



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 24 MAY 2022

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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	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-Daureeawoo, 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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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 09 of 2022

Sitting of Tuesday 24 May 2022

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

The Financial Statements of the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the period July 2020 to June 2021.

B. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Economic and Social Council for the year ended 31 December 2014. (In original)

C. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives

The Annual Report of the National Co-operative College for the Financial Year 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Annual Report 2020/2021 of the Financial Reporting Council.
- (b) The Financial Reporting (Engagement Quality Review) Rules 2022. (Government Notice No. 107 of 2022)
- (c) The Financial Reporting (Reporting on Compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance) (Amendment) Guidelines 2022. (Government Notice No. 108 of 2022)

E. Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

The Annual Report 2021 of the Data Protection Office.

F. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training**Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 103 of 2022)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 104 of 2022)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 12) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 105 of 2022)
- (d) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2022. (Government Notice No. 106 of 2022)

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)**

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

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS**THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CLEANING AUTHORITY BILL****(NO. V OF 2022)**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill (No. V of 2022).

Question again proposed.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, to start with, allow me to say a few words about the speech of the Second Member of Constituency No. 19 and the First Member of Constituency No. 16.

In his speech, the Member from Constituency No. 19 stated that –

- a) the Council has failed in their responsibility;
- b) there is a scarcity of means;
- c) they have no fund for equipment, and
- d) they do not have enough financial means and have limited manpower.

He even went as far to say that the Councillors are incompetent and are just puppets. He also said that this Bill is a nonsense. What this shows, Mr Speaker, Sir, is their arrogance. This Government is not afraid of self-criticisms. When we find something is not working properly, we

won't hide; rather we will face it and bring the necessary improvement. Self-criticism is not something to be afraid of. But one must be bold and must realize one's own limitation.

When we are aware of our shortcoming; facing them is not a sign of weakness but a sense of responsibility to improve the situation for the population. The LDA Bill which we had introduced a few years ago is a good example.

We have observed several anomalies in the construction of drains. Some of our existing drain network system needed to be upgraded to cater for the new normal, that is, the recurrent heavy rain and flash flood.

That is why we have centralised the construction of drains to get better coordination among the different stakeholders, that is, the local authorities, RDA and NDU to improve the situation.

This is precisely, Mr Speaker, Sir, the aim of this present Bill. We know there is a lack of coordination with cleaning by the different agencies, local authorities, RDA, Ministry of Environment, Tourism Authority and Beach Authority, etc. This is why we are coming with a centralised body to coordinate the work so that we can improve the situation and clean our country properly.

Regarding the hon. Member of Constituency No. 16, from what I have listened, it is obvious that it is the speech of someone who has never had the opportunity to hold Government responsibility. I am surprised by her self-righteousness, pseudo-expert attitude and super-ego, a speech that smack of sheer arrogance. Mr Speaker, Sir, ignorance is bliss.

Coming back to their usual song, 'Motion of No Confidence against the Government', I would like to remind them that, the MMM has been in the opposition from 2005-2022, that is, 17 years continuously. Similarly, since their existence, that is, from 1969 to 2022, that is, in their 53 years of existence, they have been in Government for approximately 10 years only. That is, for 43 years, they were and are still "*dans caro canne*". If this is not a Motion of No Confidence by the electorate against the MMM, I wonder what it is!

Mr Speaker, Sir, here we do not have our head in the clouds, but rather, we are down to earth and we face the reality as it is, with its systemic shortcomings. Mr Speaker, Sir, speaking as a medical Doctor, when treating our patient, at times, there will be challenging situation. If we

need a second opinion or we have to change the treatment, we would readily do it because this will be in the best interest of our patients.

One should have the courage and humility to change when the needs arise, and we are not afraid to bring a new Bill if the needs arise. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said -

“The only constant in life is change”.

We are not afraid of change especially when we know it will improve the living environment of our citizen and it will be in their best interest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you allow me to come to the present Bill, that is, the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill. The threat to the environment, Mr Speaker, Sir, is increasing day by day, and it is our duty to make Mauritius a clean and safe place to live and work.

Whatever we undertake, we must bear in mind that it has an impact on the environment, the more so, it is our responsibility to take care of our ecosystem. Therefore, we on this side of the House, welcome the introduction of this Bill before this august Assembly. This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, has the objective, *inter alia*, to coordinate, monitor and supervise the implementation of the approved cleaning programmes of public sites.

Several legislations have been enacted by Parliament over the years, aiming for the cleaning and embellishment of various areas of our country. These may be summarised as follows –

- The Local Government Act empowers local authorities to –
 - a. clean and maintain public roads;
 - b. provide scavenging services;
 - c. cleaning and embellishment of the city, towns and villages;
 - d. cleaning of rivers, canals, watercourses and drains, and
 - e. cleaning of bare lands, situated in the residential areas which have been left unattended by the owners.

- The Local Government Act further allows the Solid Waste Management Division of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, to operate and maintain transfer stations and land fill sites;
- The Beach Authority Act for the cleaning and embellishment of our public beaches and lagoons;
- The Tourism Authority Act caters for tourist sites, and
- The Road Development Authority Act for the cleaning along the motorways.

Mr Speaker, Sir, no efforts have been spared by this Government in the provision of resources – be it financial, logistics or manpower – to these above-mentioned agencies for cleaning and embellishment activities, and for scavenging services. All this endeavours were undertaken in a bid to ensure a clean and safe environment for our population. In this context, more than Rs1.5 billion is currently being spent on a yearly basis by the Government to ensure a clean environment for our citizens.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has invested massively in the procurement of vehicles, equipment and the recruitment of additional workforce. Vehicles and equipment such as tipper lorries, backhoe loaders and dumpers have been procured for Rs147 m. by the Ministry for local authorities in the Financial Year 2020-2021. Furthermore, 17 tipper lorries are expected to be delivered in the forthcoming months. Another batch of 22 vehicles including additional lorries, tipper lorries, backhoe loaders and dumpers will be procured in the next financial year for an estimated cost of Rs300 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the agencies engaged in cleaning and embellishment activities is supposed to work in close collaboration to keep our island clean. It is in this particular context that in 2019, this Government under the leadership of the Prime Minister, someone who has always championed the protection of the environment and a clean Mauritius, set up a Centralised Cleaning Coordination Committee, commonly known as the 3Cs Committee, under the aegis of my Ministry. All stakeholders, including the private sector such as Business Mauritius and AHRIM were represented in this Committee, which was set up administratively. Its objective was, amongst others, to coordinate all governmental cleaning activities and embellishment programmes amongst all the agencies. It has significantly achieved its objectives with organisation of numerous major cleaning and embellishment activities, such as, Mega National

Cleaning and Embellishment Campaign in 2019, Mega Cleanup Campaign in the context of the World Cleanup Day, Bulky wastes campaigns, embellishment and other activities island wide.

However, the officers servicing the 3Cs Committee could not dedicate the required time to the activities thereof in view of the other duties and tasks that they have to perform, thus, hampering the progress of this Committee. It is therefore fitting to provide for an apposite legal framework whereby the NECA will be empowered to –

- undertake, as and when required, cleaning and embellishment works;
- cause any cleaning and embellishment works to be carried out by the local authorities, the Road Development Authority, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority and other relevant stakeholders;
- to advise the Minister on cleaning and embellishment policies and strategies, and
- enable recruitment of full-time technical staff to meet additional objectives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cleaning and embellishment of our island is not the responsibility of the Government only. It also encompasses private sector's responsibility and concerns every citizen of the country. The inclusion of "mobilising private sector support and the NGO's to complement the effort of public organisations in the delivery of the cleaning and embellishment programmes" is further welcomed. This will undoubtedly act as a catalyst to foster a new breed of nature lovers who will strive for the preservation and promotion thereof. Hence, not only Business Mauritius and AHRIM, which form part of the 3Cs Committee, but the assistance of a larger community-based activist will be leveraged by the NECA towards achievement of a cleaner and safer environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our objective is not the embellishment of just certain part of towns or villages only, but rather, it is a concerted and coordinated approach on both the urban and the rural regeneration. As such, the National Regeneration Programme (NRP) has been introduced and is expected to enhance the environment and amenities in the interests of residents, businesses, visitors and promote more sustainable development patterns.

This activity which marks a paradigm shift in our model of urbanisation and rural development requires a specific and dedicated experienced staff. However, these cannot be achieved within the existing administrative framework. Hence, it is fitting to provide in this Bill

for the recruitment of full-time technical staff, such as landscape architects and other professionals, to meet our national agenda and objectives whilst, at the same time, enable us to meet our international undertakings for Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, with a view to providing for an increased co-ordination and improved monitoring amongst the various agencies engaged in cleaning and embellishment activities, the NECA is being set-up and full time experienced employees will be recruited accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this is also the right time to consolidate our local government and spearhead it towards a new phase of development. Since its coming into power, this Government has provided a new impetus for the transformation of local authorities through various projects.

Moreover, with a view to further enhance management efficiency, effectiveness and improve service delivery in all sectors, including, cleaning and scavenging service, this Government has embarked on an array of digitalisation projects and technological innovations, through the I-Council project for the local authorities.

The I-Council comprises use of Global Positioning System (GPS), Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and a tailor-made Council Project Management Software (CPM), including, specific modules for Scavenging Service Management, Bare Land Management, Drain Management, and Street Lighting Management.

With the use of Geographical Information Systems, all the streets will be mapped in the system and all private scavenging vehicles engaged in these activities will be equipped with GPS. This will enable real time coordination, and monitoring of these services to ensure timely provision thereof, with emphasis on a clean environment.

This I-Council project has already been rolled out in five local authorities and it is expected that the implementation thereof of the remaining seven councils will be completed by the end of this year. This tool will be paramount to attaining our object of a “cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius” in a sustainable manner. The National Environment Cleaning Authority will also benefit from this system for the fulfilment of its objectives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now, I will address a few points of utmost importance which is the management of solid wastes. According to official figures, Mauritius generates more than 500,000 tons of wastes yearly and same is disposed at Mare Chicose Landfill Station. However,

the disposal of these wastes is a major cause of concern in terms of safety and hygiene. Wastes, if well managed, are nowadays considered as an asset and may contribute significantly in the circular economy.

Government is working on a source separation of municipal solid waste project for composting and recycling. The implementation of this mega project will require proper planning and close monitoring by a specific agency appropriately equipped. This is where the National Environment Cleaning Authority will play an important role as the NECA will undoubtedly contribute in the achievement of the 3R's, i.e., Reduce, Re-use and Recycle. Therefore, the inclusion of this function in the present Bill is welcome, Mr Speaker, Sir.

All 55 market fairs falling under the authority of the Ministry of Local Government generate around 8,750 tons of vegetable wastes yearly. Local authorities will also contribute in the circular economy through the composting of these green market wastes at three composting plants. The NECA will assist in the coordination of source separation of municipal solid waste and contribute significantly in the achievement of this national objective.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can inform the House that, a pilot project for the composting of market wastes has already been issued a Preliminary Environmental Report and will be constructed shortly. This environmentally sustainable project will witness optimal adherence to the 3R's principle as it will be solely powered by electricity generated from solar photovoltaic panels and will have a water harvesting system.

The contribution of the various implementing agencies under their respective legislations has been instrumental for cleaning of our island. However, the need for a legislative framework for, amongst others, coordinating, monitoring and supervising the implementation of the approved cleaning programmes of public sites is fully justified, and I entirely support it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, consolidation and harmonisation of our existing laws, in terms of tougher penalties and adoption of new systems and technologies is also imperative to meet this national objective. It is in this context that a Technical Committee has already been set-up at the level of my Ministry to work on the review of the Local Government Act. Wide consultations will be held with stakeholders prior to the finalisation thereof.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question that arises is: how will the future generations remember us? As the saying goes, we cannot wait when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, when the air we breathe is sickening. It is only then we will realise that the true wealth is not a matter of bank accounts and assets, but rather the taking care of the environment that we live in. If we do not take care of Mother Nature now, sooner or later, its consequence will come to haunt us. Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not have any choice. We have to invest in the preservation and promotion of sustainable environment as a legacy for the next generation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the need to save our environment and to provide a better, cleaner and safer place to live and work is of utmost priority. We are all aware of the degrading quality of our living environment, and we just need to open our eyes and see the tell-tale signs.

The harsh weather conditions that we have witnessed recently is a proof that we have reached the tipping point, and that our environment needs saving and securing more than ever. As we see, the occurrences of natural disasters and calamities are increasing nowadays with ever increasing loss of human life, not just in Mauritius, but also in many countries around the world. If we do not take immediate action, we will face a much more difficult, not to mention, catastrophic situation in the future.

The points which I have raised earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not an exhaustive list, but clearly depicts the commitment of this Government towards a cleaner, greener and safer environment, and obviously the well-being of our population.

The contribution of the various implementing agencies under their respective legislations has been instrumental for cleaning of our island. However, the need for a comprehensive legislative framework for, amongst others, coordinating, monitoring and supervising the implementation of the approved cleaning programmes of public sites, is fully justified.

The National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a stepping stone towards this objective and we, on this side of this House, entirely support this Bill.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

(11.52 a.m.)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, first of all, thank all the hon. Members from both sides of the House who have taken the floor and have intervened during the debate on this landmark Bill.

I appreciate that many of the interventions were constructive in nature. The positive comments and suggestions made reflect the importance that we collectively place on a clean and healthy environment for Mauritians and visitors alike.

As I have explained in my Second Reading speech, the objective of this Bill is to have an authority that will be a one-stop-shop for better coordination, results, and accountability in the cleaning and embellishment initiatives in the country. The National Environment Cleaning Authority will be an apex institution responsible for the development and implementation of a National Cleaning Strategy with an Action Plan for the island of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Members of the House will agree that this piece of legislation was long overdue. Mauritius being a prime tourist destination, we have to ensure that our environmental assets are preserved, our country kept clean, and our public places embellished in accordance with the expectations of both Mauritians and of our visitors.

Our fellow citizens also expect that cleanliness and embellishment in the country reflect the level of modernity we have achieved, and portray the improvement that we have made with regard to quality of life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with climate change and the resulting impact on our precious environmental assets, we need to be fast and efficient in addressing the issues linked, for example, with flashfloods and other extreme weather conditions. Our drains, our rivers and canals, our towns and villages, our streets, and other water prone facilities have to be cleaned and maintained at all times. We need to be proactive and prepared to intervene wherever and whenever required.

The Bill has been drafted with a view to bringing together all the expertise and know-how of the relevant stakeholders with the objective of ensuring that all actions pertaining to the cleaning and embellishment of Mauritius are, in fact, well-coordinated.

The National Environment Cleaning Authority legislation will definitely spare us from any duplication of work and from wastage of time, human resources, and public funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some Members of the Opposition, particularly hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger and hon. Nagalingum, have tried to assert that the National Environment Cleaning Authority will usurp the powers or responsibilities of the local authorities and other authorities like the Road Development Authority and the Land Drainage Authority. Their stance does not surprise me because it is, in fact, now, in the DNA of the MMM to oppose or discredit any initiative that comes from others. They have always wanted people to believe that apart from them, everybody else is either incompetent or has a sinister motive. But the rule of karma has been ruthless against them, and that explains where they are today – in the clutches of abject demagoguery and frustration, now mainly frustration I would say, and desperately clinging to anything that could bring them to power.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have done some research and gone down memory lane. I have found that the MMM had in 1988 made similar comments to those we have heard last Tuesday. Intervening at Committee of Supply Stage for the Budget, the late hon. Baligadoo queried the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, as to why the National Development Unit had been transferred to the Prime Minister's Office. He wanted to drive home that the transfer had an ill intent.

He mentioned, and I quote -

“I am inquiring whether, through this Unit, special funds will be placed at the disposal of the Private Parliamentary Secretaries, and through some disguised way, this Unit will be utilised to fund I don't know what sort of project”.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth replied to him as follows, and I quote –

“The first answer is that I fell in love with that Unit. Secondly, all the money will be spent in what is being voted in Parliament”.

Under the same item, the then hon. Uteem cast doubt on the role and functioning of the Citizen's Advice Bureaux under the Prime Minister's Office, stating that they were supposed to be attached to Ministries. He went on to say, and I quote –

“I hope it is not going to be a political agency”.

Time has, Mr Speaker, Sir, proved them wrong. The NDU, under the Prime Minister's Office, has considerably contributed to reduce the disparity between the towns and the villages. It has been complementing the work being done by the Municipalities and the District Councils. It now continues, under the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, to play an important role in improving public infrastructure and bringing the required amenities everywhere in the country, including in Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, time will again prove the MMM wrong. The National Environment Cleaning Authority will not take over the powers and responsibilities of the local authorities or any other authority. In fact, it will coordinate in a holistic manner the cleaning and embellishment exercise throughout the island. It will address gaps and bottlenecks in the system.

The creation of the National Environment Cleaning Authority cannot, in any way, be interpreted as a disapprobation of any existing local authority or of any other authority, and of the respective Ministers or Chairpersons.

M. le président, l'honorable Joanna Bérenger s'est permise de dire, et je cite -

« En réalité, la seule raison de la création de cette autorité est d'assurer la pérennité du MSM. »

Je pense, M. le président, que du côté du MMM, ils n'arrivent pas à dormir tant ils sont désespérés en voyant ce gouvernement réaliser autant de projets et prenant autant d'initiatives qui vont dans le sens de l'amélioration de la qualité de la vie dans le pays, cela en dépit de défis sans précédent imposés par le Covid-19, et maintenant par la guerre en Ukraine. Comme toujours, ils voient des agendas sinistres dans chaque décision, dans chaque initiative. Je dis, une nouvelle fois, que notre seul et unique agenda c'est l'avancement du pays et de nos concitoyens. L'histoire reconnaît que ce sont des gouvernements menés par le MSM qui ont façonné l'île Maurice avant-gardiste dans laquelle nous vivons.

Je tiens à dire à l'honorable Joanna Bérenger que le MSM au gouvernement ne va jamais utiliser la cause environnementale pour concocter des *deals* secrets, comme l'a fait le MMM, pour collecter des pactoles réguliers, pour ne pas dire mensuels, afin d'assurer sa pérennité. Demandez à qui de droit au sein de votre parti ce que c'était le '*rocksand deal*' de 2002 ! Demandez aussi où sont versés les pactoles dont j'ai fait mention. Sachez que la pourriture se

trouve dans votre camp ! Alors vous gagnerez à nettoyer votre propre cour ! Regardez derrière vous, l'honorable Ameer Meea va vous le dire, si vous voulez plus de détails !

Mr Speaker, Sir, cleaning has always been a priority for my Government. I have myself initiated and participated in a number of cleaning campaigns. But we must do more following the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the new challenges imposed by climate change.

Presently, multiple agencies are involved in cleaning works in towns, villages, public beaches and lagoons, tourist sites, motorways, public roads, rivers, canals, and drains.

And some of these activities are cross-cutting or overlapping with each other and require the intervention of several departments.

For cleaning to produce sustained results, it is imperative to have an institutional and legal set-up for a better coordination and concerted effort in the continuous implementation, monitoring, and management of cleaning around the island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to those Members of the Opposition who have chosen to pursue on the trail of systematic criticism of whatever Government initiates, and who continue to drown themselves in the colourable waters of abject demagogy, let me remind them that zero action had been taken by them when they were in power although they knew the urgencies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some have stated that Government is setting up another institution which entails more costs and that it would serve to give jobs to political agents close to us.

I have explained earlier that a coordinated approach is vital if we are to succeed in our endeavours for a cleaner and better embellished Mauritius. That can only be achieved if we have an apex body. I do think that any sensible person will understand that.

As for the allegation in some quarters, particularly within the Labour Party, inferring that the National Environment Cleaning Authority will provide an opportunity to recruit political agents or people close to us, I can only refer these people to the averment of a former Private Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Dhiraj Singh Khamajeet, who revealed the *modus operandi* of the Labour Government with regard to recruitment in the public service. He said, at that time, there were sharks of the Labour Party who were contacting their people, even if they had not applied for a job, even on Saturdays - they must be working overtime at that time - to make sure they get

recruited. That was the sort of nepotism that was rife during the reign of the Labour Party. And they dare point their fingers at us! I think they should look at themselves in the mirror!

As for this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, we ensure deserving people are recruited. I can say without hesitation that people are recruited because of their merit. Some of our political supporters and followers always, in fact, complain, in so many cases where they have been saying: ‘Well, there are other people of different political opinion who have been recruited’ and so on. I need not say what we see from time to time also, but I always tell them that we are working for everybody alike and we do not discriminate against those who deserve a job. I can assure the House that we shall never depart from that stance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me add that the Bill has been prepared in consultation with all key partners, including the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Beach Authority, the Land Drainage Authority, the Road Development Authority, and the Tourism Authority. I would like to seize this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to all those Ministries and institutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill marks a new milestone to make Mauritius cleaner and more attractive. If we are to truly move the needle, all stakeholders must play their part on cleanliness, including our fellow citizens who must also assume their responsibilities. This is not just about safeguarding public health but also about building a more gracious society. Ultimately, cleanliness as well as public hygiene is a collective responsibility. I appeal to one and all to join hands in making Mauritius a truly clean and liveable home and instil a national culture of cleanliness. Good public hygiene will help us get over the current pandemic and be better prepared for any future outbreak.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill (No. V of 2022) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the National Environment Cleaning Authority Bill (No. V of 2022) was read a third time and passed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL -

VOTES OF EXPENDITURE - DEBATE

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to draw your attention that debate on the Bill must be confined to the reasons as to why the extra money is being sought in regard to the votes of expenditure specified...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: We can't hear you!

Mr Speaker: You want me to speak in the loudspeaker.

(Interruptions)

You prefer the loudspeaker. Okay!

I wish to draw your attention that debate on the Bill must be confined to the reasons as to why the extra money is being sought in regard to the votes of expenditure specified in the Schedule and for the period specified therein. Hon. Members should, therefore, stand guided accordingly and I request the hon. Minister not to open the debate on extraneous matters. I now call Dr. the hon. Padayachy.

(12.14 p.m.)

Second Reading

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL

(No. VIII OF 2022)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy):

Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill (No. VIII of 2022) be read a second time.

This Bill makes provision for a supplementary appropriation of nine billion and five hundred million rupees (Rs9.5 billion) under five votes of expenditure in respect of services of Government for the Financial Year 2021-2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in June last year, the House had voted a total sum of Rs145.7 billion for Financial year 2021-2022 under 72 Votes of Expenditure through the Appropriation (2021-2022) Act of 2021. However, the sums appropriated under five Votes of Expenditure will be insufficient to meet expenditure up to end June 2022. This is essentially due to some unforeseen expenditure and developments after presentation of the 2021-2022 Budget such as implementation of the PRB report.

Hon. Members will recall that Section 105(3)(a) of the Constitution stipulates that, where in any financial year it is found that amount appropriated by the appropriation law for the purposes included in any head of expenditure also known as Vote of Expenditure is insufficient or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the appropriation law, then a Supplementary Appropriation Bill needs to be introduced in the Assembly to provide for the appropriation of those sums.

Thus, in line with Section 105(3)(a) of the Constitution, supplementary appropriations are required in respect of those five Votes of Expenditure where funds will be insufficient.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the five Votes are listed in the Schedule to the Bill together with the respective sums. Details on the items of expenditure concerned as well as explanatory notes thereon are set out in the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure that has already been tabled in the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate on the supplementary appropriation of Rs9.5 billion.

- (i) Rs300 m. is required under Vote 7-1: Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning

and Development to enable the Mauritius Revenue Authority to meet costs associated with the implementation of its Salary Review Exercise, with effect from 1st July 2020;

- (ii) Rs280 m. is needed under Vote: 8-1 Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities to compensate the Central Electricity Board, the revenue foregone following implementation of a subsidy on electricity tariff for a 12-month period as from 01 January 2022;
- (iii) Rs2.5 billion is required under Vote: 18-1 Ministry of Health and Wellness, essentially to cater for the following –
 - i. Rs490 m. to pay hotels that were used as quarantine centres during the period March to September 2021, following the resurgence of COVID-19 virus in Mauritius;
 - ii. Rs510 m. for payment of allowances such as night duty allowance, bank nurse allowance and in attendance allowance to eligible officers in line with PRB Report;
 - iii. Rs600 m. for the payment of overtime to officers who worked in quarantine centres and ENT Hospital in connection with COVID-19 pandemic;
 - iv. Rs700 m. mainly for purchase of PCR Tests Kits, Rapid Antigen Tests Kits and other medical disposals related to COVID-19, and
 - v. Rs200 m. for acquisition of various laboratory devices and supplies.
- (iv) Rs520 m. is necessary under Vote: 23-1 Centrally Managed Expenses of Government to accommodate encashment of passage benefits by civil servants and increase in contribution towards the Defined Contribution Pension Scheme, following implementation of the PRB Report, and
- (v) last but not least, Rs5.9 billion is required under Vote: 24-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government as follows –
 - i. Rs3.1 billion to cater for the increase in salaries of civil servants and officers working in parastatal bodies, local authorities and Rodrigues Regional Assembly, following implementation of the 2021 PRB Report, with effect

from 01 January 2021. The implementation of the Report is estimated to cost Rs4.3 billion annually. However, for the current financial year, a sum of Rs6.8 billion will be needed due to payment of the arrears for the period January to June 2021, in this financial year.

- ii. Rs2.5 billion for contribution to the COVID-19 Projects Development Fund to ensure smooth implementation of the Flood Management Programme over the next 3 years, and finally
- iii. Rs300 m. in connection with SDR transactions following the request of IMF to pay USD equivalent of SDR of 5 m. to finance a purchase by Suriname on 25 March 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that bulk of this supplementary appropriations will be offset by underspending in other Votes of Expenditure. As such, the budget deficit for the current financial year will be around 5% of GDP as budgeted. Public sector debt, on the other hand, will be around 88% of GDP.

With these remarks, Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend this Bill to the House.

The Prime Minister seconded.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(12.22 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, we are being asked to ratify expenditure already incurred by Government; expenditure that was not budgeted last year. Once again, we are presented with a *fait accompli*. Because Government knows that its parliamentary majority will ratify any expenditure, Government has given itself a licence to spend outside what has been approved in the Budget.

I agree that there may be unexpected expenditures which could not have been foreseen at the time of the Budget, but when we take a closer look at the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure, the bulk of the expenditure could and should have been foreseen when last year's Budget was prepared. The Government even knew at that time that they would implement the PRB Report. In fact, at paragraph 361 of the Budget Speech, one could read, and I quote –

“(…), we are providing funds this year for the implementation of the PRB Report.”

So, this was known to the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development at the time he presented his Budget last year.

So, why are we being asked today to approve additional expenditure to the tune of Rs9.5 billion? We are not talking about a couple of hundred millions of rupees. We are talking about Rs9.5 billion. Were these expenditure really not foreseen? Was the additional expenditure the result of poor planning? Or did Government deliberately understate its estimated expenditure last year to understate the budget deficit? In last year’s Budget Speech, the hon. Minister announced that the budget deficit would be expected to reach 5.6%, and today he has just confirmed that these figures still stand because of underspending on other budgeted items.

But the fundamental question we should ask, Mr Speaker, Sir, is how will this or how has this Rs9.5 billion of additional expenditure been financed? How much additional revenue has been collected in form of taxes to finance that Rs9.5 billion? The amount of tax as at 30 June 2021, at the time the Budget was approved, on each litre of Mogas was Rs18.81. I am talking only about excise duty and VAT, not the contribution. Today, it is Rs21.86. 16.2% increase! When it comes to diesel, it is even worse. Last year, the amount of tax, excise duty and VAT on each litre of diesel was Rs9.50. Now, it is Rs11.81, which represents 24.2% increase in revenue collection.

So, when the hon. Prime Minister during the weekend goes and says that petroleum prices are being increased to avoid STC from becoming bankrupt, he should say the whole truth. He should say how much money is filling the coffers of this Government each time there is an increase in the price of petroleum products. 25% increase in taxes on each litre of diesel and 16% increase in taxes on each litre of gasoil, of *l’essence!* But the increase in tax is not sufficient to pay for the Rs9.5 billion in additional expenditure. So where will the money come from? It will come from loans. And the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has just announced that public sector debt will reach 88% of GDP. I hope he will give the breakdown because this figure has been contested by the International Monetary Fund in its latest report.

The question that the population must ask itself is the following: was the additional Rs9.5 billion spent by this Government justified? And should we, the people, have to reimburse the debt which this Government is incurring and putting on the shoulders of future generation

because of this additional expenditure? So, let us turn to the specific expenditure to see whether they were avoidable, unforeseeable or whatnot. Almost half of the supplementary expenditure relates to the implementation of the PRB Report.

M. le président, le rapport du *PRB* a été publié en octobre de l'année dernière. Le Premier ministre, animant une conférence de presse, avait alors indiqué que les recommandations du *PRB* qui tournent autour de R 6.5 milliards seront applicables à partir de janvier 2021. À partir de janvier 2021 ! Or, dans le manifeste électoral de *L'Alliance Morisien*, en bonne position parmi les 15 mesures phares, on pouvait lire et je cite –

« Le prochain rapport du *PRB* prendra effet à partir de janvier 2020. »

Janvier 2020, pas janvier 2021 ! Durant la campagne électorale, vous avez mené les fonctionnaires en bateau en leur promettant que le rapport du *PRB* prendra effet à partir de janvier 2020 et non pas à partir de janvier 2021. D'ailleurs, dès janvier 2020, les fonctionnaires avaient obtenu une augmentation de R 1,000 comme une avance. Vous n'avez pas tenu promesse, M. le Premier ministre, une fois de plus. Les grands perdants sont les fonctionnaires ayant pris leur retraite en 2020. Ils ne bénéficieront pas d'une révision de leurs pensions. Par contre, avec le *PRB*, est venue la contribution sociale obligatoire pour les fonctionnaires. Ce que main droite a obtenu comme augmentation salariale, main gauche a dû le rembourser en partie sous forme de contribution sociale.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the next big item of supplementary expenditure relates to the Ministry of Health and Wellness. We are being asked to approve the payment of some Rs490 m., almost half a billion rupees, to hotels used as quarantine centres during the period March to September 2021. First of all, we should ask ourselves why are we being asked to ratify expenditure in this Financial Year for the period March 2021 to September 2021 when this Supplementary Appropriation Bill relates to expenditure incurred for Financial Year 2021-2022, meaning for expenditure incurred for the Financial Year starting 01 July 2021, ending 30 June 2022.

So, why are we being asked today to approve expenditure incurred for another financial year? How much of this Rs490 m. relates to expenditure incurred before 01 July 2021? Because here, we are asked to approve some expenditures ranging from March to September. Should not the expenditure incurred between March and June be the subject of a Supplementary Appropriation Bill for Financial Year 2021 although the hon. Minister of Finance thinks that it is

possible in this financial year to ratify expenditure incurred in another financial year? So, I hope the hon. Minister of Finance can give some clarification during his summing-up.

There have been numerous PQs, Mr Speaker, Sir, on this subject and we were told that the High-Level Committee chaired by the Prime Minister had assigned the responsibility to arrange for quarantine centres for returning Mauritian passengers to the Ministry of Tourism with the collaboration of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority. And it was the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism who has been answering PQs each time we asked about hotels being used as quarantine centres. But today, we are told to vote Rs490 m. under the Ministry of Health and Wellness, not under the Ministry of Tourism, not the amount paid to MTPA. So, we want to know why it is no longer the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority who is in charge of dealing with hotels used as quarantine centres. Who took the decision? When was it taken? Why was it taken? Were the hotels used for quarantine for the Financial Year 2021-2022 the same as the hotels that were used during the first confinement? What was the procurement method used to select those hotels? Did the Ministry of Health and Wellness receive any negative representation from people who stayed at these hotels? Was, for example, the Ministry satisfied with the quality of the foods that were served in those hotels? It was widely reported in the Press and on social media last year that dialysis patients were given *briani, mine frite, satini pomdamour* at 11 o'clock at night, which were totally unfit for their diet. Has the Ministry taken any action against these hotels or are we being asked to pay Rs490 m. to the hotels when we are not satisfied with the service and the quality of food that they have served? So, we have the right to know, Mr Speaker, Sir, what procurement method has been used to select the hotels and more importantly did we get value for money.

This brings me to the next item of expenditure - medical disposable and minor equipment. Initially, an amount of Rs500 m. was budgeted. Now, we are asked to vote an additional amount of Rs700 m. which represents 140% more than was budgeted. 140% more! So, from June last year to this year, there has been an increase of 140% more in the purchase of what? PCR Test Kits and Rapid Antigen Test Kits! So, do you really want this House to believe that last year, the Ministry did not anticipate how many PCR Test Kits and Rapid Antigen Test Kits they will require? And the budget was voted last year after the second wave of confinement. So, they knew. They were not taken by surprise by COVID.

So, now that the purchase has been done, who supplied those PCR Test Kits and Rapid Antigen Test Kits? Jewellers? Owners of *quincailleries*? Suppliers who did not have *dilwil dan zorey*? Surely, the Ministry did not have recourse to emergency procurement because there was no emergency. Or did it? Were those medical supplies supplied by registered, trusted suppliers of the competitive bidding? Surely, the Ministry would not be able to use the same argument that they used to justify the procurement exercise, that they were saving lives. And I hope the hon. Minister has taken good note of what the Director of Audit had stated in his report last year, and I quote –

“...nothing justifies the flouting of the principles of good governance, especially when it involves public funds.”

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, the same comments apply to the additional Rs200 m. that we are asked to approve for various equipment and supplies. Again, a budget overrun of 75%. We approved a budget of Rs260 m. last year and now, we are told that we ended paying Rs460 m. for these suppliers. So, again, we would like to know from the hon. Minister who are these suppliers? Are we dealing with Pack and Blister again? Do all these equipment work? During the Committee of Supply, the hon. Minister will have to provide a detailed list of all those equipment that were purchased, the name of the suppliers and the procurement methods used to acquire those equipment.

We are also being asked, Mr Speaker, Sir, to approve payment of Rs280 m. to the Central Electricity Board as subsidy on electricity tariff. The amount of subsidy ranges between 6% and 10% of the electricity bill of a number of households and were supposed to last until the end of this year. According to the financial statement of the CEB on its website, the latest one relates to accounts for the Financial Year ending June 2020, as at 30 June 2020, CEB - listen to that - had an accumulated surplus of Rs20 billion and reserve of Rs7.8 billion. Just for that year, 2019-2020, it had realised a profit, a surplus of Rs816 m. So, at the beginning of this financial year, the CEB was financially in a very healthy position – it had the financial muscles to absorb the increase in fuel prices resulting from the war between Ukraine and Russia. It had the financial muscles to absorb the 20% depreciation in the value of rupees. And now, we are told that we have to pay Rs280 m. to CEB as subsidy?

The population needs to know the truth. How come, the CEB which had a very good financial position, is in a situation where we now have to pay subsidy to CEB? The population deserves the truth, Mr Speaker, Sir. The population deserves to know how much money the Government took from CEB to finance its expenditure for 2020 till today.

Gouverner, c'est prévoir. How could Government take away the reserves and surplus of CEB to finance its budget deficit? And now that the Government has taken away the surplus and reserves of CEB, who will pay for an increase in the price of fuel? Us, the population? Would you blame the Ukraine-Russian war for an increase in electricity tariff? Or would you, Government, be honest to acknowledge that you have looted the reserves of CEB just like you have looted the reserves of STC and you have looted the reserves of the Bank of Mauritius?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last item of expenditure that I would like to comment upon relates to the transfer of Rs2.5 billion to the COVID-19 Project Development Fund. Last year we voted in amount of Rs8.5 billion and we are required to vote an additional of Rs2.5 billion.

The Fund was set up in April 2020. According to the estimates in last year's budget, the opening balance as at 01 July 2022 was Rs18.16 billion – I repeat, you heard me well: there was at the beginning of this Financial Year, Rs18.1 billion of unspent money in that Fund. And you had budgeted to transfer Rs.8.5 billion from the Consolidated Fund to this fund of Rs8.6 billion. Therefore, the total amount of money in that Fund was Rs26.7 billion. And you had estimated expenditure of Rs11.6 billion. So, as at 31 June 2022, you have estimated a balance of Rs15 billion in that Fund. So, if you have estimated that there will be Rs15 billion in that Fund, why are we transferring more money to that Fund? Why are we transferring Rs2.5 billion to that Fund? We know that you had budgeted Rs10 billion out of this Fund to pay for the construction of social housing, you have not spent Rs1 on these construction of social housing! So, there is a lot of money already in that Fund. Why are we being asked to pay more money into that Fund? And when we read the small print in your Estimate, what is this Rs2.5 billion going to be used for, I quote –

“Provisions required for contribution to fund to ensure smooth implementation of the Flood Management Programme over the next three years”.

You already have Rs15 billion; you want to put Rs2.5 billion more to spend over the next three years but, hon. Minister of Finance, today the priority of the people is to eat, to lower the

cost of living. With Rs2.5 billion, you could have used that money to increase old age pension; you could have used it to give food vouchers to people and the vulnerable; you could have used it to reduce the price of petroleum products. But unfortunately, this Government is completely *coupé de la réalité*. It is a Government that simply, couldn't care less.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(12.42 p.m.)

Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It is a shame, Mr Speaker, Sir, a shame that at a time when we were expecting a mini budget or at least some urgent measures – much-needed measures – to help the Mauritian population who is deeply suffering and who cannot eat to his fill, to overcome these tough times, we are here debating on Rs9.5 billion which has been most probably squandered as has always been the case with this Government.

Alors qu'on est en train de jongler avec des chiffres par millions, excusez-moi, par milliards, le peuple est victime d'une violence économique sans précédent. R 9.5 milliards est une somme colossale. Une somme colossale qui a été dépensée, probablement même dilapidée sans avoir été au préalable votée par le Parlement. Et maintenant on vient nous demander d'y donner notre bénédiction alors que nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, sommes totalement opposés à ce que des fonds publics d'un montant aussi conséquent soient utilisés en passant par l'impôt.

Le fait qu'on nous demande de voter cette somme faramineuse additionnelle, démontre clairement la mauvaise gestion économique et manque de prévoyance du ministre des Finances. C'est une preuve flagrante que notre économie est gérée avec amateurisme et incompetence. Gouverner, c'est prévoir. Ce gouvernement ne la pas encore appris selon toute évidence malgré la motion de blâme dont il a fait l'objet tout récemment.

Comme il y a le ministre de la Santé qui va intervenir juste après moi, je vais me consacrer sur l'item de la Santé publique - 18.1 et j'attends à ce que le ministre apporte des éclaircissements à des questions qui vont être soulevées.

De ces R 9.5 milliards additionnels, le ministère de la Santé va bouffer R 2.5 milliards et cela en sus du budget alloué R 13.1 milliards qui lui avaient été initialement accordés dans le dernier budget. Ce qui fait que la Santé a engorgé au total R 15.6 milliards. R 15.6 milliards, M. le président, alors que la Santé publique fait toujours face à une sérieuse pénurie de médicaments. Une sérieuse pénurie de médicaments depuis plusieurs mois et je peux soumettre une liste au ministre de la Santé s'il n'est pas au courant.

M. le président, une pénurie de médicaments parce que d'après le règlement, d'après les procédures établies du ministère, le *Annual Procurement Plan*, les appels d'offres annuels devaient être lancés en avril de l'année 2021 pour l'exercice financier 2021-2022. Mais j'attends à ce que le ministre vienne nous éclaircir dessus. Pourquoi les appels d'offres ont été lancés seulement en décembre 2021, soit huit mois plus tard ? Pourquoi ? Qui protéger ? Et pendant ces huit mois, à part les pénuries que je viens de vous dire, il y a eu aussi *Emergency Procurement*. Pour protéger qui ? Des centaines de millions de roupies de médicaments ont été achetés suivant la procédure *d'Emergency Procurement*.

M. le président, la Covid-19 aura une fois de plus le dos large mais je vais vous dire exactement pourquoi la Covid-19 ne peut pas être tenue responsable de la gabegie, de la mauvaise gouvernance et des manigances concernant les contrats pour remplir les poches des copains, copines, familles en autres.

M. le président, allons à l'item 18.1 pour les centres de quarantaine. Le ministre nous demande un budget additionnel de R 490 millions en sus de R 1.5 milliards déjà alloués aux centres de quarantaine. R 1,990,000, voilà ce que le rapport de l'audit nous dit –

“Out of Rs205 m. paid for quarantine charges as of June 2021,” which we have been asked to approve now, “invoices for payments totalling Rs198 m. were neither certified correct by the Medical Health Officers in the quarantine facilities nor cross verified with the database of the Communicable Diseases Control Unit CDCU for payment.”

Rs198 m. out of Rs205 m., 95% ni vérifiés, ni contre vérifiés ont été payés !

Et vous savez, M. le président, je vous donne la réponse du ministère –

“There were no discrepancies in figures. In fact, the discrepancies were in the number of days the persons were quarantined in hotels according to records.”

No discrepancies in figures! Discrepancies in the number of days!

They went further and said –

“Action would be initiated by the Finance Section to recoup the overpayment made, (...)”

A ce jour combien a-t-on récupéré, M. le ministre ? Nous devons savoir. Nous sommes en train de parler de centaines de millions de roupies !

(Interruptions)

Nous devons savoir où est l'argent, combien nous avons récupéré, *overpayment* ? Cela vous fait rire ! C'est pour cela que 80% de la population n'approuvent pas l'action du gouvernement ! C'est de cela dont vous êtes fier ? *Mem sondaz ki to ti cite la sa !*

(Interruptions)

M. le président, voilà ce qui est encore dit : *out of 24 quarantine facilities and treatment centres, 14 facilities treatment centres; contracts with them have not yet been signed, yet already paid. More than 60% !* Et c'est pour cela qu'on n'est pas d'accord, M. le président.

Et M. le Premier ministre, il nous dit qu'il dépense chaque sou comme si c'est son argent ! Et M. le ministre, Alan Ganoo, demande à la population de comprendre. Comment comprendre ? 95 % payés et le ministère lui-même dit qu'il y a peut-être un problème et qu'ils vont reprendre l'argent avec les fournisseurs. Voilà, M. le Premier ministre, voilà ce que votre ministre est en train de faire. Je sais que vous n'êtes peut-être pas au courant.

R 7.3 millions payés au traiteur pour la nourriture, mon collègue vient de le dire. C'est ce qu'on a vécu dans les centres de quarantaine avec les patients dialysés. R 7.3 millions payés au traiteur ! On ne sait pas si la procédure d'allocation de contrat pour la nourriture a été suivie.

Les allocations de l'ordre de R 10.6 millions à 16 médecins du ministère de la Sécurité sociale. Là on nous demande d'approuver les *overtimes*. 16 médecins, 100 jours, R 10.6 millions ! Et vous savez, voilà ce que le ministère nous dit –

“The Ministry of Health and Wellness had recommended that all Regional Public Health Superintendents should ensure that health workers do not have to work again after 14 or 21 days after quarantine.”

Yet, we have one doctor who has been working for 221 days consecutively. That is how our Minister is governing his Ministry!

M. le président, le fameux Molnupiravir, j'attends que le ministre vienne nous confirmer cela. Est-ce qu'il y a un accord qui a été signé la semaine dernière entre CPN, le fournisseur, et le ministère de la Santé ? Le ministère va garder 500,000 comprimés au coût de R 40 millions qui vont expirer dans les jours à venir ? R 40 millions vont être jetées par la fenêtre ! Il faut payer pour se débarrasser de R 40 millions de Molnupiravir. Venez nous confirmer cela. M. le Premier ministre, ce n'est pas d'un sou que l'on parle-là, on est en train de parler de millions de roupies ! Venez nous dire cela, M. le ministre.

Il y a aussi l'item *Laboratory Apparatuses and Suppliers*, vous êtes en train de solliciter pour une addition the R 200 millions. Il faut venir nous dire, M. le ministre, vous avez acheté des appareils pour faire des tests de la Covid-19 dans les hôpitaux régionaux. Les appareils ont été livrés en juin de l'année dernière. Pourquoi en plein Covid n'avons-nous pas utilisé les appareils et ce n'est qu'en février lorsqu'il y a 2, 3, 10 cas dans les hôpitaux qu'on est en train d'utiliser les appareils ? Pour payer les laboratoires privés, c'est pour cela !

Si je continue, M. le président...

An hon. Member : *Continue !*

Mr Juman: L'autre jour mon ami, mon collègue, Dr. Mahend Gungapersad, pose une question à l'honorable ministre, il lui demande pour l'année 2020 à ce jour combien de médicaments a-t-on qui ont expirés/périmés. Le ministre vient nous dire qu'il est en train de compiler les chiffres alors que la veille il a eu deux réunions, les chiffres à la main, R 200 millions de médicaments périmés. Venez nous le confirmer, M. le ministre, de 2020 à ce jour ! Pourquoi le cachez-vous à la Chambre ?

An hon. Member: Shame!

An hon. Member: *200 millions!*

Mr Juman: Savez-vous pourquoi je sais tout ça ? Pourquoi je sais ce qui s'est passé à l'ICTA ? Parce que ce gouvernement *is in office, no more in power !* Voilà la réalité !

(Interruptions)

Moi, je ne vais pas dire de casser des omelettes pour faire des œufs ! Je ne vais pas dire cela. Mais si quelqu'un peut casser des omelettes pour faire des œufs, et qualifier ce même ministre de la Santé le meilleur ministre que notre pays ai connu, alors jugez vous-même !

Merci, M. le président.

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

At 12.58 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

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

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to bring my contribution on the Supplementary Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will refer exclusively to the supplementary funds being requested by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, where we are being asked to approve and vote an additional sum of Rs2.5 billion for the supplementary expenditure for 2021-2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are being asked to approve an additional sum of Rs490 m. for the payment of some selected hotels which were used as quarantine centres during the period March to September 2021, under the item *-Hotel Accommodation*.

In his report, the Director of Audit, for the Financial Year 2020-2021, on page 299, writes the following –

“Out of some Rs205 million paid for quarantine charges as of June 2021, invoices for payments totalling Rs198 million were neither certified correct by the Medical Health Officers in the quarantine facilities nor cross verified with the database of the Communicable Diseases Control Unit (CDCU) prior to payment.”

In the report, we also read on page 299, the following –

“The following shortcomings were noted from an examination of available records relating to quarantine facilities:

- (a) Lack of internal checks on payments;

- (b) Delay in signature of contracts between MOHW and quarantine facilities/treatment centres;
- (c) Non-compliance with the Public Procurement Act;
- (d) Lack of proper records on operations regarding allocation of quarantine facilities; and
- (e) Non-compliance with protocol for quarantine facilities for Medical and Nursing Officers.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we read the report of the Director of Audit, we have this legitimate question: is it normal to carry out payment for invoices which have neither been certified nor verified? Is it normal to carry out payment worth Rs198 m. without proper internal checks on payments?

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we need to spend money to protect our population, it is fair enough. But how can we approve payments when we are told that there has been lack of internal checks on payments. We are talking of public funds and the Director of Audit has highlighted how these funds have been blatantly mismanaged.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while we are being asked to vote for an additional Rs490 m. for the quarantine facilities, it is important we read again from the report –

“Out of some Rs205 million paid for quarantine charges as of June 2021, invoices for payments totalling Rs198 million were neither certified”

This is serious. When the Ministry of Health and Wellness was asked to explain the above shortcomings, its response is shocking. What did the Ministry said? On page 299, we read the following –

“In fact, the discrepancies were in the number of days the persons were quarantined in hotels according to the records. The Finance Section was informed not to effect payment for those discrepancies noted. Action would be initiated by the Finance Section to recoup the overpayment made, if any.”

My questions to the hon. Minister, who will intervene just after me; here are the questions -

- (1) What discrepancies were noted?

- (2) The discrepancies represented what sum of money?
- (3) How come such discrepancies occurred?
- (4) Why no initial due diligence was carried out?
- (5) What sum of money was recouped for the overpayment which was made?

Mr Speaker, Sir, how can we vote for that sum of Rs490 m. when so many questions have been left unanswered? Again, I hope the Minister, who will intervene after me, will answer these questions without circumventing them. Without circumventing them!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now move to the item entitled – *Hospital and Specialised Services*, where we are being asked to approve two different items namely -

- (a) Rs510 m. for allowances, and
- (b) Rs600 m. for overtime.

That is, the Ministry is asking us to vote a total of Rs1.1 billion for allowances and overtime.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first of all refer to the Rs510 m. for the item -Allowances. No one is against the payment of allowances and overtime for our medical staff. If they have worked for it, even if it costs an additional sum of Rs1.1 billion, as long as the claims are justified and calculated in a transparent manner, they should get their due. But what does the Director of Audit have to say about these expenses? The Director of Audit writes the following on page 300 in his report –

“The Public Health and Food Safety Unit of the MOHW was responsible for allocating the quarantine facilities to persons following contact tracing operations. However, no proper records were kept in respect of requests made by the MOHW to the MTPA for such quarantine facilities.”

Where is transparency? Where is accountability? Mr Speaker, Sir, we are being asked to vote for an additional half a billion of rupees, that is, Rs510 m. as Supplementary Budget when we are told that there has been non-compliance with protocol for quarantine facilities for medical and nursing officers. I hope all the medical and nursing officers who are following this debate realise in what opacity half a billion of rupees was spent. Did all eligible medical and nursing officers benefit from this financial largesse or was it only meant for a selected few? A few lucky ones!

Now, I will refer to the additional Rs600 m. for the item - Overtime. Again, I maintain, Mr Speaker, Sir, that doctors, nursing officers, paramedical officers and everyone who worked hard during the pandemic should get their due. They should get their due as per the PRB Report, as per established protocol for quarantine facilities for medical and nursing officers. Even here, we note with stupefaction that some had a field day with public funds while others did not get their due. The Director of Audit writes the following –

1. “... 16 Doctors from the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, whose services were retained by the MOHW, worked for over 100 days in quarantine facilities, and allowances totalling some Rs10.6 million were paid to them.
2. Ten of these Doctors stayed continuously for more than 30 days and one of them [note it well] worked for 226 days.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will delve on the Rs10.6 m. paid to the 16 doctors and I will not ask how come ten of these doctors stayed continuously for more than 30 days. I will not ask how one of these doctors worked for 226 days. I will not get the answer. But I would like to highlight the following observation made by the Director of Audit. He writes and it is important that everyone hears it –

“...there was no evidence that the Doctors of the MOHW were requested to work in the quarantine facilities.”

There was no evidence! Why the doctors of Ministry of Health and Wellness were not requested to work in the quarantine facilities? Mr Speaker, Sir, before voting for the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, we have the right to ask the following questions regarding the Rs510 m. for the allowances and Rs600 m. for overtime, that is, Rs1,110,000,000. What are the questions?

- Why were doctors from the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity retained and not doctors from Ministry of Health and Wellness?
- On what criteria were these doctors selected or chosen to work or not to work in the quarantine centres?

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, the greatest aberration is yet to be highlighted. Let me quote from page 301 of the Audit Report –

“... [When] the sample of invoices from the hotels [was] examined, the names of 14 Nursing Officers/Health Care Assistants who worked in these quarantine facilities could not be traced in the staff list of the Ministry.”

Who are these 14 Nursing Officers and Health Care Assistants who worked in the quarantine facilities but whose names are not in the staff list of the Ministry? I repeat - who are they? Can they be traced? Who pocketed the money? Who jotted down the fictitious names in the list of beneficiaries when these names are not in the staff list of the Ministry? *Est-ce qu'on doit voter des milliards pour des Nursing Officers et Health Care Assistants qui n'existent pas ? Des fantômes je dirais ! Fantom pa seulement pe vote dan sa pei la ; fantom pe gagn overtime ! Ki manier pou pey fantom overtime ? Bisin aprann avek minister de la santé. Comme dirait l'autre, plus fantôme que ça, tu meurs!* Instead of regularly digging for the *fantôme* of political opponents, of the Labour Party, of the leader of the Labour Party, you better sort out these fictitious payments which exist in your Ministry. *J'espère que le ministère de la Santé va éclairer la population sur le comment et sur le pourquoi des telles pratiques mafieuses et scandaleuses au sein de son ministère.*

And like hon. Juman said it, is the Prime Minister aware of how public funds are being mishandled, not to say embezzled in this country? I have heard him saying qu'il "*gère les fonds publics comme ci c'était mon argent*". *Dialog! Dialog for, aksion zero!* You must be joking, hon. Prime Minister! And it is a bad joke because your Government is throwing good money after bad. At a time when so many decent hard-working Mauritians are facing the difficult and painful experiences of making both ends meet, 14 fictitious officers are pocketing money from public funds.

An hon. Member: *Bisin fer ene prison Côte-d'Or!*

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: yourself.

Dr. Gungapersad: ... the saga does not end with the 14 *officiers fantômes*. The Director of Audit writes the following on page 301 in his report. Listen well all of you on the other side who can justify the unjustifiable!

“... one Nursing Officer stayed in a quarantine facility continuously for 92 days from 3 October 2020 to 3 January 2021 - *Inn fer lane laba!* He was paid Rs920,000 for quarantine charges for his stay.”

Qui est cet oiseau rare? Perle rare ! Qui est-ce? Peut-être M. le ministre va nous éclairer durant son intervention.

Today we are being asked to approve this...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Gungapersad: Today we are being asked to approve this in this supplementary appropriation and you think we are going to vote for that? He was paid at the rate of *R 10 000 par jour* which, according to the Director of MTPA, was a discounted rate. What if it was not discounted? *Ça aurait été combien?* God knows! To add insult to injury, we are told that no documentary evidence could be produced in respect of the negotiations held and the discounted offer made. So, what will the Minister tell us now because there is no documentary evidence? I know the propensity of this Government to justify the unjustifiable, to approve what cannot be approved, to condone what cannot be condoned. Let us wait and see how they will justify the unjustifiable in a few minutes. And let us wait to see how those, on the other side of the House, will shamelessly, not to say reverently, *tap latab* in a few minutes. Let the population see that in a few minutes!

M. le président, je dirais que le secteur de la santé est très malade ! Le ministère de la Santé a sérieusement besoin d'un vaccin anti-gourmandise, anti-corruption et anti-mauvaise gestion financière ! Un vaccin anti-opacité dans sa gestion des finances publiques ! Sinon il n'y a pas de cure contre les scandales qui ont violemment gangrené et secoué ce ministère sans répit !

M. le président, pour conclure, on est dans un dilemme cornélien. Maintenant avec ce présent gouvernement, *pa kone ki pou fer ! Pa zis pena konfians kan lisien vey sosis*, mais pour parodier l'autre, *pa kone kisanla pou fer konfians kan sosis pe vey lisien ! Ki so lisien, ki so sosis, tou le 2 voler !* This is a non-compliant Government and I am not going to vote for it.

Thank you.

An hon. Member: *Bravo Mahend! Top net sa!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Jagutpal!

(2.49 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, we are called today...

Mr Mohamed: Shame!

Mr Speaker: What is happening? Shame, shame, shame! Shame for what?

Mr Mohamed: Shame for him!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Shame for him? Out! Out!

(Interruptions)

If you said shame for him, out!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: But it is parliamentary!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Out!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: It is parliamentary!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I tell you shame for the Minister is unparliamentary! This is my instruction! And you have to obey!

An hon. Member: *Alle!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: So, can I apologise and stay?

Mr Speaker: No! No!

Mr Mohamed: No?

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Mohamed: You are happy if I go then!

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mr Mohamed: I am sad that I have to go.

Mr Speaker: I have been listening to you!

Mr Mohamed: I am listening to the speech and I said shame to him!

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much! Thank you very much!

Mr Mohamed: He is a shameful character!

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much! Thank you!

Mr Mohamed: I thank you too!

Mr Speaker: Thank you, thank you, thank you!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, before starting to debate on this Bill, I wish to point out that hon. Shakeel Mohamed has spoken with his mask down and this is contrary to sanitary protocols in Parliament.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ayo!*

Dr. Jagutpal: *Be oui!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Dr. Jagutpal: This is their attitude and how they rebut on all issues! Mr Speaker, Sir, we are called today to debate on supplementary budget made available to various ministries during the Financial Year 2021-2022. I will limit my intervention to the resources provided in excess to my Ministry during this challenging and unprecedented phase of time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, provision for the supplementary funds means that this Government is continuously adapting itself to the fast pace of unpredicted challenges. Mr Speaker, Sir, this attitude demarcates us from the Opposition who has shown its true colours with their go slow attitude.

I will start by reacting to the comments made by hon. Uteem. Mr Speaker, Sir, he alleged that this Government has put the House *devant un fait accompli* and that we have a licence to spend. Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Bhagwan is saying *kokin*; I will come up and explain what is *kokin* about this supplementary budget. And hon. Uteem also pointed out that we did not make provisions for the payment of PRB though this element was already present in the last Budget Speech. I think that he has a *boule de cristal* because he knew what we were about to go through last year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I challenge him to state the name of a single country where, due to the pandemic, unplanned expenses have not been incurred. So, I am inviting him to give us any single country which has the resources as to what the world is facing, and whether this is unique to Mauritius.

In regard to PRB Report, Mr Speaker, Sir, who would have been able to predict the emergence of the deadly wave in October? Why am I pointing this here? I am also referring to comments made by hon. Juman and hon. Dr. Gungapersad. Again, I am going to challenge them to name a single country which has been able to finance salary increase in such difficult times. They should remember that during this time, the Government has made provision for the PRB. Even in normal times, the Opposition would not have been able to do so, Mr Speaker, Sir. This

Government has made it. It has been able to give PRB to all employees. And payment of PRB, Mr Speaker, Sir, for hon. Juman, it is a shame?

As again pointed out by...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: He said shame!

An hon. Member: He is referring to the speech!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to...

Mr Speaker: Let me listen well to what he is saying.

Mr Assirvaden: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: If you have a point of order.

Mr Assirvaden: Vous venez d'expulser l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed sur le mot '*shame*'. Et là, le ministre vient de dire à l'encontre de l'Opposition '*it is a shame*'. Je demande que vous ayez la même politique.

Mr Speaker: I already said that, okay? Do not attract attention on you! This is cheap politics! Parliament is not for cheap politics!

(Interruptions)

Let me listen to him!

An hon. Member: *Li ti pe anvi ale!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And rest assured, if I have one word which is misplaced, I will take action!

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will refer again to what hon. Juman has said: it is a shame, it is squandered money by this Government, it is *dilapider les fonds publics*. This money is meant to pay PRB, to pay the salaries of the officers.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr Bhagwan: Why? For what?

Mr Speaker: What why?

Mr Bhagwan: He said Opposition shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are in a sitting position!

(Interruptions)

You are in a sitting position!

(Interruptions)

You do not have the right to talk! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: We all know you are on your feet!

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet!

Mr Bhagwan: We all know!

Mr Speaker: And you keep quiet!

Mr Bhagwan: Do not bark at me!

Mr Speaker: You keep quiet! You keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Do not bark at me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: And so, calling me barking, this is most unparliamentary! And I am ordering you out!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: You are calling me out?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am ordering you out!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Deor! Deor! Deor!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Ban voler!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am ordering you out!

(Interruptions)

I am ordering you out!

(Interruptions)

I am naming you!

An hon. Member: You are barking!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: You think I am afraid of you?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I am an elected Member!

Mr Speaker: I am naming you! Serjeant-at-Arms! Serjeant-at-Arms!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Ey pa touss mwa do!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Serjeant-at-Arms! Serjeant-at-Arms!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Enn malelve!*

An hon. Member: *Ale! Ale!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Voler!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *To enn bachara twa! To enn bachara!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Li malelve!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Bachara!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ar mwa to pa dir bachara!*

Mr Speaker: Quiet! Quiet! Quiet!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Nu trankil nu!*

An hon. Member: *Be saem zot ete!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening there? Let me suspend the Sitting for a few minutes.

At 2.57 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.18 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I name the hon. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, hon. Bhagwan, under Standing Order 48 in view of his disorderly conduct towards the Chair.

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, hon. Bhagwan, I beg, under Standing Order 17(3), to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move, under Standing Order 29(1), to present a motion without notice.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, I beg to move that the hon. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next four Sittings, ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame!

The Deputy Prime Minister: ...unless apologies are tendered to the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Shame! *La honte!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Shame on you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame!

An hon. Member: Shame on you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Al lacaz! Aller! Aller!*

Ms J. Bérenger: Shame!

An hon. Member: Shame on you!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Soidisant gran valer militan, be kot to bane valer militan été la ?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Bérenger: Shame! Shame!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Couvert to moustass!*

At this stage, all Members of the Opposition left the Chamber.

Mr Speaker: The motion must be seconded!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Dr. Jagutpal: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will continue from where I stopped. Again, I will quote what hon. Juman said, the Government is -

“Dilapider les fonds publics, squandering money”

Again, this Government has made provision to pay the PRB and I will explain how my Ministry will require extra money to pay for the PRB.

Mr Speaker, Sir, who would have predicted a surge in cases in the community as from July last year in spite of all the sanitary measures put in place? Listening to him, Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe hon. Uteem can use his *boule de cristal* and inform us what would be the outcome of the monkeypox situation because according to him, we should already have made provision for the extra budget required.

Hon. Uteem and hon. Juman have no idea at all of the exigencies of the health sector where you have to be operational on a 24-hour basis. Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot afford to close any of our services even if we had to face the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when hundreds of officers were posted in quarantine and treatment centres last year – we all remember, we cannot forget that they also had to go for their own

quarantine because during that time after these officers were posted, they have themselves to be quarantined, our normal services in hospitals, dispensaries, Area Health Centres and Mediclinics have to remain operational. That is why we required extra staff to do that and that was met through the overtime and allowances that we have to pay.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we obviously had to have recourse to overtime to preserve the resilience of our public health sector. Hon. Uteem asked why quarantine facilities used in March 2021 are being catered for in the supplementary appropriation for the Financial Year 2021/2022. It is only because at that time, we had no idea how long the hotels would be used for quarantine. No one could predict that. We did not even know what would happen in October. That is why the payments were made after these hotels provided their services as quarantine centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, he also queried why MTPA and the Ministry of Tourism were involved in the selection of hotels used as quarantine facilities. Mr Speaker, Sir, at a later stage, at the Committee of Supply, I will give full details on the procedures. Mr Speaker, Sir, all the procedures have been respected. For a hotel to be used as quarantine facility, the Regional Public Health Superintendent has to ensure that the hotels are appropriate for quarantine centres and not what hon. Uteem was stating.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have booked hotels for the purpose of protecting the population so that after contact tracing, suspected cases can be placed in quarantine and, in fact, for those cases not to infect their families or the community. We have not used these quarantines centres or we have not done booking for *Macarena* party as they have booked hotels for.

Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine what it takes to find a quarantine centre overnight? So, maybe they do not know, they have not been involved during that time when we have been working to get hotels for hundreds of those who have been in contact and how difficult it was during that time. Overnight, we have to look for hotels and thanks to the collaboration of the MTPA and the Ministry of Tourism, hotels have been provided at a timely interval for those people who have been in contact with positive cases.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Juman spoke of contracts not signed with hotels while payments had already been made. I will inform the House that out of the hotels used for quarantine purposes, 28 had signed their agreements and 12 have not yet signed their agreements

despite reminders sent to them. I am sure that even if they are not here they will be listening to me from somewhere and they know that I am going to refute all their arguments given earlier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the selection of hotels who have agreed to avail for quarantine facilities to my Ministry was done in good faith and, in fact, we have to thank the contribution of these hotels during these challenging times. At one point in time, no one was willing to provide hotels to be used as quarantine centres. It is thanks to those owners who, after an exercise done by the MTPA, have made provisions, have facilitated the Ministry of Health to accommodate quarantine cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we can remind the House of the numerous complaints that we received when contact cases were placed in recreational centres and how difficult it was during that time to accommodate people for quarantine. We did our best to provide decent and comfortable amenities to our population in need, and what is the claim of the Opposition now? We have provided hotels as quarantine facilities and all that has been done in transparency; they have left for now but I believe that they will come back during the Committee of Supply where I will readily provide all the information and table documents where needed.

Besides, thanks to this working relation we had with hotels, they have been able to secure the employment of their staff at a time when no tourists were coming to the country. This is what the Opposition will never state, will at least; never acknowledge the efforts of the Government to let the hotels run as quarantine centres. And, at one point in time, this has helped the hotels to maintain the employment of their staff.

With regard to food, Mr Speaker, Sir, provided to quarantined persons, I wish to point out that dialysis patients were provided with meals as initially agreed with the hotels. It is so easy now to come and say that the dialysis patients were provided with *briyani* or they were provided with *minn frit* but, Mr Speaker, Sir, what the House should know is that when meals were provided as per nutritionist's advice, do you know what were the reactions of the patients? Do we know? We do not know what were the reactions of the patients and yet they came and stated that *briyani* and *minn frit* were provided to them. It is so easy now to comment on *briyani* and to pinpoint but this is pure demagogy. We do not know what has happened there and we know that all these are being queried by the Ministry through the Medical Negligence Standing Committee.

Regarding money spent to procure medical disposables and minor equipment, again, I will provide all the information to the House during the Committee of Supply. Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Juman also stated that contracts *pou rempli les poches*, overpayment and Audit Report.

I will once again come to what hon. Dr. Gungapersad said. Basically what he said is that: “there was no accountability as per the Audit Report and the Public Accounts Committee; there was no compliance; why doctors employed at the Ministry of Health were not given to work in the quarantine centres; why doctors of the Social Security were employed; why long hours of work”. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will give the reply but basically what is hon. Dr. Gungapersad stating? What is he doing? In fact, he wanted to get political points on what he is stating. But, in fact, what is he doing? He is, first of all, blaming all the officers, all the public officers who have been accounting for all the procedures that have been done. He is asking why the doctors have been working, the nursing officers - whatever be their grades and it is as if, I have been involved in giving instructions but this is totally false and malicious because all these procedures are done by the public officers.

I will remind hon. Dr. Gungapersad that he, himself, was a public officer; he is an ex-public officer. And what is he doing now? He is blaming all the different grades, different categories of public officers who have been involved into all these procedures. From the doctors, nursing officers to the accounting officers, it can be anybody from the finance department or from the different levels of management that have been involved into all these procedures, he is directly pointing out that they have not done their work properly. And, in fact, he is blaming the whole public sector for not doing their work properly and that is what he wanted to do and his point is to blame the officers. Mr Speaker, Sir, now, I will only remind the House that the public servants will all keep that in mind. They will take note of what hon. Dr. Gungapersad has said on them because they are the accounting officers; from the Permanent Secretaries to the other officers, they will take note of what hon. Dr. Gungapersad, an officer who has retired from the Public Service, is doing today; he is blaming all these officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come back to hon. Uteem. He should have informed the House on the payment that we made to quarantine hotels. Even hon. Dr. Gungapersad stated that we have made an excess amount of payment. So, let us come to the figures. The excess amount of payment is Rs168,486 and out of this sum, Rs83,915 have already been recovered. *Voilà*, Mr

Speaker, Sir, *le niveau de l'Opposition*. So what is happening is a question of 0.04% overpayment which is being recouped and that is what they found as mismanagement.

Hon. Juman also made reference to a question put by hon. Dr. Gungapersad during the last parliamentary sitting on shortage of drugs. Mr Speaker, Sir, the PQ B/657, the Labour MPs did a walkout on that day. It is hardly one week back. He should have been present and the reply is over here, I have the reply. He should have been here and I would have replied to the question. But, unfortunately, they left of the House; they did a walkout as they always do. I am here to give all the replies. They left the House and today they are accusing us of holding information. This is again the demagogy and as stated earlier by the Prime Minister, it is in their *ADN* now.

Hon. Juman again stated that 16 social security doctors were paid for more than Rs1 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, he should know that a priority list of doctors to work in quarantine facilities was submitted by the Ministry of Social Security. However, upon contacting the doctors, a number of them refused to work in quarantine facilities. It was not leisure or a pleasure to work in quarantine facilities for any officer because it was a lengthy period to work in quarantine facilities and again, to find themselves quarantined. Due to family commitments and other practical reasons, it was not coherent to implement a roster. It was not practical to implement what was stated earlier; that the Ministry had a Circular saying that any doctor should not work beyond 21 days.

There was no option where we were faced with this situation - what happened last year in October-November. So, the Ministry had no option but to request doctors who were already posted to continue to provide their services beyond the 14 days in the quarantine facilities to manage public health concerns. And here, again, they were trying to state that there was only one officer. I believe it should be a nursing officer; I am going to provide the name of the nursing officer at a later stage so that the public knows how this Opposition is reacting.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, arrangement for Nursing Officers/Health Care Assistants to work in quarantine centres was made at a Regional level. It is not the Ministry or under the instruction of the Minister, it is purely management at the Regional level. It is through the Nursing Supervisors or the Nursing Administrators.

It is to be noted that similar challenges were faced to avail doctors to work in quarantine facilities. This also applied to paramedical staff. Therefore, those already in post were requested

to continue to provide their services at those centres as this is a concern of public health. This is why the Ministry of Health and Wellness could not apply the criteria set for 14 to 21 days of work because it was impossible for us to get doctors, nursing officers to work in quarantine centres. I have already given the reasons for that.

When these doctors, nursing officers, attendants, and general workers were putting their lives at stake to fight COVID-19, and at a time when it was challenging to find trained personnel to cater for our patients, what was the reply of hon. Juman to them? From the comfort of his house, he was calculating the amount of money we were paying those frontliners. I should not reply to what he said, but this is the attitude of hon. Juman and even hon. Dr. Gungapersad when they queried why the Ministry has paid so much money. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is through their sacrifice that today we are sitting here. They have left their families and they have put their lives at stake. Today, they should accept that this payment is their due and we have to pay them for it. And for us, it is a pride that we have dedicated officers who have worked in these facilities. Opposition was only concerned about the money and they never had any consideration for those staffs who left their families to protect us. These staffs have left their families to protect us and they stayed for long hours. Who is going to do that even if you are going to pay them? It is a sacrifice which they have made.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no price to pay for those staffs; the nursing officers and doctors who have worked in quarantine and treatment facilities because they have put their lives at stake.

Hon. Juman again spoke of expired drugs amounting to some Rs200 m. This created a big sensation as if this is the first time. Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, those drugs are from 2013. So, this was the total amount of money calculated about the expired drugs. It is nearly for 10 years. Was it not the same for the years 2003 to 2013? As if, it is the first time that drugs are being expired and that drugs have been wasted. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the case. In fact, this has been happening yearly. Every year, we do have wastage of drugs if you consider the volume of drugs that the Ministry procure and the amount of money that we spend on procuring drugs. I have already given the reply for that also in the questions B/454 and B/457 earlier. And hon. Juman wanted to create the sensation that this is the first time that drugs have been expired. In fact, this is something that happens every year and what is important to note is what is the

percentage of drugs being wasted and what are the categories of drugs being wasted. After the reply that I gave, if you see the international pattern, Mauritius is far better.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come back again to the CPN drugs. The House will note that since mid of December 2021, ICAC started an investigation on contracts awarded to CPN Distributors Ltd. On 21 December 2021, the Ministry officially informed CPN Distributors Ltd. of its proposal to return 620,000 tablets of Molnupiravir by way of an agreement. However, the latter in its reply on 10 January did not agree thereto. Subsequently, the Counsel of CPN Distributors Ltd. made a proposal to the Ministry to return 500,000 tablets of Molnupiravir. Then the Ministry, in fact, agreed to that proposal, and we have already returned 500,000 tablets of Molnupiravir. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is how we are proceeding. In fact, that was made earlier, and now, we have already returned that. What I want to point out is that till now, no payment has been made for these tablets that we have already used because there is an ICAC investigation ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the last budgetary exercise, an amount of more than Rs13 billion was made available to my Ministry; a sum which is testimony to this Government's commitment to safeguard the health and wellness of all our citizens along with the welfare state. This guiding principle has motivated governmental actions, even before the pandemic. Although the COVID-19 situation was unprecedented, it did not deter our resolve to provide our population with a public health sector at par with the expectations for a modern Mauritius. It is undeniable that our health system remained resilient in spite of the numerous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This fact has sadly been continuously denied by Members of the Opposition.

As I stated during the debates following the Leader of the Opposition's Motion of No Confidence, some will seize any given opportunity to distort facts for mere political motives. Today, as we debate on supplementary funds allocated for the health and wellness of our citizens, I am, again, not surprised that the same strategy has once again been deployed. Constructive debate remains a pillar of all democratic systems.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the supplementary appropriation of some Rs2.5 billion has been judicious in ensuring the continuous and smooth running of our public health system. This supplementary budget has also been capital in our management of COVID-19 situation, be it in terms of prevention, or treatment given to patients.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to World Bank, our country's COVID-19 response is the fourth largest in the world. The International Monetary Fund highlighted our sound management of the COVID-19 situation. The IMF also acknowledged that our vaccination campaign covering over 90% of our initial target population was remarkable.

Investment in health has a direct correlation on the productivity and economic growth of a nation. Mauritius adopted this bold stand in a challenging economic and financial context. Our audacity, in the face of adversity, allowed our country to recover from an economic contraction of around 15% in 2020 to a real GDP growth of 4% in 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the management of the COVID-19 situation, Mauritius adapted its response to its specificities and needs. We are, in fact, among the rare countries in the world to have had recourse to massive COVID-19 testing as a containment measure. This strategy allowed us to trace the maximum number of positive cases. We provided efficient treatment and assistance to each and every infected patient, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic. Contact cases were also isolated from the community in dedicated centres. This unique approach allowed us to outplay the worst case scenario predicted by international organisations.

I seize this opportunity to thank all stakeholders who readily assisted us in securing safe and decent accommodation for asymptomatic patients and contact cases. The assistance provided by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism as well as his staff, the MTPA and some key hotel owners have, in fact, been instrumental.

Our success also has to do with the commitment and dedication of our health staff. While health systems in various developed countries were crumbling under the burden inflicted by the pandemic, our health sector stood to the challenge. As mentioned earlier, not a single COVID-19 patient was denied treatment or medical assistance.

Today, while we mourn every single demise due to COVID-19; we have managed to maintain one of the lowest mortality rates in the world. And here, I wish to draw the attention of the Leader of the Opposition who, once again, accused us of manipulating figures and stated that 2,000 deaths were unaccounted for.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our population is an ageing one and despite all our efforts, the prevalence of NCDs remains an issue, that is, the NCDs being the Non-Communicable Diseases like diabetes and hyper-tension.

In 2019, we had 214,859 persons aged more than 60 years accounting for 17.6% of our population. In 2020, this raised to 18% accounting to 231,202 persons. And in 2021, again this keeps on rising. Obviously, our elderly being 80% suffering from Non-Communicable Diseases and this is a challenge of our living habits that will keep on increasing deaths every year. I just hope hon. Duval made such comments out of ignorance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, 900 deaths were attributed to cardiac issues, 300 deaths to NCDs and 784 deaths due to pathologies other than COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will summarise that this Government will continue to work hard for the modernisation of our country and for the welfare of its people. We are guided by the dynamism and the will to succeed of our talisman, our Prime Minister. No matter the demagogy from the other side of the House, we remain committed - the demagogy, be it from *marche pacifique*, go-slow, doing private prosecution - to our duty towards the population.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

(3.50 p.m.)

Dr. Padayachy: M. le président, de prime abord, je souhaite remercier mon collègue Ministre, colistier et frère, l'honorable Dr. Jagutpal pour sa prise de parole. Il a parfaitement défendu la stratégie, l'action et les résultats de ce gouvernement dans les temps au combien troublés de la Covid-19.

Je l'ai mentionné plus tôt dans mon intervention, les dépenses encourues sur certains postes pour l'année fiscale 2021-2022 ont en effet été supérieures de 9,5 milliards de roupies en comparaison au montant initialement voté par la Chambre.

Et contrairement aux affabulations des rangs de l'Opposition, le vote de ce Budget Supplémentaire n'est pas un fait accompli. Je rappelle que l'exercice financier pour lequel nous votons ce montant n'est pas encore terminé. Ainsi, nous demandons bien de nouveaux crédits avant de les dépenser. Je tiens à être très clair sur ce point, chacun de ces postes de dépenses est

justifié. A ce titre, voter contre l'allocation de ces crédits est tout simplement antipatriotique. Et je vais ici, dans cette auguste Assemblée, en donner la preuve irréfutable, tant sur le plan économique que social.

M. le président, en dépit des accusations proférées par l'un des membres de la Chambre, ce gouvernement n'a pas reçu de licence pour dépenser à tout va. Ce gouvernement a, en revanche, reçu la confiance de la population pour faire réussir le pays. Et c'est cela, guidé par notre Premier ministre, que nous faisons.

A cet égard, l'honorable parlementaire a cru bon de sortir de son chapeau la carte du FMI. Cela s'entend qu'il n'a pas lu ou pas compris le rapport du FMI. Je dois dire que les projections du FMI vont complètement dans le sens de l'action du gouvernement. Pour le bénéfice de la population et sa propre gouverne, je vais donc étayer factuellement sur le sujet.

M. le président, alors que l'Opposition veut faire croire à la faillite économique et à la crise sociale latente, le FMI prévoit –

- une croissance robuste de 6,1% en 2022 ;
- un PIB qui atteindra 520 milliards de roupies, dépassant le niveau prépandémique ;
- un objectif de 1 million de touristes tout à fait atteignable pour l'année calendaire ;
- un chômage en baisse qui reviendra à 7,8%,
- et même, M. le président, une dette publique décroissante dès cette année.

Au regard de ces chiffres qui viennent contrer les accusations vitriol de l'Opposition, permettez-moi d'affirmer avec assurance que la stratégie du gouvernement a été la bonne. Et que ce sont ces mêmes dépenses qui ont permis de nous faire sortir de la crise, de préserver la structure de notre économie et de protéger notre plus grand bien, notre population.

Comme l'avait dit Raymond Barre –

« l'économie se venge toujours ».

Je peux vous assurer que si la réponse du gouvernement n'avait pas été à la hauteur, la vengeance aurait été terrible – défauts de paiement, faillites, chômage, nous ne nous serions pas relevés.

Je me saisis donc de cette opportunité pour saluer l'ensemble des autorités et des officiers qui ont travaillé de concert pour que nous sortions, ensemble et plus forts, de la plus grave crise de notre histoire.

M. le président, j'en viens maintenant aux dépenses additionnelles liées au rapport du *PRB* de l'année 2021. Lorsque le Budget 2021-2022 a été préparé, le rapport du *PRB* était encore en cours de préparation. Le coût du rapport n'était pas connu étant donné que le *PRB* est une institution indépendante et que mon ministère n'est pas tout à fait au courant des recommandations du rapport et de leurs coûts avant la publication du rapport. Pour être tout à fait transparent, même la date de publication du rapport du *PRB* n'était pas connue à cette époque. Dire que ce montant supplémentaire résulte d'une défaillance de gestion des fonds publics ou d'une dissimulation délibérée de la part de ce gouvernement est tout simplement un mensonge. Pour ce qui est de la date de mise en œuvre du rapport du *PRB*, il est de ma responsabilité de souligner que le rapport est mis en œuvre conformément à l'intervalle de 5 ans.

Je précise que les fonctionnaires qui ont pris leur retraite durant la période de janvier à décembre 2020 n'ont pas été pénalisés. Tous les agents du service public retraités ont ainsi vu le montant de leur pension ajusté sur la base de la nouvelle grille de salaire.

Pour en finir sur ce point, il est bon de rappeler à l'honorable membre que lors des passages furtifs de son Leader au ministère des Finances, ce dernier avait étalé le paiement du *PRB* sur deux années fiscales. Alors que nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons octroyé 1,000 roupies aux fonctionnaires dès le mois de janvier 2020 puis avons implémenté le *PRB* dans sa totalité et d'une seule traite. Nous avons même payé un arriérage de 6 mois supplémentaire.

Alors pourquoi ? Pourquoi ? L'Opposition se demande-t-elle. Car, malgré les contraintes financières dues à la Covid-19, nos fonctionnaires ont réalisé un travail formidable pendant la période de la Covid-19. Et pour cela, il était juste de les reconnaître.

M. le président, je vais maintenant donner les explications relatives au montant supplémentaire de 2,5 milliards de roupies au titre du *COVID-19 Projects Development Fund* pour l'implémentation des projets de drains.

Le *COVID-19 Projects Development Fund* dispose actuellement d'un solde de 3,9 milliards de roupies. A ce jour, le Fonds a investi quelque 12,6 milliards de roupies. Ces fonds

sont engagés pour la mise en œuvre de différents projets prioritaires déjà approuvés, notamment celui du *National Flood Management Programme*. C'est précisément pour se prémunir des conséquences désastreuses du dérèglement climatique sur notre environnement, notre économie et notre société que nous votons dès aujourd'hui un budget supplémentaire de 2,5 milliards de roupies.

Comme vous le savez, plus tôt dans l'année, nous avons dû faire face à plusieurs épisodes de pluies diluviennes et d'inondations dans différentes régions du pays. Ils ont d'ailleurs causé des dommages importants à nos infrastructures, nos routes et nos plantations. Ces événements météorologiques ont également perturbé la vie économique, sociale et scolaire. Des écoles ont notamment dû être fermées pour assurer la sécurité des élèves.

M. le président, afin de minimiser de pareilles conséquences à l'avenir, nous devons investir plus rapidement et plus fortement dans l'amélioration de nos infrastructures afin d'assurer une évacuation plus rapide des eaux de pluie. A ce titre, notre réseau de drains doit être renforcé. C'est pourquoi il est nécessaire d'approuver le montant supplémentaire de 2,5 milliards de roupies. Cela donnera une plus grande visibilité sur la disponibilité de ressources et permettra aux instances gouvernementales compétentes de procéder aux passations de marchés pour une mise en œuvre rapide des projets de drains.

M. le président, ce gouvernement, sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, a l'intérêt de la population chevillé au corps. N'en déplaise à ceux qui s'obstinent à faire du tort à leur propre pays, nous, nous aimons notre pays et travaillons à sa réussite. A l'instar du vote de ce jour, chacune de nos prises de décision est dictée par les principes de justice sociale et d'efficacité économique.

Sur ces considérations, je recommande à présent le projet de loi à l'Assemblée et vous remercie de votre attention.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ESTIMATES OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXPENDITURE (2021-2022) OF 2022

&

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL**(No. VIII OF 2022)**

The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2021-2022) of 2022 was considered and agreed to.

The Supplementary Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill (No. VIII of 2022) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Second Reading

THE BEACH AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL**(NO. IV OF 2022)**

Order for Second Reading read.

(4.04 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill be read a second time.

M. le président, c'est un privilège et un honneur pour moi de présenter ce projet de loi à la Chambre.

L'objectif principal de ce projet de loi est de modifier la loi de 2002 sur l'autorité des plages en vue de suivre l'évolution des besoins du nombre croissant d'utilisateurs de la plage, de faire face aux nombreux défis rencontrés pour répondre aux demandes croissantes de services et aussi d'installations améliorés et également pour assurer la bonne gestion et le contrôle du nombre croissant de plages publiques proclamées au fil des ans.

M. le président, avant d'élaborer sur les principales clauses du projet de loi, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur l'étendue et la couverture du service actuellement fourni par la Beach Authority, les défis auxquels elle est confrontés et permettez-moi d'énoncer également sa vision pour parvenir à une meilleure gestion et un meilleur contrôle des plages publiques.

La Chambre est consciente que les plages publiques sont actuellement gérées et contrôlées par la *Beach Authority*, un organisme paraétatique, opérant sous l'égide de mon ministère. L'Autorité a été créée par une loi du Parlement en juin 2002 afin de prévoir une approche intégrée dans le développement et la gestion des plages publiques. L'Autorité est actuellement responsable de la gestion et du contrôle des plages publiques de Maurice et de Rodrigues.

À ce jour, il y a 132 plages proclamées publiques à Maurice occupant une façade maritime totale de 48,2 km et une étendue totale de 327,8 hectares. Les dernières plages proclamées publiques en 2021 sont à savoir Grand Baie (près du Sunset Boulevard) et Flic en Flac (Rue Debarcadère).

Actuellement, la *Beach Authority* est principalement impliquée dans le nettoyage quotidien des plages publiques grâce à la main-d'œuvre interne et au suivi des services de nettoyage contractuels. Elle intervient également dans la construction et l'entretien d'équipements tels que les blocs sanitaires, les kiosques, *open showers*, parkings, foyers et la fourniture d'éclairage. À ce jour, on compte entre 66 blocs sanitaires, 407 points d'éclairage solaire, 89 aires de stationnement, 1,317 poubelles (dont 22 éco-poubelles), 189 tables de pique-nique et 17 zones de baignade sur les plages publiques. Pour répondre aux attentes et à la demande croissante des usagers des plages, l'Autorité a mis en place des installations supplémentaires sur toutes les plages publiques. De nombreux projets relatifs à l'accès aux personnes à mobilité réduite, à la mise à disposition de kiosques, de bancs, de points de barbecue, de douches ouvertes, de foyers, entre autres, ont également été mis en œuvre au fil des ans.

En outre, la *Beach Authority* a défini des paramètres et des critères pour les activités commerciales sur les plages publiques et a fourni un moyen de subsistance à de nombreuses familles grâce à la délivrance de 521 *beach trader's licences* à 330 commerçants sur les plages publiques tout en accordant l'autorisation d'utiliser les plages publiques pour des activités spécifiques d'une nature commerciale et non commerciale.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne Rodrigues, il existe 12 plages proclamées publiques occupant une superficie totale de 28,2 hectares. La *Beach Authority* a signé un protocole d'accord avec l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues le 21 septembre 2007 et qui a été renouvelé la dernière fois le 16 décembre 2020, conformément à l'article 27(2) de la loi sur l'Assemblée régionale de

Rodrigues pour permettre à l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues, au nom de l'Autorité, de gérer et de contrôler les plages publiques.

M. le président, la *Beach Authority* est confrontée à un certain nombre de défis pour répondre aux demandes croissantes de services et d'installations améliorés et par un nombre croissant d'utilisateurs locaux de la plage et aussi pour les autres touristes visitant notre pays. D'autre part, il est urgent d'atténuer les effets néfastes du changement climatique en vue d'assurer un développement durable de nos plages publiques grâce, entre autres, à la mise en œuvre de plans de gestion des plages.

La *Beach Authority* prendra des mesures importantes pour améliorer les équipements et harmoniser les activités de plage en vue de fournir des activités de loisirs renforcées afin d'attirer un plus grand nombre d'utilisateurs de la plage. Pour pouvoir réussir dans ses tâches, il faut lui fournir non seulement des ressources humaines et financières mais aussi un outil juridique actualisé. D'où la nécessité de ce projet de loi.

Ainsi, M. le président, il est impératif que les pouvoirs et la compétence de l'Autorité dans le cadre législatif actuel soient revus. À cet effet, le projet de loi vise à élargir les fonctions et les pouvoirs de la *Beach Authority*. Ainsi qu'il suit –

- (1) nos plages constituant une ressource et un atout majeur pour le pays tout en jouant un rôle très important dans l'écosystème côtier, outre la gestion et le contrôle des plages publiques de l'île Maurice et de Rodrigues, la *Beach Authority* gèrera également toute nouvelle plage publique d'Agaléga, de Tromelin, de Cargados Carajos et de l'archipel des Chagos, y compris Diégo Garcia, et de toute autre île comprise dans la République de Maurice. Toutes ces îles, M. le président, font partie de Maurice selon la Constitution ;
- (2) l'Autorité sera autorisée à construire et à louer des locaux commerciaux et des confiseries, définis comme une structure fixe, spécifiquement adaptée à des fins commerciales. Cet amendement permettrait à la *Beach Authority* d'accorder en location des bâtiments existants, de construire et louer des locaux commerciaux dans le périmètre d'une plage publique. Cependant, ceux-ci seront soumis à l'approbation du conseil d'administration de la *Beach Authority*, du ministre à qui est confiée la responsabilité de la *Beach Authority* et du gouvernement. En outre,

la *Beach Authority* peut, avec l'approbation du ministre, emprunter de l'argent et contracter des emprunts auprès d'une institution financière ;

- (3) il faut renforcer l'application des règlements, qui faisait défaut dans la loi principale. Le projet de loi habilite les officiers autorisés de la *Beach Authority* à, entre autres -
- (i) émettre un *Fixed Penalty Notice* à une personne en relation avec des infractions spécifiques commises sur les plages publiques, qui doivent être prescrites et liées, entre autres, à ce qui suit -
 - (a) faire du commerce sans une *Beach Trader's Licence*;
 - (b) violation d'une condition attachée à une *Beach Trader's Licence*;
 - (c) conduire, rouler ou garer un véhicule, y compris une moto, un autocycle, un vélo sur les plages publiques ;
 - (d) ériger ou placer un panneau ou une structure, ou afficher ou faire afficher toute écriture sur une plage publique sans l'autorisation de l'Autorité, et
 - (e) exercer une activité sur une plage publique sans l'autorisation de l'Autorité.

Et la loi prévoit aussi -

- (ii) d'augmenter l'amende et la peine d'emprisonnement de R 10,000 à R 100,000 et de 1 an maximum à 2 ans maximum, respectivement, en cas de non-respect de l'avis de contravention signifié, sur condamnation, et cela en égard à la *Beach Authority (Use of Public Beach) Regulations 2004* ;
- (iii) la loi permet aussi de pénétrer dans tout local commercial, confiserie ou toute autre structure commerciale se trouvant sur une plage publique et peut, entre autres, sécuriser tout dossier, document ou tout autre objet raisonnablement requis à des fins d'enquête ;
- (iv) signifier un ordre d'arrêt interdisant à toute personne d'effectuer tout développement ou activité illégale sur une plage publique. Toute personne

qui ne se conforme pas à un ordre d'arrêt émis commet une infraction et est passible, en cas de condamnation, d'une amende n'excédant pas R 100,000 et d'une peine d'emprisonnement n'excédant pas 2 ans ;

- (v) la loi permet de signifier un avis de retrait ordonnant le retrait de tout panneau ou structure illégale sur une plage publique. Toute personne qui ne se conforme pas à un avis de retrait délivré commet une infraction et est passible, en cas de condamnation, d'une amende n'excédant pas R 100,000 et d'une peine d'emprisonnement n'excédant pas 2 ans ;
- (vi) la loi permet aussi d'augmenter des amendes pour les infractions commises en vertu des règlements pris en vertu de la loi principale et les contrevenants seront, en cas de condamnation, passibles d'une amende n'excédant pas R 50,000 au lieu de R 10,000 et d'une peine d'emprisonnement n'excédant pas un an ;
- (vii) la loi permet aussi de fournir pour toute personne qui ira à l'encontre de la présente loi ou à tout règlement pris en vertu de la présente loi en commettant une infraction, et sur déclaration de culpabilité sera passible lors d'une première condamnation d'une amende qui ne sera pas inférieure à R 10,000 et ne dépassera pas R 20,000 et à une peine d'emprisonnement pour une durée n'excédant pas 6 mois. Lors d'une deuxième condamnation ou d'une condamnation ultérieure, l'amende ne sera pas inférieure à R 20,000 ni supérieure à R 50,000 et l'emprisonnement pour une durée maximale d'un an ;
- (viii) la loi prévoit aussi d'assurer la bonne application de toutes les activités menées sur les plages publiques grâce à la préparation et à la mise en œuvre de plans de gestion des plages.

En vertu de la *Beach Authority (Traders' Licence) Regulations 2004*, la *Beach Authority* avait délivré des *Beach Trader's Licence* pour onze commerces établis. Le règlement interdit à quiconque d'exercer des activités commerciales sur une plage publique autrement que dans les *designated areas*. La *Beach Authority (Use of Public Beach) Regulations 2004* prévoit la désignation de zones pour diverses activités sur les plages publiques. Suite à l'avis obtenu du

bureau de l'*Attorney General* en septembre 2017, selon lequel les zones désignées devraient être répertoriées avec des coordonnées GPS, aucune nouvelle *Beach Trader's Licence* n'a depuis été délivrée.

Cela faisait suite aussi, M. le président, à une décision de la Cour attirant l'attention le 04 septembre 2017 sur le fait qu'il n'y avait pas de zone désignée sur les plages publiques, dans l'affaire de M. Kessaven Ellapen contre la *Beach Authority* à la Cour suprême devant les juges et que l'affaire fut annulée.

Actuellement, en vertu de la *Beach Authority (Use of Public Beach) Regulations 2004*, tout rassemblement public, divertissement public ou tout autre rassemblement où le public est convoqué est soumis à l'autorisation de la *Beach Authority* comme les divertissements, les compétitions sportives, le camping, les activités religieuses et culturelles entre autres, et aussi pour la réparation des bateaux de pêche. En revanche, les activités de nature commerciale telles que le tournage de films et la prise de photos et la promotion de produits doivent être autorisées et pour lesquelles des redevances sont réclamées. Cependant, ces activités ne sont pas prescrites.

Il est maintenant proposé que toutes les activités existantes ainsi que les nouvelles activités sur les plages publiques soient permises dans les endroits autorisés par la *Beach Authority* à des fins spécifiques. À cet égard, la *Beach Authority (Traders' Licence) Regulations 2004* et la *Beach Authority (Use of Public Beach) Regulations 2004* seraient révisées et de nouvelles activités et de nouveaux commerces prescrits. Ces activités seront permises dans les endroits autorisés par la *Beach Authority* en prenant compte bien sûr de la sensibilité des sites.

M. le président, mon ministère travaillera avec le ministère du Tourisme et bien sûr avec d'autres autorités sur les activités et commerces supplémentaires proposés et veillera à ce qu'il n'y ait pas de double licence d'activités sur les plages publiques.

M. le président, nous nous attellerons aussi à la restauration de la végétation indigène sur les plages publiques et la reconstitution des plages publiques suite à la promulgation du *Climate Change Act* de 2020.

Le projet de loi prévoit également –

(a) Qu'une plage publique soit redéfinie comme suit –

- (i) ce sera un espace tout le long de la côte qui, par une *Notice* publiée dans la Gazette du gouvernement sera déclaré plage publique par le ministre chargé du domaine du logement et des terres, et
- (ii) cela comprendra aussi l'espace compris entre la *high water mark* jusqu'à une distance de 100 mètres du *low water mark*.

Cela impliquerait que la *Beach Authority* gèrerait les plages proclamées publiques et l'espace entre la *high water mark* et la *low water mark*, et ceux jusqu'à une distance de 100 mètres du *low water mark* vers la mer ;

- (b) La révision de la composition du *Board* avec l'adjonction d'un représentant du ministère en charge du dossier des *outer islands* ainsi que du ministère en charge de la *Beach Authority* avec 3 membres désignés par le ministre. Cela garantira que la composition du *Board* est pleinement représentée par toutes les parties prenantes concernées pour leur soutien et leur collaboration, et
- (c) La réglementation des activités sur les plages publiques où nul ne peut exercer une activité comme il sera prescrit, sur une plage publique sans l'autorisation de l'Autorité, faire du commerce sur une plage publique sans la *Beach Trader's Licence* et ériger ou placer un panneau ou une structure, afficher ou faire afficher toute structure sur une plage publique sans l'autorisation de l'Autorité. Cette dernière peut, pour assurer la sécurité et la sûreté des usagers des plages publiques, interdire l'exercice de toute activité sur une plage publique.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'élaborer sur les initiatives et les projets actuels de ce gouvernement et de la *Beach Authority*, en ce qui concerne la gestion des plages publiques.

Conformément aux objectifs du gouvernement visant à démocratiser l'accès à nos plages, de plus en plus de plages sont proclamées plages publiques. Depuis 2015, le gouvernement a proclamé quelques 17 sites supplémentaires comme plages publiques, dont, entre autres, les Pas Géométriques Rivière La Chaux, Pointe des Lascars, Pas Géométriques Les Salines, Petite Case Noyale, Bel Ombre et Pas Géométriques Vieux Grand Port.

Des travaux de réhabilitation des plages sont actuellement en cours par mon ministère dans la région du sud-est de l'île et devraient être achevés d'ici juillet 2022 et remis à la *Beach Authority* pour une gestion et un contrôle ultérieurs.

Cette initiative offrira évidemment plus d'espaces au public, y compris aux touristes, à des fins de divertissement et de loisirs le long de la zone côtière.

M. le président, il convient de souligner que nos plages publiques ne sont pas seulement fréquentées par les habitants locaux, mais restent une attraction principale pour le nombre croissant de touristes visitant Maurice et Rodrigues avant l'épidémie de Covid-19. Maintenant, la situation évolue progressivement et le secteur du tourisme a pris son essor et la visite de nos plages publiques par les touristes sera à nouveau très demandée, ce qui bien sûr stimulera l'économie.

M. le président, nos plages publiques sont nos atouts premiers que nous devons préserver, soutenir et gérer à tout prix. La *Beach Authority* s'engage pleinement à atteindre ses objectifs de conservation, de protection et de préservation des plages publiques et, par conséquent, un programme complet a été élaboré pour la protection et la préservation de nos plages, notamment à travers –

(i) Des campagnes de sensibilisation

L'Autorité a lancé des campagnes de sensibilisation en vue de promouvoir les bonnes pratiques à adopter par les usagers des plages tout en visant la conservation et la protection de nos plages.

(ii) Les aires de stationnement

Une approche intégrée est adoptée pour créer des aires de stationnement appropriées sur les plages publiques afin d'empêcher l'accès des véhicules à la zone dynamique de la plage et de créer une zone séparée pour les piétons afin d'empêcher une dégradation supplémentaire des plages. A ce jour, 89 aires de stationnement ont été construites sur 55 plages publiques notamment à Palmar, Blue Bay, Flic en Flac, Mont Choisy, entre autres. Quatre aires de stationnement supplémentaires seront construites à La Prairie, Le Goulet, Petit Verger et Pointe aux Piments au cours de l'exercice financier 2022-2023.

- (iii) Les travaux de protection et de réhabilitation du littoral face au changement climatique.

En tant que ministre responsable du portefeuille du changement climatique, nous veillons à ce que les actifs des plages soient gérés et protégés des impacts climatiques de manière concertée et ceux avec la participation des secteurs publics, privés, des ONG et aussi bien sûr les communautés locales.

M. le président, l'Assemblée notera qu'au fil des ans, en raison des effets néfastes du changement climatique, y compris les violents cyclones tropicaux, les tempêtes et raz de marée et l'élévation du niveau de la mer, il y a eu un nombre croissant de plages érodées. Les archives démontrent qu'entre 1967 et 2012, environ 17% du littoral autour de l'île Maurice a été érodé. L'érosion accentuée des plages a réduit la largeur des plages dans certaines zones côtières vulnérables jusqu'à 20 mètres au cours des dernières décennies.

De plus, avec l'élévation accélérée du niveau de la mer, il existe également un risque d'intrusion saline qui affectera la qualité du sol et finira par impacter la production agricole dans la zone côtière.

C'est dans cette optique que mon ministère a identifié l'adaptation côtière comme une action prioritaire dans tous les documents stratégiques et plans d'action, notamment dans –

- le *Climate Change Act 2020* ;
- la *Updated Nationally Determined Contribution 2021* ;
- le *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework 2021*, et
- la *Mauritius Resilience Strategy 2019*, entre autres.

En sus, une série de travaux de réhabilitation côtière sont en cours à Bois des Amourettes, de Petit Sable à Bambous Virieux, de Bambous Virieux à Anse Jonchée, de Pointe aux Feuilles à Grand Sable et à Providence. En outre, le littoral de Deux Frères va être réhabilité en 'Waterfront'. Des travaux de réhabilitation côtière sont également prévus pour environ 20 sites supplémentaires.

Afin de protéger davantage les actifs de la plage à la suite de l'aggravation du changement climatique, une modification a été apportée suivant l'adoption du *Climate Change Act 2020* pour

modifier l'article 5 (a) de la loi sur la *Beach Authority* afin d'inclure la restauration de la végétation indigène sur les plages publiques et aussi le réapprovisionnement des plages publiques. L'objectif était d'empêcher toute altération de la végétation existante et d'encourager la plantation de plantes endémiques pour prévenir l'érosion en tant que *nature-based solutions*.

En outre, dans le but de renforcer davantage la résilience de la zone côtière, je souhaite informer la Chambre que mon ministère s'engage dans la mise en œuvre d'un projet d'étude sur l'inondation côtière et l'érosion des plages à Maurice et à Rodrigues, et cela est soutenu par l'Agence Française de Développement à hauteur de 1 million euro pour une durée de deux ans. Une évaluation des zones côtières en ce qui concerne les vulnérabilités et les risques aux dangers tels que la submersion marine et l'érosion sera menée. Par la suite, la cartographie de ces dangers côtiers, des risques et des actifs exposés sera entreprise et 50 *hazards GIS based maps* seront développées pour soutenir la prise de décision comme une réponse améliorée. En outre, une note conceptuelle de projet sur le *National Adaptation Plan* qui inclut la zone côtière est en cours de finalisation pour mobiliser des subventions à hauteur de *USD 2 millions*.

La *Beach Authority* agira donc comme un organe catalyseur pour s'appuyer sur les initiatives que mon ministère prend pour assurer la protection de nos plages qui abritent des atouts environnementaux clés comme les zones écologiquement sensibles, y compris les *mangroves* et les herbiers marins, entre autres.

M. le président, conscient des impacts du changement climatique sur nos plages, mon ministère a un programme continu de protection et de réhabilitation du littoral.

Des travaux de protection du littoral ont déjà été achevés sur un tronçon de 300 mètres à St Martin en février 2021. Actuellement, des travaux de protection du littoral sont en cours sur un tronçon total de 5,4 km sur les sites suivants : Pointe aux Feuilles à Grand Sable, Providence, Petit Sable à Bambous Virieux, Bambous Virieux à Anse Jonchée.

M. le président, après l'achèvement de ces travaux, en principe, il serait demandé au ministère du Logement et des terres de proclamer les sites comme plages publiques, pour une éventuelle remise à la *Beach Authority*. Conformément à ses fonctions, la *Beach Authority* sera alors responsable de la gestion, de l'entretien et du nettoyage de ces plages. Il est à noter que les plans d'entretien avec les coûts opérationnels, pour chaque site, seraient ensuite fournis à la *Beach Authority* à des fins budgétaires.

En vue de préserver la biodiversité et de protéger davantage les atouts de la plage face à l'aggravation du changement climatique, mon ministère, en collaboration avec l'Autorité et le Service forestier, a mené divers exercices de plantation d'arbres. De tels exercices avaient été effectués sur plusieurs plages publiques notamment à Belle Mare, Flic en Flac, Palmar, Le Bouchon et Mont-Choisy.

M. le président, aucun effort n'est épargné par mon ministère pour maintenir nos plages publiques plus propres, plus vertes et plus sûres.

M. le président, comme programme continue, l'Autorité réalise également le développement des infrastructures sur les plages publiques en mettant en œuvre divers projets pour la fourniture d'équipements et d'installations adéquats pour satisfaire les demandes croissantes des utilisateurs des plages. L'objectif ultime de l'Autorité est que toutes les plages publiques soient équipées au moins d'équipements/installations de base (tels que des blocs sanitaires, des poubelles, des kiosques, un parking, de l'éclairage, des tables de pique-nique et des bancs).

M. le président, la sécurité et la sûreté sont restées une priorité majeure à l'ordre du jour de ce gouvernement. À cet effet, comme l'une des fonctions de la *Beach Authority*, des installations d'éclairage adéquates, des aires de stationnement, une clôture pour empêcher l'accès des véhicules, l'installation des caméras de surveillance CCTV à des endroits stratégiques, y compris sur les plages publiques, sont en cours d'aménagement.

Des programmes de sauvetage et de patrouille de plage sont régulièrement entrepris par la *Beach Authority* lors d'occasions spéciales sur les plages publiques. Des zones de baignade dédiées sont également délimitées par l'installation de bouées et de flotteurs sur les plages publiques.

Pour une meilleure prestation de services, les activités de la *Beach Authority* ont été décentralisées pour établir quatre *sub-offices*, en premier lieu, dans les quatre zones géographiques de Maurice, à savoir les plages publiques de Pereybère (Nord), St. Felix (Sud), Belle Mare (Est) et Flic en Flac (Ouest).

M. le président, il existe un besoin pour une utilisation plus intense de la plage à des fins récréatives et commerciales. Au fil des ans, les diverses activités menées sur les plages ont

entraîné la dégradation de l'environnement balnéaire. À cet égard, la *Beach Authority* a élaboré un *integrated Master plan* pour quatre (4) plages publiques en premier lieu basé sur les spécificités et les considérations géographiques pour fournir des plages de haute qualité.

La *Beach Authority* propose donc la mise en œuvre du *Beach Management Plan* dans une approche progressive, systématique et intégrée et les zones choisies sont –

- (i) Mont Choisy;
- (ii) Flic-en-Flacq;
- (iii) Belle Mare, et
- (iv) La Prairie.

Et cela avec des objectifs pour fournir –

- (i) des orientations pour les actions qui réglementent les développements, y compris le zonage des plages publiques ;
- (ii) une conception architecturale et structurelle pour les équipements de plage ;
- (iii) un protocole/des actions clairs pour la gestion et l'entretien des plages, et
- (iv) des mesures d'adaptation et de protection pour la protection, la préservation et la régulation futures du système de plages et de dunes face aux défis de l'érosion côtière et du changement climatique.

La *Beach Authority* a déjà entamé la première phase de mise en œuvre du *Beach Management Plan Project* pour les quatre plages publiques juste mentionnées. Le projet est financé par le *National Environment and Climate Change Fund* et comprend principalement de nouveaux équipements de plage tels que des aires de stationnement et un système d'éclairage solaire, et aussi l'accès des véhicules, des exercices et aussi la mise en terre de plantes indigènes.

A ce jour, le *Beach Management Plan Project* à la plage publique de Mont Choisy, à la hauteur de quelques R 12,5 millions, a été achevé et a été inauguré le 09 avril 2022 et des travaux ont déjà commencé à la plage publique de La Prairie en avril 2022 et devraient être achevés d'ici juillet 2022. La première phase du projet concernant les plages publiques de Flic-en-Flac et de Belle Mare sera bientôt mise en place et devrait être achevée d'ici décembre 2022.

La *Beach Authority* propose également de se lancer dans la phase 2 du *Beach Management Plan Project* sur les plages de Mont Choisy, Flic-en-Flac, Belle Mare et La Prairie. En outre, il est prévu de poursuivre les projets sur d'autres plages publiques à travers le pays.

M. le président, d'autres projets, qui devraient être achevés au cours de cette année, sont les suivants –

- (i) la construction d'un bloc sanitaire sur la plage publique de *Blue Bay* ;
- (ii) la construction d'un parking et l'amélioration de l'entrée et de la sortie de la plage publique de Petit Verger ;
- (iii) la construction d'un parking à la plage publique Le Goulet;
- (iv) l'amélioration de l'accès à la plage publique de Bel Ombre ;
- (v) la construction d'un bloc sanitaire à la plage publique de Pomponette ;
- (vi) la construction d'un parking et d'un enclos de plage à la plage publique de Pointe aux Piments;
- (vii) la fourniture de poubelles, de tables de pique-nique et d'éclairage solaire sur les autres plages publiques, et bien sûr
- (viii) la construction de douches ouvertes sur toutes les plages publiques.

M. le président, dans l'optique d'améliorer encore l'embellissement et la propreté des plages publiques et des lagons, la *Beach Authority* va se lancer dans le nettoyage des lagons de 20 plages publiques.

Dans la lignée du discours sur le Budget 2021/2022, la *Beach Authority* travaille sur un projet d'accès à la mer pour les personnes avec un certain handicap. L'objectif de ce projet est de fournir les aménagements et les infrastructures nécessaires pour permettre à ces personnes de profiter pleinement des plages publiques incluant les zones de baignade.

La *Beach Authority* travaille en étroite collaboration avec le Ministère de la Sécurité Sociale, les Institutions Nationales de Solidarité et de Réforme, aussi avec les ONG et les autres acteurs communautaires pour apporter leur soutien au projet et améliorer la qualité de vie de nos concitoyens vivant avec un certain handicap et bien sûr, tout en permettant l'accès à toutes ces personnes en leur fournissant –

- (i) les parkings adéquats, les équipements accessibles et aussi l'accès au sable et à la mer;

Et il y aura aussi, M. le président, dans l'implémentation de ce projet –

- (ii) la présence des *Life Guards* pour fournir une assistance appropriée en mer ;
- (iii) des officiers de loisirs pour coordonner l'ensemble de l'opération, et bien sûr
- (iv) toute la campagne de signalisation pour informer des facilités qui sont offertes sur les plages spécifiques.

Donc avec l'accès à la plage aux personnes présentant un certain handicap, il y aura –

- (i) la fourniture et pose de tapis d'accès à la plage ;
- (ii) la fourniture de fauteuils roulants de plage flottants ;
- (iii) la création d'un système de réservation en ligne, et
- (iv) service d'exploitation et de maintenance.

Le dossier d'appel d'offres pour l'achat de 40 fauteuils roulants de plage flottants et tapis d'accès à la plage a été lancé et les offres reçues seront évaluées. Le contrat devrait être attribué en mai 2022 et les équipements livrés dans les mois à venir. Nous attendons tous avec impatience l'implémentation de ce projet, M. le président.

M. le président, l'île Maurice est mondialement connue pour ses plages de sable blanc et est devenue l'une des destinations les plus prisées des touristes du monde entier. Nos plages sont cruciales pour notre secteur touristique.

L'identité distincte de Maurice, M. le président, reste son patrimoine culturel diversifié, qui ajoute au caractère unique de notre destination. Au milieu de la pandémie de COVID-19, le tourisme local a également été promu afin d'atténuer l'impact de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur l'industrie du tourisme.

Nos plages sont extrêmement importantes pour Maurice, non seulement à cause du tourisme, mais aussi, parce qu'elles font partie intégrante de l'environnement marin, corallien et lagunaire. Il est, M. le président, de première importance que nos plages publiques soient correctement gérées et préservées pour les générations à venir. Je crois fermement que les

modifications apportées à la *Beach Authority Act 2002* fourniront un autre outil utile à la *Beach Authority* pour s'assurer que la dégradation de l'environnement des plages est atténuée et garantir qu'une approche holistique est adoptée pour protéger l'un des aspects les plus importants de notre biodiversité.

Sur ces mots, M. le président, je recommande ce projet de loi à la Chambre.

Je vous remercie.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

An hon. Member: *Pas la!*

An hon. Member: *Inn sove!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram, would you like your turn?

(4.37 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): *Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.* M. le président, c'est vraiment dommage que nous avons une opposition qui joue toujours aux abonnés absents quand il y a des débats importants dans la Chambre. Je suis sûr que le peuple prend bonne note.

Même vous, M. le président, l'autorité que vous représentez dans ce temple de la démocratie n'est pas épargnée. On a tout vu ; vulgarité, désordre, insolence, et bien sûr très mal élevé même je dirais. Voilà ce qu'on se souviendra de cette opposition qui fait la honte de notre pays. Soit ils vont s'en prendre à certains ministres avec des arguments qui non seulement ne tiennent pas la route, mais qui frôlent le communalisme. Mon ami, Dr. Jagutpal ne me dira pas le contraire.

Et en partant, on a entendu une jeune du MMM qui se dit grande défenseuse de l'environnement, je l'ai entendu dire à l'égard du DPM *valer militan*. Mais de quelle valeur parle-t-elle, M. le président ? Mais de quelle valeur ? Valeur militant d'aujourd'hui ? Ce qui leur fait mal pour dire cela c'est qu'en voyant l'honorable Steven Obeegadoo, *Deputy Prime Minister* ; un Alan Ganoo, *front bench* du gouvernement, un jeune Kavy Ramano avec des projets de lois qui sont en train de révolutionner l'environnement de notre pays, c'est cela qui

leur fait mal ! Mais par contre eux, ils sont en train d'avoir des doctorats sur comment poser des questions et comment faire du désordre au Parlement.

Aujourd'hui, on ne peut que remercier mon bon ami, l'honorable Kavy Ramano pour ce projet de loi, et j'en suis sûr que lui-même, il en est fier aujourd'hui d'être dans les rangs du gouvernement. À un moment où le pays est en train de faire face à des défis extraordinaires, du jamais vu sur l'échiquier mondial, venir avec de tels projets de loi en ce temps *challenging* je dirais, il fallait le faire. Je dirais aussi bravo au Premier ministre aujourd'hui pour avoir un tel ministre de l'Environnement ! Même si après, ils viendront me critiquer que j'ai dit que tel et untel est un très bon ministre. Et bien, nous avons de très bon ministres, et je suis fier de siéger dans un cabinet de ministre où à chaque session de cabinet, je parle pour moi, j'apprends de mes collègues. Au Premier ministre, je dirais, *yes Prime Minister, it takes a jeweller to recognise a diamond.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am intervening on this Bill, not only as the Minister responsible for the improvement of our infrastructures, but most importantly as a Mauritian.

It is no secret that each and every Mauritian form a special bond with our beaches from the very first day they set foot on our powdery sand and their eyes meet our turquoise waters; a never ending love story that would turn billions of inhabitants around the globe envious. Our unique seaside landscape is often the subject of avid discussions amongst fellow travellers across the world who, daily express their desire to discover its beauty.

It is no doubt that our beaches are the crown jewel of the Mauritian tourism economy, our main attraction that entices hundreds and thousands of tourists every year and which supports countless Mauritian families, and not only tourists. It is now an integral part of the Mauritian culture for our fellow citizens to head for their favourite beach during the weekend with family and friends and indulge in activities such as picnicking, camping, or swimming a few laps.

With development in road infrastructure and transport, nowadays, it has become very easy to reach the seaside at our leisure. And because of that, we are guilty of taking this privilege for granted. This is why, it is of the utmost importance to change our mindsets and maintain our beaches adequately and ensure a quality experience that is up to international standards.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, being an island nation known for our pristine lagoons and beaches, it is vital for us to update our legislation to manage this unique resource. Mauritius has been blessed with 132 proclaimed beaches representing more than 327 hectares translating in more than 48 kilometres of sea frontage. This is, you will agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, a significant territory to manage.

Despite our best efforts, with the frameworks provided by the current Beach Authority Bill, there are various new challenges that need to be addressed urgently. These include the growing need to meet demands for services at public beaches while also implementing mitigation measures for the dangers and impact of climate change. Therefore, it is crucial that we upgrade our current set of legislation to provide the tools to the competent authorities to act swiftly.

As mentioned in clause 12A, this improved piece of legislation will allow authorised officers of the Beach Authority to deliver fixed penalties to those who have committed an offence. In addition, under clauses F and G, they will also be empowered to deliver a stop order or a pull down notice. The powers being conferred to enforcement officers of the Beach Authority will no doubt help in deterring traders operating without the appropriate license on public beaches thereby ensuring the safety and security of all beach users.

These measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, are pivotal to the Government's endeavour to restore some order on our beaches to the benefit of the people. Not so long ago, it was a total anarchy with *petits copains, copines* raising structures here and there with the blessing of the Labour Party regime, acting as if the public beach was theirs. This Government will not tolerate such behaviour and this Bill is here to prove it. The legal framework is being reviewed and strengthened. The authorised officers will now be empowered to take immediate actions on illegal activities, traders or structures. This entails a better control of all activities occurring on public beaches, and as such, an increased safety and security to all beach users and tourists.

According to a study published in October 2020, up to half of the world's sandy beaches are at risk of disappearing by the end of this century if no action is taken to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Even assuming a better outcome for action on climate change where global emissions peak around 2040, well, over one-third of the world's beaches would be lost by 2100. Researchers had previously analysed satellite images showing shoreline changes from 1984 to

2016. They found that a quarter of sandy beaches worldwide had already eroded at a rate of more than 0.5 metre per year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on mitigation of climate change, published earlier this year, highlights the impact of climate change on Small Island Developing States, and on the need to carefully monitor and control coastline development. It is expected that our coastlines will be stressed with rising water levels, and therefore, we need appropriate measures for its maintenance and for mitigation. Mauritius will not be impervious to this impact.

We can already see how vulnerable our country can be to the impact of climate change, and it is one of the reasons we are investing billions to attenuate its effects on our people and our economy. For example, in the South East, from my constituency, as we head north along the B28 road, you can clearly see that in a few years certain parts of the shore will be engulfed by seawater, unless we act now. Therefore, I believe we are addressing this issue with Clause 5 (f) (vii), by giving the Beach Authority a clear mandate for replenishment of our beaches. Reinforced measures, like this Bill, align with the Prime Minister's call during the first Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change, calling for a state of climate emergency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having a cleaner, greener, and safer Mauritius is among the Government's priority, and we need to protect our image and environment. As much as we encourage green development, we are strongly discouraging littering; meaning we are increasing fines for littering. In the face of climate change, littering is not only immoral, but a serious crime against the livelihoods of each and everyone. I am personally concerned by this littering issue when it comes to drains. Many of you here often criticise when it comes to their construction. Unfortunately, they are not here to criticise today, but they do, we have heard them criticising. But they will be surprised and maybe find it hard to believe, the kind of objects sometimes we have to extract from clogged drains.

Coming back to our beaches, Mr Speaker, Sir, broken glasses and waste pose a hazard to beach-goers which is in our local culture. So, cleanliness is key in safeguarding our identity. And I believe that this Bill provides the Beach Authority with additional power and resources to further enhance the landscape of our beaches. Beach Management Plans would be implemented on public beaches to provide all amenities and leisure facilities and also to make them accessible

to the disabled as explained by the Minister earlier. To further pursue such innovative projects, this has now become one of the core functions of the Beach Authority through this Bill, and we can only say thank you to the Minister. I also note with interest in Clause 5 (f) (vi) where we are making it now mandatory to restore native vegetation on our public beaches which I believe is a giant step ahead.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to point out that, after the creation of the National Youth Environment Council and the National Environment Cleaning Authority, just voted a few minutes ago, and the enactment of the Climate Change Bill, the Government is now proposing amendments to the Bill of another key organisation in the protection of our environment. We are today empowering the Beach Authority, which will now be responsible for all the beaches of our Republic, not only Mauritius. Such a bold measure, indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir!

With the appropriate legal tools, adequate resources, and the means to act, we are transforming the Beach Authority into a strategic partner in the management of our territory. Not just another institution to nominate a *coler lafis*, like it had been reduced to, during the Labour Party regime. The famous *Maurice Ile Durable*, we remember nothing has been done!

This Government, under the Prime Ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, and other key Ministries like Blue Economy and Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, Agro-Industry and Food Security, and the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change itself, we are making a real contribution to our ecosystem. And here, I would like to pay tribute once again to my good friend and colleague, hon. Ramano, for the amazing work and already impressive list of achievements as Minister of Environment.

While others are making jokes, and criticising for the sake of criticising; and this morning I heard people encouraging drivers to reduce speed in order to block traffic, which they are doing - and I think this is why they had to leave - on purpose to protest against the rise in petrol prices worldwide. So, burn more fuel, more gas emissions!

And in the meantime, here, we are making genuine progress towards a sustainable Mauritius, and all this while managing an economic crisis. This is what we call a responsible Government under a strong leadership, who is dusting off old legislations and coming forward with new innovative laws that will stand the test of time. And I am confident, Mr Speaker, Sir, we will be remembered for it.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for 45 minutes.

At 4.53 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.45 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Dhaliah!

Mr R. Dhaliah (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to you for allowing me to share my opinion about the amendments to be brought to the Beach Authority Bill.

My humble contribution in this debate can adduce elements to help making our beaches more wonderful and the place to be at all times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from the very start, allow me to emphasise on one important provision of the Bill which is being debated in this august Assembly. The Section 4 of the Principal Act is being repealed and is being replaced by a new Section 4 which reads as follows –

“The object of the Authority shall be to ensure proper management and control of public beaches in the Island of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga, Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diégo Garcia and any other island comprised in the Republic of Mauritius.”

This Section sends a clear signal regarding this Government’s commitment to grant the same consideration to each and every single part of our territory, but most importantly, it shows Government’s strong determination to fight for our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and Tromelin, among others. This bears testimony of this Government’s consistency in its actions.

M. le président, le gouvernement a dévoilé sa vision et nous travaillons sans relâche pour l’accomplir. Il ne fait aucun doute que demain, les futures générations reconnaîtront le travail qui aura été abattu par ce gouvernement et que nos réalisations seront inscrites en lettres d’or dans l’histoire de la République de Maurice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with pride that I am adding my voice to the debates on this important piece of legislation because thanks to the vision and seriousness of our Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, I see it as a privilege and an honour to serve, together with wonderful

people, two beautiful Constituencies, namely, Piton - Rivière du Rempart and Flacq - Bon Accueil as Private Parliamentary Secretary. Why have I mentioned these two Constituencies? It is simply because in both, there are kilometers of beaches, running from Palmar, Belle Mare, Poste de Flacq, Poste Lafayette and Pointe des Lascars, known to be among the most famous, most frequented and most valued by visitors from abroad and the population at large.

Our beaches, Mr Speaker, Sir, constitute our pride too. When Mark Twain in his famous book 'Following the Equator' wrote –

“You gather the idea that Mauritius was made first and that heaven is a copy of our island.”

He was surely making allusion to our beaches.

Access to beaches via the excellent road network devised by the Government has been made easy over the past few years and it goes without saying that we need to toil hard to empower our public beaches with outdoor game facilities with a view of attracting more tourists and the population. For example, enhancing leisure activities on public beaches will foster opportunities for locals and tourists to seal friendship. We can also promote nautical sports such as Kayak, scuba diving and paddle boat amongst others. And we need to develop public beaches in a holistic and integrated manner, encourage swimming not only as a sport but as a leisure.

It is no secret that whilst being so popular, at times our beaches ne sont pas si bien gardées, voire protégées par certaines personnes irresponsables qui les fréquentent et qui ne savent pas faire la différence entre l'espace commun et les poubelles, ce qui est vraiment déplorable. Il n'y a qu'à voir l'état de nos plages après les week-ends. Elles font pitié avec des tas d'ordures qui jonchent le sol. Il est de notre devoir de maintenir nos plages propres et en état. En tant que Secrétaire Parlementaire Privé, je sillonne les villages, y compris les plages, des deux Circonscriptions dont j'ai la responsabilité. Malheureusement, je suis souvent déçu de constater que beaucoup de nos compatriotes ne font preuve d'aucun respect pour nos plages et nos espaces publics. Je suis intimement convaincu que l'éducation demeure le meilleur outil pour pousser les gens à comprendre que nos plages méritent d'être mieux gardées.

N'oublions pas une chose capitale. Nos plages font partie de ces produits que nous vendons aux touristes. Chaque reportage publicitaire vantant la beauté de notre pays parle impérativement de nos plages.

Focus is more on the pristine beaches and our people than anything else. So, isn't it our duty to educate people that our beaches need to be kept clean? Without stray dogs as well! Everyone here will surely concede that Government, through the revamped MSAW, is doing a lot but yet people, refusing to sterilise their domestic animals, especially cats and dogs, go leave their puppies at the beach; an action that I will qualify as reprehensible to say the least.

Avec une attitude pour le moins rétrograde, ils ne réalisent pas les préjudices qu'ils causent à l'industrie touristique, poumon de notre économie. Il ne faut pas oublier une chose fondamentale. Pendant presque deux ans, nous avons subi de plein fouet les effets de la Covid-19 qui a quasiment mis le monde en arrêt. Aujourd'hui que les activités reprennent, y compris les arrivées touristiques, il est de notre devoir à tous de contribuer à la relance de notre économie. Et garder nos plages en état ne relève pas uniquement de la responsabilité du gouvernement ou des institutions du secteur touristique.

Ayant humblement élaboré sur le sujet, laissez-moi maintenant aborder les amendements proposés par un ministre averti, un ministre qui défend non seulement l'environnement, mais aussi par extension avec ces amendements, la cause touristique, un ministre qui veut que le public ait accès à un environnement propre et sain.

Oui, M. le président, il était grand temps de venir de l'avant avec un renforcement des lois. Je suis parfaitement en faveur de ces amendements et je vais par conséquent, en toute logique, voter pour avec fierté.

Evidemment, je demanderai au ministre de ne pas lésiner sur les moyens pour conscientiser le public à travers une campagne d'information partout à travers le pays comme il sait si bien le faire.

Yes, it was high time to come with more severe laws and let us ensure that they be understood more as a deterrent than anything else. It is not with joy and glory that our responsible Government wants to apply the law in cases of people *faisant fi des règlements existants*. But, we need to protect the image of our country at a time where some people, *des*

personnes mal-intentionnées veulent fragiliser notre industrie touristique qui a commencé tout doucement à reprendre du poil de la bête.

Je l'ai souvent dit et je le répète. Tout doit se faire selon les règles et dans le strict respect de la loi. Il est un fait que ce n'est plus possible de pratiquer la politique de l'autruche concernant ces marchands ambulants qui ont, depuis quelques temps, envahi nos plages sans le moindre permis. Ils ne peuvent pas se permettre de transformer nos plages en foires. Les sanctions sont devenues la seule solution face à ceux qui ont été prévenus mais qui font la sourde oreille.

Il est temps de revoir le cadre légal, de revoir les sanctions et imposer des amendes plus sévères à ceux qui ne respectent pas les règlements. Il est donc temps de donner les moyens à la *Beach Authority*, l'instance régulatrice, pour qu'elle puisse faire respecter et appliquer la loi comme il se doit.

Il y a aussi, malheureusement, des activités qui causent un tort immense à l'environnement. Je fais ici référence à ces *barbecue parties* qui sont organisés n'importe où sur une plage alors que le gouvernement a fait construire des endroits spécifiques pour cette activité.

La plage est la propriété de tout le monde et il va sans dire que nous tous, nous avons des devoirs et des responsabilités pour nous assurer que chaque plage soit un lieu de détente et non de stress. Trop souvent, une réunion de détente tourne en bagarre en raison justement du comportement de certains qui ne respectent pas l'intimité des gens, les règlements régissant les plages ou encore qui abusent de la bonté des autorités. Il faut donc que les officiers soient investis des pouvoirs accrus pour faire respecter les lois. Halte aux constructions illégales sur nos plages, à l'érection de structures inappropriées, non à la pollution et au non-respect de ces espaces publics, et oui à la conservation et à la protection des plages.

M. le président, ce gouvernement ne fait pas semblant. Il agit. Notre priorité demeure le bien-être de notre population, la relance de notre économie et surtout, surtout, M. le président, le respect de notre mère patrie.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Ramdhany!

(5.57 p.m.)

Dr. A. Ramdhany (First Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the debate on this important Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset let me congratulate the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste, Management and Climate Change, hon. Kavy Ramano, for the commendable work and efforts that he is putting in to improve the environmental legal framework in our island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the people of Mauritius know very well how important the sea and beaches are to one of the pillars of our economy, which is the tourism industry. The astonishing beauty of the beaches and the sea brings countless of tourists every year, thus contributing to the financial well-being of the island and directly and indirectly contributing to over 70,000 jobs in the sector of travel and tourism in Mauritius, which amounts roughly to 14% of the total employment in Mauritius.

And whilst we are fortunate to have extraordinary coasts and beaches, we must not forget about the importance of looking after the well-being of our nature. We have the duty to set an example of a good environmental culture to ensure that the tourists find Mauritius in the best conditions so that they also feel the need to respect it.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, though ancillary to the general environmental laws, is of utmost importance as it provides the Beach Authority with the essential powers to ensure that our pristine beaches remain a valuable asset and thereby contributing to the sustainable development of our island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once assuming office in November 2019, this Government started implementing the measures pledged to the nation in its electoral manifesto, and a number of those measures have already been completed. True it is that the COVID-19 forced a change in the strategy, but this Government, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, left no stones unturned to take our island to new heights in terms of a green economy which aims to reduce carbon emissions and pollution, to promote enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and the prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services to improve the quality of life of our citizens which include their leisure time on our public beaches.

Mr Speaker, Sir, warming of the climate system is unequivocal and since the 1960s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented, and represent a serious threat to our public

beaches. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed with the global mean temperature increasing by some two degrees Celsius. The sea level has risen consequently. This Bill aims at protecting our public beaches around Mauritius and includes beaches which shall be proclaimed in the future within the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, being a PPS of Constituency No.6, I regularly visit the public beaches in the northern region. The powers conferred to enforcement officers of the Beach Authority will in no doubt equip them with the right tools in deterring illegal activities such as traders operating without the appropriate licenses on public beaches, thereby ensuring the safety and security of all beach users.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Beach Authority Amendment Bill is the realisation of yet another commitment binding this Government to the Mauritian nation. As mentioned in the Government Programme, Beach Management Plans would be implemented on public beaches to provide all amenities and leisure facilities, and also to make them accessible to the disabled persons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Beach Management Plan (Phase 1) at the public beach of Mont Choisy in my constituency was inaugurated on 09 April 2022 and this is a step in the right direction for a more inclusive Mauritius. This function of the Beach Authority is now being codified in the Bill, and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, will ensure the continuity and consistency in the implementation of such innovative projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the recovery of the tourism industry has been kick started by the bold decisions of this Government under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, together with different stakeholders, and as we look forward to continue our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must commit to re-attract tourists globally, and this Bill provides an opportunity to protect our most valuable assets which are our sandy beaches.

Mr Speaker, Sir, recently, I have received a letter of grievance from the Grand Bay Taxi Owners' Association which comprises of 45 members in regards to a taxi stand put up by the Ministry of Land Transport and Public Infrastructure following a request by the Association. The members are thankful for needful having been done by the Ministry and the TMRSU. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue being faced now by the members is the use of the parking slots by other vehicles, and food trucks in total non-compliance with the law.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill consolidates the legal framework within which the authorised officers will now be empowered to operate. As Sir Winston Churchill once said –

“give us the tools and we will finish the job.”

This Bill will enable the authorised officers to exercise better control of all activities taking place on public beaches and thus ensuring an increased safety and security to the beach users, tourists and other stakeholders alike. The Fixed Penalty Notice will act as serious deterrent to prevent encroachment or eyesores in terms of unaesthetic buildings or other structures on any part of a public beach.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on a concluding note, I wish to emphasise that the provisions contained in the Bill are vital to address all the challenges being encountered in the control and management of public beaches. This Bill reflects the positive and progressive spirit of this Government under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. I seize this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, hon. Kavy Ramano, anew, for bringing this Bill to the House and for the commendable work being done by his Ministry.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

(6.05 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. All my colleagues who intervened before me laid emphasis on the importance of this Bill. So, to better understand the importance of this Bill, let me take you back to the year 1961 when Mr James Meade, who is a Nobel Prize recipient in Economics, predicted a poor development prospect for our country because of our vulnerabilities to weather and price shocks and lack of job opportunities outside the sugar sector.

However, we managed to achieve what very few Sub-Saharan African countries have achieved. We transformed ourselves from a poor sugar economy into a country with one of the highest per capita incomes among African countries. Our success, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a case study on how to make a big success out of small economy.

Some, times back, Mr Joseph Stiglitz, who is also a Nobel Prize laureate in Economics, published an article in the Guardian where he wrote, I quote –

“If someone is to describe a small country that provides free education up to tertiary level, free transport for school children and free health care including heart surgery, you might think that such a country is phenomenally rich.”

But we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are not that phenomenally rich.

However, the point that I want to make here is that we managed to re-engineer ourselves, especially from the year 1985 and onwards up to 1995, and managed to create other pillars of economy and tourist industry is one of them. When we talk of the tourist industry, the success behind is definitely the contribution of our beaches. Thanks to that, we managed to reach a real GDP of above 10% in 1987 as compared to only 1% in 1983. And I seize this opportunity to thank Sir Anerood Jugnauth for his vision and determination to take Mauritius to a new height. Mr Ali Zafar has described our success of those days as the tale of three sectors, the sugar, EPZ and tourism sectors which have been essential for the country’s economic take-off.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained, the beaches help our tourism industry. Beaches are our economic as well as natural resources. They are an important feature of our life which makes about 330 km of our coastline and about 130 public beaches. As natural resources, they add beauty to the coast and provide habitats for many creatures including birds and sea turtles. As economic resources, they provide services to people and properties that have an economic value. They also generate impacts on the economy and tax base. They are also important to our lives.

To some of us, living without frequent visits to the beach, an immersion in the ocean would be unthinkable. Apart from providing leisure to our people, our beaches have been our national asset. The country and lots of our fellow citizens are among the three billion people of the developing countries who rely on the ocean for their livelihoods. It is therefore clear now that we need to properly manage our beaches not only to enhance our tourism industry but also to provide leisure to Mauritians. The aim of this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to also meet the challenges in meeting with demands for services.

Let me now talk on the amendments proposed to the existing Act. Section 2 of the existing Act where there is a definition of the public beach now includes that the space between

the high-water mark up to a distance of 100 meters from the low-water mark is the beach as in the existing law it just says up to a distance of 100 m, but does not say 100 m from where.

Section 4 of this Bill deals about the management of our beaches and this is very important, Mr Speaker, Sir, because when I went through this section of the Bill, I could not help myself from thinking of *pandits* being allocated beaches to run restaurants. *Pandits* close to the PTR were allocated beach at Trou Aux Biches to sell tandoori chicken and whisky.

When we are talking of our beaches, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are also talking of those of our small islands around the main land. The amendments also provide authority to beaches of Tromelin Island, St Brandon and the Chagos Archipelagos as these are our assets that we need to manage and have a proper legal framework so that people will not become owner of these beaches as well like at a time, one promoter who is close to the PTR denied access to Ilot Gabriel to the public and even employed bouncers to prevent public to have access to the island.

Hon. Mohamed *nous accusait l'autre jour de « sucer le sang jusqu'à la moelle »*. Mr Speaker, Sir, claiming money from the public to have access to public beaches, that is what is called « *sucer le sang jusqu'à la moelle* ». Blessed be the country that the PTR was kicked off in 2014, this country was saved from the *Draculas* and *vampires* and from 2015, Mauritians can now accede freely to the beach without payment.

Section 12A subsection 2, this is the most important one, Mr Speaker, Sir, as it deals with the security on the beaches for the beach users. It reminds me of the affidavit of some young girls made on 11 April 1997, who stated that they were in a very private party in a bungalow at Albion on 29 March 1997 when during the same night, the Press reported that at a certain point of time one of the girls was chased on the public beach and brought back. That was reported in *Le Mauricien* of 15 April 2012. At that time, the Press reported that incident because they were celebrating the 15th year since that incident occurred.

The Press also reported the presence of a minor at that a very private party and the whole saga was named the 'Macarena Party'. There were several Presses which talked about the incident and there were several *caricatures* of Deven. The former Speaker of the Assembly, Mr Ajay Daby, had to roam around the island with exhibits hanging at the end of a stick which he asserted having collected at the public beach of Albion.

This Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, talks about the safety of beach users. This is what this Government is bringing, security for our girls and all the public on the public beach. This Government is looking forward to attract more and more tourists to our island so that we can boost our economy, so that we can go back to normal at the earliest. In this situation, it is important that we bring such laws that will provide safety and security on our beaches and no more of Macarena.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend this Bill on behalf of all our beach lovers and Mauritians. Thank You, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Deputy Speaker will now take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, please be seated! Hon. Léopold!

(6.14 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I must thank hon. Ramano, Minister responsible for mitigating the climate crisis and environment sustainability at national level. Yes, I have to thank him for taking a national leadership approach and enhancing cooperation between different levels to effectively attempting to manage our coastal zone in a changing environment, and most particularly legislating an important aspect of our coastal zone in giving more power and responsibilities to the Beach Regulatory Authority to response to the contributing factors of climate change impacts which are causing a great deal of degradation to our public beaches all across the Republic of Mauritius.

The most important task of the Beach Authority is to implement measures to adapt to the impact of unavoidable climate change and to regulate the avoidable causes of the degradation of our beaches mostly caused by human. With the increased vulnerability of our beaches due to pollution, human activities, the impact of climate change; the Beach Authority, with this Bill, will get a broader responsibility to protect our beaches and one of the most important aspects in view of protecting our beaches, which the Bill provides, is a clear definition of a public beach itself. A public beach is clearly defined as the space of high water mark up to 100 meters from the low water mark. This definition is very important as it is a tool for helping to prepare the

implementation and management plan and regulating of all activities carried out on public beaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, beaches will continuously change; it is natural, it is a dynamic evolution dictated, of course, by climate and other forcings including human impact.

With this amendment, the Beach Authority will have a great task ahead, that is, the maintenance of the morphological structure of beaches, which is not going to be easy because of shocks, like extreme meteorological events which may suddenly change the configuration of beaches. This Bill is crucial, as by maintaining the structure of beaches that will ensure the maximum benefit for the ecosystem and the recreational activities that provide fuel to tourism.

A very important bearing, also, which the Bill covers, by giving a clear-cut definition to public beaches, is on the aspect of pollution, water pollution which has a direct effect on public health. We have witnessed how our beautiful, natural lagoons and beaches are exposed to danger, with the recent sad event of oil spilling. Unfortunately, if humans exist, there will be human activities; there will still be accidents despite ways of minimising and prevention.

When it comes to sea water pollution, we are not a big polluter but the ocean is continuous and open, the misbehaviours of bigger polluters, from other parts of the globe, have an impact on our beaches, as debris and chemical products improperly disposed can travel from long distance and end up on our shores.

Despite that, in general, 40% of the litter found on our beaches come from the public and half of them are that of plastic. As we all know, plastic is, in fact, never truly broken down. So, this Bill empowers further the officers of the Beach Authority to monitor and maintain beach health, hence sustaining the beaches for economic, recreational, and aesthetic purposes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Explanatory Memorandum of this Bill, the last point, which is not the least and to me the most important, because protecting public beaches go way above the management of activities carried out on public beaches. Pollution, safety and public health are very important regarding the control and management of public beach. A polluted beach will affect public health and inhibit economic growth of the community.

It is important therefore that the Bill provides, as outlined, for all matters connected to public beach safety: from structural development to safer beaches – no sea water accident/ no

drowning (with clearly demarcated swimming zone) to the monitoring of water quality from impurities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, managing our public beaches is a complex challenge which requires an integrated approach and a multidisciplinary design. Therefore, once again, it is the role of the Government in establishing proper legal framework through the Legislative Assembly to enhance policies of promoting environmentally friendly and sustainable measures.

I am therefore supporting this Bill by adding my voice to this debate, as representative of Constituency No. 21, Rodrigues Island, and as this law will be also applied to the protection of our beautiful beaches of Rodrigues and the whole Republic is lucky that in Rodrigues we do have beautiful beaches and all of them are public beaches. So any person of the Republic of Mauritius or elsewhere can access to all the existing beaches of Rodrigues Island, with only one condition - to preserve the ecosystem by using common sense.

This is my participation in this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I thank you for your great attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. François, please!

(6.23 p.m.)

Mr F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Minister for introducing this Bill and all orators who preceded me.

The objective of this Bill is to amend the Beach Authority Act so as to broaden the functions and powers of the Beach Authority to ensure proper management and control of public beaches in the Island of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga and very interestingly in Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diégo Garcia, and any other island comprised in the Republic of Mauritius as per our Constitution.

Our international renowned beaches are one of our most precious natural and economic assets, for both residents and visitors. The hon. Minister reported that there are 132 proclaimed beaches in Mauritius and 12 beaches in Rodrigues with an extent of 28.2 hectares. This implies that the number of public beaches could still be increased in numbers.

Our beaches, today, are subject to increasing development pressures, climate risks, population growth, and recreational use. The Ministry of Environment and the Beach Authority

have the responsibility to formulate clear state-wide guidance to secure appropriate, sustainable coastal management as a matter of priority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that there are only fourteen Coastal Conservation Plans that have been developed along with a Beach Management Plan and guidelines, so far out of the 132 beaches in Mauritius and none for the 12 beaches in Rodrigues. Please, do correct me if I am wrong with regard to the fourteen Coastal Conservation Plans.

A delicate issue which the Authority must look into is the effect of run-off water during heavy rainfall. It implies that the Beach Management Plan must strictly look into it as a matter of precautionary measure from the effect of polluted runoff water and its bearing on sea water pollution on some of our beaches as rightly pointed out by hon. Léopold.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister Ramano, in his interview in the Development and Cooperation - e-magazine dated 21 April 2021, pointed out that –

“the sea level is rising at a rate of 5.6 millimetres (mm) per year at mainland Mauritius and 9 mm per year at the island of Rodrigues, while the global average is 3.3 mm per year.”

The sea-level rise as a result of climate change will certainly impact our beaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in some places, on some of our beaches, erosion is considerably reducing certain beaches width during this decade. I understand that about 17% of our beaches have been eroded by about 20 meters. In addition to that, the National Audit Office, in its Performance Report No. 11 of 2013 for the Ministry of Environment, forecasted that 35% of our coastline may be occupied by hotels by 2030. And you can imagine the pressure on our coastlines and beaches.

It is worth to be noted that from a study conducted by the US National Academy of Sciences, it is underlined that the chances of a major tropical cyclone occurring in the southern Indian Ocean basin will increase by 18% every decade. One can imagine what will be the impacts of such tropical cyclone on our beaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is clear, that there is an urgent need to ensure that coastal areas are adapting to the impacts of climate change. Our beaches need to be protected from erosion. Beach erosion, being a natural process, cannot be completely eliminated. However, some

measures could be taken to reduce the rate of degradation and that could allow beaches to regenerate naturally. In our case, we have recourse to beach nourishment, replenishment, beach-fill, onto eroding and sediment deficient beach area, as what we call soft structural protection.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I recognise that valuable technical assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the Government of Mauritius, in 2012 through a 3-year project on Capacity Development on Coastal Protection and Rehabilitation in the Republic of Mauritius. I met some of the experts in Rodrigues as well. It is interesting to note the two demonstration projects carried out namely, at Grand Sable, through the undertaking of gravel beach nourishment (flexible revetment) to protect the shore against wave overtopping, and at Pointe d'Esny, to look into effectiveness of soft measures such as policies and setbacks.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the new Part IIA of the Bill regulates prescribe offences of activities on public beach. In a zero tolerance approach to avoid beach environmental crime, I note the rapid and efficient law enforcement vehicle through Fixed Penalty Notice. It is applying the same principle as Fixed Penalty Notice applied under the sections 191 to 193 of the Road Traffic Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to put on record that there have been some malicious, distorted and demagogical information with regards to the public dissemination of information about this Bill through the provision of the Fixed Penalty Notice by an internet radio and social media in Rodrigues. Very unfortunate and cheap! If we compare like with like, the FPN under this legislation is applying the same principle as the FPN under the Road Traffic Act, as I mentioned earlier.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the prescribe offences are clearly defined and it is the responsibility of the authorised officer to apply the law; in that case, the authorised officer of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Police. My serious call is that there is no abuse by any authorised officers nor the Police as the principle objective of the legislation must be clean, green and safer beaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come to Rodrigues more specifically. As I said, there are 12 beaches proclaimed with a total extent of about 28.2 hectares, namely from –

- Pointe Coton via Anse Ali to St Francois;

- Graviers near Anse Femie via Graviers near Football Pitch to Mourouk and Port Sud Est;
- Anse Raffin to Petite Butte, and
- Anse Aux Anglais via Caverne Provert to Grand Baie, for those who know Rodrigues well and for the Rodriguans listening to me.

There is still room by the Regional Assembly to take policy decision to increase the number of public beaches of good quality and to be properly maintained and make them accessible to the general public. A dozen of pristine beaches must also be proclaimed as public beaches, namely –

- Trou D'argent;
- Anse Bouteille;
- Anse Femi;
- Baladirou;
- Pte Monnier;
- Riviere-Banane lot 1 and 2;
- Fumier;
- Anse Ali;
- Var Brule;
- Ile Michel;
- Plaine Mao, and
- Anse Goeland/Pte Diable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the RRA Act 2001 has vested powers to the RRA in certain areas of responsibilities including Environment and State Lands. The beaches in Rodrigues are vested as State Land and therefore, are under the responsibility of the Commission of Lands. All our beaches are public assets. So, any leases or permissions to use beaches in Rodrigues are only granted by the responsible Commissioner. The Commission for Environment controls, manages and ensures all the existing facilities and amenities are present on our public beaches.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 27 (2) of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act stipulates that –

“Government matters for which Regional Assembly is not responsible –

The Government or any public statutory body may, by way of Memorandum of Understanding, authorise the Regional Assembly to act as its agent in respect of any of its responsibilities in Rodrigues.”

As rightly stated by the hon. Minister Ramano, a renewed Memorandum of Understanding between Regional Assembly and Beach Authority was signed on 16 December 2020 to promote development and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, and to define by mutual consent, the areas of cooperation according to the needs, interests and experience available, and to share such knowledge and experience.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the present Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill, a new updated MoU must be signed between the two parties. I understand that the areas of cooperation are as per the established list of the functions of Beach Authority in section 5 of the principal Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the cooperation between the Regional Assembly and the Beach Authority by mutual consent is by means of –

- a. *accompagnement*, that is, regular visits of representatives of beach authority with a view to providing necessary support;
- b. exchange of technical information, joint identification of technical problems and /or projects and their formulation and implementation, and
- c. other forms of technical cooperation as may be mutually agreed upon.

Further, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with reference to clause 5(b) to 5(e) of the Bill, with regards to its application to Rodrigues, that is, issue of traders license, ensure security and safety of users of public beaches, and day-to-day cleaning of beaches, I do not expect the Beach Authority to regulate these activities in Rodrigues as I believe the local authorities thereat can look into that.

At present, I have to say the cleaning of public beaches is perfectly being carried out by the Regional Assembly Government owned company, Rodclean Company Ltd. And here, I seize this opportunity to congratulate them for their excellent work to clean and keep Rodrigues beautiful. *Bravo à Rodclean Company Ltd.!* We are highly aiming, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at making Rodrigues – very important – a spotless, beautiful, safe and clean island within the Republic of Mauritius. I did not have the opportunity to talk about the new legislation with regard to the National Environment Cleaning Authority in Mauritius, presented by the hon. Prime Minister. I have to say, hon. Prime Minister that we want Rodrigues to be cleaner, safer and greener. This is the vision and this is the way forward for this Republic and our countries.

However, with regard to other projects implementation as per clause 5 (f), the cooperation between RRA and the Beach Authority should be especially for high-cost projects, being given the limited RRA budget, which is required for some projects for a proper functionality. For example, the upliftment and landscaping works on public beaches and major infrastructural development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will observe that in Rodrigues, there is a strict minimum of trade license authorised on our beaches in order to protect beach users and to respect them, as beaches are a place to relax. So far, the only authorised activities are tuckshops on a few beaches, which are leased to private individuals for the sale of local foods, drinks, non-alcoholic beverages and other local products. I note there is an urgency to facilitate people also on non-proclaimed beaches, as I mentioned earlier, especially through construction of toilets, kiosks, segregating provision of rehabilitation and embellishment with solar lightings, picnic tables and water points. These are avenues that I will request the Beach Authority to take on board in their budget share with Rodrigues and their cooperation. I obviously expect a proper coordination among all stakeholders, in the interest of a sound and proper management and control of our beaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, beach erosion and degradation, are among the main concerns for our beaches in Rodrigues, requiring immediate mitigating actions for restoration and protection. Here, I welcome the study being carried out by *Agence Française de Développement* on the floodings and erosion of our beaches in Rodrigues, as announced by the hon. Minister Ramano.

I note that, on a pilot basis, the Commission for Environment in Rodrigues, with the engagement and participation of the community, have embarked in the construction of soft barriers with sand bags at *Caverne Provert* beach, *Grand Baie* and rehabilitation and embellishment works at *Petite Butte* beaches on a community participation basis thereat. Rodrigues has also engaged in the restoration of some beaches, namely *Mourouk*, *Graviers*, *Petite Butte*, *Anse aux Anglais*, *Caverne Provert* and *Grand Baie* with native and endemic vegetation on a pilot basis.

With regard to the use of public beaches activities such as public gathering - fancy fair, political meetings, cultural, recreational and leisure activities - the Commission for Environment issues permission for the use of public beaches, followed by Police clearances under the Public Gathering Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall be brief and to conclude, our clean, green, safe and high quality beaches are *notre vitrine écologique de notre République*, while stimulating our tourism economic pillar.

On these notes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I fully support this Bill and I thank you for your kind attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister Ramano, please!

(6.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, tout d'abord, je tiens à remercier l'honorable Premier ministre pour son soutien dans la présentation du *Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill*. Je remercie également, bien sûr, mes collègues et amis de la majorité parlementaire. Alors que les parlementaires de l'Opposition ont encore une fois choisi la voie du *walkout* dont ils sont aujourd'hui devenus des spécialistes au lieu d'apporter une contribution constructive à ce débat.

L'histoire retiendra, M. le président, encore une fois l'Opposition a failli à ses responsabilités d'apporter une contribution qualitative à un projet de loi aussi important, un projet de loi qui touche aux effets du changement climatique, l'utilisation d'un de nos plus

grands atouts touristiques que sont les plages, la survie des petites et moyennes entreprises mauriciennes et la démocratisation de l'accès à la plage.

Mais pour nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous avons le courage nécessaire pour apporter des changements pour une vie meilleure de nos concitoyens. Nous sommes un gouvernement soucieux de nos responsabilités et nous serons à la hauteur de nos engagements et de nos ambitions et de l'attente de la population.

M. le président, je tiens à attirer l'attention de la Chambre sur le fait qu'il est évident qu'avec les pouvoirs et la compétence révisés de la *Beach Authority* en vertu de ce projet de loi, l'application des réglementations en vertu de la loi principale sera renforcée pour une gestion et un contrôle efficace de nos plages publiques et aussi pour répondre aux demandes croissantes des usagers des plages, y compris les touristes visitant notre île.

M. le président, Maurice étant un petit État insulaire en développement, Maurice n'est pas épargnée par les effets néfastes du réchauffement climatique et ces effets sont perceptibles le long des zones côtières, y compris sur les plages publiques. Ainsi, il est d'une importance vitale de proposer des mesures résilientes pour gérer et contrôler nos plages publiques avec une approche holistique et durable.

La délimitation des plages allant à 100 m du *low watermark* vers la mer donne une responsabilité accrue à la *Beach Authority* de gérer d'une façon efficiente le problème de la pollution et aussi le problème de la qualité de l'eau qui, je dois mentionner ici, fait partie d'une des priorités du ministère de l'Environnement.

Ainsi, la *Beach Authority* qui s'est déjà lancée dans la mise en œuvre de plans de gestion des plages, pour commencer par étapes sur les plages publiques de Flic en Flac, La Prairie et Belle Mare, le projet de loi prévoit que l'Autorité des plages poursuivra de tels projets intégrés sur d'autres plages publiques. L'importance de tels projets est de répondre aux éléments suivants

—

- fournir des orientations pour les actions qui réglementent les développements, y compris le zonage des plages publiques pour diverses activités ;
- fournir des protocoles/actions clairs pour une gestion et un contrôle efficaces des plages publiques avec beaucoup plus de professionnalisme ;

- fournir des mesures d'adaptation, de protection en vue de faire face aux impacts de l'érosion côtière et du changement climatique, et
- fournir les équipements de plage essentiels ainsi que diverses installations de loisirs pour offrir un maximum d'avantages à toutes les catégories d'utilisateurs.

J'ai eu l'occasion de mentionner, M. le président, de ce projet innovateur qui est de donner accès à la plage aux personnes présentant un certain handicap et cela deviendra une réalité dans les semaines à venir, M. le président.

M. le président, en guise de conclusion, je voudrais encore une fois remercier le gouvernement d'avoir accepté ma demande de présenter ce projet de loi, bien sûr les parlementaires de la majorité pour leur soutien, le travail accompli par toutes les équipes de mon ministère, la *Beach Authority* bien sûr, *l'Attorney General* et son équipe au *State Law Office* et toutes les parties prenantes pour leur soutien et leur collaboration inestimables pour avoir mobilisé leurs efforts dans la préparation du *Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill*.

Sur ce, M. le président, je vous remercie.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

The Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. IV of 2022) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair, the Deputy Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Beach Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. IV of 2022) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 07 June 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

Mr Ramano seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment matter? So, you are raising your hands to go home.

Thank you, very much. Have a safe trip back!

At 6.48 p.m., the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 07 June 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

