maisons sur 39 sites à travers Maurice correspondant à 400 par circonscription. Et je déplore vivement la démagogie de certains de l'autre côté, de l'opposition, voulant faire croire qu'on aurait boycotté telle ou telle circonscription, enfin, pas telle ou telle mais une circonscription précise avec des sous-entendus à relent communal.

Je l'ai dit, et je le redis, il y a plusieurs circonscriptions où nous n'avons pas trouvé suffisamment de terrain pour construire 400 maisons. Il y a la Circonscription No. 2 à Port-Louis, et j'ai eu le plaisir de m'entretenir avec les députés de cette circonscription bien en amont pour leur parler de la difficulté de trouver des terrains. Nous discutons alors des terrains à Vallée Pitot, je crois, et le député Reza Uteem m'a fait des suggestions, on a essayé mais on n'a pas pu réussir à trouver des terrains appropriés dans la Circonscription No. 2. Pareil pour la Circonscription No. 3 mais pareil aussi pour la Circonscription No. 18 ; pareil aussi pour la Circonscription No. 19. Et la concentration de l'habitat fait qu'on ne peut pas construire en hauteur dans ces régions, ce n'est pas ce qui est indiqué pour un aménagement correct du territoire et qui offrirait un habitat décent à nos concitoyens.

En tout cas, 39 sites, 35 déjà avec la NSLD, les contrats sont signés, les travaux débutent, la main-d'œuvre est mobilisée ; mon collègue le ministre du Commerce s'est pleinement impliqué pour s'assurer qu'il n'y ait pas de manquements et de pénurie en termes de matériaux de construction. C'est une tâche herculéenne et c'est pour cela que je dis que moi j'aborde cette tâche avec beaucoup d'humilité parce que nous essayons de faire ce qu'aucun gouvernement n'a réussi ou même essayé de faire, n'a osé dans le passé. Cela ne s'est jamais fait ! Nous avons parlé de 12 000 maisons, nous mettons en chantier 8 000 maisons avec la ferme intention de débiter la deuxième phase dès que possible.

Le coût de la construction est énorme. On a dû négocier les prix avec les grands constructeurs du pays. Le ministre des Finances en concertation avec le Logement et le reste du gouvernement, le Premier ministre, a fait le choix de confier cette tâche aux constructeurs du pays – mauriciens, locaux, des compagnies enregistrées à Maurice. Encore une fois, sans précédent, en termes de volume de construction dans le secteur public, c'est une ambition extraordinaire, c'est une tâche herculéenne et nous sommes tout à fait conscients des défis. Livrer 8 000 maisons en 18 mois ça ne s'est jamais fait, M. le président. Mais nous avançons pour les habitants des 20 circonscriptions du pays tout en discutant avec Rodrigues d'une formule appropriée pour Rodrigues et la NHDC est déjà engagée dans la construction de maisons sociales à Agaléga.

En plus, la NHDC poursuit son travail. À part les 8 000 maisons, la NHDC durant la prochaine année financière va livrer 203 maisons à Mare d'Albert, 223 à La Valette et va initier des projets pour encore 550 maisons dans différents lieux d'ici juin 2024. Ensuite, il y a les travaux de réhabilitation de différents complexes NHDC à travers le pays – à Atlee, Bambous, Beau Vallon, Dagotière, Gros Cailloux, La Tour Koenig, Vallée des Prêtres – et aussi la construction de *fire exits*. J'ai été étonné d'apprendre que beaucoup des immeubles de la NHDC n'ont pas de *fire exits* – incroyable mais vrai. Donc, dans la prochaine année financière, *we will be building fire exits at Baie du Tombeau, Bambous, Camp le Vieux, Atlee, Cap Malheureux, La Caverne, La Tour Koenig, Plaine Verte, Poste de Flacq, as fast as we can.*

Et à part le travail de la NSLD et de la NHDC, let me say that we are commissioning land use master plans in respect of selected towns and villages but not only, also State land that is not subject to optimal use. And there has been a lot of criticisms on the part of the Opposition again, unfortunately, trying to stir up communal feelings at times, wild allegations at other times but we are moving forward.

The master plan for Curepipe has been completed and I am delighted that the budget provides us the means to move forward. There is a new market fair coming up in Curepipe with a host of other developments. The master plan for Vacoas/Phoenix will be ready this year. In Rose Hill, there is a major redevelopment planned as regards the Rose Hill market and across the country, with the Ministry of National Infrastructure. We are working to improve conditions of life as regards housing and infrastructure for our people. Then there are the urban terminals. Again this was a line of criticism of the Opposition.

We are moving forward under the guidance of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government with development of Urban Terminals coming up in Quatre Bornes, Vacoas, Curepipe and Rose Hill expected to begin in the course of the present financial year.

Peut-être une remarque rapide sur les critiques tout à fait démagogiques de M. le député Armance, qui nous disait qu'il y avait des bâtiments de quatre étages sans ascenseurs. Que nous dit la loi à Maurice ? La loi à Maurice depuis des lustres, nous dit que pour rez-de-chaussée plus trois étages, il n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir des ascenseurs, mais plus haut que cela, plus haut que trois étages, il faut des ascenseurs. Donc, dire qu'il y a des bâtiments à quatre étages sans ascenseurs, ce n'est pas possible à moins qu'il inclue le rez-de-chaussée. J'aurais voulu que ce soit moins, que l'on puisse, avec le vieillissement de la population, accroître le nombre d'ascenseurs ; revoir la loi. Cela coûte extrêmement cher, cela a un coût prohibitif. Mes collègues du gouvernement savent de quoi l'on parle. Initialement on avait voulu construire en hauteur tous les nouveaux immeubles de la NSLD mais cela a un coût prohibitif.

Il a parlé des personnes âgées vivant au troisième étage dans des complexes NHDC. Il a tout à fait raison. Cela me brise le cœur. Je m'étais promis comme ministre du Logement de pouvoir agir, mais c'est difficile parce que ces maisons ont été achetées, et aller organiser des échanges en propriétaires de maisons, c'est quasiment impossible. Donc, ce que nous faisons maintenant pour les nouveaux complexes que nous livrons, c'est donner la priorité au rez-de-chaussée aux personnes âgées et aux familles nombreuses avec des enfants en bas âge, les handicapés. Ça nous le faisons, mais le drame c'est que ces personnes, les jeunes qui sont plus haut, eux aussi vont vieillir. Donc, il y aura plus tard des problèmes. C'est pour cela que nous préservons l'espace pour installer des cages d'ascenseur éventuellement même si on ne peut pas le permettre là immédiatement.

Les facilités communautaires, M. le président, j'ai été étonné d'écouter le député Armance. C'est comme si c'était la faute à ce gouvernement que dans tous les immeubles de la NHDC, il n'y avait rien à part les logements. Ce n'est pas vrai, et là depuis deux ans déjà, toutes les nouvelles constructions de la NHDC comprennent un centre communautaire, des facilités sportives pour les enfants, pour les plus âgés, un petit commerce, des locaux pour un petit commerce, *taxi stand*, le réseau routier, *provision of bus services* etc. Donc, tous cela est fait et ça c'est grâce à l'initiative de ce gouvernement, de ce Premier ministre, que nous innovons, M. le président.

Donc, je vais conclure. Je vais conclure en disant que first of all, I think that our country is blessed. It is blessed to have avoided the polarisation and the division that witness in so many other countries including North America, including Western Europe. We have, because of this Social Democratic Consensus, because of the new philosophy since 2014 and especially since the present Prime Minister took over, and continued with the present Minister of Finance, we have avoided the social conflict, the social strife that we witness day after day in the more developed countries. It is not an accident, it is due to the policies that are in conformity with the ideals *de la famille militante du MSM, de ceux issues du MMM*. That is why we are doing it, and all this I want to say, is an embodiment of this new philosophy which the Prime Minister, when he was Minister of Finance I believe, first introduced with the notion of the Negative Income Tax. This was the start and we followed in this new approach ever since.

Ce que nous vivons, M. le président, n'a pas fini de me convaincre que moi-même, ceux de mon Parti, la Plateforme Militante, comme ceux qui ont rejoint le MSM à l'instar de Kavy Ramano, comme le ML de mon ami Ivan Collendavelloo, comme le MPM du ministre Alan Ganoo, de Tania Diolle, que nous avons fait le bon choix. Ces idéaux qui ont été les nôtres depuis notre adolescence, ces idéaux de justice sociale, ces idéaux d'agir dans le concret pour protéger les plus vulnérables, et bien, ces idéaux, nous arrivons à les traduire dans la pratique grâce à notre participation aux côtés de nos amis du MSM dans le présent gouvernement.

Et si vous permettez, je le dis à mes anciens camarades du MMM. Nous partageons toujours – je remercie madame la députée Arianne Navarre-Marie d'être là tout de même – nous partageons toujours les mêmes idéaux. Ce donc nous avons rêvé, le salaire minimum, on en a rêvé au MMM, on n'a jamais pu s'en approcher quand nous étions au gouvernement. Tripler la pension non seulement pour les personnes âgées, mais pour les veuves, les handicapés.

M. le président, moi je suis très ému – et je ne peux pas m’empêcher d’en parler – par les deux mesures de mon collègue pour les enfants. Promettre la prise en charge pour les enfants, donc, tous les enfants jusqu’à 17 ans. Prise en charge des soins médicaux quel que soit la nature du malade. En particulier, le cancer, pour tout traitement qui devra être entrepris dans le privé à Maurice ou à l’extérieur quel que soit le centre médical. Il faut ne pas avoir de cœur pour ne pas avoir été ému par ces appels de détresse régulièrement, les collectes d’argent pour permettre aux parents d’offrir des soins médicaux à leurs enfants à l’étranger.

Eh bien, ceci est chose révolue grâce au présent budget et c’est le signe de la maturité de notre société. Cela démontre plus que tout autre chose que c’est un gouvernement qui a du cœur, que nous sommes attachés profondément à la justice sociale que de pouvoir dire qu’aucun enfant de ce pays – et merci au député Kushal Lobine d’avoir reconnu cela – ne sera victime du manque de moyens économique de ses parents pour être traité médicalement et nous l’espérons, retrouver la santé. Ce sont des causes où l’on devrait pouvoir parler d’une seule et même voix. Je le dis à mes collègues de l’opposition.

Donc, voilà, M. le président, salaire minimum hier, tripler la pension, on l’a fait avant-hier et aujourd’hui introduire et c’est une autre étape historique, ce sera sans doute un des faits marquants de ce budget, d’introduire la notion du Revenu minimum au-delà du salaire minimum. Que l’État intervienne directement pour soutenir les plus pauvres, les plus démunis pour garantir à chacun un revenu minimum de R 15 000. En me joignant à l’alliance en 2019, je ne me serai jamais imaginé qu’on aurait pu réaliser cela, avec en plus le Covid qui nous a mis à genoux pendant deux ans ! Eh bien, on l’a fait. On l’a fait et pour cela, je ne suis pas peu fier d’appartenir à ce gouvernement et je convaincu d’avoir pris la bonne décision en choisissant le camp du Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, et du MSM.

M. le président, nous avons joué de la malchance avec le Covid, *but we are back on track*. Redistribution des richesses, croissance, c’est une nouvelle année de travail que nous abordons dès à présent et le travail ne nous fait pas peur. Nous sommes reconnaissants envers la population qui continue à nous faire confiance en nous permettant de gouverner et le ministre des Finances avait utilisé une formule : ‘avec le peuple’ et je dirais donc encore et toujours avec le peuple et pour le peuple.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

(11.53 a.m.)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with a profound sentiment of satisfaction and pride that I intervene on the Appropriation Bill 2023-2024.

Laissez-moi dire aussi, M. le président, que chaque année, il y a certains médias qui décernent une personnalité comme, soit homme ou femme de l'année. Et de temps en temps, on voit aussi certains médias qui présentent quelqu'un comme un héros. Je ne vais pas rentrer dans les critères que ces médias déterminent cet homme ou cette femme ou ce héros. D'ailleurs, on a vu dans certains cas, il y a eu un trafiquant de drogue qui est décerné homme de l'année. On a eu un Maharajah qui est un héros, et j'en passe, sinon je vais prendre trop de votre temps.

Mais moi, je donne plus d'importance *to international institutions and international associations*. Je dois dire que je suis extrêmement content que l'Afrique a décerné notre ministre des Finances comme le ministre des Finances de l'Afrique. *This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is due recognition to his hard work, dedication and competence*. Je dois dire aujourd'hui, bien sûr, que je juge des personnes sur le temps. J'ai été moi-même ministre des Finances, et parmi les personnes qui ont collaboré avec moi dans ma tâche n'était pas un ministre, il était M. Kishen Padayachy. Cette collaboration, bien sûr, a continué et je dois dire s'est encore amplifiée. Je suis fier que j'ai pu le convaincre d'être candidat aussi. Il a été donc élu et plébiscité par le peuple, et maintenant, il est le ministre des Finances. Je dois évidemment le féliciter pour le travail abattu.

Et là, je félicite le gouvernement en général parce qu'avec cette pandémie, M. le président, le monde était à genoux. Il y a bien sûr l'opposition qui tourne la page et je ne vais pas refaire vivre certaines critiques de l'opposition à cette époque. Les gens n'ont pas oublié. Mais là, où il n'y avait rien de prescrit dans les livres, dans les *textbooks*, le monde a dû s'improviser tout comme nous. Mon collègue, le *Deputy Prime Minister*, a longuement parlé sur ce que nous avons pu faire, et le résultat. Et encore une fois, j'en passe sur certains médias, pas tous, qui ont écrit toutes sortes de choses. Mais moi, je me tiens à la Banque mondiale, au Fonds monétaire international et à l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé. Ce qu'ils voient, ce qu'ils écrivent, comment ils jugent notre performance, c'est ce qui compte le plus pour moi.

My satisfaction and pride stem from the fact that the 2023-2024 Budget presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, has also been widely acclaimed by both the majority of our fellow citizens and the economic operators. It is a Budget that protects the purchasing power of our people and improves the quality of life in our Republic. It is a

Budget that provides a boost for the economic recovery that has been registered since 2022 as a result of our bold actions and measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine.

M. le président, le Budget 2023-2024 est un budget gagnant pour la population. C'est un budget dynamisant pour l'économie du pays. Je remercie tous nos compatriotes qui ont vite compris que le Budget a répondu à leurs attentes et que mon gouvernement n'a jamais cessé de démontrer qu'il a une approche humaine dans la gestion de notre pays.

Les réactions suscitées auprès des principaux opérateurs économiques du pays sont aussi éloquents, et j'ai noté quelques-uns.

PriceWaterHouseCoopers Mauritius parle d'un budget qui vise à booster la compétitivité de notre juridiction dans le but d'attirer davantage d'investissements et de renforcer notre économie.

KPMG Mauritius affirme que ce budget démontre que Maurice est de nouveau parfaitement aligné sur les rails de la croissance.

Deloitte a souligné une série de mesures budgétaires visant à enlever les barrières à l'investissement, à apporter des solutions au défi de la main d'œuvre et à renforcer notre économie.

Business Mauritius parle pour sa part de réelles avancées dans le climat des affaires.

Il est indéniable que les mesures phares du Budget restent fidèles à notre philosophie socialiste d'abord, qui met le peuple au centre du développement socio-économique. Je partage le point de vue du ministre des Finances qui dit qu'il n'y a pas de progrès économique sans justice sociale.

Au sein du gouvernement, nous avons toujours été à l'écoute de la population et nous avons agi dans la continuité pour répondre aux attentes de tout un chacun, nos compatriotes les plus vulnérables en particulier, afin, bien sûr, de bâtir une société plus juste et encore plus équitable.

Peu après les élections générales de 2019, ce gouvernement, comme je l'ai dit et l'ai fait rappeler, s'est confronté à la pandémie du Covid-19. On a fait face, M. le président, à une situation sans précédent, mais nous avons relevé tous les défis avec courage et détermination. Nous n'avons jamais abdicé, mais au contraire, nous avons pris la pleine mesure de nos responsabilités et avons agi en conséquence.

Nous avons sauvé des vies, c'était notre priorité, nous avons sauvé les emplois de nos compatriotes, nous avons sauvé les entreprises. Les salaires, les bonis de fin d'année, les pensions ont été payées normalement. À aucun moment, l'État Providence n'a été remis en question. Nous nous sommes assurés de la sécurité et de la protection de nos compatriotes socialement vulnérables et nous avons veillé à ce que ceux vivant avec des maladies disposent de médicaments adéquats.

Nous avons mis à la disposition de la population des vaccins efficaces dans un temps record et nous avons équipé nos hôpitaux et centres de santé adéquatement. Et, M. le président, cela me peine de faire rappeler à la population au tout début de notre campagne de vaccination, cette campagne de certains de l'opposition qui avait même dépensé leur argent pour mettre sur les *billboards* - *mo lekor pu mwa* ou je ne sais pas quel genre d'insanités qu'ils avaient mis comme campagne - ne faites pas le vaccin, vous allez avoir plus de problèmes de santé. D'ailleurs, je n'aime pas me référer à ça mais ça démontre vraiment comment cette opposition surtout Travailleuse, leur façon, je dirais, leur irresponsabilité, leur leader même le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, lui-même il n'était pas convaincu du vaccin, il n'avait pas fait de vaccin et j'en passe pour dire ce qui s'est passé après. Mais nous, nous avons agi et bien sûr nous avons agi en tenant compte des progrès scientifiques ; en tenant compte des conseils des organisations comme l'OMS et d'autres ; en tenant compte du fait que des pays comme l'Angleterre, la France, l'Amérique avait bel et bien commencé leur campagne de vaccination.

Alors, combattre le Covid-19, préserver les emplois et les entreprises ont nécessité l'injection de plus de 110 milliards de roupies. Je dis bien : 110 milliards de roupies ! Il fallait le faire, nous l'avons fait remarquablement bien, ce qui nous a permis de redémarrer nos activités le plus rapidement possible. Et aujourd'hui, M. le président, nous sommes fiers en tant que peuple d'avoir fait preuve d'une solidarité et d'une résilience exemplaire pour se relever du Covid-19. Mais, malheureusement maintenant, nous avons la guerre en Ukraine qui est venue apporter son lot de défis avec bien sûr des bouleversements au niveau de la chaîne de distribution mondiale des produits alimentaires surtout et des carburants.

Ce qui a résulté à des poussées inflationnistes et ça a été pour tout le monde, tous les pays, il y a plusieurs orateurs qui ont donné chiffre à l'appui et tout, et Maurice, petit État insulaire qui importe la plupart de ses produits de consommation, n'a pas été épargnée. Maurice bien sûr a aussi subi les contrecoups d'une insuffisance de devises étrangères due à l'arrêt des activités économiques pendant la pandémie et cela évidemment a impacté sur la valeur de notre roupie et alimenté l'inflation. Nous disons la

vérité. Ce n'est pas comme-ci on était en train de ne pas donner les raisons de ce qui s'est passé mais nous avons pris et nous sommes en train de prendre des mesures d'après nos moyens, bien sûr.

Et, budget après budget, M. le président, ce gouvernement est venu en aide à la population tout en accordant une attention spéciale à ceux qui sont les plus fragiles afin de protéger leur pouvoir d'achat. Par exemple, les subsides sur le riz, la farine et le gaz ménager ont triplé en l'espace de 3 ans. Triplé ! Nous avons subventionné pendant une année, une dizaine de produits les plus consommés. Nous avons introduit le paiement d'une allocation de R 1,000 sous le *CSG Income Allowance* à tous les travailleurs touchant jusqu'à R 50,000 par mois. Nous avons fait mieux avec l'actuel budget, car tout en maintenant l'allocation de R 1,000 à ceux touchant entre R 25,000 et R 50,000 mensuellement, nous accordons maintenant une allocation de R 2,000 à ceux touchant jusqu'à R 25,000 mensuellement. Et malgré tout ça certains de l'opposition : *nanie pa pe fer mem, nanie pa bon mem!* Je me souviens d'un collègue, ancien ministre qui régulièrement intervenait lors de notre mandat de 2014 à 2019, l'ancien ministre Sinatambou, qui avait dit que l'opposition souffrait d'un virus. Le virus s'appelait '*nanie na pa bon mem*'. Ça continue ! Ce virus est toujours là. C'est un virus qui est plus tenace que Covid-19, M. le président.

Il ne faut pas oublier que depuis janvier de cette année, tous les travailleurs indistinctement touchent une compensation salariale de R 1,000. R 1,000 on a donné, *across the board* et il est amusant de voir que ceux qui avant le budget, nous demandaient de maintenir cette mesure qu'eux-mêmes n'ont jamais eu le courage de prendre, venir nous dire aujourd'hui qu'on aurait pu faire plus. Avant le budget ils disaient, il faut faire ça, il faut donner ça. Quand on le fait, ce n'est pas assez, il faut faire plus maintenant. Eux ils n'ont rien foutu pendant qu'ils étaient au gouvernement ; maintenant il faut faire plus.

Le *Basic Retirement Pension* est passé à R 11,000 par mois. Grâce à la contribution du *CSG Retirement Scheme*, les retraités âgés de 65 ans ou plus toucheront R 12,000 par mois et là aussi, qu'est-ce que l'opposition vient dire maintenant ? J'avais promis R 13,500, où sont les R 13,500 ? Bon, je dois dire premièrement, M. le président, on n'avait pas prévu Covid-19, on n'avait pas prévu à dépenser autant de milliards de roupies pour soutenir les travailleurs et les entreprises. On n'avait pas prévu une inflation causée par la guerre en Ukraine qui affecterait le monde entier, y compris nous et qu'il fallait donner des subsides et augmenter des subsides. Mais en plus, je ne m'engage pas aujourd'hui mais je dis : soyez patients messieurs, mesdames de l'Opposition ! Soyez patients ! Nous avons encore un budget et nous allons travailler, dépendant bien sûr de la situation

économique. Moi je ne fais pas de la démagogie. Oui, j'avais promis, j'ai promis. Évidemment quand je promets, c'est comme on dit en économie *Ceteris Paribus*, je crois, *all factors remaining constant*, c'est-à-dire, qu'on continue sur notre lancée à faire des progrès, la croissance etc. mais il n'y a pas eu de *Ceteris Paribus*. Alors ? Donc on va faire le maximum dépendant bien sûr de la situation économique qui va prévaloir l'année prochaine au moment de la présentation de notre dernier budget.

J'avais écouté mon collègue, la ministre Madame Daareawoo. D'ailleurs je vais prendre les chiffres, pas pour les mentionner encore une fois aujourd'hui, elle l'a déjà fait si bien, et ces chiffres-là doivent être régulièrement communiqués à la population parce que vous les membres, quand je dis vous, je parle surtout de l'ancien gouvernement Travailleiste parce qu'à chaque fois vous venez dire maintenant : oui, on aurait dû donner R 13,500, on aurait dû faire plus etc.

An hon. Member: Zéro.

The Prime Minister : Quel est votre bilan en termes de pension, en termes d'augmentation pour les personnes âgées ? Et qu'est-ce que disaient le MMM et le Parti travailleiste à cette époque 2014 quand on avait proposé à la population, dans notre programme de campagne électorale, notre manifeste, que la pension allait augmenter à R 5,000 ? *Non, pa pou kapav done, pa pou done, pa pou done !* MMM-Parti travailleiste ! Et à l'époque, ils étaient tellement sûrs de gagner les élections générales parce que 40 + 40 ! Mais 40 + 40 a fait 10 !

Ils ne savent pas cette mathématique-là. Attendons voir ! Moi, je ne regarde pas dans, comme on dit, *boul kristal*, je ne peux pas prévoir. Mais je peux prévoir ce qui va se passer ; d'après moi. On verra ! *Time will tell !* Parce que les gens font la différence entre ceux qui parlent le langage de la vérité même quand il y a des problèmes, même quand on fait face à des situations sans précédentes, on a toujours dit la vérité à la population. Et ceux qui, comme j'ai dit, ont des masques, vous allez voir - il nous reste un an et demi - combien de masques vont tomber du côté de l'opposition. Vous allez voir !

Et nous avons augmenté toutes les autres pensions de R 1,000, ce qui fait que depuis 2019, le *Basic Retirement Pension* a augmenté de R 2,000 soit une hausse de 22%, compensant totalement pour le taux d'inflation cumulative.

Depuis 2014 le BRP a augmenté de 120% contre une inflation cumulative de 34. 2 %. Ce sont les chiffres, M. le président.

Et ajouté à cela, le Revenu Minimum Garanti passe à R 15,000, n'en déplaie à certains, je ne vais pas répliquer l'honorable Mohamed qui avait fait tout un cas. Qu'est-ce qui est important ? Ce que reçoit la personne ; R 15,000 ! C'est ça qui est important, pas des théories et cela représente une hausse de 35% depuis 2019 et je dois encore une fois dire, ceux qui parlent, comme-ci de confusion autour de cette avancée, font preuve de mauvaise foi et d'hypocrisie.

Nous avons baissé le prix de l'essence de R 5.10 le litre en renflouant le *Price Stabilisation Account* de la *State Trading Corporation* à hauteur de 1,25 milliard de roupies. Nous agissons de manière responsable afin de ne pas mettre la STC en situation de faillite. Là, je dois dire, encore une fois la démagogie de l'opposition, ils disaient à chaque fois depuis un certain temps –

« Il faut baisser le prix de l'essence, il faut baisser le prix du diesel. »

Allez regarder les chiffres ! A chaque fois qu'il y a eu une augmentation – il y a le mécanisme qui est déjà en place - on n'a pas augmenté le prix dans sa totalité. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire ? Cela veut dire que la STC a fait des pertes pendant plusieurs années. Ces pertes sont, si je peux le qualifier en termes de subsides finalement pour la population parce qu'on aurait dû augmenter le prix par beaucoup plus et pour le diesel, comme-ci ils ne savent pas le prix du diesel a régulièrement augmenté à l'importation. Encore une fois la démagogie !

M. le président, nous nous engageons aussi à réformer la taxe sur les revenus en l'abolissant pour les contribuables qui n'ont pas de dépendants et qui touchent jusqu'à R30,000 par mois. Un contribuable avec un salaire mensuel de R 30,000 économisera R 6,500 sur une année et cet argent sera désormais à sa disposition en sus des R 1,000 d'allocation mensuelle du *CSG Income Allowance*.

150,000 autres contribuables paieront moins de taxes et à titre d'exemple, un contribuable touchant R 50,000 et qui n'a pas de dépendant économisera R 15,700 sur une année. Un autre contribuable avec deux dépendants, touchant R 70,000 par mois, économisera R 25,575 sur une année. Cela augmentera le '*disposable income*' et conséquemment, le pouvoir d'achat va s'améliorer.

M. le président, je suis également heureux qu'avec le Budget 2023-2024, nous sommes en train d'augmenter de 19% les assistances payables aux bénéficiaires sous le *Social Register of Mauritius*.

Une autre mesure qui témoigne de notre humanisme est le financement à 100% des frais de traitement à Maurice ou à l'étranger pour les enfants et adolescents âgés de moins de 17 ans souffrant d'un cancer.

Nous encourageons le recrutement des jeunes et des femmes avec la 'Prime à l'Emploi' de R 15,000 et dans ce Budget, nous incitons les femmes de tout âge à rejoindre le monde du travail et suppléer ainsi au manque de main d'œuvre dans différents secteurs.

Nos actions le démontrent, ce gouvernement a toujours privilégié encore l'éducation et l'épanouissement de nos enfants et de la jeunesse. C'est pour cette raison qu'en 2019, nous avons introduit la gratuité au niveau de l'éducation tertiaire dans les institutions publiques. C'était une décision historique. Deuxième décision historique à partir de janvier 2024, l'éducation pré-primaire aussi sera gratuite dans les institutions accréditées. Et une troisième décision historique a été annoncée dans le Budget, à savoir que le gouvernement contribuera R 2,000 par mois au développement d'un enfant depuis sa naissance jusqu'à l'âge de trois ans. Ce qui veut dire, M. le président, que le gouvernement prend en charge l'épanouissement de chaque enfant de la République depuis sa naissance jusqu'au moment où il termine ses études universitaires.

Ajouté à cela maintenant, à la majorité, nos jeunes percevront désormais une subvention de R 20,000 à l'âge de 18 ans. Qu'est-ce que certains sont en train de dire ? *R 20,000 bribe elektoral !*

Et tout à l'heure, quand le DPM énumérait le nombre de mesures dans son discours, *tout sa bribe électoral*. J'ai fait la remarque. Vous savez depuis que nous avons gagné les élections, le lendemain ça veut dire que nous avons toujours fait des bribes électorales, tous les jours. Tous les jours des bribes électorales ! C'est un peu comme le leader du MMM, qui, à chaque fois après les élections générales, il vient dire –

« Eleksion deryer laport. Eleksion pou vini, eleksion taler, eleksion dan enn mwa. »

Mais ce qu'il dit va s'avérer vrai à un de ces jours parce qu'il y aura des élections après notre mandat de cinq ans. Mais à ce sujet, M. le président, cela me désole que certaines mauvaises langues essaient de donner une connotation politique à cette mesure et qui consiste pourtant à donner un appui à chacun de nos enfants qui démarre sa vie d'adulte et par respect à notre jeunesse, je ne répèterais pas les arguments dénués de tout fondement et je dois dire même dégradants et autres insinuations formulées par ces personnes, qui pourtant jouissent d'une certaine influence.

Contrairement à eux, moi, en tant que Premier ministre, j'ai foi en chaque jeune de notre pays, j'ai confiance en leur capacité de faire briller davantage notre nation arc-en-ciel, et je m'engage encore et encore à les épauler afin qu'ils réalisent leur plein potentiel et je n'ai aucun doute que cette subvention marquant le 55^{ème} anniversaire de notre indépendance leur offrira un levier idéal dans cette volonté pour un avenir meilleur que nous avons tous en commun.

M. le président, nous avons été au chevet de notre économie en 2020-2021. Nous avons osé et nous avons réussi à redresser la barre et enregistrer une reprise soutenue. Aujourd'hui, les principaux indicateurs économiques sont au vert. La croissance - laissez-moi mentionner certains - est de retour avec une prévision de 8% en 2023-2024. Nous avons ramené le déficit budgétaire à 3,9% en 2022-2023 et nous nous sommes fixés un objectif de 2,9% pour la prochaine année financière. Le taux de chômage a baissé de 9,2% en 2020 à 7,7% en 2022. L'Investissement Direct Étranger qui avait baissé à 17 milliards de roupies en 2020 a atteint 27,6 milliards de roupies en 2022. Les investissements totaux ont augmenté de R77 milliards en 2020 pour dépasser R125 milliards en 2022.

Ces résultats ne sont pas les fruits du hasard mais ils découlent d'une action concertée, réfléchie et cohérente à tous les niveaux.

Les réformes et politiques mises en place ont permis de consolider les 3 critères cruciaux à la bonne santé économique de notre île.

Nous avons su préserver et rehausser la paix sociale, qui pour moi est fondamentale et déterminant. Nous avons assaini davantage le climat financier et nous demeurons un exemple mondial en termes de stabilité politique.

A ceux qui régulièrement brandissent à la moindre occasion le rapport V-DEM, j'ai ceci à vous dire, l'*Economist Intelligence Democracy Index* classe notre pays en première position en Afrique - vous allez dire que nous sommes régulièrement premier en Afrique - mais 21^{ème} au niveau mondial. 21^{ème}, M. le président ! Notre pays se trouve dans la ligue des *full democracies* au même titre que les pays du G20 tels que le Canada, l'Allemagne, le Japon ou encore le Royaume Uni. J'ai entendu dire un nouveau terme maintenant de l'honorable Armance, je n'entends plus 'totalitaire,' 'autocrat,' *or whatever*. Il y a un nouveau terme maintenant.

Vous pouvez croire, vous vivez dans un pays où vous avez la liberté de la radio, de la presse écrite, où n'importe qui, pas seulement l'opposition, peut manifester peut faire des réunions disant n'importe quoi aussi, des propos très diffamatoires dans pas mal de cas. Et c'est l'autocratie ! C'est un régime totalitaire ! Moi, le dictateur ! En tout cas,

Economist Intelligence Democracy Index va vous dire qu'est-ce qu'on est. Un *full democracy* !

Le monde nous cite en exemple et nous accorde sa confiance. Il est grand temps que nous nous fassions nous-mêmes confiance. Je suis persuadé que ceux qui ont à cœur l'avenir et le progrès de notre nation adopteront cette approche. Moi, j'ai une confiance absolue en notre destinée.

M. le président, il est clair que la confiance est revenue, l'optimisme est de mise, et ce budget va catalyser la reprise économique que nous avons connue.

Le ministre des Finances est venu avec des mesures pour dynamiser et propulser chaque secteur économique. Les opérateurs économiques issus du tourisme, de l'agro-industrie, du monde de l'entrepreneuriat ont d'ailleurs salué ces mesures.

En tant que Premier ministre, moi, je suis confiant que nous pouvons retrouver assez rapidement notre rang en tant que pays à revenu élevé que nous avons atteint en 2019.

Épousant la philosophie des budgets que j'ai moi-même présentés dans le passé, mon collègue, le ministre des Finances, a soutenu les petits planteurs qui ont tant contribué au développement de notre pays. Le prix garanti d'une tonne de sucre passe à R 27 500 pour ceux produisant jusqu'à 60 tonnes de sucre, encore un nouveau coup de pouce.

De même, l'effacement des dettes - très important cette mesure - l'effacement des dettes de plus de 20 ans des petits planteurs, pêcheurs et éleveurs pour leur donner une bouffée d'air frais.

Concernant les pêcheurs, la hausse de l'allocation de mauvais temps à R 650 par jour est salutaire, de même que l'augmentation à R 100,000 du *lump sum* qui est payable à un pêcheur souhaitant rendre sa carte de pêcheur et prendre sa retraite.

M. le président, ce matin, je viens de recevoir une compilation des mesures annoncées et implémentées depuis décembre 2014 pour soutenir le pouvoir d'achat et améliorer les conditions de vie de la population. Ces mesures ont nécessité des déboursements de 275 milliards de roupies - je dis bien, 275 milliards de roupies - et uniquement en termes de revenus additionnel, c'est-à-dire salaire pension, de différents subsides et des assistances financières directes. Cela est sans précédent. Et il y a certains qui ont le culot de venir dire que nous avons mis la population à genou. J'ai justement demandé à faire cet exercice.

Je salue également, M. le président, les mesures qui nous permettront d'avancer dans nos initiatives concernant la sécurité alimentaire et énergétique. De même, les mesures pour continuer à s'adresser surtout aux problèmes et défis posés par le changement climatique.

Les investissements dans les infrastructures publiques de même que dans les aménités dans les différentes régions du pays témoignent de notre volonté sans cesse renouvelée de modernisation pour améliorer, bien sûr, davantage la qualité de vie au sein de notre République, et dans la même foulée, nous continuons à améliorer le climat des affaires dans le pays et nous accélérons le processus de digitalisation de l'économie.

M. le président, j'aborderai maintenant les secteurs et dossiers tombant sous ma responsabilité directe en tant que Premier ministre, ministre de la Défense, des Affaires Intérieures et des Communications Extérieures, ministre de Rodrigues, des îles Éparses et de l'Intégrité territoriale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for our people to prosper, they must, first of all, feel safe in their country and in their living environment. In line with its mandate, the Mauritius Police Force is contributing immensely in improving the quality of life in our Republic by ensuring a safe and secure environment for both our citizens and visitors.

The Police Department will have a budget of Rs10.9 billion to implement new projects and enhance the quality of its services. One of the projects is the setting up of a Police Academy that would stand out as a Centre of Excellence for law enforcement training in the region. A plot of land of 28.5 acres at Côte d'Or has already been vested for its implementation. The Academy will provide a common training platform, not only for the Police, but also for the Mauritius Prison Services and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services.

Another important project for which funds have been provided is the construction of a new G+2 building to house the Operations Room of the National Coast Guard, including the Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre and the Server Room/Control Centre of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System. The new building will meet the requirements of the National Coast Guard, in terms of modern and spacious working place and will accommodate the new Coastal Surveillance Radar System being acquired from Japan. Moreover, to enhance surveillance and ensure optimal maritime safety and security, the Police Department will acquire a new Offshore Patrol Vessel at an approximate cost of Rs330 m. Also, 12 Light Armoured Personnel Carriers are being purchased to complement the existing fleet of vehicles so as to meet the country's expectations in terms of internal

security, disaster management during cyclonic conditions, flooding and other types of natural disasters and any other contingencies that might arise. In addition, Rs125 m. has been provided to renew the fleet of transport vehicles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget will also allow the recruitment of 1,000 Police Officers, both male and female, during Financial Year 2023-2024 and the promotion of 833 Police Officers to the rank of Police Corporals to fill vacant posts following the retirement of Police Officers. The Disciplined Forces Service Commission has already advertised for the enlistment of Police Constables/Woman Police Constables.

To further enhance the capabilities of the Safe City Project, noise cameras will be procured. The number of cases elucidated with the help of Safe City cameras bear testimony to the effectiveness and success of this project. Another indicator of its success is the number of requests obtained not only from members of the public but some Members of the National Assembly, also, for the installation of Safe City cameras in their vicinity and in their respective constituencies also.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government is pursuing its endeavour to modernise the Mauritius Prison Service and in ensuring that it is properly equipped and staffed. To enhance security, the CCTV surveillance systems have been revisited and are fully operational in all prison institutions.

In 2022, we equipped the Central Prison, Beau Bassin with a full Body X-Ray Scanner. This equipment has been instrumental in detecting illicit items hidden by detainees. Out of 22,979 scans conducted, in 129 cases foreign bodies were identified among detainees. An amount of Rs18 m. has been allocated in the current financial year so as to equip the Grand River North West Prison and the Eastern High Security Prison with similar scanners. A contract was awarded on 31 January 2023 for the procurement and installation of the said equipment and delivery is expected by end of this month.

Moreover, provision has been made for the upgrading of prison infrastructure at the Eastern High Security Prison, Melrose and the Petit Verger Prison.

I wish to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the re-engineering of both the Prisons Department and the Probation and Aftercare Service to promote better offender management practices is being looked into following recommendations submitted in the 'Beyond the Bars' Report by an international consultant whose services were hired for that purpose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the country is well aware of my Government's unwavering commitment and resolve to fight the drug scourge. The massive seizures of drugs amounting to Rs15 billion since 2015 and as many as 22,000 arrests speak volumes of the crusade we are leading against the drug peddlers. Despite the threats and the intimidations we are being subjected to, let it be clear: there will be no retreat, no surrender. We are not going to pay any heed to those who make allegations of 'drug planting' which have now become, I must say, a new weapon some are using to discredit and discourage Police Officers who are putting, in fact, their lives at risk to help society rid itself of dangerous drug criminals and their accomplices.

Je voudrai ici dire, M. le président, au Leader de l'opposition que ce n'est pas parce qu'un chef émeutier notoire et ses acolytes présents et passés répètent *ad nauseum* des accusations de 'drug planting' par la Police que tel est effectivement le cas. M. le président, hier j'ai répondu à la PNQ du Leader de l'opposition. Et d'ailleurs ce n'est pas seulement ce PNQ mais tous les PNQ, je veux avoir plus de temps moi-même pour pouvoir donner encore plus des informations à la population et donner la réplique aussi. Mais, M. le président, je ne fais pas de critiques ; je sais que les *Standing Orders* sont tels que vous respectez les *Standing Orders*. Je suis d'accord mais laissez-moi profiter aujourd'hui, j'ai l'occasion. Donc, je vais ajouter un élément pour que le peuple puisse comprendre.

Tout d'abord la *Private Notice Question* du Leader de l'opposition d'hier, il fait mention à la partie (b). Je vais lire la question, et je cite –

« (b) *with a view to eventually recommending proposals for a more effective structure to replace the –*

(i) *Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit as recommended in the Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Drug Trafficking, and*

(ii) *recently created Police Headquarters Special Striking Team ».*

Peut-être qu'on n'avait pas remarqué mais moi, je n'ai pas eu le temps d'expliquer. Lui-même dans sa question il vient dire, et je cite -

« *with a view to eventually recommending proposals for a more effective structure ».*

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire « *for a more effective structure* »? Cela veut dire que *the structure of ADSU, the structure of the Special Striking team is effective but he wants it to be more effective. And I agree with him, we want it to be more effective!*

Maintenant, quelque chose que je pense que le Leader de l'opposition n'avait pas remarqué, et ce n'est pas facile parce que le matin lorsque je reçois la question, je dois dire qu'on n'a pas beaucoup de temps pour lire tous les documents. Donc hier, même après la PNQ, je suis allé continuer à lire les documents. Donc, je fais référence, M. le président, et s'il faut *table*, je vais *table* parce que moi, je ne parle pas de n'importe quel document et je ne brandis pas quelque chose qui n'est pas vraie. – L'affidavit de Monsieur V. S. Alors un commentaire en passant, un commentaire qui va plaire à beaucoup et surtout ceux du Parti travailliste. Dans son *Applicant's First Affidavit, solemnly affirmed on 26 mai 2023*, qu'est-ce qu'il vient dire à la paragraphe 5 ? Je vais citer un bout seulement –

« *I aver that I am very close and used to provide security services to the former Prime Minister, Mr Navinchandra Ramgoolam ...* »

(*Interruptions*)

L'affidavit s'il vous plaît ! Vous savez comment ça se fait, vous jurez la vérité de tout ce que vous avez dit, et je cite -

« *I am very close to Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam...* ».

Mais plus important encore, M. le président, parce qu'hier le Leader de l'opposition faisait un grand cas et pourquoi je me réfère à ça ?

Je croyais que c'était fini, mais l'honorable Armance est revenu comme-ci mettre le couteau dans la plaie. Hier j'étais là, je l'ai entendu, heureusement.

Donc, il est venu dire 'ouais', on a dit qu'il faut *dismantle the ADSU* et que – d'ailleurs je n'avais pas dit que c'était en crise si on allait *dismantle* l'*ADSU* – mais il l'a corrigé après. Alors, qu'est-ce que vient dire Monsieur V. S. dans son affidavit ? Paragraphe 39, et je cite –

“I aver that I have no objection that any unit/division as appointed by the respondent [*The respondent* c'est le *Commissioner of Police*] conduct the enquiry in my case.”

Lui, celui qui fait des allégations, celui qui accuse certains officiers de police, vient dire et il vient demander au Commissaire de police de demander à n'importe quelle unité et division de la police de faire une enquête. Vous pouvez être plus royaliste que le Roi, M. le leader de l'opposition ?

Alors, je crois que c'est bon de préciser ces éléments pour qu'on puisse bien comprendre et je dois dire, le leader de l'opposition, a posé ses questions. On veut tous

améliorer l'efficacité de nos institutions, l'efficacité de la police. Et je le redis, M. le président, la police tombe sous ma responsabilité mais c'est le Commissaire de Police qui a le *effective control and operation of the Police*. Mais, ceci dit, bien sûr, il est indépendant, c'est lui qui dirige, mais on a des *regular consultations* et bien sûr, moi comme Premier ministre, je fais part de certaines choses que je dois faire part au Commissaire de police et lui aussi, il me fait part de certaines choses. Et je dois vous dire que moi en tout cas je suis rassuré que lui il ne va pas tolérer ces brebis galeuses si jamais cela existe au niveau de la police. Et, bien sûr comme nous sommes dans un état de droit, il y a des allégations et les allégations doivent être vérifiées premièrement. Et si, allons dire qu'on sent qu'il y a une certaine vérité dans ces allégations, évidemment, il va prendre les actions nécessaires et éventuellement l'enquête va déterminer s'il y aura d'autres actions qui vont être prises. Donc, M. le président, je dirai au leader de l'opposition, laissons plutôt nos cours de justice faire la lumière sur de telles allégations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have adopted a multi-faceted approach covering diverse aspects of the drug problem including actions in the areas of health, education, and public safety. An evaluation of the implementation and impact of the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023 will be conducted with the support of the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, prior to the formulation of the next National Drug Control Master Plan for the next five years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is widely acknowledged that evidence-based information is critical for ensuring an effective response to drug trafficking and drug use and also to strengthen prevention. To that effect, Government has recently undertaken its first national drug studies, both in Mauritius and Rodrigues. My Office also organised a conference on substance abuse for countries of the western Indian Ocean, in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission with the objective to come up with a common strategy covering intelligence sharing, supply reduction, harm reduction as well as demand reduction. And, as a follow-up, it is proposed to organise a Ministerial Meeting in 2024 to further promote regional cooperation to counter the drug threat in the countries of the region and also explore the possibility of setting up a Regional Drug Observatory.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at February 2023, over 80% of the 390 recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Drugs, including for Rodrigues, have been addressed. 146 recommendations have already been implemented and 151 have adequate measures in place. Actions have been initiated on 49 other recommendations. Three recommendations concerning the Drug User Administrative Panel will be implemented at the level of the Judiciary.

To address the drug problem, there is need to involve people from all spheres of life, such as the youth, parents, teachers, the Police, religious organisations, community groups as well as service providers. To ensure that this community-based approach is sustained, the Community Welfare Task Force project that was launched in November 2022 whereby 30 community leaders from 18 different regions have been empowered during a two-day workshop for the setting up of a community welfare task force in their respective regions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to empowering the Police and the other Law Enforcement Agencies to fight the traffic of illicit synthetic drugs, Government has obtained the support of the United States to provide a platform for all stakeholders to set up regional and international networks for the sharing of information and know-how and adopt evidence-based prevention programmes and treatment measures, in line with the International Narcotic Central Board and the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that on 01 June 2023, the contract for the construction of the new Forensic Science Laboratory was signed with URC Construction Private Limited, which is an Indian-based company. The construction will be completed in 22 months. This project will not only establish Mauritius as a major player in the field of forensic sciences in the region but will also showcase the excellent relations between Mauritius and India.

M. le président, je n'insisterais jamais assez sur le rôle crucial de la femme dans l'avancement et le progrès de notre pays. Nos mères, nos épouses, nos sœurs et nos filles méritent tout le respect, car ce sont elles qui façonnent la société dans laquelle nous vivons. Leur contribution à l'avancement de notre société et à l'épanouissement de notre économie est indéniable. Je veille personnellement à ce qu'elles bénéficient de chances égales à tous les niveaux et à ce qu'elles ne soient plus victimes de maux et de discriminations qui appartiennent à un temps révolu.

With regard to gender-based violence, I welcome the progress made so far. To show the importance I give to this matter, I personally chair a High-Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender-based Violence since January 2020 to ensure initiatives and actions to ascertain that the problems are well coordinated. Government recently had the opportunity to be informed of a mid-term review report concerning the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Elimination of Gender-based Violence. This report allowed all concerned stakeholders to take stock of where they fared better and where they still had room for improvement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I take satisfaction that we have further consolidated the framework aimed at the protection of our children. The Children's Act premised on the principle of best interest of the child, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and since 2022, the admissions to the Rehabilitation Youth Centres have decreased. The children being referred to probation services have increased due to parent-support interventions and diversion programmes. Accordingly, there is a felt need to review the role and functioning of the Reform and Rehabilitation Institutions. My Office has already started internal consultations in the matter. There may be also a need to revamp the decades-old legislations at the same time.

The forthcoming financial year will help in setting the base for the reorganisation of the Reform and Rehabilitation Institutions, through broader consultations with stakeholders concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, developing our entire territory is yet another of our priorities. Since 2015, we have provided adequate resources to ensure the sustainable and socio-economic development of Rodrigues. For the next financial year, an amount of Rs5.1 billion is being provided for furthering progress in the island.

Ensuring resilience in water supply remains a key objective. To that effect, Government has been working in close collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to implement various measures and projects to improve water production, treatment and distribution.

Accordingly, for the coming financial year, an amount of Rs117 m. is being provided in the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the construction and rehabilitation of dams and reservoirs. An amount of Rs10 m. has also been provided for the deployment of the Rainwater Harvesting Scheme in Rodrigues.

In the same vein, Rs1 billion will be invested by the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation with funds from the Mauritius Investment Corporation in desalination plants.

Moreover, to unlock the full economic potential of Rodrigues, a Technopark is being constructed, under the supervision of the Rodrigues Business Park Development Company Ltd, at Baladirou with a view to promoting entrepreneurship and employment in the field of ICT. The Technopark is expected to be completed by August this year.

Most importantly, an amount of Rs7.7 billion has been earmarked for a new runway of 2.1 km long at the Plaine Corail airport. This strategic project will enable larger

planes to land in Rodrigues thus contributing to further development and diversification of economic activities in Rodrigues.

Moreover, to further boost up the Rodriguan economy, the SME Refund Scheme and the SME International Fairs Refund Scheme are being extended to the Rodriguan SMEs. Freight charges on the exportation of agricultural products from Rodrigues to Mauritius will be waived. Additionally, the Subsidy on Animal Feed and the Promotion of Sheltered Farming and Smart Agriculture Schemes are being extended to the Rodriguan farmers.

Furthermore, with a view to supporting the tourism industry in Rodrigues, an amount of Rs80 m. and Rs30 m. are being provided to extend the Subsidy on Special Rodrigues Holiday Package and Subsidy on Airfare respectively, up to September 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is pursuing our long-standing struggle to complete the decolonisation process of Mauritius. I am glad to say that a significant milestone has been achieved in this struggle with the Judgment delivered on 28 April 2023 by the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which established a binding international maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Chagos Archipelago region. This historic judgment has once again confirmed that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius and that Mauritius is the only State which is lawfully entitled to exercise sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this month marks the 50th anniversary of the last forcible removal by the United Kingdom of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago in the wake of its illegal excision from the territory of Mauritius in 1965.

My Government is fully sensitive to the plight of our citizens of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed from the Chagos Archipelago and supports their legitimate aspiration to return and resettle in their birthplace.

My Government remains committed to implementing a resettlement plan in the Chagos Archipelago. In this regard, as already announced in the Budget Speech, another trip to the Chagos Archipelago will be undertaken to carry out an assessment of the requirements for a proper resettlement.

In the meantime, Government will continue to take, through the Chagossian Welfare Fund, special measures in favour of our citizens of Chagossian origin.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government is also committed to preserving the pristine marine environment of the Chagos Archipelago. In this regard, we intend to create a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago. The creation of such a Marine Protected Area will allow us to protect at least 30% of our maritime zones by 2030. In establishing that Marine Protected Area, Government will be guided by the following key principles –

- (a) consistency with international law, including the United Nations Charter and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as with the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 14 which is to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”;
- (b) allowing the resettlement of Mauritian nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin, on some of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago;
- (c) conservation and dissemination of cultural values, traditional knowledge and traditional management of resources as well as cultural heritage;
- (d) inclusion of no-take areas as well as subsistence fishing, and
- (e) ensuring a multi-stakeholder partnership, use of science-based evidence and implementation of a state-of-the-art monitoring and enforcement system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the statements which it made at the UN Ocean Conference held in Lisbon last year, Mauritius invited interested States, non-governmental organisations, scientific institutions and other stakeholders to support the creation and management of our Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago and to help make that area a model of ocean governance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is equally committed to put Agalega on the path of development and progress. The two main infrastructural development projects and associated works being implemented for improving sea and air connectivity to Agalega are at completion stage. The new airstrip and jetty will be operational at the end of this year. Arrangements are also being made to ensure the operation of the new jetty. In this respect, funding has been provided in the Budget for the acquisition of two tugs to enable MV Mauritius Trochetia to berth on the new jetty. These infrastructural developments will broaden the scope of economic activities of Agalega and, thus, improve the standard of living of those inhabitants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards housing projects in Agalega, the National Housing Development Co Ltd (NHDC) is proposing to construct 50 housing units of duplex type. Each housing unit will be provided with individual water tanks and rainwater harvesting system and a common photovoltaic system will supply each duplex with electricity.

I know it has been announced before, I must say it has been proved to be very, very difficult because we have not, first of all, been able to get an appropriate contractor. The cost of bringing the building materials to Agalega is, I must say, sometimes becoming prohibitive, but we shall continue to strive and I hope that we shall be able to make this project a reality this time.

A desalination plant and a sewerage treatment plant are being constructed in each village, as part of the two main infrastructural projects being implemented. These plants will also cater for the requirements of the 50 housing units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the sustainable management of our maritime zones remains a top priority for the Government. However, how to manage if we do not even know what is in our waters?

The Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration has partnered with various organisations throughout the past year for surveys and marine scientific research. These organisations include reputed ones such as Monaco Explorations and Stanford University. The Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration will pursue further collaborations for surveys which are paramount for gathering data on the mysteries of our maritime zones.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as enunciated in the Budget Speech, we are engaging on a major reform of our migration policy. The Government of Mauritius has endorsed a Migration and Development Policy for the Republic of Mauritius 2030 enumerating 158 policy measures for implementation pertaining to matters such as data collection, labour mobility, diaspora, climate change, remittances, human trafficking, and institutional frameworks, as formulated by the European Union. There are currently around 109 policy measures which have been implemented under different axes of intervention of the National Migration and Development Policy and Action Plan.

A Migration and Development Steering Committee has been set up comprising all stakeholders for increased coherence at institutional and policy levels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a need to further open up the country to foreigners who have capital and skills to boost our socio-economic development. I am pleased to inform that the Premium Visa has attracted some 3,800 foreigners to Mauritius.

Moreover, we have been very attentive to the difficulties our fellow senior citizens are facing regarding enlistment of experienced carers. It is more complicated when they are bed-ridden. We have, therefore, taken the decision that henceforth, carers from abroad will be allowed to stay and work in Mauritius beyond the current maximum period of 4 years for so long as their services are required.

Another plea which has been made recently is the dearth of workers as house staff and babysitters. It is a fact that in developing and upper middle-income countries, more and more couples are taken up at work. Therefore, Mauritius is no exception, Mr Speaker, Sir, thus the need for families to have help and support through the services of house staff and babysitters. My Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training is working out the categories of skills required to alleviate the problem of many households. We will facilitate the entry of *bona fide* non-citizens to take up employment as domestic workers.

We are further exploring new markets and initiatives to dynamise the economy. As you all know, with the pandemic, there have been many job losses worldwide. Many people have had to re-orient themselves for other jobs through re-skilling whereas some others, by virtue of their advanced age, have opted for early retirement. In this Budget, we are creating a new opportunity by attracting foreign retired people over 50 years old to invest in apartments under a special PDS Scheme for Senior Living for not less than USD 200,000. They would be given a residence permit for so long as they would hold the property.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the aviation and port sectors are critical for our development especially in an ever more globalised world. And my Government has taken unprecedented measures to support these sectors to ensure more efficiency, sustainability, and competitiveness.

Actions have been initiated to improve the efficiency of our Port to render it more competitive. And while answering a recent PNQ from the Leader of the Opposition, I had already informed the House of a series of initiatives and projects that have either been implemented or are in the pipeline.

These initiatives and projects include the installation of modern and state-of-the-art Vessel Traffic System and the implementation of a Vessel Clearance System at the cost of

Rs7.5 m. scheduled to go live by mid-July this year to streamline the submission and approval processes.

Furthermore, the Mauritius Ports Authority is reviewing its 2016 Master Plan. This study, which would cost around Rs30 m., would pave the way for new port development projects. The new Plan, expected by end of 2024, will cover the period up to horizon 2050.

The Mauritius Ports Authority has also been investing massively to increase its operational capabilities. Four small tugs at the estimated cost of Rs600 m. would be procured shortly, for which delivery is expected by first quarter of 2025.

Moreover, two big tugs would be procured for which procedures would be initiated in the coming financial year and delivery is expected in 2027-2028. Renewal of the fleets of tugs and floating crafts is of critical importance for port operations. And to that end, a Reserve Fund is being created in the coming financial year with a provision of Rs50 m. for that specific purpose.

The Mauritius Ports Authority will also be carrying out infrastructural works at Fort William. This project will enable the development of an additional 56 hectares of land thereat and thus provide an opportunity for the coming into operation of an additional shipyard as well as increasing facilities for storage of petroleum products. The project cost is estimated at around Rs270 m. with expected completion around October 2025.

Besides, under the Green Port Initiative, the Mauritius Ports Authority will embark on a project for the use of Solar Photovoltaic energy under the Central Electricity Board Greenfield Renewable Energy Scheme at the estimated cost of Rs45 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in April this year, the Cruise Terminal project which cost around Rs835 m. has been completed. 17 cruise vessels are expected to call at Port Louis in the year 2024/2025 and around 4,000 passengers can be accommodated in the terminal at any one time. The terminal will no doubt contribute to the rejuvenation of the Cruise Tourism Industry in Mauritius.

As regards capacity building, an amount of Rs25 m. is being provided in the coming financial year for the training, in scarcity areas, of staff of the Mauritius Ports Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the aviation sector. Government is maintaining its policy of opening of our skies with a diverse number of airlines serving Mauritius from key tourist sources. Our national airline, Air Mauritius is performing well

in its new configuration under the AHL Group and remains a key element in our development strategy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a responsible Government, we recognise the delicate balance between economic progress and preserving the very foundation that sustains it - the environment. That is why we have implemented measures to reduce emissions and make our aviation sector more environmentally sustainable.

In March this year, an updated State Action Plan on Carbon Dioxide Emissions Reduction for international aviation operations was submitted to the International Civil Aviation Organisation. This would reaffirm the position of Mauritius in its support to the global effort to minimise aviation's carbon footprint and safeguard the environment from global climate change. Additionally, Mauritius will participate in the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, on a voluntary basis as from year 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our endeavour to further digitalise our services, the Mauritius National Identity Card System is being revamped. The ID card will be complemented with a Mobile ID which will also serve as identity proof. The new system and the new card will have more security features and safeguards to protect the identity of citizens in line with commitments taken by Mauritius with the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

This will reduce the risk of data being misused and the system will also introduce a digital wallet which will include access to Mobile ID. The new system will be in place early next year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our resolve to keep our island clean and healthy, the National Environment Cleaning Authority, NECA, which is operational since July 2022 as the apex authority to spearhead the vision of Government for a cleaner and greener Mauritius, has embarked upon various projects in line with its mandate. Thus, NECA is carrying out cleaning programmes on various sites around the island including the M1 and M2 motorways with the assistance of other stakeholders such as the Beach Authority, the RDA, Mauri-Facilities Management Co Ltd, the Ministry of Environment and, of course, our local authorities.

NECA is coming forward during year 2023/2024 with an Action Plan to clean and embellish some 48 sites, including villages and agglomerations, throughout Mauritius, in collaboration with different stakeholders including the private sector. In addition, provision is being made for the acquisition of modern equipment and specialized vehicles for the cleaning of the island in a more sustainable manner. NECA and Mauri-Facilities will also plant trees in public spaces across the island.

Regarding the Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Company, it has come up with a development and embellishment plan for the Champ de Mars for which funds have been earmarked in the Budget. As regards the proposed new racecourse and Entertainment complex project, actions have been initiated for selecting a transaction adviser and it is expected that bids will be launched by the end of this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is and will remain a caring Government. The Citizen Support Unit was set up to be close to the people. I personally take stock, through regular monitoring and evaluation reports submitted, of the actions taken by Ministries and Departments with respect to tickets opened by citizens. For the period April 2017 to May 2023, the Citizen Support Unit has settled 245,897 cases which represent 92% of cases registered. This demonstrates the success of the Citizen Support Unit in its engagement with the citizens, through its radio programmes on the MBC on Saturdays, and also the “*Ansam Avek CSU*” campaign.

In October last year, I proceeded with the launching of the “*Ansam Avek CSU*” in Rodrigues so that even our people in Rodrigues can register complaints affecting their daily lives and for their prompt resolution by the regional administration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of its success, the CSU is being re-organised. Specific provisions have been made for a proper structure, staffing and budget. We are therefore making of the CSU, a full-fledge structure to serve our citizens still better.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget has remained in line with our vision for an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius – the better future that we all want for present generations and for our children and their children.

As a caring Government, we have made sure that we address the major current concerns and needs of our citizens, be they consumers, families, babies, children, youths, women, entrepreneurs, investors, students, educators, and the list can be extended and it is long.

It is a Budget that has not only lifted the well-being of the population but also, and equally important, has created the necessary conditions for our economy and society to accelerate its recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the war in Ukraine. At the same time, it is building up resilience to the impact of climate change.

With the underlying motto of this Budget, To Dare and To Care, we have shown that we do not only talk but we also walk the talk and we are sincere in our promises and decisions.

M. le Président, depuis le début de son mandat, ce gouvernement a dû faire face à des chocs externes inédits. Ajouté à ces défis hors de notre contrôle, nous avons aussi à conjuguer avec des contretemps internes. Je fais ici allusion aux tentatives désespérées de certains de nos opposants qui ont saisis la justice de façon répétitive pour tout et rien, aux théories du complot sorties les unes plus grotesques que les autres et à une démagogie systématique qui est devenue leur marque de fabrique.

Malgré cette stratégie calculée et dangereuse, nous avons démontré qu'en tant que gouvernement, nous sommes restés fidèles à nos engagements auprès de la population. Notre action a été constamment dictée par le travail, la discipline et la rigueur. Nous avons agi de façon responsable, dans le respect des lois et de nos institutions et nous sommes plus que jamais déterminés à traduire les aspirations de la population en réalité en toute sérénité.

Pour ceux qui parlent de budget électoraliste, sachez que ce budget, qui ne sera pas le dernier budget de notre mandat, n'est que le résultat d'un travail continu en faveur du bien-être de chaque citoyen et du progrès de notre République. Je sais pouvoir continuer à compter sur mes compatriotes pour poursuivre le travail que nous avons commencé en 2014 afin qu'il y ait un avenir encore meilleur pour toute la population.

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

At 1.21 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.55 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated. Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

(2.54 p.m.)

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy): M. le président, pour la quatrième fois de ce mandat, je me présente devant cet auguste Assemblée à la fois conscient et honoré de la responsabilité qui nous incombe.

Au sortir d'une semaine riche en échanges, en argumentations et en joutes verbales, il me revient la lourde tâche de clôturer les débats entourant, comme la tradition parlementaire le veut, la présentation du Budget 2023-2024.

Mais avant de revenir sur les mesures phares de ce budget et les enjeux largement discutés au cours de ces derniers jours, je me saisis de cette occasion pour saluer l'ensemble des orateurs pour leurs interventions. Plus particulièrement, je voudrais

remercier notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, pour sa direction et son soutien indéfectible tout au long de la préparation du budget et jusque dans sa très pertinente allocution de ce jour.

Je tiens également à mettre en exergue le précieux apport de mes collègues ministres, PPS et parlementaires de la majorité. Tant pendant l'exercice de préparation que durant les débats budgétaires, ils ont porté haut les valeurs qui sont nôtres. Tous ont apporté une importante pierre à l'édifice du Budget 2023-2024. Pour cela, nous sommes fiers d'appartenir à une majorité unie et solidaire guidée par la vision humaniste et pragmatique de notre Premier ministre.

Sous son leadership, notre pays n'a de cesse de se développer. Un développement robuste, juste et équilibré qui profite à tous les Mauriciens. Nous devons beaucoup à ce Premier ministre qui a complètement rebattu les cartes de l'action publique en faisant du progrès social le bras armé de la croissance économique. Une vision pragmatique, une grandeur d'esprit, mais aussi et surtout, une grandeur de cœur.

M. le président, ce Budget est le Budget du rassemblement et du progrès. Aux antipodes de cette approche de conciliation, l'opposition a tiré à boulets rouges, sans aucune jugeote ni honnêteté intellectuelle et encore moins de patriotisme sur chacune des mesures pro-Mauriciens de ce Budget. Comme s'ils souhaitaient le malheur de la population et du pays.

Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, sommes portés par l'accomplissement du devoir et de la mission qui nous a été confiée. Avec humilité, nous avons été touchés et parfois même bouleversés par l'accueil que la population mauricienne a réservé à ce Budget.

Je pense notamment –

- à la possibilité pour les jeunes mauriciens atteints de cancer de pouvoir dorénavant être soignés dans les meilleurs hôpitaux étrangers ;
- à la prise en charge totale par le gouvernement des soins médicaux pour les enfants malades et dont le traitement n'est pas disponible à Maurice ;
- à l'allocation mensuelle de 2,000 roupies qui sera allouée aux familles ayant un enfant en bas-âge,
- à la subvention unique de 20,000 roupies que nous verserons à tous les Mauriciens entrant dans l'âge adulte,
- ou encore, à l'introduction d'un revenu minimum garanti à 15,000 roupies par mois.

Des mesures qui changent la vie, des mesures qui sauvent la vie.

Au travers du Budget 2023-2024, les travailleurs, les personnes âgées, les femmes, les jeunes, les personnes handicapées et les malades, ont tous reçu le soutien et l'attention qu'ils méritent de la part de ce Gouvernement. Leur reconnaissance est notre plus belle récompense.

M. le président, les opérateurs économiques et les représentants de la société civile n'ont pas été en reste et nous les remercions de leur soutien. Des syndicats au patronat en passant par les analystes économiques et financiers, ils ont tous salué un Budget équilibré et à la mesure des enjeux qui préoccupent les familles et entreprises mauriciennes.

Permettez-moi d'en citer quelques-uns –

Pour M. Reaz Chuttoo de la CTSP : « *Ce budget ine reponn a sa gran latant de la popilasion parski li finn a la fwa tous la klas mwayin, a la fwa bann dimounn au bas de l'echelle et li finn vinn avek d'autres mezire ki boukou pa ti atann.* »

Pour M. Kevin Ramkalaon, Directeur général de *Business Mauritius*, il y a « de réelles avancées sur le climat des affaires, notamment avec le *streamlining* des autorisations, le retour du principe du '*silent agreement*' qui donne des certitudes quant aux livraisons de permis requis et la réforme de la fiscalité vers un système plus équitable et progressif. Les mesures annoncées par rapport par rapport par rapport à l'emploi et à l'employabilité viennent répondre à nos besoins en matière de ressources humaines, notamment avec la participation des femmes, des jeunes, des personnes en situation de handicap, ainsi que la main d'œuvre et talents étrangers. »

Enfin, pour M. Gerald Lincoln, Country Leader d'Ernst & Young à Maurice–

“The Government has cleverly elaborated a long list of measures for all segments of the population, as well as most sectors of our economy. None can complain about measures that would make their life more difficult. Most individuals see an improvement in their disposable income and we reach the psychological bar of Rs15,000 per month as minimum guaranteed income.”

Strong signals on today's priority of being GREEN: a million new trees for public spaces, the pulling down of the eyesore Emmanuel Anquetil building from the 1960s to be replaced by a mini-forest in the heart of Port Louis, solar energy, coastline protection, plastic bottle recycling, maintaining negative excise duty on

electric vehicles and introducing much needed cycle lanes on new roads. All give a clear sense of direction towards building a more sustainable island.

Agile because the Minister manages to generously increase most allocations, some substantially for those most needy, while making no changes to the corporate tax regime and withdrawing the highly criticized Solidarity Levy, albeit at a midway point by raising the highest income tax rate from 15% to 20%. Agile also, as we see a reduction in budget deficit from 3.9% to 2.9%, GDP growth targeted at 8% and falling unemployment. Public debt falling to 79% this month with a target of 71.5% in a year's time.

This budget is inclusive in many aspects first, gender measures in favor of women and mothers' joining the workforce, including a Rs15,000 monthly '*Prime à L'Emploi*' contribution by the Government for a period of two years for newly employed women. Nursery facilities to be made available by large companies, double tax deductions for childcare costs, triple deductions for employing less abled persons.

Even inclusive towards non-citizens who choose Mauritius as a place to work and live, with the facilitated work and occupational permits. Free education all the way to include pre-primary as well point to the fact that we need families to have more children to reverse the trend in our demographics.

In conclusion, a budget of continuity, with a huge focus on the social inclusion and poverty alleviation, while maintaining high infrastructural investments and generating a feel-good factor by giving something to all. A "no complaints budget" !

M. le président, ces éléments témoignent du fait que nous sommes sur la bonne voie pour réaliser notre vision d'une île Maurice inclusive et durable. Et ce, contrairement à ce que l'opposition tente de faire croire à la population. Qu'il n'en déplaise à certains, les résultats sont là. Ce n'est pas une affaire d'opinion, mais de réalité, de faits. Et pour cause, les principaux indicateurs macro-économiques mesurés à la fin de 2022 montrent une nette amélioration de nos fondamentaux. Je rappelle ainsi que -

- La croissance du PIB a augmenté de 8,7 % en 2022, en forte augmentation par rapport aux prévisions locales et internationales initiales.
- Le niveau d'investissement s'est entièrement rétabli et a dépassé largement le niveau d'avant la pandémie, en franchissant le cap jamais atteint des 100 milliards de roupies.
- Les entrées d'IDE ont atteint un niveau record de 27,7 milliards de roupies en 2022, en hausse de 50% par rapport à 2021.

- Les conditions du marché du travail se sont très clairement améliorées puisque le nombre total d'emplois à Maurice a augmenté de 35 200 en 2022 et le taux de chômage est lui tombé à 7,7 %, contre 9,1 % en 2021.
- Les exportations de biens et de services ont dépassé les niveaux d'avant la pandémie pour atteindre 320 milliards de roupies en 2022, soit une augmentation de 51 % par rapport à 2021 et un surplus de 100 milliards en comparaison au niveau pré pandémie.
- Enfin, pour ce qui est de la dette publique, elle a marqué une claire décélération, passant d'un pic à 92% du PIB en juin 2021 à 79% en juin 2023.

Sur ce dernier point, l'opposition tente de mener la population en erreur en sortant la carte du montant de la dette par habitant, et non pas celle du ratio dette par rapport au PIB usuellement utilisé. Sans vouloir donner de leçons d'économie de base, ce qui compte c'est la soutenabilité de la dette et notamment sa tendance par rapport au PIB. Je vais même plus loin et les renvoie dans leur propre camp. Savent-ils qu'entre 2006 et 2014, la dette par habitant avait augmenté de 61 % ?

M. le président, si aujourd'hui nous avons les moyens de nos ambitions et la marge de manœuvre pour oser et protéger la population, c'est parce que nous sommes sortis plus forts et plus résilients de la pire crise de notre histoire. Et cela grâce à la détermination, le courage et l'action prompte de ce gouvernement, sous la supervision de notre Premier ministre. Dois-je une nouvelle fois rappeler que nous avons été confrontés au choc le plus brutal de toute notre histoire.

Après une croissance continue de plus de 4 décennies, la pandémie de la Covid-19 nous a coûté quelques 15 points de PIB en 2020. Nous avons subi deux contractions successives, de 7 % en 2019-2020 et de 6,2 % en 2020-2021.

En termes concrets, cela signifie que du côté du tourisme, contribuant directement et indirectement à 20 % à notre PIB, nous sommes passés de 1,4 millions de touristes en 2019 à seulement 180 000 en 2021.

Un manque à gagner cumulé de plus de 120 milliards de roupies, toutes choses égales par ailleurs, soit environ 1 tiers de nos entrées en devises étrangères habituelles. C'est ce qui explique la dépréciation de notre monnaie en 2020 et 2021.

M. le président, alors que la pandémie commençait tout juste à s'essouffler, la guerre s'est abattue pour la première fois depuis 70 ans en Europe. Cette guerre entre la Russie et l'Ukraine, couramment nommée le grenier du monde, est un autre choc externe que la population mauricienne a dû vaillamment affronter. Car de ce conflit a résulté une

inflation, c'est-à-dire, une augmentation des prix pour ce qui douterait encore de la définition économique du terme, à travers le monde entier. Dans le monde, l'inflation a été de 4,7 % en 2021. À Maurice, elle était de 4 %. Et en 2022, 8,7 % au global, 10,8 % à Maurice. Nous savons quelles ont été et quelles sont encore les difficultés que connaissent les familles mauriciennes face à la cherté de la vie. C'est bien pour cela que ce budget, le Budget 2023-2024, s'inscrit dans la continuité des 3 derniers budgets présentés dans un contexte de crise mondiale et historique.

M. le président, afin d'amoindrir les effets de la crise sur la population et la structure de notre économie, ce Gouvernement a toujours osé et protégé. C'est notre ADN, ce qui nous unit, nous guide et nous éclaire. Dois-je encore rappeler la réponse historique apportée par ce Gouvernement pour sauver les emplois et préserver le pouvoir d'achat.

M. le président, le pragmatisme doit l'emporter sur la démagogie. Sous la direction de l'honorable Premier ministre, ce Gouvernement n'a ménagé ni ses efforts, ni ses ressources. Il est clair que nous ne sommes pas sortis de ces affres en restant immobiles. Bien au contraire !

Ce Gouvernement a agi avec audace sauvegardant la structure de notre économie touchée par la Covid-19 et en protégeant les ménages confrontés à l'augmentation du coût de la vie. Mais aussi, en augmentant les prestations, en investissant dans l'entrepreneuriat mauricien, en promouvant une croissance durable qui crée des emplois qualifiés et en consolidant le filet de sécurité des plus précaires.

Pour cause et pour rappel, au cours de ces trois années de crise, nous avons entre autres -

- introduit le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self Employed Assistance Scheme* qui ont bénéficié à 542 000 travailleurs, pour un montant de 27 milliards de roupies afin de préserver l'emploi ;
- contribué à hauteur de 34 milliards de roupies depuis 2020 pour subventionner les produits de base afin qu'ils restent accessibles à tous les Mauriciens ;
- investi 4,3 milliards de roupies pour soutenir le pouvoir d'achat de 350 000 travailleurs, en leur versant la *CSG Income Allowance* de 1 000 roupies par mois ;
- progressivement augmenté la pension de retraite de base pour atteindre 10 000 roupies par mois et introduit la *CSG Retirement Benefits* de 1 000 roupies pour qu'un retraité bénéficie de 11 000 roupies par mois au 1^{er} juillet 2022, et
- amélioré l'accès aux programmes de soutien du Gouvernement pour 142 000 Petites et Moyennes Entreprises et Entreprises de Taille Intermédiaire, payé la

compensation salariale des PME et introduit une Prime à l'emploi de 15 000 roupies par mois pour faciliter l'accès au marché de l'emploi pour les jeunes et les femmes.

Rappelons que la Banque mondiale a classé la réponse mauricienne à la crise comme la 4^{ème} plus forte au monde. Et malgré tout, l'opposition veut faire d'une pierre deux coups en effaçant la crise et balayant le soutien que l'Etat apporte à sa population et aux entreprises.

C'est pourtant grâce à ce même engagement sans faille du Gouvernement et à la confiance inébranlée de la population que nous avons pu atteindre d'excellentes performances en 2022 et ainsi aborder l'année 2023 avec plus de sérénité. Et cela dans un contexte international toujours incertain marqué par un conflit persistant en Ukraine.

M. le président, en implémentant la stratégie de ce gouvernement, nous estimons que les politiques annoncées dans le discours du Budget 2023-2024 vont générer 2 points de pourcentage de croissance supplémentaires et 40 000 emplois additionnels. De ce fait, en 2023-2024, le PIB connaîtra une croissance robuste de 8 %, poursuivant la tendance de 2022-2023. Le déficit budgétaire s'élèvera lui à 2,9 % du PIB.

Je souligne que ce déficit est inférieur de 1 point de pourcentage au déficit de 3,9 % enregistré l'année dernière et de 2,1 points de pourcentage au déficit de 5,6 % enregistré en 2021-2022. Plus encore, en termes de consolidation fiscale, nous avons pris de l'avance sur le calendrier ambitieux que nous nous étions fixés. La dette du secteur public devrait donc continuer à diminuer pour atteindre 79% à la fin de juin 2023 et 71,5 % à la fin de juin 2024.

A cet égard, je me permets de rappeler que nous remplirons l'objectif fixé par le FMI en abaissant notre dette publique en deçà de 80%. Nous poursuivrons nos efforts pour parvenir à notre objectif de moyen terme qui est de ramener la dette à 60% du PIB. Dans le contexte actuel, nous convenons aisément que c'est une situation que l'opposition a bien du mal à accepter. A dire vrai, la réussite de leur propre pays semble leur rester en travers de la gorge.

M. le président, fort d'une détermination sans faille et à l'appui du Budget 2023-2024, ce gouvernement est convaincu que chemin faisant, nous continuerons à améliorer nos fondamentaux économiques. Nous continuerons à renforcer notre résilience face aux chocs externes qu'ils soient d'une nature économique, environnementale ou sanitaire. Nous continuerons ainsi et ensemble à construire le futur que nous méritons. Pour y parvenir, je reviendrai dans la seconde partie de mon intervention sur les grandes mesures

que le Budget 2023-2024 contient au bénéfice des mauriciens, des entreprises et de notre environnement. Mais avant, permettez-moi dès à présent de couper court aux accusations sans fondements et critiques fallacieuses formulées par l'opposition.

M. le président, tout d'abord, je prendrai le temps de répondre aux imputations faites à l'encontre des autorités concernant la dépréciation de la roupie. Dans cette auguste Assemblée, l'opposition a fait valoir que dans les pays insulaires tels que les Maldives, le taux de change est déjà revenu à son niveau d'avant la pandémie.

En réalité, les choses sont un peu moins simplistes que le souhaiterait l'opposition qui excelle dans la démagogie et la déformation d'informations. Et oui, car Maurice, en tant que centre financier international possède depuis 1994 un régime de change flottant, ce qui n'est pas le cas des Maldives. Les Maldives ont en effet un régime de taux de change fixe, le rufiyaa étant adossé au dollar américain. Mécaniquement, il n'y a donc pas eu de dépréciation de la monnaie locale des Maldives face au dollar américain depuis le début de la pandémie.

M. le président, dans le cadre d'un régime flottant comme c'est le cas à Maurice, la valeur de la roupie face aux devises de référence est le reflet de l'offre et de la demande qui fluctuent en fonction de plusieurs facteurs. L'un d'eux étant la baisse significative des recettes en devises étrangères que nous avons connues suite à la fermeture des frontières en 2020 et 2021.

Comme cette auguste Assemblée le sait, le secteur du tourisme a fermé ses portes pendant plus de 18 mois, ce qui a entraîné une baisse drastique des entrées de devises d'environ 2 milliards de dollars entre 2020 et 2021. Les exportations de biens ont également été déficitaires d'environ 400 millions de dollars et les entrées d'IDE ont été inférieures d'environ 200 millions de dollars. Le manque de devises étrangères sur le marché local a exercé une forte pression sur la roupie et la dépréciation de la monnaie aurait été largement plus importante si la Banque de Maurice n'était pas massivement intervenue.

M. le président, les bras m'en sont tombés quand j'ai entendu l'honorable Uteem affirmer que la Banque de Maurice n'a pas fait assez pour soutenir la roupie. Ce n'est pas le cas. La Banque de Maurice a vendu quelque 3,8 milliards de dollars sur le marché local des changes depuis mars 2020 pour contenir la volatilité excessive du taux de change. Cela a été possible, car avant la crise, la Banque de Maurice depuis 2017, a fortement augmenté ses réserves en devises étrangères. Fin 2014, les réserves officielles du pays s'établissaient

à seulement 124,3 milliards de roupies, soit 3,9 milliards de dollars, représentant une couverture d'à peine six mois et demi d'importations de biens et de services.

A la fin du mois d'avril 2020, juste avant la crise, les réserves ont plus que doublé pour atteindre 280,6 milliards de roupies, soit 7 milliards de dollars et une couverture de 12,8 mois d'importations de biens et de services. Cette augmentation, elle n'est pas tombée du ciel, bien au contraire. Elle découle d'une stratégie d'anticipation visant à construire la résilience économique de notre pays pour se prémunir de chocs exogènes. Cela s'appelle de la prévoyance car gouverner, c'est prévoir.

Et aujourd'hui encore, malgré le fait d'être passés au travers de la pire crise de notre histoire, les réserves se sont maintenues proches du niveau pré pandémie. Au mois de mars 2023, les réserves officielles du pays s'établissaient à 6,7 milliards de dollars, représentant une couverture de 10,3 mois d'importations de biens et de services. Petit à petit, avec le rétablissement du secteur touristique, nous observons un rééquilibrage des entrées en devises étrangères. Nous ne pourrons pas effacer une crise de cette ampleur et de cette profondeur d'un simple revers de la main. Maurice comme l'immense majorité des pays ont vu leur monnaie se déprécier en raison de la pandémie.

Je referme ici la parenthèse de la Banque de Maurice en réaffirmant clairement que le montant du *One-Off Grant* attribué par la Banque centrale au gouvernement était de 55 milliards de roupies, et non de 150, 180 ou 200 milliards de roupies comme j'ai pu faussement l'entendre dire. Je rappelle également que cette contribution constituait une avance sur le paiement des profits dus et encadrés par la loi bancaire.

M. le président, je viens maintenant au second point que je m'évertuerai à clarifier, celui concernant l'inflation. L'honorable Ramful prétend que de nombreux pays sont parvenus à maîtriser leur inflation. Comment explique-t-il alors que l'inflation dans notre région, celle de l'Afrique subsaharienne, ait été de 14,5% en 2022, bien plus élevée qu'à Maurice. De plus, contrairement à ce que l'opposition laisse entendre, nous constatons que l'inflation à Maurice a déjà amorcé sa décrue. Nous nous attendons à ce qu'elle continue de décélérer dans les mois à venir pour revenir à un niveau optimal au moyen terme, conformément à l'objectif adopté par la Banque de Maurice.

Du côté du gouvernement, nous faisons notre part sur le plan budgétaire en réduisant le déficit à 2,9 % du PIB au cours de l'exercice 2023-2024. Contrairement à ce que n'avait pas fait l'opposition face à l'inflation de 2006 - 2007-2008, nous avons mis en œuvre un très grand nombre de mesures pour aider les plus vulnérables à préserver leur pouvoir d'achat. Au travers du Budget 2023-2024, nous avons renforcé les mesures de

soutien mises en place depuis 2020 et avons annoncé de nouvelles. Je reviendrai plus tard sur les soutiens et mesures ciblées que nous introduisons actuellement.

M. le président, l'opposition proclame que ce Budget n'est que de la poudre aux yeux. Qu'ont-ils fait de leur côté quand ils étaient aux commandes du pays ? Le PTr n'avait-il pas été créé comme le parti des pauvres et des opprimés ? Quelle a été pourtant la stratégie du Parti travailliste une fois le pouvoir conquis ?

Et qui plus est, en l'absence de choc économique majeur ou de pandémie ?

Voici la réponse. Ils ont introduit une nouvelle loi sur l'emploi en 2008 pour faciliter le licenciement des travailleurs. Pendant la crise de 2008-2009, aucune aide n'a été accordée aux travailleurs. Pas un salaire payé, pas un complément de revenu pour les employés. En revanche, de l'argent distribué à tout va aux petits copains. Ça oui, il y en a eu. Et même beaucoup avec le glorieux *Stimulus Package*.

Et M. le président, juste après les inondations meurtrières de 2013, tout ce que le Gouvernement du Parti travailliste a trouvé de mieux à faire, c'était de modifier à nouveau la loi pour réduire encore davantage les droits des syndicats et le droit de grève.

De notre côté, nous avons fait face à la pandémie de la Covid-19, l'économie a connu sa plus forte contraction et le pays était à genoux. Dans un tel contexte, qu'avons-nous fait, de ce côté de la Chambre ? Nous avons veillé à protéger tous les Mauriciens. Nous avons protégé tous les salariés, toutes les entreprises et tous les indépendants. Le paiement des salaires aux employés et aux travailleurs indépendants en témoigne.

M. le président, du côté de la fiscalité, le Parti Travailliste n'a rien fait pour rendre le système fiscal plus juste. C'était plutôt l'inverse. Ce qu'ils ont fait, c'est instaurer un système fiscal régressif.

Oui, M. le président, un système régressif. Plus vous avez, moins vous payez. Cela semble aberrant et choquant, mais c'est la triste réalité Travailliste. Le régime d'imposition uniforme introduit par le Parti Travailliste était un système fiscal injuste. En effet, la charge fiscale moyenne diminuait au fur et à mesure que les revenus augmentaient.

Ce n'est pas la philosophie de ce gouvernement. Ce n'est pas la philosophie de notre Premier ministre. Cela, c'est l'héritage du Parti Travailliste. Ils sont même allés plus loin en taxant les intérêts de l'épargne des particuliers.

M. le président, ce que nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, avons apporté au travers de ce Budget, c'est un régime fiscal progressif. Un régime juste, équitable et durable.

Auparavant, le régime de l'impôt sur le revenu était injuste en raison de l'effet de seuil qui faisait qu'une augmentation des recettes entraînait une baisse du revenu disponible.

Nous procédons à une réforme globale qui permettra à chacun de payer moins d'impôts qu'auparavant. Le régime de l'impôt sur le revenu évoluera désormais vers un régime plus progressif. Tous les revenus étant imposés de manière graduelle, en relevant le seuil d'imposition et en supprimant le *Solidarity Levy*.

Sur ce dernier point, je tiens à rappeler que nous avons fait appel à la solidarité des plus fortunés et ainsi introduit le *Solidarity Levy* afin de consolider les finances publiques pendant la pandémie.

Maintenant que l'économie mauricienne a refermé le douloureux chapitre de la pandémie et que la consolidation fiscale avance à un rythme soutenu, le *Solidarity Levy* n'est plus justifié.

Comme je l'ai indiqué, un individu sans personne à charge ayant un revenu net allant jusqu'à 30 000 roupies par mois, contre 25 000 roupies dans le système prévalent jusqu'alors, ne paiera plus d'impôt sur le revenu.

Grâce aux modifications apportées à l'impôt sur le revenu, les particuliers disposeront d'un revenu disponible plus important et le pouvoir d'achat augmentera de manière significative.

M. le président, les analyses effectuées par Maurice Stratégie à l'aide de différents modèles économétriques, notamment le modèle d'équilibre général calculable et le modèle macro-économique structurel, montrent que la réforme de l'impôt sur le revenu permettra, toutes choses égales par ailleurs, d'augmenter le PIB aux prix du marché de 0,60 % pour l'exercice 2023-2024.

Cela représente une contribution supplémentaire de 3,7 milliards de roupies à la production nationale.

L'injection supplémentaire dans l'économie résultant de la réforme de l'impôt sur le revenu des personnes physiques va également générer davantage d'emplois. Quelque 16 800 nouveaux emplois seront ainsi créés.

N'en déplaise à l'opposition, cette réforme voulue de tous est favorablement accueillie par les spécialistes. PwC Mauritius abonde dans ce sens et souligne que –

« *L'évolution vers un régime fiscal progressif apporte plus d'équité et de justice au système.* »

Et qui dit plus de justice sociale dit amélioration du potentiel de croissance économique.

M. le président, permettez-moi de poursuivre sur le sujet de la taxation. J'ai entendu plusieurs orateurs de l'opposition affirmer que ce gouvernement s'est trompé de réforme fiscale et qu'il aurait dû s'attaquer à la TVA.

C'est assez ironique, pour ne pas dire déroutant comme argumentation lorsque nous savons que c'est le MMM lui-même, et plus précisément l'honorable Bérenger qui a introduit la *Sales Tax* en janvier 1983.

Son collègue du Parti Travailleiste, M. Bheenick, a lui augmenté le taux en 1996 pour le porter à 8 %. De nouveau, le ministre des Finances du Parti Travailleiste, l'honorable Bunwaree, a introduit la TVA à 10 % en remplacement de la *Sales Tax*. Le même honorable Bérenger qui avait déjà introduit la taxe sur les ventes a également augmenté la TVA à 15%.

Alors non, M. le président, l'herbe n'est pas plus verte ailleurs. Et alors même que nous avons procédé à la suppression de la TVA sur 15 produits de base au travers du Budget 2023-2024, les modifications apportées ne leur conviennent pas non plus. Lors des débats, je dois vous avouer avoir entendu tout et son contraire de la part de l'opposition. C'est parfois troublant.

En effet, l'honorable Sik Yuen a cru malin de dire que "*Kaye, gom, kreyon pa ranpli vant*" tandis que l'honorable Bhagwan a osé prétendre que l'élimination de la TVA sur des produits de grande consommation, tels que les gommes, n'améliorera pas la vie de la population.

Ne croient-ils pas en l'éducation de nos jeunes ? Ne savent-ils pas que sur presque tous les produits alimentaires, il n'y a pas de TVA. Que plus de la moitié des produits en sont exemptés.

Je tiens à lui rappeler que les gommes, les crayons, et les cahiers d'exercices sont pourtant des biens scolaires essentiels qui doivent être achetés régulièrement par des dizaines de milliers de familles mauriciennes.

Demandez à ces nombreux parents de petits mauriciens s'ils pensent que cette suppression de la TVA est inutile ?

Peut-être que le Parti Travailleiste a oublié ses racines historiques pro-population ? Et que le MMM a lui aussi oublié comment il a été créé ? Cette amnésie semble contagieuse. Nous préférons rester loin, très loin.

De notre côté, la preuve de notre dévotion pour la population mauricienne se trouve dans notre action. C'est notre marque de fabrique.

M. le président, c'est bien ce gouvernement et ce Premier ministre qui ont annoncé en 2018 la gratuité de l'enseignement supérieur pour tous. Tout récemment, nous avons complété le cycle scolaire dans son entièreté avec la gratuité de l'enseignement pré-primaire pour tous à partir de janvier 2024.

Il ne fait aucun doute que la suppression de la TVA sur les articles scolaires de base et la gratuité de l'école maternelle aideront les parents à offrir à leurs enfants la possibilité d'apprendre dans un environnement propice au développement. C'est ainsi que nous donnerons la chance de réussir à chaque enfant mauricien et que l'ascenseur social s'activera encore davantage.

M. le président, j'en viens maintenant à l'accusation qui, de ce côté de la Chambre, m'a, je dois le dire, le plus interpellé. Je savais l'opposition malicieuse, je ne la pensais pas à ce point démagogue.

Brandissant le drapeau du *Money Illusion*, l'opposition semble complètement déconnectée de toute réalité. Elle fait même fi de ses propres déclarations.

Permettez-moi de citer l'honorable Boolell qui, dans le Budget 2006, avait déclaré

—

« Le ministre des Finances de l'époque n'a pas hésité, en 1979, à procéder à l'ajustement structurel de l'économie. Il aurait pu repousser le jour du bilan. Non ! Au lieu de cela, en tant que dirigeant, en tant qu'homme d'État, il l'a fait, quel que soit le résultat. »

Justement, quel est le résultat d'une telle politique ? Plus d'inflation et moins de croissance.

Maurice a en effet connu à cette époque ses taux d'inflation les plus élevés de son histoire. 14,5 % en 1979, 42 % en 1980 et 14,5 % en 1981. Chapeau bas, Monsieur !

M. le président, est-ce vraiment ce bilan déplorable qu'ils défendent ? Et ils osent qualifier notre budget d'argent illusoire ? Rappelons que la dévaluation provoquée s'est faite à une époque où il n'y avait pas de récession dans le monde. C'était une époque où la

croissance mondiale était positive et sans nuage à l'horizon. Pourtant, ici à Maurice, le Parti Travailleiste avait choisi de dévaluer délibérément la roupie alors que l'économie se portait bien. Pas de crise, pas de Covid, pas de fermeture des frontières. !

M. le président, sous la mandature du Parti Travailleiste, entre 2006 et 2008, Maurice a connu une inflation cumulée de 30 %. Soit, 8,9 % en 2006, 8,8 % en 2007 et 9,7 % en 2008. En parallèle, les compensations salariales avaient été pour ces mêmes années de 170 roupies, de 135 roupies et de 400 roupies, soit un total sur 3 ans de 705 roupies alors que l'inflation cumulée était d'environ 30%. Je le redis – seulement 705 roupies en 3 ans pour 30 % d'inflation ! Voilà ce qu'a fait le Parti Travailleiste !

M. le président, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons introduit une allocation de revenu CSG de 1 000 roupies qui a maintenant doublé pour atteindre 2 000 roupies pour des personnes dont le revenu est inférieur à 25 000 roupies.

Nous avons aussi accordé une compensation salariale de 1 000 roupies en une seule année. Plus encore, nous avons garanti un revenu minimum de 15 000 roupies par mois. Allez demander donc à ces Mauriciens si les ressources financières additionnelles mises à leur disposition sont factices, illusoire. Le revenu minimum garanti pour les employés à temps plein va passer ainsi de 11 075 roupies en juin 2022 à 15 000 roupies en juillet 2023, dans à peine 15 jours. C'est une hausse de presque 4 000 roupies.

Cela représente donc une augmentation de 36,1 % des revenus disponibles des travailleurs les plus vulnérables de notre société. Alors que l'inflation après avoir atteint un pic à 10 % l'an dernier amorce sa descente. Est-ce une illusion ?

Peut-être que 4 000 roupies en plus par mois ne représentent pas grand-chose pour une opposition complètement déconnectée de la réalité des travailleurs, mais pour des dizaines de milliers de mauriciens, l'introduction d'un Revenu minimum garanti à 15 000 roupies est une mesure qui change le quotidien ; le rend moins difficile, moins angoissant, moins imprévisible.

M. le président, un tel manque de compassion envers les travailleurs, ne peut que nous indigner. D'autant plus que cette même opposition quand elle est aux commandes, tolérerait sans état d'âme que les travailleurs soient payés un salaire de misère et que nos aînés ne reçoivent qu'une peau de chagrin comme pension.

L'opposition pense sans doute que la période était plus réjouissante pour les Mauriciens quand les pères de famille ne percevaient que 1 500 roupies par mois et les pensionnés à peine 2 800 roupies. Et qu'aucune aide n'avait été octroyée malgré un taux

d'inflation frôlant les 10 % à l'époque. Pensent-ils qu'il était plus facile de vivre avec 1 500 roupies en 2008 plutôt qu'avec 15 000 roupies en 2023 alors que le prix -

- du pain maison était de 2,62 roupies en 2008 et qu'il est aujourd'hui de 2,60 roupies ;
- celui de la baguette était de 5,44 roupies en 2008 contre 5,40 roupies en 2023 ;
- celui de la farine était à 13,59 roupies par kg contre actuellement 9,70 roupies par kg, ou encore
- la bonbonne de gaz de 12 kg à 314,60 roupies et contre 240 roupies à ce jour.

Permettez-moi de vous donner un autre exemple. Les nouilles, Mine Apollo, qui coûtaient 7,29 roupies en 2008, ont augmenté de moins de 2 % par an pour atteindre 9,31 roupies aujourd'hui.

En dépit de cette hausse contenue, nous sommes tout de même allés plus loin en supprimant la TVA de 15 % sur ce produit, qui ne coutera plus que 7,90 roupies en moyenne grâce à ce Budget.

Mr Toussaint : *Macaroni pena ?*

Dr. Padayachy : A l'appui de ces comparaisons factuelles, pouvons-nous sérieusement parler d'argent illusoire ? M. le président, lorsque l'opposition ne parle pas d'argent factice, d'illusion monétaire, elle parle au contraire de cadeaux populistes et même de bribes électorales. C'est à en perdre son latin. Mais surtout, quel manque de considération pour les Mauriciens !

Quand une fois les arguments avancés par l'honorable Ramful, je me tords ! Et pas de rire ! Car souvenons-nous de la politique ultra-capitaliste et inégalitaire conduite entre 2006 et 2014. Ils se sont évertués à prendre aux pauvres pour donner aux plus riches. Parce que, M. le président, ils étaient plus nombreux.

Oui, le Gouvernement d'aujourd'hui a vu ses revenus augmenter de 20 milliards de roupies mais chacune de ces roupies est retournée à la population au travers de mesures sociales. A l'inverse, lorsque l'opposition était au pouvoir, elle n'avait pas hésité à prendre aux plus démunis pour donner aux petits copains. Sans même s'en cacher, la population ne mérite rien pour eux.

Les budgets présentés entre 2006 et 2014 donnent froid dans le dos. En effet, donner du pain aux élèves dans les écoles était considéré comme du gaspillage...

Mr Toussaint : *Dominer !*

Dr. Padayachy : ... alors que subventionner les frais d'examen SC et HSC leur semblait une folie. Plus encore, ils considéraient comme des cadeaux et de l'argent jeté par la fenêtre –

- Les exonérations sur les prêts immobiliers et les personnes à charge pour l'impôt sur le revenu;
- Les subventions pour le riz et la farine, ou encore
- Le système tripartite de compensation salariale.

De ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes révoltés par ce manque d'humanisme. Avec beaucoup de conviction et de sérieux, nous nous attachons à faire l'inverse de ce que cette opposition a toujours fait car avec ou sans inflation, avoir du cœur ne s'achète pas.

M. le président, toujours dans la rubrique des retournements de veste, permettez-moi d'aborder la question soulevée par l'opposition, en particulier par l'honorable Uteem, qui accuse maintenant le Gouvernement de ne pas avoir augmenté les pensions de base à 13 500 roupies. Alors que cette même opposition criait à bribes électorales quand la mesure avait été proposée par ce Gouvernement en 2019, avant la Covid-19.

Droits dans nos bottes, je voudrais rappeler à l'honorable membre qu'en 2020, nous avons été confrontés à la pire crise de notre histoire économique. Nous avons dû faire face à des défis sans précédent, exacerbés par la guerre en Ukraine et les effets du changement climatique. Jamais auparavant nous n'avions été confrontés à une telle succession de chocs en un laps de temps aussi condensé.

Dans l'adversité, nous n'avons pas fui nos responsabilités. Nous avons apporté le soutien nécessaire à toutes les personnes touchées par la crise. Nous avons mobilisé des ressources considérables pour protéger la vie et les moyens de subsistance de nos citoyens.

Comme je l'ai dit –

- Nous avons débloqué quelque 27,8 milliards de roupies pour le *Wage Assistance Scheme*, le *Self-employed Assistance Scheme* ;
- Nous avons augmentés les subventions pour maintenir les prix de détail du riz et de la farine et contenu l'augmentation du prix du gaz ménager ;
- Nous avons prévu quelque 4,3 milliards de roupies pour le paiement de l'allocation de revenu de la CSG de 1,000 roupies par mois à quelque 350,000 salariés et travailleurs indépendants au cours de l'exercice 2022-2023 ;

- Nous avons réduit le taux de l'impôt sur le revenu pour les personnes à revenus faibles et moyens.

En plus de ces mesures, nous avons augmenté la pension de retraite, la pension d'invalidité et la pension pour les veufs. Nous allouons actuellement un total de 43 milliards de roupies pour l'ensemble des pensions de base, contre environ 12 milliards de roupies en 2014. En outre, nous avons introduit la *CSG Retirement Benefit* de 1,000 roupies par mois pour quelque 169,000 retraités âgés de 65 ans et plus.

Au travers du Budget 2023-2024, nous augmentons maintenant les pensions de base à 11,000 roupies par mois à partir de juillet 2023. Cela coûtera 4 milliards de roupies supplémentaires. C'est un choix juste, justifiable et justifié. Malgré ce que prétend l'opposition, il s'agit là d'une augmentation sans précédent des pensions de base et nous ne nous arrêterons pas là.

M. le président, je n'insisterai jamais assez sur ce point : le progrès social et la protection de la population sont la genèse du développement économique. Dans ce Budget, nous avons ainsi annoncé une nouvelle série de mesures visant à préserver et à améliorer la protection sociale par des transferts destinés entre autres aux ménages vulnérables, aux jeunes, aux personnes âgées et aux femmes.

Pour les mauvaises langues, l'enveloppe importante allouée au renforcement du filet de protection sociale pourrait être de prime abord perçue comme un poids sur les finances publiques. Il n'en n'est rien ; au contraire. En effet, leurs effets directs sur les dépenses sont compensés par l'augmentation des recettes et les effets positifs indirects, induits et catalytiques au profit de la croissance et l'emploi.

Selon l'analyse de Maurice Stratégie, les transferts sociaux devraient ajouter 6,7 milliards de roupies au PIB par le biais des effets du premier et du second tour, sous forme d'injections supplémentaires dans le flux circulaire, contribuant ainsi à hauteur de 1,21 % au PIB.

Les ménages les plus vulnérables auront un revenu disponible supérieur, et la consommation devrait ainsi atteindre un pic de 1,20 %, augmentant son niveau de 5,9 milliards de roupies.

En raison de l'activité accrue, l'investissement devrait augmenter de 1,29 %, avec un investissement direct supplémentaire estimé à 1,5 milliard de roupies. L'analyse indique tout autant que les mesures de protection sociale augmenteront les exportations de 1,96 % et les importations de 1,84 %.

Suite à l'augmentation des besoins en termes de consommation et de production, l'emploi devrait ainsi augmenter d'environ 6,700 personnes, soit une hausse de 1,26 %.

M. le président, il me semble essentiel de prendre le temps, à l'appui de statistiques et chiffres étayés, d'expliquer à nouveau le bien-fondé de cette stratégie gouvernementale centrée sur l'Humain.

En espérant avoir pu apporter les clarifications et justifications éclairées aux accusations infondées de l'opposition, je vais maintenant revenir sur les principales mesures du Budget 2023-2024.

Je rappelle que ce Budget, « Oser et Protéger » se comprend comme un triptyque voué à –

- Renforcer les fondements de notre économie ;
- Poursuivre le verdissement de l'économie mauricienne, et
- Construire le futur que nous méritons.

M. le président, le Budget 2023-2024 fait la part belle à l'économie et à ses secteurs porteurs. Au travers de cet exercice, nous avons tâché de supprimer les obstacles à l'investissement, d'adresser l'enjeu du manque de main d'œuvre et de fortifier encore davantage notre économie.

Pour ce faire, les mesures prises au profit de l'employabilité des femmes, des jeunes, des personnes à handicap et des professionnels étrangers sont historiques. Je reviens notamment sur l'ensemble des annonces faites pour favoriser l'accès des femmes au marché du travail et ainsi leur permettre une plus grande autonomie financière. Il s'agit notamment de l'extension du régime de la Prime à l'emploi, de l'obligation pour les entreprises de plus de 250 employés de disposer d'un centre de garde d'enfants ou encore de la révision des conseils d'administration pour voir siéger un minimum de 25% de femmes.

Ces mesures progressistes et équitables sont aux antipodes de ce qu'avait annoncé le Gouvernement d'antan dans le Budget 2007-2008. Oui, je dis bien 2007 et non 1907.

Je cite mot pour mot le paragraphe 172 de ce fameux Budget travailliste –

« Pour faciliter la vie des femmes, j'ai le plaisir d'annoncer la suppression de tous les droits de douanes sur les fours à micro-ondes, les fours, les cuisinières, les grils, les lave-vaisselles, les hottes de cuisine, les cafetières et les théières, les grille-pains et les machines à sandwich, les autres appareils électrothermiques tels que les chauffe-plats, les casseroles électriques et les yaourtières, ainsi que les appareils

électroménagers tels que les sèche-cheveux, les tondeuses et les appareils de coiffure. »

Voilà ce qu'en 2007, faciliter la vie des femmes signifiait pour le Gouvernement travailliste. Une yaourtière bon marché mais toujours pas d'emploi, pas d'opportunité, pas de salaire et encore moins d'indépendance.

Quelle honte, M. le président !

Sur le point de la main d'œuvre étrangère, l'opposition ne s'est pas non plus illustrée par sa modernité. Alors que ce gouvernement a notamment annoncé la rationalisation du processus d'obtention du *Work Permit* et la révision de ses conditions d'attribution, j'ai eu beaucoup de peine à entendre les arguments nationalistes et les raisonnements d'un autre temps de la part de l'honorable Joanna Bérenger.

Diaboliser les étrangers venant à Maurice, c'est tellement facile mais tellement infondé. Non, ces travailleurs ne volent pas l'emploi des mauriciens ; non, ces travailleurs ne confisquent pas les élections nationales. Au contraire, ils contribuent à notre développement en apportant expertise, capitaux et emplois car c'est bien au travers d'une Ile Maurice ouverte aux nouveaux talents que notre économie continuera à se développer, à se diversifier et à se consolider. Je le rappelle, notre objectif est de maintenir une croissance du PIB autour des 5% à terme.

M. le président, sans pouvoir faire la liste exhaustive des mesures budgétaires prises en faveur des secteurs de l'économie, permettez-moi de citer quelques-unes des annonces clés.

Je démarrerai cette liste par l'Agro-Industrie –

- Afin de soutenir le dynamisme du secteur du thé, nous avons annoncé l'augmentation de la *Winter Allowance* de 25% pour la porter à 2,50 roupies par kg de thé ;
- Par ailleurs, pour les planteurs produisant jusqu'à 60 tonnes de sucre, pour la récolte 2023, le prix minimum garanti du sucre passera de 25,000 roupies à 27,500 roupies avec le vote du Budget 2023-2024 ;
- Au profit des éleveurs qui nourrissent notre population, nous allons augmenter la subvention sur l'alimentation animale de 50% pour la porter à 15 roupies par kilo ;
- En ce qui concerne le secteur de la pêche, la somme forfaitaire versée aux pêcheurs âgés de 65 ans et plus a été rehaussée de 52,500 roupies à 100,000 roupies s'ils rendent leur carte de pêcheur ou la transfèrent.

Quant à l'indemnité journalière de mauvais temps, elle a été portée de 575 roupies à R 650 roupies.

Enfin, symbole de la solidarité et de l'humanisme caractéristiques de nos institutions, j'ai eu le plaisir d'annoncer que la DBM annulera tous les prêts restés en souffrance depuis plus de 20 ans ainsi que les prêts des planteurs, éleveurs, et pêcheurs décédés.

M. le président, les secteurs de l'industrie manufacturière, des TIC et du tourisme ont eux aussi bénéficié de mesures importantes. Afin de promouvoir la production locale, j'ai également annoncé la mise en place d'une zone dédiée au "*Made in Moris*" au Mauritius Duty Free Paradise à l'aéroport. Pareillement, nous avons annoncé renoncer aux frais de fret sur les conteneurs de Rodrigues à Maurice pour les produits agricoles, y compris les oignons, les piments, les grains de café et les citrons.

De plus, le Gouvernement accordera une dérogation de 50% sur l'augmentation des prix de l'électricité au cours des deux prochaines années pour les entreprises exportatrices qui s'orientent vers une énergie 100% renouvelable. En parallèle, le CEB introduira un système de neutralité carbone pour le secteur des TIC.

Pour ce qui est du tourisme, pilier de notre économie, le budget de promotion et de marketing de la MTPA a été revu à la hausse, passant ainsi de R 400 millions de roupies à 500 millions de roupies. C'est ainsi que grâce à ces mesures en faveur du développement sectoriel que nous atteindrons nos objectifs de croissance robuste, inclusive et durable.

M. le président, dans la continuité des budgets présentés par ce gouvernement, le développement durable et inclusif constitue en effet un pilier majeur de notre stratégie. Nous voulons poursuivre le verdissement de l'économie mauricienne, que ce soit en termes d'énergie, d'eau ou d'économie circulaire. Nous veillons aussi à ce qu'une attention particulière soit accordée à notre système social, sanitaire et éducatif. C'est ainsi que ce gouvernement donnera à chaque Mauricien la possibilité d'élargir son champ des possibles et ainsi s'épanouir.

M. le président, j'en viens maintenant au secteur de l'énergie et à celui des infrastructures. Le budget 2023-2024 voit ainsi l'introduction des programmes d'énergie renouvelable pour les hôtels, les centres commerciaux, les galeries marchandes et le secteur agricole devenir une réalité. Nous avons tout aussi annoncé la mise en place de systèmes photovoltaïques solaires sur les toits de 200 écoles publiques de l'île ainsi que l'octroi d'une subvention de 30% jusqu'à un maximum de 3,5 millions de roupies pour l'achat de bus électriques.

Au profit des familles mauriciennes de plus en plus sensibles à la protection de l'environnement, la subvention pour les réservoirs d'eau passera de 8,000 roupies à 15,000 roupies et sera étendue aux ménages dont le revenu mensuel est inférieur à 60,000 roupies.

Enfin, 3,4 milliards de roupies seront investies dans la modernisation et l'extension de notre réseau routier sur 60 km.

M. le président, les enjeux ayant attrait à la santé et à l'éducation constituent une priorité de ce gouvernement. C'est dans cette lignée que l'honorable Premier ministre a annoncé la gratuité de l'éducation pré-primaire pour tous à partir du 1^{er} janvier 2024. C'est une mesure historique qui sera complétée par la mise en place de l'allocation de 2,000 roupies par mois que ce gouvernement va octroyer aux familles ayant un enfant en bas-âge.

Concernant le secteur de la santé, nous avons annoncé que l'État aller prochainement s'engager dans la vaccination de quelque 80,000 enfants contre le papillomavirus humain afin de prévenir l'apparition de certains types de cancer. En sus, pour faciliter la vie de quelque 1,000 patients atteints de diabète de type 1, ce gouvernement leur fournira un moniteur de glucose en continu. Parmi eux, 450 patients diabétiques à haut risque recevront également une pompe à insuline. Il est clair que le bien-être de la population est au cœur de la stratégie de ce gouvernement. Quelques soient les difficultés de la vie, nous nous tiendrons toujours aux côtés des mauriciens.

M. le président, alors que je suis largement revenu dans la première partie de mon discours sur les actions prises en faveur de la population, permettez-moi de rappeler les grandes mesures sociales contenues dans ce budget.

Premièrement, dorénavant, chaque enfant diagnostiqué avec cancer sera entièrement pris en charge par le Gouvernement, depuis le diagnostic jusqu'à la fin des soins. Et cela, à travers une assistance financière pour la totalité des coûts de soins et de traitement du cancer dans les hôpitaux étrangers disposant de la meilleure expertise. De plus, la prise en charge de la totalité des soins à l'étranger pour les enfants atteint de maladie non soignables à Maurice.

Deuxièmement, pour préserver le pouvoir d'achat de nos forces vives, la *CSG Income Allowance* de 1,000 roupies est maintenue à tous ceux qui gagnent jusqu'à 50,000 roupies par mois. Plus encore, nous avons également annoncé l'augmentation de cette allocation mensuelle à 2,000 roupies pour ceux qui perçoivent jusqu'à 25,000 roupies par mois. C'est ainsi que 200 000 personnes verront leur *CSG Income Allowance* doubler.

M. le président, pour soulager les Mauriciens contre l'inflation, ce Gouvernement a annoncé la suppression de la TVA sur les 15 produits essentiels suivants –

- (a) Les nouilles ;
- (b) Le dentifrice ;
- (c) Les brosses à dents ;
- (d) Les lingettes pour bébé ;
- (e) Les couches pour bébé ;
- (f) La poudre pour bébé ;
- (g) La crème pour bébé ;
- (h) Les tire-laits ;
- (i) Les biberons pour nourrissons ;
- (j) Les cahiers d'exercices ;
- (k) Les crayons ;
- (l) Les crayons de couleurs ;
- (m) Les gommes,
- (n) Les cannes d'aide à la marche, et
- (o) Les protections pour incontinence.

N'en déplaise à l'opposition, cette mesure historique viendra soulager le quotidien de centaines de milliers de mauriciens.

Quatrièmement, symbole de la confiance que nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons dans la jeunesse mauricienne, nous avons annoncé l'introduction de l'*Independence Scheme*. C'est ainsi qu'à partir du 01 janvier 2023, tous ceux qui atteindront l'âge de 18 ans percevront une subvention de 20,000 roupies. Aller à l'université, obtenir un emploi, créer une petite entreprise ou apprendre à conduire, tels sont les projets de vie que nos jeunes adultes pourront ainsi entreprendre.

Cinquièmement, afin de protéger nos citoyens contre la hausse des prix mondiaux, à partir du 01 juillet 2023, nous introduisons le Revenu Minimum Garanti à 15,000 roupies par mois. Nul besoin de faire de polémique sur l'appellation de la mesure, ce qui compte, M. le président, c'est que tous les Mauriciens auront désormais au moins 15,000 roupies par mois pour mener une vie décente.

Dans cette même visée, le Budget 2023-2024 a fait de la baisse du prix de l'essence une réalité. Depuis le 3 juin 2023, le prix du litre de l'essence qui était à 74.10 roupies est passé à 69 roupies.

Septièmement, grâce aux marges de manœuvres dégagées nous sommes aujourd'hui en mesure de garantir l'augmentation de 1,000 roupies de la *Basic Retirement Pension*, de la *Basic Widow's Pension*, de la *Basic Invalidity Pension* et de la *Basic Orphan's Pension* pour atteindre 11,000 roupies par mois. Combiné à la *CSG Retirement Benefit*, un retraité âgé de 65 ans et plus recevra au moins 12,000 roupies par mois.

En sus, afin de soulager les ménages touchés par la hausse des taux d'intérêt, ce Budget va plus loin dans la protection des Mauriciens dont l'accession à la propriété est un rêve qu'il serait injuste de briser. Ainsi, R 1,000 roupies par mois seront accordées aux personnes qui ont contracté des prêts allant jusqu'à 5 millions de roupies pour l'achat de leur logement.

M. le président, les ménages les plus vulnérables ont, plus que jamais, besoin du soutien de l'État. Il en va de notre devoir de renforcer le filet de sécurité qui les entoure. À cet effet, nous avons revu les seuils d'éligibilité pour l'aide sociale. C'est ainsi que 20,000 ménages vulnérables bénéficieront désormais d'un soutien plus important dans le cadre du *SRM* et de la *DataBase of Vulnerable Groups*.

Dixièmement, et enfin, ce Budget a mis en son cœur chaque Mauricien. C'est ainsi que la refonte holistique de notre système fiscal viendra apporter un revenu supplémentaire à tous les contribuables mauriciens. Basé sur l'équité, tous les revenus seront taxés de manière graduelle et donc progressive.

M. le président, mettant en perspective les nombreuses et historiques mesures annoncées dans le Budget 2023-2024 face aux critiques véhémentes de l'opposition, j'ai le sentiment qu'il y a de l'autre côté de la Chambre, un passé qui ne passe pas. Et pour cause, quelles politiques le Parti travailliste a-t-il adoptées pour soulager la détresse des Mauriciens et soutenir le pouvoir d'achat lorsqu'ils étaient au pouvoir ?

Permettez-moi de citer les mesures Budgétaires qu'ils proposaient à cette période :

« Pourquoi acceptons-nous un programme d'alimentation des écoles primaires connu pour son gaspillage et son iniquité ? M. le président, nous réorientons les subventions sur le riz et la farine et les dépenses sur le programme d'alimentation des écoles primaires... En outre, le programme visant à payer la moitié des frais d'examen SC et HSC sera supprimé, sauf pour les étudiants dans le besoin ».

Ils sont allés plus loin, M. le président, pour les personnes âgées, voici ce qu'ils avaient à dire -

« Un autre sujet de préoccupation est la viabilité financière de nos différents régimes de retraite... Il est clair que nous sommes assis sur une tombe à retardement... »

J'ai cru l'entendre aussi cette fois-ci lors les débats budgétaires -

« Nous devons revoir l'âge de la retraite... les augmentations du *BRP [Basic Retirement Pension]* seront aussi limitées à l'évolution de l'indice des prix à la consommation. Et j'ai le plaisir d'annoncer que pour l'année fiscale 2006/2007, nous augmenterons les pensions de vieillesse de 5 %. ».

Je rappelle que l'inflation frôlait pourtant à l'époque les 10%.

M. le président, au cours des débats budgétaires, que n'a-t-on pas entendu sur notre soi-disant manque de considération à l'égard des forces vives. Mais n'ayons pas la mémoire trop courte et rappelons-nous comment ils ont dépecé les travailleurs et leur pouvoir d'achat. Voilà ce que cet ancien ministre des Finances avait à dire sur le sujet de l'emploi -

« C'est pourquoi nous abolissons l'actuel mécanisme tripartite de compensation salariale... Des réformes seront également apportées à la législation et à la réglementation du travail afin de parvenir à la flexibilité nécessaire... Plus il sera facile de recycler la main-d'œuvre, plus il y aura de travailleurs embauchés... ».

Je rappelle que 50 % des travailleurs touchaient moins de 8 000 roupies en 2008 et que 90 % d'entre eux touchaient moins de 25 000 roupies par mois. C'est tout simplement écœurant.

M. le président, aujourd'hui, avec les mesures annoncées dans le Budget 2023-2024, nous accompagnons notre économie à se consolider et à se verdir. Plus encore, nous soulageons concrètement les Mauriciens dans leur combat contre la vie chère et leur faisons la promesse de tout faire ce qui est en notre pouvoir pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie.

M. le président, par le truchement des mesures annoncées dans le Discours du Budget 2023-2024 -

- 350 000 personnes âgées, handicapées et veuves recevront une pension plus élevée.

- 200 000 travailleurs recevront une allocation mensuelle de 2 000 roupies.
- 150 000 travailleurs recevront une allocation de revenu mensuelle de 1 000 roupies.
- 150 000 contribuables à l'impôt sur le revenu paieront moins d'impôt.
- 85 000 personnes bénéficieront d'un Revenu Minimum Garanti de 15 000 roupies.
- 70 000 ménages ayant contracté un prêt pour l'achat de leur logement bénéficieront d'une aide de 1 000 roupies.
- 48 000 ménages recevront une allocation familiale mensuelle de 2 000 roupies par mois.
- 40 000 emplois seront créés dans les secteurs du public et du privé.
- 20 000 ménages vulnérables bénéficieront d'un soutien plus important dans le cadre du *SRM* et de la *Database of Vulnerable Groups*, et enfin
- 15 000 individus atteignant l'âge adulte de 18 ans recevront une subvention unique de 20 000 roupies.

M. le président, au travers de ce Budget, nous osons et nous protégeons la population pour qu'elle puisse envisager avec optimisme le futur qu'elle mérite. Nous rappelant au plaidoyer du Président Obama -

« C'est l'audace de l'espoir. L'audace de croire que malgré des revers personnels, la perte d'un emploi, un malade dans la famille ou une famille empêtrée dans la pauvreté, nous avons quelque emprise et par conséquent une responsabilité sur notre destin ».

Sur ces mots, je vous remercie pour votre attention, remercie le Premier ministre pour son soutien précieux, la majorité parlementaire pour son engagement sans faille et la population pour sa confiance renouvelée.

C'est pour moi une immense fierté de pouvoir servir mon pays sous le leadership de Pravind Kumar Jugnauth qui m'a fait confiance et m'a confié cette grande responsabilité.

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: Hon. Members, I now invite the Deputy Chairman of Committees to chair the Committee of Supply.

ANNOUNCEMENT

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – VOTE ITEMS – TIME ALLOCATION

Mr Nuckcheddy: Please be seated!

Hon. Members I will be chairing the Committee of Supply and I rely on your cooperation and collaboration for the proper and smooth running of this exercise.

Hon. Members, I have to inform the House that an indicative time allocation has been worked out and agreed upon by the Whips in regard to each vote item and subhead wherever applicable.

As we proceed, the time allocation will be announced and I will exercise some flexibility wherever the need arises. We will proceed page by page for the orderly conduct of the Committee of Supply.

I further wish to draw the attention of hon. Members to Standing Order 73(3) which reads as follows –

“(3) 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 appeal to hon. Members to be brief in their questions and hon. Ministers to be brief in their replies. I rely on your corporation.

Hon. Members, moreover, I wish to inform the House that keeping with the past practice, the votes in regard to the Centralised Services of Government would be taken immediately after the Committee would have considered the votes of expenditure for the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Thank you.

THE APPROPRIATION (2023-2024) BILL

(NO. IX OF 2023)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(The Deputy Chairperson of Committees in the Chair)

(4.12 p.m.)

Vote 1-1 Office of the President was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem! We have 8 minutes for this section.

Mr Uteem: Page 6, in respect to *Item 21110.005 – Extra Assistance*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister who this extra assistance is given to?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the payment of salary of *Attaché de Press*, Mrs Anjali Devi Ramlugun, for a monthly salary of Rs66,200. And then there is a series of compensation, levy contribution adding up to a total monthly of Rs71,650. Mrs Ramlugun assumed duty on 03 February 2020 and her contract is renewed on a yearly basis.

The Chairperson: Are you done hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Bhagwan.

Mr Bhagwan: Page 6, the *Item 22120 – Fees*, can we have some details on these fees?

The Prime Minister: *Alors, c'est* fees to Chairman and members of Boards and Committees. A provision is made for payment of the monthly fees to the Chairman and members of Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy and Chairperson and members of the Departmental Bid Committees and Bid Evaluation Committees.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On the same *Item 22120 – Fees*, can the hon. Prime Minister give a breakdown of the total number of petitions considered by the Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy during the Financial Year 2022-2023?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the breakdown of the number of petitions considered by the Commission from period 01 July 2022 to 11 April 2023 which I have. I can circulate it because it is a long list.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Which page?

Dr. Boolell: My apologies. Page 6, *Recurrent Expenditure*, Item 22170 – *Travelling within the Republic*, if we can be apprised by the Prime Minister as to whether the President has been to Agaléga in respect of his travel within the Republic?

The Prime Minister: No, it is number of visits to Rodrigues. There is one visit to Rodrigues.

Dr. Boolell: To Agaléga?

The Prime Minister: Not yet. We will probably invite him next time for the inauguration of the jetty and the airstrip.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on page 6 – I do not know if this has already been taken up – but Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, there is an amount of Rs5.3 m., may we have the details of this amount?

The Prime Minister: This is provision made for the payment of Uniform Allowance to office auxiliaries, drivers, sanitary attendants, laundry attendants, general workers, receptionists, gardeners, maintenance officers, handy workers and officers of procurement and supply cadre.

The Chairperson: Hon. Richard Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Yes, Item 22110...

The Chairperson: Which page?

Mr R. Duval: Page 6, Item 22110.002 – *Salary Compensation*, can the Prime Minister give details about such an increase of Rs600,000 to Rs2 m.?

The Prime Minister: So, the increase in provision is due to payment of Salary Compensation 2023 of Rs1000 across the board to all employees including advisors and six additional posts also.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 31111.408 – *Upgrading of State House of which (a) Consultancy Services*, can we know who is the Consultant who has been appointed? Is it a firm or one person?

The Prime Minister: I am told that he is not yet appointed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. On that same vote Item 31111.408 - *Upgrading of State House of which (a) Consultancy Services*, I could understand that it could not be allocated but it is planned now that it is going to be allocated this year for the Consultancy Services but it is going to last for three years. Can we have the details of that consultancy exercise that is going to last for three years for Rs16.6 m.? What is it about?

The Prime Minister: The provision in the budget of 2023-2024 is for part of consultancy services, that is, Rs8 m. The amount earmarked for 2022-2023 has not been used. The status of Consultancy Services – bidding exercise for consultancy was launched on 6 March 2023 with closing date 19 April 2023. Technical and financial evaluations are ongoing.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 7, Item 31113.046 - *Other Structures, Setting up of Ayurvedic Garden*. Can the hon. Prime Minister give more details on this project?

The Prime Minister: So, the setting up of the Ayurvedic Garden comprises of phase 1 which has been completed and so phase 1 is for the landscaping works for Ayurvedic Garden at the State House. It was completed on 17 February 2023. The Contractor, New Horizon Builders, contract value Rs5,280,432 including VAT.

Now, phase 2 is the construction of a new kiosk and upgrading of the existing swimming pool into a pond for the Ayurvedic Garden. The completion date, well again, it is New Horizon Builders, contract value Rs2,547,107.40. There is retention money and so on.

The Chairperson: Thank you and the time is over for this section.

Vote 1-1 Office of the President (Rs94,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(4.20 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: We got five minutes for this section. It is on page 9 and 10. Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 9, Item 21110.005 - *Extra Assistance*, Rs1.5 m., may we have the details and the breakdown of this figure?

The Prime Minister: So, provision for payment of salaries, duty remission on car allowance, refund of unspent leaves, travelling allowances, bonus and contributions to National Savings Fund at the rate of 2.5% of basic salary to one advisor, two household attendants employed on contract and to fill one post of cook to be employed on contract as follows –

- (i) Mr G. Vydelingum, Advisor to the Vice-President;
- (ii) Mrs Catherine Adlet Celestin, Household Attendant;
- (iii) Miss Anne-Marie Thaylamay, Household Attendant, and then
- (iv) The cook on roster recruited on 5 June 2023.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Same page, Item 22030 - *Rent* for an amount of Rs865 m. Can we have more details for this expense, please?

The Prime Minister: So, the Office of the Vice-President is currently situated in a building at Avenue Farquhar, Quatre Bornes belonging to Mr Dhananjay Ramful. In fact, we must thank him because *c'est grâce à lui, qu'on a ce bâtiment*. The first contract was signed for a period of three years with effect from 1 January 2009 at a monthly rent of Rs70,000. The contract was renewed from January 2012 to June 2020 and has been renewed on a month to month basis until a new accommodation for the Office is found. Well, I doubt if we will get a new accommodation.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy, which page?

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Pages 9 and 10 together under Item 22900...

The Chairperson: No, one by one.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: It is page 9, under Item 22900 - *Other Goods and Services, I. Vice-President*, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of the benefits and privileges and entitlements being drawn by the former Vice-President, please

The Chairperson: Excuse me, you asked a question about a former Vice-President?

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Former Vice-President.

The Prime Minister: These facilities are provided to the following former Vice-Presidents –

- Mr Abdool Raouf Bundhun;
- Mrs Monique Agnès Ohsan Bellepeau;
- Mr Paramasivam Pillay Vyapoory.

They are entitled, *inter alia*, to the services of a Clerk Typist and an Office Attendant at Government cost and a Government motorcar with chauffeur. If you want the details, I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Any question on page 9? Page 10? Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy, you got a question on page 10? Okay. So, that was the final question.

Vote 1-2 Office of the Vice-President (Rs14,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(4.25 p.m.)

Vote 1-3 National Assembly was called.

The Chairperson: We got 15 minutes for this section. It concerns pages 11,12,13, and 14. Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 11 under Item 20100 - *Annual Allowance*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister, who are the beneficiaries of these allowances?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made to meet payment of allowances for 50 funded positions paid to Members of the National Assembly under the National Assembly Allowances Act. I have a list, it is the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the Opposition and so on. I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: On page 13, I see there is an increase for one Parliamentary Private Secretary. Is there any provision for the increase in that item?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there is a provision because actually we have 2 PPS who are in charge of 3 constituencies each. As you would agree, normally one should be in charge of 2 constituencies, that is why we have created this for one more PPS.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we have details as to which constituencies?

The Prime Minister: No, we will have to decide. Let us vote first and then we will allocate one PPS.

Mr Bhagwan: We should have details of which constituencies.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan, do not waste time. Discussion is not allowed; the second part is not allowed. We move to hon. Osman Mahomed.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Item 22070 - *Cleaning Services*, is this a new service?

The Prime Minister: For *Cleaning Services*, provision is made for payment to contractor for cleaning of the precincts of the National Assembly. The tender has been launched and evaluation of bids is ongoing.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Is this new?

The Prime Minister: It looks like because there was no provision in the last budget.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Under Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister when will the Office of the Clerk be fulfilled in a permanent capacity?

The Prime Minister: Which one is it?

Mr Uteem: Under *Personal Emoluments*, my question is: is there a time frame when the Office of the Clerk will be permanently filled?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the information.

The Chairperson: Let me clarify. Hon. Uteem, this is the prerogative of the PSC and not the Prime Minister. So, we move on.

Hon. Dhunoo!

The Prime Minister: Can I give the information for cleaning? I have got it. I was not aware. It is not new. Previously, payment was being made by the Prime Minister's Office.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 11, Item 22030 – *Rent*, can we have a breakdown from the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for payment of rent of part of 5th Floor at Newton Tower to house the offices of the Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition Whip, and the Chairperson of PAC. The lease agreement between A. S. R. Properties Ltd represented by Mr Swaleh Ramjane and the National Assembly, we have the details, total monthly repayment and so on. I can circulate the other details.

The Chairperson: We move to page 12 otherwise we will not have time to take all the pages. Question on the page 12, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Under Item 31112.442 - *Upgrading of Building (b) Repairs of Old Parliament House*, every year we vote an amount under this item. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, what is the status on the repairs of Old Parliament House?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for major works to repair and prevent water infiltration to the wooden structure of the building. Provision is made for the following works –

- repairs to floor and roof of veranda;
- works to teak shingles on roof;
- repairs to roof at flagpole area;
- roof drainage system;
- finishing works on wall, and
- for any contingency.

The Chairperson: On which page?

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 11, I would like to draw your attention...

The Chairperson: No, no, we have already moved to page 12. Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Under the same item, Item 31112.442 - *Upgrading of Building (c) Replacement of Aircon and Electric Systems in Lunchroom*, can we have an update on the status of the project? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: This project consists of replacement of the air conditioning and electrical systems in the lunchroom. 5 split type air conditioners were installed in the lunchroom of the National Assembly some 10 years back. The existing 5 units are now

showing signs of failure and need immediate replacement which include the installation of a new electrical cabling and air vent system. The project value has been revised to Rs9 m. The amended bid document has been prepared and will be floated anew and works will be completed in Financial Year 2023-2024.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Capital Expenditure on page 12, Item 31121.801 - *Acquisition of Vehicles*, can we have more details on this?

The Prime Minister: Provision made is for the acquisition of a new vehicle. The vehicle attached to the National Assembly has had major repairs since April last year, with long periods remaining in the custody of the authorised dealer. On 24 March 2023, the Mechanical Engineering Division of the Ministry of National Infrastructure recommended its disposal as the vehicle is beyond economic repairs.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 31112.442 – *Upgrading of Building*, can we know from the Prime Minister whether in this Rs37 m., provision has been made for, I would say, space for MPs, be it Government, we have only one room here, one corner if I can call it a corner for the MPs? Before we had two or even three when the ex-Speaker was here, Mrs Hanoomanjee. Can we know whether provision has been made for now or for the future for additional rooms for MPs?

The Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, what I can do, is circulate the list of items that is concerned with this item of expenditure. It's a long list. Now, if you ask me whether there are free rooms which are provided, it will take me time to...

Mr Bhagwan: I am just asking.

The Prime Minister: Yes, but I can circulate, then we will see.

The Chairperson: You will circulate?

The Prime Minister: Yes, if in the list, there are no free rooms, then they are not provided.

The Chairperson: Okay, we are left with one minute only. Any question?

Mr Ameer Meea: You must check your time.

The Chairperson: That's the time I have got here.

Mr Ameer Meea: No check it, we started at 26...

The Chairperson: I have got a timekeeper. I don't need a second one.

Mr Ameer Meea: No, but we don't have one minute left. Your timekeeper is not good.

The Chairperson: No more question!

Vote 1-3 National Assembly (Rs295,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(4.35 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: We have got five minutes this. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: I will take it under item 21- *Compensation for Employees*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he intends to bring to the House the report published by the Electoral Boundaries Commission?

The Prime Minister: No, but this is not, it cannot. *Ce n'est pas recevable*. For that, you can put a PQ next Tuesday.

The Chairperson: You get up tomorrow to put a PQ for next week. So, we move on. Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Page 15, item 22120 – *Fees*. Can we have a breakdown?

The Prime Minister: It is provision for the payment of legal fees to Barristers and Attorneys for representing the ESC and EBC in court. Now, there are pending court cases of the National Assembly Elections 2019. The case of, as you know, we are well aware, the case of Dayal against myself and others, case of Sayed Hossen against hon. Bablee and others.

Mr Juman: Can we have a breakdown? How much is paid to each Attorney?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: You will submit the breakdown?

The Prime Minister: I can circulate the list and the fees payable also.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Prime Minister give the updated composition of the Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission?

The Prime Minister: So, for the Electoral Supervisory Commission, Mr Yusuf Hassam Aboubaker, the Chairperson; Dr. Sanjay Jérôme Bhunjun, Member; Mrs Marie Isabelle Sauzier, Member; Mr Yashvirsingh Roopun, Member; Miss Vedita Devi Peerun, Member; Mrs Shadmeene Mootien, Member, and Mrs Ammanah Ragavoodoo, Member.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Any more questions? No more question!

Vote 1-4 Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission (Rs4,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(4.38 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: We have got eight minutes for this section. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120.016 – *Fees icw Elections*. I see a sum of Rs600 m. has been voted for. Does this comprise general election and election in local authorities as well?

The Prime Minister: It is in connection with elections. So, the provision for the purchase of requisites for the general elections; decrease in provision as the Municipal Council Elections have been postponed. But if you look what is forecast for the year 2024-2025, I think you will see there is a budget that has been allocated for holding of both General Elections and Local Council Elections.

Mr Osman Mahomed: On the same day?

The Prime Minister: No, on the same day, I cannot say now. There is a committee...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: No, hon. Osman Mahomed, don't waste time! You get up to tomorrow to put a question for next week.

Hon. Ittoo!

The Prime Minister: Next Tuesday!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under same item 22120.015 – *Fees icw Registration of Electors*, I see an amount of Rs25.8 m. So, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister what has been undertaken by Office of the Electoral Commissioner to ensure that a maximum number of electors are registered before each election? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: That is fees in connection with registration of electors. It is the provision for payment of canvass fees and travelling allowances in respect of house-to-house enquiry held in January-February. Some 2,500 officers are involved in conducting the enquiry and the registration of electors held in May each year as per statutory requirement. Now, I have a list here of the measures taken to ensure that a maximum number of electors are registered, which I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. I am still under the item 22120.016 – *Fees icw Elections*, and the amount of Rs600 m. which is budgeted to organise elections. So may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any provision is being made in this Rs600 m. for the acquisition of any electronic voting equipment?

The Prime Minister: No, I don't think so because for the electronic voting equipment, we will need to have consultations. That is another issue altogether, as you know.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide further details?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the payment of salary to one Adviser on contract, Mr Ougra. The actual contract is for the period of 01 September 2022 to 31 August 2023.

The Chairperson: Are you done?

The Prime Minister: Yes!

The Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 – *Rent*, an amount of Rs12,678,000 is allocated, can we have more details for this expense please?

The Prime Minister: So, the provision for payment of rental of office space occupied at Max City Building and at Fatima Building for storage of ballot boxes and election materials. So, Max City Building, the office premises of 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 9th floors. The owner is H. V. Property Management Ltd. and the contract is for the period of 01 November 2018 to 31 October 2023. Now, for Fatima Building, the contract period is for 01 May 2021 to 30 April 2024. The owner is the Jummah Mosque. That's it!

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Navarre Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, thank you. Page 17, Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, we are asked to vote for an increase from Rs490,000 to Rs1,542,000 – an increase by almost four times. Can we have more details on this?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to high increase in price of all materials used for sensitization campaigns. The conduct of a symposium and expenses for destruction of ballot papers and disposal of e-waste in line with Section 45(2) of the National Assembly Regulations which provide that –

“The Electoral Commissioner shall –

- (b) after the expiry of 6 months from the date of the election, destroy the sealed parcels containing ballot papers and sensitive election documents unless there is an election petition pending before the Supreme Court.”

The Chairperson: Which page?

Mr Dhunoo: Page 17, Item 22070 – *Cleaning Services*, may we know who is the Contractor from the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the cleaning of office premises and toilets. Contractor is Office Clean Ltd. and the contract period is from September 2022 to August 2023 and then there is also the supply of Sanitact Services. The Contractor is Yufra Services Ltd., contract period is from December 2022 to November 2023.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. We move to page 18 now. Any question on page 18? No more questions.

Vote 1-5 Office of the Electoral Commissioner (Rs98,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(4.45 p.m.)

Vote 1-6 Judicial and Legal Service Commission was called.

The Chairperson: We have got five minutes. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. With regard to Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, there is a new vote expenditure of Rs2.3 m. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister what goods and services are we referring to?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for hotel accommodation in respect of officials from abroad to conduct seminars and workshops. They have the passage costs in respect of those foreign officials and then there are miscellaneous expenses, refreshments for committees and other unforeseen expenses including *per diem* paid to officials and

conferences, seminars and workshops, that is, the provision for expenses incurred in connection with conferences, seminars and workshops organized by JLSC.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister what the updated composition of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission is? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: This is by virtue of Section 85(1) of the Constitution. We have the –

(a) Chairperson who is hon. Rehana Bibi Mungly-Gulbul;

then we have members

(b) Mr Vidianand Lutchmeeparsad who is the Chairperson of the Public Service Commission;

(c) Hon. Nirmala Nirusha Devat, Senior Puisne Judge;

(d) Hon. David Chan Kan Cheong, Puisne Judge, and

(e) The Secretary of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission is Mr Chundraghosh Keenoo.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on page 20, Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, may we have the breakdown of this figure, Rs650,000?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of allowance to Chairperson and three Members. The Chairperson fee is Rs36,385 and fees for each member is Rs5,845 monthly.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Any more questions under this item? No question.

Vote 1-6 Judicial and Legal Service Commission (Rs3,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(4.49 p.m.)

Vote 1-7 The Judiciary was called.

The Chairperson: We have got 10 minutes for this section. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 22, Item 22060.003 – *Maintenance – Plant and Equipment*, can we have more details on this from the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The provision made for maintenance and repairs, the maintenance agreements are as follows –

- (a) Maintenance of air conditioners at the Judiciary – the contractor is Top Cool Engineering Ltd, contract period 01 November 2021 to 31 October 2022 and extended up to 31 January 2023 – contract value Rs700,000. A new tender exercise is under process.

Now, there is also a long list, I think I need to circulate but I can just mention that it is about –

- (b) Maintenance of air conditioners at Moka District Court;
- (c) Maintenance of air conditioners at Pamplemousses District Court;
- (d) Maintenance of generator at Moka District Court;
- (e) Maintenance of stand-by generator set at Savanne District Court;
- (f) Maintenance of stand-by generator set at Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Court;
- (g) Provision of water treatment services for air conditioning system at New Court House;
- (h) Maintenance of Central Air Conditioning at New Court House.

Well, the list is long. I will have to circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, the amount budgeted includes the remuneration of judges. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the intention is to recruit six new judges as announced in the budget or two new judges as provided on page 25 under Item Puisne Judge from 23 to 25?

The Prime Minister: Well, yes. Puisne Judge from 23 to 25, that is, the creation of two additional posts for the land division.

Mr Uteem: Because in the Budget they announced six.

The Prime Minister: No, for this financial year it is two; may be for future years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide further details? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of salary to Mr Bhimajee Dhurmea, newly recruited Advisor on contract with effect from 16 January 2023 for a period of one year to assist the Office of the hon. Chief Justice.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 22, Item 22030 – *Rent*, there is a substantial increase from Rs.3.4 m. to Rs7 m., may I know why it has increased by almost double and also if the hon. Prime Minister can give breakdown details of this Rs7 m.?

The Prime Minister: There is a list of rental of building for Curepipe District Court, the office. We have the area and for the car park also, a monthly rent of Rs70,000. It is situated at 5, College Lane, Curepipe, an office area of 360M² being first floor and so on.

The monthly rent of Rs143,000 again situated at same place, of course, and then we have for Bambous District Court, a monthly rent of Rs77,000, situated at Royal Road, Bambous and the contract has been renewed. That's it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger, I will give you one question, but not on page 22, on page 23.

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 22900.805 - *Expenses icw Assizes*. This is a new item. Can we have details about this one?

The Prime Minister: We are still on page 22 then.

The Chairperson: No. Page 23.

The Prime Minister: Provision is made in respect of expenses for Jurors and Court Ushers in connection with Assizes. The increase is due to 12 trials by jury cases being scheduled for the year 2023-2024. The provision is made for beverages, snacks, lunch during hearing days at Rs200 per day per person and any other petty expenses in connection with Assizes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of the Item 22130 - *Studies and Surveys*, although the sum earmarked is not substantial, can we be enlightened as to which studies and surveys are going to be conducted?

The Prime Minister: Item 22130 is the energy audit at New Court House. The Energy Efficiency Management Office has requested that an energy audit be carried out at

the New Court House by Energy Auditors and Firms to identify the causes of high energy consumption at the building and to submit recommendations for remedial actions.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I refer the Prime Minister to Item 28211.006 - *Council of Vocational and Legal Education*? Can we know who is chairing the Council now and who are the Members?

The Prime Minister: Members of the Council of Vocational and Legal Education

–

- Hon. Mr Nicholas François Ohsan-Bellepeau, Puisne Judge is the Chairperson;
- Hon. Mrs Shameem Banon Ayyub Hamuth-Laulloo, the Puisne Judge;
- Hon. Ms Rangan, Acting Master and Registrar;
- Mr R. Ramloll, Senior Counsel, Solicitor General;
- Mr R. Ahmine, Senior Counsel, Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Mrs Dya Ghose-Radhakeesoon, Attorney, The President of the Mauritius Law Society;
- Mr Yatin Varma, the representative of the Mauritius Bar Council;
- Mr Nicolas Boullé, Chamber of Notaries, and
- Dr. Didier Michelle, Head of Faculty Law and Management, University of Mauritius.

The Chairperson: You are done, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.126 - *Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies*, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of the composition of the Institute of Judicial and Legal Studies.

The Prime Minister: Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies –

- The Director is Mrs Seejore Biltoo, Senior Lecturer at the University of Mauritius,
- The Chairperson is Mr Joseph Gérard Angoh, ex-Puisne Judge.

And then, Members -

- Hon. Justice Maghooa, Puisne Judge;
- Hon. Justice Gunesh-Balaghee, Puisne Judge;

- Hon. Justice Aujayeb, Puisne Judge ;
- Mr Rajesh Ramloll, Senior Counsel, Solicitor General;
- Mr Rashid Ahmine, the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Ms Rangan, Acting Master and Registrar.

I think we need to correct the other answers I gave before because I see now, Ms Rangan, Acting Master and Registrar.

- Mr Yatin Varma, representative of the Mauritius Bar Council,
- Mr Thierry Vincent Koenig, representative of Mauritius Law Society
- Mr Nicolas Boullé, representative of la Chambre des Notaires,
- Mr Mohamed Iqbal Toorabally, representative of the Civil Society.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

The time is over for this section.

Vote 1-7 The Judiciary (Rs746,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.00 p.m.)

Vote 1-8 Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo! We have 5 minutes for that.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 27, Item 22030 – *Rent*, we can see there is an increase. Can the hon. Prime Minister give more details?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision under this *Item Rent* is to cater for additional cameras and to cater for any increase in price quoted by prospective bidders for the rental of CCTV cameras. Tender will be launched prior to February 2024.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26210 - *Contribution to International Organisations*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide further details pertaining to the International Organisations?

The Prime Minister: The provision is for payment to the Association for African Public Service Commissions of yearly subscription at the rate of USD 2,000.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*, can the hon. Prime Minister table a list of recruitment and promotion carried out by the PSC and DFSC in the year that just lapsed.

The Prime Minister: Which item?

Mr Uteem: Yes, we are voting for the payment of salary to the PSC and Disciplined Forces Service Commission. So, I just wanted to know how many recruitment has been done by the PSC and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission in the year that just lapsed.

The Prime Minister: Recruitment at the Commission itself?

Mr Uteem: No, by the Commission.

The Prime Minister: Okay. I have a list of vacancies filled in Mauritius and vacancies filled in Rodrigues. I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Page 27, Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*, can the Prime Minister give us a list of the composition of the Public Service Commission and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission as to when it has been renewed, the Chairperson and so on.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have the list –

- The Chairperson is Mr Vidianand Lutchmeeparsad;
- We have two Deputy Chairpersons. They are Mr Anilkumar Ramkurrun and Mr Anbanaden Veerasamy;
- The Commissioners are Mr Antoine Hervé Sydonie, Mr Shailendra Kumar Singh Dusowoth, Mr Abdool Hahmid Seelarbokus and Mr Lutchmeeparsad Jhugroo.

The Composition of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission –

- The Chairperson is Mr Vidianand Lutchmeeparsad;
- The Commissioners are Mr Deywanund Bhogun, Mr Anirood Pursunon, Mr Georges Henry Jeanne and Mr Tamanah Appadu.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you. Page 27 Item 22120 – *Fees*, could we have more details on this item, please?

The Prime Minister: Item 22120 – *Fees*. Fees to Chairperson and Members of the Boards and Members of the Departmental Bid Committees and Bid Evaluation Committees. Then there is also provision made to enable officers to benefit from training opportunities relevant to the needs of the Commission.

There are also fees to consultants, fees in connection with examinations and interviews. So, do you want to know the increase or why is there an increase?

So, the increase in fees is due to the significant increase in the number of examinations to be conducted by the two Commissions both in Mauritius and Rodrigues and the cost associated therewith which include payment for paper setting, payment to correctors, advisors and invigilation staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea, on page 28.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 28 there is a construction of office building with a project value Rs56 m., Item 31112.001 – *Construction of Office Building* and this year an amount of Rs2,800,000 has been budgeted. May I ask the Prime Minister what has been the actual cost, to now, of this office building?

The Prime Minister: Funds have not been provided in Financial Year 2023-2024 as the construction of two additional floors on the new building of the PSC and DFSC has been completed and all payments effected. Project value: Rs56.5 m. The project was completed in November 2021 and all payments have been effected.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Ittoo, last question under this item!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 31122.802 *Acquisition of IT Equipment (a) Automatic MCQ Marking System*, can we have more information about this item and what is the status, please? Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Automatic Multiple-Choice Question Marking System, there is an explanation about the system; I think I can circulate it. It will scan paper-based mark sheets and correct all the scanned sheets automatically. It will generate scores for MCQ tests per candidate per post and also generate reports per examination.

An hon. Member: There is a point of order.

The Chairperson: Point of order?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Chairperson, we have been here for so many years. I can see the Prime Minister circulates his reply. So, we are at the outset of starting the Committee of

Supply, can I appeal to the Prime Minister to at least give – through you also – the other ministers to go to the Library for the partial promises that have been made here in Parliament that the answers will be circulated and you can check many answers as promised have not been circulated.

The Prime Minister: By me?

Mr Bhagwan: You have been circulating answers but the other Ministers have not.

The Chairperson: Okay, you have made your point, hon. Bhagwan.

Mr Bhagwan: But I think it is a very important point!

The Chairperson: I am making the same appeal because last year, I made this appeal. If you were here, I made this appeal. I reiterate my appeal that Ministers, please, if you commit to submit and circulate certain information, please do so.

Vote 1-8 Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission (Rs142,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.08 p.m.)

Vote 1-9 Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal was called.

The Chairperson: We have got 5 minutes for this one. Hon. Uteem, which page?

Mr Uteem: Page 30. Under Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of cases that are pending before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have the statistics. Pending: 57 and then we have the Supreme Court for Judicial Review: 3. We have a list here, I will circulate it.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 30, Item 22120 – *Fees*, there is an amount of Rs1.2 m. May we have the details and breakdown of these fees?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the payment of fees to Chairperson and members of Bid Evaluation Committee and Departmental Bid Committee. We also have fees for training. Provision is made for payment of fees in connection with training of staff. I can circulate the details.

We also have fees for Attorneys and Counsels during the Financial Year 2022-2023. There is a list, I will circulate it.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Chairperson. Under Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide the composition of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The Chairperson is Mr Samoorgum Tirvassen. The Members are –

- (i) Mr Jean Maxy Simonet, and
- (ii) Mr Noor Muhammad Ally Meeajun.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 30 Item 22170 – *Travelling within the Republic*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details?

The Prime Minister: This is provision to meet the passage and accommodation cost for officers in connection with the Tribunal’s hearing in Rodrigues. The Chairperson, two Members, the Secretary and one Word Processing Operator normally proceed to Rodrigues annually. However, no official trip was scheduled in year 2022-2023 and provision is made for same for the year 2023-2024.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

We now move to page 31. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 3 – *Secretary, Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal*, I see that no provision has been made for this year as well. Is the post evanescent?

The Prime Minister: One Assistant Permanent Secretary is performing the duties of Secretary to the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. No more questions? We still have got one minute. If you don’t have one, we move on.

Vote 1-9 Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal (Rs21,700,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.13 p.m.)

Vote 1-10 Office of Ombudsman was called.

The Chairperson: We got five minutes for that section. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of Item 21110 – *Compensation of Employees, Personal Emoluments*, could the Prime Minister apprise us as to who is the Ombudsperson and whether report is being submitted on a regular basis in relation to complaints filed? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Mr Harry Ganoo was appointed as Ombudsman on 18 May 2022 and the term of his Office is for four years. There is a list.

The Chairperson: Please circulate! Please circulate!

The Prime Minister: The number of cases that he has been handling – Statistics for the period 1 July 2022 to 1 June 2023. I can circulate the list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Item 22030 – *Rent*, Rs2.4 m., may we have the details and the breakdown?

The Prime Minister: The provision for payment of rent to Société City Screen Ltd. for an office space area of 389.5 m² amounts to Rs200,877 monthly. The lease period is from 3 November 2022 to 2 November 2025. The owner is Société City Screen represented by Hajee Abdoola Abdul Sattar Adam Ali Mamode.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, thank you. Page 32, Item 21111.002 – *Travelling and Transport*, could we know the reason for that increase under this item considering that the price of fuel and oil has decreased?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to payment of Salary Compensation 2023 of Rs1000 to all employees.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: I asked on *Travelling and Transport*.

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is to cater for an increase in number of officers eligible for mileage, travel grant and commuted travelling.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22120 – *Fees*, there is an increase. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide details pertaining to this increase for *Fees* under Item 22120?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is to cater for Bid Evaluation Committees to be set up for the purchase of one laptop, one PC and one photocopy machine.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Any question?

Vote 1-10 Office of Ombudsman (Rs 17,100,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.17 p.m.)

Vote 1-11 National Audit Office was called.

The Chairperson: We got five minutes for this section. We start with hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: On Item 22120 – *Fees*, may we know who the fees are paid to?

The Prime Minister: The provision made for payment of *fees* is for training of staff in connection with new audit approach and methodologies, auditing and accounting standards and to meet continuous professional development requirements.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 21210 – *Social Contributions*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister why there has been an increase in *Social Contributions* for the Financial Year 2023-2024?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to filling of two additional posts and increase in ceiling from Rs531 to Rs536 per month per employee.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Under Item 21110.002 – *Salary Compensation*, there has been a decrease from Rs124 m. to Rs123 m., approximately Rs800,000 but at the same time, there has been an increase in the funded position. So, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why is it that salary has decreased in the Estimates but the position being funded has increased by 2 and one is Assistant Director of Audit? I do not think that he is doing the job free of charge.

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to compensation 2023 payable to officers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 34, Item 22030 – *Rent*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details?

The Prime Minister: Can I give further information because I have received it? The shortfall in provision for 2023-2024 will be met from savings during the course of the year.

Mr Dhunoo: Item 22030 – *Rent*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details?

The Prime Minister: The National Audit Office occupies rented premises of 8,100 ft² of office space at the 14th floor of the Air Mauritius Centre. The lessor is Mauritius State Development Corporation Ltd., MEDCO, the contract period from 19 February 2020 to 18 February 2024 for a contract amount of Rs5,197,770 inclusive of service charges and VAT per year and then, 1,544 ft² of office space at ground floor of the Air Mauritius Centre. The lessor is Foreign Plus Ltd. and the contract period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024 for a contract amount of Rs840,000 per year and that is it.

The Chairperson: Okay, we now move to page 35. I have a question from hon. Osman Mahomed.

Mr Osman Mahomed: For the post of Director of Audit, may I ask the Prime Minister for the procedures that have been followed, was there a call for application or he was appointed directly and whether he is on probation or confirmed to the post already?

The Chairperson: Excuse me, hon. Osman Mahomed. It seems to me that it is a question which should be a subject matter for a PQ. I am sorry for that. The time is over.

Mr Osman Mahomed: The Prime Minister wants to reply.

The Chairperson: I am the Chairperson.

(Interruptions)

Vote 1-11 National Audit Office (Rs194,000,000) was, on question put, and agreed to.

(5.22 p.m.)

Vote 1-12 Employment Relations Tribunal was called.

The Chairperson: We got five minutes for this section also. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Again under Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of cases that have been referred to ERT and determined by ERT and are currently outstanding?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have this information, the achievements; total number of cases. I can circulate the list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 21110, can the hon. Prime Minister provide the composition of the Employment Relations Tribunal? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The Vice-President is currently the Acting President and he is Mr Indiren Sivaramen. The Vice-President is Mr Shameer Jahangeer. I have the details of their emoluments and so on. I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 36, Item 22120 – *Fees*, there is an amount of Rs925,000, may we know to whom these fees are being paid to?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for fees to Chairperson and members of boards and committees, payment of fees to members of the Tribunal in relation to the hearing of cases. Each division of the Tribunal shall consist of a presiding member, currently one of the two Vice-Presidents, and three other members. The presiding members are not paid any fee. There have been a number of sittings and there are the rates and so on which I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Doolub, please.

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 – *Rent*, Rs5,015,000, can we have details for this item and the landlord, please.

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the payment of rent at the rate of Rs417,731.75 VAT inclusive monthly for Level 18, stores and archives found in the basement of Newton Tower Building. The contract period is from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2025, for the office, and from 01 November 2022 to 31 October 2025 for the store and archives, respectively. For the parking slots, 7 parking slots at Rs3,737.50 monthly including of VAT per slot in Newton Tower.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Dhunoo, please.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 36, Item 22070 – *Cleaning Services*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister who is the service provider?

The Prime Minister: The contractor is Keep Clean Ltd, at a rate of Rs9,545 per month inclusive of VAT. The contract period is from August 2022 to August 2023, with possibility of further renewals subject to satisfactory performance. This is for cleaning of

toilets. Then, we have Sanitact Service; the contractor is Keep Clean Ltd, amounting to Rs230 VAT inclusive monthly. The contract period is from August 2022 to August 2023, again, with possibility of renewal subject to satisfactory performance.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We have time for a last question. Hon. Mrs Mayotte.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120 – *Fees*, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of the number of cases considered in Mauritius and Rodrigues during the Financial Year 2022-2023 by the Employment Relations Tribunal and the outcome thereof? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: If I am not mistaken, I have circulated it but I can circulate the list.

The Chairperson: No, I trust you.

The Prime Minister: My officer will give the list.

The Chairperson: I know you will circulate it.

Vote 1-12 Employment Relations Tribunal (Rs25,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.28 p.m.)

Vote 1-13 Local Government Service Commission was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for this section as well. Hon. Bhagwan.

Mr Bhagwan: Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, can we know the present composition of the Board of the LGSC, the Chairperson and the members?

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson is Mr Bhanoodutt Beeharee. The Members are: Mrs Purnima Devi Rawoteea; Mr Reshad Bhaukaurally, and Mr Premchand Tanakoor.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Léopold, please.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same Item 21110.002 – *Salary Compensation*, can the hon. Prime Minister give an indication of the number of vacancies processed during the financial year?

The Prime Minister: I can circulate the list on the details of vacancies filled by promotion. I can also circulate the list of the activities carried out by the LGSC during the Financial Year 2022-2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: Item 22120 – *Fees*, may we know to whom those fees have been paid?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for fees payable to staff for attending Departmental Bid Committee and Bid Evaluation Committee as and when required.

Then, there are fees for training, that is, to cater for training of staff in order to sustain employees' continual growth. Officers are selected on a roster basis to follow courses organised by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms or training identified by the Commission.

There are also fees in connection with examinations and interviews, for conducting examinations in respect of recruitment in local authorities. Generally, the Mauritius Examination Syndicate is called upon for this exercise. There is payment of fees also to advisors for attending interview panel.

The increase in provision is due to increase in the number of Departmental Bid Committees and Bid Evaluation Committees to be carried out in 2023-2024.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. So, we have a last question on this page. Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 39, Item 31112.001 – *Construction of Office Buildings*, there was a project value of Rs33.5 m., can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if we can have an update on the status of the construction and also the total actual cost up to now?

The Prime Minister: The project includes extension of a second floor at the LGSC and the acquisition of equipment and furniture. The project has been completed.

Mr Ameer Meea: What is the cost up to now?

The Prime Minister: For the building Rs22,312,726 and equipment and furniture Rs6,057,889 making a total of Rs28,370,615. The project value is Rs33.5 m.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31132.801 – *Acquisition of Software (b) Web-based Recruitment System*. May I ask what is the project about and why is it that it could not begin this year? From my calculations, the Rs2 m. was budgeted for last year but somehow it is only starting this year.

The Prime Minister: Well the project will be financed during three financial years as follows –

- Rs2 m. in Financial Year 2023-2024, that is, the specifications are being finalised with the Central Informatics Bureau;
- Rs7 m. in Financial Year 2024-2025, and
- Rs1 m. in Financial Year 2025-2026.

So, no expenditure was incurred in the Financial Year 2022-2023.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy! You will be the last one.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Under item 31112.401 – *Upgrading of Office Buildings*, can we have more details about the buildings and the contractors as well? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The project catered for the refurbishment of the existing building, including mainly the flooring and trunking works. Now, in view of the deterioration of the flooring on the ground and first floor, there is an urgent need to replace the flooring by laminated ones in some offices so as to eliminate health hazards and give a homogenous look in a conducive environment for the staff and candidates attending interviews. So, the scope of work includes the flooring Rs1.5 m. and upgrading of LAN infrastructure on ground and first floor Rs1.6 m.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Prime Minister. Time is over for this section by two minutes.

Vote 1-13 Local Government Service Commission (Rs 54,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.36 p.m.)

Vote 1-14 Independent Commission Against Corruption was called.

The Chairperson: We got five minutes for this section. We start with hon. Bhagwan.

Mr Bhagwan: *Thank you. Mr Chairperson. Page 41, item 26313.206 – Independent Commission Against Corruption of which Staff Costs.* On nous demande de voter R 234 100 000. La fois dernière il y avait une réponse au Parlement que le directeur touche plus de R 650 000. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir quel est le montant exact comme salaire du directeur qu'on est en train de voter parce qu'on voit cet après-midi le salaire du...

The Chairperson: Okay.

Mr Bhagwan: Non, je n'ai pas terminé.

The Chairperson: You can't put two questions in one question.

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking one question. We are being asked to vote this afternoon the salaries of the Prime Minister, President of Republic, Chief Justice and so on; we would like to know, what is the salary of this VIP person, Director of ICAC?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but there is a Parliamentary Committee that, of course, can seek whatever information with regard to salaries.

The Chairperson: We move to next, hon. Dr. Boolell, please! Hon. Prime Minister, we have already moved to the second question, so let's listen to hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Well, I would have loved to rub salt on an open wound but since the hon. Prime Minister is not willing to reply, I move to another item. Capital Expenditure, Grants to...

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell, you can't say the hon. Prime Minister is not willing to reply to your question.

The Prime Minister: I have replied.

The Chairperson: You should put your question first and then we are going to see if the hon. Prime Minister is willing to answer or not.

Dr. Boolell: But in the light of the question put by the most senior Member of the...

The Chairperson: Yes, but you can't say that the hon. Prime Minister is not...

Dr. Boolell: ... is no willing to give the reply. The Prime Minister has said that we should refer the matter to the Parliamentary Committee.

The Chairperson: So, do you have a question? So, put your question!

Dr. Boolell: Capital Expenditure – Grants, item 26323.026 – *Independent Commission Against Corruption*, if we can have a breakdown in respect of the sum earmarked in the estimates?

The Prime Minister: The Extra-Budgetary Unit, so the IT equipment and software and provision is made for upgrade of server and data loss protection project and land and building and vehicles.

Dr. Boolell: This is a matter of ...

The Prime Minister: No, this one...

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell...

The Prime Minister: Whatever I have...

Dr. Boolell: I have appreciated the reply given by the Prime Minister except that I want to know why this one is not referred to the Parliamentary Committee.

The Chairperson: This question is not admissible! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 41, item 26313.026 – *Independent Commission Against Corruption of which Staff Costs*. There has been a substantial increase from Rs216 m. to Rs234 m., that is, an increase of Rs18 m. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister why such a substantial increase and also if he can circulate the number of staff and their respective positions?

The Prime Minister: Well the increase in provision is mainly due to increase in salary and allowances, calculation of CSG and other operation costs. This is all that I have.

Mr Ameer Meea: The number of staff?

The Prime Minister: The number of staff, I can get the number and circulate.

The Chairperson: Thank you. No more questions?

The Prime Minister: So, can I answer the number of staff? In post: 143, on secondment: 15. So a total of 158 and vacancy: 57.

The Chairperson: Thank you. So we don't have any more questions.

Vote 1-14 Independent Commission Against Corruption (Rs 274,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.41 p.m.)

Vote 1-15 National Human Rights Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Five minutes for this section also. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.060 – *National Human Rights Commission of which (a) Staff Costs*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the composition of the National Human Rights Commission Board?

The Prime Minister: So, the Chairperson is Mr D. B. Seetulsingh. In the Human Rights Division, Mrs Lam Hung as Deputy Chairperson; Mr Naik full-time as Member; Mrs Manguillier, full-time as Member. From the National Preventive Mechanism Division, Mr Torabally, the Deputy Chairperson; Mr Vieillesse, full-time Member; Mr Mittoo, full-time Member.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Same item, may we know the salary of each of these people? Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members of the Commission.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I should have the salary. So, for Mr Seetulsingh, salary is Rs188,250 per month plus salary compensation and then we have travelling allowance and special judicial allowance at the rate of 30% of salary. You want for all of them? If I can circulate?

Mr Uteem: Yes.

The Prime Minister: I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte, please!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Same Item, can the hon. Prime Minister provide the number of cases considered by the National Human Rights Commission? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Number of complaints by Human Rights Division – 82; resolved – 68; ongoing – 14. National Preventive Mechanism Division, number of complaints – 104; resolved – 83 and ongoing – 21. So, I will circulate the list, anyway.

The Chairperson: Any question on page 42? No questions.

Vote 1-15 National Human Rights Commission (Rs35,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.44 p.m.)

Vote 1-16 Office of Ombudsperson for Children was called.

The Chairperson: We have got five minutes for this section. We start with hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Item 22900.903 – *Awareness Campaigns (Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Children in the Republic of Mauritius - EU Funded)*, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why has the sum decreased from Rs1.3 m. to Rs529,000 this year and then in the subsequent years, this will seemingly stop, according to what is presented to us because I believe this is important ?

The Prime Minister: The decrease is due to the ending of the Awareness Campaign in November 2022.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments & 22900 – Other Goods and Services*. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide the statistics on the number of cases dealt by the Ombudsperson for Children in the Republic for Financial Year 2022-2023? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: We have awaiting report – 85; in progress – 80. There are a number of cases disposed of - 266 and number of cases in Rodrigues – 4 already disposed of, and in Agaléga – 2 already disposed of. I will circulate the list anyway.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, under Item 26210 – *Contribution to International Organisations*, can we have details with regard to the International Organisations, please?

The Prime Minister: The contribution to the International Ombudsman’s Institute and then *Association des Ombudsmans et Médiateurs de la Francophonie(AOMF)* and then contribution to African Ombudsman and Mediators Association. The increase is due to fluctuations in foreign exchange rates.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 – *Rent*, there is a decrease of around Rs845,000 for this item. Can we have more details, please?

The Prime Minister: The decrease under item 22030 is due to relocation of Office to Ebène Heights.

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you. Item 22120 – *Fees*, can we have more details and explanation for the increase, please?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made in connection with relocation of office and procurement services and we also have fees for training. The provision is made for tailor-made training required for technical staff so that they perform more efficiently and effectively to achieve the goals and objectives of this office. Fees are due to payment of fees to Chairperson and members of Bid Evaluation Committee and Departmental Bid Committee.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Item 22900.903 – *Awareness Campaigns (Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Children in the Republic of Mauritius - EU Funded)*, can we know who were the targets of these Awareness Campaigns?

The Prime Minister: Workshops and seminars for sensitization on Child's Rights to children and Child's Rights Duty Bearers but I can get the list and provide the details. I will circulate the details. There have been 31 field visits carried out which included visits to Residential Care Institutions, Correctional Youth Centres, Rehabilitation Youth Centres. Four visits to Rodrigues were effected, two under the Office of the Children's Ombudsperson Budget and two under the EU Funded Project and meeting with stakeholders working with children and visit to Rehabilitation Youth Centre and Residential Care Institution, round table session on the rights to be protected from all forms of violence with students of secondary schools as from Grade 7 boys and girls was organized.

We also have the achievement for the Year 2022-2023. So there is a long list, I will circulate both.

The Chairperson: Last question!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, could the hon. Prime Minister state who the beneficiaries of these allowances are?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the following allowances –

- (a) Internet allowance;
- (b) Driver's allowance to Ombudsperson for Children;
- (c) Allowance for washing of towels, preparation of tea to Office Auxiliary, and
- (d) Responsibility and Adhoc allowances.

Increase in provision is due to an increase in the allowances paid.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. The time is over!

Vote 1-16 Office of Ombudsperson for Children (Rs28,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.51 p.m.)

Vote 1-17 Independent Police Complaints Commission was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for this section. We start with hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26313 – *Extra-Budgetary Units*, can we have the composition of the Independent Police Complaints Commission, the composition of the Board itself?

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson is Mrs Deviyanee Beesoondoyal. Then we have Mr Phalraj Servansingh, the fulltime member and Mr Viranand Ramchurn, part-time member. That's it.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 46 Item 26313.142 – *Independent Police Complaints Commission*, I would request the hon. Prime Minister to tell us the number of complaints which this IPCC has received, number solved and cases which are still pending?

The Prime Minister: I have the list and I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under the same Item, the hon. Prime Minister gave the composition; may we know from the hon. Prime Minister the remuneration package paid to the members of that IPCC?

The Prime Minister: For the Chairperson, the salary is Rs175,750 monthly plus salary compensation and there are other benefits which I will circulate.

For Mr Phalraj Servansingh, full time member, salary Rs119,500 monthly plus salary compensations and other benefits.

For Mr Viranand Ramchurn, monthly all inclusive allowance of Rs82,250 comprising gratuity, cashable leave, passage benefits and end of year bonus.

So I circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Just canvassed. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under same item, page 46, Item 26313.142(b) – *Other Operating Costs*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details why there has been a decrease?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to filling of 3 additional posts, that is, one Senior Investigator, one Investigator and one Enquiring Officer/Senior Enquiring Officer, and payment of salary compensation 2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, page 46 Item 26313.142 (a) – *Staff costs*, could we know the number of Police Officers who have been suspended and who are still waiting for trial in cases of Police brutality, leading to prisoner’s death in Police Cell and who are still drawing a salary. I don’t know if this is under this item.

The Prime Minister: No, this is staff costs for the Commission. You will have it in the list that I have circulated. But you will only have the number of cases. So, you can come with a specific question at a normal parliamentary session, then I can provide the information.

The Chairperson: Let us have a last question under this section, from the hon. Bodha.

Mr Bodha: Mr Chairperson, can I ask the Prime Minister on the Item - 26313.142 (a) – *Staff costs*, can we have the details as regards the staff and the Investigating Officers who are at the Commission?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there is one Senior Investigator, 4 Investigators, 3 Enquiring Officers and Senior Enquiring Officer and I have mentioned that there are additional officers who will be recruited.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Time is over.

Vote 1-17 Independent Police Complaints Commission (Rs15,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.56 p.m.)

Vote 1-18 Financial Crime Commission was called.

The Chairperson: We got 5 minutes for this section. We start by hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson, recurrent expenditure Item 22900.943 - *Financial Crime Commission*, if we can have the composition of the Financial Crime Commission, salaries drawn inclusive of benefits, cases referred and outcome. Thank you very much.

The Prime Minister: Maybe I should explain. The Financial Crime Commission is not yet voted because the Bill is under preparation, it will come to the National Assembly but we need to make a budgetary provision for that Commission.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on the same Item, it has been several years now that we are voting Rs10 m. in relation to the Financial Crime Commission. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister when does he think that the Bill will come to the House?

The Prime Minister: As soon as it is ready. I can tell you we are working on it, it is going to be finalized, I believe, pretty soon, because we need to have consultations. You know all the process and it is not a simple Bill, when it comes to the Assembly we will see because it is going to regroup different institutions under one roof. So, let the Bill come and then we will debate on it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: Again on the same Item, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any provision has been made here or elsewhere for the payment of fees for consultants precisely to help us come up with this legislation?

The Prime Minister: What I can say is that the Bill is nearing finality and if there is any need for consultant of course, but I don't think we will need a consultant right now.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: No more question? Thank you.

Vote 1-18 Financial Crime Commission (Rs10,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(5.59 p.m.)

Vote 1-19 Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services was called.

The Chairperson: We have got 5 minutes for this section. We start by hon. Ms Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you. Item 21110.005 - *Extra Assistance*, can we have details please?

The Prime Minister: This is a provision for the payment of allowances to staff to be employed on contract for financial services if required.

The Chairperson: Hon Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of cases that has been referred to the Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services and the number that has been solved and that is outstanding.

The Prime Minister: I have the list. Just to give you an idea, outstanding complaints from previous period: 1,342; number of complaints received for the current period: 520; number of complaints investigated and/or resolved: 472, and number of outstanding complaints: 1,390.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under same Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*, can the hon. Prime Minister give the composition of the Ombudsperson for Financial Services Board?

The Prime Minister: There is one Ombudsperson for Financial Services who is Dr. Mitrajeet Dhaneswar Maraye. So his term of office is for 4 years and that's it.

The Chairperson: That's all you have got as answer? Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Just canvassed. Thank you.

The Chairperson: So, we move to page 49 then. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 31112.041 - *Upgrading of Office Buildings*. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this building is a Government-owned building or privately-owned building? Because Rs3 m. is going to be invested in that building.

The Prime Minister: So, this provision for the cost of fit out works required prior to relocation to Ebène Heights Building. The provision of Rs3 m. is based on the estimated cost of fit out works provided by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

The Chairperson: Hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 31132.801 - *Acquisition of Software*, can we have more details about which software we are referring to?

The Prime Minister: So, provision for the purchase of software pertaining to IT equipment including renewal of Microsoft 365 License. Cost of licenses for additional staff and cost of antivirus software.

The Chairperson: You are done?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Any more questions? No.

Vote 1-19 Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services (Rs20,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 6.04 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.44 p.m. with the Deputy Chairman of Committees in the Chair.

The Chairperson: Please be seated.

(6.42 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: We have got 45 minutes for this vote and we have nine subsections.

We start by Sub-Head 2-101: Cabinet Office. At page 55. No questions? Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 55. Item 21110.004 – Allowances of Rs8.6 m. May we have the details of this figure, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the payment of extra duty, responsibility, *ad hoc* and duty allowances to eligible officers.

The Chairperson: Page 56. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of Item 22120.017 – *Legal Fees*, can Prime Minister give us a breakdown in respect of how this amount is being spent?

The Prime Minister: Provisions for the case brought by Mauritius against Maldives, that is, fees to be paid to external lawyers; legal advice also provided in respect of Chagos Archipelago. The fees to be paid to external lawyers.

For the case of Maldives, we have USD 150,000. Fees to external Lawyers for Chagos Archipelago is of 275,000 pound sterling. We have reimbursement of out-of-

pocket expenses to external lawyers including travel and hotel accommodation expenses for meetings to be held in Mauritius, London and elsewhere – Rs5 m.

And request to ITLOS and ICJ for advisory opinions on climate change, the fees to be paid to external lawyers: 200,000 pound sterling. Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses to external lawyers for attending meetings before ICJ and ITLOS including travel and hotel accommodation: Rs500,000. That's it!

The Chairperson: That's it. Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26313.025 – *Independent Broadcasting Authority*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide the composition of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the allowances paid to the Chairperson and members?

The Prime Minister: For the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the Chairperson is Mr Bhooneswar Rajkumarsingh. His basic monthly allowances Rs57,750. Let me give his total allowances: Rs70,950.

The Members are –

- (i) Mr Rajeshsharma Ramloll, Solicitor General : Rs25,134;
- (ii) Mr Satydanand Aujeet, Permanent Secretary at Prime Minister's Office: Rs25,134
- (iii) Mrs Fulena-Boodhoo, Principal Information Officer : Rs25,134;
- (iv) Mrs Indira Pudaruth-Ruchaia : Rs25,134;
- (v) Mr Dick Christophe Ng Sui Wa : Rs25,134;
- (vi) Mr Anirood Pursunon : Rs25,134;
- (vii) Mr Sachin Jootun : Rs25,134, and
- (viii) Mr Sohun Neerunjun: Rs25,134.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Prime Minister, again under Item 22120.017 – *Legal Fees*, is it only for external lawyers? Are we also paying local legal persons here?

The Prime Minister: I think it is all external lawyers. If I confirm, I will get the answer. But I believe it is only for external lawyers.

The Chairperson: Can we take another question in the meantime?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci. Item 22900.994 – *Expenses icw National Youth Environment Council*. There is a decrease in the budget allocated. Can we have an explanation and can we know how many times did the members meet?

The Prime Minister: For the National Youth Environment Council, as criteria, I think the age limit to be a member is 35 and therefore, quite a few members have reached above 35, in fact, of 36. So, like the Chairperson, who was Dr. Zaheer Allam, now he has reached the age of 35. So, he cannot be a member of this Committee anymore. The Vice-Chairperson also who was Mr Valéry de Falbaire. There is also Mr Arvind Sookhoo, a Barrister, he has resigned. Ms Nudhar Bundhoo, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Drugs and HIV matters, has resigned as she has reached the age of 36. Mr Fabiani Appavou, who has also reached the age of 36.

The other members who are still in place is –

- (i) Mrs Soonam Puttur-Bhurtun, Assistant Permanent Secretary;
- (ii) Mrs Bibi Nabeela Fokeerbux, Assistant Permanent Secretary ;
- (iii) Ms Shiksha Darshinee Ramful, Youth Officer;
- (iv) Ms Farheen Banon Chuttoo-Domun, a Safety and Health Officer,
Confédération des Travailleurs des Secteurs Publique et Privé.

So, we need to replace a few of them.

Ms J. Bérenger: How many times did they meet?

The Prime Minister: Number of council meetings – I will circulate the information.

Can I come back to the question about external lawyers? The external lawyers are

–

- (i) Prof. Philippe Sands;
- (ii) Mr Paul Reichler;
- (iii) Prof. Pierre Klein;
- (iv) Mr Andrew Loewenstein;
- (v) Mr Yuri Parkhomanko;

(vi) Ms Christina Hioureas, and

(vii) Mr Remi Reichhold.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. We now move to the next Sub-Head 2-102: Private Office and Ceremonials. Page 56. Any question?

We move to page 57. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Item 22900.901 – *National Day Celebration*. The amount has doubled from Rs15 m. to Rs30 m. Can we know why?

The Prime Minister: The increase is due to the fact that during the past three years, the celebration was restricted to the flag raising ceremony only at the State House due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, for the National Day Celebration 2024, it is planned to celebrate same on a bigger scale.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on page 57, the first Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, Rs17.2 m., may we have a breakdown on this figure as to whom this *Extra Assistance* is being paid to?

The Prime Minister: We have provision for payment of salaries, refund of casual annual vacation leave, travelling allowances, bonus and contributions to National Savings Fund at the rate of 2.5% of basic salary for advisors. So let me give the list of advisors also because I am sure that you are going to ask the question. So, advisors in post –

(i) Mr Nayen Koomar Ballah, with a monthly salary of Rs164,650;

(ii) Sir Bhinod Bacha, Rs131,250;

(iii) Mr Kreedeo Beekharry, Rs120,900;

(iv) Mrs Tej Asha Mudhoo, Rs120,900;

(v) Mrs Sarah Rawat-Currimjee, Rs102,150;

(vi) Mr Kushalrajsing Meetarbhan, Rs95,900;

(vii) Miss Chiaw Lo Siong Shou, Rs79,350;

(viii) Mr Mootoo, Rs79,350;

(ix) Mrs Damayndee Rengasamy, Rs60,600;

(x) Mr Mohesh Kumar Ramnochane, Rs33,750;

(xi) Mr Prithiviraj Rampursad, Rs33,750.

And, I also have three other advisors –

- (a) Dr. Zouberr Houssein Issa Joomaye;
- (b) Mr Surendrea Teeluck.

There are two only but without remuneration.

Mr Bhagwan: What about Ghurburrun?

The Prime Minister: For Ghurburrun, it is terminated. He terminated at his own will.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

The Prime Minister: But he was not receiving any salary.

Mr Bhagwan: I was just asking about ...

The Chairperson: I have got your name for a question. Put your question.

Mr Bhagwan: I already asked.

The Chairperson: You have already asked, okay. If that is the way that you ask a question, okay. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 22900.014 - *Other Goods and Services of which Hospitality and Ceremonies*, can we have a breakdown of the hospitality and ceremonies for which Rs17 m. is being earmarked?

The Prime Minister: Item 22900.014 - *Other Goods and Services of which Hospitality and Ceremonies*, to meet expenses for dinners and lunches hosted in connection with State visits, visits of official guests and important personalities, the organisation of functions and ceremonies, payment to Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. for the use of State and VIP lounges and an amount of Rs13.5 m. for the purchase of medals. The increase in provision is due to a rise in price of medals.

The Chairperson: I got two more minutes.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on page 57, I will come back to Item 21110.005 - *Extra Assistance*, the hon. Prime Minister gave the list of his advisors – 11 advisors. Can I ask the Prime Minister, the figures that he gave were for basic monthly salary but what about their total pay packet including their allowances and other perks?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will circulate it.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We now move to Sub-Head 2-103. Hon. Ameer Meea, your question is for Sub-Head 2-103?

Mr Ameer Meea: Which page?

The Chairperson: Page 57.

Mr Ameer Meea: No, I already asked.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo, under which Sub-Head is it?

Mr Dhunoo: Yes.

The Chairperson: Your question on page 57, is it on Sub-Head 2-103?

Mr Dhunoo: No.

The Chairperson: So, we move to page 58 of Sub-Head 2-103. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Page 58, Item 26323.160 - *Extra-Budgetary Units, Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd (COIREC)*. We are being asked to vote Rs25 m. Can we have some details about this big amount of Rs25 m. for this new entity?

The Prime Minister: Yes, provision made for the construction of a steel structure for officials, the Press and lounge G +2 levels. Well, for the construction I must check where it is, if I have the information where it is going to be built.

The Chairperson: In the meantime we take another question. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 26313.160 - *Extra-Budgetary Units, Côte d'Or International Racecourse and Entertainment Complex Ltd. (COIREC)*. We are being asked to vote Rs20 m. this year. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what it is about and why is it that for subsequent years, no provision is being made I believe for the maintenance of Champ de Mars? Can you clarify on this please?

The Prime Minister: The provision for 2022-2023 has been used mainly to meet the following expenses: personal emoluments, taxes and levies, legal, professional and other fees, rental of office space, expenses related to the Champ de Mars and Côte d'Or.

In the budget 2023-2024, a provision of Rs20 m. has been made to hire the services of a transaction advisor under the public-private partnership framework for the construction of a new state of the art race course and entertainment facilities project at Côte d'Or.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Léopold!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900. 987 –*Expenses icw National Sanctions Secretariat*. How does the National Sanctions Secretariat function and what has been the outcome of the activities of the National Sanctions Secretariat during the Financial Year 2022-2023 and why has the expenditure of National Sanctions Secretariat increased?

The Prime Minister: The purpose of the National Sanctions Secretariat is to provide assistance and to implement decisions of the National Sanctions Committee chaired by Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service. The increase in provision of Rs10 m. is made to meet the running cost, training of staff, fees to Chairperson, members of board meetings, licencing and maintenance of the Electronic Document Management System which has been installed at the Secretariat. The EDMS ensures security of data.

Regarding the functioning of the National Sanctions Secretariat, I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22130 – *Studies and Surveys*, there is no amount budgeted for this year. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide details about which studies and surveys we have been referring to for Financial Year 2022-2023?

The Prime Minister: No studies and surveys were carried out during this financial year and no studies and surveys will be carried out during the next financial year.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 31122 .805 - *Acquisition of Security Equipment*, may we have a list of the security equipment being acquired?

The Prime Minister: No, the hon. Member should know that for security reasons, we do not provide information on security equipment.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. *Item 22900.909 – Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit* with a substantial amount voted last year, then the slight drop and then with an increase of Rs5m. Can we have a breakdown in respect of the expenses related to this unit, please?

The Prime Minister: Which sub item is it?

Dr. Boolell: *Item 22900.909 – Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit.*

The Prime Minister: Which sub item is it?

Dr. Boolell: Item 22900.909 – *Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit*.

The Prime Minister: Item 22900.909 – *Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit*. Again, this is the Counterterrorism Unit, so we do not provide information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900.929 – *Equal Opportunities Tribunal*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide a breakdown of the cases?

The Prime Minister: A breakdown of the?

The Chairperson: What is your question, hon. Dhunoo?

Mr Dhunoo: The Equal Opportunities Tribunal, I want to have more details on it.

The Chairperson: Can you provide the details, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The Equal Opportunities Tribunal consists of a President, two members and a secretary. Following the retirement of Mr Denis Vellien as Chairperson of the Tribunal, no new Chairperson has yet been appointed. Mrs Mohini Bali and Mr Abdool Kader Lotun are the current members of the Tribunal.

The provision is made for legal fees, for payment of fees to lawyers who would be required to represent the Tribunal in Court.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger. A last question for this Sub-Head.

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you. Item 22900.928 – *Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal*, there is an increase, can we know why and can we know how many cases have been treated? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: I will circulate the list of the number of cases: cases lodged; cases disposed of, because it will take too much time of the House.

The Chairperson: Exceptionally, I will allow one question to hon. Lobine under this Sub-Head.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. It is with regard to Item 22900.909 – *Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit*, may we know who is heading the Counterterrorism Unit, please? Who is at the head of that Unit?

The Prime Minister: It is Mr Deal.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We move to next Sub-Head 2-104: National Security Services. It is on page 59, there is only one item.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Item 22090.002 – *National Security Services*, I don't know whether the Prime Minister will tell me that he is bound by security.

The Chairperson: Don't pre-empt.

Dr. Boolell: No, but I want to know whether there is a possibility of having a breakdown in respect of this item and who is heading the National Security Services?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member knows, he has been in previous Governments; he knows that details on security matters are not being provided.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us more details about Item 31132...

The Chairperson: No, we have already moved to Sub-Head 2-104.

Hon. Ameer Meea, I mentioned it at the start that the time allocation has been agreed between the two Whips. I cannot do anything about it; I mentioned it.

Mr Ameer Meea: But...

The Chairperson: You say, 'but, but, but', I also got some regulations.

Mr Ameer Meea: One sub-head is on two pages.

The Chairperson: You must talk to your Whip when he is here; if he is here or when he is here. Phone him.

Mr Ameer Meea: Time allocation is not ...

The Chairperson: So, we now move to Sub-Head 2-105: Equal Opportunities Commission, page 59. Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: In respect to Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, may I know who is at the head of the Equal Opportunities Commission and what is his salary package?

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson is Mr Ahmad Sulliman Jeewah. The effective date of contract is 20 September 2021 and the period of contract is 4 years' full-time. The monthly salary is Rs188,250 and there are allowances and so on which I will circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 229000 – *Other Goods and Services*, can we have more details about it?

The Prime Minister: It is for payment of uniform allowance to eligible staff. Provision is also made for refund of two business class return passage to London for the Chairperson as per contract. The increase in provision is due to a rise in the cost of air tickets.

There are other items also like awareness campaigns, conferences, seminars, and workshops because they provide, *inter alia*, for the sensitisation and education of people on equality of opportunities. So, in that respect, the present Chairperson intends to organise workshops and seminars in addition to the usual sensitisation campaigns throughout the country.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, regarding EOC, the number of complaints received, the number of complaints that have been handled successfully and the number which is pending?

The Chairperson: Under which item?

Dr. Gungapersad: EOC, Equal Opportunities Commission.

The Chairperson: Which item number; the reference?

Dr. Gungapersad: The Commission itself; Personal Emoluments.

The Prime Minister: Complaints received, let me just briefly say, from Mauritius it is 111 and from Rodrigues it is 6. There is a list –

- Conciliated/Settled: 2;
- Not under purview: 67;
- Findings reserved: 1;
- Legal impediment: none;
- Set aside: 8;
- Investigation completed: 3;
- Withdrawn: 8;
- Assessment that is ongoing: 6;
- Under investigation: 11;
- Under study: 3, and
- Cases listed and waiting to be heard: 8

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22120 – *Fees*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister as to the increase of the fees component, why is it so?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for payment of the services of a consultant on contract having a legal background. The contract is ending on 30 June 2023, and necessary action for renewal for a further term of one year is being taken. An all-inclusive fee of Rs33,250 monthly is paid to the consultant. She supports the two investigators in the handling of complaints at the EOC. We also have provision for payment of legal fees to lawyers who would be required to represent the Commission in court for matters against public bodies.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger.

Ms J. Bérenger: Sous le même item, peut-on savoir qui est le consultant ?

The Prime Minister: Miss Neha Chowbay Nuckchady.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, hon. Prime Minister, can you repeat what you just said because I missed that part of Nuckchady?

The Chairperson: Just spell the Nuckchady.

The Prime Minister: I think you are getting confused. Miss Neha Chawbay Nuckchady.

The Chairperson: Okay, hon. Ameer Meea, I still allow you one question in the meantime!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 59, item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, Rs8.4 m. May we have the details and the breakdown of this figure?

The Prime Minister: Extra Assistance, yes. It is the provision for the payment of salaries, bonus, refund of leave, contributions to National Savings Funds at the rate of 2.5% of basic salary for Chairperson and three Members of the Equal Opportunities Commission. So, we have as Chairperson, Mr Jeewah; Members: Mr L. R. Toulouse, Mr G. Shibchurn, and Mr G. Seechurn.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan, you still want to ask a question?

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, I'm much interested. Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*. There is an increase on extra assistance. Can we have some details on this extra assistance, the increase, especially?

The Prime Minister: Well, the increase in provision is due to an increase in salary following payment of annual increments and I have given the list of those who are Members and the Chairperson.

The Chairperson: We now move to the next Sub-Head 2-106: Government Information Service. Page 60. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 26313.048 – *Media Trust Fund*, can we know the composition of Media Trust Fund? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Yes, the Media Trust Fund. So, we have as Chairperson, Mr Chayman Surajbali and the Secretary Mr Ashok Beeharry, the Treasurer Mrs Bibi Noorina Hinga Sahutoora. Members are as follows –

- Mrs K. Fullena Boodoo;
- Mr Michael Francois;
- Mr Jean Claude Le Roi;
- Mrs Fatima Capri;
- Mr Jean Marie Gungaram.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Item 31132.801 – *Acquisition of Software (Mobile App)*, there is a new provision for Rs3 m. for a Mobile App. Can we know which company or person is providing for the Mobile App?

The Prime Minister: The proposed amount is for the development for a Mobile Application which will be a one-stop shop for all governmental information policies, activities and notices. It will cater for communiqués, vacancies and other official documents disseminated by Ministries and Parastatal Bodies.

The Chairperson: The question was: who is the provider?

The Prime Minister: It will be. So, I believe it's not yet. So it will be.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 60, item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, regarding GIS, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister who is responsible for GIS and the Members?

The Prime Minister: You mean who is the Head? So, Mr Kavish Pultoo is the Director.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Yes page 60, under item 22 – *Goods and Services*, can I know from the Prime Minister why such an increase?

The Prime Minister: Well there are, I see under different items, ...

The Chairperson: Can you be more specific on which item you want to have that clarification, hon. Duval?

Mr R. Duval: Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*.

The Prime Minister: So this is provision for payment of uniform allowance to eligible officers. The increase in provision is to cater for uniform allowance to new recruits.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.048 – *Media Trust Fund*. Can we know the remuneration of the Board Members?

The Prime Minister: *Alors*, for the Chairperson the fees per sitting is Rs2,675; for the Secretary, Rs1,415; for the Treasurer, Rs1,415 and for Board Members, Rs1,180.

The Chairperson: A last question under this Sub-Head.

Ms J. Bérenger: On the same item as hon. Duval, item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, *est-ce qu'on peut savoir qui sont ces nouvelles recrues et quelles seront leurs responsabilités? Merci.*

The Prime Minister: No, but item 22900 is Other Goods and Services.

Ms J. Bérenger: You said that this allocation is for new recruits, you just said that.

The Prime Minister: But new recruits who will be recruited.

Ms J. Bérenger: Have not been recruited yet? Okay!

The Chairperson: Thank you. We now move to next Sub-Head 2-107: Pay Research Bureau. Page 61, half of it. No question? No one. So, we move to 2-108.

(Interruptions)

To pane gagn ogmantation twa? But you could put a question. 2-108. It was an opportunity for you to do that.

The Prime Minister: If you make a request, PRB will consider!

The Chairperson: Do it! 2-108: Civil Status Division, page 61, lower half Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*. May we have the details about the advisers?

The Prime Minister: This is provision to meet the payment of an all-inclusive allowance to Mr Jean Patrick Josephine, the System Technician for a period of eight months and the decrease in provision is due to non-renewal of contract of 4 service providers as 20 vacant posts of Civil Status Officer have been filled.

The Chairperson: Let me just remind you that this Sub-Head goes from page 61 to 62. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 31132.102 - *Revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Card System*, for which a project value of Rs388 m. have been presented. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is the status on this project, meaning has it begun and who is the contractor implementing this project?

The Prime Minister: The contract has been awarded to Thales HMT Consortium at a price of USD8,178,165.53 inclusive of VAT, approximately Rs375 m. at a rate of Rs45 per dollar. The contract signature 15 February 2023, the terms of payment as per contract are as follows –

- (a) 20% of contract value has been paid on signature of the contract, that is, on 15 February 2023;
- (b) 50% of contract value to be paid after delivery and installation user acceptance testing of the system, the mobile ID solution, the portal, the storage of digital certificates on the card and the software development kits;
- (c) 25% of the contract value will be paid after successful completion of operational acceptance testing, the delivery of 200,000 free personalized blank cards and the settlement of any pending issue, and
- (d) 5% of the contract value one year after operational acceptance of the MNIC and mobile ID solution in the main contract.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 31132.102 – *Intangible Fixed Asset, Revamping of the Mauritius National Identity Card System*, can

the hon. Prime Minister inform the House when was the current MNIC Project introduced in Mauritius and whether the hon. Prime Minister can inform the House as to why there is a need now to replace the current MNIC Project? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The existing MNIC Scheme was installed at a cost of approximately Rs1.1 billion in 2013 under a Government to Government Agreement between the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of Mauritius by a consortium comprising the Singapore Corporation Enterprise, Nippon Electric Company and CrimsonLogic Private Ltd. The scheme is composed of Central Population Database, Certificate Authority, MNIC System and shared infrastructure. So, regarding why we now have a new contract is because the old one has run its time and we cannot continue because of a number of reasons and one of them being that those cards are not available for us to renew.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Now we move to the last Sub-Head under this section, it is 2-109 – Citizen Support Unit, page 62 and 63. Hon. Mrs Mayotte now you can have your question!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can we know the number of tickets received by the Citizen Support Unit and the number of tickets resolved thereof.

The Chairperson: Under which item?

Mrs Mayotte: Item Sub-Head 2-109 – Citizen Support Unit. Thank you.

The Prime Minister: For the period July 2022 to May 2023, the Citizen Support Unit has received a total of 37,301 tickets out of which 25,735 have been resolved.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same Item, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister why we have a new budget for this sub item?

The Prime Minister: May be we should explain that the CSU is being reorganised under the Prime Minister's Office so that it becomes full-fledge to pursue its objectives such as engagement with the citizens on a frequent basis and enabling the citizens to register their complaints via an online platform. Accordingly, the Citizens Advice Bureau which was under the purview of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development will fall under the responsibility of the Citizen Support Unit under the Prime Minister's Office.

In November 2022, Government agreed to the Citizens Advice Bureau Organiser Cadre being absorbed into the Citizen Support Officer Cadre within the Citizen Support Unit. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger! Page 62.

Ms J. Bérenger: Page 63, Sub-Head, 2-109.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo, you have a question on page 62?

Mr Dhunoo: Page 63.

The Chairperson: So, let's listen to hon. Ms J. Bérenger first and then we come to you.

Ms J. Bérenger: Can I have the details for the Item 22120 – Fees? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for training of staff on civil status matters.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Page 63, Item 31132.801 – *Acquisition of Software*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister the details of the upgrade of the CSU Portal?

The Prime Minister: Provision required to meet the cost for the upgrading of the Citizen Support Portal, the Portal was launched in April 2017 as with any software to keep it up and running. There is a felt need to upgrade the Citizen Support Portal. The upgrade will consist of new CSU platform, CSU 2.0, acquisition of hardware and software, migration of data, existing functionalities and new functionalities; the estimated cost of Rs30 m. with payment spanning over three years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 31112.401 – *Upgrading of Office Buildings - CAB Office*, can we have more details about the upgrading of which offices as well?

The Prime Minister: This is provision required for the renovation works at the CAB Offices of –

- (a) Chemin Grenier where tiling works, upgrading of toilets, replacement of metal and opening doors at the cost of Rs1,112,000;
- (b) Lallmatie CAB Office, upgrading of electrical installation – Rs900,000;

- (c) Bambous and Goodlands CAB Offices, installation of CCTV Cameras – Rs100,000;
- (d) All 35 CAB offices, adequate items for First Aid boxes – Rs145,000;
- (e) 30 CAB offices, installation of Intruder Alarm System – Rs2,743,000.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. The time is over for this Vote Item.

Vote 2-1 Prime Minister's Office (Rs1,570,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.32 p.m.)

Vote 2-2 External Communications was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for this and we move to page 73. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Under Item 22030 – *Rent*, there is an amount of Rs4.1 m. which has been budgeted. May we have the details of this figure?

The Prime Minister: So, provision is made for the payment of rent in respect of office space of the first floor of Newton Tower, accommodating the External Communications Division. The office is rented since 01 March 2011. The present lease agreement has been renewed for a further period of 3 years from 01 March 2023 to 28 February 2026 under the same terms and conditions. The lessor is Belem Ltd and the owners are Mr Teck Yan Chan Sui Ko and Mr Michael Chung Kai Shing at the rate of Rs286,350 inclusive of VAT monthly and then we have also rental of the parking slots. There are 4 parking slots for staff and visitors. Again the same lessor Belhem Ltd at the rate of Rs14,950 inclusive of VAT monthly.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Any question? No question!

Vote 2-2 External Communication (Rs 21,700,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.34 p.m.)

Vote 2-3 Civil Aviation was called.

The Chairperson: We have 10 minutes for this item and it starts from page 75 up to page 78.

Page 75, any question? Hon Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On Item 22120.007 – *Fees for Training*, can we have more details from the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for training of technical engineering and operational personnel of the Department, both locally and overseas as follows -

- Airworthiness – Rs2,050,000
- Communication and Navigation System – Rs1,010,000
- Air Traffic Management – Rs6,065,500
- Licensing – Rs225,000
- Aerodrome – Rs225,000
- Civil Aviation Security Unit – Rs345,000
- Permit Office – Rs16,000
- General Service – Rs63,500

The increase in provision is to cater for training of 4 additional training Air Traffic Control Officers to be recruited and 3 newly appointed Airworthiness Engineers. We also have inspection and audit fees but that is another Item.

The Chairperson: Thank you hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, under Item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, if the hon. Prime Minister has the information, I would to know the number of inspection carried out by Officers of the Civil Aviation Department and the number of Airworthiness certificates issued by that Department.

The Prime Minister: Well, if I can get this information from my staff. We can move to another question while I get it.

The Chairperson: Can we take another question in the meanwhile?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Item 22120.020 – *Inspection and Audit Fees*, can we have a breakdown?

The Prime Minister: Which item you said?

Mr Juman: Audit fees.

The Prime Minister: No, which item?

Mr Juman: Item 22120.020, page 76.

The Chairperson: No! No! We are not there. We are still on page 75.

Mr Juman: Page 75, Item 22120.020 – *Inspection and Audit Fees*.

The Prime Minister: So, there is a requirement for the Department of Civil Aviation to conduct safety over site of its operations as well as its air traffic services. The provision is made for payment in relation to contracted services of resident inspectors in the fields of Airworthiness, flight operations and Air Navigation Services due to scarcity of personnel in these areas.

Provision is also made for payment of *per diem* during overseas inspections and audits. The following three contracts are awarded after procurement procedures.

1. Bureau Veritas Airworthiness, 240,000 Euros.

The contract has expired in December 2022 and new tender exercise is in progress. In the meantime, engineers at the DCA are providing coverage.

2. Organisme pour la Sécurité de l'Aviation Civile for flight operations, 330,000 Euros.

The contract is valid until November 2023. The resident Flight Operations Inspector is Captain Tony.

3. The Bureau Veritas for air navigation services, 362,250 euros annually.

The contract is valid until April 2025. The resident Flight Operations Inspector is Mr R. Sanchez.

So, total amount for 3 contracts is 932,250 euros. I see here that *per diem* also is paid to officers travelling abroad, to conduct audits and inspections as well as safety oversight of facilities overseas in respect of Air Operators Certificate delivered under the Mauritian register and also for airworthiness audit of aircraft registered in Mauritius and operating abroad.

Can I answer the previous question also?

The Chairperson: Yes, please.

The Prime Minister: So, number of inspection for airworthiness performed – 49, new aircraft registered – 5 Aircrafts and 1 Helicopter

The Chairperson: Hon. Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre Marie: Yes Mr Chairperson. Thank you. Item 22060.002 – *Other Structures*. There is an increase in the sum earmarked from Rs 66 m. to Rs 70 m., could we know what these structures are, please?

The Prime Minister: So, the increase in provision is cater for increase in exchange rates and new contract for maintenance in respect of high frequency communication equipment.

The Chairperson: You are done?

The Prime Minsiter: Yes.

The Chairperson: So we now move to. Hon. Bhagwan, you have a question on page 75?

Mr Bhagwan: No.

The Chairperson: No, so we move to page 76. Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 76, Capital Expenditure Item 31122.999 – *Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment (a)High Frequency Communication Equipment*, the project value Rs173 m., will the Prime Minister inform the House as to whether this High Frequency Communication Equipment is functional and to whom the contract was awarded?

The Prime Minister: So this equipment is used to provide High Frequency Communication Service within the flight information region of Mauritius. The existing equipment had already completed its economic life since 2020 and was reported as obsolete. The contract was awarded to INEHO of France at the quoted price of Rs141.8 m. in October 2021 for the replacement of this equipment. The project has been completed in February 2023. The remaining balance to be paid by end of June 2023 is Rs39 m. and provision is made for payment of 10% retention money to the tune of Rs12.42 m. in February 2024.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Under the same item Capital Expenditure, Item 31122.999 – *Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment (c) Solar Panel for VSAT Station of Agalega and (d) Upgrading of the VSAT Station at Agalega & St Brandon*. May we know who are the suppliers of those VSAT stations, the equipment, are they locals or are they foreigners?

The Prime Minister: Solar panel for VSAT Station at Agalega – the solar panel of the very small aperture terminal station of Agalega installed around year 2000 has reached the end of its useful lifetime. The contract to replace the existing solar power system was awarded to Rey & Lenferna in December 2022. The installation works started in May

2023 and are expected to be completed around mid-June 2023. The delay in installation is due to non-availability of ship to transport the equipment. 50% of the contract price will be paid upon delivery of the equipment on site at Agalega in this financial year.

With regard to the upgrading works for VSAT Station at Agalega and St Brandon, the Department of Civil Aviation operates a very small aperture terminal, very high frequency communication equipment in Agalega and St Brandon Islands for the provision of air navigation services. The security perimeter fences of these stations are corroded and need to be replaced. Minor civil works such as waterproofing and painting are also required. Tenders launched on three occasions in March and July 2022 and March 2023, respectively, have been unsuccessful. In order to address the issue of non-responsiveness, bids will be launched through restricted bidding exercise. Therefore, the provision of Rs2 m. is made for the year 2023-2024 and Rs3 m. for year 2024-2025.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Item 31112.001 – *Construction of Office Buildings – Permit Office* to the project value of Rs31 m. May we know whether this project has already started and which stage of completion has it reached?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for demolition of the existing Permit Office and construction of a new building to accommodate some 40 officers on shift.

Following a survey of the existing building by Pixel Creation Ltd., the Consultant appointed in December 2018. It was recommended that the building be pulled down and a new one be constructed. Tender for the construction of a two-storey building was launched on 11 August 2021, however, bids received were above the threshold of Rs25 m. The contract of the Consultant was terminated and tender will be re-launched and the Department of the Civil Aviation is accordingly liaising with the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development.

The project value has been revised to Rs31 m. and funds of Rs4 m. are being provided for the appointment of a Consultant. The project is expected to be completed in December 2025.

Vote 2-3 Civil Aviation (Rs364,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.47 p.m.)

Vote 2-4 Government Printing was called.

The Chairperson: It starts at page 79 and goes up to page 82 and we have 5 minutes for this item. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Page 79, Item 22100.001 – *Paper and Materials*. There is an increase of Rs10 m. Can we have some details about this increase of Rs10 m.?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to rise in price of paper and partly re-equilibrates the stock level of papers given that the Department had to reduce its annual procurement of paper by approximately 40% during year 2022-2023.

The Chairperson: Are you done hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 79 under Item 22060 – *Maintenance*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details of the increase?

The Prime Minister: Provision for minor repairs and works such as plumbing and electrical works and any consolidation works that may be deemed necessary.

We also have for plant and equipment. It is a long list; I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Item 22050 – *Office Expenses*, can the hon. Prime Minister give more details?

The Prime Minister: There is provision for postage and franking of letters and parcels locally and abroad. There is also provision for the purchase of petty items. The increase is due to the increase in price of goods and services.

The Chairperson: Page 80. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112.001 – *Construction of New Building*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the building has now been completed and what was the total amount paid for the construction? The original budgeted amount was Rs535 m.

The Prime Minister: The contractor is HYVEC Partners Ltd. The contract agreement was signed on 23 August 2019 and the completion date is August 2021 except for snag and variation works. The project value as at 2022-2023 is Rs521,900,000. The total actual expenditure project from 2019 to 30 June 2023: Rs513,958,050. The projected expenditure for 2023-2024 is Rs21,130,551. The breakdown is as follows –

- (i) to HYVEC Ltd., the contractor, retention money of Rs10,870,551;
- (ii) additional fund based on projected final cost: Rs7,260,000;
- (iii) post-contract variation work: Rs2 m. to the contractor.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell, do you still have a question?

Dr. Boolell: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson.

On Capital Expenditure, Item *31122.813 – Acquisition of Printing Equipment*, a sum of Rs8m. was earmarked in last year's budget. Can the Prime Minister apprise us as to whether the acquisition has already been made and which firm has supplied the equipment?

The Prime Minister: Acquisition of printing equipment, I need to get the information because I do not have the details here. The amount allocated to printing equipment under the 2022-2023 budget is Rs8 m. The amount has been used as follows –

- (i) Acquisition of one heavy duty industrial paper cutting machine for Rs4,590,000 excluding VAT, and
- (ii) Acquisition of one heavy duty industrial colour digital press, Rs1,876,000 excluding VAT has been delivered and payment is under process.

The Chairperson: Hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item *31132.801 – Acquisition of Software*, can we have details about which software we are referring to?

The Prime Minister: It is re-initiating the project of digitalisation of the Government Printing Department in two phases –

- (a) First phase: the project will focus mainly on the computerisation of the printing processors of Government Printing Department. From receiving the works orders online to delivery of jobs, all the tasks will flow seamlessly across the various units involved, and
- (b) Phase 2 will centre mainly on the computerisation of the Government Gazettes. A platform will be made available to subscribers to apply and pay their subscription online and they will also access an online library for recent Gazettes published by Government Printing Department.

So, a budget of Rs19 m. is being requested for the project and it will be spanned over three financial years.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. The time is over.

Vote 2-4 Government Printing (Rs202,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.56 p.m.)

Vote 2-5 Police Service was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, once again, we are going to take this Item by sub-head. We start by Sub-Head 2-501: General and start at page 86. So, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I take it under the Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*. During the budgetary debates, the hon. Prime Minister in his speech, announced the recruitment of 1,000 new police officers but when I turn to page 96, I see that currently there are 15,771 posts and what is provided for next year is 15,945. There is only an increase of 174 posts. So, I wanted to have clarification whether there is going to be 1,000 or only 174 new police officers.

The Prime Minister: No, there is going to be 1,000. The process will be on to recruit 1,000. The budget is for funded vacancies. So vacancies have been reported to the DFSC. The post was advertised, yes it is going to be for 1,000.

The Chairperson: Hon. Navarre-Marie, your question is on page 86?

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, page 86, Item 21110 - *Personal Emoluments*. Could we know the amount paid to police officers who have been suspended as a result of allegations of police brutality?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will get the information.

The Chairperson: We take another one in meantime if you permit. So, we move to page 87. Hon. Bhagwan.

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you. *Je peux prendre deux items ? C'est ensemble ça.*

The Chairperson: No, hon. Bhagwan, one at a time, please.

Mr Bhagwan: Item 22900.001 – Uniforms?

The Chairperson: As you wish but only one.

Mr Bhagwan: We are being asked to vote Rs85 m. Can the Prime Minister inform the House whether we are being asked to vote for the replacement of these awful tracksuit uniforms of our brothers, the police officers? This is very bad. The Rs85 m. are for new uniforms or for new recruits?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the payment of Uniform Allowance to office attendants, staff of the procurement cadre and supply of uniforms to police officers. The increase is due to provisions made for the intake of new recruits.

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22120 – *Fees*, page 87, may we get a breakdown as to the fees, detailed information and out of which, how much are being catered for legal fees and who are the legal advisors?

The Prime Minister: No, provision is made for the payment of fees to chairpersons, members of the Departmental Bid and Bid Evaluation Committees. Also to meet the cost in connection with training of staff locally and abroad and provision made for the payment of fees to the Mauritius Standards Bureau for verifications and tests carried out on samples of goods during procurement exercise.

No, this is not about legal fees. Legal fees must be under another Item.

The Chairperson: I have got a long list for page 87 but page 88, we do not have any question. So, if you do not mind we are to do 87. Let us finish with 87 first.

So, this time I am going to take hon. Luchmun Roy, page 87.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030.001 – *Rental of Building*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide the list of buildings being rented and their monthly fees as well? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: So –

- (i) Police Executive Services at St Georges Street, Port Louis, at the rate of Rs650,276.99 per month. The owner is Halkae Quadria Ishaat-I-Islam;
- (ii) The Passport and Immigration Office at Sterling House, Port Louis, at the rate of Rs1,326,565.50 per month. The owner is Mascareignes Sterling Co Ltd;
- (iii) Service charges for PIO at Sterling House, Port Louis at the rate of Rs144,532 per month. The owner is Syndicat des Co-proprétaires de Sterling House, and
- (iv) The Safe City project Cybertower 1 Ebène, Rs807,087 per month. The owner is Cyber Properties Investment Ltd.

That is it.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. We take a last question under this Sub-Head. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. Item 22900.973 – *Expenses i.c.w Safe City Project* for which we are being requested to vote a sum of Rs900 m. this year. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether when this payment is being effected, deductions are being made for downtime because many a times, most of the Safe City cameras are in breakdown mode. And if that is the case, can I have the amount that was deducted last year for breakdown time of the Safe City cameras, payable to Huawei?

The Prime Minister: For this I need notice because we have the information. I can provide the information later on.

The Chairperson: We move to the next Sub-Head 2-502: Crime Control and Investigation. It starts from the lower part of page 88 and full of 89. Page 88, anyone? No one. Okay, page 89?

Hon. Lobine, if you have a genuine question this time.

Mr Lobine: Yes. Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 89, under Capital Expenditure, Item 31112.012 – *Construction of Police Stations (g) Phoenix Police Station*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister, when this project will start? Whether same will start during this financial year?

The Prime Minister: The design is being reviewed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ittoo.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22070 – *Cleaning Services*, there is an increase. Can we know the reason for this increase from the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: But, in the meantime, I have more information about Phoenix. In fact, design is being finalised, so, construction is expected to start by January 2024 and completion is expected by December 2024. Just in time maybe before elections.

For Cleaning Services, the provision is made for cleaning of office premises –

- (i) Keep Clean Ltd. at DHQ, Vacoas for Rs50,025;
- (ii) Terminix Pest Control at DHQ for Rs8,500, and Trou aux Biches Police Station for Rs10,200;
- (iii) Mauriclean Ltd. at Flacq DHQ for Rs48,127.50 and at Curepipe DHQ at Rs50,715, and

- (iv) Alpha Facilities Group Ltd. for Rodrigues Police Station and premises at Rs67,171.50.

The increase in provision is due to the revision in the rate by private service provider.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Wochit.

Mr Wochit: Item 31112.012 – *Construction of Police Stations (h) Triolet Police Station*, last year also, it was mentioned but only on consultant fees.

The Prime Minister: For Triolet, it is still at planning stage. Yes, we are still planning.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 89, Item 31112.012 – *Construction of Police Stations (f) Cité La Cure/ Vallée des Prêtres Police Station*. I, myself, have raised this matter several times through PQs. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, where the matter stands in relation to a Police Station for Vallée des Prêtres and Cité La Cure?

The Prime Minister: I am informed here that construction is in progress. The construction started on 03 February 2023 and completion is expected by November 2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 31112.801 – *Acquisition of Buildings – Vallée Pitot Police Station*, can we have more details with regard to this one?

The Prime Minister: Procedures have been initiated to acquire a plot of land and building through the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Sir. In respect of Item 22060.004 – *Vehicles and Motorcycles*, with an estimate earmarked of a sum of 59 million. I know there is a sizeable fleet of vehicles and motorcycles; if we could be apprised as to who are the dealers and where the maintenance is made?

The Prime Minister: This is a provision to meet the costs of servicing and spare parts for 606 vehicles. The Police has contracts with 14 companies for maintenance, servicing and repairs for a period of two years.

As for major repairs resulting from breakdown or accident, quotations are sought from their local agents before such repairs are undertaken. The list of agents for repairs and maintenance are –

- (i) ABC Motors Ltd;
- (ii) Axess Ltd;
- (iii) E.A.L. Man Hin & Sons Ltd;
- (iv) CFAO Motors Company Ltd;
- (v) Emcar Ltd;
- (vi) J. Kalachand & Co Ltd;
- (vii) Toyota (Mauritius) Ltd;
- (viii) United Motors Limited;
- (ix) Xin Motors Ltd;
- (x) Bamris Motors Company Ltd;
- (xi) Allied Motors;
- (xii) Scomat Ltd;
- (xiii) Autonexx (Raouf Dusmohamud), and
- (xiv) Leal & Co. Ltd.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Now, let us move to the next Sub-Head, which is 2-503: Road and Public Safety. It is on page 90. Hon. Osman Mahomed.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Page 90, Item 31122.833 – *Acquisition of Noise Camera* for Rs20 m. this year. May we have more details about this equipment's installation?

The Prime Minister: This is the provision that has been made for the purchase of the camera with noise detection. It is not yet...

Mr Osman Mahomed: What does the noise camera do?

The Prime Minister: It is as an innovative approach to fight traffic noise pollution and environmental pollution; the level of the noise.

The Chairperson: Hon. David.

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item *31113.043 – Driving License and Test Centre*, I can see that during the last financial year, there were 4 million and now 5 million for the new financial year. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister at what stage is that project at the moment?

The Prime Minister: At Argy, Flacq, it is partly operational: construction of waiting area, upgrading of building and electrical works. And there is construction of a waiting area at Driving Test Centre Line Barracks.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item *31132.401 – e-Government Projects (a) Implementation of e-Business Plan for Traffic Branch*, can we have more details from the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: So, this provision is made for the implementation of a new audio visual testing system. The estimated cost is Rs4.2 m. and tender documents are being finalised.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Item numéro *21110 – Personal Emoluments*, je ne suis pas sûre si je peux prendre sa sous cet item parce que je voulais le prendre sous *Gender Mainstreaming* mais je n'ai pas eu l'occasion. Je constate que seulement 12 % de la force policière sont des femmes. Est-ce que le recrutement de plus de femmes, de policière est envisagé ?

The Prime Minister: This is...

The Chairperson: I don't think this question is valid, hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha, just bear with me that we are running short of time. So don't waste time with questions which are not admissible. Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item *31132.401 – e-Government Projects (b) Digitalisation of Fixed Penalty Notice*, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister more details about the digitalisation of the Fixed Penalty Notice?

The Prime Minister: This is a new item. The digitalisation of fixed penalty notice, online payment of fixed penalty – a provision made for partial payment of the project. It's a new item.

The Chairperson: Okay, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 90, item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, Rs25 m. May we know exactly what is this allowance?

The Prime Minister: So, provision is made for payment of the following allowances: acting; public holiday; rent; risk; trade; pay for officers performing minor repairs; technician pay; responsibility, and night duty. The increase in provision is due to higher rate of allowances payable with the payment of increment and compensation 2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 31132.401 – *e-Government Projects (b) Digitalisation of Fixed Penalty Notice*. This seems to be a new item.

(Interruptions)

Already canvassed?

An hon. Member: *Non, deuxième la pane canvas!*

Ms J. Bérenger: The first one was canvassed but I am not sure that the second one was canvassed for the digitalisation...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: What is the question? Let the Chairperson decide.

Ms J. Bérenger: E-Government Projects but the second one, digitalisation of Fixed Penalty Notice. Can we have more details because this is a new item?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have just answered about this. It's a new item and the provision is for partial payment of the project.

An hon. Member: *Pa radio plus sa!*

An hon. Member: *Ecoute to pou tande!*

Ms J. Bérenger: *Aret koze ta!*

The Chairperson: Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. A l'item 22060.005 – *IT Equipment*, can the hon. Prime Minister give reasons as to the increase in provision for IT maintenance?

The Prime Minister: Yes, this is for maintenance of IT equipment, both hardware and software and the increase in provision is due to payment of maintenance agreement for SHDSL Lines.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Let's move to the next Sub-Head 2-504: Support to Community and its upper part of page 91. No question? We move to next Sub-Head 2-505: Combating Drugs. It's on page 91-92. Page 91, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Chairperson, page 91, item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, Rs253,065,000. Can we know from the Prime Minister, whether these personal emoluments funds which have been allocated for the creation of a new striking team, how much and how many for ADSU?

So, this is personal emoluments for new and also existing officers, can we know whether they have been increased for the ADSU personnel and also the new striking team mentioned by the Prime Minister, how many units and how many officers?

The Prime Minister: What I have here is the increase in provision is due to payment of compensation, increments, refund of cash in lieu of unutilised sick leave and also the increase for basic salary. Provision is made for payment of basic salary for 449 funded posts. The increase is due to provision made for payment of annual increment. Now, this is the details what I have.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Under item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, we know that there is an increase in the provision from Rs8.1 m. to Rs18.1 m. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide details thereon?

The Chairperson: Which page you are talking?

The Prime Minister: You have moved to the next page.

Mr Dhunoo: The same sub-head.

The Chairperson: Which page?

Mr Dhunoo: Page 92.

The Chairperson: No, we are still on 91.

Mr Dhunoo: Same vote item.

The Chairperson: No. Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister the amount disbursed as reward money to officers?

The Prime Minister: This is provision made for payment of the following allowances –

- Acting;
- Clothing;
- Public Holiday;
- Rent;
- Risk;
- Responsibility;
- Drivers, and
- Night Duty.

The increase in provision is due to the higher rate of allowances payable after the payment of increment and compensation 2023.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on page 91, I will take it under allowances, hon. Prime Minister I can't see any provision that has been made for reward money paid by police for drug combatting because usually there is an amount that is budgeted but I can't see it in the classification?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but I will answer questions with regard to each item that is budgeted here. So, you must ask your question. If you ask me where is this item? I have to go through all the different items and find out myself. So, you put all your questions under any item you wish. This I have answered this allowances...

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea, I think the hon. Prime Minister is right. You must put your questions based on the items that figure on this, okay. So, you are asking questions which doesn't figure so the hon. Prime Minister can't answer. So, let's not waste time and move to page 92 and I will ask hon. Dhunoo to please put his question!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, we know that there is an increase in the provision from Rs8.1 m. to Rs18.1. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide details thereon?

The Prime Minister: So, it is the provision made for medals, prizes, rewards, hospitality and ceremonies and miscellaneous expenses and this is where, here you see, hon. Ameer Meea, this is where it is.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 31122.999 - *Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment*, can we know what those equipment are?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is provision made for the acquisition of air conditioners, safe and electronic scales, bolt cutters and other equipment. These are the main ones.

The Chairperson: Time is over for this Sub Head. Now we move to the next one. Sub-Head 2-506 – Defence and Emergency Rescue, page 92. Let us listen to hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 22060.004 – *Maintenance of Vehicles and Motorcycles*, may we have a list of service providers and how much they are paid?

The Prime Minister: This is provision to meet the cost of servicing and spare parts for 188 vehicles. It is the same list that I mentioned before but I will circulate it so that in case there is another one.

The Chairperson: Let me remind hon. Members that even if it concerns the same Sub-Head, we are taking it page by page. On page 92, hon. David!

Mr David: *Merci.* Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, donc, entre l'année financière actuelle et à venir, je vois une augmentation de R 10 million avec R 51.8 million à venir, puis-je avoir des détails sur cet item ?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision is due to the procurement of ammunition and pyrotechnic centralised in 020506.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, last year a sum of Rs93 m. was voted and this year, we are asked to vote a sum of Rs95 m. Could we have a breakdown on this item, please?

The Prime Minister: I have answered. This increase is due to the higher rate of allowances payable with the payment of increment and compensation 2023.

The Chairperson: Okay, now let us move the page 93, the upper part. Hon. Léopold, let us listen to you now.

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, it is Item 31113.023 – *Construction of Training Grounds/Structures (b) Miniature Range at Rodrigues Complex*, I just want to know the status of this project.

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the construction of the Miniature Range Firing; I will need to get this information.

The Chairperson: Let us take another question in the meantime. Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Item 31111.401 – *Upgrading of Quarters & Barracks*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister about the increase in provision for upgrading of barracks and quarters from Rs2 m. to R8.5 m.? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for re-roofing and renovation works of barracks and re-roofing and renovation works of police quarters. I can circulate if you want the details. For the re-roofing and renovation of SMF Barracks, they are made of wooden structure as well as concrete. They leak when it rains which results in damage of furniture representing electrical hazards and health safety issues. For the SMF Headquarters, total number of quarters is 133 which are concerned.

The Chairperson: Thank you!

The Prime Minister: With regard to Rodrigues, the Miniature Range, the status of the project is a tender stage.

The Chairperson: Thank you! Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Thank you, Item 31112.036 – *Construction of SMF Buildings*, at Vacoas, can we know the status of this project and the total cost, please?

The Prime Minister: It is completed, the retention money released. The total cost I can find out and circulate.

Mr Juman: Item 31122.805 – *Acquisition of Security Equipment*, can the hon. Prime Minister give us a list of equipment procured?

The Prime Minister: We don't normally provide information on security equipment.

The Chairperson: I agree with you. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31113.023 – *Construction of Training Grounds/Structures (a) Gallery Range – Midlands*, can we have more details from the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: This is the provision made for the construction of the Close Quarter Battle Range Training Ground far from residential area; same to be located near the Gallery Range at Midlands. The status, the design is in progress.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Now let us move to Sub-Head 2-507 – Public Order Policing. It starts at page 93, the second half and it goes up to page 94, the upper part. Page 93, anyone? Go ahead!

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 22900 – *Other Goods and Services*, there is a substantial increase in the amount allocated for other goods and services. Can we know the reason and have more details, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for sports equipment, medals, prizes and rewards, hospitality and ceremonies, clothing and bedding and miscellaneous expenses. Increase in provision is due to procurement of uniforms for SSU and for replacement of clothing and bedding that were destroyed in the fire outbreak at the Barracks in July 2022.

The Chairperson: Thank you, any other questions on page 93? No, we move to page 94, upper part only. Hon. Ittoo!

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112.442 – *Non-Residential Buildings, Upgrading of Building*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information regarding the allocation of Rs10 m. for upgrading of building, thank you?

The Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, I just said this is the provision made for the restoration of SSU building which was damaged during a fire outbreak at the Line Barracks in July 2022.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We move to the next Sub-Head 2-508: Coastal and Maritime Surveillance, Search and Rescue which starts at page 94 and goes up to 95. Now you can put your question, Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of the Item 31121.803 – *Acquisition of...*

The Chairperson: Hon. Boolell! No we are page by page.

Dr. Boolell: No but I...

The Chairperson: ...the subhead page 94.

Dr. Boolell: Okay, then I will come back.

The Chairperson: You will get your turn. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22060 – *Maintenance of which – Plant and Equipment and Helicopters, Ships and Aircrafts*. May we know if those...

The Chairperson: Hon Lobine! Either it's helicopters or ships or aircrafts.

Mr Lobine: Okay, we take ships.

The Chairperson: Either you take the air or the sea. Don't take both.

Mr Lobine: No you are giving me a choice. I choose Ships. I choose vessels ships. So, may we have more details with regards to the maintenance, whether it is done in-house or whether you have got external suppliers to do the in-house maintenance of the ships or whether it goes abroad?

The Prime Minister: So, provision is made for spares and maintenance of the maintenance of the main engines, diesel alternators and refit dry docking of CGS Valient, CGS Victory, dry docking of CGS Guardian, maintenance of CGS Observor and dry docking and underwater hull maintenance of 10 fast interceptor boats.

Increase in provision is due to higher cost of labor and spares for ships but I don't have the details whether they are being done here or abroad. I can provide the answer.

The Chairperson: You can provide the details later on.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Okay. So, let's....

The Prime Minister: No. Sorry. Maintenance is being done in India.

The Chairperson: Okay. That's your reply.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes. Page 94, Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*. A massive sum of Rs73.5 m. is being budgeted and paid every year. May we have the details and breakdown and also to whom this extra assistance is being paid to?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of extra assistance to 16 Indian Expatriates, that is, 2 Commandants, 2 Deputy Commanders, 8 *Lieutenant* Commanders, 2 Wing Commanders, 1 Group Captain and 1 Captain on deputation to serve in the Mauritius Police Force.

The Chairperson: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Item 22060.008 – *Maintenance of Ships*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister details of the service provided?

The Prime Minister: Well I have said in India, but once I get the information about which shipyard, I will circulate it.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Recurrent Expenditures, Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*. Can we have a breakdown detail of the allowances paid to whom and what are we referring to as allowances? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: So, the provision is made for payment of the following allowances – acting, public holiday, rent, risk, trade pay, technician pay, disturbance and drivers and night duty and the increase is due to higher rate of allowances after the payment of increment and compensation 2023.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We now move to page 95. Hon. Dr. Boolell has been patient.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Now under Capital Expenditure, Item 31121.803 – *Acquisition of Patrol Vessels*, the project value as spelt out. Now, can I ask the Prime Minister whether order has already been placed and whether the acquisition of patrol vessels will be brand new patrol vessels? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: So, there is one. The contract for the high speed boat, contract has already been awarded. 2 speed boats delivered in April 2023 and payment will be released in June 2023. The provision is made for 4 additional speed boats and same will be delivered in May 2024. The second is the Offshore Patrol Vessel. Provision is made for the acquisition of an offshore patrol vessel pre-qualification exercise is in progress. Provision of 10% has been made for payment on signing of contract.

Dr. Boolell: Brand new?

The Prime Minister: Yes, brand new.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31121.805 – *Acquisition of Tug*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information on the acquisition?

The Prime Minister: This provision is made for the acquisition of 2 tugs for Agaléga. I think I did mention that because we are going to buy 1 tug second hand which is actually being used and we are going to procure a new tug because we need 2 tugs in order to be able to man the MV Trochetia for Agalega.

The Chairperson: Thank you hon. Prime Minister. We now move to page 96 and let's listen to the Chief Whip.

Ms Ramyad: Page 96, Human Resources, line 17. We see *Woman Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police* where 22/23, there was no funded post but for

2023/2024, there are 5 funded posts. May we know from the Prime Minister if it is a promotional post and if yes, from which pool of Officers, that is, which post where the promotion be effected?

The Prime Minister: Which line?

Ms Ramyad: Line 17 - *Woman Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police.*

The Prime Minister: So, the provisions have been made for 5 posts of Woman Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Police to accommodate 5 Cadet Officers, females who are qualified for this post.

The Chairperson: The time is over for this vote item.

Vote 2-5 Police Service (Rs 11,800,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(8.41 p.m.)

Vote 2-6 Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity was called.

The Chairperson: We have got 10 minutes for this Item. Let's start with hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 101, Recurrent Expenditure under Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultants*, can we have more details with regards to this Item please?

The Prime Minister: 22120.008 – This is fees to Chairperson and Members of Boards and Committees. The provision is made for payment for the Chairpersons, Members and Secretaries of the Departmental Bid Committee and Bid Evaluation Committees. The increase in provision is based on actual trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes thank you. Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultants, (a) Study on local renewable energy (AFD Grant).* Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister more details about this because I am aware of a project, Rodrigues *Ile Verte* whereby AFD is financing another project on renewable energy for Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: So, it is new provision of Rs10.5 m., the study for a green island operating on the basis of local renewable energy for its electricity production and systematically using energy efficiency techniques.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Sous le même item, peut-on savoir qui sont les consultants qui font les études ?

The Prime Minister: I don't have this information. I will get information.

The Chairperson: We take another question in the meantime. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Under Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultants (b) Sustainable and Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues (EU Grant)*, can we have more details on this?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but before that, the consultant is not yet appointed. He is going to be appointed later.

Provision made for the payment of consultancy services for the review and update of the 2009 Sustainable and Integrated Development Plan for Rodrigues.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Let's now move to page 102. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Item 25110.011 – *Special Rodrigues Holiday Package*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the criteria to benefit from this package and how much is granted?

The Prime Minister: Criteria? This is a provision which was introduced on 01 August 2009 as a stimulus package with a view to boosting the tourism sector in Rodrigues and this allows Mauritians to go to Rodrigues as tourists. It is available to anybody who travels because it is a subsidy.

The Chairperson: Hon. Léopold!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900.984 – *Expenses icw National Drug Secretariat*. How will the fund allocated to the National Drug Secretariat for the year 2023-2024 be spent?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for the running expenses of the National Drug Secretariat as follows –

- (i) a national sensitisation campaign against drugs: Rs1 m.;
- (ii) empowering community welfare task force: Rs500,000;
- (iii) capacity building: Rs300,000;
- (iv) formulation of the National Drug Control Master Plan 2024-2028: Rs600,000;

- (v) International Day against Drug Trafficking and Substance Abuse: Rs400,000;
- (vi) National Consultative Forum: Rs400,000;
- (vii) regional conference of substance abuse: Rs1,800,000, and
- (viii) administrative cost: Rs2 m.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Under Item 26311.001 – *Rodrigues Regional Assembly*, why is there an increase in the grant provision?

The Prime Minister: This is provision made for grant to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for its recurrent expenditure. The increase in provision is mainly due to payment of annual increment, cash in lieu of leave, compensation to staff and recruitment of additional staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of Item 26313.024 – *Chagosian Welfare Fund*, if we can have a breakdown as to how this Fund is being managed?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the running expenses of the Chagosian Welfare Fund as follows –

- (i) staff cost for the 9 staff: Rs3,685,000;
- (ii) administrative expenses: Rs2,185,500
- (iii) social and welfare activities: Rs484,500;
- (iv) operating expenses: Rs645,000.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 102, Item 26313.070 – *Outer Islands Development Corporation*, Rs160 m. May I know the components of this figure?

The Prime Minister: This is provision made for grants to OIIC for its recurrent expenditure for both Port Louis and Agalega administration as follows –

- (i) staff cost for 199 staff : Rs82,743,912;
- (ii) administrative expenses: Rs60,428,254;
- (iii) charter of vessel, dock charges : Rs60 m.;

- (iv) less revenue received mainly in connection with sale of provisions and produce from Agalega: Rs43,172,166.

So making a total of Rs160 m. The increase in provision is mainly due to staff cost which includes recruitment of additional staff.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26321.001 – *Rodrigues Regional Assembly*, a provision of a budget of Rs965 m. for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Out of the grant allocated to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, can the hon. Prime Minister state how much is being provided for water development projects in Rodrigues? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: For water development projects, an amount of Rs117 m. has been provided in the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the Financial Year 2023-2024 as follows –

- (i) Rs62.5 m. for the construction and rehabilitation of dams and reservoirs;
- (ii) Rs54.5 m. for water supplies development projects.

The Chairperson: Hon. Léopold!

Mr Léopold: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26311.001 *Rodrigues Regional Assembly*. With regard to the Rodrigues Public Utility Corporation, what amount is being allocated for the recurrent grant of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly?

The Prime Minister: For Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation, I am told that with a view to improving the distribution of water in Rodrigues, Rs50 m. is being provided in the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to cater for the operational fees of the Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Time is over for this item!

Vote 2-6 Rodrigues Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity (Rs5,521,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(8.52 p.m.)

Vote 2-7 Reform Institutions and Rehabilitation was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for this item and it starts at page 104. We have a question from hon. Ms J. Bérenger.

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 22120 – *Fees*, could we have details about those fees, please?

The Prime Minister: Fees to chairperson and members of boards and committees. So, the provision made for payment of fees to chairpersons, members and secretaries of RYC Board of Visitors, District and Central Probation Committees. The increase in provision is based on actual cost of expenditure; it includes also fees for training of staff at Civil Service College Mauritius, fees to Consultants, that is, payment of fees to Psychologists and Therapists on a sessional basis. Provision required also for the payment of fees to chairperson, board members, secretary, finance officer and other sundry expenses. And, fees also for payment to eight community service supervisors at the rate of Rs160 per hour.

The Chairperson: Hon. Yeung Sik Yuen!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22060 – *Maintenance*, can we know why there is an increase?

The Prime Minister: This is also provision made for renovation of offices and to cater for any urgent minor work arising during the year. Provision also for maintenance of generators, water pumps, air conditioners, fax and photocopy machines. Increase in provision is based on actual cost of expenditure. We also have provision made to meet the cost of servicing and spare parts for vehicles and provision required for maintenance and repairs of IT equipment and provisions required for maintenance of the yard. So, the costs are going up because of inflation.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, under Item 22020 - *Fuel and Oil*, there is a huge increase from Rs75 m. to Rs325 m. Can we have details pertaining to this Item?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made to meet the cost of fuel in respect of vehicles attached to the department and the increase in provision is based upon actual trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Item 28211.049 – *Probation Home for Girls*. An amount of Rs3 m. is being earmarked. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many girls are actually interned in those probation homes?

The Prime Minister: Number of residents in the probation home for girls and the probation hostel for boys, so, there are currently three girls and four boys in the probation institutions. This number – I am told – is dynamic as the admission and discharge rests on the Court's orders.

The Chairperson: Thank you, now we move to page 105 and I think hon. Ms Anquetil has got a question.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Item 31111.404 – *Dwellings, Upgrading of Rehabilitation Youth Centres. Est-ce qu'on pourrait avoir des détails sur les travaux entrepris pour l'année écoulée ? Merci.*

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for minor renovation works at RYC. A small home project is kept in abeyance in the light of Children's Act. The provision was earlier made for the construction of the small home within the Rehabilitation Youth Centre (Girls) Building. However, the small home project has been kept in abeyance in view of the low number of inmates at the Rehabilitation Youth Centre following the implementation of the Children's Act.

The Chairperson: A last one, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Item 31111.413 – *Dwellings, Upgrading of Probation Institutions* for a project value of Rs20 m. I see for the four years in front of us, an average sum of Rs2 m. is being earmarked or spent every year. Is this a long term project going for 5-6 years or even 10 years if it is Rs2 m. per year for Rs20 m. Is it like a 10-year project?

The Prime Minister: No, the decrease in provision is due to ongoing survey exercises. As a result then, we will see.

The Chairperson: Thankyou. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger.

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 17, *Assistant Superintendent, Rehabilitation Youth Centre* at page 106, *je vois qu'aucune provision n'est faite pour le poste de Assistant Superintendent, Rehabilitation Youth Centre. Peut-on savoir la raison puisqu'il semblerait qu'il y ait quelqu'un qualifié pour ce poste ?*

The Prime Minister: Filling of the post is being kept in abeyance as there is only one inmate. So, one to one.

The Chairperson: Time is over.

Vote 2-7 Reform Institutions and Rehabilitation (Rs 105,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(9.00 p.m.)

Vote 2-8 Continental Shelf and Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration was called.

The Chairperson: We got five minutes for this Item and we got two pages: 107 and 108. Questions on page 107, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 22130 – *Studies and Surveys*, Rs7 m. earmarked in the Estimates have now been reduced to Rs5 m. for the Estimates 2023-2024. May we be apprised as to the number of surveys carried out, whether these surveys are being carried out in association or with foreign experts?

The Prime Minister: Well, if I give the list of studies, so, some activities carried out under the Item of *Studies and Surveys* are –

- (i) Processing of acquired bathymetry data to produce bathymetry maps of the areas surveyed in the joint management area;
- (ii) Presentation of preliminary results of the Monaco explorations expedition of the joint management area at the Monaco Ocean Week 2023 at the Monaco Oceanographic Museum;
- (iii) Compilation of data and maps for joint management area geo portal and for the marine spatial planning zoning framework;
- (iv) Preparation and pleading to the special Chamber of ITLOS in connection with the dispute concerning the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean;
- (v) Submission for an extended continental shelf to the UN Commission on the limits of the continental shelf for the Chagos Archipelago region;
- (vi) Presentation of the partial submission made by Mauritius in respect of the region of Rodrigues Island;
- (vii) Presentation for a Chagos Marine Protected Area presented at the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Lisbon;
- (viii) Reconnaissance study of the ‘Victoire’ shipwreck at Pointe aux Cannoniers, and

(ix) Elaboration and updating of the Ocean Observatory e-platform.

As you can see, all these will require foreign expertise because we do not have local expertise here.

Dr. Boolell: Have these studies been made public?

The Prime Minister: I do not know if they have been made public.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Ittoo.

Mr Ittoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Capital Expenditure, Item 31122.828 – *Acquisition of Survey Equipment*, provision was made for 4 million in the last financial year as well as in the coming years also, 4 million. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister, what is the equipment that is to be procured by the Department of Continental Shelf? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The provision was made for the procurement of a Real-Time Kinematic GPS survey equipment in Financial Year 2022-2023. However, the exercise was not successful for non-compliance and the exercise is being relaunched.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Tour.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Prime Minister advise on the responsibilities assigned to the Department of Continental Shelf?

The Chairperson: Which item are you talking of?

The Prime Minister: Under Vote 2-8. The Department of Continental Shelf and Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration is responsible for the formulation of policies and administration of the maritime zones and for the establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks governing the sustainable management of the non-living resources in the maritime zones of Mauritius, including hydrocarbons and minerals exploration and development.

The Department contributes primarily to the safeguard of our territorial integrity in carrying out maritime boundary delimitation and ensuring, through the establishment of appropriate legal frameworks, our sovereignty over Mauritius' vast maritime zones.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Vote 2-8 Continental Shelf and Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration (Rs31,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(9.06 p.m.)

Vote 2-9 Forensic Science Laboratory was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for this vote and it starts at page 109 up to page 111. We start with hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Sir. Item 22140 – *Medical Supplies, Drugs and Equipment*, Rs45 m. in the Estimates of 2022-23 and same maintained for this year. Now, can the Prime Minister apprise us as to which pharmaceutical companies supply the drugs and from where we get the required equipment?

The Prime Minister: There is a long list. I can circulate it and you will have a look. Okay? It is too long.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, there is an amount of 1.4 million budgeted for next year. May we know from the hon. Prime Minister to whom this extra assistance will be paid and for what services?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for the payment of salary compensation and bonus to one officer on contract as from 21 February 2023 for a period of 2 years as Director of Forensic Science Laboratory. It is Mrs M. G. Madhub-Dassyne, with the basic salary of Rs119,500.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Dhunoo.

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120.029 – *Fees to Mauritius Standard Bureau*, can we have more details from the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for the payment of fees to Chairpersons, members and secretaries of the Departmental Bid Committee and the Bid Evaluation Committees.

There is also provision made to meet the cost of training of staff. Also, provision is made to meet the cost for maintenance of ISO 17025 accreditation status, so as to comply with all requirements of the accreditation.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you. Item 22060.003 – *Plant and Equipment*, we are asked to vote as last year, a sum of Rs20 m. Could we have a breakdown on this item, please?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made to cater for the cost of maintenance for equipment at the Forensic Science Laboratory. So, there is a long list. I table the list.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha.

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Item 31112.019 – *Construction of the Forensic Science Laboratory*, can we know the status of the construction?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for the payment of consultancy fees and construction works for a dedicated building to house the FSL at La Vigie. The increase in provision is due to the fact that construction works for the new Forensic Science Laboratory will start during Financial Year 2023-2024.

The contract has already been awarded and signed. The Contractor is URC Private Limited and for the contract sum of USD 17,615,702.70. The Consultant is NBCC (India) Limited and the consultancy fee is USD 586,985.

It is going to be built on an extent of 10,146 m² at La Vigie. The plot of land has already been vested in my Ministry by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning. It is a good land – La Vigie.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26210 – *Contribution to International Organisations*, this seems to be a new item. Can we have more details with regard to the International Organisations we are referring to?

The Prime Minister: It is for the International Society for Forensic Genetics, that is, the contribution payment that we have to make.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Vote 2-9 Forensic Science Laboratory (Rs485,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(9.13 p.m.)

Vote 2-10 Prison Service was called.

The Chairperson: So, we got 10 minutes for this item and we start from page 114 to 117. We start with our friend hon. Doolub! Page 114!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030.004 – *Rental of CCTV Cameras*. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide information on the number of CCTV Cameras installed in prisons' premises? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: First of all, this is provision made to cater for the rental of CCTV Cameras and the upgrading of the system with additional 273 cameras to enhance

security but a total of 1,431 CCTV Cameras have already been installed in prison premises and an additional of 24 CCTV Cameras is in the process now of being installed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: It's under this very same item 22030.004 – *Rental of CCTV Cameras*, may we know the name of the supplier who is maintaining this camera and as at today, how many of these cameras are not operational?

The Prime Minister: So, the list of suppliers for installation of the CCTV Cameras are –

1. Brink's (Mauritius) Ltd;
2. Mascareignes Suppliers Ltd;
3. Contractplus Ltd, and
4. Javas Expert Engineering Ltd.

Not operational I am told, as at today, 14.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22060.003 – *Plant and Equipment*, I can see that we have an almost yearly budget of Rs15 m. budgeted for this item. May I from the hon. Prime Minister the type of equipment being maintained and the supplier of this service?

The Prime Minister: So, provision made for maintenance of plant and equipment as follows –

- repairs of machines and equipment in workshops, that is, for bakery, mechanical, poultry, carpentry, shoe making, tailoring, gardening amongst others, and then
- maintenance contracts for CCTV Cameras at Grand River North West Remand Prison, Petit Verger Prison and Open Prison for women.

The cameras have been procured by the Department.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030.007 – *Rental line for Network Services*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister who are the Service Providers?

The Prime Minister: This is provision made for rental of 170 digital portable two-way radios. The monthly rental fee is Rs332,114.25. I need to get the information about which company.

The Chairperson: Can you take another question in the meantime?

The Prime Minister: Yes!

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 114, item 22030.004 – *Rental of CCTV Cameras*, Rs15 m. The hon. Prime Minister gave the figures of 1,431 cameras but more precisely, can I ask the hon. Minister how much of these cameras are not working at Melrose High Security Prison?

The Prime Minister: I gave the figure just now 14 but I cannot say whether the 14 are for Melrose or whichever but I can provide the information.

Now for the earlier question, can I say that the contract for rental of portable two-way radios for period of five years was awarded to ATCOMM with effect from 22 December 2020 with monthly rental charges amounting to Rs332,114.25 for a period of 5 years. The contract includes the rental of the following 170 units of digital handheld mobile radio, digital base stations, relay stations and system application software. The contract was for an initial period of one year renewable on a yearly basis for a period of 4 years upon satisfactory completion of services under the same terms and conditions.

I have the information for the Eastern High Security Prison. So, number of cameras faulty, there is one faulty camera there.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Now we move to page 115 and we start with hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister page 115, item 28219.002 - *Repatriation of Prisoners*, the number and the countries?

The Prime Minister: The number and the countries, I need to get this information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 31112.411...

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have the list.

The Chairperson: Let the hon. Prime Minister finish that.

The Prime Minister: No, but I will have to circulate, it's a long list.

The Chairperson: Okay. Go on hon. Bhagwan!

The Prime Minister: Well, maybe I can give the total: 201 from different nationalities.

Dr. Boolell: How many are going to be repatriated?

The Prime Minister: How many are going to be repatriated?

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell, you don't have the floor now.

The Prime Minister: Let me get the...

The Chairperson: No, it was a question by hon. Dr. Gungapersad. It's not a PQ where you have supplementary questions.

Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 31112.411 – *Upgrading of Prisons (a) Beau Bassin Prison*, Rs11,750,000. Can we have some details whether what type of extension, any contract awarded and also for other prisons, which other prisons are being upgraded?

The Prime Minister: So, provision is made for the upgrading and renovation works as follows –

- the Central Prison, Rs8.75 m.;
- the Trade Section, Rs500,000, and
- the Prison Headquarters, Rs2.5 m.

The increase in provision is due to the project of construction of a watch tower at Beau Bassin Central Prison and for the following 15 foreign detainees, that is, 8 male and 7 females convicted in Mauritius are eligible for transfer to their country of origin. I will circulate the list for the benefit of hon. Dr. Boolell.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 31132.401 – *E-Government Projects: Prison Management System*, can we have more details where matter stands with regard to the e-government project?

The Prime Minister: So, this is provision made for the development of e-prison system phase 3 to cater for the development of new modules for probation office and juvenile offenders. These modules will be integrated with the e-prison system to capture data for those who have failed in Community Service Order and Rehabilitation Youth Centre for boys and girls.

This will enable the Government to have statistics of habitual criminals, that is, the flow of admission from Rehabilitation Youth Centre to Correctional Youth Centre and then to Central Prison. The Phase 1 was completed in September 2014. The Phase 2 was completed in February 2019, so now we are in Phase 3.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31121.801 – *Acquisition of Vehicles*, light armoured personnel carriers, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information as to why no provision is being made in the Financial Year 2023-2024? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: No provision?

The Chairperson: Which Item are you referring to? Can you repeat the Item?

Mrs Mayotte: Item 31121.801 – *Acquisition of Vehicles*,

The Prime Minister: There is provision for the acquisition of vehicles, in fact one van, 2x4 for transport section – Rs1.3 m. and one light truck with cargo box – Rs0.9 m. There is also one tractor for vegetable garden at Richelieu Open Prison Rs0.95 m. and the increase, in fact, in the provision is due to the acquisition of the new vehicles for production of vegetable and transportation of foodstuff for prisoners.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Doolub! The last one!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Same page Item 22900.029 – *Enhanced Earnings for Detainees*, an amount of Rs7.5 m. is earmarked for Enhanced Earnings for Detainees. Can we have more details for this item, please?

The Prime Minister: This provision is made for the payment of earnings to detainees with a view to impart the work culture to develop skills, to generate income, to meet the need of canteen goods and to promote saving habit. The decrease in provision is based on the trend of expenditure for the past few years.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We move to page 116. I think hon. Dr. Boolell has got a question.

Dr. Boolell: Yes, thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Page 116, Item 36 – *Prisons Medical and Health Officer/Senior Prisons Medical and Health Officer*, I see that there is no funding for that post.

The Prime Minister: The four Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers from the Ministry of Health and Wellness are posted on secondment to the Mauritius Prisons Service. So, their salaries are being met by the Ministry of Health.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Item 61 – *Senior Officer Cadet (Female)*, no provision has been made for that post as well.

The Prime Minister: Yes, there is no Senior Officer Cadet (Female) in post. Funds have not been provided as the Scheme of Service is currently being amended.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Time is over!

Vote 2-10 Prison Service (Rs995,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, we have ended with the votes for the hon. Prime Minister. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

I now suspend the Sitting for one hour.

At 9.27 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.34 p.m. with the Deputy Chairperson of Committees in the Chair.

The Chairperson: Please be seated!

(10.34 p.m.)

Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and Tourism

Vote 3-1 Housing and Land Use Planning was called.

The Chairperson: We have 20 minutes for this Vote and we start with Sub-Head 3-101: General, on page 122. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger !

Ms J. Bérenger: *Thank you.* Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, peut-on savoir à qui est distribué ce budget alloué de R 2,400,000 et quel est le *package* de ces personnes ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Sorry, I did not hear. Quel est le *package* de?

Ms J. Bérenger: À qui est attribué ce budget alloué pour le *Extra Assistance* et quelle est leurs rémunérations ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, I understand the provision here is made for the remuneration of 3 Advisors –

- (i) Advisor on Stakeholder Relations and Research – Mrs Ramsamy;

You want the salary as well? So, it is a basic salary of Rs32,350.

- (ii) Advisor on Information Matters – Mr Ludhor; basic salary: Rs66,200, and

- (iii) Advisor on Public Relation Matters – Mr Khedah; basic salary: Rs 25,525.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Deputy Prime Minister. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item - 21110.004 – *Allowances*, can we have a breakdown of the allowances he is referring to? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am informed this is provision made for payment of acting allowance, *ad hoc* allowance and responsibility allowance to officers of the Ministry.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 123, Item 22030 – *Rent*, there has been a substantial increase from Rs33 m. to Rs39 m. May I know why there is such an increase and at the same time, if I can have the details and the breakdown of this figure?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is a very good question. I asked myself the same question. So, I am informed as follows –

Provision is made for payment of rental of buildings as follows –

- (i) Ebène Tower, 2nd to 7th Floor;
- (ii) Ebène Tower, 1st Floor;
- (iii) Ebène Tower, Ground Floor;
- (iv) Ebène Tower, Ground Floor.

So, the increase in provision is due to additional office space that is to be rented at Ebène Tower, where the Ministry is presently housed. The additional office space is required following a reorganisation of various sections of the Ministry together with an increase in staff numbers.

The Chairperson: You are done? Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, that is your answer? Okay. Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: On the same Item 22030 – *Rent*, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, when does the lease agreement expire and whether there has been any tender launched for relocation to new premises?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I understand that this is since December 2010. A total extent of 4,893 square metres has been rented together with 50 parking slots. The contract was renewed for the period stretching from 01 June 2020 to 31 May 2025, for a further period of 5 years. The first one was from Shah Institute of Technology & Co. Ltd.

Then, in October 2016, a second floor space was rented from Excel International Co. Ltd. The contract has been renewed; it now extends to 30 September 2025. Since 01 June 2020, another extent of 250 square metres rented from Excel International Co. Ltd for period 01 June 2023 to 31 May 2026.

Finally, on 01 May 2022, a total extent of 211 square metres on ground floor, again from Excel International Co. Ltd, for a period of 3 years, ending 30 April 2025. So, it would appear that all these contracts run until 2025, except for one that goes up to May 2026.

The Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Deputy Prime Minister. We now move to Sub-Head 3-102: Social Housing Development and for this we have 10 minutes. It starts at page 123 to page 124. So, we start with page 123. No question? Page 124. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Capital Expenditure, Item 28222.015 – *Transfer of Title deeds of ex-CHA Houses*, can we know the number of beneficiaries and the locations as well, if the Minister can provide same to the House? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: The information that I have been provided with states that provision has been made for financial assistance to vulnerable lessees of ex-CHA housing estates whereby they are granted the land -presumably the land on which their houses stand - free of charge by means of a waiver of the purchase price of Rs2,000 and registration fees. Additionally, the notary fee of Rs1,500 and survey fees of Rs1,500 are also met by Government.

So, I understand that as at 31 May 2023, 18 families have benefited from this scheme.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, very much, Sir.

Under the Item 26 – Grants, 26313.154 – *Extra-budgetary Units – New Social Living Development Ltd*, can the Minister apprise us as to why there is a substantial increase on Rs78 m. to Rs130 m.? Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Again, that's a question I asked myself when I saw the figures. So, the explanation I have been provided with states as follows – provision made for the government grant to the NSLD to meet its operational and administrative costs including salaries of employees, board meeting fees, payment of rent, utilities, purchase of stationery, furniture and equipment. This is what the item is about.

Now, the increase is due to additional expenses foreseen to be incurred in salary and other related costs in as much as 50 additional members of staff are to be recruited. This will comprise Project Managers, Project Officers, Project Assistants, and Technical Officers in relation to the construction of 8,000 housing units on a design and build basis. And then, I have to break down, if required.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On the same item 26313.154 – *Extra-Budgetary Units – New Social Living Development Ltd.*, being given that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister just mentioned that this money is for the payment principally of salaries, maybe the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will now be in a position to tell us what is the salary of the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Operating Officer which I asked for a few days ago and at the time, you said that the information was being compiled.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes. It is not only salary, I gave the breakdown, it includes a host of different fees. Now, I'll just check if I have the information requested. The hon. Gentleman wanted the salary of the Executive Director - no, this is not provided here but if I have stated that I will lay in the Library of the National Assembly, then I will do so, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. J. Bérenger.

Ms J. Bérenger: Yes, on the same Item 26313.154 – *Extra-Budgetary Units – New Social Living Development Ltd*. Je ne suis pas sure si c'est sous cet item-là que je dois demander, mais peut-on savoir la composition du *Board* de la *NSLD* et les rémunérations aussi si possible ?

The Deputy Prime Minister: So, the composition of the Board –

- (i) Mr Mohammad Ehsan Ahmad Abdool Rahman, Chairperson;

- (ii) Mr Jairaj Sonoo, Executive Director;
- (iii) Mr Krish Addivigadoo, Independent Director;
- (iv) Mr Shameem Mahmood Muslun, Independent Director;
- (v) Mr Amritlall Moolchand, Independent Director;
- (vi) Mrs Nandita Ramdewar, Representative of Shareholders, this is SICOM;
- (vii) Mr Prakash Ramchurn, Director from the Ministry of Housing;
- (viii) Mr Jean Damien Kervin Ramma, Independent Director ;
- (ix) Mrs Amritasingh Golam, Director from the SIC;
- (x) Mr Yashraj Seeruttun, Director from the PMO.

I believe these are all the members of the present Board. The remuneration for the Board Members is Rs26,250 per month.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. On the same vote Item 26313.154 *Extra-Budgetary Units – New Social Living Development Ltd.* I fail to understand why is it that the Minister cannot provide the salary requested for by hon. Uteem because I have the full list that the Director, CEO...

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed! Listen to me, sorry to interrupt!

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister told you that he has not got the information, once he gets it, he will table it.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have it!

The Chairperson: If you have it; why are you asking the question if you got it?

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have the official document dated the 02...

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you. He is disturbing me.... Item 22120...

Mr Osman Mahomed: *To pe fer goalkeeper, li pa korek!* I have the document and I will table it.

The Chairperson: Listen to me! What goalkeeper are you calling me?

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... because the Minister is...

The Chairperson: But you told me that you got the reply, so?

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Let me talk!

The Chairperson: No, but the Deputy Prime Minister said...

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: You are playing with public funds!

The Chairperson: I am not playing with public funds!

Mr Osman Mahomed: You are playing with public funds!

The Chairperson: Those are allegations you are making towards me!

Mr Osman Mahomed: You are playing with public funds!

The Chairperson: I am not playing with anyone. Okay?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Let me talk to him!

The Chairperson: Why?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Because I have the...

The Chairperson: Because you don't have the right to say what you are saying. If you have got the reply, you keep to it...

(Interruptions)

We are in a Committee of Supply; we are going through the expenses and estimates. You have to come with your questions on clarifications!

Mr Osman Mahomed: There it is! I want you to...

The Chairperson: You are asking clarifications that you have already got and it is up to the Deputy Prime Minister to supply the information!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: *Donn informasion la!*

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

An hon. Member: *Aret sove!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Dhunoo: Item 22120.008 –*Fees for Consultant for Housing Strategy*. Can we know who are the consultants?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: I do apologise. I couldn't hear, there was so much noise from the Opposition benches.

The Chairperson: I can understand you. Could you please?

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... you are misleading the House!

An hon. Member: You want to provoke?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, I take strong objection to the remark just made. I have been accused of misleading the House.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes!

The Deputy Prime Minister: I take strong objections...

Mr Osman Mahomed: I maintain it!

The Deputy Prime Minister: ... and I would like the hon. Member to remove such a remark.

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, because the information is available at your Ministry since 02 June and you do not want to give the House this information...

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for a few minutes!

At 10.51 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 11.02 p.m. with the Deputy Chairperson of Committees in the Chair.

The Chairperson: Please be seated!

Hon. Osman Mahomed, it is not in order to make an accusation that the Deputy Prime Minister is misleading the House. This can only be made by way of a substantive motion. I therefore request you to withdraw the words you uttered to the address of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Furthermore, you made an accusation that I was acting like a goalkeeper and playing with public funds. That also is not in order. I kindly invite you to withdraw these words and tender your apologies.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, I have no problem in doing that but can we...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: It is unconditional apology!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Unconditionally! Unconditionally!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Les li koze!*

Mr Osman Mahomed: So...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Unconditional apology!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Provided that I am given the opportunity to present the motion.

(Interruptions)

Unconditionally, I have already said unconditionally; provided that I am given the opportunity to make the motion as soon as possible because it is a very serious matter.

The Chairperson: Okay, you can do so but let me also remind the House that I am abiding by the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders say that for the Committee of Supply, you can only ask for clarifications concerning the figures that are presented and not making statements. So please, help me to help the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mohamed: This is exactly what....

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you. Let us continue.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Chairperson, on a point of order, let me make it quite clear to you with all due respect. We are talking of public money and we are talking...

The Chairperson: Is that a point of order?

Dr. Boolell: No, hold on a minute. Let me...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: That is not a point of order!

Dr. Boolell: No, hold on a minute!

The Chairperson: Excuse me; excuse me, hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Standing Order that information is being withheld and information has to be released! If you have the information, the information has to be relayed! So, I hope that you will live up to the expectations of the people!

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell, the Deputy Prime Minister and any other Ministers, they have control on the reply that they are going to give. Unfortunately or fortunately, I do not have any control on that. So please, help me to help the House and help me so that we can approve this Appropriation Bill. Time is running. So we move to the next *Sub-Head 3-103*.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Am I to understand that the information is not going to be released?

The Chairperson: I cannot request the Deputy Prime Minister to do so!

(Interruptions)

It is at his own discretion that he can do it. I cannot compel him to do so!

Dr. Boolell: You know, he cannot be compelled but he has a moral obligation to release the information! And that has to be relayed.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell, I request you, let us close this chapter. Let us move on, okay? We are on *Sub-Head 3-103: Land Management and Physical Planning*, we have got five minutes.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Chairperson, can I just

The Chairperson: No! You cannot interrupt! You cannot interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is a...

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed, we are not having a debate. This is a Committee of Supply. I told you whatever you want to do, come with a substantive motion.

Dr. Boolell: But then, let him have his say, we will have our way!

(Interruptions)

Mr Toussaint: Cinema! Cinema!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Hey! Hey! Nou pou revini la!*

At this stage, Members of the Opposition left the Chamber.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members who have decided to be in this House, please! Silence, please! So, we continue!

(Interruptions)

So, we are on *Sub-Head 3-103: Land Management and Physical Planning*, no question?

(Interruptions)

Vote 3-1 Housing and Land Use Planning (Rs2,070,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.07 p.m.)

Vote 3-2 Valuation Department was called.

Vote 3-2 Valuation Department (Rs140,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.07 p.m.)

Vote 3-3 Tourism was called.

Vote 3-3 Tourism (Rs 382,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.08 p.m.)

Mr Toussaint: *Dada vini! Dada vini !*

(Vice Prime Minister'Office, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology)

Vote 4-1 Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology was called.

The Chairperson: We have 60 minutes in all for this Item and we are taking by Sub-Head. We start by Sub-Head 4-101: General as from page 143. Question? Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Item 21110.005 –*Extra Assistance*, may we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister the name of the advisors and the salary package for them?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The name of the advisors –

- (i) Mrs Dookhee;
- (ii) Mr Dansighani;
- (iii) Mr Munbodh;
- (iv) Mr Adaken;
- (v) Mr Varma, and
- (vi) Mr Moonien.

And, I am going to table the list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 21110.011 – *Basic Salary*, can we have more details?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The basic salary refers to the compensation of employees and personal emoluments. Provision is made for payment for salaries and increments for 300 funded positions, *inter alia* administrative, technical, finance, human resource and general services cadres.

The Chairperson: Are you done hon. Vice-Prime Minister? Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 143, there is an Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*, Rs6.2 m. May we have the details and a break down for this figure?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The allowances referred here are for the entertainment allowance, duty allowance, hospitality allowance, drivers allowance, car allowance in lieu of official car, internet allowance, duty remission car allowance, adhoc allowance, responsibility allowance for assuming high duties for the officers of the Ministry.

The Chairperson: We now move to page 144. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 144, Item 22900.922 – *Conferences/Seminars/Workshops*. There is a drastic drop in the sum allocated as compared to the previous year. May we know why?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In the previous year, Mr Chairperson, we had the international conference of the IAdea and there are no other such conferences programmed for this year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, under Item 22130 –*Studies and Surveys*, can we have further details pertaining to the surveys and studies we are referring to? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: These refer to the SAQMEC final study. The consultation, the pilot phase was carried out in February 2020 and we are right now preparing for the SAQMEC Final and it is carried out for some 4,000 pupils of Grade 6 in primary schools, spread for some 150 chosen schools both in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Ms. J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Yes, thank you. Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultant (Transaction Advisor for PPP Projects)*, can we have more details about this project and can we know who the Consultant is, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Fees to Consultant is for the Transaction Advisor for PPP Projects. Provision is being made for consultancy fee of the –

- MIE Campus at Côte d'Or;
- UTM Campus at Côte d'Or;
- Education House at Côte d'Or;
- Construction of Technical Education Centre at Ebène, and the
- Construction of the PSEA Building at Beau Bassin.

As far as the Consultant is concerned –

- For the University of Technology, advisory services have been awarded to Crisil Ltd from India.
- For the MIE, again, it is Crisil Risk and Infrastructure Ltd.
- As for the Education House, the recruitment has not been done yet.
- Construction of the Technical Education Centre at Ebène, approval of the Council is being sought for the award of the contract. It has not been done yet.
- For the PSEA, the Kukuza Project Development Company has been recruited as Transaction Advisor.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Time is over. We move to Sub-Head...

An hon. Member: No.

The Chairperson: What is wrong?

An hon. Member: I have a question.

The Chairperson: We are already over the time by one minute.

Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie, before I started, I had informed the House that I have in front of me a piece of paper which says that the proposed time allocation has been agreed by the Chief Whip...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish hon. Ameer Meea. It has been agreed by the Chief Whip and the Opposition Whip. Now, either you trust me or you phone your Opposition Whip who has not been here since this morning, and you get the clarifications. I am just going by the rules.

Mr Ameer Meea: ... using less time. You can compensate. You said you will be flexible.

The Chairperson: Hold on, hold on! While we taking the Ministry of the Prime Minister, you must have noticed when I had time, I allowed it but now we are already at the beginning. I won't get any time, as a buffer yet. Okay. Once I get the buffer time, I will give it to you. Okay, I am fair. I am not a goalkeeper!

So, Sub-Head 4-102: Pre-Primary Education. It starts from page 145 up to page 146. Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Sir. Under Capital Expenditure, Item 31112.002 – *Construction and Extension of Schools*, can the hon. Minister...

The Chairperson: Excuse me, on which page are you?

Dr. Boolell: Page 145?

The Chairperson: Which item?

Dr. Boolell: 31112...

The Chairperson: That's over!

Dr. Boolell: Page 145 is over?

The Chairperson: We are on Sub-Head 4-102.

Dr. Boolell: Okay, it's alright.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.071 – *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (e) Project-Based Learning*, can we have some information with regard to this?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is to introduce Project-Based Learning which aims at enhancing the holistic development of young children and foster 21st century skills for 80 pre-primary schools on a pilot basis in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goal as per 2030 Agenda of UNESCO.

There is a consultancy fee of Rs200,000; video production of Rs50,000; production and printing of PBL Guideline, Rs250,000, and budget implementation of each of these PBL guidelines, Rs1,250,000. A total of Rs2 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 145, Item 26313.071 – *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (f) Free Pre-Primary Education Scheme*, will the hon. Minister enlighten us how this sum of money would be spent?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, we are still working on the grant-in-aid policy, the scheme. It is going to be spent in providing support for the payment of salaries of the teachers and all. We have here about Rs152 m. going to salaries of 360 teaching and 191 non-teaching staff. Around Rs3.6 m. for the contribution National Savings, and around Rs83 m. for other school operational costs comprising salary compensation, SICOM Pension, travelling, vacation leave, uniform allowance for attendants, retirement benefits, and so on and so forth.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On the same Item 26313.071 – *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (c) Private Pre-Primary Schools*, there is a reduction in the grant given to Private Pre-Primary Schools, from Rs95 m. last year to Rs40 m. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, why the grant has been halved?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is mainly because we are changing the whole system. Initially, there was a per capita grant for some 18,000 students. Now with the new scheme, this will no longer be required.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26323.071 – *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority of which (a) One-Off Grant Private Pre-Primary Schools*, can we know the number of schools we are referring to, if ever the Minister has the details, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, it was an amount of Rs100,000 which was given to hundred schools every budget year. I am given to understand that since we have come up with this policy, every year some hundred schools were provided with this sum, 125 schools. It was meant for pedagogical equipment, storybooks, tablets and toys.

The Chairperson: We now move to page 146. Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Sir. Item 22120.025 – *Fees to Oriental Language Teachers*, I see that there is an increase to Rs30 m. compared to Rs26 m. in the previous financial year, if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister can inform us...

The Chairperson: Just hold on, hon. Dr. Boolell. Which item you are talking about?

Dr. Boolell: Item 22120.

The Chairperson: This is under Sub-Head 4-103.

Dr. Boolell: You just said 146.

The Chairperson: Sub-Head 4-102. I said page 146.

Dr. Boolell: Yes page 146.

The Chairperson: The upper part; only the upper part.

Dr. Boolell: You are referring only to the upper part? Okay.

The Chairperson: Under Sub-Head 4-102, you got no question? Okay. Hon. Ameer Meea, I got three minutes this time, which I will give you later on. Okay. So, we move to Sub-Head 4-103: Primary Education. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Item 22120.025 – *Fees to Oriental Language Teachers*, if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister can inform us as to the number of teachers who are teaching oriental languages and the oriental languages which are being taught in school? Thank you very much.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: 1,442 persons teaching oriental and ancestral languages.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Yes, thank you. Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, can we know to whom this extra assistance is paid to and what are their allocations?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Extra assistance is for the provision of supply teachers, primary supply teachers. Sorry, can you please tell me what is the number you have been requesting information about?

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Just give me one second. The extra assistance is meant for Program Manager Holistic Education as well as for Program Coordinators, Cluster Coordinators, Supply Teacher Primary, Supply Teacher for *Kreol Morisien*, Supply Teacher for General Purpose and Supply IT Support Officer.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson! Item 22060 – *Maintenance*, I can see that there is a drastic drop in this maintenance budget from Rs41 m. to Rs11 m. as from this year. May I know the background?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The maintenance is being given to Mauri-Facilities and it is a centrally controlled project through the Ministry of Finance.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson! Item 22900.996 – *Natation Scolaire Programme*, may we have an idea of how many students will benefit of same?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: All students of Grade 4 in all our primary schools will be benefiting from this project, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, thank you. Item 22900.006 – *School Requisites*, we voted a sum of Rs48 m. last year and we are asked to vote a sum of Rs57 m. Can we have a breakdown of expenses under this item?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It's for the printing of primary textbooks, for the stationary items for holistic education programme, sport equipment and materials, medals, prizes and rewards.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 146, item 22090 – *Security*, there has been a massive increase from Rs78 m. to Rs100 m. Will the hon. Minister explain why this massive increase?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It's to provide day time and night security in primary schools and the four zonal directorates as per contract. The funds will be used for the provision of night security services in 216 Primary Schools and the increase in provision is because of the new bidding exercise which is being launched by the CPB.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22030.001 – *Rental of Building*, can the hon. Minister shed some light upon the renting of which building we are referring to? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It's the provision made for the payment of rental building, parking slots facilities for even lines for network services; rental of building, provision is being made for the renting of office space for Zones 1, 3 and 4, including the store section, and accommodation for child needs volunteers along with payment for utilities and also for the rental of parking slots. The increase is due to the payment of additional parking slots.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 22030.007 – *Rental of Line for Network Services*, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister who is the Office Supplier and whether all Primary Schools have now been equipped with Wi-Fi facilities?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The payment is made to Mauritius Telecom and the rental of connectivity line is for the 255 Primary Schools in Mauritius and 17 Schools in Rodrigues.

The Chairperson: We now move to page 147 under the same Sub-Head Primary Education. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, very much. Item 28212.004 – *Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project*. A relative increase compared to the Estimates of the last financial year, if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister can apprise the House as to whom the project was entrusted and as to the number of needy students which take advantage of this feeding project?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Provision is being made for enhanced meals in 24 ZEP Schools and hot meals in 3 ZEP Schools and as for the list of caterers I will table it, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Capital Expenditure, item 31112.402 – *Upgrading of Schools*. Can the hon. Minister table the list maybe of schools being upgraded currently?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I will be tabling the list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.823 – *Acquisition of Equipment for Early Digital Learning Programme*. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the contract has already been awarded and if so, to whom and when will be the delivery date?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The contract has been awarded to EDSIL through a G to G arrangement. We are receiving the tablets for Grade 5 and 6 this year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 147, Acquisition of Non-Financial Assets, item 31112.002 – *Construction and Extension of Schools*. Will the hon. Minister at least table the list of schools concerned regarding construction or extension where this will be carried out?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: This will be done, Mr Chairperson!

The Chairperson: You will table?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I am tabling it!

The Chairperson: Okay thank you, we now move to Sub-Head 4-104: Secondary Education. Here also we got 10 minutes. We start from page 147.

Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes on page 147, Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, Rs98 m. is being budgeted this year. May I have the components of this figure?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The extra assistance once again, Mr Chairperson, refers to the payment of allowance for supply teachers recruited to serve the State Secondary Schools in all subject areas.

The Chairperson: Thank you! Any question on page 147 from anyone? Hon. Woochit!

Mr Woochit: Item 21110.002 – *Salary Compensation*, there has been a drastic increase in salary?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: This is due to the payment of compensation for Year 2023.

The Chairperson: We move to 148. Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of Item 22090 – *Security*, compared to the last Financial Year, I see a substantial increase by Rs10 m. in relation to security, if the hon. Vice Prime Minister can apprise us as to whom the contract has been awarded and the reason as to why there is this substantial increase? Thank you very much.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Funds will be used for the provision of night security in 63 State Secondary Schools. Increase in provision is based on new estimates for contracts; bidding exercise is in progress at the level of the CPB.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.034–*Mauritius Examinations Syndicate*, there is an increase of Rs30 m. for Year 2023-2024.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The operational examination related expenses of the MES are met from Government grant, income from fees in respect of examinations conducted by the MES on behalf of professional and other bodies and then funds for sponsorship of SC and HSC and GCE Exams. Most probably, this year, it is extra because of the fact that students of Grade 10 and Grade 11 both are sitting for the SC Exams.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 26313.132 –*PSEA – Management Grant to Private Secondary Schools*, there is an increase from Rs590 m. to Rs630 m. for this year, may I know have from the hon. Vice Prime Minister a breakdown of each college, how much is given for each college and what is the criteria for allocation of that grant? This is the management grant, not the student.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, the grants are meant for rental for the use of premises and for the operational costs of each and every school. Now, the increase in the

amount that has been mentioned here refers to the fact that the comprehensive grant formula is being worked again for the next phase of three years.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 – *Rent*, may I know the reason behind the increase from Rs1.9 m. to Rs5.2 m. as from this new financial year?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Here, the provisions are being made for the rental of podiums, sound systems in respect of functions in public Secondary Schools as well as provision for internet services and rental for switches for all school net project at Rs86,000 per month and also the rental of business booth rental line or air box from Emtel for 63 State Secondary Schools.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120 – *Fees*, can the hon. Vice Prime Minister tell us more about the healthy and supportive school environment initiative whose provision has not changed for the next financial year? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Provision has been made for grant to school health clubs; 69 State Secondary Schools and 79 Private Secondary Schools and organisation of Youth Forum and Youth Assembly.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 148, Item 22900.807 – *Expenses icw Technology Education Stream*, a new stream is coming, will the hon. Vice Prime Minister tell us how many schools will be involved in the pilot project and whether it would be only State or Private Secondary Schools also?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: There are 10 schools involved; it will include both State and Private Secondary Schools. It will include academies as well as regional schools.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Item 28212.012 – *S.C and H.S.C Examination Fees*, there is no increase in the sum earmarked inspite of the fact that the Rupee has been devalued. Has there been any decrease in the number of students taking part in the examination?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Not at all, Mr Chairperson. In fact, the MES normally has a reserve and normally because of fluctuations in foreign exchange rates etc., so they normally do have the sum and part of it most probably remains from last year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900.006 – *School Requisites*, I note an increase of at least Rs11 m., can the hon. Vice Prime Minister tell us the reasons thereof? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The provisions are for printing and publishing of textbooks for Grade 7, 8 and 9 and for the purchase of books for needy students, equipment and materials and teaching aid materials. Increase in provision is due to the rise in the cost of printing and book materials.

The Chairperson: So we move to page 149. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 149, Item 31112.402 – *Upgrading of Schools*, there is a budget of Rs68 m. May I have a list of schools which are being upgraded?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I will provide the list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I am referring to page 149, Item 31112.002 – *Construction and Extension of Schools*. There is a drastic drop for this financial year. Will the hon. Minister table at least the list of schools concerned with the construction and extension.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I am tabling the list.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26323.123 – *Mahatma Gandhi Institute*. Je vois que chaque année, il y a un budget qui était prévu de R 10m. sauf sur cette nouvelle année financière avec une baisse à R 7 billion. Puis-je demander pourquoi cette baisse ponctuelle pour cette nouvelle année?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The Rs2.5 was provided for the acquisition of a new van, AC units and CCTV cameras. So, now that this has already been done, they do not require that much of funds.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We now move to Sub-Head 4-105: Technical Education. We have got 10 minutes and it starts from page 149. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultant - Roadmap for Technical and Technology Education*, can the hon. Minister provide details whether we have already embarked on with a consultant if ever to provide the name and details? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, the fees are meant for a consultant coming from the University of Alberta in Canada. We have a provision of Rs5 m. for consultancy services to conduct a high level forum on technical and technology education and to devise a road map for technical and technology education for Mauritius. This will bring together the triple helix of Government industry and technology operators to connect the skills gap of today and to the industry trends of tomorrow. So, it is, in fact, meant for the consultancy services to conduct this High-Level Forum on technical and technology education.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Under the Item 22900.991 – *Expenses icw Technical Education Centres*, can the Vice-Prime Minister can apprise us why there is this substantial increase compared to money earmarked in the last financial year?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The provision being made is to meet operational costs including salaries, allowance, maintenance of tools and equipment, as well as cleaning services for the 6 Technical Education Centres currently being administered by the MITD pending the taking over by ITET.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.157 – *Institute of Technical Education and Technology (ITET)*. We voted a sum of Rs15 m. last year. Can we have a breakdown of expenses incurred last year?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: So the provision was made to meet the operational cost of ITET and the Human Resource cost, support of staff allowance, rental of office space, maintenance of building and also for the purchase and procurement of vehicles, IT equipment and furniture.

The Chairperson: Hon. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 149, same Item like hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie, Item 26313.157 – *Institute of Technical Education and Technology (ITET)*, Rs18 m. for this year. Will the hon. Minister tell us whether it is fully operational, number of students who are currently following courses and the staff, as well as the Board of the ITET?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: As I have just stated, Mr Chairperson, the 6 institutions are still being run under the MITD and the staff of the MITD is involved there.

I can also table the Board of the ITET.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, Item 22900.991 – *Expenses icw Technical Education Centres*. There is an increase in the budgeted amount. Can we have a breakdown of the amount paid to each Technical Education Centre?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I don't have the information with me right now. I have it bulked, but we can provide it to you.

The Chairperson: We now move to page 150, the upper part only. Go on, hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 152, Item 28212.011–*State of Mauritius/Additional Scholarships...*

The Chairperson: No! Which Item? Page 150. So there is no question. So we move to *Sub-Head 4-106: Special Education Needs*. We have got 5 minutes for that.

Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.149 – *Special Education Needs (SEN) Authority*. There was no provision made last year and I see that there is provision of Rs169 m. So, if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister can apprise us as to how this money is being spent to cater for those who are in need of special education.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, funds have been provided for the grant-in-aid and we are also providing hot meals to students in the SEN Schools. We are providing funds to the SEN Schools, the NGOs and the RCEA-SEN Schools. We are also providing hot meals in all these schools for all these children on a daily basis.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, Item 26313.149 – *Special Education Needs (SEN) Authority (b) Grant-in-Aid for SEN Schools run by: (i) NGOs*. Could we have a list of the NGOs that will benefit from this budget, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We have 47 NGOs and 8 RCEA Schools and a total of 2,505 students. We are going to table the list of NGOs.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On this very same Item 26313.149 – *Special Education Needs (SEN) Authority (b) Grant-in-Aid for SEN Schools*. May we also have from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, the criteria for allocation of these grants to the various NGOs?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the Special Education Needs Authority has got norms and conditions and a list of criteria and all registered schools only do get these funds. I will obviously submit to the House, a list and criteria used by the SENA.

I would also like to add that the increase in funds is also on the account of the fact that the salaries of all the carers, teachers, drivers, handy workers have all been increased to meet the new requirements as per the budget.

The Chairperson: Hon. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 150, Item 22120 – *Fees*. For example, from Rs2.2 m, it comes to Rs1.2 m. this year and then again it drops for subsequent years. May we know why there is this drop, hon. Vice-Prime Minister?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The decrease is due to the fact that MIE has already conducted 50% of the work for the adaptation of textbooks.

The Chairperson: We move to page 151 under the same Sub-Head.

Dr. Gungapersad: Page 151 at the top. We find that transfers to non-profit institutions, Item 28211.067 – *RCEA for Special Education Needs (SEN) Schools*, for this year and subsequent years we do not have any budgetary provision while we had it last year.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I think that the funds have been transferred from one item to another. The amount has been transferred under the vote of Special Education Needs Authority.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Under Item 26323.149 – *Special Education Needs (SEN) Authority of which (a) Upgrading of SEN Schools run by NGOs/RCEA*, may we have a list of the SEN schools that would be benefiting from this grant?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: If I'm not mistaken, all the SEN schools will be provided with this grant of about Rs100,000 for upgrading the infrastructure and around Rs50,000 for educational materials and equipment.

The Chairperson: Time is over! We move to Sub-Head 4-107: Scholarships and Capacity Building. We have got five minutes for this.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 152, Item 28212.011 – *State of Mauritius/Additional Scholarship*, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister why the estimate for State and additional scholarship has decreased by Rs10 m. when we all know that tuition fees and living expenses around the world has been increasing and the more so, the living allowance for laureates has not been changed since 2017?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The funds are used for the payment of tuition fees, living allowance and air tickets for a total of 283 laureates and 13 beneficiaries of scholarships under the Rodrigues Scholarship Scheme. We have noted that some students have delayed their departure as well. Sometimes, those getting the scholarships decide to move at some other point in time, so, they ask for a delay. *Ils ont déjà commencé des cours* à Maurice and they decide to go after that. This is a policy decision.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28212.020 – *Student Scholarship Schemes for Vulnerable Households*. There is a decrease in provision for the year 2023-2024, may we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister why this decrease in provision?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The decrease is due to a low number of applicants. For the vulnerable group, they apply for the scholarships and it all depends on whether or not, they come into the first 500 candidates according to the list from Cambridge.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28212.010 – *Post-Graduate Scholarship Schemes*. I'm sure I will get the same reply from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister. In respect of budgetary provision earmarked compared to last year, there has been a substantial drop, be it for the State of Mauritius Post-Graduate Scheme or Post-Graduate Scheme for Laureates. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform us as to why there has been a drop in the budgetary provision? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Every year there are nine scholarships that are awarded to graduates willing to go for a Master's Degree. For studies abroad of one year's duration, the tuition fees, living allowance and air tickets at the beginning and end of the course are covered. For those who study locally, the scholarship covers tuition fee and living allowance for two years and their monthly allowance as well. So, most probably you have fewer students going for the two years and some going for one year only.

If they take the first degree in Mauritius, then, they can take two years for a postgraduate degree outside Mauritius. If they do not stay in Mauritius for their first degree and they go out, then they do not have to pay for the postgraduate allowance.

The Chairperson: Mr Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 28212.032 – *Scholarship Schemes to Student with Disabilities*, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister how many students benefited from that Scholarship and what is the amount paid to each student?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, we have five scholarships every year, normally five every year. And it all depends on which course they follow. Sometimes they go for polytechnics, for degrees – it all depends on which courses they are going for. So, the amount will vary.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 28212.025 – *Financial Assistance Schemes to Students*, there is a considerable drop. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister provide information as to why there is such a drop in the figures and also the number of beneficiaries under this one? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is most probably due to the fact that we now have the Free Tertiary Education Scheme. 196 students had applied for the loan under the above scheme. We are talking here about a scheme that started in 2013 and the beneficiaries have all paid back their loans apart from one. That's why there is a decrease.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Again I am referring to page 152, Item 28212.038 – *Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme in Digital Technologies*. I would like to have details regarding how this Rs10 m. would be spent, number of students concerned and where normally these students go to study - locally or abroad – to which universities?

The Scheme comprises two types of scholarships for those willing to go abroad and for those willing to do their post-graduation in Mauritius at the *Université des Mascareignes* and the funds were utilised for 22 new awards, two scholarships awarded for PHD courses, 15 scholarships to be awarded at Masters Level of one year duration if it is taken abroad and two years if it is taken in a local institution. Five scholarships awarded to PHD level for a duration of up to four years abroad or locally.

I do not have any more information here. 20 scholarships for AI and Block Chain technology are awarded at *Université des Mascareignes*. The number of beneficiaries is 12.

Mr Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Vice-Prime Minister. We will now move to the last sub-head which is Sub-Head 4-108: Tertiary Education. We have five minutes for this and it starts at page 152. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Item 22130 - *Studies and Surveys – National Higher Education Strategy*. Can we have more details from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The *Studies and Surveys* refer to studies and preliminary project preparation for the National Higher Education Strategy and the funds of Rs5 m. are available. The Ministry is partnering with UNESCO, the World Bank and High Education Commission to obtain wide stakeholders' inputs on the topic. Preliminary pillars identified for the strategy are technology driven high education, agile regulatory framework and the quality assurance, pass ways and micro credentials as part of the higher education, the role of research and internationalisation and cross border higher education.

Mr Chairperson: Thank you. So, we move to page 153. Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, Item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission*. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to table the composition of the Board of the HEC?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Yes, it will be done.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On the very same point, Item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission*, in addition to the composition of the Board, may I request the Vice-Prime Minister to also table the salary package of the Chairman and each member of that Board?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Yes, this will be done. The Chairperson has a package of Rs40,000 and members Rs2,500.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. On the same Item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission*, could the Vice-Prime Minister inform us as to the number of African students who have taken advantage of the scholarships awarded and

secondly, the funding of research projects and if the hon. Vice-Prime Minister can table the projects that are being funded? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: There are 153 African students who have benefitted from the scheme and 60 are still following courses in Mauritius. As far as the research fund is concerned, we have 103 projects that have been approved since the start of the scheme for a total project value of Rs156.2 m. As at date, HEC has a closing balance of Rs43.1 m. which will be used for disbursement in respect of ongoing projects in the year of 2023-2024. All new projects are funded on basis of the potential impact on the economy and society. Eight new projects have been approved for a total value of Rs7.5 m. Funds amounting to Rs7.7 m. are committed for disbursement up to June 2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, under same Item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission, ii. Recruitment of foreign lecturers*, can the Vice-Prime Minister inform how many foreign lecturers have been recruited?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The foreign lecturers are recruited on a temporary basis. They come for one or two modules and they go back but I will try to get the information and table it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28211.071 – *Higher Education Advisory Council*, may we know the composition of the Council?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It has not been constituted yet.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 153, Item 26313.150 - (d) *Université des Mascareignes of which Scholarship (Robotics and Artificial Intelligence)*, there has been a 100% increase in the budgetary provision. Will the hon. Minister inform the House how many students will benefit from the scholarship every year and for what level? Is it for diploma, graduate, post graduate levels?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is supposed to be for post-graduate. It is a Masters in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. It is serviced by consortium of universities and it is awarded jointly by UDM and *Université de Limoges*. There are 20 scholarships that have been awarded to students of self-finance. 15 students from batch 1 have already graduated.

The scholarship covers an amount of Rs250,000 per student as tuition fees and cost of overseas placement for up to three months during the last semester of the programme.

The Chairperson: Any question on page 154? No? Okay.

Vote 4-1 Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Rs 19,700,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.11 a.m.)

(Vice Prime Minister's Office, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management)

Vote 5-1 Local Government was called.

The Chairperson: So, we take Sub-Head 5-101: General on page 166 and we have got seven minutes for this. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, may we have the names of the advisors and their salary package?

Dr. Husnoo: The *Extra Assistance* is for the payment of salaries for four advisors

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- (i) Advisor for information matters – Mr Yeadally Jameer Udeen;
- (ii) Public Relations Officer – Mr Mussa Innayatula;
- (iii) There is one expert on land use and planning executive – Mr Rajeshwar Phul, and
- (iv) One advisor on policy matters – Mr Oomar Khooleegan.

Mr Uteem: I also asked for the salary package.

The Chairperson: Sorry?

Mr Uteem: I also asked for the salary package. Not just the names.

The Chairperson: Are you going to provide this information?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, I got it. Mr Rajeshwar Phul, Rs82,250; Mr Khooleegan Rs43,500; Mr Mussa Innayatula Rs25,525; Mr Yeadally Rs66,200.

The Chairperson: Any other questions on page 166? Page 167? No.

So, we move to the next Sub-Head 5-102: Facilitation to Local Authorities and for this we got 10 minutes. Page 167, the lower part. Page 168, hon. Dr. Boolell.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Under Grants, Item 26312.017 – *Disaster Risk Management Programmes in Local Authorities*, Rs18 m. earmarked for the coming financial year. If the hon. Vice-Prime Minister could apprise us as to how this money is going to be spent; if he can give us a breakdown. Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: This is a new item which is being introduced through the amendment in the Local Government Act this year. An amount of Rs1.5 m. will be allocated to each of the 12 local authorities to develop their respective disaster risk management programme because as you know, we are trying to train people near their place of residence. In case of disaster, they can act quickly instead of waiting for people to come. Basically, this is what it is.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Tour.

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (d) Multipurpose Complexes (iii) Abercrombie*, may we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister where matters stand?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, Abercrombie is a very complicated case. What happened is that, there were a lot of issues between the consultant and the contractor. They have both stopped working and the MNI has taken over to act as consultant to sort out of this project. The problem is not just the first floor; we have to consolidate the ground floor as well. So, the MNI is working on the plan and once we sort it out, we will advertise for the contractor as well.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (c) Renovation of Port Louis Theatre (Phase II)*, an amount of Rs23 m. is earmarked for next year. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, what is the status of these renovations? We seem to be voting every year an amount for innovation and the Theatre is still not operational.

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, Phase I is over. Provision of Rs23 m. is to kick-start the Phase II of the project of Port Louis Theatre. It is estimated that the Council will only be able to use the Rs23 m. this year. An additional amount of Rs10 m. has been provided in the Loto fund in the financial year.

Mr Uteem: What is the pace of the project?

Dr. Husnoo: This will take a bit of time. It is a very complex project, as you know. The first phase took a long time as well and the second phase, maybe easily two years. Easily!

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (d) Multipurpose Complexes (vi) 16ème Mille*, may we know from the Vice-Prime Minister where matters stand?

Dr. Husnoo: This is for the construction of a Multipurpose Complex at 16ème Mille. We are still looking for clearance from the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the National Infrastructure Division, the Department Civil Aviation, Water Resources Unit and Wastewater Management. Once we get all the clearances, then, the bid will be invited through Open National Bidding.

The Chairperson: Hon. Mrs Mayotte.

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 169, Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (e) Markets and Fairs (vii) Bambous (Consultancy)*, it is mentioned consultancy. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us more details about this item?

Dr. Husnoo: Construction for market fair at Bambous – the project value is Rs90 m. A plot of land to the extent of 1.5 arpents belonging to Belle Isle Estate at Royal Road, Bambous has been identified and needs to be acquired by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and vested in the District Council of Black River through my Ministry. Site visit was effected by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning in the presence of relevant stakeholders on 06 June. We are still waiting.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 168, Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (d) Multipurpose Complexes (iii) Abercrombie*. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, how much has been spent up to now on this project, bearing in mind the dispute between the consultant and the contractors, and also what are the risks the public is facing in relation to this building?

Dr. Husnoo: The actual expenditure is around Rs10.2 million as of 05 May. When the project was started to put the first floor extension, it was found that the ground floor is not strong enough to take the first floor. That is why there were some disputes. Now, as I have explained, the MNI has taken over. They have to consolidate the ground floor first,

and then, we have to build the third floor. I know it is a very difficult situation but that is the way it is, unfortunately.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We now move to page 169. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (f) Setting up of Incinerators of which (ii) Long Mountain*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister provide details on this project, whether it includes land acquisition and the project completely because the amount is Rs18 m.?

Dr. Husnoo: This item provides for the construction of an incinerator, as you mentioned, at Long Mountain. Currently, discussions are ongoing between the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, my Ministry and the District Council of Pamplemousses to finalise a site around Ilot Branch Road. We have to finalise the site. Basically, this is what it is.

The Chairperson: Hon. Woochit.

Mr Woochit: Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (e) Markets and Fairs (vi) Pamplemousses*. I would like to know, from the amount Rs130 m., is the land adjacent to the site included in it or is it only for the contractor?

Dr. Husnoo: Rs37 m. has been made available in this financial year to start the construction of a new market. Basically, it is for the construction. The project value is Rs130 m. and around Rs7 m. will be spent during the current financial year. It has been awarded to Laxmanbhai & Co. (Mauritius) Limited.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (f) Setting up of Incinerators of which (vi) Tranquebar*. Rs20 m. was the project value and an amount of Rs2 m. has been earmarked for this year. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister where matters stand as to whether the contract has been awarded and what is the schedule completion date of that project?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, a plot of land has been identified adjacent to the existing cremation ground at Tranquebar. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has informed that there is a risk of air pollution in the surrounding area and I recommended to seek the views of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. We are still waiting for a reply from the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 169, under item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (i) Small Development Projects (Indian Grant)*, if we go at the Appendix, it's mentioned greening and embellishment of the following major roads in Phoenix. May we get more details where about in Phoenix those embellishment works will be carried out?

Dr. Husnoo: I don't have the list of roads actually. I just have the list of projects. I can circulate it to you later on.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Doolub!

Mr Doolub: Page 169, item 26322.030 – *Local Development Projects (e) Markets and Fairs (v) Mahebourg*. Project value was Rs107 m., Rs39 m. earmarked for last year, reduced to Rs10 m. for forthcoming year, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister apprise us with regard to work in progress for this project?

Dr. Husnoo: As you are aware yourself, being a Member of the Constituency, there have been some problems with the contractor. So the provision of Rs10 m. has been made in this financial year for the ongoing construction of the market fair at Mahebourg. Contract, as you know, was awarded to EDCC Co. Ltd. for the design built framework for an amount of Rs83.7 m. The project value is Rs104 m. The project started in September 2019. However, the contract with EDCC Co. Ltd. was terminated in December 2022 due to a breach of contract on behalf of the contractor. The Ministry of National Infrastructure has taken over to complete the project.

Mr Chairperson: Thank you, hon. Vice-Prime Minister, time is over!

Vote 5-1 Local Government (Rs 5,364,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.26 a.m.)

Vote 5-2 National Disaster Risk Reduction was called.

Mr Chairperson: We got 10 minutes for this item and it's from page 173 to 175. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 173, item 22070 – *Cleaning Services*, may we know from the Vice-Prime Minister who are the service providers?

Dr. Husnoo: The item provide for cleaning services at Level 6 at Citadel Mall. The contract awarded to Mauriclean Ltd. from 01 December 2022 to 30 November 2023

for an amount of Rs104,328. For sanitary bins, contract awarded to Alpha Hygiene from 07 August 2022 to 06 August 2023 for an amount of Rs20,700.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 173, item 22030 – *Rent*, there is an amount of Rs8.5 m. May we have the details and the breakdown of this rent, to whom it is being paid?

(Interruptions)

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Ministers Mrs Koonjoo-Shah and Teeluck, please stop this cross talking otherwise, you will take me for a midfielder.

Mr Ameer Meea: *Wa al deor!*

Mr Chairperson: Earlier they took me for a goalkeeper, now they will take me for a midfielder.

Mr Toussaint: *Deor!*

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I repeat my question?

Dr. Husnoo: The rent is for renting of office space at level 6 at Citadel Mall, Port Louis. The item provides for the renting of 12,000 square feet of office space on the 6th floor, Citadel Mall in Port Louis at the rate of Rs703,800 monthly and the contract started from 2017 and it is a 5 year's contract.

Mr Chairperson: Any other question on page 173? So, we move to page 174 and we start by hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 28222.025 – *Compensation for the Relocation of Inhabitants (Landslide)*, we see there is a drop in the amount. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister provide further details why there is this drop and when would the inhabitants be relocated; whether we have any dates right now? Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: As you are aware, the Ministry is responsible to cater for the survey undertaken by the Quantity Surveyor Section of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, the building and the structures and for the survey undertaken by Valuation Department of the Ministry of Housing and Land. Appropriate compensation packages are to be worked out by the latter Ministry. Provision is made to cater for the survey undertaken by the Quantity Surveyor Section and he is at Chitrakoot; survey is still pending for four houses there. Compensation package under preparation and there are others at Vallée Pitot and other sites as well.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Under the very same item 28222.025 –*Compensation for the Relocation of Inhabitants (Landslide)*, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what is the amount budgeted for relocating the inhabitants of Vallée Pitot who are prone to landslide?

Dr. Husnoo: The initial, I mean, it's only Rs500,000, its mentioned here. It is a token item but again compensation package is under preparation.

Mr Chairperson: Thank you. Page 175, no question?

Vote 5-2 National Disaster Risk Reduction (Rs26,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.30 a.m.)

Vote 5-3 Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service was called.

Mr Chairperson: We got 15 minutes for this and we start at page 176 up to 178. Hon. Uteem! On page 176.

Mr Uteem: Item 22060.004 – *Vehicles and Motorcycles*, there is a budgeted amount of Rs10.3 m., may I have a list of the service providers which carried out the maintenance from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister?

Dr. Husnoo: This item is for payment of firefighting vehicles of which maintenance is being charged. The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service has a fleet of 147 vehicles which need regular preventive maintenance to placement of used parts, renewal of worn out tyres and batteries. Increase is due mainly to the acquisition of new fire trucks and utility vehicles.

Mr Uteem: The question was the service providers. Who does the maintenance?

Dr. Husnoo: I don't have it here with me but I can later let you have it.

Mr Uteem: Thank you.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 176, item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments*, can I ask the hon. Minister the examination for station officers which were cancelled, can I have an update on those examinations? What happened? Is there any investigation or when is the new examination scheduled for?

Dr. Husnoo: As you are aware, this examination is done by the Discipline Forces. It was cancelled the last time but it is the Discipline Forces that is going to take over and is going to do the examination. So, it does not fall under Local Government but the DFSC.

Mr Chairperson: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Under item 22120 – *Fees*, may we have more details please as to the sum being allocated for fees?

Dr. Husnoo: This is for payment of fees to Consultants, Chairperson and members of the Departmental Bid Evaluation Committees and training courses as well.

The Chairperson: We move to page 177? I have got a long list for 177 here. Hon. Wochit!

Mr Wochit: Item 31121.801 – (c) *Acquisition of Fire and Rescue Vehicles*, there has been Rs283 m. which had been earmarked and this year we have no fund provided. Can we have an explanation on this one?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually 20 Firefighting and Rescue Vehicles have been delivered already and commissioned in September 2022 and they are all operational.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.999 – *Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment (b) Aerial Drone*, can the Vice Prime Minister give more details about this?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually they are trying to buy a drone, naturally to help them in very difficult circumstances during fire and all and the technical specification are under preparation. Tender is expected to be launched in August 2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112.424 – *Upgrading of Fire Stations*, I can see that for this new financial year, we have a budget of Rs20 m. which is being earmarked. May I have some details about those upgrading works? Thank you.

Dr. Husnoo: The construction of emergency staircases at St Aubin Fire Station, Curepipe Fire Station, Coromandel Fire Station and Triolet Fire Station; request has been made to MNI to implement this project under a framework agreement. Work has already started at St Aubin and Triolet Fire Station.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 177, Item 31112.024 – *Construction of Fire Stations (a) Goodlands Fire Station*, a project value of Rs120.8 m. Last year Rs7 m. was used and for this current year Rs18 m. Will the hon. Vice Prime Minister give us details regarding same?

Dr. Husnoo: It is because the procurement process has been cancelled by CPB due to significant margin between the lowest bidder and the cost estimate in 2022. A fresh bid exercise was initiated; bid document is at the level of the CPB for vetting. Works are expected to start in October 2023.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 31112.024 – (d) *Satellite Fire Stations (Consultancy)*, there is a number of contracts. There are 8 contract for consultancy in various fire stations. May I know from the hon. Vice Prime Minister whether the tender for the appointment of the consultant has already been launched and whether that consultant has already been appointed?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, as you know, this is a new project, we are trying to do this Satellite Fire Station so that it scattered across the island.

The Chairperson: Hon. Vice Prime Minister, just address the Chair because when you are turning back, we can't hear you properly.

Dr. Husnoo: Sorry, Mr Chairperson. This is a new project because we are trying to develop Satellite Fire Stations across the island so that the Fire Services can be nearer the villages and all that. In case of fire, they are nearer to provide the service; and in case of flash flood as well. Now, this is in this budget, it's a new item. We are going to start working once the budget is approved.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: In relation to uniform, Item 22900.001 – *Uniforms*, every year, there is a budget of Rs20 m.

Dr. Husnoo: Which page, please?

The Chairperson: On page 177!

Mr Ameer Meea: On the same vote, since we still have time on page 176, Uniforms.

The Chairperson: No, no, no!

Mr Ameer Meea: It is the same vote. To be fair, it is on the same vote, we have 15 minutes according to my paper and we still have ...

The Chairperson: And again, the procedure was agreed between the Chief Whip and the Opposition Whip.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, we have 15 minutes. I have it with me.

The Chairperson: You know it's not only the time allocation that has been agreed, it has been also agreed that once we complete one page, we won't go back.

Mr Ameer Meea: No, but I asked you. I asked you when I was ...

The Chairperson: How would I know how long the Minister is going to take to reply to these questions.

Mr Ameer Meea: So, you anticipate that his reply will be long then you don't give me my question. That is what you are saying.

The Chairperson: Because once the list is exhausted, I move to the other page.

Mr Ameer Meea: Okay, then when your next page is not exhausted you come back to the list because we still have time.

The Chairperson: No, we can move forward not backward.

Mr Ameer Meea: No, it's not fair at all. I have one important question and you are depriving me of my rights.

The Chairperson: It is again an allegation, okay?

Do me a favour next time you asked your Opposition Whip to be here so that he can explain, so that I won't have to explain in his place.

Vote 5-3 Mauritius Fire And Rescue Service (Rs735,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.40 a.m.)

Vote 5-4 Mauritius Meteorological Services was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for this Item and it starts from page 179 up to page 181. Page 179, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. In respect of Item 22120 – *Fees of which Enhancing Meteorological Observation, Weather Forecasting and Warning Capabilities (JICA Funded)*, I see that there is a slight decrease from the sum earmarked

from the budgetary provision of last year. Now can we be apprised as where matters stand and whether the project is about to be completed because this is a very important project. So, if the Minister could apprise us as to where matters stand in relation to enhancing the meteorological observation weather forecasting?

Dr. Husnoo: Yes, Mr Chairperson, I think the hon. Member is right. It is a very important project. Yes, this project was funded by JICA but after the project was completed, the training had to go on. That is where the sum is coming for - the training is mainly for continuous training basically.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under Item 22120 – *Fees*, may I know from the hon. Vice Prime Minister to whom the fees are paid?

Dr. Husnoo: I have just mentioned actually, the fees to the consultants for JICA consultants, for training fees, this is what it is basically.

Mr Uteem: No you did not mention to whom. You mentioned it is paid but you did not mention the name of the Consultant.

Dr. Husnoo: For the project, it is completed but the training goes on afterwards.

Mr Uteem: I know this is why I am asking who the trainer is?

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem! Please, address the Chair.

Dr. Husnoo: The JICA people.

The Chairperson: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, you also.

Dr. Husnoo: Sorry.

The Chairperson: Now you are having a debate. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*. Last year we voted a sum of Rs700,000. This year we are asked to vote Rs2.2 m. Could we have some details on this Item?

Dr. Husnoo: Can you give me the item number exactly please?

The Chairperson: The title and the amounts are not right.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Can I have some information on the Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*. Details on Allowances.

Dr. Husnoo: This item provides for payment of ad hoc and acting responsibility, meal, night duty, public holidays, internet, duty remission, driver's allowance to Acting Director. Wave rider allowance, hardship allowance, disturbance allowance to Officers posted to Saint Brandon and Agalega and the registration fees to Engineers. Basically this is what it is.

The Chairperson: Hon. David!

Mr David: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*. I can see that as from this new financial year we are earmarking a budget of Rs1.4 m. May I know the nature and the supplier of this assistance?

Dr. Husnoo: This Item provide for payment of all inclusive allowance to one advisor on communication matters at the Mauritius Meteorological Services. The person will be recruited on a yearly basis and will provide advice on policy formulation, establishment of a productive relationship with the media, production of material to disseminate information to the public amongst others.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22060 – *Maintenance*. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister elaborate whether it is in-house or outsourced? If outsourced? Who is the contractor?

Dr. Husnoo: This Item provides for maintenance of building, plants and equipment, vehicles, IT equipment, ground and radar equipment at Trou aux Cerfs. The increase is based on actual trend of expenditure. It is for building, plant, equipment, vehicles and so many things actually.

The Chairperson: Page 180. Hon. Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Capital Expenditure, Item 31112.001 – *Construction of Office Buildings (b) New Mauritius Meteorological Services Building (Consultancy)*, can we have details with regard to this project, whether we have already appointed a consultant, details about the consultant as well?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually this is a new building, because as you know, there are so many services provided by the Mauritius Meteorological Services. They need extra spaces. They have extra staff. They have a lot of equipment. They need extra space so they are going to build a new building there. That's what it is for. It has not been started yet.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes on page 150, Item 26...

The Chairperson: Excuse me! Excuse me! Which page?

Mr Ameer Meea: 180.

The Chairperson: You said 150.

Mr Ameer Meea: Ah okay. I was just testing you if you were following me.

On page 180, Item 26210.199 – *Contribution...*

The Chairperson: Nowhere in the Standing Orders, it is mentioned that you can test the Chairperson.

Mr Ameer Meea: Okay.

The Chairperson: So, be mindful of it next time.

Mr Ameer Meea: No problem. Item 26210.199 – *Contribution to Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems for Africa and Asia*. There is an amount of Rs45,000 that has been budgeted. May I have the details of the breakdown of this figure?

Dr. Husnoo: The Mauritius has been invited to join the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System. The MoU between Mauritius and RIMES has been cleared by the SLO. Mauritius will benefit in many ways, namely tsunami and earthquake alerts and other advisory to weather and climate change.

The Chairperson: Page 181. Hon. Woochit!

Mr Woochit: Mr Chairperson, we have three Items: 7, 8 and 15.

The Chairperson: No! Only one!

Mr Woochit: ... which have not been filled? These posts have not been filled. Can we know why?

The Chairperson: Which Item?

Mr Woochit: 7, 8 and 15.

The Chairperson: No! No!

Mr Woochit: On the same page.

The Chairperson: No, it can be on one page but one line.

Mr Woochit: 7.

The Chairperson: What is your question?

Mr Woochit: Why this post has not been filled?

Dr. Husnoo: The Chief Meteorological Telecommunications Technician, the post became vacant on 04 June 2022 following the retirement of Officer in post. Appointment in the grade is made by promotion from the grade of Deputy Chief Meteorological Telecommunications Technician which is presently vacant as the officer in post reverted on 08 May 2022. The most senior officer in the grade of Principal Meteorological Telecommunications Technician will be due for promotion as Deputy Chief Meteorological Telecommunications Technician in July 2023. Presently, he has been assigned the duties as CMTT on ground of administrative convenience.

The Chairperson: Time is over!

Vote 5-4: Mauritius Meteorological Services (Rs 127,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(0.50 a.m.)

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

Dr. Padayachy: Mr Chairperson, I move that the Committee of Supply reports progress and ask leave to sit again.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed.

On the Assembly resuming with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair, the Deputy Chairman of Committees reported accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to today, Wednesday, 14 June 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Adjournment matter, hon. Aadil Ameer Meea?

Thank you. Have a good night.

At 0.55 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday, 14 June 2023 at 10.00 a.m.