

**SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES  
(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2020****CONTENTS**

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**ADJOURNMENT**

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**(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. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
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
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning
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 Tourism
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Commerce and Consumer

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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
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 Huroyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

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**MAURITIUS**

**Seventh National Assembly**

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**FIRST SESSION**

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**Debate No. 22 of 2020**

**Sitting of Tuesday 23 June 2020**

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**

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. V of 2020). (In Original)

**B. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities**

- (a) The Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security (Safe Transport of Radioactive Material) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 125 of 2020)
- (b) The Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security (Registration of Service Providers) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 126 of 2020)

**C. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management**

- (a) The Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix (Fees, Dues and other Charges for Classified Trades) (Revocation) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 127 of 2020)
- (b) The District Council of Grand Port (Fees for Classified Trade) (Revocation) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 128 of 2020)
- (c) The District Council of Flacq (Fees for Classified Trades) (Revocation) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 129 of 2020)
- (d) The District Council of Moka (Fees, Dues & other charges for Classified Trades) (Revocation) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 130 of 2020)

**D. Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives**

- (a) The Financial Statements of the Fashion and Design Institute for the 18-month period ended 31 December 2010.
- (b) The Financial Statements of the Fashion and Design Institute for the year ended 31 December 2011.
- (c) The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Fashion and Design Institute.

**E. Attorney General, Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security**

The Annual Report of the Mauritius Meat Authority for the year ended 30 June 2018.

**F. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

The Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark-Up) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 124 of 2020)

**G. Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training**

The Workers' Rights (Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 123 of 2020)

**H. Ministry of Health and Wellness**

- (a) The Prevention and Mitigation of Infectious Disease (Coronavirus) (Revocation) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 120 of 2020)
- (b) The Quarantine (Quarantinable Diseases) (Revocation) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 121 of 2020)
- (c) The Quarantine (COVID-19) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 122 of 2020)
- (d) The COVID-19 (Closing Down of Premises and Restriction of Activities and Movement in Public Places) (Revocation) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 131 of 2020)

**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***First Reading*

*On motion made and seconded the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. V of 2020) was read a first time.*

*Third Reading*

*On motion made and seconded, the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 (No. III of 2020) was read the third time and passed.*

*Second Reading***THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL****(NO. IV OF 2020)**

*Order for Second Reading read.*

(11.37 a.m.)

**The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill (No. IV of 2020) be read a second time.

The Bill makes provision for a supplementary appropriation of thirty-three billion and seven hundred million rupees (Rs33,700,000,000) in respect of services expenditure sometimes Government can spend to acquire services rather than provide of Government for Financial Year 2019-2020.

This supplementary appropriation is required in accordance with Section 105(3)(a) of the Constitution as the voted amount under six Votes of Expenditure, in the current financial year, will be insufficient to cater for the following -

- (i) Rs25.2 billion for meeting expenses in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (ii) Rs5.3 billion for payment of basic pensions following the increase in BRP rate from Rs6,210 to Rs9,000 with effect from 01 December 2019;
- (iii) Rs2.0 billion as transfer to the National Environment Fund for implementation of various environment projects under the Fund, and
- (iv) Rs1.2 billion in respect of some other urgent and unforeseen expenses such as NDU projects, Metro Express Ltd and SDRs transaction.

Mr Speaker Sir, in fact, Section 105(3)(a) of the Constitution stipulates that, where in any financial year, it is found that the amount appropriated by the appropriation law for the purposes included in any head 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.

Accordingly, those six Votes requiring supplementary appropriation in Financial Year 2019-2020 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.

The supplementary appropriation is required as follows -

- (i) Rs280 m. under Vote 2-2: National Development Unit for payments in respect of projects such as construction and upgrading of roads, sport facilities and children's playgrounds;
- (ii) Rs200 m. under Vote 4-3: Rodrigues for payment of basic pensions to beneficiaries in Rodrigues following the increase in rates with effect from 01 December 2019;
- (iii) Rs220 m. under Vote: 7-2 Land Transport to provide a loan to Metro Express Ltd to enable the Company to meet its initial operating expenses;
- (iv) Rs1.2 billion under Vote: 10-1 Ministry of Health and Wellness for the purchase of medical supplies in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic;

- (v) Rs5.1 billion under Vote 12-1: Social Security and National Solidarity essentially to cater for the increase in the monthly basic pensions rates to Rs9,000 as from 01 December 2019;
- (vi) Rs26.7 billion under Vote 25-1: Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government for the following -
  - (a) Rs11.0 billion in respect of the Wage Assistance Scheme put in place by Government to provide financial support to employees of the private sector who became technically unemployed during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The provision caters for the expected disbursement under the Scheme up to June 2020;
  - (b) Rs3.0 billion to provide financial support to the informal sector under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme up to June 2020;
  - (c) Rs45 m. for basic food items distributed to families on the Social Register of Mauritius, those receiving Carers' Allowance as well as residents of homes in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic;
  - (d) Rs2.0 billion as transfer to the National Environment Fund for implementing various projects to better protect the environment and mitigate the risks associated with climate change. This amount will be used mainly to implement programmes such as Flood Management, Landslide Management, Rehabilitation of Beaches, and Solid Waste Management;
  - (e) Rs10.0 billion as transfer to the National Resilience Fund for implementing schemes and programmes to ensure resilience in the wake of COVID-19. Out of this amount, Rs9.0 billion have been earmarked as support to the National Air Carrier, and
  - (f) finally, Rs0.65 billion to account for the purchase of SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) by Government upon request made by the IMF in accordance with the Articles of Agreement.

I wish to inform the House that in June 2019, the National Assembly, through the Appropriation (2019-2020) Act 2019, had voted a total sum of Rs123.7 billion under 71 Votes of Expenditure in respect of services of Government for Financial Year 2019-2020. However, the above supplementary expenditure could not have been foreseen at that time. In

addition, Government revenue, which was initially estimated at Rs121.7 billion, would be significantly lower by some Rs20 billion, essentially due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy.

In view of the above and as I stated in the 2020-2021 Budget Speech, the budget deficit for this financial year would be exceptionally high, that is, around 13.6% of GDP.

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

**The Prime Minister seconded.**

**Mr Speaker:** Debate is open!

(11.45 a.m.)

**The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are called upon to vote six items of expenditure with a supplementary appropriation of Rs33,700,000,000. The hon. Minister is right to point out that we have a high budget deficit for the year 2019-2020, which is as high as 13.6% of the GDP and a total public debt of GDP which has almost hit the roof and is 83%.

Of course, this is not the main issue, but as for Financial Year 2020-2021, it stands to reason that there will be deficit, and I don't expect the budget to be balanced. I can give figures, but this is not the debate today and I will come straight on Vote/Subheads.

Let me comment briefly on Vote/Subhead 7-2 - *Land Transport, 7-201 Metro Express Ltd.* A loan of Rs220 m. has been extended to the company to meet its initial operating expenses. Now, I do understand that the Metro Express Ltd came to a standstill during the contagion period, but I still can't understand. I expect the Minister or the Minister of Land Transport to explain forcefully as to why its resources have been stressed for such a spell of time. And I would like the Minister also to tell the House whether ridership of 55,000 commuters daily, as spelt out by the Minister of Land Transport, remains the magic figures for it to be financially viable. Once for all, the Minister of Finance has to say loud and clear for how long will taxpayers continue to subsidise the operation cost of Metro Express and if year in, year out, the cost of subsidies and loan will escalate. We are told that a loan provision of Rs380 m. has been earmarked for Financial Year 2020-2021, notwithstanding the Rs5.2 billion budgeted to complete Phase II of the project.

Now, I expect also the Minister of Land Transport to honour commitment given by his predecessor in respect of promises made to have interactive sessions with residents and

entrepreneurs, all those who are going to be impacted by the second phase. What we don't want is to suffer the fate of what we call the Roland Armand syndrome, and this syndrome has to be avoided at all costs.

The Minister owes more than an explanation. There should be clarity also and certainty on compensation to be given in relation to revenue to be foregone during construction phase. Residents and entrepreneurs of Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes are eagerly waiting for a long solicited meeting with the Minister. It is time, of course, to reap dividends from the march which we staged, and I still recall how forceful hon. Mrs Diolle and hon. Ramano were in their address to the crowd.

Let me now come to the second item *10-1*, subsection *10-102 Hospital and Specialised Services*, where a substantial sum of Rs1.2 billion has been earmarked for purchase of medical supplies. I take it for granted it is personal protective equipment, ventilators, continuous positive airway pressure, test kits, reagents and medicines. Now, I expect that a breakdown would be given and I hope the Minister of Finance will, in the name of transparency and governance, disclose the names of the suppliers, the amount paid, and if there was an emergency procurement exercise. Because our concern is that under the cloak and garb of COVID-19, the contract has been awarded in doubtful circumstances.

I also want to know whether the Evaluation Committee has awarded contracts to deserving bidders and whether that Evaluation Committee was relieved of its responsibilities to be replaced by persons who were subservient to the Executive. I have been told that the preferred bidder has been tagged as a parallel importer of substandard products. The winner has the support, I have been told, of people from higher quarters, and I have been told that he also have the blessing of the National Committee on COVID.

Now, there is deep-seated concern and people going to hospitals are worried in relation to the drugs which are prescribed to them, and I am not going to go into issues which we raised when questions were put to the Minister in relation to the PNQ. But I expect Government, in the name of transparency and accountability, not only to give a breakdown but to give all the relevant information, and since this is a highly controversial issue and it would be in the interest of Government and the Minister, in particular, if there is seriousness of purpose, that a Select Committee be set up to look into all the intricacies and to ask relevant questions. That Committee will have the power to call persons and papers required because it is relevant that we know exactly what has taken place. And I am very worried

because as of now certain replies have been given, there had been a lot of confusion as to the amount that has been disbursed or remain to be paid to the preferred supplier, and this matter has not only been discussed and debated here, but outside also, concern has been expressed by medical practitioners, by pharmacists and others.

Now, much is being said and we get a lot of information from officers of the Ministry of Health, and they are worried. So, for the sake of clarity and since the Minister nodded and said that he is all out to give all the relevant information, - and I call upon Government to give serious thought to what I am proposing - that it is time to set up a Select Committee to look into all the issues so that once for all, the relevant papers are circulated; the public is aware of what really happened, as to whether drugs that are being prescribed at hospitals are substandard; money paid to the preferred bidder, and whether the allocation of resources has been given to bidders who are deserving or there has been differential treatment given to one specific bidder.

So, I certainly hope that this request, which I consider it to be legitimate, coming from the Opposition, will be entertained. At a later stage, when our friends from the Opposition bench, and I expect hon. Bérenger and others will be more explicit in the light of what I stated.

I will now come to the Social Security and National Solidarity Fund, 5.1 billion. Let me, without going into any detail, remind the Prime Minister of what was promised to the elderly and to those who would be entitled to a staggered increase, allegedly before January 2024. If I refer to the reply given by the Minister, that magic figure of Rs13,500 will not be reached and I don't see any person qualified to have this pension will ever get these Rs13,500. Besides, the hon. Minister of Finance stated very clearly that it depends on how things evolve economically. But I expect Government to tell the truth, to highlight the deep-seated concern. There have been several articles which appeared in the Press and I expect Government will live up to the expectation of the people. This is an issue that cannot be treated lightly, and I hope that this will be looked into very seriously and the Minister will tell us whether this magical figure Rs13,500 will be attained and if this sum will be disbursed to those who will be qualified by year 2023 to have the basic retirement pension. At this stage, I will not say much, but I leave it to Government to live up to its expectation.

Let me now come to the main COVID related items of expenditure. I have in mind the transfer of Rs15 billion to the COVID Project Development Fund and an amount of Rs8 billion under the Wage Assistance Scheme.

Now, the decrease in the gross expenditure at the bottom of page 18 in the Estimates 2021; when we look at the decrease in the gross expenditure, it has decreased from 174 billion in year 2019-2020, revised to 166 billion in year 2020-2021 or by 8 billion. This, I am sure the Minister will agree, is a misleading indicator of Government's effort to curtail expenditure. In fact, there is an increase in total expenditure of Rs12 billion when special funds are accounted for from 156 billion to 168 billion. It is not a decrease of 8 billion. If anything, the Budget Estimate does the trick by transferring 10 billion as expenditure in the 2019-2022 to the National Resilience Fund, but spend nothing in the same year saving it for expenditure in 2020-2021, mainly an amount of Rs9 billion earmarked as support to Air Mauritius. It also transfers 2 billion as expenditure in 2019-2020 to the National Environment Fund, but for expenditure in 2020-2021, mainly for land drainage.

In respect of the Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government, there is this increase in Recurrent Expenditure of 14 billion. Now, this increase of 14 billion in the Recurrent Expenditure in the Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government, Vote 25-1, is on account of wage subsidies following the COVID lockdown, for the months of March, April and May, including the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme. There was some doubt as for the month of June, but the Minister gave firm assurance that assistance will be forthcoming. I take it for granted that is what he said.

But the question, of course, which begs answers relates to disbursement and eligibility criteria, and these have to be established. Those who have been in employment for up to six months, we know what will happen to them when they are laid off. Will they have a financial support of Rs5,100, and for those who have been in employment for more than six months, would they be entitled to workfare programme? I hope, if it is so, that the workfare programme will be more than adequately funded. This additional funding, where will it come? Will it equally come from the 14 billion? I hope the Minister will inform us accordingly.

And as for the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund which takes care of retirement of each employee, I would like to know whether this has been rescheduled to come into

operation in two years' time. We know that MRA will be the custodian of the account of workers.

There is 3 billion also that has been earmarked for the self-employed. I would like to know whether this is a loan given at a concessionary rate, what are the modalities and whether these have been worked out.

Now, the problem of the SMEs is a cash flow. A loan with floating charge as a collateral will make borrowing difficult. Government should guarantee the full amount of the loan at zero interest.

Now, as matters stand, many complaints are registered and we read in the papers complaints highlighted by workers, and I pray that those who are left out will be taken onboard. There is also uncertainty as there is no concerted action between the relevant Ministries especially Labour and Tourism, Commerce and International Trade, and the anxiety will prevail unless formal agreement is concluded between Government and strategic sectors that there would be no layoff.

As of now, we have not heard of any formal undertaking being given in writing that there would be no layoff, of course, should sectors take advantage of the financial support being disbursed by the Mauritius Investment Corporation.

So, this has to be spelt out very clearly. It has been said in the Press, but we would like to hear it and we expect Government to give firm guarantee that there would be no layoff of workers when those strategic sectors have recourse to funding from the MIC.

Also, I expect the Minister of Employment to give us the number of cases referred to the Redundancy Board and how many of these referred cases have been set aside.

Now, the increase of the 12.7 billion in Capital Expenditure in the Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government, Vote 25-1, is largely on account of the additional transfer, I have stated, of Rs12 billion to a special Fund, namely the National Resilience Fund and the 2 billion to the National Environment Fund. The reason for the transfer of 10 billion at the end of the Financial Year 2019-2020 to the National Resilience Fund is to provide for Rs9 billion as support to national carrier in 2020-2021, as shown at page 423 of the 2020-2021 Estimates.

Now, these are classified under Capital Expenditure in the Estimates ever since the Budget classification of Recurrent and Capital Expenditure was changed in 2015, but would

be taken, I have been informed, as current expenses under the IMF classification if spent on wage subsidies of the air carrier employees. The Minister will have to tell us if the dedicated amount will make up for shortfall in the contributory pension of the employees of Air Mauritius. If it is so, then the Minister has to be explicit and inform employees of Air Mauritius as to measures being taken to mitigate the negative impact of redundancy. We are told that a final document is being prepared by voluntary administration, and I take it for granted that this will be circulated to all stakeholders. I have been also told that there are ongoing talks between administrators and the trade union in a spirit of collective bargaining, but the appearance, unfortunately, is deceptive as the trade union feels that the administrators are acting unilaterally. It would be in the interest of one and all, especially of the Tourism Sector, that this problem is resolved and the sooner Air Mauritius takes off, the better for the Tourism Sector.

Now, I will come to the Rs2 billion. The reason for the transfer of this Rs2 billion at the end of the Financial Year 2019-2020 to the National Environment Fund is to provide for Capital Expenditure from the Fund of a total of Rs2.3 billion in 2020-2021, mainly for land drainage expenditure. And what are we told? That a sum of Rs.1.1 billion to be managed by the NDU, and we know that the major problem remains flood. Despite some work being carried out, there is a call for a coordinated and coherent approach. Since the Land Drainage Authority was proclaimed in 2018, the Master Plan has not been produced. Consequently, lack of coordination between RDA, NDU and Local Government makes the task incomplete and there is poor runoff and overflow in many flood-prone areas. Now, it stands to reason that the Rs2 billion will not be enough to address the perils of the sea and the storm. I don't have to remind ourselves of the number of houses built on wetlands and flood plains; the upstream and downstream of flood waters in many prone areas have to be given priority.

Finally, we are told we have an obligation to contribute to the IMF for two reasons: one because of force majeure and secondly, because over several years our balance of payments has been positive, though on a declining trend, for external factors and poor level of preparedness. Today, the balance of payments is deficit by more than Rs40 billion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is obvious as to why the Rs12 billion should be transferred to Special Fund in 2019-2020 instead of 2020-2021 for expenditure in 2020-2021. Now, as is frequent practice, this is an attempt to window dress figures by spreading Government expenditure over two years, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. And if the Rs12 billion were transferred in 2020-2021, the total transfer of Special Fund in 2020-2021 would total Rs27

billion inclusive of the transfer of Rs15 billion to the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund budgeted for 2020-2021.

No doubt a large amount of expenditure that is actually Rs19.5 billion in 2020-2021 is being spent from the Special Fund. And when we talk of Special Fund, it means that there is poor accountability and lack of transparency. And we know how contracts are allocated and we know to whom. So, it is time to consolidate the Budget Fund and the Special Fund because this window dressing cannot continue forever. What people want to know is that when we are called upon to vote a substantial amount of money, it is taxpayers' money, and Government has a responsibility, in the name of transparency and accountability, to see to it that figures are transparent in respect of allocation of contract that is awarded to the best and that it should not be allocated to people close to power.

You have to answer to the people and this is the reason precisely why earlier, in relation to the Rs1.2 billion voted to finance the cost of medical disposable and equipment, we appealed to Government to set up a Select Committee because people have a right to know what has happened, what Government intends to do. There is huge payment to be made and I expect Government to respond positively to the appeal, not only of the Opposition, but people have a right to know - because it is taxpayers' money - how this money is being spent. We want money to be spent judiciously.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Ramano!

(12.10 p.m.)

**The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano):** M. le président, je vous remercie de me donner l'opportunité d'apporter ma contribution aux débats sur le *Supplementary Appropriation Bill*.

M. le président, nous venons tout juste de franchir une étape importante et symbolique avec le vote du Budget 2020-2021 ; un budget qui a été formulé dans un contexte sans précédent. Mon ami et collègue, le ministre des Finances, a su jongler magistralement avec les ressources disponibles afin de présenter un budget qui est à la fois une bouée de sauvetage pour notre pays, un plan de relance économique innovant et une rampe de lancement pour propulser notre pays sur la voie d'un développement durable et inclusif.

M. le président, le but de mon intervention c'est de donner des explications quant à la somme de R 2 milliards en termes de somme supplémentaire allouée au *National Environment Fund* et d'expliquer la pertinence des projets identifiés et dont bon nombre de ces projets sont déjà en cours.

Au paragraphe 241 du budget, le ministre des Finances l'a clairement précisé -

« Pour financer la mise en œuvre des actions identifiées, nous proposons de transférer 2 milliards de roupies au *National Environment Fund* par le biais d'une estimation des dépenses supplémentaires au cours de cet exercice. J'introduirai, à cet effet, un *Supplementary Appropriation Bill*. »

M. le président, il ne faut pas se voiler la face. Le monde est toujours en situation de crise sanitaire. Si aujourd'hui le peuple mauricien peut se réjouir de pouvoir retrouver une vie quasi normale, c'est grâce au travail qui a été abattu par le Gouvernement pour gérer cette crise à travers des décisions et des actions courageuses, des dépenses additionnelles bien sûr, mais des dépenses concrètes et aussi efficaces. Le Budget 2020-2021, ainsi que les mécanismes financiers qui ont été mises en place, visent à soutenir ces acquis. Il nous donne la possibilité d'aller de l'avant avec confiance pour faire progresser les engagements que nous avions pris et qui ont été validés en novembre 2019 par le peuple mauricien.

M. le président, la somme de R 2 milliards au *National Environment Fund* pour soutenir les mesures urgentes et importantes pour l'environnement, le changement climatique et la gestion des déchets, entre autres.

M. le président, à titre de rappel, il est bon de le souligner que cette augmentation est la preuve concrète de la détermination de ce gouvernement de répondre aux grands défis environnementaux, qui sont tout en haut de notre liste de priorité. Malgré ce que disent certains membres de l'opposition, certaines choses qu'ils souhaitent nous faire croire, mais vu le montant qui a été alloué au *National Environment Fund*, il est clair que le Gouvernement a démontré son soucis dans la protection du changement climatique et aussi à la protection de l'environnement.

M. le président, le Premier ministre l'avait souligné lors de son discours sur le budget, le montant alloué pour la protection de l'environnement a augmenté de 160% depuis l'année financière 2017/18.

Cette année globalement quelques R 3,5 milliards ont été allouées à ce secteur. Cela représente une augmentation de 29% par rapport à l'année dernière.

Il est bon aussi de souligner à titre de rappel, M. le président, que la *National Environment Fund* avait été créée en 1991, sous le leadership de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, comme Premier ministre et par la suite restructurée en 2018, pour servir les objectifs de soutenir le processus de développement durable et pour aider le pays à renforcer sa résilience face au changement climatique.

La *National Environment Fund* avait été réorganisée et consolidée dans le cadre de l'exercice budgétaire 2018/2019. C'est la toute première fois que ce fonds était géré de manière centralisée avec près de R 2 milliards. Ce n'est pas par hasard qu'une somme aussi importante a été mobilisée afin de soutenir des investissements urgents et pertinents, ciblant la protection de l'environnement, la gestion des aléas climatiques et des désastres afin de renforcer la résilience face au changement climatique et de promouvoir le développement durable.

Je voudrais aussi souligner que la *National Environment Commission* a été réactivée en 2017 et a contribué grandement à donner un nouvel élan pour mobiliser plus efficacement les ressources financières et mettre en place les mécanismes nécessaires pour soutenir les mesures pour la protection de l'environnement et accroître notre résilience.

M. le président, tout comme la crise du COVID-19, la crise climatique est toute aussi dramatique. Dans de telles circonstances, le gouvernement a pris les taureaux par les cornes, et nous sommes en train d'agir rapidement et efficacement. Pour cela, nous avons besoin de ressources. Le *National Environment Fund* nous donne justement les moyens d'être à la hauteur de ces défis.

Les membres de l'opposition seront sûrement d'accord, seront dans l'évidence aujourd'hui, que le *Supplementary Appropriation Bill* doit être adoptée d'une façon unanime vu l'urgence de la situation face au changement climatique et au danger que représente aujourd'hui le changement climatique face aux défis environnementaux.

Je voudrais ici, M. le président, m'attarder un instant sur certaines mesures phares qui sont déjà en cours et d'autres qui seront initiés sous le *National Environment Fund* qui sont déjà en cours en 2020 et qui seront en cours, principalement pendant l'année financière 2020-2021.

Chaque année nous aurons à subir des évènements météorologiques extrêmes. Je n'ai nul besoin de vous rappeler que notre pays est souvent cité comme étant un des plus exposés de la planète de par notre position géographique. Nous sommes à la merci des cyclones, des

raz de marée, des pluies diluviennes et des régimes de précipitations changeantes et souvent imprévisibles.

Au risque de me répéter, il faut quand même souligner que les impacts du changement climatique sont déjà très visibles. Nous savons à quel point nos côtes sont sujettes à une érosion accrue à cause de la hausse accélérée du niveau de la mer, qui a été estimée à 5,6 millimètres chaque année. Ce chiffre est d'ailleurs supérieur à la moyenne mondiale qui est de 3,3 millimètres. Ainsi, certaines parties de nos côtes ont déjà été érodées jusqu'à près de 20 mètres. Dans ce contexte, des mesures urgentes sont nécessaires.

M. le président, *rehabilitation, protection and management of beaches, lagoons and coral reef programmes*. Une somme de R 215 millions fait partie de cette somme de R 2 milliards.

M. le président, les zones côtières de Maurice sont constamment menacées par les effets du changement climatique. Le rétrécissement de nos plages dû à l'érosion côtière est un problème majeur que nous faisons face, menaçant, sans distinction, notre économie, notre industrie du tourisme, notre habitude de jouir des moments privilégiés de détente. L'érosion accentuée des plages a réduit la largeur des plages autour de certaines zones côtières à un niveau dramatique.

Le gouvernement a ainsi entrepris des travaux de réhabilitation du littoral à grande échelle sur plusieurs sites. Ce budget s'aligne ainsi dans une logique de continuité, avec une somme totale de R 215 millions visant la gestion des plages, des *lagoons* et aussi des récifs coralliens.

Une somme de R 134 millions a été allouée afin de poursuivre des travaux sur 10 autres sites les plus affectées par le phénomène de l'érosion côtière, totalisant 6,3 kilomètres du littoral, notamment dans la région de St Martin-Bel Ombre, Anse Jonchée, Providence (Grand Port), Bois des Amourettes, Pointe aux Feuilles, Petit Sable, Bambous Virieux, Rivière des Créoles, Grand'Baie et Grand Sable. Les travaux, qui sont en cours dans bon nombre de régions, amélioreront d'une façon substantielle ce potentiel de *coastal erosion* que nous constatons actuellement dans le pays, M. le président. Ces travaux proposés amélioreront également le potentiel socio-économique et récréatif de la région, notamment avec la création de plages de sable perchées d'une piste cyclable et la plantation d'arbres endémiques et aussi fruitiers. Dans cette même optique de la lutte contre l'érosion côtière, les filaos seront remplacés par des espèces endémiques et indigènes. Le projet a déjà commencé

dans la région de Flic-en-Flac et Le Morne à la hauteur d'une somme de R 10 millions et ces projets de remplacement des filaos couvrent une distance de 200 mètres sur 300 mètres sur la plage publique de Flic-en-Flac et Belle Mare.

Afin de synchroniser les efforts des acteurs locaux sur l'aménagement des sites populaires à Maurice, la *Beach Authority* viendra aussi avec un plan de gestion de la plage de R 50 millions, qui sera implémenté à Flic-en-Flac, Mon Choisy, La Prairie and Belle Mare.

La santé des coraux et des récifs coralliens ne sera pas ignorée par ce budget, M. le président. Ainsi, un total de R 12 millions de cette somme de R 2 milliards sera injecté dans un projet de contrôle d'un mollusque invasif, ou couronnes d'épines au coût de R 3 millions, et cela se fera en partenariat avec bon nombre d'ONG. Ainsi, nous aurons aussi un projet de restauration des récifs coralliens au coût de R 9 millions.

Au-delà des mesures budgétaires de cette année sous le *National Environment Fund*, le ministère, de cette somme de R 2 milliards et aussi pendant la période de 2020-2024, nous avons identifié 16 autres sites affectés pour lesquels il est primordial d'apporter une solution urgente. Des études approfondies sont en cours et seront suivies par des travaux de réhabilitation d'envergure.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le *Flood Management Programme* et le *Landslide Management Programme*, le ministre Hurreeram donnera plus d'explication là-dessus. Mais il est bon de le souligner, M. le président, que l'érosion côtière, le *landslide* fait partie de la priorité de ce gouvernement.

M. le président, il y a une somme de R 207 millions identifiées pour le *Clean up Mauritius and Embellishment programmes* sous le *National Environment Fund*.

Le gouvernement s'est engagé à améliorer l'aspect visuel de notre île. Mon souhait, avec le gouvernement, est de rendre cette petite plus verte et belle. Je voudrais saluer mon collègue, le ministre des Finances, d'avoir accordé une importance à ce sujet et d'avoir prévu une somme de R 207 millions à travers le *National Environment Fund* et ce, malgré la situation économique difficile du pays. M. le président, les travaux sont en cours, toujours à travers le *National Environment Fund* pour l'embellissement des autoroutes, en commençant par les autoroutes *M1* et *M2*. A cet effet, mon ministère, en collaboration avec la *Road Development Authority*, développe un plan directeur pour l'aménagement paysager et l'embellissement de l'autoroute prenant du carrefour de l'aéroport de Plaisance jusqu'au carrefour de Grand'Baie, La Croisette. Et ce plan se fera en collaboration avec les opérateurs

économiques de la région. Ce schéma directeur couvrira les aspects de conception et de planification pour la mise en œuvre, le suivi et l'entretien du paysage de l'autoroute. Il va prendre en compte le microclimat, le sol et bien sûr l'aspect historique et culturel des régions du pays aussi bien que la sécurité des usagers.

Les abords de l'autoroute seront dotés de plantes endémiques et décoratives, d'arbustes, d'arbres fruitiers et de fleurs avec les objectifs précis en ce qui concerne notre engagement pris au niveau international d'augmenter le puits de carbone; améliorer l'expérience visuelle de voyager, bien sûr, tout le long des autoroutes et valoriser les aspects historiques, culturels et touristiques du pays.

Ce vaste projet va impliquer plusieurs entités gouvernementales ainsi que le secteur privé, les ONG et d'autres acteurs. Je voudrais saisir l'occasion pour remercier le bureau du Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement (PNUD) à Maurice pour sa contribution de 30,000 dollars à ce projet.

En outre, le travail d'embellissement va continuer en ce qui concerne les autres sites publics tels que les abords des rivières, les lieux de cultes pour le bien être de toute la population. Donc du *National Environment Fund*, une somme de R 65 millions a été allouée à cet effet. Pour l'année en cours, la collaboration des collectivités locales est assurée pour les projets d'embellissement, pour le *dredging* et aussi l'emménagement de 35 berges de rivières et aussi pour prendre des dispositions nécessaires pour la célébration des fêtes religieuses et 61 lieux de cultes.

M. le président, le gouvernement donne une attention particulière aussi à d'autres sites tels que la Citadelle, Vallée des Prêtres, le Dauguet. Non, les projets en cours de cette somme qui a été allouée R 2 milliards, M. le président, ne visent pas seulement à embellir mais aussi à redynamiser la culture de planter des arbres fruitiers et autres qui vont contribuer à assurer la sécurité alimentaire dans le pays. Cela va aussi permettre aux gens de se renouer avec les plantes qui malheureusement, pendant trop longtemps ont été mises aux oubliettes.

M. le président, de la somme de R 2 milliards il y a une somme de R 115 millions qui a été allouée au ministère des Collectivités Locales afin de pouvoir acheter de nouveaux camions et de compacteurs, ainsi que pour le nettoyage de drains. Dans cette même optique, la *Beach Authority* est pourvue d'une somme de R 5 millions afin de continuer les travaux de nettoyages de nos lagons, dont bien sûr la *Beach Authority* qui tombe sous l'égide de ministère du Tourisme.

M. le président, une somme de R 153 millions est allouée dans les R 2 milliards au *Solid Waste Management Programme*. M. le président, la transition écologique se fera, entre autres, par un changement de paradigme, d'une économie dite linéaire à un modèle économique circulaire, où les déchets sont considérés comme des ressources à être valorisées. Ce budget a alloué quelques R 153 millions pour la gestion des déchets dans son ensemble. Les grands axes de ce financement se focaliseront sur la mise en œuvre du tri de déchets à la source et la promotion du compostage et du recyclage. Les travaux sont déjà en cours, M. le président.

R 114 millions de cette enveloppe seront englouties par l'extension et l'opération des facilités d'élimination de déchets solides à Mare Chicose. Et de ces R 2 milliards, M. le président, une somme de R 10 millions est allouée à la construction de cinq déchetteries qui seront mises en place dans un premier temps dans les cinq *Transfer Stations* dans le pays pour le stockage des déchets qui sont généralement pas ramassés par les collectivités locales, c'est ce qu'on appelle les déchets encombrants, incluant aussi les déchets électroniques et les débris de construction.

Un *scrap yard* au coût de R 7 millions est mis en place afin de démanteler et recycler les véhicules usagés. Il sera aussi utilisé pour le stockage des matières recyclables. Une étude de faisabilité au coût de R 4 millions sera faite pour l'exploitation d'unités de tri et de compostage sur une base de *Public Private Partnership* à Forbach et à La Chaumière pour la ségrégation des matières recyclables. Ce projet va permettre au gouvernement d'économiser R 1,500 par tonnes sur le transfert et l'élimination des déchets.

En ce qui concerne le tri de déchets, mon ministère travaille actuellement sur un plan pour fournir au moins deux poubelles par ménage. Et une des poubelles sera utilisée pour le stockage des déchets organiques et l'autre pour les déchets secs tels que les matières recyclables. A ce stade pour l'étude, une somme de R 8 millions a été identifiée, M. le président.

M. le président, l'amiante est connue de tous pour être dangereuse pour la santé. Elle favorise divers cancers, qui mettent souvent longtemps à se déclarer. Le gouvernement prend au sérieux le problème de l'amiante au niveau des logements dans les cités EDC/Ex-CHA. Dans le recensement complété en août de l'année dernière, il en reste 1,738 maisons à risques en raison de la présence de l'amiante. De ces 1,738 maisons, il y a environ 150 qui sont inoccupées. Le contrat pour le démantèlement de 216 maisons a été déjà alloué en octobre de

l'année dernière et les travaux sont en cours. Une somme additionnelle de R 5 millions a été allouée pour le démantèlement d'une cinquantaine de maisons additionnelles.

M. le président, une somme de R 40 millions a été allouée - toujours sous les R 2 milliards de *Supplementary Expenditure* - pour le *Disaster Risk Reduction Programme*. M. le président, l'Ile Maurice est extrêmement vulnérable aux cyclones, aux inondations, comme je l'ai mentionné. M. le président, il est bon de souligner qu'une étude entreprise par la *National Academy of Sciences* publiée cette année où il est mentionné que la probabilité d'avoir des cyclones majeurs dans le sud de l'océan Indien va accroître de 18% chaque décennie.

La nature, les caractéristiques de ces phénomènes climatiques sont en train de changer: elles deviennent de plus en plus fréquentes, et gagnent en intensité et en ampleur à cause du changement climatique. Soucieux de la sureté de sa population et des impacts potentiels de ces catastrophes sur l'économie du pays, ce gouvernement ne lésine pas sur les moyens.

M. le président, une somme de R 22 millions a été faite sous le *National Environment Fund* pour le *National Multi Hazard Emergency Alert System*. Ce mécanisme permettra à la population de recevoir, de façon systématique, des informations pertinentes et opportunes avant une catastrophe. Cela va permettre de prendre des décisions éclairées et des mesures appropriées. Il couvrira l'île Maurice, Rodrigues, Agaléga, St Brandon et sera mis en œuvre par une société néerlandaise, sous la supervision du *National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre*. Ce système touchera un grand nombre de personnes à travers divers canaux de communication, à savoir les réseaux de téléphonie mobile et fixe, la télévision, la radio, l'internet, le courriel, les médias sociaux et les panneaux d'affichage numériques.

M. le président, le *National Environment Fund* prévoit aussi la mise en place du *Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme* avec le soutien de la *SADC* pour soutenir l'évaluation des risques liés au changement climatique, notamment concernant les risques d'épidémie et pour promouvoir la sécurité alimentaire. Ce programme d'investissement prévoit la somme de R 1 million par an au cours des trois prochaines années pour l'évaluation de la vulnérabilité du secteur agricole aux aléas du changement climatique.

M. le président, autre somme préconisée sous le *National Environment Fund*, R 126 millions pour le *Green Economy*. Ce budget prévoit une somme cumulée de R 126 millions afin d'opérationnaliser une économie verte et d'accentuer une transition écologique. A cet

effet, les mesures phares comprises dans ce budget sont comme suit et bon nombre de ces projets, M. le président, il est bon de souligner sont déjà en cours –

- R 20 millions pour l'installation des chauffe-eaux solaires dans 1,250 maisons *NHDC*. Il est à noter qu'à ce jour, 106 ont déjà été installés ;
- R 10 millions pour le compostage de déchets organiques au niveau des ménages et des marchés ;
- R 10 millions pour l'acquisition d'une nouvelle station fixe de surveillance de l'air ambiant, l'*Air Quality Index*. Donc, deux nouvelles stations seront installées dans les prochains trois ans. Ces trois nouvelles stations, couplées aux trois existantes, permettront à mon ministère d'établir un indice de la qualité de l'air. Et cette indice de la qualité de l'air sera *broadcasted* avec le bulletin météorologique, M. le président ;
- M. le président, une somme de R 10 millions pour l'acquisition d'équipements pour renforcer la surveillance environnementale, que ce soit des émissions de véhicules fumigènes ou les résidus de pesticides dans l'eau;
- R 3 millions pour inculquer une culture environnementale chez les jeunes à travers l'engagement communautaire en ligne avec la transition écologique;
- R 1 million pour rendre le secteur public plus vert en encourageant l'adoption d'une charte environnementale et la promotion de pratiques durables, et
- R 1 million pour l'élaboration d'une stratégie de résilience pour Maurice. M. le président, ce gouvernement attache une importance particulière aux *Environmentally Sensitive Areas* et leurs utilisations comme zone-tampons pour atténuer les effets néfastes du changement climatique, ce qu'on appelle les *nature-based solutions*. Le but étant de cartographier ces *Environmentally Sensitive Areas* et de les intégrer dans le *Outline Planning Scheme* du ministère du Logement afin qu'elles soient protégées des développements futurs.

M. le président, permettez-moi de souligner que d'autres projets sont en cours pour soutenir ces initiatives sur les *Environmentally Sensitive Areas*. Le projet *Mainstreaming Biodiversity into the Management of the Coastal Zone in the Republic of Mauritius* qui est financé par la *Global Environment Facility (GEF)* et facilité par le Programme des Nations

Unies pour le Développement (PNUD) à Maurice, vise à intégrer la conservation et l'utilisation durable de la biodiversité dans la gestion des zones côtières. Un des composants de ce projet consiste à la mise à jour de l'inventaire des *Environmentally Sensitive Areas* côtières et marines. Des recommandations seront faites afin d'améliorer la protection et la gestion de ces *Environmentally Sensitive Areas* par des cadres institutionnels et législatifs adéquats.

Le projet comprend aussi l'élaboration d'un plan de Gestion Intégrée des Zones Côtierères pour le district de Rivière Noire et Rodrigues, en adoptant l'approche *ridge-to-reef*. Cette activité garantira que les *Environmentally Sensitive Areas*, marines et côtières, et seront pleinement intégrées et considérées dans le cadre de la planification.

En outre, M. le président, le projet inclut un *Strategic Environment Assessment* sur les plans de la gestion intégrée des zones côtières, proposés par le district de Rivière Noire et Rodrigues, qui bénéficiera aux deux régions en termes de contribution à l'intégration des considérations environnementales dans la préparation et l'adoption des plans de la gestion intégrée des zones côtières en vue de promouvoir le développement durable.

M. le président, en sus, Rodrigues bénéficiera aussi d'une enveloppe de R 56 millions pour la mise en œuvre de divers projets environnementaux.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de réitérer ma profonde gratitude à mon collègue le ministre des Finances. Malgré le fait que le plan directeur sur l'environnement que mon ministère est en train de préparer, sera finalisé dans les jours à venir, on va initier à travers le *National Environment Fund*, la mise en œuvre d'un certain nombre d'activités identifiées pendant les assises de l'environnement, tenues en décembre 2019. Toutes ces mesures vont permettre à notre pays de s'engager dans une nouvelle voie de développement qui prône une transition écologique

M. le président, au-delà des R 2 milliards injectés dans le *National Environment Fund*, il sera nécessaire d'explorer d'autres sources de financement, que ce soit à travers des assistances financières internationaux ou des financements innovants du secteur privé.

Nous savons que la mise en œuvre des contributions déterminées au niveau national, ou *CDN* sous l'Accord de Paris dépend de la disponibilité du financement climatique. De ce fait, les actions transformatrices que nous recherchons doivent s'accompagner des mécanismes de financement innovants, incluant la mobilisation des financements du secteur privé. À cet égard, ce budget jette les jalons pour la mise en place d'un mécanisme

d'obligations vertes afin de mobiliser le financement climatique dans un contexte très difficile.

M. le président, permettez-moi de conclure pour dire que, comme dit l'adage -  
 « Aux grands maux, les grands remèdes. »

Et surtout les grands moyens. Le *Supplementary Appropriation Bill*, répond à nos besoins. Il répond aussi à ceux qui ont essayé de tirer un peu sur l'ambulance, comme dit l'adage. Effectivement, toute en sachant les circonstances particulières de ces derniers mois, plusieurs membres de l'opposition ont essayé de chercher la petite bête et ont voulu faire croire, pendant leurs interventions sur le budget, que nous avions omit de donner sa juste valeur à la protection de l'environnement et à venir avec des mesures concrètes pour gérer les impacts du changement climatique. Et pour ceux qui connaissent le domaine, connaissent l'engagement et de dévouement de ce gouvernement, M. le président.

Mais en réalité, nous nous sommes donné les moyens pour soutenir un développement durable et inclusif. L'environnement sera un atout majeur de notre vision du développement pour le pays. Nous sommes aussi déterminés à construire une île Maurice résiliente aux changements climatiques. Nous savons tous que ces objectifs ne pourront pas être atteints sans des ressources financières considérables. Ainsi, ce projet de loi répond aussi bien à nos besoins qu'à nos attentes.

C'est pour cela que j'espère, malgré tout, que tous les membres de cette Assemblée feront foi de sagesse et de reconnaître la bonne foi de ce *Supplementary Appropriation Bill*.

Sur ce, M. le président, je voudrais vous remercier de m'avoir donné la possibilité d'intervenir sur ce projet de loi.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Bérenger!

(12.40 p.m.)

**Mr P. Bérenger (First Member for Stanley & Rose Hill):** On nous demande de voter un énorme budget supplémentaire de R 33.7 milliards et c'est regrettable que le ministre des Finances n'est, quant à lui, contrairement à son collègue, l'honorable ministre Ramano qui nous a fourni beaucoup de renseignements, mais il est regrettable que le ministre des Finances lui, nous demandant d'approuver un budget supplémentaire de R 33.7 milliards, ne nous ait donné aucune clarification sur les différents items de revenus qu'il propose.

Le gros morceau dans ma présentation sera le R 1.2 milliards au ministère de la Santé, l'affaire Hyperpharm, et je passerai ensuite à un certain nombre d'autres sujets. M. le président, récemment, il y a quelques jours, il y avait eu une *PNQ* du leader de l'opposition sur toute l'affaire Hyperpharm et j'avais été extrêmement étonné d'entendre le ministre de la Santé dire à cette occasion, je le cite –

*« ... as far as medication is concerned, not a single medication has been procured from the said company that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned. »*

Choquant ! Venir nous dire que non ! Et il insiste lorsque le leader de l'opposition dit qu'il a des documents. Il dit : « Non, je sais de quoi je parle. Aucun achat de Hyperpharm. » Il l'a dit haut et fort. Et pourtant il se contredit très vite lorsque le ministre - concernant cette affaire de Hyperpharm - soumet deux listes d'importateurs dans le secteur concerné. Une première liste de R 26 millions seulement. J'ai tendance à dire, le document est claire, quels produits, etc., c'est *tabled* - après qu'il ait dit que rien n'a été *procured* à travers Hyperpharm. Mais ne voilà-t-il pas qu'une deuxième liste est circulée, une deuxième liste que j'ai cherchée, ce n'est pas certifiée, mais circulée par le ministre en question - une deuxième liste à travers laquelle on apprend que R 67 millions ont été *awarded*, d'après le document déposé par le ministre de la Santé que R 67 millions de médicaments et d'autres items de la santé ont été *awarded*, le mot utilisé, à Hyperpharm, mais pas encore payé, parce que, d'après mes renseignements, les procédures n'ont pas été suivies. Les fonctionnaires concernés ne veulent pas s'engager sans que toutes les procédures aient été suivies. Après qu'il ait dit que pas un seul item ait été *procured*, ait été importé à travers Hyperpharm, il circule une liste de R 67 millions d'importations, M. le président. Et pourtant, il avait dit au Parlement, *I am tabling a list. "I am tabling details regarding local importers to whom contracts for emergency procurements were awarded." Which is which?*

C'est pourquoi nous sommes très troublés dans l'opposition et nous demandons que toute cette affaire d'Hyperpharm soit complètement éclaircie. Et le ministre ferait bien d'écouter et de donner son opinion sur notre demande d'un *Select Committee*, la demande de l'opposition. Parce qu'après avoir dit que rien n'a été importé à travers Hyperpharm, il se contredit et puis il vient avec une déclaration, M. le président, toujours en réponse à cette *PNQ*. Mais qui va le croire? A la fin de la *PNQ*, il vient dire : *"Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware who is Director of Hyperpharm"*. Non, mais soyons sérieux ! Qui va croire ça? Surtout, lorsqu'on se rappelle que lorsque le ministre de la Santé d'aujourd'hui, présidait le *Medical Council*. Pendant qu'il était président, le monsieur en question - que je ne nommerai

pas par respect pour les procédures du Parlement - c'est-à-dire le *Director of Hyperpharm* avait été nommé sur le *Medical Council* qu'il présidait. Et maintenant, il veut nous faire croire - mais j'espère qu'il se corrigera, nous souhaitons lui donner l'occasion qu'il dise ce qu'il a à dire. Parce que c'est inacceptable, qu'il commence par dire que Hyperpharm n'a eu aucun *procurement award*. Faux ! Contredit par lui-même ! Ensuite, il vient essayer de nous faire croire qu'il ne sait pas, *he is not aware*, il ne sait pas qui est le directeur de cette firme. Cela ne se passe pas du tout dans le public. Ce qu'il faut c'est de donner tous les détails sur ce 'un milliard deux cents millions de roupies'.

Nous avons l'impression que ce n'est pas seulement pour des médicaments, mais pour des *light equipment* aussi. Nous voulons savoir - *gloves, masks, ventilators, PCR Tests et Rapid Tests*. Le pays a droit à une liste détaillée de ces R 1,2 milliards. Nous insistons là-dessus et le pays insiste là-dessus et nous continuerons d'insister, M. le président. Et aussi, c'est dans l'intérêt de tout le monde de dire, parce que les pharmaciens, qui n'ont pas bénéficié de ces contrats, ont parlé. On leur a jamais - c'est vrai que c'était un *emergency procedure*, mais même là, les pharmaciens concernés, importateurs ont dit on ne les a jamais informés qu'il fallait qu'ils fassent les offres pour tel ou tel item, médicaments ou équipements. Est-ce que cela a été fait ? Si, oui, donnez-nous copie de la correspondance échangée entre le ministère et ces importateurs. Le doute c'est qu'il n'y a jamais eu tout cela. S'il y a eu des lettres, donnez-nous copie des lettres. Ça pue l'*insider trading*, comme on dit ! Ça pue l'*insider trading* ! Le doute c'est que certains ont su qu'il y aurait un avion spécial qui viendrait d'un pays étranger et qu'on a donné l'occasion à ceux qui ont bénéficié de cet *insider trading* de faire leurs offres. Et dans la liste des *procurements* dont cette firme a bénéficié, il y a 20 items importés et qui ont été *awarded*, d'après le document soumis par le ministre, et qui ont été *awarded* en un seul jour, le même jour. Tout cela sent très mauvais, le *insider trading*, le complot ! Il faut éclaircir tout cela.

C'est dans l'intérêt du ministre lui-même, c'est dans l'intérêt du gouvernement à moins qu'il y ait trop à cacher, sinon c'est dans l'intérêt du ministre, en tout premier lieu, d'éclaircir toutes ces questions, de donner la liste de tous les items et donner les détails des procédures qui ont été suivies, M. le président.

Pendant que je préparais mon dossier, M. le président, coïncidence avant-hier, au Zimbabwe, le ministre de la Santé, je ne souhaite pas cela au ministre de la Santé, mais les faits sont les faits. La *BBC* rapporte avant-hier, au Zimbabwe, le ministre de la Santé a été arrêté et traîné en Cour : 'untel was arrested on Friday after Government came under

*pressure from the Opposition and on social media over a scandal surrounding the procurement of Coronavirus test and equipment.'*

Comme par magie, une nouvelle firme qui a eu tous les contrats, *a 20 million contract awarded to a Hungary registered firm allegedly without going through proper processes. The two months old firm*, Jacks Consult a raflé la mise et les paiements ont été bloqués, un peu comme dans le cas que j'ai cité ici, concernant Hyperpharm. Je répète je ne dis pas que ce soit le ministre, lui-même, qui a été *involved* dans ces *dirty tricks*, mais c'est dans son intérêt, dans l'intérêt du gouvernement de faire toute la lumière sur toute cette affaire d'Hyperpharm. C'est pourquoi l'opposition, nous avons proposé un *Select Committee*, un *Select Committee* à une majorité de représentants du gouvernement, un *Select Committee* qui est présidé par un ministre du gouvernement. C'est dans l'intérêt, d'abord, du pays, mais du ministre lui aussi, qu'un *Select Committee* soit nommé pour faire toute la lumière sur cette affaire d'Hyperpharm, M. le président.

Ayant dit ce que j'avais à dire, pour appuyer la demande du *leader* de l'Opposition, pour toute opposition, au nom de toute l'Opposition, qu'un *Select Committee* soit mis sur pied pour faire toute la lumière sur cette affaire d'Hyperpharm. Je vais rapidement sur quelques autres points : le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*, nous avions nous-mêmes insisté, et ça a beaucoup aidé le pays à un moment très difficile. Nous avions insisté pour que ce soit étendu à juin et au-delà même que le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* soient étendus à juin - le ministre, il n'est pas là, le débat a lieu mais il n'a pas besoin d'être là, lui. Le ministre est venu dire que le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* étaient étendus *up to June*. Est-ce qu'il fait exprès d'être ambigu? *Up to June? Including June or up to June excluding June?* La population, les travailleurs, les salariés, les entreprises ont le droit de savoir. Et la somme qu'on nous demande de voter couvre quelle période? J'ai posé la question concernant juin et les choses deviennent d'autant plus compliquées que, dans les décisions du Conseil des Ministres du 12 juin, il est dit, je cite le *Cabinet Decision Communiqué* –

« *Cabinet has agreed to pay for the month of June an allowance ...»*

Not the allowance provided for under the *Wage Assistance Scheme et le Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*. *Non!*

*« Cabinet has agreed to pay for the month of June 2020 an allowance under the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to workers and self-employed individuals in the Tourism Sector.... »*

Mais le communiqué continue –

*«and all those whose work premises or business operations had to remain closed after the lifting of the curfew.»*

Qui ? On est en droit de savoir ! Les salariés, les *self-employed* sont en droit de savoir qu'est-ce qui va arriver en juin et au-delà au *Wage Assistance Scheme* et au *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*. Et qu'est-ce que ça veut dire exactement cette décision du Conseil des Ministres ?

Pendant que je suis sur ce sujet, nous savons que dans le discours du budget le ministre avait annoncé que R 15 milliards ont été *earmarked* pour un *monthly allowance*, sans aucun détail, et j'ai cherché. Que le ministre éclaire ma lanterne si je n'ai pas assez cherché, mais *earmarked*, je n'ai trouvé aucune part dans le budget cette somme de R 15 milliards. Et qu'est-ce qui va arriver maintenant, le pays est en droit de savoir, il y a le *Wage Assistance Scheme*, il y a le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*, il y a ce que le gouvernement a annoncé concernant le secteur du tourisme, et au-delà, d'après le *wording* du *Cabinet Communiqué*. Qu'est-ce qui va arriver donc concernant cette somme de R 5,100 qui a été promise sans aucune précision aux chômeurs et aux *self-employed* ? C'est la confusion totale, il faut éclaircir les choses. Par humanité on doit ça à la population en général. Tout le monde est conscient que la population est angoissée. Dans le monde du travail, dans le secteur de l'éducation, les gens sont angoissés, parents, mais aussi les travailleurs, les salariés. Le gouvernement a un devoir de clarté de dire exactement qu'est-ce qui va arriver concernant le *Wage Assistance Scheme* et le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*, cette *allowance* non précisée, cette *allowance* au secteur du tourisme et autres, et cette somme de R 5,100 promise aux jeunes et aux chômeurs affectés par le chômage technique en ce moment.

Air Mauritius ! A la page 423 des *Estimates* pour 2020-2021...

**Mr Speaker:** Are you referring to the Estimates for the budget or supplementary estimates?

**Mr Bérenger:** You do not get my point?

**Mr Speaker:** Supplementary estimates?

**Mr Bérenger:** Well, yes! But when we are asked to vote billions for the Wage Assistance Scheme and the...

**Mr Speaker:** So, limit your debate to supplementary estimates!

**Mr Bérenger:** Well, I think those who understand me get the point, Mr Speaker, Sir!

**Mr Speaker:** I understand, don't you worry.

**Mr Bérenger:** Therefore, I will move to *Air Mauritius*. En ce qui concerne *Air Mauritius* à la page 423, on nous demande de trouver une somme de R 9 milliards à être payée à *Air Mauritius*. La clarification que je demande, c'est parce qu'à la page 423 des *Estimates*, ces R 9 milliards sont définies comme des *current expenditures*. Nous avons le droit de savoir. Est-ce que c'est uniquement pour les *current expenditures*, c'est-à-dire, pour les salaires même que *Air Mauritius* ne vole pas en ce moment, mais il y a des salaires à payer, il y a des frais. Est-ce que, donc, ces R 9 milliards sont uniquement pour les *ongoing recurrent expenditures*? Ce qui voudrait dire qu'il y a bien d'autres milliards à venir ! Je demande un éclaircissement de la part du ministre.

Le *Metro Express*, on nous demande d'approuver un prêt de R 220 millions. On a le droit de savoir à quelles conditions, à quel taux d'intérêt, ce sera remboursé quand? Et je note que le ministre lui-même dit 'for initial support to *Air Mauritius*, for initial expenditure...' Mais est-ce-que sa remonte à avant le Coronavirus ? Pourquoi maintenant ? Le ministre qui était responsable du dossier nous avait dit qu'il n'y aurait pas de dépenses supplémentaires, maintenant on nous demande d'approuver un prêt. Nous avons le droit de savoir à quelles conditions et quand ce prêt sera remboursé ?

Le *National Environment Fund*, j'ai apprécié le discours du ministre. Je n'apprécie pas tout dans l'action concernant l'environnement. Nous sommes d'accord, on transfère R 2 milliards au *National Environment Fund*, et je remercie le ministre, qui, lui au moins nous a donnés pleins de détails sur comment ces R 2 milliards seront utilisées, mais seulement j'ai envie de pleurer. Dans le discours gouvernementale, aujourd'hui l'environnement c'est qui ? L'environnement c'est avant tout, les ONG, les jeunes. Et dans le discours programme du gouvernement - et nous en étions ravis - on nous avait promis un *Youth Environment Council*, nous avions applaudi, et voilà ça a disparu du discours du ministre aujourd'hui. Ce n'est mentionné nulle part, mais ce n'est pas trop tard, c'est une excellente idée, il faut embrigader les jeunes et les ONG dans le combat pour la défense et la survie de

l'environnement. Surtout, j'ai pris la peine d'aller vérifier la composition de ce *National Environment Fund*, à 100% des fonctionnaires. Les fonctionnaires font leur travail, ils font du bon travail la plupart du temps. Mais sur cette question de l'environnement, il faut embrigader les jeunes et les ONG, et là, on donne R 2 milliards au *National Environment Fund* qui est à 100% une affaire de fonctionnaires. Et je les salue pour le bon travail qu'ils font mais ce n'est pas ça ma critique. Je suis triste, et je suis triste aussi qu'au moment où dans le même communiqué du Conseil des ministres, dans le même communiqué du 12 juin, on nous avait annoncé –

« *Cabinet has agreed to the Attorney's General's Office finalising the draft Climate Change Bill.* »

Très bien! Très bien ! Mais ça aurait pu au moins être mentionné aujourd'hui, et nous souhaiterions savoir quelle forme ça va prendre et quels fonds seront alloués. Je ne sais pas quelle institution sera mise sur pied pour faire un succès de ce *Climate Change Bill* à la mauricienne. Il n'est pas trop tard et je fais donc, un appel au gouvernement de ce côté-là, de reprendre cette idée, d'un *Youth Environment Council* et de continuer le travail pour la défense de l'environnement.

Mon dernier point, M. le président, concerne le *SDR Purchase*. Je pense que là aussi nous avons droit à un éclaircissement. Donc, le *IMF*, étant le *IMF*, il y a des mouvements, il y a des 'purchases', de 'special drawing rights', etc., l'idée étant que les pays qui sont en position avantageuse, concernant leurs balances des paiements, concernant leurs réserves, que ces pays contribuent à l'avancement des pays moins favorisés, c'est-à-dire, les pays qui sont en difficulté de balance des paiements et des réserves en devises étrangères. Donc, on nous demande de contribuer 650 millions. Je ne suis pas contre, mais nous avons droit à des éclaircissements. Est-ce que cette demande - surtout ce que je voudrais savoir, c'est parce que le ministre, au moins ça, il nous l'a dit, que le FMI avait fait cette demande et que le gouvernement a agréé, mais ce que j'aimerais savoir, moi, c'est quand, est-ce que c'était avant la crise du *Coronavirus*? J'aimerais avoir la date à laquelle le FMI a fait cette demande. Je ne suis pas contre, mais nous ne sommes plus du tout dans la situation pré-crise de *Coronavirus*. Je ne dis pas que nous devrions reculer. Si nous avons pris des engagements, nous avons pris des engagements, mais je souhaiterais donc savoir à quelle date le FMI a fait cette demande et est-ce que la situation change avec la crise du *Coronavirus* ?

Je termine, M. le président, en insistant sur ce *Select Committee* que l'opposition demande. Je demande au ministre de ne pas prendre méchamment la référence que j'ai faite au Zimbabwe. La coïncidence c'est qu'il y a trois jours de cela, ce qui est arrivé est arrivé au Zimbabwe. C'est un signal et c'est une leçon. C'est dans l'intérêt du ministre, c'est dans l'intérêt du gouvernement. Il y a assez de scandales dans l'air ces jours-ci, mais cette affaire d'Hyperpharm, il faut éclaircir tout ce qui peut être éclairci et ceux qui auront, à la lumière de ces éclaircissements, à rendre des comptes, auront à rendre des comptes.

Merci !

**Mr Speaker:** I suspend the sitting for one hour!

*At 1.08 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.20 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**The Minister of Land Transport & Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, for any Government which has a clear vision to turn its country into a high-income economy, one of the strategies that have to be adopted must be massive investment in developing its modern infrastructure. And, as the House is aware, the Metro Express Project is the biggest and the most complex infrastructure project ever constructed in Mauritius. This project will span over 26 kilometres and will provide a light rail system from Port Louis to Curepipe and it will comprise of 19 stations and link major regions, including the major cities of Port Louis, Vacoas-Phoenix, Quatre Bornes and Rose Hill, where the mass of the population lives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the light rail system remains a vague concept for the past decades. It was a subject of endless discussion. Unfortunately, there has never been a real commitment to implement this mass transit transport system that will address the issue of traffic congestion, while, at the same time, promoting an eco-friendly mode of transport. The present Government had the will power to pursue the implementation of this unprecedented mega project, and no doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, the realisation of this project will remain a most valuable legacy which will be bequeathed to the country and to future generations.

That is why, as a caring Government, in the first place, free passenger service on the light rail system was provided to the population as a whole up to 09 January of this year, and there is no doubt that this novel means of transport is a game changer and is providing an

integrated and alternative mode of travel for commuters along the Port Louis to the Rose Hill corridor.

This project, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a landmark achievement, a project that will pave the way for future economic development. It will undoubtedly regenerate the urban setup and will contribute towards an upgraded and a cleaner country.

As I said, the Metro Express started its commercial operations early this year, on 10 January more precisely, linking Port Louis to Rose Hill in its initial phase, and it has witnessed an enthusiastic welcome by the users and members of the public. Gradually, our commuters have embraced this modern and green mode of transportation, and before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, which, unfortunately, led to the necessary imposition of confinement for the safety of our citizens, so, before the outbreak of COVID-19, Mr Speaker, Sir, some 650,000 passengers had used the system. And the light rail service, unfortunately, had to stop on 20 March of this year due to the curfew, ensuing from the COVID-19 outbreak, and the service resumed only as from 16 May and is slowly picking up momentum. The Metro Express has already welcomed more than 93,000 passengers since then.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should acknowledge that the introduction of a project of this magnitude, within just two years, has been indeed a praiseworthy achievement. The Design and Build contractor, Larsen & Toubro Ltd, is actively working on the completion of Phase IIA of the project, that is, the alignment from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes, which will become operational by April 2021, and works are being concurrently pursued along the remaining of Phase II which runs from Quatre Bornes to Curepipe and which is scheduled to be in operation as from 2022.

So, now, with the introduction of this Metro System, people can travel from Rose Hill to Port Louis in around 19 minutes, even during peak hours, and it is providing a reliable and safe means of transport that allows commuters to reach the capital with less physical and mental stress, and thus contributing to higher productivity. Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the Metro Express business model, Metro Express Ltd is expected to be financially sustainable as from the completion of the whole project, that is, upon completion of Phase II from Port Louis to Curepipe in financial year 2022-2023, when the bulk of commuters will travel. Therefore, as in every business, Metro Express Ltd. will need some support in its initial phases of operations and we should not forget that even before starting commercial operations in January this year, MEL had to incur operating expenses, basically to pay for

salaries, wages, as staff had to be recruited and trained so that MEL could be in a position to start operations; other costs such as electricity charges, both for the testing of the trains and the electrical network to ensure security compliances to international norms and safety of passengers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned earlier, the outbreak of COVID-19 has negatively impacted the operations and the financial situation of MEL and is expected to continue to impact on the light rail service, as is the case on the global economies across all sectors and industries without any exception. So, as all players in the local transport sector, MEL has not been spared. There was no ridership for a period of eight weeks due to the curfew. This means that there was no revenue generated and, on the other hand, MEL had to bear almost of its operating expenses like payment of salaries, insurance cover, maintenance contract, etc.

Secondly, since resumption of operations on 16 May 2020, MEL had to comply with Health & Safety measures taken to protect to protect the passengers and to avoid a second outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. Hence, social distancing was observed in trains up to 14 June, which meant that the maximum number of passengers allowed in trains was 81, and this, of course, implied a shortfall in revenue, while, at the same time, an increase in cost due to additional safety measures required.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, it had been observed that the ridership prior to the curfew was three times higher than the post-curfew period and it is expected that the ridership will take some time to get back to the pre-COVID-19 level, although a gradual increase in ridership is being observed and noticed. The COVID-19 is also delaying the coming into operation of the Metro system from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes because of the confinement period and this is a shortfall in revenue for MEL.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, MEL needed some financial support to meet its financial obligation until its full operation which is expected to financial year 2022-2023. I want to make this clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. To clear all doubts in the mind of the Members of the Opposition, and I repeat what I just said, according to MEL, the cash flow forecast over the next 5-year period will require some financial support to finance its cash flow deficit during its partial operation, that is, up to year 2022. MEL is expecting to generate cash flow surplus only after attaining full operation. It can then afford to repay the financial support advanced to it during the partial operation. Hence, it was agreed to provide a loan of up to Rs500 m. to contribute to financing of MEL's operation. And a loan agreement has been signed between

MEL and the Ministry on the following main terms and condition, - and this was queried into by hon. Bérenger – the repayment period is 10 years, including a grace period of 3 years; interest rate equivalent to Key Repo Rate and interest to be capitalised during the grace period. Due to the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on MEL's revenue, Mr Speaker, Sir, MEL requested for additional support for its operation and it was agreed to increase the loan amount to Rs600 m. by providing an additional Rs100 m. in the budget for financial year 2021. An addendum to the existing loan agreement will be brought accordingly.

As at date, Mr Speaker, Sir, some Rs180 m. had already been disbursed from this loan amount. It is expected that, of the Rs600 m. as loan, some Rs220 m. will be disbursed in financial year 2019-2020, and the remaining Rs200 m. will be in financial year 2020-2021. And the details of the Rs220 m. of loan are as follows, Mr Speaker, Sir –

- The Rs220 m. comprise of salaries and allowances, electricity charges, insurance, feeder buses, maintenance contracts for trains, purchase of ME cards, advertising and launching expenses, rental of office, cleaning and maintenance, furniture, fittings, vehicles, security expenses, other expenses which amount to Rs220 m.

So, I repeat, in order to meet its operating financial obligations, this financial support of Rs220 m. is in the form of this loan to Metro Express Ltd and is being provided in the course of the financial year ending in June 2020. This, I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, is being used mainly to pay for expenses related to salaries and maintenance. I have just listed all the items a few minutes ago, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is why I want to clarify this point, this loan of Rs220 m. is being provided to support MEL to meet its operating expenses for the payment of the different items I have just mentioned. This loan, which we are calling upon Parliament to vote, has nothing to do with the total cost of construction of the Metro line which is being financed, as we know, through a grant of USD, Rs275 m. and a Line of Credit of Rs260 m. from India. Therefore, the loan of Rs220 m. today is not in any way meant for the payment to the contractor, Larsen & Toubro. Yes, delays in the implementation of the project have cropped up, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, at this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is premature to assess whether there will be any cost overrun regarding the contract value of the project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to add that since the Metro system is gaining momentum and gaining the confidence of the population, as a safe, reliable and rapid means of transport and given that the project is progressing at a satisfactory pace and, of course, with some

delays due to curfew related to the COVID, Mr Speaker, Sir, the link between Quatre Bornes, as I just said, and Rose Hill is expected to be ready by April next year and Government is going to continue support MEL during the initial stages of operations until full operation is reached.

Therefore, again, I repeat, in the form of a loan to Metro Express Ltd, a provision of Rs380 m. has been made in Budget 2021. MEL will repay the loan in 10 years, as I said, and will start repay the loan after a grace period of three years on capital and interest following the first drawdown of the loan.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we know, only Phase I of the Metro Express Project has been completed as at now. Ridership is picking up progressively. The schools are yet to resume. This loan is to allow the company to finance its cost of operation during this transition phase leading to full service after Phase II would become operational. At that time, Metro Express would be in a position to honour its financial commitments. We are not providing subsidies. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a loan which will be repaid by Metro Express Ltd. And the financial plan for Metro Express is clear. According to this financial plan, an operating surplus would be registered as from year one of full operation from Port Louis to Curepipe and in year one, the targeted ridership is 53,000, I'll round the figure, it's about 54,000 passengers. I repeat it, Mr Speaker, Sir, no Government subsidy would be required as per the 15-year financial plan of Metro Express.

It is interesting to note, Mr Speaker, Sir - I don't want to go into an argument with my friends of the Opposition, but I wish to remind the House that the cost of the Metro Express Project is Rs18.8 billion, as I said, financed by an Indian grant of Rs9.9 billion and a line of credit from Exim Bank of India for the remaining amount of Rs8.9 billion. Therefore, all in all, providing for capital and interest repayments and currency fluctuation, Metro Express Ltd will be liable for around Rs12.6 billion. I repeat Rs12.6 billion. And if we compare that to the previous project of the previous Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no comparison at all, if I go into the precise figures, this project is about three times less than the MLRT Project which was advocated by the previous Government. And in the project of the previous Government, I see the Government would have had to provide between Rs600 m. to Rs800 m. of subsidies yearly, which is not in our case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

But I wish to highlight also and to allay any apprehension of the Opposition and of the country that disbursement of the loan to MEL is done in a systematic way. Funds are

disbursed only after the updated cash flow forecast and the documentary evidences submitted by MEL have been examined by the Finance Section of the Ministry of Land Transport in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

It is to be highlighted, Mr Speaker, Sir, that MEL is carrying out extensive communication campaigns through videos, radio spots and other mass communication channels to encourage more passengers to use Metro services which is fast, reliable and a safe mode of transport and hence boost up fair revenue. MEL is also working on its operation model to bring about efficiency and hence reduce its cost of operation by reviewing its staffing structure and leveraging on information technology.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition also asked the question about the interactive session about the owners or the occupiers of the different houses or residences which will be impacted by the Metro Project. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like just to give some details about what is happening on this issue,

To understand the magnitude of the project with the complexities, the ramifications, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the second Phase of the Project, we must keep in mind - indeed the question of land issues, the question of encroachment of land acquisition, of traffic diversion remains an issue which has to be dealt with by the different stakeholders, the different authorities and the contractors. But to get an idea of what we are talking, Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue is the acquisition of 16 plots along St. Jean Road, Quatre Bornes, the acquisition of 23 plots from St. Jean Roundabout to Phoenix Roundabout, the acquisition of 39 plots from Curepipe to CEB, Vacoas, 55 encroachments on State land from Curepipe to CEB, Vacoas, just to give you an idea what is the extent of the problem, how deep are the issues we have to deal with in the coming weeks.

But, nevertheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we must bear in mind also that when we are dealing with such types of problems, we must remember that road closures, traffic diversions along main roads always result in major disruptions to the mainstream traffic and it is clear that recurrent traffic congestion is always likely to occur. And in the case we are dealing with, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the hon. Members of this House and the MPs of the different constituencies which are concerned with the Metro Express Project that we are very alive to this question of interaction, on the question of PR with the members of the public. In fact, in Curepipe, in Vacoas, in Quatre Bornes, Mr Speaker, Sir, multi-stakeholders' team comprising representatives of the different relevant authorities, including

the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, Larsen and Toubro itself, Metro Express Ltd, have been set up to undertake communication exercise and provide the necessary information to the persons inhabited near the alignment. Engagement with persons concerned is going on as was done previously for Phase I of the Project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hot spot, if I can use that term, is, of course, Curepipe and Vacoas for the moment and last week a team carried out site visits to discuss about traffic diversions at Rivière Sèche Bridge and also conducted a stakeholder management and communication exercise door to door with the residents in relation to the land acquisition exercise and forthcoming works thereat. More communication exercises are being planned in the coming days and this will be an ongoing process, Mr Speaker, Sir. This applies to Curepipe, to Vacoas and also to Quatre Bornes. Weekly coordination meetings are being held at the level of the Municipal Council of Curepipe. Metro Express Ltd and other stakeholders such as the Traffic Management Unit, the National Land Transport Authority, the MPs, the PPSs, the utility service providers are all present to discuss and monitor the works and suggest improvements whenever required. A similar setup was put in place at the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill for phase I whereas all metro related issues were discussed and complaints were addressed to that. We are repeating the exercise for Curepipe, for Vacoas and for Quatre Bornes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The PR exercise was also being carried out by the contractor himself to inform and sensitise the local residents about the plan works, the diversions and the alternative routes they should use to access their respective houses.

So far, we note that these traffic diversion schemes are working successfully after a period of adaptation. In the case of Curepipe, Mr Speaker, sensitisation flyers have been prepared by NLT, distributed to the inhabitants in Curepipe. Engagements with the local inhabitants through the Municipal Council of Curepipe have also been carried out prior to the start of any diversion of works.

I would like to thank the Mayor, the Councillors of the Municipal Councils of Curepipe, Quatre Bornes and Vacoas for their participation, their collaboration in the project, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Finally, I would like to end, Mr Speaker, Sir, by stretching upon this fact that the sum that we are being asked to vote, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not in any way a subsidy.

We are confident that, at the end of the phase II of the project, MEL *battera de ses propres ailes* and this project, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, will be another jewel in the crown of our country.

The Metro Express will be surely helping the country in terms of economy growth, Mr Speaker, Sir, and will be the multiplier effect that will help us reversing the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic along with providing a fast, reliable and safe mode of transport to the country.

I have done.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

(2.46 p.m.)

**The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It is an honour to address this Assembly in respect of the Supplementary Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill. The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure is a recurrent feature in the yearly budgetary exercise. Today, we are being asked to vote an additional amount of Rs33,7 billion. The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure concern the National Development Unit, Rodrigues, Land Transport, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, Social Security and National Solidarity and the Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government.

This year, the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure make provision under vote item 25-1 for assistance scheme under the Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an exceptional situation where Government has had to take appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and especially to protect jobs and income.

As the House already knows, the mandate of my Ministry is to support the most vulnerable of our society. As a result, the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity takes the lion share of the Budget. In fact, for the financial year 2019-2020, an amount of Rs26,927 billion was voted for the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity. This represents 21.76% of the Government's voted budget. Out of this amount, Rs25,2 billion has been spent only on pensions. This represents 93.59% of the budget of the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we, Members of the House, are asked to vote for additional funds under vote item 12-1 which make provision for a supplementary appropriation of Rs5,105 billion for the financial year 2019-2020. This additional amount caters for the increase in basic pensions which took effect in December 2019.

Here, we are fiscally talking about the Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Widow's Pension, Basic Invalidity Pension and other basic pensions such as the Carer's Allowance, Guardian Allowance and Inmate Allowance, amongst others.

Allow me here to comment on our Government's efforts with regard to basic pensions since 2014. Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government has always been deeply concerned with providing reasonable pensions to our elderly, persons with disabilities, widows, orphans and also vulnerable persons. We believe that everyone should be able to live with dignity; everyone should be able to meet his or her basic and primary needs.

Members of the House will recall that when our Government took office in December 2014, Basic Retirement Pension was a meagre of Rs3,623. We made a commitment during the electoral campaign of 2014 to increase this pension to Rs5,000. We did it. We were true to our word, Mr Speaker, Sir. We also increased and aligned Basic Widow's Pension and the Basic Invalidity Pension from Rs3,267 to Rs5,000 in 2014.

Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these pensions were even lower than the basic retirement pension at that particular time, at that material time?

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a reasonable Government, as a responsible Government, we made sure that these basic pensions continued to increase over the course of our first mandate. This is, of course, in an effort to cater for the increase in the cost of living. So, in 2016, Basic Retirement, Basic Invalidity and Basic Widow's Pension all increased again from Rs5,000 to Rs5,250. In 2017, these pensions increased again to reach Rs5,450. In 2018, they became Rs5,810 and, recently, in January 2019, the pensions increased to Rs6,210.

Then, during the electoral campaign in 2019, we announced what we would increase basic retirement pension from Rs6,210 to Rs9,000. Again, we fulfilled our promise, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As regards the increase in pensions, our Government has always shown strong political will. No Government has ever dared to come up with such substantial increases. Even now, in spite of this difficult economic situation the world is facing due to COVID-19 pandemic, we have maintained the basic retirement pension at Rs9000 and other pensions

also like the Basic Invalidity Pension and the Widow's Pension. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the continuous increase over the years, since 2014, is no doubt proof of our Prime Minister's and our Government consideration for our elderly and vulnerable people.

Let me, now provide the House with some details about the pension rates as at date. Pension for those aged 60 to 89 was increased to Rs9,000 in December 2019, an increase of 148% since December 2014. At the same time, the pension for those aged between 90 and 99 increased to Rs16,710. As for our centenarians, the pension has increased to Rs21,710 in 2019. The Basic Invalidity Pension and the Basic Widow's Pension also increased to Rs9,000, here, an increase of 175.5% since December 2014.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, our Government has also increased the Carer's Allowance from Rs3,000 to Rs3,500, of course, in an effort to better support elderly persons who are bedridden and persons with severe disabilities in need of constant care and attention. As at June 2020, over 276,000 persons are benefitting from Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Widow's Pension, Basic Invalidity Pension and other basic pensions. Let me also remind the House that around 23,200 persons are benefitting from an increase in the Carer's Allowance I have just mentioned. Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that the additional funds under my Ministry have been disbursed, I must say, for a good and worthy cause. Our efforts to increase basic pensions over the years have made a real difference in the life of so many families.

On a concluding note, Mr Speaker, Sir, protecting the elderly and vulnerable groups is a top priority of our Prime Minister and our Government. I am happy to say that additional funds have been used judiciously in the best interest of our elders and the most vulnerable. We are committed to continue providing support and assistance to our elders and vulnerable people. In fact, I must say a good Government has to focus on the well-being of those who need support and assistance the most. This is exactly what we have been doing since 2014 and what we are still doing to date. Mr Speaker, Sir, we remain people-focused and leave no one behind.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(2.57 p.m.)

**Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pick up from where the hon. Minister of Social Security left off, whereby

she is of the view that this Government is people-focused and that they will leave no one behind.

I think this is a very interesting statement that can easily be used as a tag on social media, and I see that the Minister of ICT approves of what I have just said.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No conversation!

**Mr Mohamed:** He loves having conversations with me, I do not know why. Now, the thing is maybe he will not be so happy when I continue to say why I picked up from what the hon. Minister of Social Security said: that this Government leaves no one behind.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the population outside watch us in this House discussing about Estimates of a Supplementary Expenditure for 2019-2020, the people very often would like to switch off because it is pretty confusing. What people do not understand is what exactly this Supplementary Expenditure is when the Appropriation Bill was just voted. And, I think, it is very important for people to understand what it is in very simple words. It is that the Government budgeted for an amount last year and that amount was not sufficient and has already engaged upon spending an additional amount. So, what we are coming here to do, in this House, is not to seek permission of the House to spend that amount; it is only seeking approval through the numerical number in the House of a cover authorising them to have already spent. That is basically what it is. Because the Constitution makes reference to it and the Constitution says that they have a time limit within which they have to do it; otherwise that would be unlawful appropriation. It is as simple as that.

*So, when, for instance, we are asked, this Government comes before the House and tells the population, demande à la population de l'autoriser, non pas à dépenser R 1.2 milliards en plus, mais de simplement prendre note du fait qu'ils l'ont déjà fait et c'est simplement une formalité, aujourd'hui, de venir ici, à l'Assemblée nationale, d'avoir l'approbation, pas avant les faits, mais après les faits.*

Il est important, M. le président, pour que les Mauriciens et Mauriciennes qui nous regardent, les étudiants, les jeunes et les moins jeunes, puissent comprendre que - et là, je vais m'attarder sur cet élément de R 1.2 milliards, comme je l'ai fait la semaine dernière - R 1.2 milliards, c'est ce que le gouvernement a déjà engagé, et s'ils ne viennent pas dans une période de six mois pour le faire, avant le 30 juin, c'est là où ça devient problématique. Et c'est pour cela que ce n'est pas une coïncidence que l'honorable ministre des Finances s'est

référé aux clauses y relatives dans la Constitution. Mais, maintenant, ce que la population veut savoir, c'est que ça représente quoi exactement ? Vous nous avez demandé de l'argent l'année dernière, cela a été voté, R 1.2 milliards sous la couverture ou l'excuse du COVID-19.

M. le président, la semaine dernière, l'honorable ministre de la Santé, comme indiqué par l'honorable Bérenger, avec raison, a commencé par nous dire une chose et a commencé à nous donner des preuves qu'il dit quelque chose d'autre. J'avais clairement expliqué cela, et je remercie l'honorable Bérenger pour l'avoir dit encore une fois, ici, à la Chambre. Mais ce qui me surprend, c'est que le lendemain, après avoir dit cela, il a eu l'occasion de venir faire un *statement*, une déclaration ministérielle. Il l'a fait. Mais est-ce que dans cette déclaration ministérielle, il est venu expliquer le fait que plus de R 60 millions ont été dépensées sur Hyperpharm sans *procurement procedures*, sans appel d'offres et que quelques minutes plus tôt, il avait dit que ce n'était pas le cas ? Est-ce qu'il est venu faire un *Minister's Statement* à cet effet ? Non. Il ne l'a pas fait. Et la raison pour laquelle l'honorable ministre ne peut pas venir faire une déclaration ministérielle à ce sujet, c'est précisément parce qu'il ne peut le faire, parce qu'il n'y a pas d'explication logique qui puisse lui venir en aide. Parce que s'il y avait une explication logique, croyez-moi, M. le président, il l'aurait déjà fait et même répété.

Son silence, je ne dirais pas est un silence de coupable. Et tout cas, j'espère pas ! Mais ce qui me choque, et je pense ce que la population doit vraiment vouloir savoir et doit être informée, c'est précisément ce document que j'ai entre mes mains, qui a été produit la semaine dernière, et si cela n'a pas été le cas, je vais le faire. C'est un e-mail daté du 12 mai 2020 de la part du directeur de Hyperpharm Maurice. Et dans cet e-mail adressé à un certain M. Bhugun, que je présume est l'*Administrative Head*, le *Senior Chief Executive* du ministère de la Santé - et je suis sûr que l'honorable ministre ne va pas me contredire sur cela ; cet e-mail est adressé à ce Monsieur Bhugun. Et pourquoi je me réfère à cela ? C'est parce que cela concerne ces dépenses qui se trouvent, se retrouvent dans les R 1.2 milliards. Et dans cet e-mail, le responsable de Hyperpharm vient dire, *and I quote: "All the products in the attachments are medicines that are/will be out of stock very soon."*

My question is: how does he know? How does a Director of a private company, who is only but a supplier of this Government - whenever they are called to supply, hopefully, in legal manner and not in unlawful means, they are only but someone whom the Minister does not know, he says. He expects us to believe him? I don't! What I can assure him is that just like me, most of us don't. When I say most of us, I mean the people of Mauritius don't. He

expects us to believe that he does not, but, at the same time, the facility with which, the ease with which someone of a company, of a private sector writes to the SCE of his Ministry and says that those attached products are medicines that are or will be out of stock very soon. My question is: how does he know? Who told him? Mr Jawaheer or Mr Bucktowar? Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall. I hope it is not the Minister who falls off the wall like Humpty Dumpty did, because if he is not responsible, he cannot be made to bear the consequences as Humpty Dumpty.

What I am getting at here is that this director refers to a list given to him by the Director of Pharmaceutical Services; it says here. Why was it given to him? Why was such information given to him? And what make things worse. Look at the ease with which he orders people around as though he owns the Ministry, as though he knows each and every nook and corner of that corridor leading to the corridors of power! And what does he say? He says here: "Tomorrow, we are delivering to Ministry of Health 21 products." That is nice!

Let us understand. *Comrenons que tout cela c'est* through emergency procurement, *où il n'y a pas eu d'appel d'offres.* "Kindly ask the Department concerned to issue the direct purchase approval." On 12 May 2020, he says: "We are going to deliver 21 products. Ask the department to issue the direct purchase approval." He means to say that he did not have the direct purchase approval yet and that he was going to deliver. So, this Mr Bhugun, who is the Senior Chief Executive, has a lot to answer for.

And when the hon. Minister of Finance was explaining what this Rs1.2 billion was, I know why he did not give us details, and I know why he kept on glancing to his left, looking over his shoulder, not as though someone who is peering over his shoulder to his good friend, the hon. Minister of Health, because the answer lies with him. But is it possible for the Minister of Health to tell us that the answer does not lie with him? Perhaps? Or with another doctor. Perhaps another doctor. And the thing is I am quite sure, looking at the hon. Minister of Health, that he knows who is the guilty one. He knows who is the one who is responsible for this wrongdoing, because wrongdoing there was and wrongdoing there is. He knows who it is. And let me get to that. What was the role of the State Trading Corporation in this whole deal of Rs1.2 billion?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the State Trading Corporation, following a Cabinet Decision of March 2020, started becoming responsible all of a sudden for the importation of pharmaceutical products, be it PPEs, equipment or medication. Question: why is it that the

Minister concerned with the State Trading Corporation made no reference to it in his speech on the Budget? Don't you think that the people of this country should have been enlightened as to the role of the State Trading Corporation for having spent Rs1.2 billion of their money without procurement?

Mr Speaker, Sir, *la population veut savoir. Et la population se demande comment se fait-il que le ministre responsable du Commerce décide de ne piper mot sur ce sujet, le rôle infâme de la State Trading Corporation?* Neither did the Minister of Finance! Neither did the Prime Minister! Neither did the Minister of Health! No Minister referred to the State Trading Corporation! Why?

The State Trading Corporation has acted as paying agent to buy pharmaceutical products, to put the money forward on behalf of the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Health - apologies - was acting as agent, *courtier* for other private contractors, including Hyperpharm. Out of Rs1.2 billion, how much did Hyperpharm get in a contract? Wasn't it Rs800 m. plus? And you know why the hon. Minister of Health looks surprised? Because he knows it is not him. He knows the doctor is responsible. The only thing I want him to do is to realise that he is a man who is a professional first and foremost; he has a reputation first and foremost, and he should not allow anyone to use him. Because it would be sad that he will have to take the fault for it. Rs800 m.! *R 800 millions de plus! Il nous avait dit R 67 millions par erreur. Il avait dit que rien n'avait été acheté d'Hyperpharm, mais le document qu'il avait mis sur la Table de l'Assemblée nationale avait démontré que c'était R 67 millions. Par erreur or divine intervention, we knew the truth.*

Now, there is more. There isn't there more than that, but Rs800 m. or so spent by this Government through STC. And there is one thing. Today, the people have to know. *Plus que St. Louis!* Today, the Government has to know, the people have to know and the Government cannot pretend ignorance. Rs1.2 billion! You see, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was reading with a lot of interest to the intervention of the former Minister of Finance, now Prime Minister, on the Appropriation Bill. There is one thing that he kept on repeating as though it was his mantra. What did he say every time? When he was in the Opposition, the need for accountability, the need for transparency. He kept on repeating this day in day out, each and every time he had an opportunity to take to the stand and to pronounce his speech on the Appropriation Bill; accountability, transparency. How accountable is this Government today when we do not know how the Rs1.2 billion were spent and there is no transparency on that?

Mr Speaker, Sir, Rs1.2 billion, it is not a small affair. You see, under the guise of trying to help the people, yes! You do not deserve a medal just because you decided to help the people! That is your responsibility to do it. You have to do it and you cannot expect medals or *des guirlandes* on your neck just because you did your duty. But what you have to do is to ensure that no one benefits unlawfully from your supposed duty. That's the point!

Do you know how sickening it is that some people have made money on the backs on the Mauritian population during this COVID-19? Do you know how sickening it is that corruption is rife during COVID-19 with taxpayers' money, using STC as a front? If what I am saying is not true, why does not the hon. Minister of Finance come and take his time to answer all questions pertaining to this Rs1.2 billion, later on, at Committee Stage; that he undertakes to produce all documents from now on, he is getting advanced notice? That he does not tell us that he will do it later on and then we never see the document coming. That his colleague meets with him in the corridors and brief him, if need be, but answers must be forthcoming today. Rs1.2 billion; this Government juggles billions. But the people out there want to know where have the billions gone to; to whom has it gone to; how had it gone to them and why did they benefit? Was it the best deal for the population? Was it in the interest of the Mauritian population? That is what they want to know. Simple questions – accountability, *la transparence*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is sad, and let me end on this. I won't take more of your time or anyone's more time, but it is sad today, and I take note of that, that today we are meeting on a Tuesday. The Prime Minister has decided to put this Bill today, on a Tuesday, and he has done so knowingly because he loves transparency, he loves accountability, this Prime Minister. So much so that he stops us from putting questions today on Tuesday, by fixing this Bill to today when he could have done it on any other day. That is his choice. He is responsible for it, but he will put himself forward as being the lover and the better teacher of accountability and transparency. Excellent! But the background of today's presentation of the Bill should also be, let's not forget that yesterday, when we are talking of fiscal responsibility, we are talking about the importance of being responsible with the nation's fate when you have it in your hands, only yesterday, Zambia has decided to renege the Double Taxation Agreement with Mauritius. Congratulations! Long live Mauritius.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Hurreeram!

(3.17 p.m.)

**The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Yet another mud-slinging exercise, yet another horrendous show that I almost want to apologise to our viewers for having had to watch the speaker before me.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact remains that, today, our country is COVID free, barring the four imported cases that we have in the quarantine centre. If the hon. Member who spoke before me is sincere in all his allegations, I wonder why he has not been to the Central CID and made a statement straightforward. But, instead, what they do? This has become a habit – from a sitting position, *sous l'immunité parlementaire, faire des allégations gratuites contre le ministre Jagutpal qui, première fois ministre, la première fois qu'il vient dans cette Assemblée comme ministre, député première fois et il a dû répondre à une PNQ, et il l'avait fait admirablement et on le félicite pour cela.*

Should I, Mr Speaker, Sir, remind the hon. Member on the other side that he did not have to deal with a situation as the COVID-19 but, without any doubt, he has been one of the worst Minister of Labour that this country has ever had. His legacy is an unemployment rate of 8.1% and two abusive labour laws and tens of thousands of Mauritian workers losing their job. With such a disgraceful legacy, I am afraid that he does not have the *locus standi* nor the moral value to give us any lesson. The hon. Member of the Opposition, as usual, makes a fool of himself in trying to ridicule what will now be remembered as one of the best Budgets ever presented in this august Assembly, and I say thank you to the hon. Prime Minister and to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, almost two weeks have now elapsed since the presentation of the Budget 2020-2021, and, despite all the efforts of the Opposition to put doubts in the minds of the people, just like we just saw earlier, it is safe to say that all the measures that have been taken have been validated by a vast majority across the country because, today, our countrymen feel safe in the hand of this Government.

There are still a few who will criticise only for the sake of criticising. As a responsible Government, we will thrive to ensure that these citizens also can aspire to a better future.

I have gone through a long list of projects during my speech on the Budget, including construction of major road infrastructures as well as buildings and drains, which has been

approved by my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. I won't go through that again.

I am quite pleased that, during my first mandate as Minister, I have been trusted with quite an important sum of money and projects that, before and after completion, will have contributed to put our whole economy back on track.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, who is also Minister for the first time in his career, could not have faced a worse situation when presenting his first Budget and this, the people out there will appreciate, especially when they hear those very demagogical speeches. They will appreciate when they know that, today, they have a Government at the helm of this country that is doing the best to continue to build that modern Mauritius. And to my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance, I am very much tempted to say rough seas make stronger sailors, tough times build greater people.

All across the public sector, mandatory budget cuts have been proposed and many Ministries have had to review their budget proposals. Sacrifices have had to be made in order to survive. People have to understand that this situation is unique. Unprecedented! It is not only the Mauritian economy that is at risk. Globally, countries are facing the same predicament.

Airlines across the world have crashed. Millions are facing unemployment whilst Governments are imposing pay cuts and increase in taxes in order to sustain their economy. And what do we have here? *Un budget dans la continuité*. A budget that is pervaded with the same philosophy as the three previous exercises - *un budget social*.

Un budget social, M. le président, dans un contexte pareil, relève du domaine de l'impossible. Mais mon collègue, le ministre des Finances l'a fait, et le Premier ministre l'a fait. Et comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, des sacrifices devront être faits car on ne fait pas une omelette sans casser des œufs. Il s'agit là, M. le président, d'un budget courageux, je dirais même osé. Quel gouvernement aurait eu le courage de taxer les plus riches afin de venir en aide aux plus démunis? Les masques sont tombés. On a vu qui sont ceux qui étaient contre.

Quel gouvernement serait venu de l'avant avec une véritable réforme de notre système de pension en pleine crise? Le même gouvernement qui a introduit le *Negative Income Tax*, le salaire minimum.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, we come to the population with clear intentions, increase their purchasing power and guarantee a decent pension upon retirement.

*Paroles données, paroles sacrées.*

I will ask the population not to judge us now. Judge us at the end of our mandate, just like in 2019, when it was clear which Prime Minister is a man of his word, which Prime Minister has the best intentions of your families at heart, which Prime Minister has sworn to serve this population and will work tirelessly, hand in hand with the Members of his Government to make Mauritius succeed.

**Mr Mohamed:** On a point of order.

*(Interruptions)*

*Pe commencer là!* On a point of order! The hon. Minister is not talking at all about this particular Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir. And it has always been a tradition that you limit yourself only to the strict parameters of this Bill. I stuck to the Ministry of Health, Rs1.2 billion. That is all. Now, I have not even heard him say anything up to now. So, to stick to Standing Orders, he has to be relevant. Even if hon. Ganoo gives him the answer to his *réplique*, it does not mean he is right. Stick to Standing Orders! You asked a question to hon. Bérenger just now. Stick to Standing Orders! I hope it applies to him as well.

**Mr Speaker:** So, Minister, stick to the debate!

**Mr Hurreeram:** I think the Leader of the Opposition has enlarged the debate, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, I am just replying and setting the context in which I will come to the ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Don't enlarge it!

**Mr Hurreeram:** Yes, sure! Mr Speaker, Sir, I know it hurts. My Ministry, as I said earlier, has been granted millions to inject in the Construction Sector. As you all know, this sector is a driving force of our economy and will help Government to not only secure jobs but also will help to create jobs and boost our growth.

Allow me to explain that amount of Rs350 m. that was provided to the National Development Unit in the Estimates for the Financial Year 2019-2020 for the construction and upgrading of roads. The voted provision was unfortunately insufficient to cater for payment of ongoing projects...

**Mr Speaker:** No conversation!

**Mr Hurreeram:** ...for previous years and new projects awarded for the Financial Year 2019-2020. A little more than Rs400 m. has had to be disbursed for construction, resurfacing and upgrading of no less than 400 roads across the island since 2011.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, in those lists of projects, thanks to the dedication of my colleague, the honourable Minister, Anwar Husnoo, to his constituency, Rs150 m. was invested by the Road Development Authority where they have executed 40 projects, including an additional lane on the motorway, rehabilitation of hard shoulders, resurfacing works and upgrading drains. Another Rs120 m. have been disbursed this time by the National Development Unit for 39 road projects in Plaine Verte, Cité Martial, Roche Bois and 11 drain projects, including drain works at Ambroisine-Cité Laval Street in Plaine Verte, 12 amenities, including the upgrading of Mamade Elahee Football Ground in Cité Martial, thanks to hon. Dr. the Anwar Husnoo, in No. 3.

The need for additional funds since there were delays in payment of outstanding claims for projects implemented in previous years which has spilled over on the budget for this Financial Year due to the following –

**Mr Speaker:** No conversation there!

**Mr Hurreeram:**

- 1) no timely submission of Applications for Payments;
- 2) some payments could not be certified due to technical issues such as non-submission of test results, and
- 3) delay in implementation of projects due to road alignment, way leave issues and certainly inclement weather conditions.

It was expected that the additional amount of Rs250 m. would be disbursed by 30 June 2020.

Furthermore, an amount of Rs96 m. was provided for the Financial Year 2019-2020 for the construction and upgrading of amenities and, here also, the voted provision was insufficient to cater for payment of ongoing projects for previous years and new projects awarded for the Financial Year 2019-2020.

Here also, there were delays in payment of outstanding claims for projects implemented in previous years which had spilled over on the budget of this financial year due to the same reason I have mentioned earlier.

Besides the Rs280 m. allocated to the National Development Unit under this Bill, another Rs330 m. in this financial year has been given to my Ministry with regard to our Emergency Drain Work Projects.

As you are well aware, this Government has started a series of major drain infrastructure across the island, in flood-prone areas in order to make the homes of our citizens safer, especially during rainy season. An amount of Rs1.2 billion under the National Environment Fund has been allocated in the budget.

These drain infrastructures are a must in order to protect the lives of Mauritians who currently live in regions which could easily get flooded once rainy season comes. It is a matter of urgency and I thank the hon. Minister, who understood the urgency behind the implementation of these projects which have been unfortunately stalled in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should also say after the comment of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the contract for the elaboration of the Master Plan of the Land Drainage Authority has already been awarded to Swayze Consulting through the technical assistance of *Agence française de développement* in November 2019. The draft Master Plan is expected in December 2020.

Pledging the full-fledged Land Drainage Master Plan, the Land Drainage Authority has taken the following actions –

- Introduce a Drain Impact Assessment under the Environment Impact Assessment for better development control. I am informed that the LDA has already processed over 100 applications for development projects.
- Acquiring a new and high resolution Digital Elevation Model (DEM) and an aerial imagery. The actual DEM dates back to 2008 and it is a 10 metre horizontal grid with vertical accuracy of one metre on firm ground.

However, due to rapid urbanisation and corresponding changes in topography that have occurred during the past decade, it is considered limited for the purpose of land drainage. A new DEM will be one metre horizontal grid and 15 cm vertical accuracy. The acquisition of the DEM by LIDAR has been completed for Rodrigues and it is 80% completed for Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Road Development Authority, the National Development Unit, the Land Drainage Authority, all falling under the purview of my Ministry, have been trusted with the required fund of taxpayers' money where every cent is accountable. My colleagues on this side of the House, the Members on the other side of the House, and myself, will see to that.

We are building a new Mauritius. Now that the Budget had been voted, things will go very fast. At the level of my Ministry, we have increased our spending capacity over the last six months, things are moving quickly. And I would like here to thank all Civil Servants under my Ministry, the Engineers, the staff for the formidable work that is being accomplished. Our country needs us, now, more than ever. A long and tedious journey awaits and we have to remain focused for our economic survival is at stake.

The Opposition, unfortunately, does what they do best: petty politics, provocations, vain attempts to throw tantrums, use the media in the futile, mudslinging campaign again. The population knows better, Mr Speaker, Sir. The population is behind this Government. And with them on our side, nothing is impossible.

And to the few who still doubt the goodwill of this magnificent team at the helm of this country, I have this message to them –

“You have to change from doubters to believers.”

And remember, we are all in this together. And together we will succeed in our endeavour.

“The struggle continues, victory is certain”.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leopold!

(3.36 p.m.)

**Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I won't be long at all as the hon. Minister of Environment has explicitly given all the elements that I wanted to raise on the National Environmental Fund, in regard to the rehabilitation of our coastal regions of Rodrigues Island which are being affected by the phenomenon of climate change.

Once, Mr Speaker, Sir, an ex-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom stated that he considered that the debates on Supplementary Estimates are the most worthless of any that he had known in his career. This may be true or maybe not, depending on circumstances. But the public needs to know as taxpayers how public funds are being used and to clarify any misunderstanding, and because we are in that unprecedented and exceptional circumstance which justified changes and further appropriation of funds to the previously agreed main Estimates 2019-2020.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Coronavirus pandemic has had a wide impact on the Healthcare Services in Mauritius. It has been noted worldwide and in Mauritius that patients suffering from that illness have put tremendous pressure, especially in acute care, that is, intensive care, and this in turn has caused a great effect on the normal care provided to the wider population as well. Therefore, both sudden demand and supply on health care have an extra cost.

And to my opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir, the success of combatting Coronavirus in Mauritius was because of the efficiency of contract tracing, but most of all was the way Government dealt with a backdrop of shortages to treat Coronavirus patients in acute care and the protection of hospital staff. With this fund, the Government has been able to boost the capacity of hospital by increasing ICU beds and critical care beds which are very expensive.

Another success was in the investment of protective equipment to hospital staff. Procurement of protective equipment to hospital staff, despite an acute shortage due to an increase demand, has also helped in containing the virus by giving staff more confidence and motivation in dealing with patients suffering from Coronavirus. All this was made possible because of extra fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, return on investment in investing in health care services is not about money, it's not about profit. It is about the improvement in health care delivery in a safe and timely manner by building and maintaining a healthy population. Therefore, the Government needs to keep on investing money in improving health care to build human capital, preventing prolonged lockdown so as to enhance economic activities. Investing an additional Rs1.2 billion has also shown the commitment of the Government for universal health care. Coronavirus pandemic has shown to the world that universal health care is fundamental, especially while dealing with infectious disease like COVID-19.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, investing money on public health is money well spent as this leads to a comprehensive health care service and preventing inequalities in accessing health care services. And that is my participation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

(3.41 p.m.)

**Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):** Mr Speaker, Sir, a Supplementary Appropriation Bill is meant to cover expenditures which were not budgeted, expenditure which had not been subject to debate and scrutiny last year when the Budget was voted. And this year, the Supplementary Appropriation is at a record high of Rs33.7 billion. Rs33.7 billion represents almost 25% more expenditure than was budgeted last year. And today, we are supposed to approve all these expenditures that were never scrutinised, that were never authorised before they were incurred. Now, obviously, there are certain items of expenditure that we have no issues approving. Out of the Rs33 billion, for example, Rs5 billion represent the increase in pension.

May I remind hon. Members that when the Budget was voted last year, the then Minister of Finance, now Prime Minister, announced an increase of only Rs500 monthly in the old age pension as from January 2010. And at that time, everybody was disappointed because everybody was expecting old age pension to be aligned with the minimum wage. But then, came the general elections, and I am very proud that MMM was the first party on 16 October 2019 to announce its 20 priority measures and one of these 20 priority measures included, and I quote –

*“Alignement immédiat de la pension de vieillesse sur le salaire minimum”.*

Yes, it was the MMM which first announced that old age pension will be aligned to the minimum salary. It's only on 23 October, a whole week later that *l'Alliance Morisien* undertook to increase pension to Rs9,000 as from December 2019 and to Rs13,500 in the course of their next mandate. We are happy that old age pension has been increased in December and today we are ratifying this increase. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, those who are expecting an annual increase in their pension, were, no doubt, very disappointed to hear the hon. Minister of Finance stating in answer to a PNQ on 12 June, and I quote –

*“(… ) nous maintenons l’essentiel à R 9,000, et nous avons le courage de le dire, oui, c’est à partir de 2023 qu’il y aura des augmentations pour la pension pour ceux qui partent à l’âge de la retraite et que ce sera la CSG qui va payer cette augmentation. (… ) si la situation économique le permet (… ). »*

This is very far from what was undertaken by *l’Alliance Morisien* during the campaign where they undertook to increase pension to Rs13,500 during this mandate.

What the hon. Minister of Finance was saying basically is that old age pension, from now on, will be frozen to Rs9,000 and it is only as from 2023 that there might, not even there will, there might be an increase in pension, if the economic situation permits and this additional pension will be paid only to those going in retirement and the retirement is not 60, it is 65. So, this additional pension would be applicable to only those aged 65 and above, and it will be paid out of *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, probably today is the last time we are called upon to vote for an additional amount for pension as going forward according to this Government, it will be the employees of the private sector who will have to pay any increase in pension through the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are being called upon to approve Rs11 billion for the Wage Assistance Scheme and Rs3 billion for the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme, these two items of expenditure are directly linked to COVID-19 Pandemic and were necessary because we were under confinement and most of us were not able to work.

The hon. Minister of Finance informed the House earlier today that this amount represents payment up to June 2020. Now, employees in the private sector have been paid half of the month of March, they have been paid for the month of April, they have been paid for the month of May, but, up to now, whether it is on the website of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) or through Cabinet decision, there is absolutely no indication that Wage Assistance Scheme will be extended to all employees in the private sector earning less than Rs25,000. And on 12 June 2020, Cabinet stated, and I quote –

*“Cabinet has agreed to pay for the month of June 2020 an allowance under the Wage Assistance Scheme and Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to workers and self-employed individuals in the Tourism Sector and all those whose work premises and business operations had to remain closed after the lifting of the curfew”.*

So, Cabinet decision does not specify the amount that is going to be paid to these employees. It also does not specify who other than those who are in the Tourism Sector, who will benefit from this Wage Assistance Scheme. It is certainly not clear what is “those whose premises or business operations had to remain closed after lifting of the curfew.” Does that cover, for example, an enterprise which voluntarily decides to close down his shop? Is that only applicable to companies which are in financial difficulties? So, they have to close down because they do not have the financial means to continue trading? So, it is very unclear who is going to be paid that Wage Assistance Scheme. And the hon. Minister of Finance should also - I hope - clarify why we are required to vote Rs11 billion, when at page 395 of the Estimates, he had made provision under Centrally Managed Expense of Government for an amount of only Rs8 billion under Wage Assistance Scheme. Why is it that under the Estimates circulated a few weeks ago, Rs8 billion for Wage Assistance Scheme, and today, the Estimates that we are going to vote is Rs11 billion, what happens to these Rs3 billion? Who received those Rs3 billion? So, I look forward to hear the hon. Minister of Finance during his summing-up on this.

We are also required to vote Rs3 billion under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme. Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot of people complained about their application for payment under this scheme being turned down by the MRA. In answer to a Parliamentary Question (PQ) which I asked on 05 May 2020, the hon. Minister of Finance stated that, as at 04 May 2020, MRA had received 253,102 applications for assistance under this scheme, out of which 189,476 were approved. So, roughly out of 250,000 or so applications, more than 60,000 were rejected. That is more than 25% rejection rate. So, we need to know why these applications were rejected.

There are, of course, the eligibility criteria, which, according to me, is too restrictive. For example, why can't a self-employed who receives the monthly social benefit, because his child is handicapped be eligible. So, he is a poor person, and just because his child is handicapped or someone else in his family, another dependent is in receipt of social benefit, automatically he is disqualified. He is a self-employed, he is already struggling to run a family, he has an handicapped child, but he is not entitled to receive this Rs5,100. And many people complained that they satisfied all the eligibility criteria, and yet, their applications were wrongly rejected by the MRA very often because of mistaken identity or because inaccuracy in the database held by the MRA. This is the reason why a few weeks ago, I raised the issue during Adjournment Time that the MRA has to have a dedicated desk to

receive and deal and investigate complaints about the rejected applications. But the single most important criticism of the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme was the quantum, only Rs5,100 per month, not even the minimum salary. In fact, it was half of the minimum salary and it was so unfair, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I know a family in my Constituency, there are two brothers, one is a driver working for a company in Port Louis, the other one is a taxi driver. The brother who has a taxi received only Rs5,100 whereas the other brother who was employed as a driver - doing the same thing, driving a car - he got his whole salary during confinement time. So, that's so unfair, how can Government come up with such a blatantly discriminatory scheme? Are self-employed less deserving than full-time employees? Full-time employees in the private sector got up to Rs25,000; employees in the government sector - civil servants - got their full salary, self-employed got only Rs5,100? How is a person supposed to feed his family and pay his expenses with only Rs5,100 and it is not as if we are talking about people who do not want to work. These people want to work, but they were prohibited from working. There was a law, there was a curfew, people were not allowed to work, they were not allowed to fend for themselves and they did not receive any Work Access Permit. They were confined at home, so it was the responsibility of Government who has forced them to stay at their places, forced them not to work, to come up with an adequate compensation during a time that they are not able to work. And many self-employed are among the most vulnerable people of society. We are talking about poor people, we are talking about people who live in slums, people who have no savings, people who can't find a job and who have to fend for themselves. *Pourquoi un tel mépris pour ces gens, M. le président?* I really hope that this Government will extend the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme for a few more months for these many self-employed who are now struggling.

Let me come to funds being transferred to the National Resilience Fund. Rs10 billion are being earmarked for implementing schemes, including support to the National Carrier. But, in fact, if we want to have a more detailed view about how this sum of Rs10 billion is going to be spent, we need to turn to page 423 of the Estimates, which puts the details of payment under the National Resilience Fund, and then, we see from that list, promotion campaign Liverpool Football Club, Rs375 m. over the next 3 years will be given to Liverpool Football Club. That is a lot of money, Rs375 m.! And I really hope that the people responsible, whether it is in the tourism sector, the Ministry of Sports, have made a study to see the impact of linking Mauritius to Liverpool, and whether instead of attracting tourists,

we will not be putting off people who do not like, who do not support Liverpool Football Club.

*(Interruptions)*

Jokes apart, but in all transparency, now that we are told that we are going to pay Rs375 m. to Liverpool Football Club for the next 3 years, so the least we can expect is for the Ministry concerned, whether it is Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Tourism or the Ministry of Finance, to table a copy of the agreement. We need to know what is the campaign that is going to be undertaken by Liverpool, we need to make sure that this is money well spent. And we need to know if there were any middleman, any intermediary, who were these people, and how much money they got paid. So, I hope that the Ministry concerned will table the agreement in due course.

But the bulk of the money under the National Resilience Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is, Rs9 billion, will be used to support Air Mauritius. Air Mauritius, our National Carrier, our pride, our ambassador overseas. We are injecting so much public funds in Air Mauritius, yet we are never allowed to ask any PQ on Air Mauritius. So many MPs, including myself, hon. Bhagwan and so many other MPs, have asked numerous PQs on Air Mauritius, but systematically, every time, the Minister responsible for External Communications has refused to answer our PQs on the excuse that Air Mauritius is a public company. Air Mauritius is a public company, now we are going to inject Rs9 billion of public funds in Air Mauritius, and we still will not be able to ask any question about it! So, I think when they are asking us to vote Rs9 billion, come and give an undertaking to the House that henceforth any time an MP is going to ask questions on Air Mauritius, this Government will answer, because, just as we have the right, the population out there has the right to know how is this Rs9 billion going to be used. Are we putting good money after bad money? Is Air Mauritius just going to take this Rs9 billion and we would not know what they do with this money? We will not be able to ask any question? How can we be sure that this Rs9 billion will be well spent? How can we be sure that Air Mauritius will not face more financial difficulties down the road after we have injected Rs9 billion?

The only way to ensure that Air Mauritius is viable and comes out of this crisis with flying colours is to implement a policy of good governance. Good governance requires Government to stop interfering with the operation of Air Mauritius, and allow management to run Air Mauritius as a commercial airline. Good governance requires Government to stop

nominating people to its board based on political allegiance, but instead, look for people with competence and merit. Good governance requires Board Members and employees to be sanctioned if they mismanage the affairs of the airline.

The truth of the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that Air Mauritius was already in financial difficulties even before the COVID-19 pandemic. *Les ailes d'Air Mauritius étaient déjà plombées avant COVID-19.* The account published by Air Mauritius, pre-COVID-19, speaks for itself, there were massive losses.

I listened to the Budget Speech of the hon. Prime Minister last week, obviously, outside Parliament because we were thrown away, we were expelled. According to him, if Air Mauritius is in the financial mess, it is because of the hedging losses and the acquisition of 6 aircrafts. I totally agree that the hedging loss was a severe blow to Air Mauritius and MMM criticised the Labour-PMSD Government for that. That was in 2009. But hedging was in 2009, 11 years ago. The then Chairman of Air Mauritius resigned and the person in charge of hedging was sacked, and, in the meantime, Air Mauritius became profitable again. So, surely, hedging cannot be the main reason for Air Mauritius' problems today.

The hon. Prime Minister criticised the acquisition of airlines immediately before the 2014 general election, and when he assumed power in 2014, he called for a full-fledged enquiry, Mr KGB. But what happened to that enquiry? Was anyone arrested? Was anyone prosecuted for corruption or bribery, for taking commission? But, more importantly, did the Government cancel the order? What did the Government do? The Government actually went ahead and bought two more aircrafts. Air Mauritius was wrong to have ordered six aircrafts, so to rectify the thing, they ordered 2 more aircrafts.

And what about the Asia-Africa Corridor, who took that decision? Who announced it in Parliament as a landmark in their air access strategy? How much money did Air Mauritius use? How many hundreds of millions of rupees did they lose because of that Asia-Africa Corridor! I am told, at times, there were more crew members than passengers on the flights from some African destinations. Was there any sanction? Did the Chairman resign? Was the employee sanctioned? Nothing! What about political interference? Who sacked a competent CEO like Megh Pillay because he has the indecency to set up a Disciplinary Committee to try to sanction an employee close to *Lakwizinn*? Who caused to be appointed to the Board of Air Mauritius, his Personal Advisor, when the latter was being prosecuted for corruption offence for which he was later found guilty? People living in glass houses should not throw stones.

So, really, it is of no purpose playing the blame game, *pa mwa sa, li sa! Vous êtes tous coupables.*

But the question that we have to ask ourselves is the following: should Government have allowed Air Mauritius to go under voluntary administration? If Government was going to bail out Air Mauritius as it is doing now, by injecting Rs9 billion, why didn't it do it before? The Government has representatives on the Board of Air Mauritius. The close advisor of the Prime Minister, Mr S. S. is on the Board. Surely, the hon. Prime Minister was aware that the Board was going to put Air Mauritius into voluntary administration. Why did the Government not intervene at that point and bail out Air Mauritius? Because voluntary administration is not a joke! Going into voluntary administration is an event of default. Today, some of the planes of Air Mauritius, especially the new ones, are grounded because they risk being seized the minute they land in some of the airports outside of Mauritius, because Air Mauritius is under voluntary administration. So, the only reason I can think of why the Government refused to bail out Air Mauritius and allowed Air Mauritius to be put in voluntary administration is to enable Air Mauritius to sack employees and alter their condition of employment, and this is precisely what the administrators are doing.

May I remind hon. Members, when the administrators were appointed, they issued a communiqué, the first one was on 24 April, and what does it say, first line -

*« D'emblée il est important de souligner qu'Air Mauritius n'est pas en situation de faillite. »*

24 April 2020, Air Mauritius n'est pas *en faillite*. Barely a month later, 01 June 2020, another communiqué, first line -

*« Le temps presse car les risques d'une mise en liquidation sont réelles. »*

So, a month ago, the company is not *en faillite*, one month after appointment of administrator, the company will be put in liquidation when they know that the Government is going to bail them out, they know that the money is waiting for them! Why? Because they want to pressure the employees! Mr Speaker, Sir, employees cannot and should not be made the scapegoats. If employees are being sacked, what about the directors, what about top management, what about those who mismanaged the company? Oh, that's Ok for the Directors, that's Ok for the Top Management, only the employees have to be sacked! In South Africa, just next door, the former Chairperson of South African Airlines, Mrs Judy Mayeni, was recently declared a delinquent Director by the High Court in Pretoria over her

conduct while leading the airlines Board Directors - that is South African Airlines. The Chairperson is not only sacked, but is sued and is made sure that she never becomes a director on any public companies. What about Mauritius? All these directors who are responsible for Air Mauritius to be in voluntary administration, they will continue to act as directors? The Government is going to bail out Air Mauritius and put Rs9 billion and they will come back and will still remain directors on the Board? Is this what this Government is telling us today, to vote Rs9 billion *et ce sera du pareil au même*, there will be no change in Air Mauritius? At least, give an undertaking that all the Board will be sacked and, henceforth, competent people, patriotic people will be put on the Board of Air Mauritius, then, you can morally justify to use public funds!

Let me come now to the final part of my intervention: medical disposable and minor equipment. I saved the worst for last: the Rs1.2 billion that we are called upon to vote for the purchase of additional medical supplies and minor equipment. But, let me start, Mr Speaker, Sir, by thanking our friendly countries: Canada, China, India, Japan and the United States, as well as the Foundation and Regional Organisation, such as Jack Ma Foundation, the European Union, UNDP, and others for the medical equipment, medical supplies and medicines which they so generously donated to us in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The support was particularly crucial in the early days following the outbreak of the disease in Mauritius because there was, at that time, an acute shortage of protective equipment and testing kits. So, thank you to all these friendly countries and organisations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a saying –

“Never let a good crisis go to waste.”

And COVID-19 Pandemic turned out to be a golden opportunity for some people to enrich themselves; carefully orchestrated schemes. When I look at what happened, I ask myself: probably some people must have missed the calling. *Ils ont raté leur vocation.* They ought to have been tailors, because they are expert in tailor-made procurement. It all started on 19 March 2020 when the Procurement Policy Office issued Directive 44, stating, and I quote –

“To combat the spread of COVID-19 virus in Mauritius, public bodies may resort to emergency procurement to procure goods, works and other services under Section 21 of the Public Procurement Act 2006, which has as objectives to safeguard life, quality of life or environment.”

The infamous Emergency Procurement! The same Emergency Procurement which was used in 2006 to award a contract to BWSC for the St Louis Power Project, a contract which we now know has been awarded after BWSC financially rewarded members of the Mauritian administration and others. And last week in Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister tried to argue that the corruption occurred in 2014 before he was Minister in charge, and everyone on the Government rank applauded, you know, *tapé la table, tapé la table!*

*(Interruptions)*

I understand some even went out and had firecrackers. We have seen it on Facebook. Firecrackers! Now a letter from BWSC to CEB has been circulating, which shows the corrupt practice occurred in relation to St Louis Power Project Plan II: “I can confirm to you that our latest project in Mauritius, St Louis II, was among the projects subject to investigation.” Port St Louis II was under that Government! That was in 2016. That’s when the Certificate of Emergency was used to award the contract, so there is no longer ‘*Pas mwa ça, li ça.*’ So, now, what are you going to do? What is this Government going to do when now you have proof that the corruption happened when your Government was in administration? Business as usual? *L’argent lepep ça, Rs700 m.!*

**Mr Speaker:** Come to the debate!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Uteem:** This is the debate; the debate is about Emergency Procurement! We are asked to ratify Rs1.2 billion under Emergency Procurement and we want to make sure that Emergency Procurement is not being resorted to, now, as it was in 2016, so that some people can get a lot of *commissions*. So, let me come back to this Rs1.2 billion of medical supplies that we are called upon to vote. We know from the PNQ of 15 June 2020 that Emergency Procurement was used to purchase pharmaceutical products and medical supplies in line with Directive 44. This is what the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness told us. We also know that one supplier in particular, Hyperpharm Ltd, supplied pharmaceutical products worth Rs67 m. And this is what we see from official documents that were tabled by the hon. Minister. And yet, in this very same august Assembly, the same hon. Minister stated, and I quote from Hansard –

“(...) as far as medication is concerned, not a single medication has been procured from the said company that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned.”

And after the Leader of the Opposition tells him -

“(...) either he is misleading the House or he is lying through his teeth.”

What did he answer?

“I am sure of that. I would like to have the documents that have been supplied.”

The hon. Minister is elected for the first time, I understand it's his first time as a Minister, but he has to know where he is sitting; this is Parliament. This is a sanctuary, this is where truth should prevail; this is where everybody is watching you. This goes in Hansard. So, whenever you are going to say something, make sure you think before you say something, especially if what you are going to say turns out not to be true.

As hon. Bérenger pointed out earlier today, unfortunately, it is not the first time that the hon. Minister was economical with the truth, if I can use this expression, because if I say ‘lying’, I will be asked to withdraw. So, he was economical with the truth. On the same day, in his PNQ, at page 21 of Hansard, he stated, and I quote –

“I don't know who is the Director of Hyperpharm.”

And we know about Cabinet decision of 23 June 2017. On 23 June 2017, Cabinet has taken note that ‘Mr’, I am not going to quote his name, has been nominated a member of the Medical Council of Mauritius. And who was the Chairman of the Medical Council in June 2017? Dr. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal! He is laughing...

*(Interruptions)*

You are laughing! Why did you say that you don't know the gentleman? So, all these years that you have been president of the Medical Council and he is sitting by your side, you did not know who was sitting by your side? Just like you don't know now how the contracts have been awarded!

So, let's come back to Emergency Procurement. The way the scheme unfolded, appears to be a very carefully premeditated act by certain people to favour a particular bidder.

The tender document was tailor-made for this purpose.

*(Interruptions)*

It is relevant because we are talking about Rs1.2 billion.

*(Interruptions)*

Rs1.2 billion, is it relevant? Of course, it is relevant, how you have used Rs1.2 billion.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, continue with the debate!

*(Interruptions)*

The Member is continuing with the debate.

**Mr Uteem:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Ministry of Health issues a tender. I have a copy of the first page of a tender which is usually issued; it is on the website of the Ministry anyway. You will see under preparation of bid, it is said that you need to provide – we are talking about supply of drugs – Certificate of Pharmaceutical Products (COPP) for each product and it is stated here that the Document is mandatory to be received. So, it is a mandatory provision in any tender that you need to have the COPP, the Certificate of Pharmaceutical Products. What is the COPP? It is a certificate in a format recommended by the World Health Organisation. So, it is a prescribed format which establishes the status of the pharmaceutical product that you are importing and the country that it is exported from. Now, I challenge the hon. Minister to table a copy of the COPP for every pharmaceutical product that has been bought from this pharma. There is none. The document which the hon. Minister tabled is a certificate of analysis, which is completely different. The certificate of analysis comes from the manufacturer, as he knows, he is a doctor, I am not. It does not emanate from the Drug Controller General of India. The Drug Controller of India is the only Government body in India authorised to issue such certificates, such COPP. So, this is the first serious breach.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Uteem:** Second, the Pharmacy Act in this respect is very clear. Every medication has to bear the standard and when you look at the certificate of analysis that has been tabled by the hon. Minister, in each of the pharma product supplied by Hyperpharm, it is written that the standard met is India Pharmacopoeia. As to the Pharmacy Act, section 24 –

“No person shall sell any pharmaceutical product which doesn’t conform to specified standard.”

Section 45 –

“Any person who contravenes this Act shall commit an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs10,000 and to imprisonment of a term not exceeding two years.”

So, any person who sells pharmaceutical products that do not conform to specified standard is committing an offence under the Pharmacy Act.

Now, what is the specified standard? Specified standard means such standards as are specified in the British, French, United States or European pharmacopoeia. I have nothing against Indian pharmacopoeia but Indian pharmacopoeia as at today is not a specified standard. It is a criminal offence for someone to sell drugs to the Ministry and for the Ministry to buy drugs which do not conform to standards either specified in the British, French, United States or European pharmacopoeia. So, now tell me how is it then that this contract has been awarded because my information is that at the level of the Ministry, the Senior Pharmacist refused to sign it. There is one Pharmacist who said this.

“The Principal Pharmacist of Procurement Unit on 08 May 2020 observed that there is a number of things missing, namely the certificate of pharmaceutical products, has not been submitted. And then the pharmaceutical standard of the pro forma is not mentioned. In the absence of the above information, - this is what he said – no technical evaluation of the offers can be carried out. No technical evaluation, the bid cannot be evaluated. No technical evaluation of the offers can be carried out and as such the efficacy and safety of the pharmaceutical product cannot be ascertained. In my opinion, even if this exercise is an emergency procurement and although it requires no bidding competition, it is primordial to carry out a due diligence on the source of supply as it entails efficacy and safety concern.”

**Mr Speaker:** May I know the source of the document?

**Mr Uteem:** Yes, this is the Minutes signed by the Principal Pharmacist. It is the same document which the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned in his PNQ last week. The Chief Pharmacist refused. He said that these products do not conform to the Pharmacy Act. So, now I am asking the hon. Minister: who signed the letter of award? Who took it upon himself to take possession of all these medications because you stated in your answer these medications are already in the store. So, Government has already taken stock of all these medical supplies, all these drugs, which is in breach of the Pharmacy Act. Everyone who participated in it is guilty of conspiracy. It is a criminal offence.

If Hyperpharm has flouted the Pharmacy Act, then it is disqualified to bid in any tender whatsoever including supply of medical equipment and light equipment and he must be sanctioned. If anyone at the level of the Ministry or the procurement committee or even an advisor or, as hon. Mohamed mentioned, people at the level of the Ministry of Commerce and State Trading Corporation had intervened or the special advisor to the Prime Minister has intervened, to allow Hyperpharm to supply products in breach of the Pharmacy Act, all of these people are equally liable criminally and should be sanctioned.

Now, let me ask the hon. Minister who is going to talk after me, a simple question which everyone has the right to know: out of the Rs1.2 billion that you are asking us to vote today, how much of this money is going to Hyperpharm or a company owned or related to the Director of Hyperpharm? Because, we certainly cannot condone the misuse of public funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the seriousness of the situation, I also join the other Members of the Opposition of this side of the House and formally request the Government and yourself, as Speaker, to set up a Select Committee made up of MPs from both sides of the House to look into the whole procurement that took place at the level of the Ministry of Health and Wellness during Covid-19 pandemic.

Thank you.

(4.22 p.m.)

**The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am pleased to intervene on the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2019-2020) of 2020.

Today the House is called upon to approve for an additional amount of Rs33.7 billion in respect of 6 different votes of expenditure. May I, for the purpose of the House, stress at the very outset that 45% of this amount, that is, Rs15 billion 245 million accounts for expenditure incurred in relation to an exceptional phenomenon, called COVID-19.

I am hereby making reference to the following items -

- Rs1.2 billion for the purchase of medical supplies and equipment.
- Rs11 billion for the Wage Assistance Scheme.
- Rs3 billion for the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme.

- Rs45 million for the distribution of essential food items to vulnerable families, shelters, homes and charitable institutions.

Mr Speaker Sir, my other colleagues are providing details pertaining to their respective Ministry. However, I thought it as important that I add my voice to the debate. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, during his intervention, and rightly so, stated that these figures, we are called upon to vote today, were not included in the initial Budget. This has also been canvassed by hon. Reza Uteem.

However, I fail to understand the statement of the Leader of the Opposition when he says that this is a window-dressing exercise. I will urge that they both come to terms with regard to this statement.

Hon. Uteem also mentioned that, regarding the widows pension, which was to be aligned with the minimum wage in the case they won the election and this was in their electoral manifesto, but may I remind him that the minimum wage is the doing of this Government during the previous mandate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in the midst of a combined global health, economic and social crisis - definitely the most severe which we have ever witnessed. But we have already started on a path of a new normal in the age of COVID-19.

On this road to recovery, we still need to safeguard our welfare state, maintain confidence in the economy, save jobs, fund new projects and invest in healthcare services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, even though we are going through an unprecedented situation, we have upheld all the principles of our Welfare State. To just name a few of our actions: distribution of food packs to needy families; ensuring the timely payment of pensions; effecting anti-flu vaccination at the doorstep of our senior citizens, children with disabilities and inmates of charitable institutions and homes.

This is the spirit of this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir. Compassion, consideration and solidarity are our core values. These are, to use the words of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, deep-seated in our DNA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will touch upon only a few of the main items presented in the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure, especially the ones that save or improve lives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, infrastructure makes a crucial contribution to economic development and growth of a country. As a caring Government, it is our duty to make the necessary investment to elevate the infrastructure of the country.

As we have all witnessed that our country has been transformed into a major construction site. Major road works and construction works such as drains to mitigate the risks of flooding, tarring and upgrading, maintenance of amenities are all visible around the country.

It is understood that the NDU requires the Rs280 m. to effect payments for ongoing works which are nearing completion during this financial year. We all know that contracts for works are awarded and payment is effected after completion. It is completely justified to vote for the requested amount so as to allow the NDU to honour its commitments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, item 10-1 pertains to a sum of Rs1.2 billion for the Ministry of Health and Wellness. This supplementary expenditure is required to fund medical supplies in relation to COVID-19.

When the pandemic reached our borders, the only right thing to do was to control the outbreak, save lives and sensibly manage the situation and its dire consequences.

Mr Speaker, Sir, “health is wealth”. Had the situation not been managed responsibly, COVID-19 would have brought us down to our knees as it has unfortunately done in many parts of the highly developed world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that COVID-19 has taken a toll on healthcare services around the world. In many big economies, the inefficiencies and lack of preparedness of their healthcare systems are being highlighted.

Here in Mauritius, we can affirm that our healthcare system has not failed us in this crisis. Testing, tracking, tracing and administering the required treatment require appropriate logistics and resources.

In this context, Government has invested and will continue to invest massively in our healthcare system to protect our citizens. Government has ensured that decisive and appropriate actions are taken to handle the outbreak as efficiently as possible and this is even acknowledged at international level.

On this note, let me recall a statement of the representative of the World Health Organisation in Mauritius, Dr. Laurent Musango. He said, and I quote –

*“The Government of Mauritius was committed at the very start of the outbreak in investing in procurement of all required equipment and materials, including personal protective equipment (PPE), medicines and related logistics for the strengthening of the laboratory capacity” – End of quote.*

He made this statement following a meeting with the President of the Republic on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 and it was reported in a press release of the WHO.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also seize this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work of our front liners in the health sector. We all owe them a huge debt of gratitude for their tireless and selfless efforts.

As long as the virus is widespread somewhere, the threat will remain everywhere. The fight against the pandemic is still on.

On ne peut pas baisser la garde. La lutte continue. Et c'est tout à fait normal que l'État continuera à investir dans notre système de santé. C'est ici, M. le président, que l'investissement additionnel de R 1.2 milliards consenti pour la santé et le bien-être de nos compatriotes prend toute son importance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to item 12-1 which relates to pensions. Expenditure under this vote has been widely canvassed by my colleague, hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo.

As we battle against the health and economic impacts of COVID-19, our Welfare State remains sovereign. Government needs to and will ensure that the social protection nets cover vulnerable households and citizens. The various pensions have been substantially increased since December 2014, Mr Speaker Sir.

Souvenez-vous des faussetés qui ont été véhiculées suivant l'annonce d'augmenter les pensions? Nos adversaires disaient : “pas viable”, “ciblage”, “augmentation de la taxe”, “politique de terre brûlée”! Mais, M. le président, nous avons tenu notre promesse. Toutes les prestations sociales ont connu une hausse afin de garantir un meilleur niveau de vie à nos citoyens. Aujourd’hui, environ 331,000 personnes de notre République en sont les bénéficiaires.

Je me souviens d'un reportage de la *MBC* en décembre 2019. Il y a le témoignage d'une personne âgée - un grand-père tout heureux d'avoir pu acheter des jouets pour faire plaisir à ses petits-enfants grâce à la hausse de sa pension. Ses yeux brillaient de joie.

La reconnaissance du dur labeur de nos ainés et la compassion envers les démunis et ceux dans le besoin: C'est ce que ce gouvernement prône!

Donc l'enveloppe additionnelle de R 5.1 milliards consentie au ministère de la Sécurité Sociale est largement justifiée tout comme la somme de R 45 millions nécessaire pour assurer la distribution de vivres aux 8,000 familles figurant sur le registre social, ainsi qu'aux bénéficiaires de *Carer's Allowance*. Les institutions charitables, les abris et les maisons de retraite étaient aussi concernés.

Même en situation exceptionnelle pendant le couvre-feu, où la décision de fermer les supermarchés et boutiques pendant une semaine a dû être prise pour freiner la propagation du COVID-19. Nous nous sommes assurés que les familles vulnérables puissent obtenir des aliments essentiels.

Je pense, donc, que dans un esprit de solidarité, la somme de R 45 millions additionnelles est largement justifiée.

Venons-en à une autre mesure sans précédent pour sauvegarder les emplois cette fois-ci, M. le président, le *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

Critical sectors for our economies and societies have been hard hit, tourism, air travel and SMEs, to name but a few. We were facing and still are facing a daunting challenge to secure jobs. Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization recalls, and I quote:

*“For millions of workers, no income means no food, no security and no future.*

*[...]As the pandemic and the jobs crisis evolve, the need to protect the most vulnerable becomes even more urgent.”*

This is precisely what the Government has done, Mr Speaker Sir. We could not allow our enterprises to perish and to just proceed with lay-offs. This is specifically why the Wage Assistance Scheme was implemented. This scheme has allowed around 11,000 businesses to meet the salary costs of some 207,000 employees.

Mr Speaker Sir, it will take some time before businesses pick up. We have to implement the necessary policies to support businesses to prevent bankruptcies and massive job losses. It is obvious that Government should pull in resources to help ease the burden of distressed enterprises, thereby the necessity of providing an additional budget of Rs11 billion under the Wage Assistance Scheme.

Similarly, for the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme, Mr Speaker, Sir, the ILO depicts that as a result of the economic crisis created by the pandemic, almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers have suffered massive damage to their capacity to earn a living. Many self-employed individuals in the informal sector of our country were left without alternative income sources. It was crucial for the Government to step in and extend a helping hand to those individuals. The Self-Employed Assistance Scheme has allowed nearly 196,000 individuals to have revenue to meet their needs.

In a state of economic urgency, targeted and flexible measures to support workers and businesses, particularly small enterprises, those in the informal economy and others who are vulnerable are very important. Therefore, the provision of Rs3 billion in connection with the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme is of crucial importance to save livelihoods, show compassion and care.

The next item, on which I will comment, Mr Speaker Sir, is the National Resilience Fund which includes measures to support the National Air Carrier to the tune of Rs9 billion.

Mr Speaker Sir, the COVID-19 pandemic has a dooming impact on aviation industry in the world. According to an analysis of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the COVID-19 crisis will see global airline passenger revenues drop by US\$314 billion in this year, that is, 2020. This represents a 55% decline compared to 2019.

Almost every airline in the world is seeking State aid to survive. Emirates, the world's biggest long-haul airline, saw its revenue fall by 4%. The Dubai Government has already pledged undisclosed financial support for Emirates to help the State-owned carrier cope with the coronavirus impact. Air France's revenue fell by 15.5% in the first quarter of 2020. Its net loss widened to 1.8 billion euros. Air France has received 7 billion euros in French-backed rescue aid.

Ryanair has received about \$730 million from the United Kingdom's Covid Corporate Financing Facility. The loan is supporting Ryanair's cash balance. In April, the Lufthansa Group airlines recorded a 98.1% decline in passenger numbers to 241,000. The State support measures are securing the solvency of the German airline until it is able to generate sufficient funds from its own resources.

Sweden has earmarked a budget of approximately 455 m. euros Loan Guarantee Scheme to support airlines affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Recently, the United States Government outlined a \$58 billion aid package to airlines. Mr Speaker Sir, Air Mauritius

has, unfortunately, not been spared by the outbreak of COVID-19. We all want our National Carrier to rebound and to keep on being our pride. In this context, I welcome support measures to ensure that our Paille-en-Queue spreads its wings in the sky.

Mr Speaker Sir, IATA pointed out that airlines should be prepared for the eventual recovery. This will ultimately give Governments around the world the confidence to open borders. And it should give passengers the confidence to fly. To do so, Government has to, first of all, enhance the resilience of our national airline. This is why I believe that the amount earmarked for the National Resilience Fund to better equip Air Mauritius will go in that direction.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is essential for Government to foster more resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth. We have demonstrated our resilience and conviction. Looking ahead, it remains paramount to keep this momentum going. The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure has highlighted all major projects for which funding is absolutely necessary.

I will end my intervention on a quote from a British Biologist, Thomas Henry Huxley who stated, I quote –

“Economy does not lie in sparing money, but in spending it wisely”.

Examples I have quoted under the six different votes and their respective rationale are more than justified and I surely support them all.

Thank you for your attention, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Jagutpal!

(4.39 p.m.)

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry procures Rs1.3 billion of medicines every year and medical items as well. It is an undeniable fact that the management of medicines, be it prescription, storage, dispensing of medicines, orders and evaluation have always been an issue. My Ministry is looking into the whole issue and reviewing the whole chain. So far, we don't have a proper e-Health to manage medicines and a proper warehouse. We will always have these issues, thus raising doubt. This Government has both projects, e-Health and warehouse, where we can manage the medicines.

Just to start, I also wish to inform the House that the Minister of Health in Zimbabwe has been exerting pressure on his subordinates to award contracts and this is why he is facing

imprisonment. Now, I would welcome hon. Members to inform the House if there has been any pressure from anybody, to come forward to say that there has been pressure, and obviously, we are going to face the truth.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, obviously! On 09 June, 2020, in this very House, I stated that the Budget 2020-2021 was one that would go down in history. A budget exercise done in a context of great uncertainty and in time when the whole world is facing one of the worst threats it has ever had to address. The COVID-19 pandemic still an ongoing situation, the lives of millions of people remain at risk, and this unforeseen and unprecedented situation continues to weigh heavily on the global economy. The budget presented by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, remains faithful to the vision of the Prime Minister, and to the priorities of this Government. The safety and health of the population is the key pillar guiding our address.

Mechanisms have been put in place to allow the economy and the industry to remain resilient in these testing times. Government, through its action, has also committed itself to prevent as many job losses as possible. Strategies have been devised to accelerate our healing process. In spite of various challenges looming ahead, the Budget 2020-2021 remains an ambitious one. Government will continue to invest so as to upgrade and create new infrastructures that live up to our nation's ambition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 20 March, 2020, Government courageously took the bold decisions of putting in place a sanitary curfew. As the hon. Prime Minister rightly says, there should be absolutely no compromise on the health and wellbeing of our citizens and there has been no compromise at all. Today, this bold measure has given tangible and obvious results. Our country has been able to prove wrong predictions calculated by various institutions. The budget of Rs12 billion allocated to my Ministry for this financial year highlights the Government's commitment to the health and wellness of each and every Mauritian.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are called today to vote a Supplementary Appropriation of some Rs33.7 billion. The Ministry of Health and Wellness will be granted an additional envelope of Rs1.2 billion. This amount will certainly broaden and strengthen our ability to operate more efficiently. The House will note that already more than Rs561 m. have been disbursed, over and above our normal budget, to upgrade the country's preparedness level in the face of COVID threat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in our management of COVID-19 situation, we have been the target of unnecessary attacks. I still remember in February and March this year, when we started to restrict our territory to foreigners coming from regions over the world, we were accused of diplomatic blunders. I still remember in this House, Members of the Opposition accusing the Ministry and the Government of remaining idle and minimising the impending COVID-19 threat. We were accused of not being ready, of lacking sufficient protective equipment, medical expertise and medical equipment to address the situation. The House will recall later, during the debates on the Budget, we were accused of having indulged in spending spree.

I will relate to you the spending spree the Government has been on, Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the Members of the Opposition. My Ministry has disbursed more than Rs43 m. to charter flights, airlift equipment and supplies from abroad. Please note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these money have been disbursed to Air Mauritius and not to Hyperpharm. The demand for medical and protective equipment and the means employed to meet those demands are, indeed, daunting. Thanks to the vision and quick reaction of the Government, we did not have to face such situations. I believe they still remember what has been going on when we were in the crisis state. Thanks to the vision, we thus purchased two new PCR Testing Units for more than Rs11 m. through the STC.

I believe again, the hon. Members of the Opposition will admit that we have purchased it through STC, but the money has been given to the company to buy those PCR Testing Units. Now, our testing capacities which could cater only for few hundred samples daily have been upgraded. Today, we can do more than 1,000 tests daily. In addition, around Rs240 m. worth of medical disposables were procured from China Sinopharm International Corporation. So, this has been procured directly to China through the company that has supplied us medical equipment. We were prompt in acquiring PCR test kits, nasal swabs, throat swabs for around Rs99 m. So, these were meant to deal with the COVID pandemic. We also procured Rapid Antigen Testing Kits from South Korea and this has allowed us to widen our testing capacities through the community and today, we are among the rare countries in the world which have already tested more than 10% of its population. I seize the opportunity here to pay tribute to the courage of all these workers as well as each and every staff of my Ministry, thanks to whom our public health care system remains resilient. Protective equipment, surgical gloves, masks, protective gowns, disposable overall were purchased to the tune of more than Rs131 m. There has been no shortage of protective

equipment among our staff. All of them were equipped as required and recommended for their level of intervention in the COVID-19 cases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the abovementioned items have been procured from a myriad of suppliers. I agree that in a reply to the PNQ addressed to me on 15 June 2020, I wrongly stated that we had not procured medicine from Hyperpharm. Why is this so? Because I am not involved in any procurement process. The Leader of Opposition has much more information through whatever be the means. The Minister is not indulging himself in any procurement activities in the Ministry. I should say also, does the Opposition expect me to know the details concerning suppliers involved in a procurement exercise? Do you expect the Minister to know all the details? Times have changed, my dear, unlike the Betamax case, there is now no ministerial intervention in the procurement process. You are having a lot of people giving you information. I believe those people should tell you whether the Minister is involved in the procurement process. Not at all! It's only during the Betamax case where the Minister or I don't know who was involved. As a Minister, again, I am not involved in procurement process. This is the very basic of ethics and transparency. Allow me today to also circulate a list of all companies which have been awarded contracts by my Ministry from January to June this year and for the year 2019. So, I have all the lists of procurement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately I do not know the Directors' name of all those companies. I do not know whether hon. Reza Uteem is one of the Directors. Unfortunately,...

*(Interruptions)*

I don't know. Whatever I know, I am going to submit it, but companies that I don't know, I should say I don't know. If hon. Reza Uteem would have informed me that he is one of the Directors of the company and I may not know him personally, but still I will say that I know hon. Reza Uteem, that he is a Director of the company. So, I am going to submit all those lists.

Now, allow me, again, to inform the House, apart from Hyperpharm Ltd, awards were given to Proximate Ltd...

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, when anybody intervened, I have listened to everybody. So,...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Let the Minister finish with his speech first.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Awards were given to Proximate Ltd, Prosafe and Company Ltd, FTM Mauritius Ltd, Trionex Development Ltd - I am sorry I don't know all those companies - Health Active Ltd, Cernol, I am sorry Cernol is not meant only for Lysol, I believe...

*(Interruptions)*

... fortunately, Advanced Healthcare Ltd. Now, Biocom Ltd...

*(Interruptions)*

I am not. Hon. Leader, I remember that Cernol is being used. I am just informing the House. So, maybe you will think that the Ministry is procuring Lisol for, you know, to cure patients like President Trump said, unfortunately, not, so Geetanjali Ltd, among others. So, all the lists will be tabled in this House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me also to thank various companies, NGOs and socio religious organisations which heartily donated protective equipment and sanitizers to our frontline officers. This is, indeed, a sheer example of constructive collaboration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while each year around 50,000 senior citizens and Mauritians with vulnerable health conditions get their flu shots. This year, 130,000 Mauritians have been vaccinated. So, here again, I wish to point out that we ran out of vaccines and we arranged to procure more vaccines so as to reach a greater proportion of the population, and every year, the same company is being allotted to have a vaccination. At that time, when we had a shortage of vaccination, nobody queried about the tender and the procurement exercise. Some Rs50 m. were disbursed to that effect. A contract was awarded. I have nothing to do with Biocom, but it's good that this company was able to procure the additional vaccination.

On this note, I wish to share with the House that this year, we have registered a very significant decrease in the number of respiratory tract infections in our public institutions. So, for the last three months, we registered 17,504 such cases, while during the same period, last year, we had registered 49,861 cases. We have, therefore, had 32,357 less cases this year. Thanks to this, we have been able to do the vaccination that has contributed a lot in that decrease in number of patients suffering from flu. Of course, the sanitary curfew and the respect of sanitary measures have also contributed in that issue.

Today, in Mauritius, life has almost resumed back to normal and to new normal I should say. The imminent challenges before us consist in bringing the stranded Mauritians abroad back home. So, again, here, we have solicited the help of the Ministry of Tourism. At

one point in time, we solicited the help of the Ministry of Commerce. It was an issue. We solicited help from the Ministry of Tourism again and through the different hotels, we have been able to have more quarantine facilities. A process that is still ongoing and is being carried out with utmost sense of attention. We will continue to take the required time to safely carry out this repatriation exercise despite the unfounded and easy critics from our friends on the other side of the House.

I can guarantee the House that our sanitary and quarantine protocols are strictly adhered to. Yesterday itself, these measures allowed us to detect three positive cases in a group of passengers coming from Madagascar.

I wish to remind the House that thanks to our quarantine protocols, 99 positive cases have been contained and the contamination chain could thus not reach the community. Quarantine measures are essential in our daily management of this sanitary situation. Government did not hesitate in giving its full support in order to allow quarantine centres to operate in the best conditions. This again involves financing; we cater for the accommodation, the medical care given in such facilities, the personnel, the catering, transport and consumables, the exit for screening tests, amongst others. So, we had the help of even the Ministry of Infrastructure, where they have helped the Ministry of Health to have the flu clinics. And again, they have also, through the request from the Ministry of Health, managed the Castel warehouse where we have all the equipment stored.

I wish to highlight it to the Members of the Opposition, it's not only the STC that has been helping the Ministry of Health, but other Ministries as well, namely the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Attorney General's Office because there has been a lot of regulations. It is not just a business of the Ministry of Health.

This month itself, my Ministry was accused of favouring one supplier, Hyperpharm, for the procurement of essential drugs. It was alleged that we allowed what some believe to be substandard medicines in our health service. Accusations were made against the pharmacy industry that this Government will set up.

Let me reassure my friends on the other side of the House that the procurement exercise undertaken by my Ministry was justified and complied with as prescribed by law and without prejudice to any other supplier.

Concerning the emergency procurement referred to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, pro forma invoices were sent to the following companies –

- IBL HealthActiv;
- Ducray Lenoir;
- Trident Healthcare;
- Hyperpharm;
- A Crooks Limited;
- Pharmacy Patel;
- Pharma Trade Ltd;
- Scott Health, and
- Pharmacy Nazroo.

Only Hyperpharm responded, but the company did not meet all the requirements. However, as lives of Mauritians were at stake, we contacted the company and we worked out a solution as defined in the Procurement Act for emergency procurement.

I am tabling the pro forma invoices sent to the abovementioned companies from the Pharmacist Procurement Unit of my Ministry. I have already tabled all the documents required and even additional information that confirm our stand.

Now, hon. Shakeel Mohamed boasted in this very House that he has his people from within the Ministry who feed him with information - true. Can you imagine the gravity of the statement made? Because all the information you were being given, how it has been given, these are confidential information and confidential documents were leaked - well, part of it. These documents talk about...

*(Interruptions)*

I, myself, have not been able to get through these documents because these documents...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Let the Minister speak!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...are meant for procurement. The Minister will never have access to those documents, but...

**Mr Mohamed:** *Pa sa ki tonn dir mwa!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Allow the Minister to make his speech!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** That is what I told the hon. Member. So, the hon. Member has the document; I do not have. Unless on the day that he has produced the document...

*(Interruptions)*

And then I came and verified in my Ministry. I was able to get access to those documents. So, confidential documents, Mr Speaker, Sir...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...are in the hands of the Opposition and I, in the Ministry, because I do not want to get involved...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...in procurement, they have those documents. Now, I believe the hon. Member should act in good faith. If ever these documents are really damning, he has to advise the officers who have submitted these documents to him to do the procedures, to go to probably the Police or to any institution to inquire. I would have done so. Tomorrow, if I am getting access to a document from his office - he is a lawyer and he knows better than me - I would not take that document from an officer or bribe him to give me a document. I will not do that.

*(Interruptions)*

I will inform that guy: "See, you have a document, this is for the office of the hon. Member. So, take that document, I will accompany you to the Police and you make whatever has to be made". I am not going to come over here and just make a show out of it.

As suggested again by hon. Paul Bérenger, there is a need to set up a Select Committee. So, again, I am inviting them. I even invited the hon. Leader of the Opposition that if ever he has substandard medication to come up, I am ready, I am here to facilitate you, I am here to give those documents, those medications to the Pharmacovigilance Committee and, from there on, we should know what are the medications that are substandard. It is more than one week. I have not received a single document. And, as rightly pointed out in the past, the Prime Minister also was waiting for a document...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** And what really came? We know very well. So, again, those who claim to have damning information should go towards institutions of this country that are entitled to inquire and they are going to help my Ministry. As a Minister, I would welcome them...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order, please!

**Mr Mohamed:** *Zafer Joomaye la to pa dir!*

**Mr Speaker:** This is debate going on! What is happening, hon. Mohamed?

(*Interruptions*)

**Dr. Jagutpal:** As a Minister...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed!

(*Interruptions*)

**Dr. Jagutpal:** As a Minister, I welcome those whenever because the Minister...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed, what is happening in this House?

(*Interruptions*)

You do not have the right to do that! Let the Minister make his speech!

(*Interruptions*)

Do not interrupt! This is parliamentary democracy! Debate is going on, do not interrupt! Go on Minister!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Allow me again to share some information on the Committees that assess bidding exercises. The hon. Member, Paul Bérenger, wished to have some information on the Committees that assess...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Parliamentary democracy, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...bidding exercises at the level of my Ministry. I wish once more to point out as Minister...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** House of Commons standard, please!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Hurreeram:** *Bouffon! Bouffon!*

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Minister, continue!

**Mr Hurreeram:** *Bouffon! Bouffon!*

(*Interruptions*)

**Dr. Jagutpal:** So, please...

(*Interruptions*)

Information of...

**An hon. Member:** *Ekout twa kozer avant!*

(*Interruptions*)

**An hon. Member:** *Pena manier! Manier pena!*

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Hurreeram:** *Si to piti torpa anou al...*

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Order, please! Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order, please!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Hurreeram:** *Si to piti torpa anou al CID!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Order! Order, please! Both sides of the House! Both sides of the House, order please!  
Minister, continue!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** These committees are responsible for the smooth-running of procurement exercises.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** You have a point of order?

**Mr Mohamed:** He has just insulted me and you did not hear him?

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** I didn't.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Mohamed:** He just insulted me, he just threatened me. You did not see him?

**Mr Speaker:** Okay. Wait a minute!

**Mr Mohamed:** You did not see him?

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** I did not hear.

(*Interruptions*)

If there is any point, we can review. We can review it and I will ask him to withdraw.

(*Interruptions*)

I can do that. For the time being, let the Minister finish and then we will do that exercise.  
Please Minister, carry on!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** So, these committees are responsible for the smooth-running of procurement exercises as required by law. The Departmental Bid Committee's composition is defined by financial instructions, No. 2 ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Parliamentary democracy, please!

**Mr Mohamed:** My foot!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jagutpal:** The Departmental Bid Committee's composition is defined by the Financial Instructions No. 2 of 2014 as follows –

- A Chairperson who shall be the accounting officer or any other officer, not below the grade equivalent to that of Deputy Permanent Secretary, designated by the accounting officer;
- Officer-in-charge of procurement and supply of the department as member;
- Officer-in-charge of financial operations at the department as member, and.
- Officer other than an officer of the procurement and supply cadre or financial operations cadre not below the grade of Office Management Assistant.

So, as for the Bid Evaluation Committee, the DBC recommends its composition from a list of evaluators, maintained by the Ministry ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ... and approved by the accounting officer.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Regarding quality of drug supply, the House will note that there is a Pharmacovigilance Committee that is mandated to look into this aspect. So, we have indeed done what it takes to prevent any shortage of essential drugs in our country in good faith and, of course, it involved additional spending. We have to bear in mind that the global context at that time and even now, more than 90 countries had imposed export bans on medicines. Prices soared as demand swelled. The disruption of air and maritime traffic added to the difficulty. Our margin for intervention was extremely limited, but yet we delivered, and if...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...some are of the view that we paid too high a price for the health and security of our citizens, allow me to highlight that for this Government, health and security of our citizens are and remain priceless.

The supplementary funds being given to the Ministry will indeed allow us to remain safe even in challenging circumstances. My Ministry has been given the necessary funds for the construction of a new state-of-the-art warehouse and operations of this new warehouse to be digitalised. Irrelevant and malicious comments have already been voiced out concerning our endeavour to adopt the Indian pharmacopeia, along with other standards we verify when procuring medicines. Amalgamations have been given, where those not in favour with this measure have gone as far as associating this pharmacopeia to the sub-term 'substandard'. Such comments are indeed unwarranted. The India bashing...

*(Interruptions)*

...the India bashing...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Let the Minister speak!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...we note with much concern, continues.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Order! He has the right to speak. Order, please!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** So, the Indian pharmacopeia is a proven and tested one. Medicines bearing this standard are exported all over the world and to the United States, being the biggest importer. Adopting this pharmacopeia will allow us to broaden our procurement exercises. We will have an even better competitive edge and these lower prices for high quality products will, above all, have a positive impact on our consumers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding Government's project to set up a pharmaceutical industry, we have absolutely no intention, as suggested by the Opposition, to give undue favours to supposed *petits copains* - we know where it comes from - and facilitate their entry in this sector. If such malpractices were recurrent in the past regime, it is not warranted under the leadership of our Prime Minister. Any company...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! You don't have the right to interrupt like this!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ... which is qualified to operate in this sector and has the potential to propel our country to new heights, will be given due consideration. I again wish to highlight the Prime Minister's, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, personal commitment in the fight against COVID-19. His leadership from the very beginning of the situation has been capital in protecting the citizens of our Republic from the deadly and invisible virus. Government has spared no efforts in equipping the country with all necessary tools to weather this storm.

Thanks to the concerted actions of various Ministries and stakeholders, we have been able to secure sufficient material to address this situation we are facing since the past few months and we have also prepared for long-term. The additional funds, in the process of being allocated to my Ministry, will grant us a better *marge de manoeuvre*, should things evolve in an unwanted manner.

Battle against COVID-19 is not over yet. We have succeeded in curbing the risk of contamination in local community. As we speak, it has been 57 days since we last recorded a local case of COVID-19 contamination. Currently, only four active cases are in treatment. They are imported cases which we have detected in the quarantine facilities. We should continue to monitor our medical supplies and whenever we feel that we have to upgrade our efficiency preparedness, we should be in a position to do so.

Allow me, now, before ending, Mr Speaker, Sir, to share with the House the statement sent to me by Dr. Moeti, the World Health Organisation Regional Director for Africa, regarding the management of COVID-19 situation, I quote –

“The hands-on leadership of the Prime Minister of Mauritius in the response, the implementation and gradual easing of social measures and considerations in relation to testing and other public health measures are best practices and experiences that other countries can learn from.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, Dr. Moeti is based in the Republic of Congo and this is her appreciation of our management of COVID-19 situation.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! No conversation!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** She acknowledges what our friends on the other side of the House, seated only some metres away, fail to see.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** I will suspend the sitting for 30 minutes.

*At 5.13 p.m., the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 6.01 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Please, be seated! Order, please! What is happening?

Hon. Hurreeram!

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I apologise and withdraw what I said.

**Dr. Boolell:** On a point of order. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to Standing Order 48, Disorderly Conduct. I am sure the whole House has heard what hon. Hurreeram has stated. The conduct is not only disorderly, but what he has uttered is unacceptable. I grant you that hon. Hurreeram has withdrawn. He has apologised, but under the circumstances, in view of the gravity of what he has said and if I refer to Standing Order 48, in fact, he should withdraw from the House.

*(Interruptions)*

For less than that, people have withdrawn from the House.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we should not create a precedent out of that. Listen to my ruling. We should not create a precedent out of that. If not, then the ball could be in the camp of the Opposition.

**Dr. Boolell:** Can I have it from the hon. Minister that this will not be repeated again?

**Mr Speaker:** He has already apologised. Okay!

Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker,...

**Mr Speaker:** I have already given my ruling!

**Mr Mohamed:** This concerns...

**Mr Speaker:** I have already given my ruling; my ruling is final.

**Mr Mohamed:** This concerns you.

**Mr Speaker:** I have already given my ruling; my ruling is final!

**Mr Mohamed:** This is a new point of order!

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, take the floor!

**Mr Mohamed:** This is a new point of order!

**Mr Speaker:** You don't shout! You don't shout! You don't shout! You don't shout at the Speaker!

*(Interruptions)*

First of all, apologise for shouting to the Speaker!

**Mr Mohamed:** I apologise for shouting to the Speaker. Very happy? Now, I have got a point of order to raise. He has only apologised, but he has not been specific about what he is apologising.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** He said he withdraws whatever he said. Can you repeat it?

*(Interruptions)*

Wait! Please!

*(Interruptions)*

Please, allow the hon. Minister to withdraw!

**Mr Mohamed:** About the thing he said about my father ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Hurreeram:** I withdraw, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I apologise again.

**Mr Speaker:** Okay. Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval!

(6.03 p.m.)

**Mr X. L. Duval (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes):** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the last Member of the Opposition to speak, I will raise a number of issues. I will not repeat what has been said before me. But obviously, especially as I am coming just after the speech of the hon. Minister of Health, I would like to comment and fully state, I'll support the MPs of the PMSD for the request by the Leader of the Opposition, by hon. Bérenger, hon. Uteem and hon. Mohamed for a formal Select Committee to be set up in the case of the purchase of drugs and other equipment from Hyperpharm.

I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have once before served on a Select Committee. It was a Select Committee on the sale of gas turbine, would you believe, by some firm to the CEB, and I found that a very effective way of coming to the truth. The result of that particular Select Committee was that officers of the CEB were sanctioned and the then Minister of Energy had to resign.

So, I can only say that it is a very effective way of dealing with such cases of alleged fraud and corruption and wrongdoing. I must say also, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I am very sorry, the hon. Minister before me has spoken at length and tried to explain, but for me, he has only strengthened the case. He has only strengthened the case for a Select Committee. I know that he is new, but still, Mr Speaker, I mean, he said ‘Westminster’. Did you say so, Westminster level that we have to abide? But let me say why I think he has only strengthened the case for a Select Committee.

Firstly, Mr Speaker, he says he does not really know anything about procurement. Procurement is totally unknown to him. So, in a way he is saying: *li tire so canett dan zouet* – ‘I don’t know anything about this, I am only a mouthpiece of what I have been given by my Ministry to answer’. So, he does not know anything about procurement. In fact, he goes so much to say that Members of the Opposition and, in particular, the Leader of the Opposition has more information than him on the subject matter, and it is because we have more information than him that we are asking for a Select Committee. This is the first thing.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, how much money was actually spent? How many products? What was actually bought and for how much from Hyperpharm Ltd? There is a total confusion in the minds of the MPs here and in the minds of the population. During the famous PNQ recently, he stated that no sum had been disbursed. Zero! And then, he, himself, circulated in this august Assembly a document purporting to show that Rs67,108,224 worth of medicine was purchased from Hyperpharm, going from May 2020 to June 2020. So, firstly, we have zero, we have Rs67 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, if you are not confused, you are a better man than I, because what has just been produced by the hon. Minister here, in this document, shows the award of pharmaceutical products from January to June 2020, and, in this document, Hyperpharm accounts for only Rs1.1 m. So, in three different instances, where the Minister has provided information, it was zero, Rs67 m. and now Rs1.1 m. So, which is which? Nobody really knows and apparently, he is confused as well, because he said he does not really know anything about procurement. So, that is the second issue.

The third issue, Mr Speaker, is: we don't want to *noyer le poisson*. Are we talking about pharmaceutical products of pharmaceutical nature, that is, medicine? Are we talking about protective equipment? Are we talking about ventilators? Nobody is quite sure. And the Minister, in his reply, has not clarified at all this issue and that could be one of the reasons why so many figures are being bended about. Now, hon. Mohamed, himself, mentioned Rs800 m. are purchased from Hyperpharm. The hon. Minister had 45 minutes or so to reply to this and to say to hon. Mohamed: 'you are completely wrong, it was not Rs800 m.' He never said. He never actually answered the issue. The main thrust of the speech of hon. Mohamed was to say that out of the Rs1.2 billion spent and which we are being asked to vote today, Rs800 m. was purchased from Hyperpharm. You would have thought that the Minister would have seized on the occasion to reply to this but he has not. So, these are one, two, three, four reasons already. Now, it's not only a question of what we have bought from whom; it is also the question of: at what price have we bought these medicines and other equipment. There are lots of figures, lots of accusations flying around in the country at large but what we know for sure is from this document produced by the Leader of the Opposition to the House showing that, at least, on one item - there are many items - 2,200% mark-up was made on one medicine called Haloperidol, tablet 5mg. So, it is not only a question of whom we bought it from and what were the procedures but also at what price was it paid for?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has said that we are voting Rs1.2 billion and that is the case we are voting Rs1.2 billion. He has said to my surprise that he has only spent Rs500 m. or so to date. Now, we are on 26 June, this we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the accounts of Government are made on a cash basis. So, he has only four working days left to spend Rs700 m. Is it what he is telling us? If you look at Hansard very carefully, you will see that the Minister has said out of this Rs1.2 billion, he has spent Rs550 m., leaving a little less than Rs700 m. to be spent in the next four days. Is that what he wants the House to believe? Does that make any sense to any of us? Are we now going to spend in the next four days? Are they all emergency procedures or are they going to come by Air Mauritius tomorrow morning, on Saturday, on Sunday? Is it going to be paid in one big cheque to Hyperpharm or whatever, Rs700 m. on Monday? This does not make sense, Mr Speaker.

The other thing, Mr Speaker, the hon. Minister says that we should accompany him if we wish, bring him some documents, we will go together to the Police or to ICAC, I presume. Who in Mauritius, apart from people staying in Beau Bassin lunatic prison, believes in ICAC or the Police? Haven't we just been placed on the grey list by the Financial Action

Task Force, on the black list by the European Union and today Zambia has cancelled the Double Taxation Agreement with Mauritius? Because of the ineffectiveness of these institutions, haven't we just been placed on the black list? He wants us to believe that: 'No, we shouldn't have a Select Committee'. We will go to ICAC. We will go to the Police with him; CCID will actually have the enquiry that nobody is going to believe, Mr Speaker. There are all these reasons. Unfortunately, I must say for him the case where a Select Committee has been reinforced by his speech. He says he does not know much about it. He has not put any pressure, but nobody has really suggested that he may have. There have been a lot of the speeches. If you listened to the speeches, the tendency of many of them is that there were other Members of Government, members around Government, members in the National COVID Committee who would have put the pressure. That is also something that I wanted to point out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my humble opinion, public opinion will not excuse, *ne pardonnera pas* that in a case like this, of national disaster where so much hardship has been created, has been caused to so many people, that *il y a un soupçon* that people took advantage of this national disaster, took advantage of this very, very unfortunate situation hitting our country, took advantage of it to make money.

The Select Committee is important because we must show to the population that, either people who have taken financial advantage of this terrible situation hitting our country should be punished or OK, alternatively, that there was no such occurrence, but the nation is right and deserves an answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, whilst tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs, have got so much hardships. Is it possible, it seems likely that a few corrupt individuals found in the general lockdown an opportunity to make money? That is the question that needs to be answered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At a time, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Government created the Solidarity Fund, where we were all asked to give 10% of our salary to the Solidarity Fund for distribution, could it be that others were making tens of millions of rupees on taxpayers' money, negating all the Solidarity Fund that so many Mauritians contributed to? Is that the *soupçon* that we want to leave in the minds of everyone?

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, *le public, les Mauriciens, ils ne vont pas tolérer, ils ne vont pas accepter, n'est-ce pas*, as I said, that people make money from their plight, from their hardships.

Secondly, public health, Mr Speaker, Sir, the poorest sections of our nation attend hospital - everybody does, but mostly the poorest sections of our population - and take medicines from there and they have to have the trust that the medicines that are provided there, wherever they come from, are sound medicines to treat their various illnesses. And again, Mr Speaker, Sir, trying to make money, indecent amounts of money, indecent mark-ups at a time when medicines are needed for the poorest sections of the society, must be punished and this is why, the last thing I would say, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important that one, for corruption, secondly, for public health, we have a Select Committee and we see and throw the whole light on it. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I had to say on the Select Committee.

I would now, Mr Speaker, Sir, come to another point on the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure, this concerns pensions. Now, of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all 100%, a 1,000% in favour of increasing pensions. All the three parties' manifestos had it in their programmes. We, in *l'Alliance Nationale*, had said that we would raise it to Rs10,000 immediately, and then, to Rs14,000 at the end of our mandate. We have worked out how this would be done so that we don't come to the mess that we are in today, and we are in a mess, because it must be done intelligently, because otherwise, it just remains as an empty promise. And we all are reminded that when the hon. Minister of Finance answered the PNQ recently on pensions, he did not commit himself to reaching the Rs13,500 monthly pension to old age pensioners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when you look at some of the comments that the very, very abled, intelligent, learned, experienced actuaries and actuarial firms made after the presentation of the Budget, and this one is by Aon Hewitt, it is a public document dated 15 June, few days ago. Aon Hewitt is a firm that employs 50,000 people worldwide, it is an American firm and it has an office in Mauritius. It is not just a fly-by-night little firm.

And this is what, Mr Speaker, Sir, Aon Hewitt has said on the Current Pensions System of the Government and what is being proposed –

“It is this system that is clearly unsustainable...”

As opposed to the NPF.

“It is an unfunded system which is not sustainable in the long run. It has Ponzi-like characteristics....”

Ponzi-like characteristics! And, Mr Speaker, Sir, it goes on to conclude –

*“...the system will collapse at some point”.*

Now, as I mentioned, we are all in favour of paying good pensions and we had committed ourselves to raising the pension to Rs14,000 at the end of this mandate, before the next elections. We did not win the elections, although there are cases in Court. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, it must be the responsibility of Government to listen also to what actuaries and learned people are saying about what they have proposed, and if it is true - I am not an expert myself, I am not an actuary - that it is what has been set up by Government, and what we are proposing today to fund to the tune of, I think, Rs5 billion, is, in fact, a Ponzi-like system - ‘a Ponzi-like system’ in the words of Aon Hewitt, the reputed actuarial firm - then, we have every reason to worry.

We have seen the disaster situation that this Government has taken: Air Mauritius, State Bank, MauBank, National Insurance Company (NIC), etc., and the huge debt that are being run up. And now, it seems that they are proposing a system for pension, that is clearly unsustainable, that will collapse according to Aon Hewitt, and that has Ponzi-like characteristics. Mr Speaker, Sir, *gouverner c'est prévoir*. I will also say this, there needs to be fairness in everything. The fact that only the private sector and the private sector employees will contribute to the CSG, is, obviously, unfair and not correct because it will be used to top up the pensions of all Mauritians, including public sector's employees, but I will come to that, Mr Speaker, Sir, at some other occasion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me deal now with employment. We were all hugely disappointed when at the time of the Budget Speech, about twenty days ago, the Minister of Finance seemed to completely disregard what ought to have been the major thrust of his speech, that is, how to combat, how to maintain employment and prevent unemployment. Because, Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know - most of us must have been unemployed at some point in time after leaving school, etc., many of us have children, some of us even have children who are not working - that being unemployed is probably the greatest hardship that can occur to the person, to his family, to his dependents and to everyone. That is probably the greatest hardship that can happen and, at least, to so many social problems, apart from just financial problems, drugs, alcoholism, domestic violence, you name it, it happens from there. So, we are all disappointed when employment did not seem to be the major thrust, it was construction of so many roads, etc., in putting Rs10 billion in Africa, which were the thrust of the speech.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was the first, I think, back at the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, to say that the thrust, again, of the Government action should be not just to provide loans, etc., to firms - at the time that was it - but also to make sure that we had a decent Employment Support Scheme, which was later called the Wage Assistance Scheme.

Now, there was not much detail either in the Budget Speech or in the subsequent speeches by different Ministers here. Now, I think I am the first, I have to thank the Ministry of Labour for that, I think I am one of the first, Mr Speaker, Sir, in this House, to be reading the regulations made by the Minister of Labour, No. 136 of 2020. I think that was published yesterday, and it gives the details on the Wage Assistance Scheme that will apply for June. Now, it will not have escaped your attention that today is Tuesday 23 June, and that payday is Thursday, and so that gives two days. And most people have not taken cognizance of this, as it is evidenced by speeches in the House. So, that gives the whole of the employees in Mauritius two days to understand what is in there.

*(Interruptions)*

Nobody is aware of it, hon. Minister.

**Mr Speaker:** Minister, do not interrupt!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, it is okay, it is alright. It is okay, I have no issue. So, the issue is that people are not aware. Nobody is aware of this regulation. Nobody in this House and even on the Opposition side, because quite rightly so, we would not have been aware had we not been given a copy. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this has to be applied, therefore, in a few days' time and the hon. Minister of Tourism, when he spoke - we were not there because we had been expelled -, he did mention quite rightly, I think, 125,000 people work in the tourism sector and related sectors. He did make a mistake; it is not 8% of GDP. That would be a disaster if 125,000 people only created 8% of GDP. It is, in fact, 24% of GDP. But, otherwise, it is right, tourism, 125,000 and a quarter of our nation gross domestic products. It is a huge sector, much bigger than any other sector in Mauritius in terms of employment, in terms of contribution to GDP.

There was confusion from the Cabinet decision of 12 June, as to who was going to be covered. Now, with this document, it is clearer. But all this time, my point is this: nobody knew. People have been making people redundant all over the place because they did not know what Government had in mind. There was not a word. Other countries have issued this sort of regulation for months ahead, saying how much and under what circumstances they

will be subsidising employment. Why? Because they do not want people to pre-empt the decision and throw people out on the street, whereas they could have been retained.

So, this comes late in the day. It is not a bad document, I must say. It is not bad, although I will speak about it in a moment. It is late. The problem is it is late. For many people, it will be too late; that is the point. And we need to know for July, for August. We have already announced that Air Mauritius will not be flying for at least a month or two. So, what is the problem of telling us this will also apply in July, this will also apply in August until the airport is open? At least we know where we are. Now we do not know where we are. It will be when? The third week of every month, we will learn what will happen to employees in that month. Most of them would have been thrown into the street, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, we need to protect employment. That is our major concern. Now, this is coming three days before payday, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It does provide for a number of things, which I think is correct, but there are also a number of things missing. You will note, Mr Speaker, Sir, for instance, that not all firms in the tourism sector will be covered by this new regulation. Restaurants are not covered. Now, if you have friends having restaurants or you like maybe yourself to go and have a meal or a drink in a restaurant, you will see how empty these restaurants are; most of them, because restaurants in the coastal areas, especially, even those in Bagatelle, are suffering hugely from the lack of tourists. It makes sense. We have 50,000 tourists a day in Mauritius on average, that is, 150,000 meals a day that are produced, many of them by the hotels, others are provided by restaurants. So, restaurants are not covered at all. They are completely not covered by this. Other, *table d'hôte*, or these guys living in Chamarel and having *table d'hôte* in Chamarel, etc., they are completely ignored by this regulation and will not get a cent, Mr Speaker, Sir. You can imagine also, many other companies.

The thing that is wrong with this is it only targets tourism sector and firms supplying the tourism sector, and thirdly, a number of niches that taxi drivers in hotels and people working in market fairs, etc., that is good, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, a decent wage support system should have covered any or all firms which are currently suffering from COVID-19, any or all firms. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me take an example.

There is a major firm here, I will not give the name, which does the dry cleaning, etc., for hotels. It will not fall under this because it does not come to the requirement here that 90% of your business need to be to a tourism enterprise. It is less than 90%. Let us say it is

80%, 250 people will be put out of work because this regulation does not cover that particular enterprise, because this regulation, apart from supporting hotels, guesthouses, holders of tourism enterprise licences, pleasure crafts, etc., which is all fine, travel agencies, etc., says in point 6, Mr Speaker, Sir, that businesses which derive at least 90% of their income from goods or services sold to a person engaged in tourism activity, shall be covered. So, if you are less than 90%, you do not get a cent. That means, Mr Speaker, Sir, that you have to follow the people up.

What I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that this should be flexible. Let us say that you are paying the full Wage Assistance Scheme to someone who is at least selling 90%, but nothing prevents you from giving a smaller percentage, say 50% of the full scheme to someone's sales who produces at least, say, 50% of their sales are made to a tourism enterprise. This would mean, Mr Speaker, Sir, once they have accepted the money, at the same time, they would accept not to put anyone on the redundancy list. And so, Mr Speaker, Sir, this may appear to be a good thing. It is in a way not as bad as it could have been, but it has major flaws and it will not stop redundancies in major parts of our economy because it fails to understand that even BPO companies, call centres, with the weakness of the world economy, are suffering and are having a reduction of, say, 30% or 40% in their turnover, and this is not covered at all by this regulation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

And we have many things, we have many companies, real estate companies - I mean there are no planes - which receives foreigners going to come and buy, which receives foreigners going to rent. There are no planes at the moment in Mauritius. Events Organisers; have you seen any concerts being organised at the moment? No, nothing!

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be much wider than it is at the moment, and I will here join what hon. Uteem said on the Self-Employment Assistance Scheme, that is, somehow assuming that all self-employed get Rs10,000 a month, get the minimum wage, that is a wrong assumption. Who does not know of a *mâcon* who earns a daily wage of Rs1,200, who may have taken a loan, who may have sent his children to school, to universities, who may have engaged so many of his expenses? And, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Self-Employment Assistance Scheme only gives a paltry amount of Rs5,000 even to persons who may have lost everything. Let's take for instance the hairdresser. Maybe, the hairdresser has lost the majority of her clients in these difficult times, because people don't like the proximity, etc. The hairdresser doesn't get ten thousand rupees a month, maybe fifty, maybe a hundred, I don't know. If that hairdresser is *en règle avec la MRA*, if that hairdresser has paid taxes on

her full amount of income, why should he or she not be entitled to a refund or assistance, and especially since day in day out, the Government - and previous Governments also have tried to encourage people becoming self-employed, have tried to make every Budget also - has taken so many things out, taxes, etc. of the SMEs to encourage people, and this goes in the other direction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to come quickly now to the Metro Express. It is not a surprise that it is making a loss. We all knew, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it was going to make a loss. And in a number of PNQs that I raised, this issue was answered by the then Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. But Mr Speaker, Sir, there are conditions attached to the Metro Express that will make it profitable, and some of these conditions, I understand, are completely unpalatable to Government, or have simply been ignored in their rush to build Metro Express. One of the conditions, for instance, - and I saw the report - is there should be fiscal disincentives for drivers to take their cars into town to drive to work, that in a way, drivers should be forced to take the Metro Express by a congestion charge and so forth. Now, the previous Government, in its rush to go ahead with Metro Express, they did not do that. I am not saying it should, I am just saying it was a precondition to make it profitable. And, of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, who is going to take the Metro when one has to take a bus to the Metro, because the car parks are not only not ready, they are not ready by the fault of the Government in taking so long, but also even when they are ready, most of the spaces are for shops and others, and extremely small amount of car parking spaces are available, maybe not enough for the people working in the shops and the hawkers, etc. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole concept of the Metro Express has deviated from what the consultants wanted at the start, with preconditions which the Government thought politically unpopular. But they went ahead nevertheless to spend more than Rs20 billions of Government money. I will just finish on this issue – I can table it – by showing you, Mr Speaker, Sir, a famous Cash Flow Statement that was produced by one Mr Georges Chung who was a Special Adviser at the time at the PMO, and also the one, the father of the famous Air Corridor. Now, Mr Georges Chung produced a Cash Flow Statement showing that, at the minimum, on the first year, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Metro Express was going to give Rs250 m. of profit, of net cash flow, of excessive cash flow. And what we have, we have Rs220 m. negative, so, loan, which is to cover the bad performance of the Metro. So, Government does not want to be left with a *boulet*, Mr Speaker, Sir, around its neck. The people of Mauritius need to know that the concept of the Metro Express has to be reworked with the car parks – I am not saying to put a

fiscal disincentive, but, at least, the car parks, etc. that are required to make the Metro viable, otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, year in year out, the taxpayer will be forced to pay to subsidise Metro Express, whatever hon. Minister Ganoo may say.

On Air Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, I need to say something. Firstly, I don't know what the plan is. We are being asked to vote Rs9 billion, but what is the plan. Is Air Mauritius going to be closed, is there going to be a new company, we don't know what is the plan. Everything seems to be on the table, yet, we are already voting the Rs9 billion and nobody has bothered to explain to this House what is the plan for Air Mauritius. We deserve an explanation; the nation deserves an explanation, the Tourism Sector deserves a proper explanation as to what was said.

And, Mr Speaker, Sir, 'hedging' has become something of a bad word, as if something terrible was done. I am taking the STC hedging and the Air Mauritius hedging as different. Let us try and remember how the hedging happened. The hedging happened because the price of petrol, at the time, kept on increasing and increasing beyond even the 100 USD per barrel. At the time, people working in the risk management of Air Mauritius thought it wise to take a Hedging Insurance Policy so that if it went beyond a certain amount of money, then, the insurance company, which was linked to Barclays, would pay Air Mauritius. Now, I was not in charge of Air Mauritius at that time, so I have nothing to sort of say, provide excuses; that is the truth. Now, hundreds of other airlines did the same things. Hundreds of other airlines also took the hedging insurance, because that was best practice at the time. Now, once the loss of 200 million Euros, which is a huge loss, was made. Once that loss was made, then, I was asked to take care of Air Mauritius and it was included in my portfolio, previously I think it was under the Prime Minister's Office. So, we are talking about 2008, Air Mauritius comes under my portfolio, I am the person who appoints André Viljoen, etc., in charge of Air Mauritius. But what was the outcome of the hedging? How much money was the House, here, asked to vote to subsidise Air Mauritius hedging? The answer is simple: Zero Rupee! I was in charge for two years, we took it back to profitability and the taxpayer, to this day, as far as hedging is concerned, has not had to invest one cent. Air Mauritius went back to profitability and by 2010 it was flying high once again. So, that is the issue of hedging, Mr Speaker, Sir. Here, it is the contrary, there is a saga of the pursuit of the planes, which hon. Uteem explained very well, and we are asked now to vote the Rs9 billion and, according to what I can read, I can see, it seems to be that, suddenly, it is the

employees, the very valuable, nice and performing employees who are being made the scapegoat and they will pay the price of the mismanagement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, finally, I will come to the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. I have listened carefully to what hon. Minister Ramano just said. Firstly, *la charité commence chez soi*. Yesterday, on the papers, there was a picture of garbage, tonnes of garbage right in front of the doorstep of the Ministry of Environment. So, instead of the Minister announcing, at the cost of hundreds of millions of rupees, some new....

*(Interruptions)*

No, no, this is the truth!

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member! Hon. Minister, don't disturb!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** This is the truth...

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister, don't disturb!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** This is the truth. I don't know if you don't read the papers either, but, you should, because it had a picture there of your doorstep at the Ministry, completely full of garbage...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** That is how it is. You, now, don't tell us that you are going to have a national campaign when, in fact, in front of your own Ministry that is the situation. That was just *en passant*, but that is also the truth.

Now, secondly, this is the more important issue, the other one also. I listened to the Minister carefully, a long list, even coming down to Rs1 m. Nowhere did he mention what he was going to do to alleviate the plight of all those poor refugees, who, day in day out, during the cyclone season and the flood season, you see suffering in these terrible, badly equipped centres that exist today; centres that are not worthy of being called centres in a country like Mauritius, which is supposed to be rising to high-income status at one point in time.

Here, we are a country, aspiring to be a high-income status and we put our refugees sleeping, many of the families are on a single mattress. Isn't that true? On a single mattress! No decent washing facilities! They may have to go to work the next day. No decent washing facilities! Not even hot water, don't speak about it! Maybe one toilet for men, women, children altogether! Nowhere to heat some food! Until we had raised the question in Parliament, no decent food given to them! And so, Mr Speaker, Sir, here we have a situation - and this is the most serious point and I would like to appeal to the Minister that this should be his primary concern. We are now in June. We have a few months before November, the cyclone season and the flooding and he would stand out in a history of this nation if he were to ensure that in these poor centres, Mr Speaker, Sir, they would be given individual camp beds like they do in every other part of the world, that he would provide decent toilets and paper too and that he would provide showers, showering facilities so that these people don't have to go to work dirty the next day and lose their jobs, that he would even provide places where you could maybe put young children, babies, etc.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, is there a problem?

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, I am given to understand that 30 minutes, from the Chief Whip...

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I wasn't told. Why does this only apply to me? I wasn't told. No, I'm sorry, I was not told. No, we are not accepting

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Chief Whip, make your point!

**Ms Ramyad:** It was decided a maximum of 30 minutes per speaker.

*(Interruptions)*

Because for us it was 20 minutes and for you it was a maximum of 30 minutes.

**Mr Speaker:** Okay, it seems that there was no consensus. So, I allow you a few more minutes.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr X. L. Duval:** It is a question of principle. I am finishing anyway, but it is a question of principle and I do not accept that something is imposed on us like this. I won't come to the question of the mask, Mr Speaker, Sir, not to embarrass you, but there is a limit to what we can accept.

To come back, Mr Speaker, Sir, so, my plea to the Minister of Environment, let's see for the next few days, he comes up with a plan seriously to help the thousands of people who are living in makeshift accommodation, we have seen his colleague throw them out on the street, okay that's another type of natural disaster that's another type, we have seen their colleague throw them out on the street, but he is responsible for the disaster centre, whatever, let us see whether in the coming days he comes up with a decent programme so that people who are the poorest of this nation, who are forced to live in flood-prone areas, who are forced to live in makeshift ram-shack accommodation and who have to run children and babies in their hands to these centres, they are provided, Mr Speaker, Sir, with decent accommodation as surely will happen, they will require in the next few months.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Minister Lesjongard!

(6.47 p.m.)

**The Minister of Tourism (Mr G. Lesjongard):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, le *Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2019-2020* est présenté aujourd'hui dans la Chambre en seconde lecture et sera par la suite examiné en comité.

M. le président, le vote que prendra la Chambre après les débats sur le *Supplementary Appropriation Bill* est un exercice familier pour certains et peut-être pas pour d'autres, M. le président. Le montant total de ces estimations est de l'ordre de R 33,7 milliards et est réparti comme suit –

*The National Development Unit:* R 280 millions;

Rodrigues: R 200 millions;

*Land Transport:* R 220 millions;

*The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life :* R 1,2 milliards;

*Social Security and National Solidarity:* R 5,1 milliards, et

*Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government:* R 26,695 milliards.

Comme nous le savons, M. le président, ce sont des dépenses qui ont été effectuées en dehors de ce qui avait été prévu dans le budget. Et à la fin des débats quand nous allons voter, nous allons permettre au ministère des Finances de s'approprier les fonds nécessaires afin d'honorer les paiements dans les contextes spécifiques.

M. le président, j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention les interventions des membres de l'opposition et surtout de l'honorable membre qui m'a précédé. Malheureusement, quel est le constat, M. le président ? Le constat est clair. C'est un procès d'intention contre le ministre de la Santé. Presque tous les membres de l'opposition ont argumenté spécifiquement sur la dotation qui concerne le ministère de la Santé et veulent faire croire à la population de ce pays que le ministre de la Santé, pendant la période du Covid-19, il a magouillé, il a protégé ses amis, et c'est ça principalement ce qu'ils veulent que la population entend. Mais n'oublions pas, M. le président, que nous le voulions ou pas, que ce soit sur le plan local ou que ce soit sur le plan international, l'honorable Jagutpal est notre héros national. Il a été présent dans toutes les réunions du *High Level Covid Committee*, il a été sous pression pendant plusieurs jours, M. le président, parce qu'il fallait sauver des vies, il fallait gérer une des situations les plus difficiles que non seulement notre pays faisait face mais que le monde en entier faisait face, M. le président. Ça ils ne veulent pas dire à la population ça. Ça nous le disons, M. le président, parce que nous avons vécu ces moments, non seulement nous, eux, et la population dans son ensemble nous avons vécu, nous avons passé par des moments extrêmement difficiles mais tout le long, dans un esprit de partage, dans un esprit de solidarité. Aujourd'hui le pays est *Covid-free*, M. le président. Voilà le résultat !

Par contre, M. le président, qu'est-ce que nous constatons: que dans certains pays, les pays les plus avancés, ces pays aujourd'hui sont toujours dans des situations d'extrême difficulté et la population est consciente de ça.

La dotation dans les *Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure* allouée au ministère de la santé, c'était pour sauver une population, c'était pour soigner ce peuple en termes de médicaments en termes d'équipements - et d'équipements de première nécessité.

Vous réalisez, M. le président, qu'au début de la pandémie, nous n'étions même pas préparés pour ça. Personne ne savait. Qui savait dans cette Chambre que nous allions faire face à cette pandémie et qu'il fallait tous ces équipements médicaux, qu'il nous fallait tous ces médicaments afin de rassurer le peuple?

Tout le long de cette situation dans le pays, nous avons communiqué avec la population. Nous leur avons expliqué quelle était la situation. Nous avons été transparents, M. le président. Il y avait une conférence de presse animée par un petit comité tous les jours. Moi-même j'ai participé à un certain nombre de conférences de presse où on donnait toutes

les informations à la population.

Mais c'est un fait. Depuis le début de cette situation, l'Opposition a adopté même façon de procéder. Cette façon de procéder c'était : 'Ah, vous ne faites pas assez. Ah, vous auriez dû faire ça. Ah, ceci, vous le faites mal.' Et, aujourd'hui, c'est cette même attitude qui est en train de prévaloir pendant les débats mais plus spécifiquement aujourd'hui parce que l'homme à abattre aujourd'hui c'est le ministre Jagutpal. Il faut dire à la population qu'il a mal fait son travail, qu'il a magouillé pendant cette période de COVID-19. Le précédent orateur l'a clairement dit. Vous avez fait des choses sur le dos de la population qui n'étaient pas claires. Mais ce n'est pas le cas, M. le président. S'il y a un fait, M. le président, c'est que la population sait. Si nous sommes où nous sommes arrivés aujourd'hui en étant une nation Covid-free c'est grâce à ce gouvernement, M. le président. Ça, on ne pourra changer ça.

M. le président, je l'ai dit pendant mon intervention sur le budget. Comme ça a été le cas pour le budget, ce *Supplementary Appropriation Bill* est présenté dans un contexte sans précédent et toujours avec comme toile de fond le COVID-19. C'est vrai qu'il y a des allocations considérables mais c'est pour couvrir des dépenses que nous avons faites pendant cette période de COVID-19 et qui nous a permis à faire face et à gérer d'une façon correcte cette situation.

Cette situation que nous faisons face c'est une situation dramatique et la population comprend ça. La population comprend aussi malheureusement qu'il y a eu des personnes qui sont décédées suite à cette pandémie dans le pays mais ça aurait pu être plus que ça. Et ça aussi la population comprend. Nous nous sommes donnés les moyens premièrement afin qu'il y ait moins de morts parce que quand nous constatons ce qui se passe de par le monde, il y a eu des pays qui ont eu des dizaines de milliers de morts, M. le président. Il faudrait comprendre la situation du ministère de la Santé. A un certain moment, il y avait tellement de pression sur le personnel de la santé. Nous avons vu des pays où le personnel de la santé a dû abandonner. Ça, c'est la vérité. Ils ont laissé mourir des personnes. C'est pourquoi il faut dire chapeau bas au personnel de la santé, M. le président, pendant cette période. Ils ont donné d'eux-mêmes, M. le président.

L'autre item, M. le président, concerne les allocations de pension. J'ai été étonné, M. le président. Laissez-moi me référer à ce que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval a dit dans son intervention et je pense aussi que l'honorable Reza Uteem avait lui-même parlé de la même chose, c'est-à-dire que, dans le programme électoral des trois partis de l'alliance de

l'Opposition, ils avaient fait mention de l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse. Je pense que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, lui, il avait dit que, dans leur programme, ils devaient augmenter de R10,000 à R14,000. Bonne question à poser à ces honorables membres : est-ce que dans votre pétition électorale, vous n'avez pas dit que c'est un *bribe* électoral ça ? Aujourd'hui, vous voulez défendre ce que vous aviez mis dans votre programme électoral.

M. le président, pour nous, c'était une parole donnée et toute parole donnée est une parole sacrée ; et surtout parole donnée aux ainés de notre pays, ceux et celles qui ont bâti cette République. Aujourd'hui je parle de nos ainés, des veuves et des personnes autrement capables. C'est pourquoi, M. le président, la dotation dans ce *Supplementary Appropriation Bill* est de l'ordre de R 5,3 milliards. Mais nous savons tous, qu'en ce moment, M. le président, moment difficile, notre facture sociale est énorme mais il faut le reconnaître que, depuis notre indépendance, nous avons assuré un *Welfare State* solide et, dans le dernier budget, le ministre des Finances est venu encore une fois consolider l'État providence et, en ce faisant, démontrer notre engagement pour une vraie justice sociale dans le pays et nous positionner encore une fois comme un gouvernement socialiste malgré les temps difficiles.

M. le président, sous le *primeministership* de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, le bien-être de nos ainés a toujours été une priorité. Nous sommes toujours redevables envers, ce qu'on appelle dans le langage local, nos *gran dimounn*.

M. le président, nous sommes dans une période de force majeure et c'est important. Là aussi, il faut le dire. Je l'ai dit tout à l'heure-là, les dotations pour le ministère de la Santé en termes d'équipements, en termes de masques mais aussi en termes de nombre de tests qui ont été effectués dans le pays, que ce soit des tests PCR ou des *rapid tests*. Si je ne me trompe pas, nous sommes arrivés à plus de 150,000 tests effectués dans le pays, M. le président, afin de protéger notre nation.

(*Interruptions*)

Ben oui, c'est plus que 10% de la population.

M. le président, nous avons été forcés de fermer notre frontière et l'arrêt de l'économie mondiale a plongé le monde, mais aussi notre pays, dans des situations d'extrême difficulté et nous avons dû prendre des décisions et agir en conséquence. C'est vrai que ces mesures sanitaires ont grandement aidé à contenir la propagation du virus.

M. le président, pendant ce période de couvre-feu, il y a eu beaucoup d'inconvénients et ça a grandement bousculé le quotidien de chaque famille. Mais rappelons-nous, quelques

semaines avant le confinement et quand le virus s'est propagé de par le monde, s'est installé une certaine psychose. Et dans certains cas, à l'étranger et à Maurice, il y a eu ce qu'on appelle le *panic buying*. Et nous avions tous été témoins, beaucoup de familles qui avaient les moyens avaient pu s'approvisionner dans les supermarchés. Toutefois, ce n'était pas le cas pour ceux qui vivent dans des situations difficiles, surtout ceux qui ont un salaire chaque semaine ou chaque quinzaine. Il était difficile pour ces familles de s'approvisionner. Et puis, nous savons tous, M. le président, que par la suite, il y a eu la fermeture des supermarchés et des boutiques. Les familles les plus vulnérables, ceux qui tombent sous le *Social Register of Mauritius* faisaient face à d'énormes difficultés. Ils ne pouvaient pas s'alimenter, M. le président. Et en tant que gouvernement responsable, pas seulement responsable, mais solidaire, M. le président, au niveau du *High-Level Committee*, présidé par le Premier ministre, nous avions pris la décision d'aider ces familles. Ces familles les plus vulnérables de notre pays qui, à cette période extrêmement difficile, ne savaient pas comment s'approvisionner. M. le président, nous avons préparé des colis alimentaires pour ces familles. Non seulement, nous les avons préparé, nous avons fait une distribution chez eux, M. le président. On est allé chez eux, M. le président, pour les aider. Jamais un gouvernement n'a fait ça auparavant. Mais nous avons eu le courage de le faire, M. le président, parce qu'on a compris la souffrance, on a compris les difficultés que faisaient face ces personnes.

Nous avons donné ces colis alimentaires à presque 9,000 personnes si je ne me trompe pas ou plus que ça, M. le président. Et par la suite, toujours sous le même ministère, c'est-à-dire, le ministère de la Sécurité Sociale, nous avons fait la même distribution à ceux bénéficiant du *Carer's Allowance*. Et toute cette distribution avait été faite pendant cette période de couvre-feu et de confinement. C'était des logistiques extrêmement compliquées et difficiles, mais nous avons pu le faire en temps et lieu, M. le président.

Nous sommes allés plus loin, nous étions, M. le président, conscients que les plus vulnérables avaient des difficultés à se procurer des masques, élément essentiel de protection contre le COVID-19. Encore une fois, le ministère de la Sécurité Sociale, qui a une dotation budgétaire dans ce *Supplementary Expenditure*, a distribué 67,500 masques aux familles les plus vulnérables de ce pays, M. le président. Et ça aussi, c'est une première, M. le président. Et quand je dis c'est une première, j'arrive, maintenant au *Wage Assistance Scheme* et au *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, que ce soit le Premier ministre, que ce soit ce gouvernement, nous sommes et nous serons toujours à l'écoute des personnes ou des familles les plus vulnérables de notre pays. Au tout début de la pandémie, on a engagé une discussion principalement, - je me rappelle bien cela – c'était ça le début de la discussion, sur les *self-employed*. Comment allaient-ils faire par cette période de pandémie ? Et là, on parle des travailleurs de ce pays, qu'ils soient maçons, électriciens, plombiers, servantes, jardiniers ou autres. M. le président, nous avons réagi et nous avons réagi de la bonne façon. Premièrement, nous avons dit que nous allons aider ces personnes-là et à partir de là, nous avons défini comment ils allaient bénéficier de cette aide et quelle serait l'institution qui allait être responsable. A partir de là, nous avons demandé à ces personnes de venir s'enregistrer pour bénéficier de ce *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, à ce jour, qu'ils soient maçons, qu'ils soient plombiers, qu'ils soient jardiniers ou servantes, ils ont été au nombre de 197,000 travailleurs, M. le président, à bénéficier de plus qu'un milliard de roupies. *This is what we call a caring Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, caring for the workers of this country.* Mais il y a aussi le *Wage Assistance Scheme*. Quel était le but, M. le président ? Il faut le dire. J'ai entendu certains membres de l'opposition, dans leur intervention, parlaient du *Wage Assistance Scheme*, mais le but était clair. C'était de sauver des emplois.

M. le président, qui est celui ou celle à l'intérieur de cette Chambre ou qui nous écoute, qui n'ont pas été témoins, à travers la Presse internationale, des crises sociales dans certains pays, M. le président ? Avons-nous été témoins de ça à l'ile Maurice ? Non. Au contraire, M. le président, la vie a repris son cours, l'activité économique a redémarré dans notre pays. C'est vrai que tout ça se passe étape par étape, mais le but de le faire étape par étape, M. le président, c'est de s'assurer qu'on ait des résultats concrets et c'est ce que nous avons, M. le président. On nous a beau critiqué, l'opposition nous a beau critiqué, M. le président, mais le fait est que la vie a repris son cours normal dans le pays, quand dans certains pays ils ont à lutter contre cette pandémie encore. Et c'est ça la vérité qu'il faut dire à la population et non pas ce que, eux, ils sont en train de dire à la population, M. le président. Critiquer c'est facile, mais gérer c'est difficile, M. le président. Continuer à critiquer, nous, nous allons gérer le pays, M. le président. On a la capacité pour le faire.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Abbas Mamode!

**Mr Lesjongard:** M. le président, il critique.

M. le président, on a évoqué aussi *the Regulations that were published with regard to the tourism sector*. Ecoutez, on travaille en collaboration. Il y a eu consultation entre que ce soit le ministère du Travail ou le ministère du Tourisme ou le ministère des Finances. *It is an exhaustive list. It would have been impossible to take everybody onboard.*

L'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval a parlé des restaurants. Il y a des restaurants qui fonctionnent, M. le président. Il y a plusieurs restaurants qui fonctionnent dans ce pays. *We have attended to the most needy in the Regulations that have been published.* Et s'il y a des améliorations, s'il y a encore autres choses à faire, on est à l'écoute. Et ce qui a été fait, a été fait en consultation, M. le président, avec les acteurs du secteur. Il y a eu coordination, il y a eu consultation.

C'est vrai que le secteur touristique est le secteur le plus affecté par la pandémie, ça on est tous conscients. Mais on a donné l'assurance aux acteurs du secteur, le gouvernement a donné cette assurance. Dépendant de nos moyens, nous allons être à vos côtés et vous aider à traverser cette étape difficile, ce qui m'amène naturellement à *Air Mauritius* et les commentaires qui ont été faits. Nous sauvons Air Mauritius, ça il faut le dire. Mais, comme de par le monde, il faudrait qu'on prenne connaissance de la situation. Ce que traverse la compagnie nationale, il y a plusieurs compagnies de par le monde qui passent par cette situation. *Virgin Airline* a licencié plus de 3,000 personnes. Finnair, ils ont rendu 12 avions et licencié 2,400 personnes. 113 avions de *Ryanair* sont cloués au sol et ils vont se débarrasser de 9,000 employés. Airbus, grande société, fabricant d'avions, ils ont 60 avions neufs stockés. Pourquoi ? Parce que les compagnies qui avaient acheté, ils ont annulé leur commande. Et ils font un commentaire, c'est-à-dire, qu'au mois de septembre de cette année-ci, ils prévoient que 8,000 avions seront cloués au sol. Alors, le constat est alarmant, pas seulement à Maurice, mais aussi à l'extérieur, M. le président.

Je note une contradiction dans ce que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval a dit dans son intervention. Concernant le *hedging*, grande contradiction, M le président, l'honorable Xavier- Luc Duval vient dire : 'Bon, cela arrive le *hedging*', et que c'était un mal nécessaire. Mais je ne pense pas que c'est le cas pour le MMM. Le MMM a tellement critiqué ce *hedging* que je pense qu'ils ne sont pas sur la même longueur d'onde. Ça c'est première contradiction.

Deuxième contradiction, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval vient dire à la Chambre qu'*Air Mauritius* ne tombait sous sa responsabilité, c'est après le scandale du *hedging* qu'il a repris, lui, les rênes d'*Air Mauritius* et qu'il a commencé à régler le problème de *hedging*. Est-ce qu'il vient dire que c'était l'ancien Premier ministre qui était responsable et qu'il a fallu que, lui, il vient en 'Zorro' et règle le problème de *hedging* au sein d'*Air Mauritius* ? Est-ce que c'est cela qu'il vient à la Chambre ? Parce que, moi, j'ai écouté avec attention ce qu'il a dit. Il a dit : 'Pendant deux ans, M. le président, j'ai réglé le problème de *hedging* chez *Air Mauritius*', qui confirme qu'avant lui, il y avait quelqu'un d'autre qui était le leader du Parti travailliste et qui a mal fait les choses.

(*Interruptions*)

Moi, ce que je comprends. Peut-être j'ai tort. Corrigez-moi, M. le président, si j'ai tort !

(*Interruptions*)

C'est un *non-goal*, comme dit mon collègue.

M. le président, il y a aussi la somme qui a été allouée pour tout ce qui touche à l'environnement, mais aussi des projets de développement dans diverses régions de l'île.

M. le président, le changement climatique est un défi majeur et je pense qu'il ne faut pas venir évoquer des petits problèmes dans des endroits comme ramassage d'ordure. C'est vrai que cela pose problème, mais je pense que la collectivité responsable va assumer ses responsabilités. Par contre, le ministre, il a d'autres soucis, il a d'autres problèmes à régler, et c'est un ministre compétent et je pense qu'il va faire ce qu'il faut faire, afin de faire face au changement climatique.

M. le président, je vais terminer avec les projets de la *NDU*. C'est important, nous sommes des politiciens, nous sommes responsables de nos circonscriptions, et très souvent, nous avons beaucoup de plaintes. Mais non seulement des plaintes, M. le président, *at Adjournment Time*, qui sont ceux qui se lèvent et disent : 'ministre de *Local Government*, nous avons tel problème, ministre de l'Environnement'. L'argent qu'on dépense, c'est pour vous aider à faire face à vos mandants dans vos circonscriptions, M. le président.

(*Interruptions*)

Alors, soit nous acceptons qu'il faut dépenser pour qu'on améliore le sort de nos mandants dans leur circonscription, soit nous ne sommes pas sur la même longueur d'onde, en ce qui concerne cela. Alors, très souvent, j'entends des membres de l'opposition venir dire : 'Ah,

parce que nous sommes des membres de l'opposition, on ne fait rien dans notre circonscription'. Là, nous faisons dans votre circonscription, alors, il faut nous remercier pour le travail que nous faisons.

M. le président, ceci étant dit, je vais conclure en disant à situation exceptionnelle, il nous faut prendre des mesures exceptionnelles, et c'est le cas aujourd'hui.

M. le président, je vous remercie de votre attention.

**Mr Speaker:** Minister of Finance!

(7.21 p.m.)

**The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy):** M. le président, permettez-moi tout d'abord de remercier mes différents collègues orateurs qui ont pris aujourd'hui la parole.

Parmi eux, pas moins de sept ministres ont déjà clarifié un grand nombre de points relatifs à leur propre ministère. Malgré cela, j'ai pu prendre note de certaines remarques de la part des membres de l'opposition. Je profite de cette occasion pour répondre, avec la plus grande transparence, à ces derniers.

Comme je l'ai énoncé dans ma première allocution du jour, la majeure partie de ces dépenses supplémentaires s'explique par les bouleversements imprévisibles induits par la pandémie de la COVID-19.

Le cours du monde a changé, nous avons dû nous adapter dans les plus brefs délais. Car nous sommes un Gouvernement responsable, nous avons promptement agi pour protéger notre nation, nos entreprises et par-dessus tout, nos concitoyens contre ce virus.

Sous-entendre, comme l'a fait l'honorable Mohamed, que notre stratégie de lutte contre la pandémie s'assimile à une vulgaire quête de gloire est tout sauf approprié.

Nous sommes certes de part et d'autre de l'hémicycle mais il convient de prendre le sujet avec un petit peu plus de sérieux.

Nous parlons de 1,3 millions de vie, la démagogie n'a pas sa place ici.

Nous avons lutté contre la mort, c'était, et cela l'est encore une guerre contre un ennemi invisible.

Toutes les ressources, y compris financières, ont été mobilisées.

Pour gagner cette première bataille, il nous a fallu acheter les équipements de protection sanitaire nécessaires pour nos *front liners* qui ont œuvré nuits et jours pendant le confinement.

Nous avons également dû fournir une aide salariale exceptionnelle pour protéger l'emploi et soutenir les travailleurs indépendants pendant cette période si difficile.

Tout cela a nécessité des fonds supplémentaires, qui bien entendu n'avaient pu être provisionnés en amont.

Pour être très précis, sachez que R 28,7 milliards de ces dépenses supplémentaires sont liées à la pandémie de la COVID-19. Une partie non négligeable sur laquelle nous ne pouvions faire l'impasse.

Je suis intimement convaincu que nous avons fait le bon choix.

Un autre montant de R 5,3 milliards est destiné au paiement du BRP suite à son augmentation à hauteur de R 9,000, à compter du 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2019.

Ces dépenses, vous en conviendrez, n'auraient pas pu être prévues.

M. le président, pour répondre aux commentaires formulés en ce qui concerne le *Wage Assistance Scheme*, je tiens à réitérer ce qui a été pourtant déjà expliqué maintes fois.

Pour le mois de juin 2020, le Gouvernement continuera à verser l'allocation d'un mois de salaire de base pour ceux qui perçoivent jusqu'à R 50,000 mensuellement, avec un plafond de R 25,000. Cela concerne les salariés du secteur touristique et aussi les salariés des entreprises qui n'ont pas été autorisées à opérer jusqu'à la levée totale du couvre-feu.

De plus une allocation de R 5,100 sera versée aux travailleurs indépendants du secteur touristique et ceux qui n'ont pas été autorisées à opérer jusqu'à la levée totale du couvre-feu.

En outre, un chauffeur de taxi opérant à l'aéroport ou basé dans un hôtel, un artisan, un artiste, une personne travaillant dans une cantine scolaire et un marchand opérant dans une foire commerciale pourront également bénéficier de l'allocation.

A ce titre, j'aimerais clarifier pour l'honorable Uteem que les 11 milliards de roupies provisionnées dans ce projet de loi concernent l'année financière 2019-2020, c'est à dire pour le paiement du *Wage Assistance Scheme* pour la période de mars 2020 à juin 2020 inclus.

Dans le budget 2020-2021, une provision de 8 milliards de roupies a été prévue pour le *Wage Assistance Scheme* dans le cadre du *Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government*. Cela s'appliquera pour la période commençant au 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2020.

Un montant supplémentaire de 7 milliards de roupies a été affecté à cette fin au travers de plusieurs autres institutions publiques.

Ces fonds serviront à financer l'allocation payable au titre des deux régimes susmentionnés au profit des salariés et des travailleurs indépendants.

Notre combat pour préserver l'emploi est sans faille, n'en déplaise à l'ancien ministre des Finances qui se tient de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

Il a pourtant lui-même réussi l'exploit, en pleine période de croissance mondiale, de provoquer des pics de chômage inédits ainsi qu'une grave contraction de l'investissement privé.

Avec toute la volonté du monde, il nous sera très difficile de réitérer cette piètre performance. Qui plus est, alors que toutes nos actions de sortie de crise sont dirigées vers la sauvegarde de l'emploi.

M. le président, Air Mauritius se trouve actuellement dans une situation financière précaire qui a été accentuée avec l'apparition de la COVID-19. La compagnie a été placée sous administration volontaire par son conseil d'administration afin de sauvegarder les intérêts de cette dernière et ceux de toutes les parties prenantes.

Permettez-moi d'assurer à la Chambre que les R 9 milliards allouées au titre du *National Resilience Fund* prendront principalement la forme d'une injection de capital dans la société. L'injection sera effectuée une fois que toutes les procédures auront été suivies et après avoir pris en compte le rapport de l'administrateur.

Notre objectif, M. le président, est de sauver notre fleuron national et de veiller à ce qu'il recommence à fonctionner sur une base financière saine.

Concernant le point soulevé par le Leader de l'Opposition au sujet du *Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund*, la Chambre se souviendra que nous avons amendé la *Worker's Rights Act 2019* au travers de la *COVID-19 Act* au regard du paiement de la contribution des Fonds qui devait débuter à partir d'avril 2020.

Le paiement des cotisations commencera désormais au 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2022.

Toutefois, afin de préserver les intérêts des salariés, des règlements ont été pris pour prévoir qu'un employeur soit dans l'obligation de payer la contribution ou la gratification de 15 jours par année de service en cas de départ à la retraite ou de décès d'un employé, ou en cas de démission ou de résiliation de son contrat de travail pendant la période de transition.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le *National Environment Fund*, un montant initial de 2 milliards de roupies a été transféré au Fonds en juin 2018 pour la mise en œuvre de divers projets visant à atténuer les risques associés au changement climatique.

Le regroupement des programmes liés à l'environnement sous un même toit fait suite à des recommandations antérieures du PNUD, et apporte une plus grande visibilité sur les montants dépensés par le secteur public dans le domaine de l'environnement, et notamment en matière de lutte contre le dérèglement climatique.

Cela souligne par ailleurs l'importance de la contribution financière apportée par les partenaires du développement aux projets environnementaux.

Je tiens à rappeler que le *National Environment Fund* a été créé par la *Environment Protection Act*.

Cependant, jusqu'en 2018, aucun projet majeur n'a été mis en œuvre dans le cadre du Fonds en raison du manque de ressources.

En réalité, pour le dire très franchement, la *National Environment Commission* n'a jamais daigné se donner la peine de se réunir pendant une période de 9 ans, soit de 2005 à 2014. Comme si la préservation de l'environnement était, pour le gouvernement travailliste, un sujet de priorité secondaire.

C'est bien notre Premier ministre qui a fait preuve de détermination en abordant de manière holistique les conséquences du dérèglement climatique sur notre écosystème, notre économie et notre pays.

Il a, à cet égard, présidé la réunion de la *National Environment Commission* en 2018. Par la suite, des projets d'investissement prioritaires ont été identifiés et le NEF a été remaniée par des amendements apportés à certaines sections de l'*Environment Protection Act*.

À ce jour, R 1,76 milliards ont déjà été décaissées et des fonds supplémentaires seront nécessaires pour faire face aux dépenses futures en vue d'atténuer les conséquences négatives

du changement climatique. C'est pourquoi nous prévoyons une provision supplémentaire de R 2 milliards.

M. le président, sur la question de la transparence, permettez-moi d'indiquer aux honorables membres de l'opposition à qui cela aurait pu échapper que les détails des projets mis en œuvre dans le cadre du *NEF* et du *NRF* sont inclus dans les tableaux C2 et C3 aux pages 423, 424 et 425 des *Budget Estimates 2020-21*. Tous les projets publics relevant des *Special Funds* suivent les mêmes procédures. Les comptes des dits-Fonds sont d'ailleurs audités par le Directeur de l'audit.

Enfin, M. le président, en ce qui concerne les transactions relatives aux droits de tirages spéciaux, je souhaite informer la Chambre qu'à deux reprises, le FMI a demandé à Maurice d'acheter un total de 12,5 millions de *DTS*, soit environ R 650 millions, à des membres ayant une position extérieure faible, à savoir 3 millions de *DTS* à l'Egypte en juillet 2019 ; et 9,5 millions de *DTS* à la Jamaïque en mai 2020.

En juillet 2019, les réserves extérieures de Maurice s'élevaient à R 259,3 milliards, ce qui représente 11,8 mois de couverture des importations. Ces réserves ont augmenté pour atteindre R 275,8 milliards en mai 2020, soit l'équivalent de 12,5 mois d'importations.

M. le président, pour conclure, rappelons-nous que nous traversons une période d'incertitude sans précédent. Plus que jamais, l'heure n'est pas à la politique de bas étage. De ce côté de la Chambre, nous n'attendons aucune médaille. Nous nous acquittons de notre mission en vertu des engagements pris et du mandat clair obtenu auprès de la population.

Merci.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill read a second time and committed.*

#### **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

*(Mr Speaker in the Chair)*

#### **ESTIMATES OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXPENDITURE (2019-2020) OF 2020**

**&**

#### **THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL**

**(No. IV of 2020)**

(7.37 p.m.)

*Vote 2-2 National Development Unit (Rs280,000,000) was on question put, agreed to.*

**Mr Mohamed:** *Item No. 31113045 - Construction and Upgrading of Amenities*, was that included therein because I had one question. I do apologise, if you don't mind.

**The Chairperson:** NDU, vote 2-2?

**Mr Mohamed:** Yes, but I wanted to put a question regarding *item 31113045 - Construction and Upgrading of Amenities*. It has not been voted yet, anyway.

**The Chairperson:** So, this has been voted.

**Mr Mohamed:** So, the question is: I just wanted to ask the hon. Minister whether the containers that have been provided for the flu clinics, is that included under this particular budget? The containers that have been given, if I am not mistaken, to Jurassic, the contractor, is that included under this particular budget where, I think, it was about all our hospitals, the containers were stuck together and painted?

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Chairperson, the question of the hon. Member has nothing to do with upgrading of amenities.

**The Chairperson:** This has already been voted.

**Mr Mohamed:** Sorry! No, it has not been voted.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Chairperson:** No. it has already been voted. So, we move to vote 4-3.

*Vote 4-3 Rodrigues (Rs200,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.*

*Vote 7-2 Land Transport was called.*

**Mr Uteem:** We are being requested to vote for an extension of loan. Can I ask the hon. Minister to table a copy of the loan agreement between the company and the Government?

**Mr Ganoo:** Well, I will have to verify and then I will make a statement to the House, Mr Chairperson.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Ramful!

**Mr Ramful:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the daily operating expenses as well as the daily revenues and profits for the operation of the Metro?

**Mr Ganoo:** If the hon. Member will come with a specific question on that issue by way of a PQ, I am sure I will readily give him the answer.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Ms Anquetil!

**Ms Anquetil:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Concernant le tracé du métro*, can the Minister inform us if provisions have been made for compensation in the event of land expropriation at Sivananda Avenue, Floréal?

**Mr Ganoo:** Of course, Mr Chairperson, already many owners on other structures have been compensated, for example, from Port Louis to Rose-Hill. So, I can inform the hon. Member that arrangements have been made. In fact, all the plots of land which the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning intends to acquire have already been evaluated and the quantum is being proposed to the owners. And in case they do not agree with the offer that is being made to them, then, they will have to go to the Board of Assessment.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Armance!

**Mr Armance:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Since the Minister said that the amount is going to be for the operation cost of the Metro Express, can he give us the operation cost per month of the Metro Express?

**Mr Ganoo:** In the same breath, Mr Chairperson, as I just answered, I suggest that the hon. Member comes by way of a specific Parliamentary Question, I will readily give him the answer.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the Minister in relation to this Rs220 m. give us a brief detail on the initial operating expenses?

**Mr Ganoo:** In fact, in the course of my speech, Mr Chairperson, I listed all the items which constitute this loan of Rs220 m. and I can refer the hon. Member to my speech –

- salaries and allowances;
- electricity charge;
- insurance;
- feeder buses;
- maintenance contract of trains;

- purchase of ME Cards;
- advertising and launching expenses;
- rental of office;
- cleaning and maintenance;
- furniture and fittings;
- vehicles, and
- other expenses

And this amounts to exactly the sum of Rs220 m.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** As to the advertising contract referred to by the hon. Minister, could he please tell us how much exactly was the advertising contract for and to whom was the contract given, and whether there was any *appel d'offres* before the advertising was given?

**Mr Ganoo:** I see here the advertising and launching expenses amount to Rs7.7 m. And in terms of the names of the bidders, I can inform the hon. Member that MEL, in fact, had awareness and sensitiveness campaigns together with launching events in order to market MEL's brand and the start of its operation, and this expense costs Rs7.7 m. This is what I could say.

**Mr Mohamed:** Who was the contractor?

**Mr Ganoo:** I don't have the name of the contractor. I can submit it to the House at a later stage, Mr Chairperson.

*Vote 7-2 Land Transport (Rs220,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.*

(7.45 p.m.)

*Vote 10-1 Ministry of Health and Quality of Life was called.*

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Minister table a list of the medical supplies, the name of the contractor, the contract value of the award and the procurement method used for these Rs1.2 billion?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Chairperson, I will table all the information required. For the time being, I have some information, but I am going to table the remaining information.

**Dr. Boolell:** When there is an emergency, there is restrictive bidding. Can we have the number, the list of all eligible suppliers? Were all the eligible suppliers informed of emergency procurement for the acquisition of PCR, drugs, ventilation, personal protective equipment? And can we be informed, apprised as to whom the contract has been allocated, and what has been the share of allocation in relation to Hyperpharm?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Chairperson, I have already given much information in my speech. Now I will table all the information required as per the Member's request.

**Dr. Boolell:** You will table more information.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Could the hon. Minister also table the agreement or any document that establishes the relationship between the Ministry of Health and the State Trading Corporation, how much money was paid to the State Trading Corporation and how much money the State Trading Corporation advanced for the purchase of all equipment bought, not only drugs, but equipment, PPEs, and to which companies were the facilities given? And one specific question: how much facility was given to Hyperpharm specifically by the State Trading Corporation and the Ministry of Health?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Chairperson, again, I am going to table all the information required.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Chairperson, the hon. Minister stated in his speech that he had spent Rs500 m. or so up to now. So, this is 26 June; he has four days left. May we know where the remaining Rs700 m. will be spent until Monday?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Again, Mr Chairperson, all information as per the...

*(Interruptions)*

I am going to table it.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Give the information!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Chairperson, I don't have the information right now. I am going to submit the information.

**Mr Armance:** Mr Chairperson, out of the Rs500 m. that have already been spent, can the hon. Minister give us the details when it was spent? Was it from the months of March to June? Give us the details month by month, please.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Again, Mr Chairperson, the information will be provided to the hon. Member.

**The Chairperson:** I now put the question, namely that the sum of Rs1,200,000,000 for Vote...

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Member has one?

**Mr Mohamed:** With regard to the same issue of Rs1.2 billion, I asked earlier on under the Vote of the hon. Minister responsible for the NDU and he said it was not under this heading. What about the flu clinics; the flu clinics in all the hospitals and the containers that were bought and sold for Rs3 m. or so? I think 80,000 bought and then sold to the Ministry for Rs3.2 m. To whom was the contract given? Was there any bid called for, for the containers to be used as flu clinics, and how much was given to that bidder? The hon. Minister will table it as well?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Chairperson, the flu clinic is called the 'Covid Testing Clinics'. It has been donated by World Health Organisation, UNDP and the IBL Group.

*(Interruptions)*

Now...

**The Chairperson:** Okay!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Can you...

**Mr Mohamed:** The one given to Jurassic! How much has it cost?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** The Ministry of National Infrastructure has undertaken all the formalities concerning the...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Chairperson:** No, there is no debate!

**Mr Mohamed:** If there is no debate...

**The Chairperson:** There is no debate here, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

*Vote 10-1 Ministry of Health and Quality of Life (Rs1,200,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.*

(7.50 p.m.)

*Vote 12-1 Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity (Rs5,105,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.*

*Vote 25-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government was called.*

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** With respect to item 28212042 – *Other Expenses icw COVID-19 Pandemic*, may I know from the hon. Minister – I don't know who is responsible for this Rs45 m. that has been used to distribute food – who decided the composition of the food basket, and who identified the supplier who would be supplying those food items?

**Dr. Padayachy:** On May 2020, the Minister of Social Security replied a PQ No. B/21 on distribution of food packs and informed the House the quantum of funds disbursed in connection therewith as well as the eligibility criteria.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Uteem:** ... the composition of the basket, who decided which product has to go there.

**An hon. Member:** Qui a choisi les produits?

**Mr Uteem:** Qui a choisi...

(*Interruptions*)

**The Chairperson:** Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Order, please!

(*Interruptions*)

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président...

(*Interruptions*)

**The Chairperson:** Order!

**Dr. Padayachy:** Je vais demander au député Uteem de venir avec une question spécifique et on répondra à cette question.

**The Chairperson:** Hon Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** I wanted to know when I am reading from the National Resilience Fund, reference is made here for 2019-2020, the sum of Rs10 billion for the National Air Carrier. And what I wanted to know, therefore, is if I could have an explanation, I do not have his expertise on technical issues, whether the hon. Minister could tell us, because here I see Rs10 billion for 2019-2020, and then for 2020-2021, I see Rs9 billion. Is it, therefore, that Rs19 billion, Rs10 billion for last calendar, Rs19 billion for the air carrier, is that correct?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Mr Chairperson, out of the Rs10 billion, it is expected that Rs9.3 billion will be used in Financial Year 2020-2021 as follows –

- Rs9 billion for support to the National Air Carrier;
- Rs65 m. as interest subsidy of which Rs50 m. for the *plan de soutien*;
  - Rs75 m. for the promotion campaign with Liverpool Football Club;
  - Rs50 m. for tourism branding;
  - Rs30 m. for major events with tour operators;
  - Rs40 m. for fees in respect of strategy for textile hub;
  - Rs25 m. for the Africa Warehousing Project;
  - Rs20 m. for guarantee scheme by ISP Ltd, and
  - Rs30 m. for meeting the operating cost of ISP Ltd.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Armance!

**Mr Armance:** Mr Chairperson, under item *National Environmental Fund*, may I have some more details on projects that have been implemented so far? If the hon. Minister does not have the list, can he table it to the National Assembly, please?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, je vais déposer à la Chambre la liste des projets.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Quirin!

**Mr Quirin:** Merci, M. le président. En ce qui concerne l'item *National Resilience Fund*, par rapport à l'accord signé avec *Liverpool Football Club* concernant la promotion de

Maurice, peut-on savoir quelle est le montant qui a déjà été payé à Liverpool à ce jour et s'il y a eu un intermédiaire qui a bénéficié d'une somme, des commissions etc.?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, encore une fois, je vais dire quelque chose de très simple, Monsieur le député Quirin peut venir avec une question spécifique et je répondrai par la suite.

(*Interruptions*)

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Chairperson, with regard to the issue of Rs75 m. referred to by the hon. Minister of Finance in relation to *Liverpool Football Club*, could he give some explanation as to how that money is spent? Is it marketing fees or others fees specifically paid to the Club or is there any intermediary? If there is an intermediary, who is the intermediary, and if it was payment made, how it is made? Some details!

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, par rapport à cette question, je viens de dire que je vais déposer - quand il y aura une question spécifique sur le sujet, il n'y a pas de question spécifique sur le sujet. On est en train de faire une campagne de promotion avec le *Liverpool Football Club*, qui est, je pense, un club unique au monde.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Ameer Meea!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. If I can catch the attention of the Minister! With the injection of Rs10 billion in Air Mauritius, clearly there will be a dilution among the existing shareholders, so can I ask the hon. Minister what will be the value of one share of Air Mauritius after the dilution?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, j'ai beau être un technicien mais là-dessus je n'ai pas encore suffisamment d'information pour pouvoir répondre à cette question, parce qu'on n'a pas de précision là-dessus. J'y reviendrai par la suite.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Regarding the item for the *National Environment Fund*, there was an allocation of Rs150 m. in the previous Budget Speech for the construction of drains in areas affected by extreme weather conditions, can we know from

the hon. Minister whether a sum will be allocated for these specific areas within the Rs100 m. allocated for the construction of drains and whether he could table a list of these areas?

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, je vais déposer la liste des projets et vous aurez toutes les informations dessus.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Juman!

**Mr Juman:** With regard to the item *National Environment Fund*, can we know if Fond-du-Sac forms part on the list for drains?

(*Interruptions*)

**The Chairperson:** Order!

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, je vais déposer la liste.

*Vote 25-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government (Rs26,695,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.*

*The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2019-2020) of 2020 was considered and agreed to.*

*The Supplementary Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill (No. IV of 2020) was considered and agreed to.*

**The Chairperson:** Honourable Members, I have to report to the House that the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2019-2020) of 2020 and the Supplementary Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill (No. IV of 2020) have passed the Committee of Supply without amendment.

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

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 30 June 2020 at 11.30 a.m.

**The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

Adjournment Matters!

## MATTERS RAISED

(8.02 p.m.)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger!

### AVENUE SIVANANDA, VACOAS – METRO EXPRESS PHASE II - INHABITANTS - VEHICLES - ACCESS

**Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal):** Merci, M. le président. Ma requête concerne les habitants de l'avenue Sivananda B à Vacoas, et s'adresse éventuellement au ministre responsable du Métro Express et aussi au ministre responsable du Logement et de l'aménagement du territoire. Avec les travaux de la Phase II du Métro Express, une vingtaine de familles risquent de ne plus avoir d'accès pour véhicules menant jusqu'à leurs maisons. Cela les angoisse énormément car si demain il y a un problème de santé et de sécurité et que l'ambulance ou les pompiers doivent accéder à leurs maisons, il n'y aura plus d'accès. Leur requête est donc d'avoir un accès pour véhicule et d'avoir éventuellement une rencontre avec l'honorable ministre responsable du Métro Express.

J'aimerai partager avec lui la liste des familles concernées et je le remercie de bien vouloir considérer leur requête.

**The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, I did reply partly to this question of the hon. Member in the speech I just made a few hours ago. We are very well aware of this problem, I mentioned in my speech just now the issue of encroachment and the issues of land acquisition, and how we are dealing with it at the moment. And I did remind the House, earlier on, that in fact there is a Committee now which is meeting nearly every day or twice a week. The Committee is chaired by myself and when I am not here, the Mayor is chairing this Committee. In fact, tomorrow morning, every Wednesday, this Committee will be meeting at the Municipality of Curepipe and there is a similar Committee meeting at the Municipality of Vacoas also which will be meeting on Thursday, the day after today, and we are looking at all these issues.

Concerning the issue raised by the hon. Member, I can assure her that a team made up of representatives of my Ministry, MEL, Ministry of Housing, the Police, TMRSU, the MPs and the PPS of the locality are, in fact, conducting a PR exercise, a door to door exercise. And we are very well aware of this problem of access. True it is that some owners have either encroached on State lands and sometimes, built walls or fenced the natural access, and now, we have a big problem and this team is working on a case to case basis. Each owner is

making his complaint to this committee, and the committee is trying to find a solution to each and every individual case. Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member can rest assured that we are very alive to the difficulties of these people, although they, by themselves, sometimes, have encroached on reserves or have encroached on State land, but since now the Contractor L&T needs that land for the track. So, we are, on a human basis, trying to find a solution to each individual owner of this property.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Lobine!

(8.04 p.m.)

#### **CITÉ PALMERSTONE, PHOENIX – CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND**

**Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix):** Mr Speaker, Sir, my request is addressed to Dr. the hon. Anwar Husnoo, Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management. It is with regard to the children’s playground at Cité Palmerstone, which is in a very deplorable condition. It is being used as a dumping ground, several complaints have been made to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, but yet, it is still the same. With the leave of Mr Speaker, Sir, may I just table a picture that I took this morning to show the state of this children’s playground at Cité Palmerstone, Phoenix? May I table it, please?

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would advise the hon. Member to put the application through the CSU, we will sort it out.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(8.06. p.m.)

#### **MAURITIUS VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION - SECRETARY GENERAL - REINTEGRATION**

**Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal):** Je vous remercie, M. le président. Ma requête s’adresse au Premier ministre.

M. le Premier ministre, je sollicite votre intervention pour renverser la décision de la réintégration du secrétaire général de l’Association Mauricienne de Volley-ball, qui fait face à un procès d’attouchemen sexuel allégué sur une athlète mauricienne. Le cas est toujours devant La Cour de Queensland en Australie. J’ai parlé à la jeune athlète aujourd’hui, et avec son autorisation je vous informe qu’elle m’a confié qu’elle était très bouleversée de cette

décision. Le Comité Directeur de l'AMVB a refait appel à ce monsieur car étonnamment, personne, mais personne d'autre dans notre pays n'a les compétences requises pour s'occuper de son secrétariat.

M. le Premier ministre, je pense qu'à travers cette décision, votre gouvernement envoie un très mauvais signal aux victimes de violence dans notre pays. Vous avez, ce soir ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No speech!

**Ms Anquetil:** Vous avez, ce soir, M. le Premier ministre, l'occasion de démontrer votre détermination et votre engagement de combattre toute forme de violence à l'égard des femmes.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

**The Prime Minister:** M. le président, premièrement je ne suis pas au courant des *ins and outs* de ce cas, et je suis étonné que l'honorable membre adresse cette, je ne sais pas, je dois dire, si c'est une plainte ou si c'est une représentation de quelqu'un à moi, parce que autant que je sache, la Fédération de Volley-Ball est autonome, et les décisions qui sont prises au niveau de la Fédération, sont prises, que je sache, même pas avec le consentement du ministère des Sports. Maintenant qu'on vient étaler cette affaire devant la Chambre, évidemment qu'elle m'interpelle non seulement comme citoyen mais aussi comme Premier ministre, et je vais voir quels sont les pouvoirs qui me sont attribués pour prendre n'importe quelle décision que ce soit concernant ce cas. Et je dois dire que je ne suis pas au courant de ce que l'honorable membre est en train de dire, à l'effet qu'il y a une affaire, autant que je me rappelle, en Australie. D'autant plus que c'est une affaire de Cour de justice, je vais essayer de prendre toutes les informations, et je reviendrai à la Chambre, peut-être pour faire une déclaration.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dhunoo!

(8.09 p.m.)

#### LES CASERNES, CUREPIPE – BUS SERVICE

**Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to Hon. Alan Ganoo, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. It has been brought to my knowledge that concerning Bus Route 128, Les Casernes, Curepipe, only four buses are serving the route instead of six. With school

resuming next week, I will request the hon. Minister to look into the matter with the NLTA to remedy the situation.

**The Minister of Land Transport & Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** I thank the hon. Member. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will certainly look into the matter and query the NLTA if there is any problem vis-à-vis the operators serving this particular line.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ameer Meea!

(8.08 p.m.)

#### **NTA – WAITING TIME**

**Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. It relates to the NTA. So, I am addressing to hon. Ganoo. I will kindly ask him to open his eyes while talking to me so that we can go quickly. The issue is that every day there are about 100 to 200 persons queuing up in the sun and sometimes in the rain to have access to the NTA. There are cases where, after waiting for 2 hours outside the building of NTA, when going inside finally, the person has to wait for another 2 hours because of 100 persons also waiting inside the building. Clearly, this is not an acceptable service level by the NTA. There are other Government services which have been able to adapt to the current circumstances, the current situation. Therefore, I am making an appeal to the hon. Minister, if he can look urgently into the matter so that to improve the service level at the NTA. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**The Minister of Land Transport & Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, this situation can be explained by the fact of the effects of COVID-19. As you know, for 3 months we were in confinement, and the offices of the NLTA were, of course, closed, since we were under lockdown. Now, what is happening is we are clearing the backlog of cases and, unfortunately, this is the building of the NLTA, and as far as I remember, this building was rented from an individual or a company during the Labour days. Perhaps we should find a better NLTA Headquarters. Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, as you know, one of the objectives which was announced in the budget was to digitalize the services of the NLTA. Hopefully, we are going to do it this year. We started, and with this new process, I am sure less people will be queuing up at the NLTA.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ramful!

(8.12 p.m.)

### **BEAU VALLON – STREET LIGHTING**

**Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have an issue which concerns street lighting and therefore, it falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Local Government. It is in relation to the road which links the airport and the village of Beau Vallon, and this road in fact, has been the subject of many fatal road accidents, especially happening at night. The last one dates back to 3 weeks ago and in fact, in most cases, the main cause of the accident is because of poor visibility, especially at night. May I therefore request the hon. Minister to kindly look into the issue and if proper lighting could be provided along that road?

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to look into it and I would advise the hon. Member, like everybody else, I am just saying it so many times, to put the application through the CSU, it has been established for this kind of issues, but I am going to follow it up.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Quirin!

(8.13 p.m.)

### **BEAU BASSIN - ROADS - REPAIR**

**Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière):** Merci, M le président. Ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre des Collectivités Locales et aussi au ministre des Infrastructures Publiques et concerne le mauvais état des routes à Beau Bassin. M. le président, les résidents d'un certain nombre de rues m'ont contacté par rapport au mauvais état des routes justement à Beau Bassin. Je vais citer rapidement quelques-unes, donc Pavé d'Amour et Lilas Avenue à Coromandel, Rues Dr. Reid, Leishman, Colonel Draper, Monseigneur Leen, Commerson, Dr. Lesur, Pope Hennessy, entre autres. C'est un cauchemar, M. le président, pour les conducteurs qui empruntent ces routes quotidiennement. Merci, donc, aux ministres concernés de s'assurer que ces rues, que j'ai mentionnées précédemment, ainsi que d'autres, soient remises en état dans un délai raisonnable car c'est la moindre des choses que de permettre aux citadins de Beau Bassin de pouvoir circuler sur des

routes en parfait état. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'ils sont triplement des *taxpayers* : impôts, *road tax*, et aussi la taxe immobilière.

Je vous remercie.

**Mr Speaker:** Minister!

**Mr Quirin:** Ministre des Collectivités locales ou celui de l'Infrastructure nationale ou du développement communautaire, *either or*.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Member, give one name!

**Mr Quirin:** Ma requête concerne le mauvais état des routes à Beau Bassin. J'ai adressé ma requête justement, à vous, en tant que ministre des Collectivités locales et aussi à mon ami, le ministre de l'Infrastructure...

Donc, choisissez, lequel qui veut bien répondre.

**Mr Speaker:** Ok. Both Ministers I think can reply.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I would advise the hon. Member to put it through the Citizen Support Unit (CSU) which will have a look.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(8.15 p.m.)

### **CAMP YOLOFF SOCIAL COMMUNITY CENTRE**

#### **– RENOVATION WORKS & UPGRADING**

**Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):** Merci, M. le président, ma requête s'adresse au ministre de l'Egalité du genre et du bien-être de la famille, qui est responsable également des centres communautaires à travers l'île Maurice.

En fait, le centre communautaire de Camp Yoloff est dans un état totalement délabré *and it leaks when there is rain. So, I will humbly ask the Minister to look into it and to expedite matters.*

*Thank you.*

**The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah):**

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform this House that, indeed, when it comes to the renovation works and upgrading of Camp Yoloff Social Community Centre, there is a budget of Rs5 m. already allocated to that project. The town council of Port Louis is giving us a helping hand in the design of the project and as soon as the design phase is completed, bids are going to be launched for the construction phase. That construction phase is expected to take from 6 to 9 months.

Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. David!

(8.17 p.m.)

**OLD MOKA ROAD, PLAINE LAUZUN - FOOTPATH**

**Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):** Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Infrastructure nationales du Développement communautaire, l'honorable Hurreeram.

M. le ministre, au niveau de la Old Moka Road, à Plaine Lauzun, à l'endroit où a été installé l'un des pilotes de supportage des rails du Métro Express, une partie du trottoir n'a pas été rétablie, ce qui représente un réel danger pour les nombreux piétons qui empruntent cette route très passante. Je précise que cette situation a été remontée récemment via le portail en ligne de la *Citizen Support Unit* (CSU), mais vu le danger, et en particulier, avec la reprise des écoles la semaine prochaine, puis-je demander au ministre de traiter cette requête avec urgence.

Je partage une photo de l'endroit avec quelques détails supplémentaires pour faciliter la tâche du ministère.

Merci.

**The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram):** We will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Nagalingum!

(8.18 p.m.)

**ROSE HILL MARKET – CLEANING**

**Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill):** Merci, M. le président. M. le président, permettez-moi, à travers vous, d'attirer l'attention du ministre des Collectivités locales sur une pétition qui circule actuellement concernant le marché de Rose Hill. En effet, les maraîchers, ayant été notifiés que l'administration municipale compte dorénavant fermer le marché les jeudis pour cause de nettoyage, ils ont objecté tout en accueillant favorablement le projet de nettoyage. Il faut comprendre que les maraîchers n'ont pas travaillé pendant le confinement et ils sont aujourd'hui dans une situation financière difficile. Aussi, les conséquences de cette fermeture hebdomadaire peuvent entraîner des inconvénients publics en général et aux maraîchers en particulier.

Les marchés ferment normalement les dimanches après-midis, temps qui peut être utilisé pour le nettoyage. Ils se demandent, par ailleurs, qu'arrivera-t-il si certaines cérémonies nationales tombent un vendredi tout comme, par exemple, le Maha Shivaratri, le Cavadee ou Eid, entre autres, quand le public doit s'approvisionner la veille et soit le jeudi en produits essentiels pour cette occasion.

M. le président, les maraîchers trouvent plus raisonnable de fermer les marchés le jeudi après-midi et non toute la journée. Les équipes de nettoyage auront amplement le temps pour le faire. Je demande au ministre de voir avec le maire à la municipalité de Rose Hill de faire le nécessaire.

Je vous remercie.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, during the COVID-19, we took the opportunity to clean all the Markets and Market Fairs as well. They were in a terrible state. So, we have cleaned them, but the work will need to go on. Anyway, I will talk to the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill to see how we can sort it out. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Juman!

(8.19 p.m.)

#### **IBRAHIM ABDULLAH MARKET FAIR, CITE MARTIAL – MARAÎCHÉS – SELF-EMPLOYED ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

**Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):** Merci, M. le président. Ma requête est adressée à l'honorable ministre des Finances. Suite à une visite que j'ai effectuée en compagnie des députés, les honorables Abbas Mamode et

Osman Mahomed, à la section artisanale du marché central ce matin et samedi j'ai été à la foire Ibrahim Abdullah, à Cité Martial, j'aimerais attirer votre attention sur le fait que ces maraîchers n'arrivent pas du tout à travailler. Certaines échoppes restent même fermées, puisqu'il n'y a pas au marché central des touristes, donc, pas de clients, pas de clients à la foire Cité Martial aussi. Les deux députés précités se joignent à moi pour vous lancer un pressant appel, M. le ministre, pour que, premièrement, ces maraîchers ainsi que d'autres marchands des foires qui se retrouvent dans la même situation, soient exemptés du loyer mensuel du mars 2020, qui est déjà fait jusqu'au mois d'avril, et de l'étendre jusqu'au novembre 2020.

Deuxièmement, ces maraîchers et leurs employés sont techniquement sans emploi, Je fais un appel au ministre, s'il peut étendre le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* pour eux et pour leurs employés jusqu'à ce que les affaires reviennent à la normale, peut-être dans un mois ou deux. Je compte sur le ministre. Vraiment, c'est un drame de voir ces personnes qui ne travaillent pas du tout, que ce soit à la foire ou au marché central.

Merci.

**The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (Dr. R. Padayachy):** M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour cette question. Je vais travailler dessus, avoir un peu plus de précision concernant cette requête et revenir avec une réponse précise sur ce dossier.

Merci.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

(8.21 p.m)

#### **BALFOUR, BEAU BASSIN - LARCENY**

**Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière):** Merci, M. le président. J'attire l'attention du Premier ministre sur le nombre croissant de *larceny with breaking* dans la région de Balfour, à Beau Bassin.

Le *Neighbourhood Watch* et les habitants de cette région m'ont fait part de leur crainte pour la sécurité des *seniors* et de tous les habitants et ont adressé une demande au directeur du *Police Main Command and Control Centre (PMCCC)* pour l'installation de caméras de surveillance *Safe City* sur les rues...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Ms Foo Kune:** ...sur les rues Bougainville, Shand, Gaëtan Raynal et André Moutia. A cet effet, ils ont signé une pétition et je vais déposer une copie à l'Assemblée. Je demande à ce que leur requête puisse être accédée pour renforcer la sécurité à Beau Bassin. Je vous remercie.

**The Prime Minister:** Je suis très content que l'honorable membre apprécie l'investissement qu'on est en train de faire dans le projet de *Safe City*.

*(Interruptions)*

Et je dois dire la raison. Au moins sur ce sujet, nous sommes sur la même longueur d'onde. Evidemment, je passerai le message au Commissaire de Police en ce qui concerne la criminalité et toutes les mesures qu'on peut prendre, bien sûr, pour prévenir la criminalité.

Merci.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(8.23 p.m.)

#### **KALI ROAD, MELVILLE & GOODLANDS – ROAD RESURFACING**

**Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management.

I have received numerous complaints from the inhabitants of Melville and Goodlands regarding the abject condition of the road known as Kali Road, which connects these two villages.

As per my information, the contract for the resurfacing of this road had already been allocated to a firm in a recent past. But, sadly, to date, the work has not been undertaken; on the contrary, the situation has seriously worsened after the layer of asphalt was removed and replaced by a layer of crusher run. As expected, after each heavy rainfall an increasing number of potholes have inevitably appeared on the road. These potholes have regrettably led to a few serious road accidents, especially among cyclists, motorcyclists and even pedestrians.

I am making an appeal to the Minister to do the needful in regard to the prompt resurfacing of the road, the installation of street lightings and the looping of thick roadside bushes so as to ensure the safety and security of the road users.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll pass on the message to the local authorities.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

(8.24 p.m.)

#### **NEW TRUNK ROAD, PLAINE LAUZUN - WASTES**

**Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):** Merci, M. le président. Ma requête est adressée au ministre de *Land Transport* et au *DPM*, ministre de l'Énergie et des Utilités publiques également. Depuis la construction d'infrastructures pour le Métro, des débris en termes de terre et de parpaing ont été laissés sur place à la *New Trunk Road* à Plaine Lauzun de même qu'à Camp Chapelon à côté du terrain de football. C'est un vrai *eyesore* et cela représente une vraie menace pour la santé. De plus, comme une vingtaine de maisons du quartier ne sont pas raccordées au système de tout à l'égout, ces monticules de terre et de débris retiennent les eaux usées dégageant une odeur nauséabonde. Déjà il y a eu deux ou trois cas de Dengue dans cette région récemment. Je demanderai donc aux deux ministres s'ils pourraient faire enlever ces débris et raccorder ces maisons au système de tout à l'égout car il y va de la santé des habitants.

Je vous remercie.

**The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** I will, for my part, Mr Speaker, Sir, certainly apprise Larsen and Toubro, the contractor, of this situation and request them to do the needful to ease this problem.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

(8.25 p.m.)

#### **DR. A. G. JEETOO HOSPITAL - GENERATOR**

**Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):**

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to raise an issue addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and it concerns Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital.

In Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, there is an old generator which is at the backyard of the hospital and at least once a week the generator has to be switched on for maintenance purposes and the problem is that this generator is extremely noisy, it is above the decibel permitted level under the Environment Protection Act and it is in the middle of a densely populated residential area. And now even at night for no reason this generator is switched on and this is causing a lot of inconvenience to the inhabitants of the region.

So, may I ask the hon. Minister to take up the matter with the responsible officer at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and maybe his colleague at the Ministry of Environment to find a solution because this is causing a lot of inconvenience for the residents?

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Thank you, hon. Member, to have raised this issue with me.

The generator is under the Electrical Services Division of the Ministry. So, I'll take up this matter and find out what solution can be brought.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(8.27 p.m.)

**PAUL & VIRGINIE STREET, PORT LOUIS – TWO-WAY TRAFFIC****Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):**

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. It is following representations made by inhabitants of Lenepveu Street which is in Constituency No. 2. May I request the Minister to see with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit if that part of Paul et Virginie Street which links Magon Street and Sir Edgar Laurent Street, can be converted into a two-way traffic so that the residents can have easy access to their residence in Lenepveu Street rather than having to make a detour of nearly half a mile which causes delay in their daily activities.

Thank you.

**The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo):** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will certainly convey the suggestion made by the hon. Member to the Traffic

Management and Road Safety Unit. Of course, they will ultimately have to take the decision after making the necessary survey and study.

**Mr Speaker:** No other matter to be entertained.

*At 8.29 p.m. the Assembly, was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 30 June 2020 at 11.30 a.m.*