



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 24 JUNE 2019

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Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 17 of 2019

Sitting of 24 June 2019

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Declaration of Assets (Amendment) Bill 2019 (No. XI of 2019). (In Original)
- (b) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 110 of 2019)
- (c) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 111 of 2019)
- (d) The Value Added Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 112 of 2019)

B. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands

Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

The Annual Report of the Statutory Bodies Family Protection Fund for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2017.

C. Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

The Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 109 of 2019)

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2019. (Government Notice No. 113 of 2019)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I 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 rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Declaration of Assets (Amendment) Bill (No. XI of 2019) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL 2019

(NO. X OF 2019)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill 2019 (No. X of 2019).

Question again proposed.

(11.33 a.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me time this morning.

Madam Speaker, when this Government took office in 2015, there were numerous challenges before us and some of them greater than we could have anticipated.

Now that we near the end of our mandate, it is good that all Members on both sides of the House have taken time to go over these last five years. Everyone will have his opinion, of course, but the final say is, as usual, with the people.

When I took office in late 2015, I knew that my first challenge was CT Power. Since August 2001 - and it is good that it be placed on record so that everyone knows what we are talking about - the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities at that time, that is, the MSM/MMM Government, had commissioned a study to set up a 100 MW coal power plant at Pointe aux Caves. It was for a coal power plant and at Pointe aux Caves, nowhere else.

Then there was the report, which was approved. Out of the blue, in 2005, there appear a company formed by printers who come and bid without being asked, without knowing where they come out. They come with a bid, they say: 'we want to do CT Power', this coal power plant which had been commissioned by the MSM/MMM Government. They say 'we are going to do it'. And in 2005/2006, the Government accepts it. Within three years, I have given the details in my statement I made, so I will not go over all this, but we know land is leased to CEB and ultimately to be leased to CT Power. On 23 December 2008, Government, the Labour Party/PMSD Government gives a Christmas gift to CT Power, a beautiful Christmas gift which lands, I was about to say 'through the chimneys', but I do not think it is very appropriate to use 'chimneys' when we talk of CT Power. CEB was to procure the coal. Of course, they would refund. CT Power was to produce electricity from the coal procured by CEB and it would sell it at Rs4.58 kWh. That is the price of 2005. Imagine, today, what it would be, because it was indexed.

This was nothing but a sweetheart deal. I do not know who was the sweetheart, but it was a sweetheart deal, and CEB was to build a substation near that power plant for Rs300 m. They did not go to Cabinet, they do not go through tender procedures etc., we hear some people talking. It is good to know that it was on the eve, that is, 22 September, that it was sent to CEB and CEB promptly signed it on 23 December. Very, very strange indeed!

In January 2013, there is the EIA licence, with the famous Condition 15, that they have to show their financial standing. The project cost was USD200 m., Rs6 billion. By 2013, they signed a new document, USD200 m. had reached USD348 m. There were justifications for this because of the environmental standards that had to be met. But it was USD348 m. as against USD200 m. There was one problem. CT Power had no money, and this is why Clause 15 had been inserted by the Environment Tribunal. It was supposed to have USD40 m. as equity, as shares. CEB was to bring in Rs300 m. CEB was to give CT Power Rs300 m. as equity and CT Power would put in USD30 m. So, it needed funding, and in order to get funding, there was a clause in the Power Purchase Agreement which CEB had signed with CT Power, that there was a condition that all these deals should be effective only if and when Government signs what is called an Implementation Agreement. What is an Implementation Agreement? Fairly and squarely, Government would guarantee all the debts of the CEB because with that document, if signed by Government, then, CT Power can go around to all the banks and will obtain all the funding that is required, so that you do not need money to do it, you need a paper signed by Government. Everything was done in secret. Not

even Cabinet was made aware of what was being done, a bit like Betamax, and we have heard a lot about Betamax. The PMSD was in Government. I say that because I am still startled at reading what the Leader of the Opposition said last year in the course of the debates on the Budget when he said he will always fight for transparency. Because that is the classical example, whether it be CT Power or Betamax, of things being done secretly and in an opaque manner. For CT Power, it was supposedly a fast track committee chaired by the Prime Minister. For Betamax, it was a committee chaired by the now Leader of the Opposition. Whether CT Power or Betamax, Labour Party and PMSD were the common factors.

It was important that CT Power shows its money, the proof of its financial standing, that they were not just small printers in some dark alleyway of Kuala Lumpur because or else we would not expose their money. We considered that CT Power had not satisfied this condition. The then Minister of Finance told me: ‘I am not satisfied that Condition 15 has been met’. I listened to him, I looked at the contractual documents and I said, ‘There is a problem; I shall look at the Attorney General’, who gave me advice. And what I did was to say I am not going to sign.

I have to be very fair here because these are also matters of record. The then Minister of Finance, now the Leader of the Opposition, had made a more or less similar statement in March 2014, a few months before he is going to resign, and so had my predecessor, the Deputy Prime Minister in July, 2014, so that there can be no debate. We were all in agreement that CT Power had to show its money, and up to today, we have not seen the colour of their bottom dollar cent. CT Power went to the Supreme Court. I was comfortable about their case, but the Supreme Court held otherwise. The Supreme Court felt that CT Power had sufficient financial standing and that the reasons invoked by the Minister were unreasonable, irrational and in breach of the legitimate expectation of the applicant.

With regard to me, the Supreme Court told us that my decision not to sign that agreement are misconceived, unreasonable, irrational and in breach of the legitimate expectation of the applicant. Government did not agree and we went to the Privy Council. The Privy Council has held that the Supreme Court was wrong and that the Judges had, I quote –

“fallen into error.”

And it is good that I, again, state what the Privy Council had said –

“(...) entering into the Implementation Agreement would involve a commitment (...) requiring substantial payments of public money. There is inevitably a possible political dimension to such questions which it would be legitimate to take into account.”

I read this because CT Power, before the Privy Council, had said that it was a political hot potato which I could not handle. I can handle hot potatoes, of course, and I love them, but I am not here to give a culinary course. But that was their case and the Privy Council set them right. I am entitled as a Minister to take into account political considerations when taking a technical decision. The Privy Council says -

“In the present case, it appears that the incoming government, after the general election of December 2014, may have been less convinced than the former government that the project was a good idea and that the commitment to be given in the Implementation Agreement was justified.”

In other words, that the political decision we took was justified, and this is a finding of a Court, the highest Court of Appeal of Mauritius. All right, CT Power was over, there is still the case for damages. We shall see that, we shall not comment on it because it is *sub judice*, of course. But the end result is that whether we like it or not, 100 MW of power had disappeared with my decision. We had decided not to proceed with CT Power. How are we going to replace it? Because the country needs electricity, the country needs to produce electricity.

My predecessor, the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Rashid Beebeejaun, had said on, at least, two occasions in Parliament that his problem was that if we end CT Power, we would be facing a shortage of electricity. The Leader of the MMM was very gloomy. Let me hasten to open a parenthesis that the Leader of the MMM has been very kind to let me know this morning, through hon. Bhagwan, that he would not be able to attend today, and I believe he informed the Prime Minister as well. I say that so that no unsavoury comments be made regarding his absence. It is good that everyone knows that he has a problem; we don't need to go into all this. But, still, I am going to speak about him.

The Leader of the MMM was very gloomy. He prophesied that, with the end of CT Power, by 2017 we would be facing blackouts. On the eve of Divali 2015, *L'Express* had put up its big title on the first page, 'Blackout'. So, an atmosphere was created in the country that this Government could not be trusted, and that has been the cornerstone of the speeches of the

Opposition ever since we took power: we did not know what we were doing, we cannot be trusted, we are amateurs. Even in the context of this Budget Speech. Where are the blackouts up to today? Blackouts were to come in 2017, then the goalpost was moved to 2018. We still have light. Oh, it has not been easy! I grant that. The technical people were there to make sure that we did not have the blackout.

But let us be clear about MMM policy. CT Power was a target, as hon. Uteem said - and I shall come back to this. I have said that this was the policy since 2001 for a coal power plant at Pointe aux Caves so that it is not surprising that we hear hon. Uteem clearly saying that the reservation of the MMM about CT Power was because it was an unsolicited bid and the *bailleurs de fonds* were not inclined to fund a project based on such procedures. True, that was the MMM stand. In other words, had it been done in a regular manner, with a level playing field, the MMM had no problem. There was a division, but I don't want to go into discussion of the politburo of the MMM. But we know, it is public knowledge that hon. Bhagwan was against, whether CT Power or whatever, he was against. There was a little bit of division of opinion within the MMM on this issue. But that was the only reservation, that is, the procedure, the way it was being done. They had no problem with coal. We have a problem with coal. Coal is the worst pollutant that you can find.

If you are going to have a coal power plant of the CT Power type, Pointe aux Caves is the only place where you can do it. And we have heard that debate within the MMM and even outside of the MMM. It is cheap, the jetty at Pointe aux Caves is easy to access, then, the health and whatever is affected. To be fair to the MMM, to us, at that time, 2005, climate change, environment was not as high on the political agenda as it is today. You see the last European elections and you see how high it has become on the political agenda. With the end of CT Power, we must cater principally for peak periods. We must maintain a safe capacity gap to ensure supply.

On 03 March 2005, the then Leader of the Opposition, Member for Stanley/Rose Hill, put me a PNQ, where, again, very frankly, he did not use indirect language and he set out his fears for peak periods. I was the subject of, at least, four PNQs on electricity supply issues so that all my weekends at the beginning of 2015 were very busy weekends, I remember. But there have been no blackouts, and I must place on record the prudent planning by the technicians of the CEB, at that time, Mr Gérard Hébrard, the new Chairman of the CEB and all the Board members, some of them, in particular, who really put their minds into preventing blackouts. They steered that organisation in the right direction and I would be

failing in my duty if I did not mention that, especially that they have been the subject of constant attacks during these last four years. The new General Manager also deserves mention, he is in an acting capacity, but he has continued the direction which had been set before the departure of Mr Hébrard. So, what did we do? The first thing was St Louis. We revived the St Louis Project, which had been abandoned. The state-of-the-art engineering from Scandinavia, what didn't we hear at that time? Anything under the sky that you could think of we heard about St Louis! And although the Opposition within the House was tempered by the normal rules of procedure, although the criticism was which they believed in good faith should be done, the fact is that this gave wind to the sails of several persons who were set to delay the project through attempts at judicial intervention. At least five cases, Madam Speaker, we had to writ. All the five were found to be frivolous, but were designed to delay the project because then we would be short of power. That was the design of these people. The cases were entered in Court, the cases were entered in the Environmental Appeal Tribunal, and they lost all of them.

The St Louis Project was completed, Rs4.2 billion, no cost overrun, and it was completed within contractual time limits. I don't know if there are many other projects of that magnitude which have not met cost overruns or which have not exceeded the contractual time. Today, nobody talks of St Louis. All these predictions of gloom and doom, that people were going to die with St Louis, that the motorway would be covered with smog, that cars would be crashing into one another, where is it? Where are the people? And that has been what the Government has sustained since the beginning; CT Power, Electricity, St Louis being good examples. You start a project, there are people who come under the guise of being NGOs, they stop the project, they delay it, and then they say: 'You see, they can't deliver.' And when we deliver, they keep quiet, they disappear in thin air.

Then, the second alternative was clean energy. I thought I had lost all capacity of being startled by the Leader of the Opposition; he has proved me wrong. This is what he said in his speech, a few days ago, on the Budget, and I am reading from the unrevised, of course. There are certain grammatical which we will not take into consideration –

“If renewable energy is going to take funds out of adapting our country, our nation, our economy, agriculture, our towns and villages to effects of climate change (...)”

Just hear well what the Chief of the alternative Government is telling us, is telling the international community.

“If renewable energy is going to take funds out of adapting our country (...) to climate change, better put money where there is an adaptation to protect our economy and our people.”

It is not a question of money, it is a question of life and death of our island. Our island is being eroded, we are suffering the brunt of climate change; we are the innocent victims of climate change. We are saying better put money where there is an adaptation to protect our economy and our people if technology allows it, if we can spare the money, and this is my fight about gas turbines. What does all this mean? Well, first of all, it is gibberish. What is paradoxical, and I think he has not understood everything about gas turbines and I am sure it must be my fault because I should have explained it more clearly. He has no fight against coal, the most polluting fuel in electricity generation. This, he has no fight; his fight is against gas turbine, which is when it's going to use LNG will be using the least pollutant fossil fuel that exists. We have an international obligation to comply with our undertakings taken at the COP 21, and we are not the only one to have done it. 146 countries signed this.

Trump is reneging his undertakings, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition does not think that we should do like Trump. Well he may, it is his right, but it would be suicide for Mauritius. I personally worked with hon. Dayal when he was Minister of Environment, and he went to the conference in November/December 2015. We worked together on the intended nationally determined contribution which we submitted at the conference. Let me take the opportunity to congratulate him. He did a very good job in Paris. He was not the only one, he had a team. Do you realise what our efforts, hon. Dayal and myself have done to our country? The Leader of the Opposition, I correct him, because what he has done is dangerous. Our efforts have brought us Rs1 billion, which we are receiving from the Green Climate Fund set up at that time.

In 2015, with the support of the UNDP, Mauritius presented a project to the Green Climate Fund. Mauritius was among the first batches of country to receive a grant of USD 28 million. This will finance battery energy storage, smart grid, mini grids at Agalega, rooftop solar PV, development of a national green code, capacity building at MARENA and the URA. This is what has been done. This is why it is dangerous to say we use only the spare money and my fight is against gas turbines. At least his predecessor, the one who was Leader of the Opposition before him, hon. Bérenger, he had the courage to use frank, honest and even candid language. I remember the PQ of March 2015 when he told me: “Listen, I have experience, why don't you have an international tender which would include coal technology,

LNG, HFO, etc.?” But if you have such tender, of course, coal technology will be the best, the lowest tenderer because coal is the cheapest that you can have, but it kills. If we are going - and I think we should patriotically close that debate - to still dream of increasing coal, then forget about Green Climate Fund, forget about International Solar Alliance, forget about European Union support and forget your country. That is all! Good thing some people left Government, never to come back, I hope!

In 2018, coal represented almost 52% input to produce electricity, and you want to increase? Electricity generation from coal is 40%, and we want to increase? CEB does not use coal, it uses heavy fuel oil, which is fossil fuel, not as pollutant as coal, but pollutant nevertheless. The IPPs of the sugar industry use coal.

There was a great debate under the MSM-MMM Government. At that time, coal was encouraged, and we can see all these lorries which are transporting coal from Port Louis to Omnicane, for instance, the risk that it poses. The IPPs represent a strong financial force in Mauritius, a powerful lobby, and they seem to have tremendous support within certain quarters of the Opposition, and we have got to be very careful when we listen to certain language that is being used.

Statistics Mauritius highlights that the energy sector was the largest contributing sector to gas emissions and accounted for 76% in 2017. We have taken a commitment before the United Nations to achieve 35% renewable energy by 2025 and reduce emissions by 30%. Between 2004 and 2005, whatever Maurice Ile Durable could have said and done, the fact is that only one solar plant was set up. The report of the National Energy Commission of 2013, the Manraj Commission, had been shelved. There was no political resolve in spite of good efforts made by people working within the Maurice Ile Durable. And I have in mind, hon. Osman Mahomed, whatever be our political divides, who worked genuinely in good faith to progress renewable energy in Mauritius, but nothing was done because there was no political resolve.

As from 2015, all this changed. Fiscal incentives, VAT reductions, I set up the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency, they are working on standards, fundings and strategies. Now, there is a call for new proposal for a National Scheme for Emerging Innovative Renewable Energy Technologies for small units not exceeding 200 kW capacity, eight solar farms of a total capacity of 56 MW. In 2014, there was only one, SARA KO. These solar

farms are at Mont Choisy, Petite Retraite, l'Esperance, Beau Champ, Solitude, Queen Victoria and Henrietta. Rs3.6 billion investments!

One other project for 4.88 MW is in the process of implementation. For Henrietta, a creation of CEB Green Energy, 15 MW solar PV farm to generate 3GW/hours annually to provide electricity, solar electricity, not from coal, from the sun, to 20,000 households. Just one, Henrietta, for 20,000 households! And, in fact, what has emerged is that it is functioning better than the others because apparently the climate in Henrietta is ideal for efficient production of solar energy, and this is why, later, I shall come to what we are doing in Rose Belle.

And what did we hear about the CEB subsidiaries? Today, they are functioning, one or two not functioning as well as the others, but they are functioning, and the example is what is being done by CEB Green Energy.

The wind farm at Plaine des Roches, we have put Medium-Scale Net-Metering Schemes, 3 Small-Scale Distribution Generation Schemes for households. We received 3,000 applications and 1,209 installations have been commissioned, at least 4.3 kW by December 2019. There are a series of other schemes. Co-operative federations receive a one-off grant of Rs10,000 per kW up to a maximum of Rs50,000. SMEs for installation of 2,000 roof-mounted solar PV kits of 2 kW capacity each. Waste to energy power plant in the pipeline, upgrading of Sans Souci Dam, and now Rose Belle, a 15 MW solar farm in collaboration with Rose Belle. The Minister of Agriculture and myself are working. CEB and Rose Belle Sugar Estate - their Board - to maximise the land at Rose Belle, use that land to produce energy, and vegetable plantation can continue under the solar panels. All this is being done. We are going to put up a 1 MW solar PV park at Grenade in Rodrigues. Combined with the 1.2 kW wind energy generation, it will bring the total of renewable energy capacity in Rodrigues to 2.2 kW. But the cornerstone, the pride of achievement surely must be the 'Home Solar' project. Low-income families get solar roof top kits/PV kits, free of charge for 20 years, being given 50 kilowatt/50 units of electricity free of charge. This project, Madam Speaker, has pride of place in my heart and in my mandate because it was selected first among 86 entries by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) for financing of USD10 m. The pilot phase has been completed with 1,000 solar panels already installed. Did we hear the Opposition on that? Not one word. 1,000 solar panels installed free of charge and, Madam Speaker, gender equity in energy, 46% of the beneficiaries are female headed households. We are talking of

30% women on Board of Directors, in Parliament, in local authorities, yes. But what about these poor low income women who head a household? There is one case in Bramsthan. The United Nations came and made a clip on this lady who was in poverty. With one roof top panel with free electricity, she started her own little business. Today, after three years, the United Nations shows the progress that she has made economically for her family. She now has a business which feeds her whole family and she is now no longer qualified to be on the Social Register of Mauritius. This is the fight against poverty, and this is what has got to be done if we want to lift people out of poverty.

So, Mauritius is quoted as an example in all international fora and in Mauritius as well. The good, serious NGOs have contributed a lot to change the culture attitudes on this subject. The realisation by countries like France, India and China that renewable energy was energy of the future has helped Mauritius as well. We have the increasing influence of IRENA and the International Solar Alliance of which France, India and Mauritius are founding members. And, of course, I can understand that there are people who don't like hearing this. All that has been achieved in the field of renewable energy only in four years! This is extraordinary.

Let me come to the sugar industry. That is an alternative to CT Power as well. The sugar industry is a long-time partner of CEB. The production of electricity is from a mix of coal and bagasse, predominantly coal, but also some bagasse. The use of bagasse concerns thousands of small and medium planters. Bagasse energy is reducing because cane, there is less and less. What is the problem? The problem is that the sugar cane of planters, small planters, was being sent to the millers, who burnt it to make sugar and then they used the bagasse to produce energy, which they sell to the CEB. The price which CEB pays for bagasse has varied from Rs1.89 to Rs4.35; CEB pays to the miller. But the IPP which receives all that money does not pay one cent to the planter, although it is using his bagasse that produces electricity. Something must be done.

From crop 2018, CEB paid Rs55 m. as bagasse transfer price. After the calculation, that becomes seven cents per kilowatt-hour, which was paid to small planters. Then, in 2015, the Minister of Agriculture came with the Sugar Cane Sustainability Fund.

For the crops 2015-2017, planters were remunerated, this time, at the rate of Rs1,100 ton of sugar over and above the proceeds of sugar, equivalent to some 18 cents per kilowatt-hour. And in crop 2018, planters were remunerated at the rate of Rs2,500 ton of sugar over

and above the proceeds of sugar, equivalent to 40 kWh. And for this crop 2019, they will receive Rs2.19 per kilowatt-hour of bagasse energy, from 7 cents to Rs2.19. That is the partnership between the sugar industries, the small planters and the CEB. Of course, as the Leader of the MMM said, “Somebody will have to pay”. But what about our solidarity with the community of small planters, without whom we would not be there today? So, that is the point about it.

I now come to cane trash - *la paille canne*. Normally, after the crop, the trash cane, the *la paille canne* is left on the fields. In 1997, there was a contract which was signed with Alteo. It expired on 21 December 2018. We were paying Rs4.32 per kilowatt-hour for coal plus 21 cents coal levy and Rs4.12 for bagasse, excluding bagasse transfer price of 22.5 cents, which made an average of Rs4.20 per kilowatt-hour. The contract was 20 years, but this is what people fail to understand. This is a contract where there was a renewable clause for five years, automatic renewal unless two years before you wrote and you said if you are going to extend, we want to renegotiate, and that is what we did in 2016. We said no automatic renewal; we are going to negotiate fresh terms because there is one thing. If we do not renegotiate, then they continue, but we need bagasse energy, the country needs energy from renewable sources and we need electricity. Not renewing the contract would have made us lose 100 GWh energy from bagasse.

Alteo holds a meeting with the Ministry, and I am present at that time, 2015 or so, and Alteo offers, without us asking, a new power plant for 50% coal and 50% bagasse and trash. Bagasse is declining, trash is still there, and it is trash. So, we looked at this innovative technology, very new, very innovative, and we said let us have two negotiations. One is for the extension of the old contract and the second is for the new power plant.

For the new project, it is a steering committee composed of the Ministry of Energy, our Director General, the Ministry of Finance, of course, the Ministry of Agro-Industry, of course, and the MCIA, the Environment, CEB, and they will negotiate with Alteo. This new project is still negotiating, they are still discussing and now we have taken support from the African Development Bank, the African Legal Support Facility plus legal and financial advisers are discussing with external advisers of Alteo - I don't know what is happening. No agreement has been reached yet, hence a certain confusion which arose a few days ago. For commercial terms, a restricted negotiating committee has been set up, it is composed of the Ministry of Energy, CEB, MCIA, Business Mauritius because of the national impact of that agreement and, of course, Alteo.

At the same time, in 2016, CEB, therefore, discusses extension and, on 21 August 2018, AEL comes with a commercial proposal. The idea emerges that let us use cane trash in that extended agreement, let us use cane trash as a pilot project. And to give you an instance of what we are talking about, cane trash used in the extended contract will represent 1.7%, that is, a production of 3 GW over 170. It is experimental to test what will happen, what are the financial implications of the use of cane trash so that it helps us to negotiate the new contract.

Alteo Energy proposed - I am going to give the tariff so that we know what we are talking about - 495 per kilowatt-hour for coal energy, Rs3.01 for bagasse, Rs6.03 for cane trash energy. On 31 August 2018, I go to Cabinet and I set out all the paraphernalia of the matter, and I informed Government of the discussions which are being held for the Alteo's proposal to set up the new power plant and also of the existing agreement with Alteo to be extended from 2019 to 2022 and the works are on terms to be mutually agreed. Government, Cabinet agreed to my proposal.

On 07 December 2018, the negotiating panel recommends that cane trash energy should be remunerated at the same tariff as bagasse energy. That is what the negotiating panel, on 07 December 2018, recommends: trash energy same as bagasse. Don't forget, there is no yardstick to know how to remunerate trash energy. So, they use the next best, that is, bagasse.

Alteo informed CEB that there would be no incentive to use cane trash if cane trash is to be remunerated on the same basis as bagasse because when you burn your cane, the bagasse is in the mill and you use it to do energy whereas for cane trash, you have to collect it, you have to bale it and you have to transport it, and all this costs money. That is the argument of Alteo.

So, on 18 February, at my Ministry - but I am not present - there is a meeting chaired by the Director General of my Ministry, together with the General Manager of CEB, other technical staff as well as Alteo, and this is following a decision of the Board of CEB. Finally, the committee recommends to CEB a coal energy tariff of Rs4.45 kilowatt-hour indexed on local inflation - that is important - and not indexed as before, and the CIF coal price. A bagasse energy tariff of Rs2.80 per kilowatt-hour indexed on local inflation at 2018 base price and it also recommends cane trash energy tariff of 4.45 for that experimental period of three years, that is, for these 3 GWh per year, 1.7% of the production. And, for the first time,

we will be able to see how cane trash behaves as biomass for electricity production and, if the experience is positive, then we are ahead for a bright future for *la paille canne*. But, Madam Speaker, what is extraordinary in that deal is that, for the first time, the IPPs will pay the suppliers of trash Rs1 per kilowatt-hour. Very marginal for this project, because it is only 1.7%, but the principle is here. Before this, for the bagasse, the IPPs were not paying anything; it was CEB that was paying. But now, IPPs are going to pay Rs1 per kilowatt-hour. It is a starting point, but it is a starting point. The average price for coal and bagasse under the extended contract is Rs3.86 per kilowatt-hour, as compared to Rs4.72 under the previous agreement. This will result in a savings of Rs140 m. annually on average for the next three years.

So, we will be able to use that money to pay for the bagasse at the same time. That is the calculation which is made. The CEB also plans to run on a combined cycle gas turbine, ultimately running on LNG. Of course, there are discussions as to how it should be financed, but there are no discussions as to the finality. Since 2003, the plans of Government have been to put up this combined cycle gas turbine. There has never been any discussion on this until now because there are people who want to oppose everything that we do. How do you call it? *Nanien pas bon!* Everything was good! Today, even this is not good. When the world is doing it 'No, I have a fight against gas turbine!' Why he has a fight against gas turbine, no one knows, but he has a fight, he does not like gas turbines. There is no reason for any sensible man to have a sort of dislike for gas turbines. I have heard somebody say: "Ah, for peak period, for peak time, you spend so much money". But how do you cater for peak time? Don't you need to spend money? Don't you need a plan? Don't you need additional power? It has existed all the time. Now, gas turbines on a combined cycle running on LNG is state-of-the-art, because LNG is the least pollutant of fossil fuels, as I have said, and is being used more and more. If we don't get into it, then others will take our place.

Without going into the details, let me come to the Betamax issue. It is surprising how lots of things happened between 2006 and 2009. We have heard of CT Power and Betamax also, same *modus*. And you know, in criminal jargon, the *modus operandi* leads you to the criminal. When a burglar has burgled four/five houses, he has a similar *modus operandi*, and the Police use it and they identify who he is. Betamax is the same. 2007! Don't forget 2006, CT Power, Minister Jeetah writes to India to say they won't use Prabhat Shipping. The Minister of Finance, then, chairs a Committee restricted to the price and he asked the BDO to advise him on the price. Hon. Uteem talked of Betamax and he said that hon. Soodhun had

defended Betamax, as if hon. Soodhun, when a Minister, was the one who was guilty of Betamax. What is extraordinary is that he blames hon. Soodhun and puts in silence his good friend, his acolyte, hon. Jeetah! He does not mention him at all! The Minister defended the contract, he said. He listed the advantages of such a contract. Hon. Soodhun read what he had said in his reply. In the first reply, he says –

“I have received a report which tells me that Betamax is good.”

In a second report, he says –

“I have received a report which tells me that Betamax is bad.”

And then, he says –

“I have received advice that it is legally in order.”

What does hon. Soodhun know about ships, about petrol, double hull cargo? What does he know about whether it is legally in order or not? He is the Minister, he responds to what the officials tell him.

(Interruptions)

But...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, of course! Of course, your problem - the problem is that when they say this, they obliterate completely those who are the real guilty parties in Betamax. And the explanation is not far away! When asking questions on 10 August 2010, the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition - hon. Uteem reads the reply; he should also read the question. Hon. Bérenger - well, in Hansard it is said ‘Mr Bérenger’.

“Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister gets me wrong; we believe it is a positive step forward for Mauritius through Betonix to own an oil tanker.”

So, the MMM was in full agreement with Betamax, and he was not acting on advice. He was acting through his own volition. Hon. Soodhun was acting on advice. He could not do otherwise. Whereas there, it is what he believes –

“(...) it is a positive step forward for Mauritius...”

Patriot!

And he goes on -

“(...) through Betonix to own an oil tanker.”

And he goes on. Sorry, I don't like talking behind the back of people. I am sorry for his affliction, but I must say because I am making my speech.

Madam Speaker: You are quoting from Hansard?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Of course. Also –

“(...) what is done is done.”

(Interruptions)

Gete devan, pas gete dans rétroviseur! What is done is done, it is positive. That was the attitude: CT Power, Betamax, same people, same reactions, same *modus*, and same results! And same culprit!

Betamax also, Implementation Agreement! And what we also forget, which hon. Soodhun also forgets, in 2011, when hon. Soodhun was a Minister, he asked for a report from Forensic Insights and Forensic Insights gave a report - it was headed by Mr Bhadain - setting out all the deficiencies in the Betamax agreement. And hon. Alan Ganoo - he remembers now - made a Press conference to uphold what hon. Soodhun has done. So, those are facts. This is not history; this is memory, and the memory, when it saves us, the writing is there.

In August 2000, there is the *cassure*; in March 2012, there is the Remake. At that time, unknown to the population, is being run a Ponzi Pyramid Scheme. You pay an investor from the money of other investors rather than from your profits. And the profits were being diverted to their own pockets through a web of subsidiaries, including a bank, Super Cash Back Gold, Bramer Property Fund preference shares, high returns and, through a web of agents, they skimmed the country: pensions of retired persons, savings of old people, whatever money. And with a little help from your friends, in 2006, a tax is levied on interests which you receive on your savings account, on your deposits. Paragraph 170 of the 2016 Budget, if ever you ask me whether I am quoting from Hansard. The tax. I have the choice. There I have BAI which is giving me higher rates of interest. Up to now, I have not gone to them because after all people were talking bad about them. Now I have to pay tax when my money is in the bank, but when it is at BAI, I don't have to pay tax. So, what do I do? I go there and, of course, I am paid, because they get more money, they pay the investors, they put it in a web of subsidiaries. Ultimately, Bramer Bank is sending hundreds of millions of

rupees every month abroad. And in December 2010, it is now established, liabilities of the whole group exceed their assets by Rs1.2 billion, in 2013 by Rs12 billion. We hear a lot: Ah, we mismanaged BAI; we didn't know what we were doing, etc.! Usual stuff! Which means, if they had been in power, they would have continued with it? And what would have happened to Mauritius? The plan was to even take Rodrigues. It was an attack on the Mauritian economy. He has gone to wherever!

Up to now, not one case he has lodged in Mauritius except to get some of the assets. In November 2013, the then Leader of the Opposition had sounded the alarm. Even he did not know the depth of the problem, but he knew and everyone knew that money was being diverted through subsidiaries. The ratio was not being satisfied. The International Monetary Fund had raised the alarm. The investments were over the permissible requirements. It is good to note that, as far back as the MSM/MMM Government, and I must mention his name, Sushil Khushiram, who had worked together with me, together with hon. Baloomoody, as lawyers I mean, on the Financial Intelligence Anti-Money Laundering Act, with Iqbal Rajabally - there was a team - young Michael King Fat, we worked together on this. That brought sanity to the financial sector. The Financial Services Commission was set up in 2001. In 2004, we amended the Bank of Mauritius Act; we put a new Bank of Mauritius Act in order to stop and to prevent BAI. But if you are protected in high places and you are able to flourish, so that hon. Uteem for all that he says in a flamboyant tone, I admit, he must admit one thing. The MMM knew that the money of BAI was tainted, they cannot say they did not know, I know because we participated in the discussions, we knew what was happening. I know hon. Osman Mahomed received a contribution from BAI. He can say, "well I didn't know", the benefit of the doubt you have got to give to him; not much, Rs720,000.

Madam Speaker: No...

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am sorry.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have made an affidavit on this. If the hon. Deputy Prime Minister wants, I can give him a copy of this so that he can rectify what he has said.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed, if you have got a point of order, you raise your point of order or you want to have a point of personal explanation. What do you want? You have got a point of order? If you object to what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has said, I will ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to be moderate and not to mention personal things against any hon. Member.

The Deputy Prime Minister: He got me wrong. The facts are there. I was saying that we cannot impeach his good faith because there is no evidence that he knew, that he should have known the origins of the money. Now, he is putting an affidavit, I bow to this, I have no ill intent and if I have hurt him, I am very sorry and I withdraw whatever could have hurt him. I do apologise if I have done that. It is not my way of doing things.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, in 2010, an alliance is concluded, MSM/Labour Party, PMSD also. In June 2011, MSM leaves the Government. In September 2011, ICAC calls Pravind Jugnauth, now Prime Minister, to ICAC. On 24 December 2011, it is amazing how these things happened two days before Christmas: CT Power, Betamax, Pravind Jugnauth. Everything happens 23-24 December. He is arrested, he is charged with sedition. 2012, the President of the Republic, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, now Minister Mentor, resigns from Le Réduit. No need to go into who went to see him, etc., we all know. Then, 2012, Remake! I was all for it, my friends know. I was 100% for the Remake because that was the perfect recipe for Government to work, and it had worked in 2000, and it was going to work. Meeting 01 May 2012, it was clear that the Remake was heading for a resounding victory at the next General Elections. Same conditions. Then, February 2014, we start the Parliament, we have an Opposition and, in April 2014, the Remake is over. I had to take a decision. I resigned from the MMM and I told my friends – and I have many, not only in the MMM, but my friends of the MMM, I have many – “You are doing something which is very wrong. You are going to win the elections.” I thought so because they were very strong. For me, 40 plus 40 did make 80...

(Interruptions)

And 90, but I said “I am going to do it alone. I am going to fight you because I do not agree with this”. The Alliance, Muvman Liberater is formed with a very, very small nucleus - me, Ken Fong, Eddy Boissézon, Anil Gayan, etc. I hear people talking against Anil Gayan and all that. They don't know what sacrifice he has made for this country. Then, the MMM and the Labour Party flounder for some reason, we don't know, each one has got his idea. And after the defeat, and after Muvman Liberater, we will have Mouvement Patriotique, we will have le Renouveau Militant, we will have hon. Ramano, we will have a sorry state of affairs. At the same time, the Remake is off because, according to the leader of the MMM, the accused, Pravind Jugnauth, should have asked for an early trial and should not have raised points of law. I don't know whether the points of law are valid, but it is his right. You cannot break an

alliance because you don't like points of law. But never mind. He is found guilty and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment to be converted into community service order. Let us not forget, and we understand why some people relished at that time, because 12 months imprisonment meant not only community service, cleaning the yard of St James Cathedral, which I am sure he would have done very well - not only this - but disqualification to become, and let us not forget...

(Interruptions)

More than 12 months? I am sorry. It was not 12 months and a day then. So, the Supreme Court allowed the appeal. The DPP appeals to the Privy Council. It is his right! But the reason given was that there was – and I need to say it – a big point of law that had to be thrashed out by their Lordships of the Privy Council. When we look at the statement of case, there is no point of law. When we listen to submissions, there is no big point of law, and when we read the judgment, the Lords tell you it was on the facts of the case, whether the facts gave rise to a conviction. But the appeal came, the results of the appeal came and the appellant – the DPP – lost his appeal. But what is interesting is when hon. Uteem tells us this is *le scandale du siècle*. Government bought a derelict building. Why did he not tell it to Jeetah when they were good pals, good friends, drinking fruit juice at Hennessy Hotel? What did he not tell him: 'you buy a derelict building'. And who was the expert in examining buildings...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem! Hon. Uteem! Hon. Uteem, please! Don't make comments because when you make comments, it attracts comments from the other side and then things become worse in this Chamber.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Obsolete equipment! How does hon. Uteem know the equipment was obsolete? I heard the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor say exactly the other thing the other day. How am I going to know whether the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor is right or hon. Uteem is right? But, at the end of the day, there were experts who did it, there were valuers. The DPP had these reports. If it is true what hon. Uteem has said, do you think the DPP would have hesitated one second to put that on the shoulders of Pravind Jugnauth? So, it is easy to cry out *scandale du siècle*. But give the man a break! After all that he has gone through - and I'll come to the personal emotional issues of this case - you still go on on him?

But the people who are watching us on television, do you think they are fools? Do you think, just because you shout *scandale du siècle*, obsolete equipment...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, don't interrupt please! I have said that comments on this side will attract comments on the other side as well.

The Deputy Prime Minister: The fact is that MedPoint is not only a mere legal victory for Pravind Jugnauth. It is a victory for his Party, yes, for the Party Alliance, yes, but also for Government and for the country as a whole. And to say things like: 'I am very happy for you, hon. Prime Minister, but the fact remains that your sister, your brother-in-law have benefited by selling a building which was worth Rs75 m. for Rs144 m. and this money came out of our pocket. That is what we are saying *jackpot, zotte meme acheter, zotte meme vender*. This should go down in history as revealing the true face of the MMM, through hon. Uteem.

(interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

(interruptions)

No comments on this side!

The Deputy Prime Minister: I also need to say just a few words because I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will talk about it. Hon. Uteem quotes on the Central Bank issue. Yes, Erdogan wanted to use the Central Bank's reserves. I also went through the internet and I saw the same source of information as he saw. But what he forgets to say is that Erdogan wanted to finance his bank deficit. Economists and financials will argue for ever and ever, but never mind! India, when hon. Uteem says: well, the ex-Minister, Piyush Goyal, etc. he gives the impression – I know he does not say it – that Piyush Goyal was involved in finance. Piyush Goyal, I know him very well. He was the Minister of Energy at that time, and I had constant dealings with him. In India, we were together in the International Solar Alliance. Yes. What he says is: 'ah, the Reserve Bank is sitting on 9 trillion Indian Rupees. So, some of it should go to help the Budget. Arun Jaitley said the same thing. He said: alleviate poverty with some of this money. It gave rise to a debate, and now I understand - I have not read yet, let me wait for the final communiqué – that there is an arrangement which is going to be made because the case of the BJP is that how can you have 9 trillion Indian Rupees

fructifying and you do not give a little bit of that to the poor? Make sense! I am quoting from the Hindustan Times of 19 June 2019 to say all that I have said. I said that so that I am not accused of plagiarism or whatever.

Let me say on LNG because time has run out. My Ministry is not in charge of LNG. I am interested just because I was put as Chair of the Inter-ministerial Committee to deal with LNG. The supply, storage, transmission of LNG will be a matter for State Trading Corporation, hon. Minister Gungah, who came with me to the Seychelles. I went there because I am the Chair of the Committee, but hon. Minister Gungah and STC are the people who are more involved in it. Of course, I am interested because CEB wants LNG, and we want to get this to be going as quick as possible. One figure, SADC has estimated that there are 600 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the region so that – I am not talking in the air - we do not have to go to Turkmenistan or Azerbaijan to get our natural gas, not even Qatar.

The financial situation of CEB, I must mention a little bit because we have several projects, because of the price of petrol which went down as from 2015. But with good, sound management, we have been able to accumulate certain surpluses. And do not tell me again to use these surpluses for fancy expenses. I will use the surplus to help the small planters because that is my duty towards my country, but I am not going to waste it. So, we have to have sound management and we need to invest in further equipment for CEB. For instance, we have reduced social tariffs for poor people; we have assisted in the extension or displacement of electricity service. I have talked of the Home Solar Project; a multipurpose building will be constructed for its employees. We are going on energy efficiency.

I am trying to beat you for lunch time, Madam Speaker, but I want to say one or two things on the Utility Regulatory Authority. That was a failure and up to now we are struggling, but at least we are trying and we will be able to know. I have to talk of the greatest challenge which is water. What do they say? I am going to give you. Hours of supply 24/7 in Surinam; 22 hours in Riambel, Chamouny, St. Felix, Chemin Grenier and adjoining regions. Pressures increased in all these areas. 12 hours in Sottise, Pereybere and Cap Malheureux after mobile filtration plants. Grand Baie, Choisy, Pointe aux Canonnières: 24/7. Saint Pierre, L'Avenir, L'Agrément, Petit Verger, Gentilly, Helvetia: 24 hours. Next year, 26 hours!

(interruptions)

Bel Air, Trou d'Eau Douce and surrounding areas: 24/7. Port Louis! Do you hear on the radio, Port Louis, now? Water supply: 24/7. New pumping station at Plaine Lauzun, pipe-laying works. In the East, Port Louis, Moka regions, 90% of consumers 12 to 24 hours supply. The only region where we have not reached 24/7 ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

The Deputy Prime Minister: ...is my constituency and that of Number 20. But it is going to come as soon as Bagatelle water treatment plant starts operation. Today, out of 350,000 consumers, 245,279 are receiving 24/7 water supply today. And only 0.5%, that is, 1,955 out of 358 subscribers are receiving less than 8 hours of water supply per day. That is the achievement and that is rising up to the challenge. We have changed so many pipes in so many regions.

Production has increased to nearly 800,000 metre cube per day compared to 670,000 metre cube in 2015. There have been mobile containerised treatment plantss, two new service reservoirs, upgrading of treatment plants of Nicolière, Rivière du Poste and a treatment plant to be built at Pont Lardier, Piton du Milieu and Mont Blanc; eight new boreholes, and, of course, I add the Water Tank Scheme.

I am going to conclude with wastewater. When I took that Ministry, the Wastewater Management Authority, I just need to read what appears in the second report of the National Assembly, the Public Accounts Committee chaired by hon. Mrs Perraud. That Wastewater Management Authority, the PAC wrote:

“(...)there has been total absence of accountability and good governance in the management of some statutory bodies falling under the aegis of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities.”

And don't think she is talking about me. She is talking of the Ministry for the years ending December 2012, 2013 and 2014.

“Your Committee noted with concern that the then Chairperson of the Board of the WMA refused to collaborate with the Senior Chief Executive and officers of the Ministry.

Your Committee severely condemns the conduct of the then Chairperson of the Board of the WMA inasmuch as he was paid out of public funds.”

I have to acknowledge the independence with which hon. Mrs Perraud wrote and signed this report. She had no problem about blaming her own colleague within the party and I say hats off. I don't think, that within our party, I would have done the same thing on one of my colleagues of the party. I mean, I have to acknowledge this, but then it is on record, her own colleague Executive Committee Member - I don't know what he does - was severely condemned. Today, the things have changed.

(Interruptions)

Don't tell me you are protesting!

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

The Deputy Prime Minister: There are lots of projects...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, please!

(Interruptions)

Who provoked you? Because I will get both of you out.

The Deputy Prime Minister: There are several...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, again? You see how comments from one side of the House attract comments from the other side of the House and creates disorder in the House.

Mr Rutnah: But, Madam Speaker, you don't expect...

Madam Speaker: No, please! Resume your seat! Hon. Rutnah, resume your seat! If you want to stay in the House, then resume your seat. I have given my ruling. I don't want any argument from you. Yes!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, when hon. ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, you continue? Would you continue?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I think if I talk, the things will smooth out. When the hon. Vice-Prime Minister was addressing us, we knew the works that are being done. I ended up when talking of water, of my constituency and Beau Bassin which are still suffering, but everyone who goes to Rose Hill will see the works that are being done, and I must here really thank the Prime Minister. He has been of tremendous help. I wonder how he does it. He

knows exactly all the corners of the island where work is being done. I see him, sometimes he asks: 'What has happened to such and such building?' And Ligne Berthaud, he has helped us tremendously. He is helping us for the Mediclinic of Stanley. Soon, there will be Mediclinic in the Stanley area. It is a team spirit and I must again pay tribute to the *Maire*, Mr Ken Fat Fong Suk Koon, who is a younger bulldozer, but still bulldozers through Rose Hill to perform works: Plaza, Balfour and all that has been done.

Let me conclude now. The debates this year have more or less been of a very good standard. There have been *écarts* sometimes, but I must point out one or two things. I cannot agree with the paternalistic way in which Rodrigues, especially hon. Leopold was treated. I cannot agree with this. What he should now say '*merci* PMSD' because he lives in a *lacaz cité* in Rodrigues? That is not fair! That is not done! What is it? We go back to the years where you say '*merci, merci, merci*'. Rodrigues has got autonomy. Have we ever heard of one person says Rodriguans should say '*merci* Anerood', '*merci* Bérenger'? Has Bérenger ever said or has Anerood ever said: 'Come here and tell me thank you for what we have done'?

(Interruptions)

Wait! Wait!

And I heard hon. Lepoigneur quoting the case of Roussety and Electoral Commissioner in 1967. And he says PMSD was defended by Jules Koenig, Gaëtan Duval and Oozeerally.

(Interruptions)

Well, listen before you just say yap yap yap!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Just listen!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur, you had the opportunity to intervene. Didn't you? You made your point. It is only fair now that you listen to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. He is making his argument as well.

The Deputy Prime Minister: What he pointedly refrains from mentioning, whom he refrained from mentioning is d'Unienville, who is the sole survivor of what happened in

1967. Jules Koenig, Duval and Ooozeerally are all gone. D'Unienville would have told him, first of all, that the PMSD did not win the case, that they lost the case before the Supreme Court. So, don't come and say: 'victory, victory, victory; *merci, merci, PMSD, merci, merci*'. What is this? And then: '*ou ti lacaz cité a koz mwa*'. Do you think it is a language to be used?

Now, the fact which is written in memory is that the Chief Minister of the time had held a constitutional meeting and Collin Liz, who is still alive, he is 88 today. He was in the 30s professor of whatever. He came to Rodrigues and he designed the two-member Constituency for No. 21 and the PMSD was then very strong in Rodrigues, they made representation before Collin Liz. Collin Liz held his meeting in the house of the Magistrate at that time and everyone came. This is how that two-member seat was a grave error of the colonial masters. It was done by an Order in Council of the Queen in the 1950's to exclude the dependencies from the meaning of colony, so that the colony of Mauritius became only the island of Mauritius and that was redressed. And Roussety rightly put in a case. They lost the case before the Supreme Court, but they added to the pressure, of course, to create a constituency.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Whether the reason was to make sure that they get two additional seats in Parliament because the Labour Party had already said they are not going to put a Labour Party candidate because the Labour Party had said Rodrigues must be for Rodriguans. The PMSD was, and still is, I suppose, of the contrary view. They sent Ollivry and Roussety to be candidate, then there was a *Parti Rodriguais* Basile Alas, a retired and master who had never lived in Rodrigues but who was a Rodriguan. He stood no change against the mighty force and we don't need to go back.

I have told hon. François very nicely, it's not necessary to go back into how the campaign was conducted, what were the things which were said, unsavoury things which were said in Rodrigues at that time, no need to go into it. It has done us sufficient harm that this is an episode of our history which is best forgotten. Let us retain what was good out of what happened. It is true, whether we like it or not, independence gave us all the powers to make us what we have become. Independence gave us the education which has made all of us.

Hon. Rutnah, the son of a bus driver, I think, hon. Gayan the son of a bus driver, hon. Leopold, a poor man of whatever *Cité* - it is only through hon. Mrs Perraud that I heard that he was of very poor extraction. This is independence, autonomy that has made them. So, why

do we need to go into these old quarrels of the 1960's, *merci, merci, merci*. No need to do this. We don't have to do this. There are lots of poor people here, I am sure of poor extraction, I don't know all of them. They appear to be rich today...

(Interruptions)

and, on the other side, of course. So, let us get on with history. Now we have Chagos, now we have a whole territory respected internationally and we have a young Prime Minister.

And I conclude by this, everyone has said 'we thank the Prime Minister for the Budget', and I am not saying it, and I am sure no one has said it just because it is a formality. It is because it comes within our heart to tell the Prime Minister that we are very happy about the Budget. It has been a good budget; we have worked *carré-carré* with the Prime Minister for this Budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 1.31 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

(2.34 p.m.)

Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to intervene as the last Member for the Opposition in the debates 2019-2020, and this gives me an opportunity, firstly, to reply to a lot of things that have been said through the course of the debates that were twisted, half-truth and that needs to be addressed.

Madam Speaker, my intervention, today, I wanted to focus on the challenges ahead for the country, and that is for me climate change. But before I get to this, Madam Speaker, let me firstly reply to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister who intervened just before. There is one thing, Madam Speaker, when he has spoken about the combined gas cycle generators of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he has twisted the words, the truth that was used.

Firstly, Madam Speaker - I will come to it during my speech - the importance of adapting the country to climate change rather than focusing and spending so many resources

on the mitigation of greenhouse gases. But it is noteworthy, Madam Speaker, to say that we have never spoken about coal as opposed to gas generators. It has never been a debate between combined gas cycle versus coal. That was not what was raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition throughout his PNQs. What was raised is the issue that we have gas turbines today at Nicolay, gas turbines, albeit old, Madam Speaker, but in good running condition. In fact, barely used; only 10% of their lifetime has been used and they can be used for another 20 years to come, Madam Speaker.

So, the debate that was started by the hon. Leader of the Opposition was why invest Rs8 billion in a combined cycle generator to cater for peak power demand when you already have two generators at Nicolay which can do the job perfectly well. The issue was with wastage of funds; the issue was also with regard to transparency, which he so talks about. Why does he not talk about the fact that the tendering procedures were thrown out by the Independent Review Panel, that in four/five years he has failed to come with a transparent and fair tendering process? Why doesn't he talk about that rather, about how all this affair was tainted with irregularities and again thrown out by the IRP? It is the truth Madam Speaker, it is public.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, he talks about Betamax, as if Betamax is an issue where he is trying to pull in the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Let me ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, first of all, whether - and he does know - that *comité* which was presided by the hon. Leader of the Opposition had never...

(Interruptions)

Yes, it was to review one specific clause of the contract, not to review the contract in its globality. It was to review one technical clause. It was a committee, whereby all Chartered Accountants, Accountants, Members of Cabinet were part of, to look at the specific clause of the contract. And that Committee never concluded its report! So, Madam Speaker, I challenge the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, if he is so serious with his allegations, to publish the report, to table it here in this Assembly. He should table the report of that Committee if truly he maintains what he has said, Madam Speaker. I challenge him to do so, and he can do so at any time. So, Madam Speaker, that was noteworthy.

Madam Speaker, he talks about Betamax. So, we beg the question: Hasn't Government learnt any lesson from Betamax? We beg the question: Isn't the Rose Hill Urban Terminal, for example, which was in the news recently, where there is a perception of

favouritism and irregularity with regard to the Rose Hill Urban Terminal and the Quatre Bornes Urban Terminal, whether this will not be another Betamax? With regard to the IPPs, they have spoken about Alteo. He has not explained the point raised by the hon. Mohamed last time. He has not explained how come there was a price differentiation of Rs1.45 as from the moment CEB made the offer of Rs3.09, I think, for trash energy, and how suddenly, in his office, when it was negotiated, without the negotiating panel, with the Director of CEB at his office, how it suddenly jumped to Rs4.45. We were expecting him to come with explanations because *il est un donneur de leçons en matière de transparence et d'éthique apparemment*. Self-proclaimed, Madam Speaker! But he is the very last person to give lessons of ethics and he should have come, as a responsible Deputy Prime Minister, with his explanations, because these were raised in Parliament during the debates and has not been replied.

Let's talk about the Metro Express, how the contract has been kept secret, how the terms of the contract are kept in complete opacity, outside of the control and view of Parliament. Let's talk about Agalega, the same thing; Côte d'Or, the same thing; about this Special Purpose Vehicle mechanism that has been so readily exploited by Government where it engages Government-to-Government, billions of rupees; let's talk about the Safe City project; let's talk about CEB (FiberNet). Let's talk about the so many other major contracts that were given, and I hope, because they talk so much of Betamax, that there won't a Betamax *bis*, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, he talks about transparency and good governance. Let us ask him then why is it that, at the Wastewater Management Authority, there has been no General Manager for the past three to four years. Why is it that the political nominee, appointee by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the Chairman, runs the show there? Why is that the case? Is that in line with good governance? Is that in line with transparency? It is not, Madam Speaker.

Let's talk about his promises for 24/7 water. Madam Speaker, nobody believes in this House the assertion that he has made earlier with regard to the supply of water. If that was the case, then, how do you explain that on radio, every single day, every single month people are on the streets, that every single day, people are complaining about water supply, water shortages, especially in summer, Madam Speaker? How do you explain it, if really that was the case?

Madam Speaker, we forget the pledge of 24/7 was also to significantly increase the replacement of deficient pipelines in the country. Do you know, Madam Speaker, because he

has talked so little about that sector, that he has done significantly less than the former Government in that aspect? Significantly less, whilst, as we know, the 24/7 was a promise of *l'Alliance Lepep*. As we know, water shortages were a contributing factor to the last Government being ousted from power. As we know, the 24/7 water supply was a long awaited dream coming true for Mauritians. And you know, Madam Speaker, he has not explained why it has been significantly less. But I think the only explanation I can gather was in his Presidential Address in this House in 2015, when talking of the previous Government, he said: “We have got a mandate to do this. What is more, we have the money and we have always had the money to do that work for water pipes. That money was stashed away because, you know, if you do that sort of job, there is very little room for commissions, so it was not an interesting project.”

Is this why it is significantly less then? People will come to their own conclusions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me quickly reply to hon. Gayan. He spoke about the Prosecution Commission and again twisted the facts. Madam Speaker, what is important for me to say at this point of the Prosecution Commission, we have explained already how we were attempting to control an important arm of the judicial process, how we were attempting...

(Interruptions)

Yes, Government! How Government was attempting to put a Commission that would direct the Director of Public Prosecutions and that could reverse any decision he would take to initiate prosecutions or to discontinue prosecutions. Even disciplinary powers to sack the DPP should he not do something as trivial as furnish the monthly report, and we all remember when it originally came, the proposal, the draft legislation, how we were giving just one month, 30 days to the Judicial and Legal Service Commission to appoint the Chairman and his two assessors. 30 days! When realistically this Government cannot appoint a Director General of the Wastewater Management in four years, we are expecting them to do that in 30 days, failing which, it would be the Prime Minister who would himself appoint. Madam Speaker, that was the Prosecution Commission. And what happened, Madam Speaker? When the draft Bill was circulated among Ministers at something like 09:00 in the morning or 08:30 in the morning on a Friday, and that they would have to discuss and approve this draft legislation on that very same day, two hours later, it is the now hon. Leader of the Opposition who stood up and said, “No! Unacceptable”, Madam Speaker.

Unacceptable to rush through a Constitutional amendment, especially which touches the powers of an important arm of the judicial process. Therefore, he moved that Cabinet postpones the discussion on this. It was postponed for one week, to the next Friday, and in that one week, Madam Speaker, consultations were made with people with experience in the legal profession. And everybody came to the same opinion. It was wholly unacceptable to come up with such a proposition. So, we recommended that we take out that absurdity of the Prime Minister appointing members, Chairperson and two assessors. But then, Madam Speaker, when Government persisted with bringing that legislation to the House on Tuesday, something like 22 December, after three days of it being discussed in Cabinet, under a Certificate of Urgency, you find this acceptable, Madam Speaker? And we tried, we attempted to change Government's mind. We attempted, we made a plea to Government to push that Bill until March the next year. It would give sufficient time to the public, to the stakeholders to debate on it. Madam Speaker, this was never acceded to. So, we had a decision to take, Madam Speaker. We had a decision to take because there were strong and persistent attempts to buy out our Party Members. Strong and persistent attempts! So, we had a choice to make. Do we risk negotiating, staying on and losing - *une hémorragie* - Party Members or do we all collectively make a decision and leave? And this is what we have done, and we are proud of it, on this side of the House, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Let it be said, that has not stopped Government from buying out two of our Party Members. They know who they are. I do not have to repeat their names, and some were Party Members for 50 years, Madam Speaker. But, anyway, this is in the past.

Madam Speaker, quickly I'll go to Rodrigues. First of all, we shouldn't attack the memory of Sir Gaëtan Duval, Madam Speaker. We shouldn't do that. He is not here to defend himself, first of all, but, secondly, because he was the only politician who had 300,000 people in his funeral. He was loved by every Mauritian, and that speaks volume. Politicians nowadays, in funerals, 20 people is too much.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Leader of the Opposition, don't make these comments now!

Mr A. Duval: So, do not attack his memory; we will defend it, Madam Speaker. But a word of advice to the MPs from Rodrigues is that they don't realise, Madam Speaker, the

dire situation in which they are, economically speaking. It was already at a low point, economically speaking, but with the passage of the two cyclones, it is now even weaker in terms of agriculture, of farmers, animals that were lost, infrastructure, in terms of the stagnation in tourism, 25,000 foreign tourists only, a model which we propose to review, Madam Speaker. But the question is –

- (1) Who has kept the people of Rodrigues without ambition?
- (2) Who has kept the youth of Rodrigues without aspirations?
- (3) Who has encouraged them to go back to the land, to farming?
- (4) Who has encouraged them to turn away from sectors that had once started to gain a footing in Rodrigues, ICT, tourism, etc., and go back to agriculture?

Who has, Madam Speaker? And the situation is dramatic.

There is, first of all, *l'exode des jeunes Rodriguais vers l'île Maurice et ailleurs*. They can no longer aspire to anything in Rodrigues. So, this situation is dramatic. The water situation is still dramatic. Madam Speaker, we stand here today as the PMSD, we were here for Rodrigues in its development and we stand here for Rodrigues again, ready to help further in its development. And we will, Madam Speaker. And this is why we are taking so much interest in Rodrigues, because we strongly believe, Madam Speaker, that it is only the PMSD that can give Rodrigues *un deuxième élan*. It is only the PMSD because you know, Madam Speaker, I will tell you an anecdote. When there was no tourism in Rodrigues, do you know who started the first hotel in Rodrigues? It was Sir Gaëtan Duval. Where Cotton Bay is today, it was nothing; it was just *un terrain vague* with ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, with goats. That's all. But he had, Madam Speaker, the vision for Rodrigues. And while nobody wanted to invest in a hotel in Rodrigues, he went to see Air Mauritius and he got Air Mauritius to build the first hotel. That was back in the 1970s or so. He made Air Mauritius build the first hotel. He believed in Rodrigues before anyone else and he saw the vision for Rodrigues and, up to now, Cotton Bay is still one of the most beautiful hotels in Rodrigues. So, that, Madam Speaker, concludes on Rodrigues. I say it again, we stand ready and willing to help them, and we will endeavour, Madam Speaker, to push Rodrigues further.

Madam Speaker, let me come quickly to the economy. The MCB Focus report has been published a few days ago and it is rather alarming with regard to the dire situation it paints. First of all, Madam Speaker, MCB Focus is probably the most respected and

independent institution. What I am about to say does not come from me, Madam Speaker; I am no economist. It comes from the conclusion of the Economic Outlook Report of June 2019. Madam Speaker, while it is accepted now that the GDP growth for this year is 3.7%, it paints a much darker picture for next year. 3.5%, Madam Speaker, is the legacy of this Government. 3.5% is the predicted forecast for next year.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I hear people saying ‘*menti*’. Again, this is the MCB Focus report. Madam Speaker, if you think about it, the Government started at 3.7% of GDP growth in 2014. It is going to leave with 3.5%, and they have, during the course of the debate, *le toupet* to come and say that when Xavier Duval, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, was in the Ministry of Finance in 2012, the growth was 3.2%. They forget two things. First of all, that it was after succeeding the MSM in that Ministry, it was their legacy, but secondly, Madam Speaker, that he drove GDP growth to 3.7% up until 2014. But what can be said about this one? You take it at 3.7% and in spite of all the debts that we are taking, the billions, 300 billions of public debt, in spite of all of this, in spite of the massive public investment, Madam Speaker, there is going to be an increase of 35% for this year of public sector investment. There was, last year, an increase of 15%. In spite of all of this investment, of all of the loans, of all of the development, we are going back to 3.5%, Madam Speaker, and this, unfortunately, is the real situation.

Madam Speaker, another worrying fact is the number of banks that are leaving Mauritius. Madam Speaker, major international banks; Barclays has left, it has now become ABSA, taken over; Investec has left. Dutch bank has left; Banque des Mascareignes has left. HSBC wanted to leave but couldn’t get a buyer. Habib bank is closing down in 2020. Banque Privée de Fleury is also closing down.

Madam Speaker, the lessons we need to learn from this...

(Interruptions)

Exactly. There is no longer confidence in Mauritius, Madam Speaker. The major international banks are leaving, and this is the conclusion, Madam Speaker. And this is going to get worse following the announcement now that we are going to amend the law to have the Special Reserves in the Bank of Mauritius, to use them to repay our loans. It is only going to get worse.

Madam Speaker, quickly, tourism. Again, from MCB Focus, it has contracted by 1% since the beginning of the year, four months of the year, 3% arrival by air, and what is worse is that the income from tourism earnings has declined by 9%. Even though tourism has declined by 1%, how much they spent is 10 times more, and while regional competitors are doing double-digit growth, Madam Speaker, Seychelles and Maldives. What is noteworthy, Madam Speaker, what Government has to take note is that in that MCB Focus, you will see there is a part on the survey by Statistics Mauritius as to why it is that tourists no longer favour Mauritius as a prime destination. Two words, Madam Speaker. There is a fall in the perception of the level of security and the quality of the environment in Mauritius, and I will focus on the second part during my intervention.

Tourism has changed. Much more emphasis now is on ecotourism. Much more emphasis is on sports, leisure tourism, which all involve nature, Madam Speaker and, unfortunately, in this regard, we have utterly failed.

Madam Speaker, also in the MCB Focus report, you will see financial services is slowing down. The FDI flowing into India from Mauritius, Madam Speaker, has halved in one year, from 16 billion US dollars last fiscal year to now 8 billion US dollars this fiscal year.

But, Madam Speaker, what is most alarming is unemployment, and we have to call it the youth unemployment problem. Madam Speaker, out of the total people unemployed, 50% are aged below 25; 26 of those are *gradués chômeurs*, people with degrees, and there is 25% of youth underemployment.

Madam Speaker, what is also worrying is that the labour force is contracting. It has contracted last year by 10,000. Not only does it mean, therefore, that people are definitely leaving the labour market, but what is interesting and worrying, Madam Speaker, is that, with regard to our labour force from 16 to 60 or whatever, the percentage of people in the labour force compared to the population, there is a disparity between other countries. Only 58.9% of our labour force compared to the population. Compared to other countries, more than 70% of the labour force on a ratio compared to the population of that age I have given you. So, this is worrying, Madam Speaker. The labour force is contracting and we need to understand why. This is the point that I would like to take quickly, Madam Speaker. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said last time underemployment was something like 140,000 where the MCB

Focus says it's 168,800 people who are unemployed and underemployed in Mauritius. Nearly 170,000 people.

Madam Speaker, first of all, we need a complete reform, review of the tertiary education system, of that sector. It is unacceptable, Madam Speaker, that, to this day, there are people training for degrees that are certainly going to lead them to unemployment. It is unacceptable. Madam Speaker, the first time I intervened in Parliament, I had asked the Minister of Education to come up with a proper career guidance system so that we could study the job market, so that we could study what was the trend with regard to employment, with regard to degrees, so that we could foresee changing trends and prepare those undergoing tertiary or secondary education to those changes and adapt to them, so that when they come out on the job market, they are sure to get a job. But, Madam Speaker, it has not been done. It has not been done.

The results are here, Madam Speaker and, therefore, we need a major reform. We need to start studying on the employment trends. We need to start also reviewing the courses that we give at the universities in Mauritius. We need to stop forcing, funnelling students into courses that might not be their first option, that might be their second or third choice but that they are forced to do it because of lack of capacity, lack of room for their first choices.

Madam Speaker, we need now to adapt our universities for the job market today. If courses are unpopular, get rid of them. If other courses are more popular, make sure you have capacity. If you find out that, by doing so, you will leave a certain number of lecturers without any job, so be it, Madam Speaker, because we cannot leave such a high proportion of the youth jobless. Rather have it than have so many youth today without a job or working underemployed. So, Madam Speaker, this has to be done.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the youth, let me say as well that there is no longer any motivation, any hope, any aspirations in Mauritius as well. First of all, there is the Tale of Two Cities that was so well spoken by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, of how we are devising between the public sector and parastatal bodies as employers, and the private sector, with all these economic major benefits that we are giving to the public sector and parastatal employees, payment in advance, for example, of the PRB, Rs1,000 increase which is good.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I will come to this. Also the Medical Insurance Scheme, while we are not doing the same for the private sector employees.

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, I have spoken to a lot of people, workers at the bottom of the ladder, and they are very upset about this, and this disparity is getting even bigger. So, therefore, Madam Speaker, today, the perception is that you have to go and work in the public sector or in the parastatal body because *c'est plus alléchant*, and that if you work in the private sector, it's going to be hard work, less pay, less benefits. But when we are in a situation where it is clear, Madam Speaker, to everybody here who receives the public, their mandates, the focus is on seeking a job in Government or parastatal bodies and that when there are so many job offers in the private sector which, to this day, are not applied by, where they have to resort to bring in foreign workers, then you have to understand that we have a problem, Madam Speaker and that, in this Budget and through this trend, we have only made matters worse. So, this is one thing.

The second thing, Madam Speaker, is regard to recruitments. Why keep having a policy that you will employ only those jobseekers on the unemployment list be it for Government jobs or parastatal bodies, and that you won't employ those who are already in employment, because that continues that cycle. If you only want to get a job in the public sector or in a parastatal body, because obviously of the major benefits that are being given now, and which are not being given in the private sector, and which should be given. Then, Madam Speaker, you apply for a job in the public service, but for you to get that job, you have to be unemployed. So, where is the incentive to go and work in the meantime, and hoping to get your chance to get a job in Government or a parastatal? There is none. So, we are encouraging people, Madam Speaker, to stay on the unemployment list, to take the risk of waiting to get a job in Government than to work in the meantime and, Madam Speaker, this has to be attended to by Government.

Madam Speaker, let me get to climate change. Madam Speaker, we are the first generation to suffer the consequences of climate change, and the last one to be able to do something about it to change its course. Mauritius is ranked as the 13th country with the highest disaster risk and 7th most exposed to natural hazards according to a World Risk Report. Yet, we contribute only 0.01%, Madam Speaker, to global greenhouse gas emission. I say that again: 0.01% is our contribution to global warming. It is all a matter of priorities, Madam Speaker. And this is what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister fails to understand. There is nothing, absolutely nothing Mauritius can do to slow down global warming. I am not talking about stopping it, even slowing it down, there is nothing. If we disappear from the map, nothing would change, Madam Speaker, virtually nothing. There is no sign of it getting

better. You have seen, with Trump now in office, he has reversed the decisions of Barrack Obama. You have seen that whatever is happening with Iran, the conflicts around the world, that the priorities today is not climate change for the super powers but trade war is, conflict is, but not climate change. So, why, Madam Speaker, *se bagarrer pour une bataille perdue qui ne dépend pas de nous*? Why invest billions of rupees, Madam Speaker. Just in terms of investment, if I may, I will show you, we have the Rs8 billion that we are supposed to use to purchase the two combine gas cycle gas generators. Well, I said it earlier. We have already generators capable of giving the energy production for peak power. That's Rs8 billion. And then, we have signed for MARENA, 161 USD million. Okay, part of it is funded by grants, etc. but most of it is funded by this Government, by public funds. Rs28 m is from the Green Climate Fund, Rs18 m is a loan from the French Development Agency. The Central Electricity Board is going to invest Rs123.9 m. and then Rs1.5 m. grant from the United Nations. So, we are going now to invest Rs6 m. to accelerate towards the low carbon emission. Do you think, Madam Speaker, it makes sense? Do you think, Madam Speaker, when you can reconcile the policy of this Government, as I will show, to invest peanuts in climate change adaptation, while we are thrashing out money like this in combine gas cycle generators, which we do not need, and in accelerating to a low carbon emission country, when we emit 0.01%? Even hon. Rutnah will understand our contribution. It is so insignificant that it is not worth investing so much money into. And why it makes me upset, Madam Speaker, I will come to it. It is because we are investing very little to climate change adaptation. Let us see what is being done. Madam Speaker, let me just say something about climate change first. Climate change will inevitably lead to more frequent and more destructive storms, floods and natural hazards. The impact will continue on increasing, and it is just the beginning, Madam Speaker. And it is here to last and it is here to get harder and harder. It will hit us harder with years.

Do you imagine, Madam Speaker, 26 million people are displaced by climate change today, 10 times more than conflicts. Just imagine that! Climate refugees – there is a new term now – 10 times more than conflicts refugees, that just gives you an idea, Madam Speaker. The World Bank estimates that, by 2030, a hundred million people will be pushed into poverty because of climate change, and it is accelerating, Madam Speaker. It is the greatest threat to our country, the greatest threat to our generation, to the world, but especially to our country. Don't forget the figures, Madam Speaker, 13th on the list of those most susceptible to the natural hazards. And yet, it has occupied such a small part of this Budget

or of the last four Government Budgets, Madam Speaker, and this is why I think *il faut avoir un réveil de conscience*. Firstly, we brought the attention to this House of the risk of super cyclones, which are going to increasingly threaten the country. Madam Speaker, in Mozambique, this year, there has been more than a thousand deaths caused by the cyclone. It was followed by an outbreak of cholera due to the poor management. Up to 1.7 million hectares of crops have been destroyed in Mozambique, that's ten times the size of Mauritius on crops alone. The economic value of the cyclone amounts to Rs70 billion of damages just to infrastructure and another Rs70 billion in damages, social and economic. So, Madam Speaker, it is clear that super cyclone is now the norm in the world. But what are we doing about it?

In the last PNQ of 30 October, the hon. Minister of Environment was questioned as to the preparedness of the country to face super cyclones. Madam Speaker, legitimate questions were asked, whether our protocol had been reviewed to cater for the increased intensity, whether our refugee centres were adequately equipped, - we all remember the '*touss sali*', here, in Parliament, on the question of mattresses, people having to sleep on the floor - whether there were generators, mattresses, showers to cater for these people, decent food provisions, clothing, first aid kits, people trained to perform first aids interventions, whether these refugee centres had even flood barriers, Madam Speaker, to stop themselves from being flooded. And these were all legitimate questions and they were all pushed under the rug, on the pretext that there was a committee which was presided by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, whereby the Minister of Environment was also onboard, and that this committee would address all of these issues. That was dated back 30 October 2018, beginning of the cyclone season. Madam Speaker, not one word in the debate on this. We are still awaiting for the answers, as if we have to come back with a Private Notice Question again to ask. Not one word by the Vice-Prime Minister, not one word by the Minister of Environment, Madam Speaker! Not one word by the Vice-Prime Minister; not one word by the Minister of Environment, Madam Speaker. When we asked about the building norms whether this had been reviewed, it has to be reviewed, Madam Speaker, whether for houses, domestic, for commercial buildings, the Metro Express, *un aveu de la part du ministre, dans une question parlementaire la dernière fois que les pylônes du Metro Express, d'électricité étaient conditionnés pour faire face seulement à 150 km/h de vent* when now the norm is 300 km/h of cyclones.

So, Madam Speaker, these are questions that today have still not been answered, whether we had reviewed Building and Land Use permits to cater for the increasing risks. *Gouverner c'est prévoir, Madame la présidente ! Mais, malheureusement, jusqu'à maintenant rien n'est prévu.* This, Madam Speaker, is just the tip of the iceberg, *de l'insouciance du gouvernement sur le changement climatique.*

Madam Speaker, there is the problem of flooding. Every year, it occurs. We all remember the tragic loss of 12 lives in 2013. It has marked the history of this country. And when you look at the Audit Report on the major causes of flooding, it highlights the inefficiencies of the drains that we are building today. Rs800 m. are spent every year on building drains and this report, just to read the conclusion of the executive summary, you will see, Madam Speaker, it tells you whatever we are doing to try and stop flooding is not enough. It says that there is no plan, there is no study; there is no qualitative study, no effectiveness study of the drains we are building in order to stop flooding. It says that while it was made clear, Madam Speaker, in the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Framework and Action Plan that was initiated by last Government, it says that we are building mostly in the dark when it comes to drains, that we are building subject to what has happened in the past. Let's say last year there was a flood somewhere, we build there when we know that flooding is dynamic, it changes, Madam Speaker. It won't necessarily occur here again, but the conclusion, Madam Speaker, is that flooding will continue unless and until we attack the root cause of the problem, a proper identification of the flood-prone zones. Do you know when we are going to get that, Madam Speaker? It is only when the Land Drainage Authority, the first Bill that was voted by the new Prime Minister, which is an authority which has been given a lot of powers to combat flooding, but, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, up to now, there is no land drainage master plan. It is only in mid-2020 that we can expect it. It is only after that that you will have a flood map and we are still awaiting the danger zoning plan. Therefore, Madam Speaker, whatever we are building - and that is the point - there is no guarantee that it will protect the population tomorrow from floods. So, therefore, Madam Speaker, why is it that it is only now in this budget that we are recruiting five technicians to speed up all of this? Why is it that we are not giving all the resources as should have been given a long time ago, Madam Speaker, and therefore, you draw the conclusion as has the Audit Report and I read it

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“Since 2003, the same causes of flooding have been repeatedly highlighted in several studies. Government has been taking several initiatives to mitigate its impact in

addressing the causes but it has not derived the full benefits. The identified causes will continue to contribute to flooding in the future unless we sort out the Land Drainage Master Plan, the flood zoning map, the flood map, the danger zoning map.”

And all of this.

The point is what, Madam Speaker? It is to say that we are investing huge amounts of money into something that may not work. We are taking the risk again that coming the heavy rains, there can be still again flooding, but what is the worst because that is not the point to be made. The point is that we are investing billions of rupees in the Metro Express, in the Côte d’Or, in major infrastructural works, we have exempted them from the EIA Act.

(Interruptions)

I will come to Agalega as well.

We have not studied the impact of developing such structures. We do not have a flood map. We do not have a danger zoning map. We do not know therefore if we are constructing in places which we should not construct and one of the things that is highlighted in the Audit Report is that 50% of flooding is caused by construction in low-lying areas. We call that unplanned development, bad development. We do not know if that is bad development as well.

Madam Speaker, the greatest mistake that this Government has made was to exempt Metro Express, Agalega and all of them from the EIA. When we sat here until 5 o’clock in the morning because our hon. friend, Patrice Armance had put a Motion of Disallowance on that regulation to exempt Metro Express, we were told ‘don’t you worry.’ We were told the necessary will be done. Has it been done? We can’t draw the conclusion when we look at what is happening in La Butte, what has happened this weekend that it has not been properly done. *Ça commence déjà à céder* and there are rumours that one of these *colonnes*, in fact, is lower now because *ça s’est engouffré*. Well, given the opacity surrounding the project, you can only go by rumours, Madam Speaker. So, Madam Speaker, this is the thing. We have exempted these major infrastructural works from EIA. And I just hope, Madam Speaker, that once it starts its operation, we do not see that we have impacted on natural drains, manmade drains or constructed on low-lying areas or in zones that should be highlighted in red ‘Do not build’ with all these projects. Unfortunately, not only don’t I know the answer, but Government does not know the answer because again the studies are not yet ready.

Madam Speaker, I have also to denounce the fact that we are exempting projects from EIA, again, we have to stop this nonsense. With regard to Agalega, for example, we have no idea what is being done, we have no idea the impact it will have on the ecosystem. It was once an island untouched by development and we do not know how it will affect the ecosystem which is already strain by global warming, rising temperatures, coral bleaching, all of this and we do not know the impact of this 3.2 km runway.

Madam Speaker, I think, be it with the Metro Express, erasing of Promenade Roland Armand or the other green spaces we have had, be it with any other major Government infrastructural work, today the carelessness to the environment in which we build, Madam Speaker, I think is a crime against nature.

Madam Speaker, on the same topic of climate change, I have to now highlight the economic impact of climate change. First of all, tourism, I quoted from the MCB Focus Report, that the environment is degrading now. But, Madam Speaker, beach erosion is a major concern for Mauritius. Out of the 90 beaches that we have, something like 25 beaches are being victims of erosion at an advanced stage. Another 20 beaches are also being touched by erosion. And what are we doing, Madam Speaker?

I have read the speech of hon. Sinatambou. I was amazed, Madam Speaker, that out of the 21 pages of his speech, only one page touches on climate change, and in case you are wondering, if the rest was on the Ministry of Social Security, the answer is 'no', Madam Speaker. Only one page there again. He says: No, Madam, only one page there again. Therefore, Madam Speaker, beach erosion is something he should have addressed properly. Do you know what he says, Madam Speaker, in his very short speech on climate change? He says that 'this Government is the Government that has tackled climate change more than any other Government'. But what he does not say, Madam Speaker, is with regard to beach erosion. The project that he cited so many times in this House at Rivière des Anguilles, at Mon Choisy are projects initiated by the previous Government, signed by the previous Minister of Finance under the Adaptation Fund, is it not true? Is it not true that, in 2012, is when we saw the Adaptation Fund and I have it here, Madam Speaker. 2014, the last Budget of the hon. Leader of the Opposition – rehabilitation of beaches, project value Rs616 m and then the rehabilitation of beaches under the AFP – Adaptation Plan, Rs166 m. You know they say that the Government will touch more on the issue of climate change. When you go and look at expenditure, Madam Speaker, there is no significant increase. It has remained more or less the same with regard to beach erosion. This is why, Madam Speaker, tourists are

decreasing in coming to Mauritius. It is because the state of erosion is worrying and we are not tackling it, Madam Speaker, as we should sufficiently. We are putting something like Rs150 m in this Budget which is not enough, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, erosion is caused primarily by the disappearance of our coral reefs because coral reefs help to attenuate waves. You know they have to break waves before the wave breaks onto the coast and when your reef disappears, Madam Speaker, this is why erosion accelerates. It is the first cause of erosion along with sea level rise. So, therefore, Madam Speaker, it is not only necessary to adapt our beaches against rising sea levels, to place physical barriers to attenuate waves to do the job of coral reefs, but it is also important, Madam Speaker, to regenerate, rehabilitate our coral reef and regrow them because there is something like 20% of living corals left in Mauritius. Between 1997 and 2012 is when most of it died. Something like 70% died during that period. There is 20% now left. What are we doing about it? You will see in the Budget, we are providing for Rs16 m. for coral farming. Madam Speaker, this is only in Blue Bay and this money, this is not us putting it in it; it is money granted to us by the United Nations under a project – to rehabilitate the coral reef at Blue Bay. But what has this Government done to rehabilitate our coral reef? Today, Madam Speaker, nothing. This is a major mistake. Why, Madam Speaker? Because there is a correlation between coral reefs, and the loss of beach through erosion with decreasing revenues and arrivals from tourists. There is a correlation between the loss of beaches and corals and the decrease in that sector which follows in the loss of revenue and then losses in jobs. It is recognized internationally, Madam Speaker, because coral reefs have a value.

Let me just give you a figure about the value of the reef economy as we call it. It is in billions of rupees. We estimate here in Mauritius that, with the degradation of our coral reefs up to 2030, we will lose something like 100 million dollars every year in the loss of revenue, that is, Rs3.5 m. every year if we continue at this rate. We are going to lose Rs3.5 m. every year up to 2030 and then, you know, Madam Speaker, 2030 is approaching the end date of coral reefs in the world anyway because of not protecting them. We see rising temperatures, all of them will disappear if we do nothing. So, therefore, they can be exploited for a short time to come and then we have to say goodbye to our ecosystem. What are we doing about it? Again nothing. Why, Madam Speaker, in other countries? I'll take one example Oman. Oman has invested something like 9 million US Dollars, Madam Speaker, something like Rs300 m. in coral farming. It has dedicated an entire zone of twenty kilometres by seven kilometres of its coastal waters and it has planted massively coral farms. After just twenty-four months,

Madam Speaker,— we are not talking about tourism – in fisheries alone, we have seen an increase in revenue of up to 60% - a sustained revenue, Madam Speaker, which nearly pays off the initial investment every year up until 2030. You have invested 9 million US Dollars, you are going to get back every year after two years something like 8 million US Dollars and this is what Oman has done. Australia is doing it; all the countries are doing it.

Madam Speaker, besides from beaches and corals and the lagoon, what do we have to offer more to tourists. Would it not make sense to any person to first rehabilitate our beaches, our corals? Would it not make sense, in order to compete with other markets which are much better in terms of environment than us, that we should do the same? Apparently, it has not, Madam Speaker, because the funds that we are spending on rehabilitation of beaches and corals, it's little. Worse, Madam Speaker, these are all funded through aid by the United Nations; the same United Nations now which is investigating the Ministry of Environment through the Adaptation Fund. While they were investigating a fund of 10 million dollars, something like Rs350 m. to rehabilitate Rivière des Anguilles, Mon Choisy, etc do you know what the programme consisted? It consisted of five-based approach. First was physical rehabilitation, the last point was to create knowledge base, training to do studies, to understand the correlation between coastal development, hotels development among others and beach erosion; to understand what were the causes of beach erosion. Why did they accept to fund Rs300 m. or so they were expecting the minimum, Madam Speaker. The minimum is that you wait for the determination of the report to see the causes of erosion and how to best mitigate them, how to best develop coastal development before you touch your coastline. What have we done, Madam Speaker? I have read on the Express article: the Minister is being accused of having delivered twenty EIA permits, not less than 20 EIA permits for hotel developments while he was under the moral duty but also while there was an understanding that we would wait for the study before going ahead with any development. He will have to explain himself, Madam Speaker, to the United Nations. Do you know why? Because they don't like to be taken for fools; because they have accepted to fund beach rehabilitation, because they have, in fact, pledged to fund the coral farming in Blue Bay and because it seems we have not respected their conditions. This is going to hurt us on our reputation and this is also going to be a problem in the future. Madam Speaker,....

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval, I think you have exceeded the time allotted to you, so I'll give you an additional of some three or four minutes to wind up your speech, please.

Mr A. Duval: Okay, Madam Speaker. Let me just go straight to what I am going to propose to Government. Madam Speaker, I think to treat climate change, we need to be now more serious about it. What we propose, Madam Speaker, we think the next Government should firstly delimitate protected areas much more. In our lagoon, in Blue Bay, there should be something like 30% of our lagoon being protected areas. And we should then indemnify the fishermen who live on these lagoons, find a scheme.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, plantation of mangroves, just to give you a figure. Well, previous Governments had planted something like 10 times more mangroves than this Minister. I asked the hon. Minister now to go back to the roots and go back with the fundamentals of stopping climate change and beach erosion. There are so many measures that need to be adapted, Madam Speaker. And the last thing I ask is that we have a Public-Private Investment Plan for the future with regard to the regeneration of the lagoon, that we invest money in it and that we ask the hotels and the people in the hotel sector to also help contribute to the farming. Once we have done the protected areas, then we farm them and we protect them, Madam Speaker. The return is huge on investment. I will table. I do not have time to go into it. I will just table the coral reef economy and, Madam Speaker, I am sure hotels will be happy to chip in because we all realise that not doing so is going to be the end of the tourism industry, it is going to be the end of the ocean economy, it is going also to be the end of Mauritius as it has been for millions of years, and we cannot allow that to happen. The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor is here, I make a plea to him. He talks about legacy. It is his last mandate. Push this forward, leave a real legacy to the people of Mauritius and to future generations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.38 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is with great satisfaction that I rise to sum up Budget 2019-2020. Great satisfaction because this is yet another budget which this Government has presented to the nation, which has been widely accepted and acclaimed by the population, by the stakeholders and I must say by a number of analysts generally.

A Government Programme is, of course, not achieved in one Budget, but rather one Budget at a time.

As I said in the Budget Speech, when this Government came to power in 2014, we had a reconstruction job to do.

And today, I can say, again with great satisfaction, that we are accomplishing the mission that we set out to fulfil and that the population had entrusted to us.

But we all know that the road our nation travels does not end here. Our transformative journey continues, and Budget 2019-20 has further paved the way with new avenues to embrace a brighter future together.

Madam Speaker, let me thank all Members of the House who have participated in the debates.

The 2019-20 Budget, as I have said, is one of continuity towards the development of the economy, with a focus on improving the lives and living standards of each and every citizen in Mauritius and broadening opportunities for all, so that our citizens can fully materialise their aspirations in life. This has been the driver of our Government policies since 2015. We have hence introduced bold and historic measures – the Marshall Plan against Poverty, the Negative Income Tax, the Minimum Wage and lower taxation for the middle-income class, amongst others.

Madam Speaker, the philosophy of our Government has been to build up the productive capacity of the economy, whilst ensuring a fair and just distribution of growth for all.

The results of our actions have been concrete and the proof can be seen today.

For the period 2007 to 2014, investment in the economy grew, on average, by only 0.8% annually. Over the last five years, this figure has been at 5.4%. These are figures I am quoting, which appear officially in Statistics, published figures of institutions which are recognised. And I shall come to figures again, later on. In fact, last year itself, investment grew by a record 11.4% annually and is expected to continue to grow by 12.6% during the current year. Capital investment in the economy will be more than Rs100 billion during this year. It is a record figure and shows higher levels of confidence in the economy.

It also highlights the massive public infrastructure programme in terms of new roads, the Metro Express, new hospitals and schools, land drainage and water systems. Today, as we all can see, Mauritius is a massive construction site. With these projects, the construction industry itself, which has been constricting since 2011, is now booming with a record of more than 9.5% growth last year itself.

More than the absolute figures, when we look at capital productivity, the statistics show that our investments and policy of development have been fruitful. The productivity growth of capital, which has been negative over the period 2006 to 2014, is now growing positively.

Madam Speaker, the 2006 reforms that have been presented as the only possible alternative, in fact, resulted in widening the income gap and restricting our development potential.

We have been working very, very hard in order to reverse this trend and, today, each rupee invested in the economy is bringing more to the economic and social development of the country. Alongside Government projects, we are creating the enabling environment for private sector investment in productive sectors of the economy.

This Budget also reflects continuity in terms of our policies to reduce unemployment and control inflation. Today, let me repeat again that the rate of unemployment in our economy is at 6.9% - the lowest figure in 18 years - and each and every one working full time today earns a minimum of Rs9,400. We have been working very hard to reverse the high unemployment trend in the economy. In 2014, unemployment was at nearly 8% and was on the rise. Along with a decrease in unemployment rate, there has also been a significant improvement in the earning capacity of workers. Today, more than 75% of employees get monthly earnings of more than Rs10,000 as compared to an estimated figure of approximately 50% in 2014.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, to further improve the conditions of employment, we are coming up with a new Workers' Rights Bill and also a Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund to ensure that an employee can move between jobs without losing his years of service which account towards his retirement gratuity. This is going again to be a historic moment in the history of the advancement of workers.

(Interruptions)

Of course, we shall be clapping more when the Bill will be before the House.

We have also successfully ensured that prices of goods and services are kept in balance. In fact, the inflation rate in the economy peaked at nearly 10% in 2008 and averaged more than 5.5% during the period 2006 to 2014. This was the result of the policies of the previous Government, which impacted negatively on the low and middle class. Now,

inflation has stabilised and even touched its lowest level, its lowest rate ever in 2016 at 1% only. In 2019, inflation rate is again expected to be of less than 2%.

Madam Speaker, at the same time, household consumption expenditure is growing by a record level this year since 2008, showing again confidence of the population in the economy and its higher levels of standard of living and purchasing power.

It is, indeed, for us, a question of economic direction. We have chosen to take one which favours the inclusive development of the economy for the benefit of all. The reforms of the previous regime have favoured those who earn more at the detriment of the lower income earners. We can still remember the Ramgoolam-Sithanen TINA economics that has only had the effect of increasing income inequality and purchasing power gaps in the country.

I think it is very revealing, if I can make hon. Members remember who was denouncing this TINA economics. A Member of the Labour Party, Nita herself, in this very House, in the same Government, was criticising and was saying that the then Minister of Finance was strangling the poor and those who are at the lower rung of the ladder. I do not need to go into all these, but just to mention so that, at least, we do understand in what kind of environment the former Labour Government was, in what direction they were looking.

But, Madam Speaker, the philosophy of this Government since December 2014 is about a redistribution strategy and a democratisation of the economic space. This Budget continues on this path through policies to enhance the living standards of everyone - reduction of taxes on essential goods and personal income taxes, further increases in old-age pensions and other social security allowances, interim increase to public sector officers with regard to forthcoming salary revisions, amongst others.

Let me just open a parenthesis here, because I heard the last intervener, hon. Adrien Duval, again saying what some others have been saying, that it is unfair, it is a discrimination that we are granting Rs1,000 across the board to all public officers, pending a salary revision. I think we must be honest. We are talking about pending a salary revision. We are talking about the PRB. The PRB is not applicable to everybody. Of course, there are Remuneration Orders with regard to the private sector. There is the policy of each and every company with regard to its own salary revision for its enterprise. This is a different matter. We must not try to confuse the minds of people between salary revision and salary compensation. They are two different things. And I say it is very, I would call it 'intellectually dishonest' – this is

what we say – to try to mingle and to make people believe that Government has granted a salary compensation. This is not the case.

Madam Speaker, at the same time, we have engaged ourselves in strategies to boost entrepreneurship in the economy, through higher levels of access to finance and ensuring that doing business in Mauritius is as smooth as possible. And again, let me say this is easier said than done. Because when we want to improve the environment for entrepreneurs to have the best opportunities in order to invest, but not only in order to invest, but in order to be able to be successful. Now, what has this Government done? And I think we should be proud. It is not question of politics here; it is not a question of Party. But so be it if it is this Government which has been able to achieve an improvement in the ranking of Ease of Doing Business at the World Bank.

Madam Speaker, of course, sometimes we have to be careful because the next report will be coming out this year. We do not know what is going to be the ranking of Mauritius. But I can assure the House, and people will see, I and this Government, we will do whatever it takes to continue to improve the facilities and the ways for people to do business in Mauritius. I have said we are coming with a Business Facilitation Bill. I shall not go into the details of it because it will be debated before this House - the number of other improvements we are bringing. But this future publication of the ranking in the Ease of Doing Business will have already taken into consideration all the measures that have been taken by the Government, not these ones. That will be taken for the next report after this one.

So, let us pray, I pray that we continue to improve our ranking, but I must say it is a very, very difficult task when you have reached 20th in the world to keep on climbing the ladder and become amongst the best, of course, but we shall strive and we shall try to do it.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I say our policy has been clear. We want growth that is sustainable and inclusive, and this has been the common thread in all the seven Budgets that I have presented so far. It is my personal conviction as we create wealth, no one should be left behind. In fact, Madam Speaker, I engaged myself in politics to work towards the betterment of the nation and the well-being of one and all.

So, Madam Speaker, my summing-up will be in five parts -

First, I shall refute the criticisms on the issue of the prepayment of external debt.

Second, I shall counter some of the criticisms on the economic policies of the Budget.

Third, I shall elaborate on the main investment projects, both ongoing and in the pipeline.

Fourth, I shall list out the main achievements of Government in the areas of social development and environmental sustainability.

Fifth, I shall dwell on some of the misleading and unfair criticisms that have been expressed by some Opposition Members.

Madam Speaker, let me start with the issue of external debt repayment.

The measure announced will save the country some Rs400 m. of interest payments yearly. Rs400 m. we are paying every year and that will be saved.

Hon. Dr. Boolell has dared to say that this Government is leaving a legacy of public debt to future generations. Let me highlight that, out of the Rs18 billion of foreign currency debt which we are prepaying, some 97.8% were borrowed by the former Labour Party Minister of Finance, Mr Sithanen.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Let me table. Because, Madam Speaker, I do not speak out of thin air, as I say. All the figures that I mentioned, anybody can come up and can challenge me. But challenge me, not with your own fabricated figures; with figures that are published and that are published by institutions that are recognised. So, let me table a list of all those debts that have been taken, and I shall ask the question. Hon. Members will have a look at all those loans that have been taken and what were those loans meant for. Because I can remember, Madam Speaker. Who does not remember about the Stimulus Package of Sithanen? Some of the money was distributed to some agents; I must call them agents of the Labour Party.

Who does not remember about the Infinity saga? It is infinity, it does not end! Do I have to remind Members of the Labour Party especially, that money was taken, was given for Stimulus Package and has been spent on buying luxurious cars, buying Aston Martin, buying Rolex? Who does not know about the saga of RS Denim and RS Fashion? And this saga is continuing! The same person, today, has been, I must say - well, let me not prejudge the issue – managing - let me put it in that way - the affairs of the company in such a way that it went bankrupt. Now, an inquiry is being conducted. The Registrar of Companies has already

nominated a professional to look into this affair and to give us a report. So, we shall see. As I say, I do not want to prejudge nor do I want to influence anyone on this issue. But these debts, Madam Speaker, these loans have put unnecessary burden on the shoulders of our young people. We now, of course, have to refund these debts with interest and other charges. But, of course - somebody has said earlier - what has been done has been done. So, it is a hot potato but, then, you make what of it? *Purée* out of it?

But let me now come to the points raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition in respect of the Special Reserve Fund, insinuating that they are unrealised and merely paper profits. When he said that, of course, I have been looking at it, and I have been asking - because I am not in the field of accountancy - again, some people, just to double check, because you never know. Madam Speaker, let me say if that was the case, I have been told, it would have been impossible for hon. Xavier Duval, as Minister of Finance, to approve the use of that Fund to capitalise the Bank in 2011.

(Interruptions)

Yes! But how did you do it? I am going to explain how you did it!

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking!

The Prime Minister: In that year, Madam Speaker, Rs1 billion was transferred from the Special Reserve Fund to the credit of the Accountant General's bank account with the Bank of Mauritius; and for the Government to then provide an authority to debit the Accountant General's bank account with the Bank of Mauritius with the amount of Rs1 billion to subscribe same amount to the Bank of Mauritius capital.

(Interruptions)

I do not want to respond to the hon. Leader of the Opposition from a sitting position...

Madam Speaker: Please don't!

The Prime Minister: The point, hon. Leader of the Opposition, you still do not understand! You are talking about paper profit. But if it was paper profit, you cannot transfer money. It would have applied to you as well!

Madam Speaker, others also have been questioning this. That is why I want to go back to history. In 2004, when the new Bank of Mauritius Act was introduced, the amount of around Rs13 billion standing to the former Foreign Exchange Rate Fluctuations Reserve was legally deemed realised and transferred to the Special Reserve Fund. Again, this is proof.

During that year, as it may be observed from the Bank of Mauritius Annual Report, an amount of Rs990 m. was utilised to increase the capital of the Bank and an amount of Rs2.5 billion, under the caption “Accumulated Profit”, was transferred to the Special Reserve Fund.

So, when you look at the Annual Reports of the Bank, every year, there are movements between the accumulated profits and the Special Reserve Fund. The balance in the Special Reserve Fund as at end of June 2018 is realised and distributable as per accounting practice, given that the reserves are held in liquid marketable investments.

To take care of the concerns expressed in certain quarters, emanating from misconceptions created by Members of the Opposition and others, of putting the Bank of Mauritius at risk or undermining its independence, let me reaffirm to the House and the population that I would be the last person to try to jeopardize the financial stability of the Bank of Mauritius.

In fact, Madam Speaker, the amendment I shall be proposing to the Bank of Mauritius Act in the Finance Bill is such that the priorities in the use of the Special Reserve Fund would be as follows –

- (i) to increase the amount paid as capital of the Bank;
- (ii) to meet the cost of monetary policy operations, and then
- (iii) to the extent possible, meet repayment of central Government external debt obligations.

Let me also highlight that the final decision will be taken by the Board of the Bank.

Now, I heard hon. Uteem saying that what we are doing is illegal. Of course, if we do not amend the law, we cannot do it, and this is what happened also for monetary policy. For the Bank to conduct monetary policy, we have to amend the law. That was done in 2015, and that is why I am proposing this amendment.

Madam Speaker, there can be no better ring-fencing of the reserves of the Bank than this.

Another point that needs to be highlighted is the fact that the IMF guidelines on the use of Foreign Currency Reserves clearly state that the official foreign exchange reserves are held in support of a range of activities, including to assist the Government in meeting its foreign exchange needs and external debt obligations. I am tabling a copy of the extract from the IMF guidelines so that everyone can see and read.

Now, a Memorandum of Understanding will be entered into between the Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to operationalise the proposed amendment and guarantee the independence of the parties.

Madam Speaker, prior to the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004, the Bank was allowed to create as many reserve accounts as was required from the profit made in any one year.

And at Budget time, the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank would agree on a profit figure to be remitted by the Bank to the Government as dividend for that year. Those who have been Ministers of Finance would know exactly what I am talking about.

In the year 2002, when hon. Bérenger was Minister of Finance, although the profit of the Bank for that year was Rs1.2 billion, a higher amount of Rs1.5 billion was paid to Government by writing back an amount of Rs0.3 billion from reserves.

Again, in 2003, an amount of Rs1.5 billion was paid, when the Bank had only made a profit of Rs750 m., again, by writing back an amount of Rs750 m. out of the reserves of the Bank. These two big transfers were made when hon. Bérenger was Minister of Finance and Mr Basant Roi was Governor of the Bank.

Now, the question I ask: Was that a hold-up of the Bank of Mauritius, Madam Speaker, with the Governor as a consenting victim?

That same Governor, the self-professed champion of Central Bank independence did all this.

And again, those who are saying that if it is not money, it is just in the books, how is it that so much money could have been transferred from the Bank of Mauritius to the Consolidated Fund?

And then, Madam Speaker, the same Governor - you have to listen to this. I say, especially to the MMM, hon. Uteem, because he came much afterwards. Listen to this. - the one that both of you now are praising, in 2005, do you know what he did? He cunningly transferred Rs2.5 billion from the accumulated profit of the Bank to the Special Reserve Fund. You know, with what objective? To reduce the amount of dividend payable to Government in the future. I ask the question: What was the deliberate move to restrict? Was it to restrict the '*marge de manoeuvre*' of the then Minister of Finance? This Governor writes lengthily in newspapers. I hope he will write on this also; on what he has done.

Madam Speaker, I wish to, once again, reassure the House and the Nation that there is absolutely no way that the Government is putting in jeopardy the ability of the Bank of Mauritius to carry out its statutory functions, and there is absolutely, I say, absolutely no encroaching on the independence of the Bank.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, Section 47(4) of the Bank of Mauritius Act makes it an obligation for Government to issue negotiable Government interest bearing securities to make good any deficiency in the Bank's capital. Therefore, this should put to rest all the arguments of fear mongers that the Bank of Mauritius can go bankrupt.

And let me here remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, once again, that I was the one who introduced the Bank of Mauritius Bill in 2004, a new Bill altogether, which gave significantly more independence to the Bank of Mauritius.

And let us also go back, to not too long ago, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance, from 2011 to 2014, the kind of strenuous relationship which then prevailed between the then Governor, Mr Bheenick and the Minister of Finance. I should say one of the worst episodes of confrontation between a Minister of Finance and a Governor of the Central Bank, all because the Minister of Finance wanted to encroach a bit on the territory of the Central Bank.

Well, even the Monetary Policy Committee was not spared - you should remember. As Minister of Finance, he appointed his personal adviser to sit on that...

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, that is not accurate. There was no adviser appointed there. It would have been illegal. The hon. Prime Minister should check. He is repeating it now. That's why I am saying it is not. Please check and later he comes back. It is not accurate.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that one Nishan Degnarain was appointed by the hon. Minister of Finance.

(Interruptions)

Well, he was appointed!

(Interruptions)

This is what I am saying!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me explain to the hon. Leader of the Opposition; maybe I must remind him, maybe he has forgotten. Let me say. My point is they are accusing us, this Government, that we are encroaching on the jurisdiction, into the affairs, in the independence of the Bank of Mauritius. But what is this, Madam Speaker? When you appoint your adviser on the Monetary Policy Committee, not even on the Board - for the Board, it is provided by the law, but not on the Monetary Policy Committee. And then, you cannot! He is the last person to tell us!

Madam Speaker, let me come to the episode, because this has been the criticism I have had from the Labour Party also. Let us not forget the Sithanen-Bheenick saga. I think sometimes it is good - The newspapers have been publishing, you know, the Press conference by some Board members on the pavements outside the Bank of Mauritius premises and the threat from the then Minister of Finance to resign. Cannot we remember? I think it is good that I table this. We can see a photograph, members of the Board of the Central Bank holding a Press conference or a meeting rather. I think they were denied permission to enter. Can you imagine that? They were denied permission even to have access to a boardroom or to a room in the Bank of Mauritius and they had to conduct their meeting on the pavements, and then they had to hold a Press conference to communicate, you know, with the journalists. I mean, it is good that I table this for the record, for everybody to see. So, I think that should, at least, make those members of the Labour Party and the PMSD, you know, not repeat the same kind of criticisms again.

I shall now deal with the other criticisms that have been made on the economy.

Now, I must say it looks like a concerted effort from Members of the Opposition to create the perception that this Budget does not provide our country with the means to create wealth and jobs.

Yet, the entire part of the Budget on the economy is, in fact, about expanding the country's capacity to produce more and more efficiently. It is a Budget that will deliver a GDP growth rate of 4% in real terms, at a time when the world economy is projected to grow at a much slower pace of between 2.6% and 3%.

A 4% GDP growth for our country also means a near 4% increase in per capita income, which very few countries across the world can boast of.

And let me explain how this wealth will be created.

Madam Speaker, the Central Focus of the Budget is on boosting competitiveness through Innovation and Artificial Intelligence.

Madam Speaker, the writing is on the wall.

The danger of falling behind if we do not innovate is clear.

Indeed, innovation is what will make this country avoid the middle income trap.

And I am confident that this nation of ours can make it to the High Income Country status by 2023, as I have announced in my Budget Speech of 2017/18. And I think that if we maintain the rising growth path, the low and stable inflation and the stability of our exchange rate, we can even graduate to that status earlier than in 2023.

This is a challenge that I take personally, and we shall see in time to come.

That is why - and precisely why - on innovation, we have walked the talk.

Madam Speaker, this Government has dared to go where no previous Government has even thought of going - where innovation is concerned. Four years ago, there was no elaborate eco-system for innovation and application of AI technologies. Today, we have a National Innovation and Research Fund in which a seed capital of Rs100 m. will be injected. There are new e-services to facilitate citizens' interaction. There is a single point of entry for application of permits and licences. The 'National Payment Switch' is being implemented by the Bank of Mauritius and the National Payment Systems Act has been enacted in 2018. A Regulatory Sandbox Licence (RSL) is now allowing companies to invest in innovative projects. The National SME Incubator Scheme has been introduced. An innovator occupation permit has been introduced. There are now 350 Wi-Fi hotspots across our country. And we are providing free high broadband internet to some 11,000 families in the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM). We have introduced coding in primary schools and we shall give free tablets to Grade 4 students as well. The Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Council will soon be operational to implement the AI strategy. And the courses for the development of talent in AI announced in this Budget will complete the ecosystem.

Madam Speaker, just as this country has set the stage for the development of the global business centre, the seafood industry, the ICT sector, we have in the recent years created strong foundations for the investment in innovation and AI technologies, which will be the main driver of growth in the future. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has criticised the Budget for the support that we are giving to help industries face their near term

difficulties. And if we do not, Madam Speaker, what will be the cost to the sugar industry, the small planters, the thousands of workers and all the other sectors that depend on the sugar sector, including transport and energy? We have to ask the question - is it not the sensible thing to do? - the responsibility of this Government to save an industry that has been the mainstay of our economy for centuries and where thousands of jobs are involved and that is the main source of income for thousands of families? This Government, Madam Speaker, is satisfied that we have done what we needed to do and our commitment to support the small planters and workers and to consolidate the viability of the industry, in the face of eroding preferences and lower world prices, goes in fact far back.

Ever since 2001 when I assumed the responsibility of Minister of Agriculture, I have been courageous enough to come up with the Sugar Sector Strategic Plan and subsequent measures to ensure that all the stakeholders of the sugar sector are taken on board in the much needed reform process. In fact, I am proud to say that I saved the sugar sector, which the Labour Government had brought to the brink. And we know, despite the vile attacks that the Labour Party especially, when I came up with the VRS Scheme, what did they not say? I mean, it is in Hansard, we can all have a look. At that time, the former Prime Minister was Leader of the Opposition, but this VRS, Madam Speaker, has been wholeheartedly welcomed by workers. In fact, now, what is happening, the workers are asking and saying that "Trade unionists are telling us Government should come up with another VRS for the workers". In fact, I was the one who engaged also in initial discussions with the European Union to get the financial support we needed to implement the reform, at a time when the Sugar Protocol was scheduled to disappear. And needless for me to say that my friend, hon. Nando Bodha, took over and carried on. I do not want to go again into the detail of it; into what has happened after discussions with the EU, into what we planned to do, and into what we had agreed. I remember Commissioner Fischler, and again what had happened when the Labour Party took over.

Madam Speaker, the EU allocated unprecedented grants to the tune of Rs14 billion to Mauritius under the Sugar Accompanying Measures for Economic Restructuring. And as I say, it is a pity that most of those funds had not been fairly distributed, and it is a fact that the 2005-2009 period was painful for small planters. They were ignored and they were left in a situation where they had no choice than to abandon their fields. It is only in 2010 when I came back in Government, as Minister of Finance, that small planters were given the consideration they deserve.

In the 2011 Budget, the sugar sector, especially the small planters, was given utmost attention. The 80% advance to small planters to enable them to better prepare their fields in post-harvest time was reintroduced. The premium paid by small planters to the SIFB was reduced by 70%. I abolished the 15% tax on cooperative societies that was imposed by the then Labour Government. I abolished the tax on interests, and you would remember the National Residential Property Tax that was hurting small planters who had saved some money in the bank and had constructed their decent, modern residences. I reintroduced the 100 % duty free facilities for small planters acquiring 4 x 4 cabs, again, which was abolished by the Labour Government, the famous Rama Sithanen. I came up with a measure facilitating the accreditation of cooperative societies to the Fair Trade Initiative, thus providing them the opportunity to get an additional of 60 US dollars per tonne on their sugar revenue. I took the decision whereby small planters received an additional Rs1,000 of revenue on each tonne of molasses utilised to produce potable alcohol. In the same vein, Madam Speaker, I reduced cess. By so doing, the revenue of the small planters was increased by Rs2,800 per tonne of sugar accruing, and that represented a big relief for them.

On the other hand, what did the Labour Government do? They had promised - I would call it a false promise - that small planters would be given 35% shares in all sugar corporate entities. 35%? Where is it? Did it materialise?

(Interruptions)

You know, people were saying *dans 100 jours nou pou sanz zot la vie*. 35%! That would have changed the lives of small planters, yes, and workers also. Again, in 2014, the then Government promised to give a financial support to the tune of Rs3,000 to small planters to help them meet ends as the price of sugar was falling. That was obviously a false promise, and the small planters kept waiting. Nothing happened and, today now, when the former Prime Minister is in the Opposition, not even an elected Member, going around and promising Rs25,000 one tonne of standing cane. I do not know what he is going to promise again, what the Labour Party would be promising again.

Madam Speaker, it is only when this Government assumed office that small planters were again given consideration. While all their earlier benefits have been maintained, they received a financial support of Rs3,400 per tonne of sugar for the 2014 crop. DBM waived all interests and penalties on their loans of up to Rs150,000. Small planters producing up to 60 tons of sugar also benefited from an additional revenue of Rs1,820 for the 2016 crop.

Again, for the 2017 crop, measures were announced to support small planters. These efforts show that we have not forgotten that small planters have contributed a lot to make our country what it is today. It is in that same spirit that in this year's Budget, I announced that small planters will be paid Rs25,000 per ton of sugar for the first 60 tons of sugar accruing.

Madam Speaker, we are not only addressing the short-term problems of the sugar industry. As I said in the Budget Speech, the World Bank will carry out a study on how to ensure the long-term viability of the sugarcane industry. This will be followed by appropriate reforms and actions to strengthen and ensure the future of that sector. And let me add here that this Government is also preparing the country for the agriculture of tomorrow with investments in some hundred sheltered farms across the island. One hundred sheltered farms!

Madam Speaker, as regards support to fishermen, I would like to announce, today, two measures that we are taking. First, the restriction of 25 horsepower for VAT refund by the MRA under the VAT Refund Scheme on purchase of outboard and inboard motors will be removed. Second, I am increasing the daily bad weather allowance from Rs310 to Rs365. This Rs55 increase is the highest ever granted to fishermen by any Government, and it is a paradox, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition who has criticised the initial increase we proposed, provided a mere Rs9 as increase in 2013-2014. Rs9! And the MMM also criticised!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Hon. Bérenger provided a measly Rs10 when he was Minister of Finance in 2001-2002.

Madam Speaker, the other industry facing near term difficulties is the export manufacturing sector. Again, true to our commitment to protect jobs, workers and industries, we are giving that industry the support it needs. We have provided Rs120 m. for the support for Trade Promotion and Marketing Scheme to improve competitiveness of our exporters, and we shall consider the possibility of extending the support to cover exports to the US market.

As the former Speed to Market Scheme has been successful in supporting the industry, I am confident that this new scheme also will help our enterprises to expand their exports and tap new markets. Hon. Bérenger maybe might have misunderstood the relevance of setting up the ISP Ltd with a share capital of Rs1 m. because he said how is it that only

Rs1 m. is being provided. Well, I thought that he would have made the difference between the equity of the ISP Ltd and the funds that will be made available to the ISP Ltd, which amounts to Rs1 billion to finance various schemes to support the enterprises. Let me say how these Rs1 billion will be raised –

- Rs500 m. currently available under the Investment Support Programme.
- Rs450 m. receivable from refund of previously granted leasing facilities.
- And Rs50 m. from the National Resilience Fund.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the EDB will also be setting small industrial and business zones across the island.

Let me now speak about the financial services sector. The growth of that sector has been steady and above 5% for the last five years. The progress made is not haphazard and, as I said in the Budget Speech, Mauritius is now rated as fully compliant with the OECD standards on transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes.

With respect to AML/CFT, we have successfully obtained an upgrade of 11 FATF recommendations, thus demonstrating significant progress in meeting technical compliance. More than 10 licences have been issued to Fintech companies under the Regulatory Sandbox Licence, including crowd funding platforms, robo-advisory fund managers and exchanges enabling companies to raise digital money.

A Fintech Association has been created to ensure that start-ups and our youth have the right platform to develop their creative talent, attract investors in their projects and market their products locally and in Africa. Twenty incubatees are already developing their products.

For the tourism sector, Madam Speaker, unlike the gloomy situation, painted by Members of the Opposition, latest figures indicate that we shall have yet another year of positive growth. Our Budget measures will give a further boost to that sector in the coming year. We have allocated Rs695 m. to promote our destination and, in addition, we are making significant investments to diversify and improve the tourism product.

Let me now come to our plan to further boost investment in the manufacturing sector. Madam Speaker, apart from the business and industrial zones which the EDB has set up at Riche Terre, Côte d'Or and the Rose Belle Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences Park, the private sector along with the EDB will be setting up industrial zones in five different regions of the country, namely –

- the Port Louis Northern region;
- the Eastern region;
- the Southern region;
- the Western region, and
- the Central region.

And let me also stress that the entire country is teeming with projects – from coast to coast – in rural as well as in urban areas and also in Rodrigues and Agalega.

In fact, there are significant investment projects that are currently being implemented in the country by both public and private sectors that will give a tremendous boost to economic growth in the future.

There are projects for a total value of more than Rs200 billion being implemented in all the five regions that I have just mentioned.

I shall be tabling a complete list of such projects, which will also include new community projects and sports and leisure projects across the country. We are just not talking. This is there for everyone to see, Madam Speaker.

Let me also say that investment, as measured by the Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), accelerated significantly in 2018.

Public investment grew by 14.7% in 2018, but investment also rose sharply in the private sector, mainly due to an increase in machinery and equipment.

The main industrial sectors which have registered substantial growth in investment are: ‘Construction’, ‘Arts, entertainment and recreation’ and ‘Transportation and storage’.

In the Business Facilitation Bill and the Finance Bill, there will be numerous reforms that will give a further significant boost to private investment. I do not want to go into the details, but let me just say that the new Business Facilitation Bill will amend some 29 primary legislations and 25 Regulations.

Madam Speaker, with the measures and policies of the Budget, economic growth should rise further. We are expecting growth to be above 4% in future years with sharper decline in the unemployment rate.

As regards youth unemployment, the Opposition has stressed the fact that it is high. Let me point out that many countries in the world have high youth unemployment rate. In other words, there is no major problem of long-term unemployment among the youth in

Mauritius. Moreover, it is well known that young people, new on the labour market take more time to get the kind of job they aspire to get.

With the list of projects that I have just mentioned, the criticisms made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the effect that there is no measure to boost the productive sectors and that none of the productive sectors are doing well are totally unfounded. I do not want to go into this issue - because hon. Uteem raised about the youth unemployment and some Members also. I ask them to go and have a look at the statistics. The days when MMM/MSM was in Government, the days when hon. X. L. Duval was Minister of Finance in the Labour/PMSD Government, MMM/MSM Government also. You can have a look and you can compare also with the actual figure. It turns around maybe 20, 24 or 25%, which has been the trend throughout years and years and years. But I must proudly say, that, as compared to other years, nearly 88% of our youth are employed within a period of one year. 88%! Now, I am not saying we should not care for the 12% that remain and that find difficulties in getting a job within that year, or maybe they take more time. But then, again, our actions are also geared towards solving that problem. That is why we have come up with a number of schemes for training, for retraining, and we see to it that what the industry requires in terms of jobs, so that we are able to guide our youngsters towards those job sectors. This is the aim of this Government.

Let me now come to the fourth part of my summing-up. Madam Speaker, I have spoken about what this Government has done and continues to do to expand wealth in our country and consolidate the economy.

Let me now speak about what we have done to ensure that the wealth we create is fairly shared and that economic growth is inclusive - as the rising tide lifts all boats. In fact, no previous Government had done so much to achieve inclusiveness as what this Government has done. This is why I will maintain that the statement made by hon. Shakeel Mohamed and some other Members of the Opposition that the poor are getting poorer is wrong and blatantly unfounded, and I shall prove it, Madam Speaker.

If we look at the latest Gini Coefficient in 2017, which measures income distribution, it shows an improvement in equality, whereas during the period 2006 to 2014 it has been deteriorating. Equally important is that the share of total income going to the 20% of households at the lower end of the income range increased from 5.3% in 2012 to 5.7% in 2017. On the other hand, the share of the upper 20% of households decreased from 47.5% to

46.0% during that period. And these data do not even take into account the impact of minimum wage and other recent measures to improve the income of families at the lower rung. Madam Speaker, we shall look at the figures again after the one financial year, and then we shall see how much we have improved in terms of social justice.

Let me also list a few of the actions that we have taken to improve the purchasing power of the poor and low-income families.

Increase in monthly basic pensions by around 85%, from Rs3,623 per month in 2014 to Rs6,710 as from January 2020, for the benefit of some 270,000 individuals. And I heard some Members of the Opposition saying that we have raised expectations. We have raised expectations? They have been raising expectations! I can ask any Member of the Opposition to tell me, when have I, in a public speech or even elsewhere in private forum, stated that the Basic Retirement Pension will be increased to be at the same level as the minimum wage. Where have I? Hon. Bérenger talked about it, that we have raised expectations. I thought that he would have tabled - I do not rely on Press reports - at least Press reports. Madam Speaker, why some of them did say that? They said that before the Budget. Because I had already said before to the old age people that this Government cares a lot, has consideration, has gratitude for them, and we will keep on increasing their Basic Retirement Pension, which we are doing now. Madam Speaker, we have to remind - maybe some Members of Government also have already forgotten about it - the discrimination in Invalidity Pension for those below 15 years. Some 3,200 of these people are now benefitting from this pension. For more than 40 years, they have been discriminated against.

Subsistence Allowance to some 11,000 poor households at a cost of Rs250 m. annually since 2017 to eradicate absolute poverty.

Child Allowance to some 12,000 students from poor families at an annual cost of Rs115 m. since 2016/2017.

Further educational support to the poor, some Rs200 m. spent under Marshall Plan against Poverty since 2015 on this item under the Vote of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

Reduction in price of 12 Kg cylinders of cooking gas from Rs330 in 2014 to Rs210 today – a decrease of 36%.

(Interruptions)

I do not know how to interpret a huh..., I can...

(Interruptions)

A reduction in price of flour that we have taken in a previous Budget, from Rs5.85 for ½ Kg to Rs4.85, and the maintenance of subsidies for rice and flour to keep down prices over the period 2015-2019.

Up to 6 Cubic Metres of water free.

Subsidies on SC and HSC exam fees. Since 2015, do you know what is the total cost? Rs1.5 billion!

Rs600 m. now for free tertiary education since this year, 2019.

Minimum wages introduced in 2018, some 100,000 workers benefitting from this measure.

70,000 beneficiaries of Negative Income Tax and Special Allowance at a cost of Rs465 m. per year since 2017-2018.

More than 2,900 community-based projects implemented by Local Authorities and NDU.

More than 14,000 new posts filled in the Civil Service.

Increase in the annual per capita grant for teaching aids, utilities, furniture and equipment for Special Education Needs Students, Madam Speaker, from Rs1,300 to Rs5,200 - a fourfold increase. I am very proud of this. In this Government, we are very proud of this.

The support to the SENS schools more than doubled, from Rs61 m. in 2015-2016 to Rs135.2 m. in 2018-2019.

120 high-level retired athletes are receiving the State Recognition Allowance. Artists also, for the first time with this Government, are getting their due recognition.

Increase in maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks and payment of leaves also applicable to mothers with less than 12 months service.

Employees earning less than Rs50,000 monthly have benefited from a reduced income tax rate of 10% instead of 15%. In all, Madam Speaker, since 2015 to December 2019, this Government would have increased the purchasing power of the population, through direct and indirect transfers, pensions, free tertiary education, social aid, subsidies,

income tax reduction, negative income tax, minimum wage, amongst others, in an unprecedented way, most of which benefits are going to families with modest income.

We have indeed increased the purchasing power of the population by some Rs100 billion from 2015 to 2019, including the various subsidies. And, Madam Speaker, while we are promoting wealth creation and greater well-being of the population, we are also investing judiciously in environmental sustainability.

Our policies and measures are exhaustive and far-reaching, addressing issues of pollution, recycling, wastewater management, solid waste management, preservation of our lagoons and reefs, drainage to mitigate the impact of flash floods and erosion, access to good quality water for the population and cleanliness of our living environment, amongst others.

Two years ago, Madam Speaker, I initiated the *Moris Nou Zoli Pei* campaign, alongside citizens in different localities. Ensuring a clean and sustainable environment is my personal struggle for our country. Last year, I injected Rs2 billion in the National Environment Fund to finance environment protection and enhancement projects.

This year, I have announced a major cleaning up campaign to make of Mauritius one of the cleanest and safest countries in the world. We have, of course, to be responsible and it takes a collective and patriotic effort from each and everyone to attain this objective.

Unfortunately, hon. Adrien Duval is not here. He talked a lot about the environment. I shall respond to one thing by which I am shocked. I heard him say that in Mauritius, we have a very low emission of carbon and gas and, therefore, what difference would it make because we are going to invest billions of rupees - in fact, yes, we are investing billions of rupees - and that it would not make such a difference, and is it worthwhile to spend so much money.

Madam Speaker, first of all, if everyone would reason in the same way, what would happen to the earth? Because he fails to understand that Mauritius is not an island in isolation. We are living in a world, we are living on earth, and that is why there has been such, let me say, *reprise de conscience* concerning gas emissions. And that is why also we have adhered to the Paris Agreement and that we have undertaken a number of obligations in the Paris Accord.

As the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said, is it the wish of the hon. Member that we should adopt the same reasoning and the same stand as the United States, that is, walk away from the Paris Agreement and say that, well, this is not a major problem and it is the problem

of some other countries? I fail to understand that kind of reasoning. As a young Member, I thought that particularly the youth would be even keener on engaging into protection of the environment. Maybe he is mixing up with the issue of climate change and the impact of climate change. That is why I totally disagree with him on that, and I do not want to go into all the other things because it will take the time of the House for me to respond when he says that there is no EIA on this and that. Well, with the Metro Express, I think he knows very well that they have been exempted from the licence, but they have provided the EIA Report and the executive summary has been made public. So, we are seeing to it that the conditions are being respected.

With regard to Agalega also, it is the same thing.

With regard to protection of the coral reefs and so on, there is a number of initiatives. We can provide a list, in fact, of what Government is doing. But let me say one thing, hon. Adrien Duval. We would have wished to do much more than that, but it is a question of budget, it is a question of how much money you have, and we have to do a number of things with regard to different sectors. It is a priority of this Government.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to some other criticisms that have been made on the Budget. I must say hon. Uteem has been very unfair and making false statements that the budget deficit is not reliable.

Nowhere, Madam Speaker, does the IMF show any concern about the reliability of the methods used to calculate the country's deficit. I must say just a figment of imagination of some people who choose deliberately to see things in a crooked way. Can hon. Uteem produce to this House any document which says that the budget deficit before and what we are forecasting now has been greater than what we have already done before and what we are forecasting now? Do not come up with any figure coming from, I do not know, which mind, and then you say budget deficit is 5%, public debt is so much per cent! What is this? If you tell me - and I am referring to IMF, I am referring to World Bank, I am referring to Moody's, I am not referring only to Statistics Mauritius and to figures produced by the Ministry of Finance. Those international organisations, and particularly IMF, have regular checks on the economic indicators of this country. Let me say this includes the hon. Leader of the Opposition also. He has been saying, he has written a letter, he has tabled the letter that the IMF - I must say the reply turned out to be futile because the response of the IMF, Madam Speaker, in the letter has never confirmed the doubts that have been expressed by the hon.

Leader of the Opposition. Where does it say in the letter, if he can show me, that the IMF has expressed doubts about the way we calculate our public sector debt? Where is it said? Nowhere!

As I say, whether in regard to debt or deficits, the estimates of the IMF and the Ministry of Finance do actually converge. In fact, we have never seen in the Article IV Report of April 2019, the deficit of 5% that some people are talking about.

Again, I say, show me where, in the Article IV Report of 2019, does it say that budget deficit is 5%. As a matter of fact, the IMF stated in its April 2019 Article IV Report, at paragraph 7, that, and I quote - *‘the fiscal outturn for year 2017/18 was broadly in line with the budget.’* What is this, Madam Speaker?

Let me now address some of the other concerns of hon. Bérenger as regards support to the artists. Over and above measures implemented during the previous financial years, a *‘Village des Artistes’* will be built at Batterie de l’Harmonie to provide a conducive environment for artists to create works of art, showcase their creations, hold working sessions and conduct workshops.

With respect to the fight against corruption, hon. Bérenger has said that we did not mention anything in the Budget Speech. Let me remind the hon. Member that we indeed announced the setting up of the Financial Crime Commission to act as an apex body to ensure greater coordination and coherence among the various investigative agencies, including ICAC, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the enforcement department of the Financial Services Commission in carrying out their functions, and, in particular, in dealing with investigations concerning drugs and corruption offences and all other financial and economic crimes.

Madame la présidente, l’honorable Bérenger et son parti se présentent comme un rempart contre la corruption et de temps en temps tentent de faire la leçon aux autres sur ce sujet. Mais allons voir dans les faits, les positions à géométries variables qu’adopte le MMM sur la corruption.

In fact, if we had liaised we would have maybe tuned up our speech, but the hon. DPM has made mention of that.

L’honorable Paul Bérenger était le premier à qualifier le Super Cash Back Gold de la BAI de Ponzi Scheme. C’était lors d’une PNQ adressée au ministre des Finances en novembre 2013, à l’honorable Xavier Luc Duval, mais la moralité version mauve a voulu que

le même MMM empoche R 10 millions de la BAI de Dawood Rawat pour les élections générales de 2014 au moment où c'était le grand amour entre le Parti travailliste et le MMM.

Ce même MMM ne s'était pas embarrassé de présenter Ashok Jugnauth comme candidat à trois reprises, après que ce dernier fut trouvé coupable à la fois par la Cour suprême et le Conseil privé pour *electoral bribery* – trois fois. Comme si, une fois il a été battu, cela ne suffisait pas. On l'a représenté et on a oublié cette condamnation pour *electoral bribery*. A ce moment-là, c'était monsieur 'Propre' et le parti MMM était le parti 'Propre'. Troisième exemple, Madame la présidente, le MMM n'a jamais pris de sanction contre monsieur Bidianand Jhurry qui avait été écroué pour *making use of office for gratification whilst being a public official* en vertu de la Prevention of Corruption Act. Président du Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund en 2005, il était accusé et condamné d'avoir favorisé l'embauche de cinq de ses proches au sein de cet organisme. Voilà, Madame la présidente, comment le MMM combat la corruption. Le peuple, je suis sûr, en a pris bonne note.

Mais le MMM n'en finit pas de nous étonner pour ne pas dire de nous décevoir. L'honorable Uteem est allé jusqu'à minimiser le scandale Betamax. Je dirai quelle honte, surtout quand on sait à quel point la Cour suprême a été sévère dans son jugement dans cette affaire, alors que certains prévoyaient déjà que l'État devrait dédommager Betamax. Je ne vais pas faire référence à l'ancien Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam qui avait tenu des propos publics et avait même fait des confidences, Madame la présidente, pour dire que, d'après lui, – je dis d'après lui – l'honorable Xavier Duval lui a dit que lorsqu'il était au gouvernement, il avait supplié le gouvernement de ne pas aller de l'avant, de mettre un terme à ce contrat. Quelques jours avant le jugement de Betamax et que Navin Ramgoolam disait : voilà le gouvernement irresponsable qui va payer autant de milliards. C'est comme s'il savait déjà que le jugement allait être d'une certaine manière. Alors, il prévoyait donc déjà qu'on allait dédommager Betamax, la compagnie de Vikram Bhunjun - il faut le dire ; peut-être que les gens ne savent pas, la compagnie de Vikram Bhunjun, beau-frère de l'ancien ministre travailliste Rajesh Jeetah - à hauteur de R 4.5 milliards pour rupture de contrat. La Cour suprême de Maurice a refroidi les ardeurs de ces mêmes personnes. Et c'est important. Malgré que cela a été mentionné par plusieurs membres, laissez-moi citer les trois derniers paragraphes du jugement, *and I quote* –

“The enforcement of an illegal contract of such magnitude, in flagrant and concrete breach of public procurement legislation enacted to secure the protection of good governance of public funds, would violate the fundamental

legal order of Mauritius. Such a violation breaks through the ceiling of the high threshold which may be imposed by any restrictive notion of public policy.

We have absolutely no difficulty in holding that the public policy of Mauritius prohibits the recognition or enforcement of an award giving effect to such an illegal contract which shakes the very foundations of the public financial structure and administration of Mauritius in a manner which unquestionably violates the fundamental legal order of Mauritius.

For the given reasons, we find that the Award is contrary to the public policy of Mauritius within the meaning of section 39(2)(b)(ii) of the IAA, and the Award is accordingly set aside. We also, as a result, set aside the provisional order for the recognition and enforcement of the Award which was granted on 07 September 2017.”

I do not want to foresee what will happen in the future, but I speak as a lawyer, Madam Speaker. I have looked at the judgment of the Privy Council of the CT Power, and I was discussing that with the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. I shall only say this. We can clearly see the thinking of the Privy Council on issues like favouring a party with regard to using public funds for a contract. I shall just leave it at that and then time will tell and we will see how this case will end up.

Madame la présidente, je crois bien aussi que l’honorable Uteem doit avoir pactisé avec le diable pour avoir osé diminuer l’ampleur de ce scandale qui est, celui-là, un véritable scandale du siècle. En effet, les vrais coupables sont ceux qui avaient taillé un contrat juteux de dix milliards sur mesure pour favoriser le beau-frère d’un ministre qui était présent au Conseil des ministres lorsque celui-ci avait approuvé le *deal* avec la complicité du Premier ministre coffre-fort. Dois-je rappeler à la Chambre que lors de la perquisition chez l’ex-Premier ministre, une enveloppe avait été découverte avec le nom de l’expéditeur, en l’occurrence, un certain Vikram. On peut se poser la question si le contenu de cette enveloppe a alimenté le fameux coffre-fort. Pouvons-nous comprendre que c’est pour cette raison que Navin Ramgoolam continue à défendre aussi farouchement ce scandale du siècle ?

Madam Speaker: On this score, hon. Prime Minister, I think that we should refrain from imputing motives, if ever.

The Prime Minister: I am stating facts. It is a fact. We can check it from the record...

(Interruptions)

One minute, I am not...

(Interruptions)

No, no, I am not giving way. I am explaining...

(Interruptions)

I am explaining!

Madam Speaker: Please, I have given a Ruling on that matter. If ever there are questions on imputing motives, then you should refrain. This is what I have said.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in response to what you just said, what I am saying to the House is that I am stating the facts, that there was an envelope that was found. On one of the envelopes, it was written Vikram and there are legitimate questions that people can ask. I am not imputing any motive. I am not saying that this and that happened, but it is for people to see whether this has happened.

Now, let me come to l'autre scandale, CT Power, où le Parti travailliste avait alloué un contrat découlant d'un unsolicited bid pour privilégier un bailleur de fonds malaysien qui avait grandement financé leur campagne électorale en 2005. Et pourtant, ils se frottaient les mains lorsque l'affaire avait été référée en justice, où le promoteur avait poursuivi l'État. Il réclamait des dommages de R 4.5 milliards. Le Conseil privé, en donnant raison au gouvernement mauricien, encore une fois, a mis fin à leur acte diabolique. Est-ce que pour l'Opposition, et surtout je parle pour l'Opposition MMM, ce n'est pas aussi un autre scandale du siècle ? En dépit de tous ces actes pour piller les fonds publics, le MMM était soudainement tombé amoureux du Parti travailliste.

Madame la présidente, on sait que l'amour est aveugle, mais je ne savais pas que c'était si aveugle que ça. Peut-être à cette époque, et aujourd'hui encore on me dit qu'il y a un *chemistry* spécial entre l'honorable Bérenger et le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Et encore une fois, je dis n'oublions pas aussi - on a tendance à oublier - le cas de BAI, où Dawood Rawat, qui réclamait des dédommagements au gouvernement mauricien, a essuyé un revers devant le Tribunal d'Arbitrage de Paris. Au contraire, il a été sommé de payer environ R 3.7 millions à l'Etat.

Madame la présidente, lorsque j'entends le Leader du MMM parler de démocratie, je ne peux m'empêcher de rire un bon coup. Dans quelle démocratie a-t-on vu un Leader de l'Opposition comploter avec un Premier ministre pour fermer le Parlement pendant neuf mois afin d'accoucher d'une alliance dans leurs intérêts personnels ? De plus - je dirai 'de plus' - Madame la présidente, il s'était accroché au poste de Leader de l'Opposition jusqu'au dernier moment. L'honorable Bérenger l'a fait sans scrupule ...

(Interruptions)

Ce n'était pas neuf mois, un an ? Ce bébé a pris du temps pour être conçu.

Madam Speaker: Please, no crosstalking!

The Prime Minister: Je dirai l'honorable Bérenger l'a fait sans scrupule en tournant en farce un poste constitutionnel. C'était un viol de la démocratie. Et il ose parler de démocratie. Le peuple n'a pas oublié.

En tout cas, Madame la présidente, voilà pourquoi le MMM dégringole. L'hémorragie se poursuit tant dans l'hémicycle que sur le terrain.

Et pour rappel -

- en 2000, le MMM en alliance avec le MSM, avait fait élire 29 députés.
- En 2005, 11 députés.
- En 2010, 19 députés.

Après les élections de décembre 2014, le MMM, dans l'opposition, comptait 12 élus, et je passerai sur ce qui a été dit concernant la grande victoire ...

(Interruptions)

40 plus 40 ! Ce n'était pas 80, 40 plus 40 allait faire 90, parce qu'il y a certains du côté du MMM et du Parti travailliste qui avaient déjà pitié pour cette opposition MSM/ML et PMSD aussi. Donc, ils avaient pitié pour nous. Ils allaient gagner ! Malheureusement ils allaient gagner !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Certains ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Je vais dire il va se reconnaître. Certains avaient pris rendez-vous chez leur tailleur aussi, avaient choisi leur *bodyguard* aussi déjà, en avance.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: Mais, Madame la présidente, regardez ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

The Prime Minister: Regardez maintenant. J'allais oublier. Il y a aussi les élections municipales. Les élections municipales, 120/0 ! Le MMM a écrit l'histoire, est entré dans l'histoire !

(Interruptions)

Oui, chaque fois plus fort que jamais !

Aujourd'hui, le MMM ne compte plus que six députés avec les démissions de l'honorable Alan Ganoo, l'honorable Kavi Ramano, l'honorable Jean Claude Barbier, l'honorable Joe Lesjongard, l'honorable Dr. Zouberr Joomaye et l'honorable Dr. Raffick Sorefan.

(Interruptions)

Non, Danielle Selvon, faites attention ! Elle est passée au MMM, mais elle a bien vite réalisé son erreur.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Je ne sais pas ! Finalement, aussi pour la partielle de 2017, le MMM a non seulement essuyé une défaite mais n'a même pas pu atteindre 15% des suffrages.

Donc, de plus...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! That is why I said no crosstalking! No crosstalking, please!

The Prime Minister: De plus, l'honorable Béranger aussi n'est plus Leader de l'Opposition.

Laissez-moi dire aussi, Madame la présidente, dans un entretien accordé à *l'Express* de dimanche en date du 22 février 2015, l'honorable Barbier avait soulagé sa conscience en avouant, et je cite, que -

“J’ai dit tout haut ce que tout le monde, au parti, pense tout bas. Il est là, le problème. L’état-major n’est même pas au courant de ce qu’il va dire - Il parle de l’honorable Paul Béranger. Il découvre les prises de position du leader en même temps que les journalistes. Ce n’est pas possible de fonctionner ainsi. Paul Béranger l’a mal pris parce qu’il n’est pas habitué à être bousculé. Mais si on ne change rien, ce parti va finir par mourir. Il ne restera plus qu’un fan club.”

Voilà le fan club, Madame la présidente. Ou du moins...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please! No crosstalking! I have said that this is what creates disorder in the House. If there is crosstalking, there is provocation and it creates disorder in the House. It makes my task more difficult. Yes!

The Prime Minister: Ou du moins ce qu’il en reste du fan club dans l’hémicycle, Madame la présidente. Mais je dirais, sur le terrain, les militants ont perdu tout espoir. Ils quittent le navire mauve qui va à la dérive. Et, quand le Leader réclame des élections générales, ils savent qu’une autre désillusion se profile à l’horizon.

Le désastre à multiples dimensions que connaît le MMM a conduit le parti à se noyer dans le communalisme infect après le fameux communalisme scientifique qui était jadis la marque de fabrique du Leader du MMM.

Madame la présidente, le discours et le comportement du député Uteem dans cette auguste Assemblée, je dirais, m’a vraiment ‘surpris’ et c’est un mot assez faible. Je n’aurais jamais cru qu’il pouvait aller aussi loin dans sa diatribe communale. Le peuple, je suis sûr, en a pris bonne note, tout comme pour le député Shakeel Mohamed aussi, avec des arguments à relent bassement communal, et je dirais un comportement indigne dans la Chambre. Et là, le député - je n’allais pas parler sur ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. It is too easy for the hon. Prime Minister to come and say that I made a speech on the Budget *à relent communal*. Which part of my speech was *à relent communal*? At least! Otherwise, he should withdraw it. This is wrong; he should withdraw it, unless he tells me which one.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I would request not to make any provocation and to refrain from using offensive expressions. If, in other forums, the hon. Member has made certain comments and if he did not make it in this august Assembly, then, I think, we should refrain from mentioning it.

The Prime Minister: *Madam Speaker, laissez-moi venir sur ce que l'honorable – je n'allais pas faire des commentaires sur ce cas, le cas qui me concerne, où le Privy Council ...*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, please resume your seat! I have already given my ruling on that matter and I have asked the hon. Prime Minister to proceed with his speech. Proceed without making any further comments on what you said.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member wants me to give example, I can give example, but I do not want to waste the time of the House and I want to continue with my speech. The hon. Member, we all remember, when the Metro Express was being constructed in Port Louis, when there were the poor people - I must say poor people because *on les a induits en erreur* - he was the one who went there, *en train de monter les gens, de dire qu'il faut protester*.

(Interruptions)

Let me say!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please sit down! There are two points which have been mentioned. One point to which you objected was that the hon. Prime Minister has said that, in your speech on the Budget, you had mentioned certain elements relating to communal hatred. That is the first thing. Now, you are objecting to ...

Mr Mohamed: To him saying that I provoked *manifestation*!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Order, please! Order! Now, there are procedures in this House. Besides making comments from both sides of the House through crosstalking, there are procedures in the House. If somebody is not happy with what has been said, if any hon. Member is aggrieved by what has been said, there are procedures and then, he can relate to the procedures and come with a motion to the House.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I just said that the procedure I am adopting...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, the procedure I am adopting is a very simple one. It is a point of order based on the fact that he is imputing improper motives upon me, which is not right!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, please! I don't think there is any...

(Interruptions)

If you want, if you wish that I check what you said in the Budget Speech and I come back, I can do that. Then, I will have to suspend the sitting, check and come back, or what I will do is that I will reserve my ruling to some other time so as not to take the time of the House for the time being. Now, for the time being, allow the hon. Prime Minister to finish his speech.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I said that hon. Shakeel Mohamed has had an unacceptable behaviour in this House. That is one. And, secondly, I said he has been holding communal speeches outside this House, and I can show. I shall bring it up to this House if he wants to. I was mentioning the case of Rajahbally where he had made a public statement, which has been recorded. They were saying that Plaine Verte should come down now, Plaine Verte would come and do this and do that. What is this? Everybody knows what he meant when he said that. So...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I know what you are worth...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: What am I worth?

Madam Speaker: Please, order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Mohamed: *Raciste...*

The Prime Minister: *Mwa raciste?* You withdraw that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: You withdraw.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Can we have some order in the House?

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order in the House?

I think hon. Members should have a certain element of courtesy between each other. A certain element of courtesy from this side to this side and from the Government side to the Opposition side, and this will restore order in the House.

(Interruptions)

Please, sit down! Hon. Soodhun, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun, please calm down and don't get excited. When I am on my feet, you can't stand up and say whatever you have to say. Okay! I have given my ruling on that matter. I think that's the end of it. I will ask the hon. Prime Minister to proceed.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I would request you to see to it that the hon. Member withdraws the word '*raciste*' addressed to my attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, did you utter that word ‘*raciste*’? Because I didn’t hear. I couldn’t hear because...

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I will not waste your time, I withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Mohamed: Learn from me!

The Prime Minister: Madame la présidente, comme je l’ai dit, je ne voulais pas faire de commentaire sur l’affaire du *Privy Council* en ce qui me concerne, mais force est de constater que pendant le débat, il y a l’honorable Uteem qui a fait, je dirai, des remarques pour le moins désobligeantes, et montrant un manque d’égard total envers notre système judiciaire, envers la Cour suprême et envers le *Privy Council*.

Le *Deputy Prime Minister*, je l’ai écouté, je ne savais pas ce qu’il allait dire. Il a bien dit, il a bien parlé, il a bien répondu. Donc, je ne vais pas répéter ce qu’il a dit. Mais lorsque j’ai lu, relu le discours de l’honorable Uteem concernant cette affaire, ce qu’il a dit, c’est comme-ci lui, et pour cela, je ne dirai pas - je sais quel est le *mood* du MMM. Ce n’est pas seulement lui. Je sais quel est le *mood* du MMM, de certains membres du MMM. Ils sont très déçus que j’ai pu gagner mon affaire devant le *Privy Council*, très, très déçu. Parce que je marchais avec des menottes en mains – ils faisaientt comme ça, avant le jugement. Qu’est-ce qu’ils n’ont pas dit ? Je ne vais pas entrer dans tout cela. Je demande à tout le monde de lire cette partie où le député Uteem vient dire que Pravind Jugnauth a des actions dans MedPoint, sa sœur a des actions, son beau-frère a bénéficié. Clairement, si c’était quelqu’un d’autre, j’aurais pu comprendre, quelqu’un qui n’est pas juriste, mais venant d’un avocat, clairement, qu’est-ce qu’il veut insinuer ? Qu’il y a conflit d’intérêt, *zot mem aste, zot mem vende*.

(Interruptions)

This is what I can infer!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Sit down! Can you please sit down?

(Interruptions)

Can you please sit down? Please, sit down, hon. Uteem!

After five years, I think you should understand now, that when I am on my feet, you should sit down! I have been saying that so many times. After five years or so, I see that hon.

Members don't accept that when I am on my feet, they should sit down. If you said that, in your speech or you never said that, I can still check. That also, I will ask the Table to note it down. I will check, and then I will come with a ruling. Okay? So, now, on my ruling, there should be no argument. For me, the hon. Prime Minister should continue with his speech. I have already given my ruling on that matter and, on a ruling of the Chair, there should be no argument, please!

Mr Uteem: On a point of order! You have not even listened to my point of order. Let me tell you what was my point of order.

Madam Speaker: You have already raised your point of order. Please, sit down!

If you are saying anything on the ruling that I have already given, I will not allow it. If it is something new, it is only then that I will take your point of order. I have already said if it is something new.

Mr Uteem: The point of order is not about what I have already said. The point of order is that the hon. Prime Minister just said that I said something. It can only mean that is what I meant. So, that is imputing improper motives. So, I don't want him to impute any improper motives.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I don't think this tantamounts to imputing improper motives. I don't think so, hon. Uteem. Clearly, I think the hon. Prime Minister should proceed.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, what I am saying is the logical interpretation. It is as if, you know, the hon. Member is putting me on a retrial with regard to this case. That is what I find. Five Law Lords, Madam Speaker - five - unanimously have found that there was not even a conflict of interest, there were no circumstances that could lead to conflict of interest, and as rightly been pointed by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, who is a Senior Counsel, who is a seasoned lawyer.

What was the issue? Was there a great constitutional legal point that has been raised? I shall just say that. I shall not comment any further on this. Otherwise, some can say that I am criticising institutions. But that is the situation. But, anyway, if the MMM will continue to say '*scandale du siècle*', etc., well, keep on saying!

And that is why I am saying, Madam Speaker, l'ampleur du désastre politique qui accable le MMM, l'avenir des militants n'est pas avec le MMM. Je profite de l'occasion pour

saluer encore une fois le courage du *Deputy Prime Minister* et son équipe qui, guidés par le principe du militantisme, avaient claqué la porte du MMM en 2014. Le flambeau du vrai militantisme se trouve de ce côté de la Chambre. C'est pourquoi nous continuons à accueillir à bras ouverts les militants, pour bâtir un avenir meilleur pour notre pays et nos concitoyens.

Madam Speaker, *les...*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I think there should be an element of courtesy towards the hon. Prime Minister. You keep interrupting him, and what he is saying is serious, you make as if it is trivial matters.

The Prime Minister: Madame la présidente, le MMM, l'honorable Paul Bérénger aussi parle, je cite, concernant les élections partielles: 'une telle incertitude constitue un manque de respect envers la population'. Où est le manque de respect envers la population ? C'est parce que lui, il ne sait pas quelle est la stratégie du gouvernement. Mais quel Premier ministre va dire publiquement 'voilà ce qu'on va faire' et quelle est la date des élections. Enfin, j'ai connu autant de Premier ministres, et j'étais avec lui aussi, quand nous étions ensemble, il était Premier ministre.

Ce que je peux dire, Madame la présidente, nous allons respecter strictement les provisions de la loi. Premièrement, l'élection partielle a été fixée. Les élections générales vont être fixées d'après ce que la Constitution nous permet de faire. Nous allons voir, le temps viendra, et je ne vais pas en dire plus là-dessus.

Madame la présidente, je ne peux pas oublier les avancées de Maurice sur le dossier des Chagos. Nos victoires historiques aux Nations Unies et à la Cour internationale de justice ont prouvé que nous menons un combat qui est juste et légitime. Ces victoires représentent aussi une gifle magistrale aux prophètes de malheur. Car, nous n'avons pas oublié, là aussi c'est un fait, car ça a été dit quand l'honorable Bérénger disait que nous n'obtiendrons pas 10 votes pour la première résolution en juin 2017 et que nous risquions gros par rapport au vote sur la deuxième résolution après l'avis consultatif de la Cour internationale de justice, parce que pour lui, d'après lui, le lobbying n'avait pas été fait comme il faut parmi les Etats

membres des Nations Unies. Et dans les deux cas, les votes massifs en faveur de Maurice ont prouvé qu'il avait encore une fois tort de critiquer comme il l'avait fait.

Madame la présidente, je réitère ici ma détermination pour poursuivre le combat afin de compléter la décolonisation de notre pays et exercer notre souveraineté sur l'archipel des Chagos et enfin permettre à nos compatriotes d'origine chagossienne de retourner dans leurs îles natales. Très prochainement, je présenterai une motion visant à demander à l'*Electoral Boundaries Commission* d'annexer les Chagos à une circonscription. Tout comme la provision budgétaire initiale de R 50 millions pour un éventuel programme de relogement, cette initiative sera un signal fort que l'arrêt de l'administration illégale des britanniques de l'archipel ne saurait être retardé et que la République de Maurice pense déjà à l'avenir et aux droits fondamentaux de nos compatriotes qui choisiront d'aller vivre aux Chagos.

Madame la présidente, nous devons rester solidaires et unis dans ce combat pour faire respecter notre intégrité territoriale. Et laissez-moi dire aussi, *Madam Speaker, whilst we are investing a lot in the development of infrastructures in Mauritius, we are also investing massively in the modernisation and transformation of Rodrigues Island and Agalega.*

L'honorable Adrien Duval avait dit que pas grand-chose avait été fait et que, au contraire, auparavant, lorsque le PMSD était au gouvernement, ils avaient donné beaucoup plus d'attention à Rodrigues.

I think we can compare, we can see. I have inaugurated the MARS Cable which brought high speed internet to Rodrigues, and I do not want to go back into what has happened, what promises were made. And after renovating and increasing the capacity at the airport of Rodrigues, AML will construct a new runway at Plaine Corail to enable landing and takeoff of larger aircrafts. We are also coming with a new scheme to upgrade the ex-Trust Fund houses. We are also supporting the tourism sector, again by maintaining the subsidy on airfares so that prices do not increase.

Agalega, Madam Speaker, will also benefit from a new runway and a new jetty, which will substantially improve air and sea connectivity, and there is a series of other measures that I have announced in the 2019/2020 Budget for Agalega. And the Outer Islands have never had so much invested in the upgrading of their infrastructure.

Madame la présidente, l'unité, c'est ce que j'ai toujours prôné pour l'avancement de notre peuple. Notre slogan, c'est «Unir Pour Bâtir». Et au fil des années, notre parcours et nos réalisations ont prouvé que nous avons été fidèles à ce slogan, synonyme de progrès, de

bonheur et de justice sociale. Le communalisme ne nous mènera nulle part. J'invite la population à la vigilance, car il y va de la paix et de l'harmonie dans notre pays.

Madam Speaker, before concluding, let me reiterate my commitment to continue, and with even greater determination, my combat against drug traffickers. I announced several measures in the Budget Speech. As I said in the Budget Speech, and it is worth reiterating, that, and I quote –

“Since 2015, ADSU, in collaboration with other enforcement agencies, has seized some 750 kgs of drugs worth more than Rs5.7 billion and made over 9,900 arrests.”

With our cooperation, Reunion and Madagascar have made significant arrests of drug dealers.

To complement the work of ADSU, officers of the Police Force are making targeted landing in several hotspots of drug dealing, with positive results in terms of seizure of drugs and proceeds from drug trafficking as well as arrests of drug dealers.

Madam Speaker, here we have devised another strategy. They think that the Lam Shang Leen Report has been put aside. I do not want to go again into the detail of who has had the courage to initiate a Commission of Inquiry on Drugs, but I can say that a number of the recommendations are being taken onboard.

Well, each time, I am not going to come to this House and say rapport Lam Shang Leen. Look at the results! And now, we have also devised a strategy where there are combined efforts from different units of the Police Force, ADSU, of course, SMF, SSU, ERS, the NCG Commando, and they have had a number of landings. I am getting the reports every week and how many seizures of drugs, heroine, cannabis, cannabis seeds, methadone and how many people also have been arrested. So, the operation is called Operation Sudden Fall, and we shall continue it, and it will not fall. I say that also because in recent days, we have seen the good results of the work that has been done by ICAC to seize assets of drug dealers.

As I said, Madam Speaker, the war on drug is indeed a daily one. We are making very good progress and we will not stop until all the drug dealers are behind bars. It is, therefore, not those who, in the past, have tolerated the activities of the drug mafia and persistently refused to set up a Commission of Inquiry on drugs, and even now proposing to legalise cannabis, who will, today, tell us what to do. It is this Government that has set up a Commission of Inquiry on Drugs and it is this Government that is taking the bull by the horns and combating the drug barons.

I will now conclude, Madam Speaker. There are times in a nation's journey when tough challenges must be faced and wonderful opportunities awaiting to be harnessed. For our country, for our nation, for our people, this is one of those times. To seize the opportunities requires that we stand prepared. The tough challenges call for fundamental choices to be made, for new avenues of progress to be charted. These are precisely the central thrusts of Budget 2019-20.

On many occasions before in our history, our resolve to progress as a nation has been tested but, every time, our steadfastness and determination as a nation have prevailed. We must continue on that path with actions, actions and actions.

As the French author Georges Bernanos has said, and I quote - «On ne subit pas l'avenir, on le fait.»

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 5.38 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.20 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY - VOTE ITEMS - TIME ALLOCATION

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to inform the House that in keeping with past practice, after consultation with all parties concerned, an indicative time allocation has been worked out in regard to each vote item, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 73(4). As we proceed, the time allocation in respect of each vote item will be announced. As usual, I will exercise some flexibility wherever the need arises. We will proceed page by page for the orderly conduct of the Committee of Supply. I would kindly request hon. Members not to address any policy issues. In this context, your attention is drawn to Standing Order 73(3), which provides that –

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

I also appeal to hon. Members to be brief in their questions and hon. Ministers to be brief in their replies. I would rely on your collaboration. I further wish to inform hon. Members that the hon. Prime Minister has made a request for the votes in regard to the Centralised Services of Government to be called out of turn, that is, immediately after the Committee would have considered the votes of expenditure for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. In addition, the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports has made a request that votes in regard to his Ministry be taken after the Committee would have considered the votes of expenditure of the Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands and Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. This request has been made in view of the fact that he is taken up with the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games. I have been informed that there have been consultations on this issue and that there is no objection. We shall, therefore, proceed accordingly.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I have a Point of Order. Can I make a Point of Order following your...

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Bhagwan: I would like to draw your attention that during last year's Budget and previous Budgets, while proceeding through Committee Stage, many Ministers have agreed that the answers be circulated. Now, I have gone to the Library, Madam Speaker, hundreds of these replies have not been given to we, elected Members, as promised during Committee Stage. Can I ask, through you, the Prime Minister at least to direct Ministers, if they do not have the reply, they can say they do not have the reply, but not give the House the impression that they will circulate and as such give us the impression that they will circulate it, even not on the same day, the day after or the week after, but nothing has been done. So, can I appeal to you before starting Committee Stage?

Madam Speaker: Yes, I would agree to what you have said. In fact, if they had committed themselves and they had said that they will circulate the replies and the replies have not been circulated, then it is better for them to say that they do not know or they do not have the information. Thank you.

(06.23 p.m.)

THE APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL 2019

(NO. X OF 2019)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Chairperson: Let me say that we have got a total time of eight minutes for this vote item.

Vote 1-1 Office of the President was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan, on page 1.

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you. On page 1, Madam Chairperson, item 21110.001(1) *Basic Salary - President of the Republic*, can I take it that under this item we have an Ag. President and can the taxpayers know what would be the difference in salary, whether he is given any allowances and on the same count, how many missions he has effected, and the last mission especially to South Africa where he used a Rolls-Royce?

The Chairperson: Can I ask hon. Members to ask one question at a time, please?

The Prime Minister: An allowance of Rs90,000 being paid to the Acting President, being the difference between the salary payable to the President and the salary of the Vice-President. A duty allowance of Rs22,785 monthly is being paid to the Acting President of the Republic, being the difference between the duty allowance of substantive President and the duty allowance of Vice-President.

(Interruptions)

Yes. The foreign missions of the Acting President, I have a list and I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Madam Chairperson, I am interested in Item 21110.001 (25) *Basic Salary - Gardener/Nursery Attendant*. I see for period 2018/2019, there was a provision for 31 whereas for this year there is a provision for 26. May we know the reason why there was been an increase in the number of nursery attendants?

The Prime Minister: The post is filled by selection from among general workers on the establishment of this Office requiring four years' service, and none of the general workers in post reckon four years' service to be appointed Gardener/ Nursery Attendant. Therefore, provision has been made to meet the salary of 26 Gardener/Nursery Attendant only.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody, page 1.

Mr Baloomoody: On the same page, item 21110.001 (2) – *Secretary to the President*. Last year, there was provision. This post has not been filled. Do we intend to do away with that post? Because it has been there last year and it is here again, but no allowance.

The Prime Minister: Mrs N. Bheenick, Permanent Secretary, has been assigned the duties of Secretary to the President, her salaries currently being met from the vote of the Public Service Commission with effect from 04 April 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 21110 (3) – *Deputy Permanent Secretary*. From last year to this year, there has been a reduction from 2 to 1. May we know the reason why for this decrease in Deputy Permanent Secretary?

The Prime Minister: Because the decrease in provision is due to the transfer of one post of Deputy Permanent Secretary from the vote of the Office of the President to the vote of the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance. The decrease is also because of the posting of a newly appointed DPS as from April 2018 in replacement to a Senior DPS.

The Chairperson: Page 2! Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Yes, thank you, Madam Chairperson. With regard to Capital Expenditure, item 31111.408 – *Upgrading of State House*, from project value of Rs44 m. for last financial year, there was an amount of Rs27 m. earmarked. Can we know if this sum has been spent and, if so, can we have a breakdown, please?

The Prime Minister: The project value is Rs45 m., and a contract was awarded on 09 March 2018 to Bholah-Jeetun Company Limited for the sum of Rs34,949,391.25 following open bidding exercise. The handing over of the site was effected on 23 April 2018 because works started on 07 May 2018. The actual expenditure is Rs42,610,368.68, and the completion date is 29 January 2019. The decrease in the provision, as the work is completed, and provision has been made for payment of retention money.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Madam Chairperson, I am interested with the item 21110.002 – relating to *Salary Compensation*. I see for the last financial year there is a provision of Rs640 whereas for this financial year, the provision has almost doubled. Can we know why the salary compensation has doubled?

The Prime Minister: Yes! The increase in provision is due to payment of salary compensation of Rs400 per month as from January 2019 across the board to 110 staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bagwan! Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: The same page, item 22120 – *Fees*. May we know from the Rs2,300,000 which were approved last year, how much has been spent and to which organisation these fees have been paid?

The Prime Minister: Yes, fees to Chairman and members of the Commission of the Provocative of Mercy and Chairperson and members of the Departmental Tender Committees and Bid Evaluation Committees. I can circulate the list or if you want me to read.

The Chairperson: Yes, please! Circulate the list, please! Hon. Jhuboo! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, item 21111.002 – *Travelling and Transport*. Can I ask whether this item covers transportation overseas as well? Because to pick up from where hon. Bhagwan just left earlier on, there is this issue of travelling in South Africa.

The Prime Minister: This is provision for payment of PRB travelling and travel grant and travelling allowance and refund of bus fares to staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval! Please, be quick!

Mr A. Duval: May we know, with regard to the Provocative of Mercy, under *fees* - 22120, how many sittings there have been, and how many applications have been granted and refused since 2015 to date?

The Prime Minister: The Commission met on 17 occasions from July 2018 to April 2019. Out of 1,283 petitions considered by the Commission, 489 free pardon and 690 remission of sentences have been granted. Out of 690 cases, 554 were granted remission for period spent on remand and in police cells in accordance with the Judicial and Legal Provision Act of 2018.

Vote 1-1 Office of the President (Rs70,100,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.33 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: Page 3, we have total time of 7 minutes for two pages. Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Item 21110.004 – *Allowances*. Rs1 m. last year, Rs1 m. for this year again. May we know how much has been used last year, and the allowance is for what purposes?

The Prime Minister: The provision for payment of house allowance is Rs9,500 monthly and duty allowance is Rs48,300 monthly for the Vice-President and Acting Responsibility Allowances for staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. With respect to item 21110 (1) – *Vice-President*, now that the Vice-President is acting as President, what happened to the staff? Are they redundant technically?

The Chairperson: This relates to the administration, hon. member! Hon. Bhagwan! Page 3! No. Hon. Adrien Duval! Page 3? No. Hon. Baboo, page 3!

Mr Baboo: May the Prime Minister tells us what are these extra assistance and why is the increase?

The Prime Minister: Which item?

Mr Baboo: Sorry. Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*.

The Prime Minister: The provision for payment of salaries duty remission on car allowance, refund on unspent leave, travelling allowances, bonus and contributions to the National Savings Fund at the rate of 2.5% of basic salary to one adviser, two household attendants and one gardener nursery man employed on contract. So, there is Mr G. Vydelingum, Adviser, Mrs C Teeroovengadam, Household Attendant. The Household Attendant one which is vacant. The Gardener and Nurseryman vacant, which I said earlier, they were not qualified and then, well, the amount is there.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, on page 3, item 21110.001 (12) – *General Worker*. The post funded two, last year, and this year, also two. But there has been a decrease in the amount budgeted from Rs190,000 to Rs150,000. May we know the reason?

The Prime Minister: Yes, because of partial provision has been made as the two General Workers in post are on secondment from the Ministry of Social Security, National

Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development. Consideration will be given for their permanent transfer after a period of six months.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Madam Chairperson, at page 3, under *Item 22030 - Rent*. May I know who tendered and who was the winner of the award?

The Prime Minister: Well, provision is made for payment of the rent of Rs70,000 per month for the Office of the Vice-President, situated at Avenue Farquhar, Quatre Bornes. The lessor is Mr D. Ramful. The first contract was signed for a period of three years with effect from 01 January 2009 and was subsequently renewed from January 2012 to December 2016, January 2017 to December 2018 and January to June 2019. The contract has again been renewed from July 2019 to June 2020.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I refer the hon. Prime Minister to page 3, under *Item 21111 – Other Staff Costs*. Can I inquire from the hon. Prime Minister about the particulars of the staffs?

The Prime Minister: Well, in fact, there are provisions that are made for payment of travel grants, travelling allowance and refund of bus fares to staff. The increase in provision is based on the trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Page 4! Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. With regard to *Item 22900 – Other Goods and Services*, may we have the breakdown of the goods and services supplied, and secondly, an explanation as to the variation between the years, Rs300,000 from last year to this year?

The Prime Minister: They are provisions for payment of uniform allowance to Office Auxiliaries, Drivers and General Workers. There are provisions also for payment of monthly allowances to one Clerk, Word Processing Operator and one Office Auxiliary employed by the retired Vice-President, Mr Raouf Bundhun; one Office Auxiliary and one Clerk, Word Processing Operator employed by Mrs Oshan Bellepeau, retired Vice-President. Four first class air tickets, Mauritius/ London/ Mauritius, annually, for medical check-up for the retired Vice-Presidents, Mr Raouf Bundhun and Mrs Oshan Bellepeau. Expenses for surgical intervention, if required, to the retired Vice-Presidents.

Vote 1-2 Office of the Vice-President (Rs14,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(6.40 p.m.)

Vote 1-3 National Assembly was called.

The Chairperson: Vote 1-3! We have got a total time of 15 minutes for 4 pages. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 5, *Item 20100(4) – Deputy Chairman of Committees*. We have a very able Deputy Chairman of Committee. Can we know how many Committees he has presided for the past years since he has been appointed - in terms of number? Can we taxpayers know?

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan, I am sorry, I can't allow this question because it depends on myself, as Speaker, as to how many Committees I would ask him to chair. I am sorry.

(Interruptions)

No, but I don't reply to your questions. Hon. Osman Mahomed! No? Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 5, under *Item 21110.001 (2) - Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary*, where the amount earmarked came down. The year before it was Rs288,000 and it just came down to Rs258,000. May we know why?

The Prime Minister: Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary - the amount has been adjusted according to the actual salary drawn by the holder of the post.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 5, under *Item 20100 – Annual Allowance*. May we know where is the Prime Minister catering for the Rs1,000 PRB payment in advance allowance, as virtually all the salaries for all the votes are the same? If the hon. Prime Minister can explain, please.

The Prime Minister: No, you can't. The hon. Member cannot ask that kind of question. He must ask a question with reference to the item.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval, it doesn't relate to the National Assembly *per se*.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Chairperson, with regard to this item, may we know whether or not it includes the Rs1,000 payment PRB in advance? It's a simple question.

The Chairperson: It's a question which relates to the Minister of Finance. Now, we are taking the budget of the Prime Minister's Office. When we come to the budget of the Ministry of Finance, then for sure provisions will be made under the budget of the Ministry of Finance or otherwise. Then, we will ask the question.

Mr A. Duval: This item is under remuneration and, as MPs, we are supposed also to get that remuneration. I am asking whether it caters for it or not?

The Chairperson: No! I am sorry, hon. Adrien Duval, I can't accept this. So, page 6! Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: At page 6, item 21110.001(24) – *Hansard Reporter and Sub Editor*. May we know what happened to that post? Are we going to recruit one or it keeps repeating, but there is no allowance for that?

The Prime Minister: No provision has been made as there are no qualified candidates for the post.

The Chairperson: Hon Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: At the same page, 6, *Item 21110.001 (31) - Procurement and Supply Officer, Senior Procurement and Supply Officer*. We see there are no funds concerning procurement especially.

The Prime Minister: No provision has been made as the post has been upgraded to Principal Procurement and Supply Officer.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: With regard to *Item 21110.001(17) - Manager Broadcast*, may we know why there is no funded position for this financial year?

The Prime Minister: Well, no funds have been allocated as the post has been advertised on three occasions, but the Public Service Commission reported that there was no qualified candidate. Recommendation will be made in the review exercise of the PRB for the restructure of the Broadcast Unit and the Parliament ICT Unit. Presently, the Parliament ICT Manager is equally acting as Manager Broadcast.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: At page 7...

The Chairperson: We are at page 6. Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Under the *Item 21110.001(11) - Parliamentary ICT Manager*, where the amount was Rs367,000 and now it is raised to Rs746,000. May we know why?

The Prime Minister: The full provision has been made as the post has now been filled.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I would like to refer the hon. Prime Minister to page 6, *Item 21110.001(25) - Assistant Hansard Reporter and Sub Editor*. I see for last year the provision was two and for this year the provision is for six. Despite an increase from two to six for last year, the provisions were Rs220,000 and for this year the provision is Rs353,000. Why this discrepancy despite the fact that it has got four more?

The Prime Minister: I can explain. The partial provision has been made as the scheme of service is being reviewed. The post, in fact, was advertised in October 2017 and there were no qualified candidates. So, presently there are six officers in the grade of Management Support Officer who are helping in the Unit against payment of an appropriate allowance.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Page 6, *Item 21110.001(23) - Senior Hansard Reporter and Sub Editor*. There has been a substantial decrease of Rs500,000, but the number of staff has remained the same, that is, six, may we know the reason?

The Prime Minister: Well, the provision has been made for only five officers in the post. The vacant posts cannot be filled in as there are no qualified candidates.

The Chairperson: Page 7! Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Chairperson, on *Item 22060.005 – IT Equipment*. Do we understand that we are paying Rs18 m. a year for maintenance of IT Equipment here, and who has the contract, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for maintenance of IT Equipment, maintenance of Control Room and other associated equipment, Harel Mallac. Robotics cameras, Harel Mallac; Wifi, Mauritius Telecoms; Ipad and Software, Ispace & Co.; Digital

Recording System & Servers, Harel Mallac, Prepress Unit Equipment, Ispace & Co. Heavy Duty Printing Machine, and maintenance for equipment, CBE & Co.,

The increase in provision is due to additional amount provided for maintenance of IT Equipment following live broadcasting project.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On the same item of IT Equipment, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether any provisions have been made in the digital recording software for transcription of creole, so that Hansard can record Creole language.

The Prime Minister: Well, I do not think that provision has been made.

The Chairperson: It is a policy matter, hon. Uteem. Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Chairperson, at page 7, *Item 22 – Goods and Services*. May we know why there is an increase for the year 2020-2021?

The Prime Minister: It is because there are a number of items under that main item: Cost of Utilities, Office Equipment and Furniture and Expenses. I can circulate a paper, because it is a long list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Fowdar! No? Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 7, *Item 22120.007 – Fees for Training*, I see that every year there is an amount of Rs1 m. that is earmarked for training. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister the amount that has been spent in 2018-2019 out of this Rs1 m.?

The Prime Minister: Well, there are two items under this. The provision for Fees for Training is for training of staff. And then, there is provision also for payment of Transmission Fees to MCML for live broadcasting of the sitting of the House at the rate of Rs350,000 per month.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Chairperson, at page 7, under *Item 22040 – Office Equipment and Furniture*. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether provision has been made for the setting up of a Press corner, in terms of furniture within the precinct of the National Assembly?

The Prime Minister: Well, this is provision for the purchase of IT items for Members of Parliament under the Facilities Grant Scheme for some 30 Members. Members are paid a facilities grant of Rs85,000 for the purchase of a laptop, a fax machine and a mobile phone every three years.

The Chairperson: Page 7? Hon. Baboo! No? Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I know the hon. Prime Minister has touched on this *Item 22120.041 – MCML - Transmission Fees*. Parliamentary debates have been broadcast for quite a while now, but I see that last year there were no disbursement at all, but this year, we have been asked to vote Rs4,830,000. May we know from the hon. Prime Minister why this is so?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have replied. The annual fees to the amount of Rs4,830,000 have been budgeted for the provision of the ongoing operation, maintenance and support by MCML for the transmission and broadcast system for the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House on television, through its terrestrial broadcasting network. It is the fees that the National Assembly has to pay to MCML for its Parliament TV Channel, through which viewers watch the proceedings every time.

The Chairperson: A last question on this page, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. If I may refer the hon. Prime Minister to page 7, under *Item .008 - Facilities Allowance to Honourable Members*. Can the hon. Prime Minister state what facilities it is being referred here for the colossal amount of Rs21 m. every year?

The Prime Minister: Well, probably I shall get the details. It is provision for payment of facilities, allowance to Members of the National Assembly at the rate of Rs24,000 monthly - 72 Members, at the rate of Rs24,000 monthly. Well, the Chief Whip gets Rs30,000 monthly.

The Chairperson: Page 8! Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Chairperson, *Item 31112.442 – upgrading of Parliamentary Security*. We have Rs27 m. to be spent over the next three years. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us what is being upgraded for our security?

The Prime Minister: Upgrading of Parliamentary Security - this project consists of measures to enhance the security aspect in the vicinity of the Parliament against any terror attack. Project value: Rs15 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 8, under *Item 31112.442 – Upgrading of Building (c) Major Repairs to old Parliament House*. There was a project value of Rs38 m. and now there is Rs5 m. next year, and Rs30 m. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what do these repairs relate to and whether tender has already been launched and the contract awarded?

The Prime Minister: This project consists of major works to repair and prevent water infiltration to the wooden structure of the building. Provision is for preparation of tender documents and floating of same by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. Project value: Rs40 m. And then, there is also replacement of air-conditioning and electric systems in the lunch room of the National Assembly.

(Interruptions)

Well, there are details. I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Madam Chairperson, *Item 31122.999 – Acquisition of New Sound System for Committee Room*. As the project value is Rs10 m. and only Rs3 m. has been used, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister the reason why?

The Prime Minister: It was meant for the replacement of the sound system in the two Committee Rooms, because I understand that the present sound system is faulty and has reached the end of its lifetime. But, the project could not be implemented as there are water infiltration problems in the old Parliament House. Therefore, the project is being put in abeyance until the repairs are completed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin! No? Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. *Item 31112.442 - Upgrading of Building (b) Parliamentary Museum* – a very good project. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister where matters stand on this Parliamentary Museum?

(Interruptions)

Tarolah! Chaumière etc.! Mett Tarolah, Rutnah !

(Interruptions)

Madam Chairperson: Order! Order! Order, please! We are taking the time of the House.

The Prime Minister: This project consists of the setting up of the Parliamentary Museum. The sum allocated is for the hiring of the services of a Consultant. The project value is Rs5 m.

Vote 1-3 National Assembly (Rs261,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

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

The Chairperson: We have got only one page, 5 minutes. Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes, Madam Chairperson, concerning item 21110.001(3) *Secretary, Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission*, no funds have been made available. Can we know why?

The Prime Minister: No financial provision has been made for the post of Secretary, Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission as one Deputy Permanent Secretary from the Prime Minister's Office is presently serving as Secretary to the two Commissions against payment of an allowance of Rs6,600 monthly.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under item 21110.001(1) *Chairman, Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission*, can we know from the Prime Minister where matters stand concerning the report which is under preparation concerning the Electoral Boundaries Commission?

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, the Electoral Boundaries Commission had conducted public hearings on 07 April, 24 September, 24 November 2018 and on 16 and 17 April 2019. I understand that the report of the Commission is due in 2019, but I do not have an exact date.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Under item 22120 *Fees*, I find an amount of Rs300,000 each year. May we know for what purposes these fees are paid for?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the payment of legal fees to Barristers and Attorneys for representing the Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission in Court. Three cases are pending before the Supreme Court and can be called for hearing at any time.

(Interruptions)

Do I mention the cases, you want to know? The case of Sandeep Bhawanidin v. the Electoral Supervisory Commission, Anwar Keenoo v. Other respondents in the presence of ESE and Rezistans ek Alternativ v. The State in the presence of ESE.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Can I refer the hon. Prime Minister to item 22900 the last item on this page in relation to *Other Goods and Services*. I note that for the last financial year there was a provision of Rs25 m. whereas for the current year, the provision is made Rs75 m., then it goes down to Rs25 m. again. Can we know why there is a substantial increase of Rs50 m. from Rs25 m.?

The Prime Minister: The increase is due to the publication of reports of the Commission in connection with the delimitation of boundaries of constituencies of the Republic of Mauritius and on the local regions of Rodrigues and other petty expenses.

Vote 1-4 Electoral Supervisory Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission (Rs3,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.01 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: There are two pages, 10 minutes. Hon. Mrs Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Under item 21110.005 *Extra Assistance*, may we know what does it include?

The Prime Minister: Provision is for the payment of salary of one adviser on contract. Monthly salary Rs56,450.

Ms Sewocksingh: Can we have the name?

The Prime Minister: Mr Rajesh Oograh who has retired from the services as Deputy Chief Electoral Officer on ground of age. So, he is now the adviser.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Under item 21110.001(2) *Chief Electoral Officer*, it was Rs85 m. for last year's budget and this time it is Rs810 m.

The Prime Minister: Full provision has been made to fill the vacancy as the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer is now qualified for the post as from June 2019.

The Chairperson: Page 11! Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: That you, Madam Chairperson. On page 11, item 22120.016 *Fees icw Elections*, can I know which election it is being referred to?

The Prime Minister: Fees in connection with elections, provision to meet cost of expenses in connection with the National Assembly Election and the National Assembly By-election such as payment of election fees, electoral travelling allowance, allowance for supervising elections, overtime and so on and so forth.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Under the same item, Madam Chairperson, 21120.015 *Fees icw Registration of Electors*, may we know how many Commonwealth citizens have been registered as electors in this exercise? Commonwealth residents, citizens, foreigners, Commonwealth nationals who have been registered as per the Constitution as electors, may we know how many of them? Well, they must know.

The Prime Minister: I do not know myself, Madam Speaker. It is the Electoral Commission which will know and who can...

(Interruptions)

I do not think even it will know. The register is being updated now. So, it is not in a position. Later on, you can ask a PQ on this.

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

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 11, item No. 22030 *Rent*, there is an amount of Rs11,425,000, may we know the details and to whom the rent has been paid?

The Prime Minister: The provision for payment of rental of office space occupied at Max City Building and at Fatimah Building for storage of ballot boxes and election materials. Let me say it so that there is no – this is easier. For Max City Building, the owner is H. V. Property Management Ltd and the monthly amount for 2018/19 is Rs824,429 because there is

a big office area. Fatimah Building the owner is Sunee Cootee Mehman Society, the Jumamah Mosque it says here and for the same period, Rs97,538.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: The question has been put and answered.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you , Madam Chairperson. I am interested with *item 22070 - Cleaning Services*, can the hon. Prime Minister state why the cleaning services have substantially increased for next year from Rs650,000 to Rs800,000.

The Prime Minister: Yes, the provision is made for cleaning of office premises and toilets. The contractor is Office Clean Limited – 70,600 monthly in accordance with the terms of contract, and for the supply of Sanitact Services, the contractor is Hygiene Team Services – Rs2,300 monthly in accordance with the terms of a new contract and the increase in provision is due to revised contract value in relation to payment of minimum wage.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin.

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On page 11, *item 22060 –Maintenance*, for 2018/19 an amount of Rs1.9 was earmarked and for 2019/20 this amount has doubled. Can we know why?

The Prime Minister: Provision for maintenance of photocopiers, air conditioners, computers, printers and other minor repairs, services of air conditioners Rs28,300 annually. The contractor is Sewraj Conhye and Rs1,325. monthly to UMCL for the servicing of generator.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Chairperson, *item 22030 – Rent* – may we know the location of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner and to whom the rent is paid?

The Prime Minister: Well, it says Rémy Ollier street, HB Properties Limited. I think Max City building. The hon. Member should know.

Vote 1-5 Office of the Electoral Commissioner (Rs378,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.10 p.m.)

Vote 1-6 The Judiciary was called.

The Chairperson: 20 minutes for four pages. Hon. Baloomoody.

Mr Baloomoody: On page 12, *item 21110.001(3) Justice of Appeal*, it is a new item of course. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister where this court of appeal will sit and provisions is being made for how many judges?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not have the answer where they will sit, but these posts were created in the context of the establishment of the court of appeal which is awaiting the passing of the relevant enactment in the National Assembly. We shall know when it will be passed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes. Concerning *item 21110.001(12) Deputy Director Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies*, I understand this is a new post *mais ce nest pas demain la veille parce qu'il n'y a aucune somme qui a été allouée*.

The Prime Minister: The post has not yet been established in the Civil Establishment Order.

The Chairperson: Yes. Hon. Adrien Duval.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I ask the Prime Minister under *item 21110.001(4) - Puisne Judge*, four new Judges will be appointed. Do we know who will be appointed? Does the Prime Minister know or are they not yet appointed?

The Prime Minister: Vacancy to be filled by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission for effective delivery of justice by the Supreme Court and four additional posts of Puisne Judge are required at the new Supreme Court building. It will house 24 court rooms and each court room will be allocated to a Puisne Judge.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I take the hon. Prime Minister to *item 21110.001(6)* in relation to Deputy Master and Registrar and Judge in Bankruptcy. I note that there is provision made for two Deputy Master and Registrar while we know that there is only one Deputy Master and Registrar. Why is there provision for two?

The Prime Minister: One Deputy Master and Registrar is appointed with effect from 21 of May 2019 and one post will be filled by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission in due course. That is why part provision has been made.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I come to the issue of Deputy Director Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, another item - *item 21110.001(12)*? May we know where matters stand with regard to that Institute because no provision is made?

The Prime Minister: As I have just replied earlier. The post has not yet been established in the Civil Establishment Order. Maybe I can circulate the reason as to why it is going to be established and for what purpose it is being planned.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur.

Mr Lepoigneur: *Item 21110.001(10) – President, Industrial Court*, there is a decrease from Rs1,428 to Rs714 nearly 50%.

The Prime Minister: Funds are provided for six months. The post will be filled by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission in due course. The Vice-President, Industrial Court has been assigned the duties of President, Industrial Court from 01 of October 2018.

The Chairperson: Page 13. Hon. Fowdar.

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 13, *item 21110 .001 (23) Court Officer*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, although the number of court officers has gone down from 97 to 90, the budget amount has increased from Rs19 m. to Rs20 m.

The Prime Minister: There are twelve vacant posts. Provision has been made for four additional posts of court officer for six months to cater for the increase in the workload.

The Chairperson: Yes. Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 13, *item 21110 .001 (27) Electrical Engineer/Senior Electrical Engineer, Electrical Service Division*. May I know why there is no provision for this year's Budget and suddenly you have an exponential increase in the expenditure.

The Prime Minister: The post of Electrical Engineer/Senior Electrical Engineer has been created to service a new Supreme Court.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah.

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I take the hon. Prime Minister to *item 21110.001(47)* in relation to Court transcriber. For last financial year and this financial year, the number of court transcribers was 17 whereas for last financial year the provision was made Rs6,100,000 whereas for the same amount the provision is only Rs5 m. Why this discrepancy?

The Prime Minister: A partial provision has been made to fill in the five funded vacancies.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 13, *item 21110.001 (45) - Word Processing Operator*, the number has increased but the budget has decreased. Can we know why?

The Prime Minister: Well, funds have been reduced in view of new recruits who are drawing the initial salary in their scale compared to the previous incumbents.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Madam Chairperson, I refer the hon. Prime Minister to *item 43 – Management Support Officer*. 17 posts have been funded with an estimate of Rs5,290,000 and then for the year 2019-2020, 19 posts funded, but with a reduced estimate of Rs4,940,000. Can the hon. Prime Minister enlighten us on this?

The Prime Minister: The same explanation. The funds have been reduced in view of new recruits who are drawing the initial salary in their scale compared to the previous incumbents.

The Chairperson: Page 14, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Madam Chairperson, *item 22070 – Cleaning Services* and *20090 – Security*, the amount earmarked was Rs5 m. and for the next financial year, it has doubled to Rs10 m. Can we know the name of the contractor and why this amount has doubled?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for general cleaning services at the New Court House in accordance with the new contract for the period 02 May 2019 to 30 April 2020. Provision made for general cleaning services at Astor Court Building, Levels 6 to 9 in accordance with new contract for period 02 May 2019 to 30 April 2020. Again, general cleaning services at Commercial Court, new contract for period 02 May 2019 to 30 April 2020.

The contractor is Alpha Cleaning Ltd. There is also another contractor, Brilliant Cleaning Services Ltd. I see there is a long list which I can circulate.

(Interruptions)

Well, new provision, there is a new contract. I have stated the new contract from which day to which day. I can circulate all.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: No, not from a sitting position, first, and then, one question at a time. You cannot abuse of the time.

The Prime Minister: I can enlighten the hon. Member. Because there has been an increase that is due in rise in contract prices following the implementation of minimum wage and also provision for new Supreme Court building consisting of 13 floors.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Same item 22060 – *Maintenance*, can we know the type of maintenance and the name of the contractor?

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, there is a long list of all the maintenance work with the amount that is being paid. I think it is better I circulate.

(Interruptions)

There are a number of contractors. I see, just to mention names, Top Cool Engineering Ltd, Aqua Science and Technology Ltd, Javas Expert Engineering Ltd, Magnet Energise Ltd, Manser Saxon Contracting Ltd, Vitec Electronics Corporation. It goes on like this. So, I shall circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At the bottom of the page, item 22120.024 – *Fees icw Capacity Building*, may I know who is running that programme for Rs6 m.?

The Prime Minister: Fees to Chairman and members of Boards, that is provision is made for payment of fees to Chairman and members of the Rules Committee, to members of the Departmental Bid Committees and Bid Evaluation Committees. We are talking about item 22120.

The Chairperson: Item 22120.024 – *Fees icw Capacity Building*.

The Prime Minister: This is a different one then. So, provision that is made for the participation of all Judges and Magistrates in connection with training capacity building, retreats and residential seminars during Court vacation in April, August and December with a view to enhancing the standard of justice and to playing its vital role as a third arm of our democratic State.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I take the hon. Prime Minister to item 229000.014 – *Hospitality & Ceremonies*, Rs4 m. estimates for the year 2019-2020. Can we be apprised as to which ceremonies and how hospitable are we going to be with respect to the estimates earmarked?

The Prime Minister: For launching of the official opening ceremony of the new Supreme Court by January 2020. Then, bilateral exchange with representatives of Seychelles and Mauritius, the Joint Project Monitoring Committee between Government of India and Mauritius and visit from delegates of International Organisations such UNODC, COMESA, UNDP and so on at different times of the year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Item 21111.002 – *Travelling and Transport*, we can see that there is an increase in the Budget Estimates. Can we have some details about this item, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of travelling allowance as follows - refund of bus fare: Rs13 m.; travel grant: Rs6 m.; PRB travelling: Rs8 m.; petrol allowance: Rs7 m.; commuted travelling, that is for Ushers and others: Rs15 m. The increase in provision is due to filling of vacancies and additional posts and more officers being eligible for travel grant and petrol allowance.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 22900.989 – *Expenses icw Land Division*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister where matters stand with regard to the Land Division and how many Judges there will be for that specific division?

The Prime Minister: Well, this has just been announced. So, this is a new provision following the announcement made in the Budget. It is an announcement, so, we are going ahead and it will take some time, it cannot be set up just like that.

The Chairperson: We will move on to page 15, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 15, item 27210.010 – *Legal Assistance in “in forma pauperis”*, it is a good thing that the legal assistance has doubled from this new financial year. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, the amount of Rs2 m. that was earmarked, what is the amount that has been spent to date out of this Rs2 m.?

The Prime Minister: Well, it is for legal aid which is granted to needy people under the Legal Aid Scheme. Expenditure includes fees to Attorneys and Barristers for both Mauritius and Rodrigues as well as refund of air tickets to Attorneys and Barristers to and from Rodrigues for July 2017 to June 2018, Rs771,446.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 31112.015 – *Construction of Court*, the initial project value is Rs1.1 billion. I see there is Rs257 m. this year. May I know if you have an indication of the final contract value? Has there been any cost overrun on the project, and when the project is going to be handed over?

The Prime Minister: Well, there are a number of projects which have been financed. I have it here that the Supreme Court will be relocated in the new Supreme Court Building as from December 2019.

The Chairperson: No, I am sorry, one question I’ve said. On question at a time!

The Prime Minister: The new Supreme Court Building, the project value is Rs1.1 billion. For progress, 60% of the works are completed, so far. Expected date of completion of work is December 2019. The payment which has already been effected is Rs648 m. I am not aware if there is any cost overrun, at this stage.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan! No. Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I take the hon. Prime Minister to 26313.126 – *Extra-Budgetary Units Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies*. I find that the Government is contributing Rs1 to that institute, and we know as well that Barristers and Attorneys contribute on a yearly basis as well. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister when was the last time that that institute released his audited accounts?

The Prime Minister: Well, I need to get that information. I do not have it here.

The Chairperson: Can we take another question, hon. Rutnah, in the meantime?

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Madam Chairperson, if I may refer the hon. Prime Minister to item 31122.802 in relation to *(b) Revamping of Digital Court Recording System*. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there is provision or revamping Digital Court Recording System from District Court up to all Court levels, up to the Supreme Court or only to a particular level of Courts?

The Prime Minister: Well, the information I have here is that it was the first phase implemented in the Court Rooms of the Supreme Court at the end of 1999 and extended to the Intermediate Court, Industrial Court, Court of Rodrigues and all the District Courts the next year. So, the Digital Court Recording System is more than 10 years old and needs to be revamped. So, with the new system, the Judiciary will benefit from better security features, latest technologies of the new version and thus enabling faster and better quality of Court records. 70% of the project was completed in Financial Year 2017/18. The provision for the remaining 30% of the project was made in Financial Year 2018/19, and I understand that it will cover all those Courts that I mentioned earlier. With regard to auditing, I am informed that it was audited by the Director of Audit last year. Well, this is what I have.

Vote 1-6 The Judiciary (Rs950,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

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

(7.31 p.m.)

The Chairperson: We have a total of 3 pages for 10 minutes. Hon Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 16, item 21110 – *Personal Emoluments for the Chairperson, Public Service Commission*. The budgeted amount for this year is Rs2,416,000 where it goes down next to Rs1,968,000 Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister why?

The Prime Minister: Decrease in provision as the payment of allowance of Rs37,275 is being met under item allowances.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr Duval: Thank you. Under item 21110.001 (1) – *Chairperson*, may we know under delegated powers, how many people were recruited by the PSC and the DFSC during the last financial year?

The Prime Minister: But this item is about the Chairperson, it is not about delegated powers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Item (8) *Assistant Secretary, Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces*. Are we doing away with that post? Because no provision has been made for the subsequent years.

The Prime Minister: No provision has been made as the substantive holder of the post has retired on 31 May 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. If I may take the hon. Prime Minister to item (13) which is the penultimate item on that page. I see that there is a provision for a legal officer which is a new position. Is it the case now that the Public Service Commission and the Disciplined Forces Service Commission will cease to take advice from the State Law Office.

The Prime Minister: The new post has been created following the recommendation of the PRB Report of 2016 in view of the increase in the number of cases which are being lodged before the PBAT and the Supreme Court and to assist in legal matters. I understand that the scheme of service is being processed.

The Chairperson: Page 17, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 17, item 21110.004 – *allowances*. Can I know to whom these allowances are being paid and for what purposes?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of acting and entertainment and *ad hoc* responsibility, fixed cost, and duty remission, car allowances to eligible officers. The increase in provision is due to increase in number of staff and monthly personal allowance of Rs37,275,000 to Chairperson of Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, Page 17, item (31) - *Senior Gardener/Nursery Attendant*. The post is one, but the sum estimated decreased from Rs252 to Rs126. May we know why?

The Prime Minister: Well, the funds have been reduced as the incumbent in post is due to retire in early 2020.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. If I may take the hon. Prime Minister to item 21111 in relation *Other Staff Costs*. Can the hon. Prime Minister enlighten the House whether the other costs related to staff from private sector contractors or are they public servants other than those who have been listed in the foregoing items?

The Prime Minister: I see here they are for payment of PRB travelling, travel grant, travelling allowance, refund of bus fares and for overtime also, for office of auxiliaries, senior office auxiliaries and to other staff. So, they are for public servants and welfare staff also.

The Chairperson: Page 18, hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 31112.001 – *Construction of Office Building*. I see there was a sum of Rs8 m. budgeted last year. May we know how much has been spent with it?

The Prime Minister: Construction of Office Building. Two additional floors of 1,230 metre square. The revised project value Rs44.7 m. The project value of Rs39 m. in Budget 2018/2019 has been revised on 20 February 2019 to Rs44.7 m., but the contract has not yet been awarded. There is provision for the construction of two additional floors on the new building of Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission. The project tentative start date is July 2019 and tentative completion date July 2020. Rs20 m. has been budgeted for Financial Year 2019/2020 and Rs24.7 m. for Financial Year 2020/2021.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes, Madam Chairperson, on the same item, construction of this building, may I know from the hon. Minister, on that amount that was budgeted last year, how much has been spent because in the Estimates there are Rs8 m. for this project, I want to know how much has been spent up to now.

The Prime Minister: I have just said that the contract has not yet been awarded.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I take the hon. Prime Minister to item 31122.802, the penultimate item on this page, it is in relation to Acquisition of IT Equipment. I note that last year, there was *Acquisition of IT Equipment* amounting to Rs2,500,000, whereas for this year there is a provision of Rs8,500,000. What other additional equipment for this amount would be procured?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to the enhancement of the IT system hardware and software Rs1 m. and purchase of Automatic Scoring System, Rs7.5 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 22120 *Fees*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what do these fees relate to, and to the extent that there are legal fees, can we have the names of the legal advisors?

The Prime Minister: No, they are provisions made for payment of fees to members of Departmental Tender Committee and Bids Evaluation Committees. They are fees for training, fees to consultants. There are also provisions for payment of fees to officers assisting the interviewing panels and expenses such as setting papers, designing of questionnaires, markings, invigilation fees in connection with examinations and also provision for the payment of fees in connection with the equivalence of certificates, that is, fees to Mauritius Qualification Authority.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under Item 31122.805- *Acquisition of Security Equipment*, there was an acquisition for security equipment...

The Prime Minister: Can you repeat which item?

The Chairperson: The last item on the page.

Mr Lepoigneur: Item 31122.805- *Acquisition of Security Equipment*, the last item. Can we know which equipment it was?

The Prime Minister: No provision made as the expenses are meant under item Rental of Equipment.

Vote 1-7 Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission (Rs117,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.41 p.m.)

Vote 1-8 Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal was called.

The Chairperson: Two pages, five minutes. Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 19, Item 21110.001, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister who is the Chairperson of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and the two members?

The Prime Minister: Well, I can tell, the Chairperson, Mrs Shirin Aumeruddy-Cziffra has been reappointed as Chairperson with effect from 19 March 2018 to serve for a further term of office of three years. Mr Guy Wong So has been reappointed as member with effect from 19 March 2018 to serve for a further term of office of three years. Mr Samoorgum Tirvassen has been reappointed as member with effect from 19 March 2018 to serve for a further term of office of three years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Item 21110.001 (3) *Secretary Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal*, the hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that there is an increased number of cases, but yet no fund has been provided for the post of Secretary to the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. Why?

The Prime Minister: Because one Assistant Permanent Secretary has been assigned duties of Secretary to the Tribunal.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. May I take the hon. Prime Minister to item ...

The Chairperson: I'll interrupt the hon. Member, we are limited in time, so, go straight to the Item number, please. Straight to the Item number.

Mr Rutnah: I heard hon. Duval saying '*assize twa*'. I have equal rights to ask questions like he has.

The Chairperson: No, refrain from making comments, please!

Mr Rutnah: May I take the hon. Prime Minister to item 21110.001 (9) *Word Processing Operator*? I see that in last year, provision was made for three, this year as well for three, whereas for last year, the provision was Rs711,000 whereas this year it is decreasing and it's coming to Rs630,000, why for that same number of Word Processing Operators it is decreasing to Rs630,000.

The Prime Minister: Because one Word Processing Operator is drawing a lower salary than the previous holder.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Under item 22030 *Rent*, I note that for this year and last year, the rent is Rs1.4 m., but then the next year, it goes down to Rs1.3 m. Is there a reason why there will be a change in rent?

The Prime Minister: Provision for renting of 4th Floor at Belmont House over an area, of so much at the rate of Rs22.32 per square feet plus VAT for a period of three years, starting on 01 March 2018 and ending 28 February 2021. There is also provision for renting of one parking slot for a full time member of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson: Page 20, hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, item 22120 *Fees*, may we know what are these fees related to?

The Chairperson: Item 22120 Fees.

The Prime Minister: They are provision for payment of fees to Counsel and Attorneys retained on a case to case basis to represent the Tribunal before the Supreme Court in cases referred for Judicial Review. The increase in provision is due to numerous Supreme Court cases cannot be predicted.

Vote 1-8 Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal (Rs15,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

Vote 1-9 Office of Ombudsman was called.

The Chairperson: Two pages, five minutes. Hon. Fowdar.

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. *Item 21110.001(5) Financial Officer/Senior Financial Officer*, I can see no provision for next year, does it mean that the post has been abolished? Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The post of Financial Officer/Senior Financial Officer is abolished against the creation of the post of Principal Financial Operations Officer.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur! Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Yes, Madam Chairperson. Page 21, *Item 21110.001.004 – Allowances*, can we know these allowances have been paid to whom once again and for what purposes?

The Prime Minister: Payment of Responsibility Allowance, Special Judicial Review Allowance, Driver's Allowance, Ad Hoc Allowance and other allowances.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 21, *Item 21110.002 – Salary Compensation*, can we know about the increase from Rs100,000 to Rs260,000?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision is due to the payment of salary compensation of Rs400 per month as from January 2019 across the board to 20 staff.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Page 21, *Item 21111.100 – Overtime*, may we know why this high increase, more than 100% increase in overtime is provided for next financial year from Rs100,000 to Rs220,000?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision is mainly to cater for the payment of overtime to officers who will be engaged in the proposed 10-week awareness raising campaign around the island.

The Chairperson: Page 22, hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. *Item 26210 – Contribution to International Organisations*, may we know to which international organisations we contribute?

The Prime Minister: To International Ombudsman Institute, contribution to *Association des Ombudsmans et Médiateurs de la Francophonie*, and contribution to African Ombudsman Association.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: *Item 22100 - Publications and Stationery*, last year it was Rs185, 000, this year Rs325,000 and then the following year Rs240,000. Why is there this going up and down, there is no uniformity? Why is there a difference?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision for item paper and materials is due to other interrelated expenditures for the conduct of the proposed awareness raising campaign such as printing of flyers, complaints and feedback forms. And then the number of IT

equipment has increased following the intake of additional staff and this has thus resulted in an increase in the use of toners.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: *Item 22030 – Rent*, which building and who is the owner of the building?

The Prime Minister: Building of Société City Screen for office space and the owner is Société City Screen but represented by Mr Hajee Abdoolah Abdul Satar Adam Allymamode.

Vote 1-9 Office of Ombudsman (Rs15,200,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.51 p.m.)

Vote 1-10 National Audit Office was called.

The Chairperson: 2 pages, 5 minutes. Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: No question, Madam Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: May I know with regard to *Item 21110.001(4) – Basic Salary – Principal Auditor*, may I know why there is a decrease in the estimates 2019/2020 while the funded position is the same?

The Prime Minister: The funds have been reduced as a result of promotion of two Senior Auditors who are drawing a lower salary than the previous incumbents.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: *Item 21110.001(16) – Basic Salary – Management Support Officer*, there are eight MSO and the amount has gone down on 2019/2020. There are still eight staff.

The Prime Minister: The funds have been reduced as the newly appointed Management Support Officers are drawing the initial salary of the post.

The Chairperson: Page 24, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Page 24 Madam Chairperson. Thank you Madam Chairperson. *Item 22120 – Fees*, there is an amount Rs2,725,000 which are earmarked for 2018/2019, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, if there is in the breakdown anything for training and what has there been the amount spent on training, if any?

The Prime Minister: For training, the provision made for payment of fees for training of staff in connection with the new audit approach and methodologies and then if it is in relation to training.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: *Item 26210 - Contribution to International Organisations*, may we know what are these international organisations?

The Prime Minister: Provision to meet payment of annual membership to international audit institutions which are as follows –

- Contribution to African Organisation of Supreme Audit Institution;
- Contribution to African Organisation of English Speaking Supreme Audit Institution;
- Contribution to International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institution, and
- Contribution to Asian Organisation of Supreme Audit Institution.

The increase in provision is due to change in contribution from 1,000 USD to 2,500 USD annually in respect of fluctuations in exchange rates.

The Chairperson: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: May I ask the Prime Minister, Madam Chairperson, *Item 21111.002 - Other Staff Costs - Travelling and Transport*, whether this includes overseas travelling and if so, can the Prime Minister tell us which embassies the audit has visited last year, if he can tell us that and whether any are planned for the next financial year?

The Prime Minister: *Item 21111.002 - Other Staff Costs - Travelling and Transport*, this is provision made for payment of travelling expenses, PRB travelling, travel grant, mileage allowance, cost of air tickets to officers proceedings to Rodrigues twice on audit assignment.

Mr X. L. Duval: I take it that, since air tickets are to Rodrigues only, there are no embassies that the audit had visited last year?

The Prime Minister: Well I can answer as far as this item is concerned; yes clearly this is the information that I have here unless they can provide me with same. Well there are two embassies: Embassy of Geneva and Embassy in Germany.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under the same item of travelling and transport, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the criteria used by the Office in determining who, which staff is going to undertake those overseas travels?

The Prime Minister: Well, I would not know about the criteria, Madam Chairperson. We can take another question in the meantime?

The Chairperson: No, but time is over already.

The Prime Minister: But I can circulate then. The Deputy Director of Audit and Assistant of Director of Audit.

Vote 1-10 National Audit Office (Rs164,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(7.57 p.m.)

Vote 1-11 Employment Relations Tribunal was called.

The Chairperson: 2 pages, 5 minutes. Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 25, item 21110.001 (1) – *President, Employment Relations Tribunal*, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister who is the President and the Vice-President of the Employment Relations Tribunal?

The Prime Minister: Mr Abdool Rashid Hossen, appointed as President of the ERT with effect from 15 September 2008; Mr Indiren Sivaramen, appointed Vice-President on 15 February 2010; Mr Shameer Janhangeer, appointed Vice-President on 21 June 2011.

The Chairperson: Hon Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item 21. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, how many cases were lodged, heard and determined by the Tribunal last year?

The Prime Minister: Number of cases lodged as at 31 March 2019:116; number of cases disposed, including for previous year: 81; number of cases disposed within prescribed time limits: 55; number of awards: 9; number of orders: 9; number of cases pending: 92.

The Chairperson: hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 25, item 21110.001 (7) – *Principal Financial Operations Officer*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister if this post is no longer required?

The Prime Minister: The post of Principal Financial Operations Officer and that of Assistant Financial Officer have been abolished against the creation of one post of Financial Operations Officer/Senior Financial Operations Officer.

The Chairperson: Page 26, hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: With regard to the item 22120 – *Fees*, may we know these fees is paid to whom?

The Prime Minister: The monthly fees for the President is Rs29,925 and Rs890 per sitting per member. And then, there are fees for training also, provisions that are made for training of staff.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I just clarify the issue. The fees to the President, is it in addition to his monthly salary?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am advised.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Well, the question has been put and replied.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Madam Chairperson, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in relation to item 22030 – *Rent*, who is the recipient of this rent?

The Prime Minister: The owner of the building is Belem Limited, represented by Directors, Mr Michel Chan Sui Ko and Mr Michael Chun Kai Chin.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Already answered.

Vote 1-11 Employment Relations Tribunal (Rs25,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(8:01 p.m.)

Vote 1-12 Local Government Service Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Two pages, 5 minutes! Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Item 21110.001 (8) – *Assistant Procurement & Supply Officer*, there is one post now, can we know when is this post likely to be filled?

The Prime Minister: Well, one post of Assistant Procurement & Supply Officer has been created to service the Procurement & Supply Section. The work is presently being carried out on a part-time basis by an officer posted to the Public Service Commission. So, I believe it takes its time for recruitment to fill the full-time post.

The Chairperson: Page 28, hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 31132.801 – *Acquisition of Software (a) Electronic Document Management System*, the project value is Rs10 m., yet there has been a budget for Rs13 m., may we understand why?

The Prime Minister: Well, this, I believe, is a new project, the provision of Rs10 m. for the Electronic Document Management System. The primary objective behind the implementation of the EDMS is to eliminate the need for Physical Document Management at the Local Government Service Commission, as presently with the increase in the number of files, the storage issue is becoming more and more critical. Well, there is a long explanation about the system. So, I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Circulate it, please! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 31112.001- *Construction of Office Buildings*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the construction is on target or whether there is any variation?

The Prime Minister: Tenders were floated again on 27 November 2017. The successful bidder 'Keep Clean Limited' which quoted for an amount of Rs23,272,030 was notified on 26 March 2018. The Contract Agreement was signed on 16 May 2018 and handing over of the site was on 25 May 2018. The starting date of works, 08 June 2018 and the intended completion date for the project was 07 June 2019. The duration of the works is for a maximum period of 365 days. The overall progress of works as at 12 April 2019 on site is 97% structures and 42% finishers. There is a provision of Rs11.5 m. which represents construction works, electrical installation works, data and telephone, cabling works and a contingency sum of Rs1 m. and VAT at 15% for furniture, fittings and equipment.

Vote 1-12 Local Government Service Commission (Rs49,400,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(8:05 p.m.)

Vote 1-13 Independent Commission against Corruption was called.

The Chairperson: One page, 5 minutes. Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Concerning item 26313.026 – *Other Operating Costs*, can the hon. Prime Minister elaborate what is the Other Operating Costs?

The Prime Minister: We hear another question until I get the answer.

The Chairperson: We hear another question. Hon. Léopold!

Mr Léopold: Item 26313.026 – *Staff Costs*, may I know how many staff are affected to Rodrigues Sub Office?

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, this also I will need to get it. I have the number. The location, it falls within the duties of the Parliamentary Committee on ICAC to approve same. The monitoring of the Budget is well laid down in PoCA itself. Well, this is what I have, I do not have the answers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I hope we can have an answer. We are Parliament. Parliament is supreme although we have the Parliamentary Committee. Under item 26313.026 – *Staff Costs*, I would like to know what is the amount earmarked as salary and other allowances for the Director General and from when the contract ends with regard to the Director General of ICAC, the total monthly salary, and when his contract is supposed to be terminated?

The Prime Minister: Well, this provision, the information that I have here is personal emoluments, including salaries of staff, pension contribution and allowances for 174 funded positions, and there are also other staff costs, cost of utilities, miscellaneous office expenses, maintenance, international corporation, capacity building, professional services, community relations and preventions, sub office in Rodrigues, running cost, office equipment, furniture and IT.

Mr Bhagwan: No, but I think we are Parliament. I am asking: how much are we being asked to vote? We can't ask to vote a lump sum. We have the Parliamentary Committee. I have been in the Parliamentary Committee, but we can ask a question, how much are we paying, the public is paying for the Director General? There is nothing to hide in that.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add.

The Chairperson: You don't have the salary of the Director General?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Can I ask, under item 26313.026 - *Independent Commission Against Corruption*, the number of complaints received for the last fiscal year and inquiries initiated and prosecuted where proceedings have been commenced in Court as well? So, complaints received, inquiries initiated and prosecutions commenced.

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I do not have this information. I will look into it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask you with regard to the - Independent Commission Against Corruption, the staffs costs, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister how much has been spent on overseas travelling by the Director and the total amount of *per diem* he has received for the last financial year? The number of overseas travelling and the *per diem* he has received.

The Prime Minister: Well, again, I do not have this information. I shall look into it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: In the same vein, Madam Chairperson, I think we are entitled to the information sought by our friends in the good name of transparency and accountability and that I have thought that the officers have this information off the cuff.

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, if I do not have the information, I do not have it. The hon. Member has, right at the start, raised the issue and said if we do not have the information, we do not have it. So, I said I shall look into it. No, I am not saying that I shall circulate. I said I shall look into it.

Vote 1-13: Independent Commission Against Corruption (Rs218,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(8.11 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Chairperson, page 30, is it?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Rughoobur: Page 30, item 26313.060 - *Other Operating Costs*. I think out of this item, *other operating costs*, any expenditure relating to publication of reports, the last report of the Commission dates back to 2017 from the website. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is the amount, why is there a delay in the publication of the latest report, since an amount has been voted for such expenditure?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the information here, but they will probably send it. May I have another question in the meantime?

The Chairperson: From hon. Uteem in the meantime.

Mr Uteem: Than you, Madam Chairperson. Item 26313.060 - *National Human Rights Commission*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, what is the salary and remuneration of the President and of the two Vice-Presidents?

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson is Mr Dheerujlall Baramlall Seetulsingh and the salary is Rs176,000 per month plus compensation, the internet allowance is Rs3,000 per month, the travelling allowance is Rs22,190 per month, Telephone is Rs306.20 per month and special judicial allowance at the rate of 30% of salary, that is, Rs52,800 per month. He has been reappointed for a further period of four years up to 15 July 2022. Deputy Chairperson, you wanted to know about the others or I can circulate? Mrs Marie Lourdes Lee Yin Lam Hung and members, part time, Mr Samioullah Lauthan, Mr Jacques Jonathan Ravat, there are others also, Deputy Chairperson. No, we have the National Human Rights Division, I can circulate the terms and conditions.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Item 26.060 - *National Human Rights Commission*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of complaints received at the Commission and what is the act of the cases?

The Prime Minister: Number of complaints from 01 July 2018 to 30 April 2019, from organisations against which complaints have been received, ministry and departments: 66, resolved: 33, ongoing: 33. Parastatal bodies, 3 number of complaints, resolved: 2 and ongoing: 1. Judiciary: 12, resolved: 8, ongoing: 4, and miscellaneous, 105 complaints, 56 resolved and 49.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many times member of the Commission has visited the prison in the last financial year?

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody, I am sorry, I don't know whether the hon. Prime Minister wants to reply to this, but this question is not related to the budgetary provision which is being made. In the Committee of Supply, we ask question which is related to provisions being made.

Mr Baloomoody: We have been asked to vote the salary of the members of the Commission.

The Chairperson: Yes, sure.

Mr Baloomoody: One member of the Commission has made it public, Mrs Teeluckdharry that she will never attend prison. This is why I want to know whether she is attending prison because this forms part of the Commission?

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody, there are questions which you can ask when Parliament sits for Parliamentary Questions, then you send your question. Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chair. If we can stay on the same item in relation to staff costs, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, how many staff mend this Commission?

The Prime Minister: The National Human Rights Commission has a workforce of 29 staff, as follows –

- 8 staff recruited on contract, and
- 21 staff on secondment from the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

The Chairperson: Mr Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Same *item* 26313.060 – *National Human Rights Commission*. May we know, out of the last fiscal year 2018-2019, how much was spent on travelling overseas, including the amount of *per diem* paid and the number of persons who travelled?

The Chairperson: This also relates to a Parliamentary Question rather than provisions for which we are examining.

The Prime Minister: Well, I have a list, I can circulate.

Vote 1-14 National Human Rights Commissions (Rs29,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

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

The Chairperson: Two pages, five minutes! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Chairperson, at page 31, under *Item 21- Compensation of Employees*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many complaints were made last year to the Ombudsperson and how many she investigated?

The Prime Minister: The number of cases reported from July 2018 to 12 June 2019-

- Awaiting report: 53
- In progress: 85
- Number of cases disposed of: 355
- Number of cases reported: 493

Cases heard during the financial year 2018-2019 –

- For Rodrigues, number of cases already disposed of: 10
- For Agalega, number of cases already disposed of: 6

The Chairperson: I am sorry. Hon. Baboo, you had a question?

Mr Baboo: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 32, under *Item I22900 – Other Goods and Services*, may we know what are these other goods and services and why this increase of Rs200,000?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of uniform allowance to eligible officers; provision made to cater for case conference held by the Ombudsperson for children's Office and provision made for the expenses in connection with the activities organised by the Ombudsperson for children's Office.

Provisions are also made for the following –

- Workshop for children
- Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the UNCRC
- Meetings with stakeholders from Ministries/Departments and Civil Society Organisations
- Workshop for adults
- Renting of venue
- Kits for workshop
- Launching of annual report

And the increase in provision is also due to the increasing number of sensitisation campaigns organised by the office.

The Chairperson: Page 32! Hon. Baboo! No? Hon. Lepoigneur! No?

Vote 1-15 Office of Ombudsperson for children (Rs14,400,000) was, on question, agreed to.

Vote 1-16 Independent Police Complaints Commission was called.

The Chairperson: Five minutes! Page 33! Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 33, *Item 26313.142 – Independent Police Complaints Commission*, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister who is the Chairperson and the members of the Commission?

The Prime Minister: The Chairperson is Mrs Devyani Bissoondoyal. Mr Falraj Servansingh, full-time member; Mr Dick Christophe Ng Sui Wa, part-time member.

The Chairperson: Hon. Thierry Henry!

Mr Henry: Madam Chairperson, at page 33, *Item 26313.142 – Independent Police Complaints Commission*. May we know how many complaints have been received and the outcome thereof, please?

The Prime Minister: The outcome as at 31 May 2019 – there is a summary. I can circulate.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister on the fees to the Commissioners, whether he will circulate or give the amounts paid to each Commissioner per month, please?

The Prime Minister: I can circulate the fees also.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah?

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 33, *Item 26323.142 - Independent Police Complaints Commission*, where there is no estimate for this year. May we know why?

The Prime Minister: No provision is required as the official car has already been purchased.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under *Item 26313.142 – Independent Police Complaints Commission*. I know the hon. Prime Minister has tabled a list, but I don't know whether in that list of complaints received there is any indication of how many are

advised for prosecution, how many arrests, or cases that have been lodged in Court following the inquiry made by the Commission?

Mr X. L. Duval: Hon. Prime Minister, we have not received the information regarding the fees. You have not circulated yet.

The Prime Minister: I shall. Well, I can give you the fees. So, for a Chairperson: Rs164,000 monthly, plus salary compensation. For a full-time member: Rs110,000 monthly, plus salary compensation. For a part-time member: Rs74,350 monthly, all inclusive allowance.

With regard to the number of complaints received, I am circulating the list - the number of complaints disposed after investigation; still under investigation; number of complaints withdrawn, number of complaints referred to DPP, complaints referred to DFSC and complaints settled by conciliation.

If I may clarify, so that there is no confusion afterwards, it is a summary from 01 July 2018 to 31 May 2019. I am circulating the list.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On the same item, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many staffs are manned at the Independent Police Complaint Commission and, out of the staffs, how many are Inquiring Officers?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have a list. I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Madam Chairperson, on the same item, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there is a sub-office in Rodrigues, and if so, how many staffs are there in Rodrigues for the Police Complaints Commission?

The Prime Minister: No, we do not have a sub-office in Rodrigues.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Madam Chairperson, on the same item, if I could be apprised as to the number of times the Commission has sat?

The Prime Minister: I shall circulate the information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode! No? Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On the same item, may we know the number of official cars that are being used by the members, their make and engine capacity and value?

The Prime Minister: I can circulate the information.

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

(8.27 p.m.)

Vote 1-17 Financial Crime Commission was called.

The Chairperson: One page, 5 minutes. Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Can we know, Madam Chairperson, with regard to the Financial Crime Commission, when the Commission will be set up if it has already earmarked a building, an office and the number of staff that will be recruited under the Commission?

The Prime Minister: Well, first we shall have to come with the Bill to Parliament, it will be debated and then we shall be able to give whatever information we are able to give at that time.

(Interruptions)

Well, let Government finalise the Bill and then it will come to Parliament.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under the same item, Madam Chairperson, Rs10 m. is earmarked this year, so, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there is any amount out of this Rs10 m. for surveys, paying the consultant to come up with structuring this Commission?

The Prime Minister: There is a committee which is looking and reviewing the institutional and legal framework to, in fact, improve, as we have just said in our programme also, the fight against financial crimes, including fraud, corruption, money laundering and so on. So, it will depend, but provision is being made so that in due course as and when legislation will be enacted, then we shall be able to give more precise information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Under item 22900.943 *Financial Crime Commission*, last year, we voted a sum of Rs10 m. Given that the Commission has not been set up, can I take it that last year the expenditure was zero or there was some expenditure?

The Prime Minister: Well, no money has been spent.

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

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

The Chairperson: 2 pages, 5 minutes! No question! Yes, page 35. You have got a question?

Mr Uteem: Yes. Under item 21110 *Personal Emoluments*, there are 10 funded positions. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether all of the 10 positions have been fulfilled?

The Prime Minister: Present staffing. So, there is one Ombudsperson for Financial Services, one Office Management Assistant, four Management Support Officers, one Confidential Secretary and one Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary. So, total number of staff is 8.

Vote 1-18 Office of Ombudsperson for Financial Services (Rs25,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

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

The Chairperson: 13 pages, 45 minutes! Before we proceed further, I'll request hon. Members to ask questions with relation to the provisions which have been made in the budget. I had said at the beginning that questions relating to administration and policy should not be asked. Page 37! Page 38! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Chairperson, on page 38, item 21110.004 *Allowances*, there is an amount of Rs7,500,000. May we know the details of this amount?

The Prime Minister: This is the provision for payment of extra duty responsibility, *ad hoc* and duty allowances to eligible officers.

The Chairperson: Page 39! Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Under item 22900 *Other Goods and Services*, the amount was for Rs4 m. and it is Rs54 m. for Estimates of 2019/20. Why such an increase?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of uniform allowance to staff of the procurement cadre, office auxiliaries and drivers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 39, under item *22120.017 Legal Fees*, there is an amount of Rs34 m. that is budgeted. May we have some details on this amount?

The Prime Minister:

- Fees to be paid to external lawyers: £400,000;
- travelling and hotel expenses for our external lawyers: Rs4 m.
- lobbying activities by our Mission in New York: USD15,000;
- hiring of lobbying firm in United States of America: Rs11 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: The question has been answered, Madam Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Under item *31122.814 Acquisition of Air-Conditioning Equipment*, an amount of Rs20 m. was earmarked for last year and out of it only a sum of Rs10 m. has been used.

The Prime Minister: Decrease in provision as the three chillers will not be replaced in this financial year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. With respect to *22900.985 Expenses for Chagos Archipelago*, is the Prime Minister willing to inform the House the breakdown as to the expenses in connection with Chagos Archipelago? I am sure the expenses will be amply justified when our chivalrous knights would relinquish the knighthood also.

The Prime Minister: Sorry, I didn't....

The Chairperson: No, we don't ask these questions in Committee of Supply, hon. Dr. Boolell. You have been here for a long time now, you know.

Dr. Boolell: I asked a breakdown as to the expenses...

The Chairperson: The question of relinquishing knighthood does not arise.

Dr. Boolell: What about the expenses?

The Chairperson: Expenses okay.

The Prime Minister: Provision required for a visit to the Chagos Archipelago and expenses relating to the preparation for eventual resettlement on some of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Page 40.

The Chairperson: No, page 39. Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Yes, thank you, Madam Chairperson. With regard to *item 22120.017 - Legal fees*, can the Prime Minister give exactly the names and the amount given to each lawyer under this item for legal fees?

The Prime Minister: The services of the following external lawyers have been retained by Mauritius: Professor Philippe Sands QC, Mr Paul Reichler, Professor Pierre Klein, Ms Alison Macdonald QC, Mr Andrew Loewenstein, Ms Christina Hioureas and Mr Remi Reichhold. These lawyers have been working as a team led by Professor Philippe Sands QC.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin.

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. *Item 22050 Office Expenses*, an amount of Rs4.1 m. was earmarked for 2018/19. Can we know how much from this amount has been spent and, if possible, to have a breakdown please?

The Prime Minister: Well, how much has been spent – I know it is provision required to meet postage fees, cleaning materials and petty expenses such as costs of making tea, brushing of towels and catering services for Cabinet meetings and official functions.

The Chairperson: Page 40. Hon. Uteem.

Mr Uteem: Thank you. *Item 22900.988 Expenses icw His Holiness Pope's Visit* – Rs50 m., can we have a breakdown of the anticipated expenditure under this heading.

The Prime Minister: Sorry which item?

Mr Uteem: That is item 22900.988 the visit of His Holiness the Pope – Rs50 m., can we have a breakdown of the anticipated expenditure?

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Chairperson, on the same item, can I ask the Prime Minister to tell us which events are being organised during the days' visit of the Pope. It is the same related question.

The Prime Minister: So, a provision of Rs50 m. is being made to upgrade the infrastructure at Marie Reine de la Paix and at Père Laval church which His Holiness will also visit. There are details of construction and so on, I can circulate.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Chairperson, which events the Pope will be attending here? I presume there is expenditure for that.

The Prime Minister: I believe that they are still finalising the programme for the Pope, but we have to vote an amount, at least, to cater for expected expenses.

The Chairperson: Hon. Thierry Henry.

Mr Henry: *Item 21110.005 Extra Assistance*, peut-on avoir un breakdown et à qui ces sommes sont payées s'il vous plaît ?

The Prime Minister: Provision for payment of salaries, refund of casual, annual, vacation leave; travelling allowance, bonus and contributions to National Savings Fund at the rate of 2.5% of basic salary to the following advisers: Sir Bhinod Bacha, Mr Jean-Francois Chaumière, Mr Mammad Ally Dahoo, Ms Chiaw Pen Lo Siong Shou, Mr Prithiviraj Rampursad, Mrs Sarah Rawat-Currimjee, Mr Dario Robert Thumiah, Mr Rama Krishna Veeramundar, Mrs Damayndee Rengasamy, Mr Viswaraj Malloo, Mr R. Meetarbhan, Mr Ken Arian, Professor Reshmi Ramdhony.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin.

Mr Quirin: Page 40, item 22900.014 Hospitality and Ceremonies, Rs21.1 m. earmarked for 2018/19, can we have a breakdown of this amount please?

The Prime Minister: To meet expenses for diners and lunches hosted in connection with State visits, visits of official guests and important personalities, the organisation of functions and ceremonies, payment to Airport Terminal Operations Ltd for the use of State and VIP lounges and an amount of Rs3 m. for the purchase of medals. Increase in provision is based on actual trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. With regard to 005 extra assistance, he has given the names of advisers. May we know how much, for each adviser, is the basic salary they draw along with their allowances; so, therefore, the total salary they draw monthly?

The Prime Minister: We can circulate the list.

The Chairperson: Page 41. Hon. Baboo.

Mr Baboo: On *item 21110 .001(9) Intelligence Officer/Senior Intelligence Officer*, may we know why this post is still vacant please?

The Prime Minister: The new grades will assist CTU as the noddle agency of the Government of Mauritius in the prevention and combat against terrorism and related matters, both locally and internationally. All the three schemes of service have been sent to the Public Service Commission on 05 of April 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Page 41, first item, *item 21110 .001(5) - National Security Adviser*, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister who is the incumbent?

The Prime Minister: Mr Kanwar Brijendarsing Katosh has been appointed on contract as National Security Adviser with effect from 06 of April 2015. His contract has been renewed on each expiry thereafter for a further period of one year.

The Chairperson: Page 42. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Last item 22900.909 Other Goods and Services - Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of overseas travel effected by members of that Counterterrorism Unit and the cost of those overseas travel.

The Prime Minister: The officer-in-charge has attended 26 international meetings and conferences since 2015 and has undertaken 21 official intelligence missions. The costs of participation in most of the international conferences have been borne by the organisers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jhuboo.

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. *Item 22130 - Studies and Surveys* for an amount of Rs33 m. and Rs25 m. could we know from the hon. Prime Minister if we could have some more information on this provision please?

The Prime Minister: Studies and Surveys – provision made for consultancy services: one, mechanical and electrical for the new Government Centre and the old Government House. The contractor is Pro5 Limited for a contract amount of Rs9,430,000 including VAT.

The contract was awarded on 06 May, 2019 and second, the introduction of electronic passport to replace the current machine readable Mauritian Passport.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Item 22060.001 – *Maintenance of which Buildings*, Rs37 m. was earmarked. Can the hon. Prime Minister elaborate and can we know the firm concerned and the payment to the firm?

The Prime Minister: Provision for maintenance, repairs and other minor works at New Government Centre. The restoration of Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall for a contract price of Rs12,650,000, and the contractor is Kisten Enterprise Co. Ltd. There is also a contractor K.C Electricals Ltd, and the contract price is Rs17,549,000. And then, renovation of toilets, part payment, the contractor is Keep Clean Ltd and the contract price is Rs6,372,150. There is also water proofing works. The increase in provision to cater for complete restoration of Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall is Rs30 m. for renovation of toilets and water proofing works.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 42, item 22900 - *Counterterrorism Unit*, the hon. Prime Minister gave the number of trips that were carried out by the officer in charge of counterterrorism, but he did not give the amount that was paid by the Government of Mauritius in relation to those trips.

The Prime Minister: I do not have the information with me now. I shall circulate this information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Item 22120, may we know what these fees include?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the payment of fees to Chairperson, members of departmental bid and Bid Evaluation Committees. The Committees meet as and when required. So, fees are paid as follows - Departmental Bid Committee: the Chairperson Rs440. per sitting; members: Rs360 per sitting, and for the Secretary Rs260 per sitting.

For the Bid Evaluation Committee and the Due Diligence Committee, the fees are paid at hourly rate starting as from Rs400 to Rs1100 per hour depending on the category of officers who are called upon to act as Chairperson and members. The Chairperson is paid an additional sum representing 10% above the hourly rate for his category.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: On the same page, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in regard to item 22900.909 – *Expenses related to Counterterrorism Unit*, Rs66.5 m. whether we can have the breakdown for this, please?

The Prime Minister: Well, I shall look into the matter.

The Chairperson: Page 43, hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 26313.148 – *Economic Development Board (b) Refund to SMEs for Participation in International Fairs*, the budget has been decreased by Rs10 m. for this year. Can I know why there is this decrease in budget?

The Prime Minister: For Economic Development Board, the amount decreased as only about Rs10 m. was disbursed during financial year 2018-2019. However, the amount for financial year 2019-2020 is Rs30 m. as it is expected to disburse more during the next financial year. For the participation in fairs, the low level of participation from the part of SMEs in this current year, as at date, only 118 companies have benefited from a sum of Rs10,488,809.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Page 43, item 26313 – *Economic Development Board*, may I know from the Rs686 m. earmarked for EDB, what is the budget for promotion of financial services?

The Prime Minister: Well, I do not have the details with regard to promotion of financial services. I can find out and circulate this information.

The Chairperson: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X.L Duval: I have two questions on item 26313.148 – *Economic Development Board*. How much is spent on overseas officers which the EDB finances, firstly. In fact, I will ask a second question immediately. How much has EDB spent in the last financial year on promotion of block chain which was in the budget?

The Prime Minister: Well, I shall circulate this information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Pg 43, under capital expenditure, item 31112. 435 – *Upgrading at Clarisse House*. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister what will Clarisse House be used for?

The Prime Minister: I know what it was being used for before. For Upgrading at Clarisse House, I see Rs2.5 m. for 2018-2019 and Rs2.8 m. for 2019-2020. I have here a breakdown with regard to the different projected expenses. So, I can circulate that. But I can say that nothing much is going on right now at Clarisse House. There is much less activity.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 26313.020 – *Gambling Regulatory Authority*, may we about the board members, the salary and benefits, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the running cost of the Gambling Regulatory Authority.

(Interruptions)

For the Board members, the Chairperson is Mr Om Kumar Dabidin; Vice-Chairperson: Dr. S. Maharajah. Then members, I believe, Mrs Kotick Kalyanee; Mr Bussier Gerard Pascal; Mr Dabee Direndrakumar; Mr Jhugroo Krishna; Mr Molaye Reshad; Mr K. Beekharry, Mr Ujoodhia Chandra Shekar. I shall circulate so that you have all their monthly fees and so on.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. If I may take the hon. Prime Minister to item 22900.928 - *Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal*, the hon. Prime Minister will note that the budget has decreased by Rs1 m. May I ask him how many staff are there in this Tribunal and why the Budget has been decreased by Rs1 m.

The Prime Minister: Decrease in provision as some furniture and equipment have already been bought during the financial year 2018-2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 26313.148 - *Participation in Dubai Expo 2020*. We can see that the Budget allocated for 2019/20 is Rs2 m., then it increases to Rs36 m. for 2020/21. Can we have details about this item, please?

The Prime Minister: The World Expo 2020 will be held in Dubai and will be organised ... So, what was the question?

Ms Sewocksingh: Details about this item - as we can see that the Budget allocated for 2019/20 is Rs2 m., then it increases to Rs36 m.

The Prime Minister: Well, I shall find all the information and I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Page 44. Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Let me remind the hon. Members that we have reached an agreement on time allocation. I am being very flexible. Now, it is already 21.00 hours and we should have finished on this page since 20.55 hours. Right?

(Interruptions)

You know, if you come and dispute each time the time allocation, we will never finish. We will never finish because there are more pages to go on these. It's not that I am not allowing you to ask questions. You are asking as many questions.

(Interruptions)

But if I take page 43, then don't ask questions on pages 44, 45, 46.

(Interruptions)

If you agree, you don't ask. I will allow one question on page 44, that's it. Then we will continue on page 43. I will allow only one question on page 44. Okay? Then, let us take hon. Rughoobur.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Chairperson, that was on page 43. Item 26313.148 - *Economic Development Board - Participation in Dubai Expo 2020*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the criteria for the choice of participants by the Economic Development Board?

The Prime Minister: I would not know the criteria for that, Madam Chairperson. I can obviously later on ask the EDB and then we can circulate this information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Item 22900.929 – *Equal Opportunities Tribunal*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister...

The Chairperson: Page 43, which item?

Mr Baloomoody: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister how many cases have been referred to the Tribunal and how many have been disposed?

The Prime Minister: In 2019, the number of cases referred by the Equal Opportunities Commission to the Tribunal is 3. The number of cases disposed is 1. The number of cases pending before the Tribunal is 2. For 2018: 12 and the number of cases disposed of is 1 and the number of cases pending before the Tribunal is 11.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: On page 43, item 26313.015 – *Financial Intelligence Unit*. Every year, there is an amount of Rs54 m. which is budgeted, but we don't have the details of the running costs like staff costs and so on because, according to my information, the FIU is understaffed.

The Prime Minister: Well, this is the provision that has been made for the Financial Intelligence Unit. Is it understaffed?

The Chairperson: Can we take another question from hon. Dr. Boolell, in the meantime?

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. There is a massive sum which has been budgeted...

The Prime Minister: Which item first?

Dr. Boolell: Sorry, my apologies! Item 26313.148 - *Economic Development Board*. There is a massive sum which has been budgeted for the Economic Development Board. I know there are many programmes which are already based. Can we have a list of the programmes based and how many of these programmes have been attained?

The Prime Minister: I can circulate this information.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. With regard to Capital Expenditure, item 31122 *Other Machinery and Equipment Replacement of Chillers and Associated works at New Government House*, may I know who is the lucky contractor?

The Prime Minister: Which item?

Mr Jahangeer: Page 43.

The Chairperson: Which item number?

Mr Jahangeer: Item 31122.814.

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the installation of chillers that will be suitable for the DOHA Project at the New Government Centre. So, there is no...

Mr Jahangeer: There is no contractor?

The Prime Minister: No.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Item 262313.148 - *Economic Development Board*. May we know what is the total salary drawn by the CEO, including any allowances, benefits, etc?

The Prime Minister: I can circulate this information.

The Chairperson: Page 44! Hon. Bhagwan, one question!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 22090.002 – *National Security Services* - Rs18 m. can we know from the hon. Prime Minister, the number of personnel attached to that Unit, who is heading; the number of personnel who are attached to the Unit and who are following political opponents of the regime? I see one in front of my house every day. So, I have to feed him night and day. Can I know from the Prime Minister whether it's the intention of Government to review the National Security Services; whether they are involved in telephone tapping of political opponents?

The Chairperson: No. But these relate to policy matters. I am sorry hon. Bhagwan, these relate to politics. We won't allow questions on policy matters.

(Interruptions)

But you ask too many questions in one question, that's why. You should ask one question at a time.

(Interruptions)

What did you ask? Not five in one! One in one, not five in one! So, which question are you replying to, hon. Prime Minister, only the number?

The Prime Minister: No. Madam Chairperson, we all know with regard to the National Security Services, we normally do not provide information.

The Chairperson: Page 45, one question, hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Page 45, item 22030 - *rent*, may we have details about this item?

The Prime Minister: With regard to *Item 22030 – rent*, provision for the rental of office space on the first floor of Belmont House at the rate of Rs109,251, including VAT per month and proposed relocation of the offices as from April 2020. Rental of two parking slots at Level 2 of Newton Tower for an amount of Rs6,500 plus VAT per month and five parking slots at Garden Tower, Rs75,000 yearly.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan! No? Page 46 then! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Chairperson, I...

The Chairperson: I asked; I gave you the floor, you didn't...

Mr Bhagwan: *Mo pas inn tann ou*, Madam.

The Chairperson: You should be attentive.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Chairperson, at page 45, under *Item 21110.001 (45) - Director, Information Services*, can we know who is holder of the job, whether he is a Member of the Board of the MBC/ TV?

The Prime Minister: Mr Lutchmeeparsad Ramdhun has been appointed as Director, Information Services with effect from 14 February 2015. Yes, he is a member of the MBC Board.

The Chairperson: One question on page 46, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under *Item 22100.005 - Public Notices*, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House what are the newspapers which receive these publication notices and how much for each newspaper?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the details. The list of newspapers the services of which have been retained for publication of Government paid publicity during the current financial year are as follows –

- Dailies: L'Express, Le Défi Quotidien, Le Mauricien, Le Quotidien, Le Socialiste.
- Weeklies: Week-End, Le Défi Plus, Le Xournal, News on Sunday, Mauritius Times, La Vie Catholique, Kozé Rodriguais, Le Dimanche Hebdo, Star, 5-Plus Dimanche.

Mr Uteem: The amount paid, not just the list of newspapers.

The Prime Minister: Amount – I shall look into it.

The Chairperson: Page 47! No question? Page 48! One question, hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. At page 48, *Item 22030 -Rent*, can we know the rent paid for the Civil Status Officer at Bel Air and Mont Ida?

The Prime Minister: With regard to provision to meet payment of rental for 34 Civil Status sub-offices and service charges payable to nine sub-offices, there are the details which I can circulate. The increase in provision is due to price changes in respect of the 11 new lease agreements and the rental of parking slots. There are different numbers of parking slots which I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Page 49! Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under *Item 22060.005 - IT Equipment* where there is an important allocation of Rs300 m. over the next three years. Could we know from the hon. Prime what it entails?

The Prime Minister: Well, I find there is a decrease of Rs10 m. which is due to certificate authority, that is, license to use the Mauritius National Identity Scheme System which has been provided for under the Vote of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

The Chairperson: Page 49, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: *Item 22100.003 - Printing and Stationery*, I see Rs45 m. up from Rs5 m. this year. Does that have anything to do with GNews? What is that amount, please, why it is so high?

The Prime Minister: This is provision for purchase of toners and stationary items for National Identity Card Unit.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am on page 49, which page are you?

The Prime Minister: Page 49, yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay, Rs45 m.?

The Prime Minister: Which Item?

Mr X. L. Duval: *Item 22100.003- Printing and Stationery*.

The Prime Minister: Publications and Stationery of which Printing and Stationery? I can circulate this. The additional Rs40 m. represents the purchase of 170,000 units of blank and pre-personalised blank cards that are required for MNIC Card production over a period of two years. I can circulate this.

The Chairperson: One last question! I have hon. Ameer Meea and hon. Uteem, which one of you will ask that question?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem, last question!

Mr Uteem: Madam Chairperson, under *Item 22900 - Digitalisation of Civil Status Records*, there is an amount of Rs12.1 m. earmarked for five years. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether this project is ongoing, whether the contract has been awarded already, who won the contract and where matters stand?

The Prime Minister: The maintenance charges for NIC system is payable to the Singapore Corporation Enterprise (SCE), maintenance agreement of central population database payable to SCE again, the scanning system and hardware, software to State Informatics Limited, and the Civil Status Division System to State Informatics Limited.

Vote 2-1 Prime Minister's Office (Rs1,997,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

The Chairperson: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 9.14 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.19 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

(10.19 p.m.)

Vote 2-2 National Development Unit was called.

The Chairperson: We have a total of 20 minutes for 3 pages. Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Page 52 Item 26313...

The Chairperson: Which page are you? Page 50?

Dr. Joomaye: 52.

The Chairperson: No, hon. Rughoobur, on page 50, please. 50! Page 51! Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 21210 *Social Contributions*, may we have some details about this item?

The Prime Minister: Provision represents Government's contributions for employees to the National Savings Fund at the rate of 2.5% of their monthly salary up to a ceiling of Rs437 per month per employee.

The Chairperson: Hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: Item 2110.005 *Extra Assistance*, on peut avoir un *breakdown pour ce* Extra Assistance, s'il vous plaît?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for the payment of an all-inclusive allowance to trainee engineers to assist project managers and project officers in infrastructural projects. The decrease in provision is to cater for payment of allowances for only four trainee engineers instead of six. The trainee engineers are enlisted and posted to the NDU by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and the allowances are met by the NDU.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Joomaye! On page 52!

Dr. Joomaye: Item 26313.144 *Land Drainage Authority (LDA) of which –*

- (a) *Fees to Consultant for Technical Assistance to LDA (including Vulnerability Study)*
- (b) *Fees to Consultant for Land Drainage Master Plan*
- (c) *Fees to Consultant on Legal Study for LDA*

I would like to know which consultants who have been appointed.

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision to cater for salaries and other allowances for Land Drainage Authority staff and for preparation of the Land Drainage Authority Master Plan.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31113 – *Other Structures*, can the hon. Prime Minister give us a list of construction in upgrading of road and amenities in Constituency No. 2? He can table the same if he does not have it ready.

The Prime Minister: This is provision for resurfacing of damaged roads, upgrading of roads and construction of new roads. There is a list, it will be tabled.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: On the same page, item 22120 *Fees*, we see that there is an increase for fees. May we know who are the beneficiaries of these fees and for what purpose.

The Prime Minister: They are provisions made for the payment of fees to Chairpersons and members of Departmental Bid Committees and Bid Evaluation Committees. The increase in provision is based on actual trend of expenditure and there are also fees for training of officers by the Civil Service College and sponsorship of one CAB Organiser enlisted to follow Diploma in Social Work at the University of Mauritius. In fact, the decrease in provision is based on actual trend of expenditure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, item 26313.144 *Land Drainage Authority (LDA) of which –*

(b) *Fees to Consultant for Land Drainage Master Plan*

To pick from hon. Dr. Joomaye's question, can we have the name of that consultant who is being paid a total Rs63 m. for the preparation of that Master Plan, the name of the consultant?

The Prime Minister: Fees to consultant, I see for technical assistance, and then you have fees to consultants being co-financed by EDB, AFD. I do not have the name of the consultant. Can I have the name of the consultant? Not yet appointed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: The Prime Minister has already replied.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31113.015 *Construction and Upgrading of Drains*, I find that no amount has been earmarked. Can we know why?

The Prime Minister: So, an amount of Rs515 m. has been provided under the Flood Management Programme of the National Environment Fund for drain projects at page 378 of the Budget.

The Chairperson: Hon. Thierry Henry!

Mr Henry: Item 26313.144 – *Land Drainage Authority (LDA) of which (c) Fees to Consultant on Legal Study for LDA*, il y avait une somme de R 1.4 m. qui avait été votée

l'année dernière. Peut-on savoir combien a été dépensée et à qui cette somme a été déboursée, s'il-vous-plaît?

The Prime Minister: All amounts have been disturbed. The consultant is Stantec INC.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Mr Chairperson, *item 26313.144 – Land Drainage Authority (LDA) of which (a) Fees to Consultant for Technical Assistance to LDA*. The amount earmarked was Rs10 m. and only Rs8 m. has been used and I want to know also why this decrease and also who is the consultant?

The Prime Minister: Consultant is DAI from Brussels, Belgium.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you Mr Chairperson. I just want to come back to *item 26313.144 – Land Drainage Authority (LDA) of which (b) Fees to Consultant for Land Drainage Master Plan*, there was a budget of Rs3 m. last year, so, I understand that a new consultant has not been appointed yet but what was the amount used for last year? The Rs3 m., has it been spent or unspent?

The Prime Minister: Here, it says no amount has been used. It is planned for a consultant to be appointed in August 2019 and Rs20 m. will be disbursed as consultancy fee in the financial year 2019-20.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Chairperson, *item 26313.144 – Land Drainage Authority (LDA)*, can we know who chairs this authority? Is there a board? Who are the members of the Board? What are their remunerations?

The Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, I have answered a PQ on that but we can, of course, circulate same - composition of Land Drainage Board. I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Yes, better circulate!

The Prime Minister: and then when it was...

(Interruptions)

Who chairs? Mr V. Lutchmeeparsad, the acting Chairperson. He is the Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Housing and Lands and Supervising Officer and National Development Unit.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Thierry Henry!

Mr Henry: Merci. *Item 31113.045 – Construction and Upgrading of Amenities*, il y avait une somme qui avait été votée l'année dernière de R 95 millions. Peut-on savoir combien de projets ont été faits dans la circonscription numéro 12 s'il-vous-plait?

The Prime Minister: I do not have it in terms of constituency, but, of course, I can have the information circulated.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Prime Minister, thank you. Hon Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 26313.144 – Land Drainage Authority (LDA) of which (b) Fees to Consultant for Land Drainage Master Plan*, we see Mr Chairperson that there is the bulk of the fees to be paid in 2020/2021. Are we therefore to assume that the Land Drainage Master Plan will only be ready after the financial year of 2020/2021?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have answered a PQ on that issue and I have stated when the Master Plan will be ready. We can circulate the same information, again.

Vote 2-2 National Development Unit (Rs680,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(10.32 p.m.)

Vote 2-3 External Communications was called.

The Chairperson: We have two pages and the time allocated is 5 minutes. Hon. Uteem, page 53! Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Page 54!

The Chairperson: Page 53!

Dr. Boolell: No.

The Chairperson: Then we move to page 54! Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Item 32145.520 – loans to Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd*, may we know why is there a loan of Rs184 m.?

The Prime Minister: Well, I did not hear your question, sorry.

Mr Armance: I am asking about the loan to Cargo Handling Corporation, Rs184 m.?

The Prime Minister: Cargo Handling Corporation has ordered third ship to shore crane and associated equipment from Navy China Ship Handling Trading Company Limited, Haixi Heavy-duty Machinery Company Limited and Officine Meccaniche Galileo SRL for a total amount of Rs750 m. So, this is being funded by the own funds of Cargo Handling Corporation Limited. Rs388 m. and Rs178 m. as equity participation of Government in CHCL and Rs184 m. as loan on existing loan terms and conditions.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. *Item 22120 – Fees*, exceptionally high this year, Rs12.4 m. and then next year only Rs150,000. May we know for what purpose are we voting Rs12.4 m.?

The Prime Minister: Fees to consultants. European Union and Agence Française de Développement have made available a grant of 500,000 euros to the Government for conducting a study for improving productivity and efficiency at Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd and, following a tender exercise, the studies are being conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Ltd, South Africa and are expected to be completed in financial year 2019-20 and, out of the provision of Rs20 m., an amount of Rs8 m. has already been disbursed. The remaining balance will be paid in this financial year 2019-20. The final report is due in October 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Chairperson. *Item 22030 – Rent*, can the hon. Prime Minister let us know what rent it is?

The Prime Minister: Provision required for payment of rent on the first floor of Newton Tower. The lessor is Belem Limited, owners are Mr Tek Yam Chan Sui Ko and Mr Michael Chun Kai Chin. The provision of 15% increase as per existing contract has been made for year 2019/20.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin! Hon Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes. I have to come back on *item 32145.520 – Loans to Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd*, page 54, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, what are the interest rate and the repayment date for that loan?

The Prime Minister: The loan to Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd will be on the same terms and conditions as those from its previous loan from Government, that is, interest of Euribor plus 0.56%.

The Chairperson: Time is over for this budget item. Last question, hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Same item 32145.520, can the hon. Prime Minister tell us when these cranes will be operational?

The Prime Minister: Well, the equipment is expected by October 2019 and will be fully operational by January 2020.

Vote 2-3 External Communications (Rs216,600,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(10.37 p.m.)

Vote 2-4 Civil Aviation was called.

The Chairperson: We have four pages and the time allocated is 10 minutes. Page 55, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under *item 21*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, the number of aircraft inspected and air worthiness certificate issued by the Civil Aviation Department last year?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is mentioning, under item 21, Item 21 is *Compensation of Employees*. It cannot be about aircraft.

Mr Uteem: The employees carried out inspection and issued air worthiness.

The Chairperson: But the item is with regard to compensation of employees, it is not maintenance. Any more questions on page 55? Page 56, hon Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Regarding item 21110.001(23) - *Air Traffic Control Officer*, in the previous year, the number of post funded was 34 and now it is 33. It seems that there is no provision to fund one more post. There is a decrease in number of civil aviation officers.

The Prime Minister: The 27 Officers in post and 6 Trainees will complete their training in July 2019 and will thereafter become due for appointment.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. The hon. Prime Minister has just mentioned that there are 6 trainee officers, but at item 24, we see that there are currently only 3 Trainee Air Traffic Control Officers.

The Prime Minister: Provision has been made for the enlistment of 3 trainees as 3 Air Traffic Control Officers have been promoted.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Item number 18 with respect to the number of post which have been funded for year 2018/19 is 8 and as for next year, the number of post funded has been reduced to 6. Can the hon. Prime Minister enlighten us on it?

The Prime Minister: Well, the funds have been reduced as there are no qualified candidates to be promoted in the post for the time being.

The Chairperson: No more questions on page 56, we move to page 57. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 22060.002 – *Maintenance - other structures*, Rs56,000,219 budgeted for this year. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister what these structures relate to?

The Prime Minister: This increase in provision is due to additional maintenance contracts, namely –

- (1) Maintenance of the Very Small Aperture terminal (VSAT), (VHF-AM) Amplitude-Modulation Equipment, the project has been completed in September 2018;
- (2) Maintenance of the Aviation Security Identification Card Production System;
- (3) Re-tensioning and maintenance work of the 600 ft mast at Bigara Transmitting Station, the maintenance support contract for maintenance of Air Traffic Management System used for provision of air navigation services and maintenance support that has been contracted with Thales Air System for five years for the yearly sum of Rs26 m.

Well, Mr Chairperson, there is also a list of other maintenance programme. I think it is better that I circulate.

The Chairperson: I think it is better you circulate, hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Thierry Henry!

Mr Henry: Item 21110.004 – *allowance*, peut-on avoir des détails, s'il vous plaît?

The Prime Minister: There are provisions made for payment of allowances such as night duty allowance, height allowance, public holiday allowance, acting allowance, allowances to technicians, riggers engineers and other shift workers.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Just one question, item 21110.001(59) - *Cabinet Maker*. What is the job of a cabinet maker at the Civil Aviation Department, please?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: One officer has retired, it is proposed to fill the post of cabinet maker.

The Chairperson: We have one more minute left for this page 57.

The Prime Minister: I do not have the information. I shall circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody, last question!

(Interruptions)

We move then to page 58, hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Item 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultant*, can we know the name of the consultant and the project involved?

The Prime Minister: Well, to the previous question, if I may be allowed. One Cabinet Maker is for repairs of filing cabinets and furniture. So, we need somebody to repair.

Fees for training, the provision is made for training of technical engineering and operational personnel of the department and the decrease is due to training plan for the next financial year which has been based on the training needs analysis.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: On the same question, 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultant*, I am more interested to know about the Rs29 m. that was budgeted last year and how was this used? Which project to be implemented and the name of the consultant?

The Prime Minister: Provision is made for payment of consultancy fee to *Bureau Veritas, France*, following a tender exercise for the conversion of the department into an autonomous civil aviation authority. As at date, a total amount of Rs8.3 m. has been paid out

of a project value of Rs9.2 m. The final report is expected in August 2019. So, the decrease in provision, as payment of the remaining amount has to be effected.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same item - 22120.008 – *Fees to Consultant*, the hon. Prime Minister just gave details on the training. May I know, out of the Rs9 m. that was earmarked for the last financial year, what is the amount that has been spent actually?

The Prime Minister: From an amount of Rs9.2 m., total amount paid is Rs8.3 m. as at date.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 58, under *Item 31122.999 (c) Replacement of High Frequency Communication Equipment*, can we know to whom the contract has been allocated?

The Prime Minister: The estimated cost of the project is Rs80 m. A provision of Rs64 m. has been made for financial year 2019-2020 and the bids are being evaluated by the CPB.

The Chairperson: A last question for this page! Hon. Fowdar!

Mr Fowdar: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 58, under *Item 26210 – Contribution to International Organisations*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the name of the recipient organisations?

The Prime Minister: It is contribution to the African Civil Aviation Commission and the increase in provision is to cater for fluctuation in exchange rates.

Vote 2-4 Civil Aviation (Rs474,500,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

Vote 2-5 Government Printing was called.

The Chairperson: The total time allocated is five minutes for three pages. Page 59! Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. At page 59, under *Item 21110 (2) – Deputy Government Printer*, may we know if someone has been substantially appointed to this post because, last year, we were told that a Senior Graphic Artist was assigned duties for this post?

The Prime Minister: Well, the post is presently vacant and partial provision has been made to fill the vacancy. The Temporary Assistant Government Printer is presently acting as Deputy Government Printer.

The Chairperson: We move to page 61. Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Mr Chairperson, under *Item 31112.001 – Construction of New Building*, may we know if construction has already started and to whom it is allocated?

The Prime Minister: A provision of Rs270 m. is made to finance the construction of a new building at La Tour Koenig that would be used by the Government Printing Department. The contract for Consultancy Services was awarded to Design Forum Ltd. for an amount of Rs15,150,000, excluding VAT, and the building contract was awarded to Hyvec Partners Ltd. for an amount of Rs378,106,101, excluding VAT. The handing over of construction site was held on 03 May 2019 and work is ongoing.

The Chairperson: Hon Armance!

Mr Armance: At page 61, under *Item 22070 – Cleaning Services*, may I know who has been awarded the contract there?

The Prime Minister: The contract in respect of Cleaning Services for office and warehouse, workshops and yard was awarded to Angel Cleaning Services Ltd. for a period of one year, starting from 03 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. Payment at the monthly rate of Rs65,000 plus VAT. And Sanitary Services for four units presently awarded to Mauriclean Ltd at the monthly rate of Rs828, extended for a period of three months with effect from May 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval! No? Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under *Item 31122.813 – Acquisition of Printing Equipment*, we can see that for 2019-2020, the sum estimated is Rs13 m., then we see there is an increase of Rs20 m. May we have some clarification on same?

The Prime Minister: There is a proposed plan to procure one unit semi-automatics teaching machine in replacement of the present one, which is about 30 years old. Second, one unit heavy duty black and white digital press; high frequency of repairs in connection with the present digital press which has to be overused at about twice its capacity. Third, it is for one unit laminating machine in replacement of an office type laminating machine. Total: Rs13 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under *Item 22100.001 – Paper and Materials*, may I know who is the supplier of same?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the name of the supplier. I have only explanation about what it is. Maybe, another question in the meantime?

The Chairperson: The time is over!

The Prime Minister: Can I? The answer is coming.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: I believe it is Ramtoola Paper Master Printing

Vote 2-5 Government Printing (Rs336,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

Vote 2-6 Forensic Science Laboratory was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody! Page 62! We have three minutes on this page.

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under *Item 21110(2) – Deputy Director, Forensic Science Laboratory*. We know there are quite a lot of work at the Forensic Science Laboratory and that they are very understaffed. May we know what is happening to the post of Deputy Director, why it is not being filled?

The Prime Minister: No provision has been made as there is no qualified candidate for the post of Deputy Director, Forensic Science Laboratory in accordance with the scheme of service of the post.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Last year, during Committee of Supply, we were informed that there were 1,674 pending cases awaiting FSL report. With the sum we voted last year, can we have an idea from the hon. Prime Minister whether this figure has gone down or has remained the same?

The Prime Minister: Which item?

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is a general question because it was discussed last year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Member, you have to refer to an item. Hon. Quirin!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will take a question on the Director.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin! Please! You have the floor.

Mr Quirin: At page 63, under *Item 22140 – Medical Supplies, Drugs and Equipment* where an amount of Rs30 m. was budgeted for 2018-2019, can we know the names of the suppliers for this item, and the amount paid to each?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the name. Maybe, another question in the meantime before I get the name.

The Chairperson: Can we move to hon. Dr. Joomaye, please?

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 63, last item *31122.804 Acquisition of Laboratory Equipment*, a sum of Rs45m. has been budgeted. May I know if a chromatography spectrometre for testing synthetic drugs is included in that amount to be purchased?

The Prime Minister: Yes. In fact, provision is required for the purchase of one Liquid Chromatography High Resolution Mass Spectrometry required to carry out such tests that will include illicit drugs, therapeutic drugs as well as synthetic drugs. And with the amendment of the Road Traffic Act to include drug driving screening, the Forensic Science Laboratory has been tasked with the analysis of biological samples for the presence of drugs and drug metabolites.

As regards the former question, I am informed that it will be circulated.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item *31112.019 Construction of the Forensic Science Laboratory*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the contract has already been awarded, and, if so, to whom?

The Prime Minister: I see that provision has been made for the payment of consultancy fees; preliminary expenses for the construction of dedicated building to house FSL. So, the contract has not been allocated.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: On the same issue, can we know whether a site has been identified, where will that laboratory be?

The Prime Minister: Yes, because I have it here that it is at La Vigie. Therefore a site has already been identified.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22140 *Medical Supplies, Drugs and Equipment*, may we have the full details of this, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the purchase of –

- (i) consumables, that is, renewal items, chemicals and reagents;
- (ii) special kits and reagents required for DNA profiling in casework;
- (iii) special reagents and reference materials for chemical instrumental analysis,
and
- (iv) helium gas for chromatography and mass spectrometry analysis.

Vote 2-6 Forensic Science Laboratory (Rs153,600,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.00 p.m.)

Vote 2-7 Finance and Economic Development was called

The Chairperson: Page 65, nobody, 66 also. Page 67, hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Concerning item 22060 *Maintenance*, can the hon. Prime Minister elaborate and is it internal or contract out?

The Prime Minister: Decrease in provision is due to 12 months provision made instead of 18 months compared to last year in accordance with terms and conditions of maintenance contract. And the breakdown is for buildings, minor works at Government House and Emmanuel Anquetil Building, plant and equipment for repairs and maintenance of air-conditioners, fax machines, photocopiers, water filters, for vehicles and motorcycles, for repairs of 10 official cars attached to senior civil servants and 13 vehicles in the fleet of the Ministry, and IT equipment for hardware and software maintenance agreement and repairs of PCs, laptops and printers as detailed. For the details I can circulate because there is a list.

The Chairperson: Yes. Hon. Thierry Henry!

Mr Henry: Under item 21110.005 *Extra Assistance*, can we have a breakdown, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the remuneration of 4 advisers on contract and the Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers as follows –

- (i) Name of advisers –

- Mr Gérard Sanspeur;
- Mr K. Guptar;
- Dr. S. Naraynen, and
- Mr. M. Oozeer.

(ii) Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers – Mrs S. Sonah-Oree.

Decrease in provision following the resignation of one adviser.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item 22120 *Fees*, may we have a breakdown on the fees, please?

The Prime Minister: The decrease in provision at the cost of consultancy services is now made under item 22120.040 *Expert Skills Scheme* of vote 25-1 of Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government, fees to Chairperson and members of Boards. The increase in provision is due to payment of fees to Chairperson and members of the National Environment Fund. And provision is made for payment of fees to officers attending the following Committees –

- National Environment Fund;
- Departmental Bid and Bid Evaluation Committees;
- Public Pension Advisory and Technical Committees;
- Subcommittee on borrowing requirements of Government held at Bank of Mauritius, and
- Audit Committee.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 22900 *Other Goods and Services*, can we have details regarding this item?

The Prime Minister: There has been a decrease in provision as the Conference on United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on Blue Economy was held from 18 to 21 September 2018 in Mauritius. Regarding payment of uniforms and so on, I can circulate the other information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Page 69.

The Chairperson: No, we are on page 67. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. With respect to item 26313.043 *Mauritius Revenue Authority*, I would like to have clarity on the constant increase over the next three financial years with respect to the Mauritius Revenue Authority, if we could be enlightened.

The Prime Minister: This is the provision made for the recurrent grant as follows –

- Funded positions: 1,621,
- Actually in post: 1,457.

To meet therefore payment of salaries, allowances, cash in lieu of leave, end of year bonus, travelling, transport, overtime, passage benefits, duty exemption on purchase of car, medical schemes, performance bonus and statutory contributions in respect of those staff.

The Chairperson: We move to page 68. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26323.043 *Mauritius Revenue Authority*, every year there is like Rs390m., the next year it is Rs309m. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is this capital grant for MRA used for?

The Prime Minister: Sorry, I did not hear the question, what was it?

Mr Uteem: I am talking about the capital grant, item 26323.043 *Mauritius Revenue Authority*, there is Rs309m. earmarked for this coming year, so may we have some details what the grant relates to?

The Prime Minister: I have a list of the items. I can circulate it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.802 *Acquisition of IT Equipment*, last year, we budgeted Rs17m.; this year Rs10m. May we know what is the total cost of this project? Because we keep investing in IT equipment. Last year, Rs17m., for this financial year, then there will be another Rs3m. So, can we have more details?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the purchase of two backup servers for the e-budget system.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Mr Chairperson, same item, can we know if the amount of Rs17 m. which was earmarked for 2018/19 has been fully spent and can we also know the name of the company to whom the contract has been awarded?

The Prime Minister: To CIL Limited and I do not know if the amount has been spent – an amount of Rs6 m.

The Chairperson: Page 69. Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: *Item 31132.103 e-Procurement*, there was an amount of Rs62,250. earmarked for this project, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there is any delay in the implementation of this e-procurement project and the name of the consultant please?

The Prime Minister: The e-procurement project, I am informed, is a major public sector reform with the aim of transforming the public procurement process from the current paper base medium electronic platform. The total contract amount USD 2,991,109. The project status is already completed. I can circulate the payment details.

The Chairperson: Thank you hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Abbas Mamode.

Mr Abbas Mamode: *Item 22060 – maintenance of which .005 IT Equipment* from Rs13 m. to this year Rs20 m. can the Minister elaborate and whether this is a contractor and the name of the contractor?

The Prime Minister: IT Equipment – this is the payment for maintenance agreement for the e-procurement system after a warranty period of one year. It is USD307,064 payable in 2019/20 to Nextenders (India) Pvt Limited. And there are other expenditures: IT Security Audit Rs2m; maintenance of IT equipment R0.15m; and licence for team viewer Rs0.03 m and enhancement for new features in e-procurement.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you. Sub-Head 2-703: Independent Review Panel, may I know how many cases had been lodged before that panel and how many cases are pending currently?

The Prime Minister: For year 2018/19, as at 18 of June 2019, cases reviewed total 15 – I can circulate the details, but I shall mention only the total. Cases which have been dismissed, withdrawn and so on, I can circulate the information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you Mr Chairperson. *Item 22060 – maintenance of which .005 IT Equipment* – that is quite a huge sum: Rs13 m last year, Rs20 m. this year. May we know the name of the firm with regard to the maintenance of the IT Equipment?

The Chairperson: I think this has been replied by the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: It is the same that I mentioned - Nextenders (India) Pvt Limited.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. *Item 22120 – Fees* – I believe last year we talked about Bid Evaluation Committees, we voted Rs9.6 m. but this year, the figure is way down; has been revised downward to Rs650,000. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister why such a big difference?

The Prime Minister: I have clarified the decrease in the provision as the costs of consultancy services are now met under *item 22120.040 - Expert Skills Scheme of Vote 25-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government*

The Chairperson: Page 70. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under *Sub-Head 2-704: Assessment Review Committee*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister again how many cases have been lodged and are pending before the ARC currently?

The Prime Minister: You have total and subtotal for customs: 78 and remaining pending cases as at 31 of May 2019: 227; for VAT: 276, remaining 570; for income tax: 554, remaining 1,458 and Registrar-General: 747 and remaining 2,863. So, if we add the total 1,645 cases settled and 5,118 cases remaining pending as at that date and I can circulate the details.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: *Item 21110.005 – Extra Assistance*, can we have the breakdown please?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of allowances to Members of ARC. I can circulate the list of Members and their monthly allowance.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: *Item 22120 Fees*, the fees have decreased this year. May we know what are the fees for? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: The decrease in provision is due to provision of Rs5 m. under capacity building programme now being made under the *item 22120.040 - Expert Skills Scheme of Vote 25-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government* and, two, training being carried out in-house by local consultants.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: At page 70, *item 21110.005 – Extra Assistance*, last year it was Rs13 m., this year Rs11 m. May we know some particulars about that extra assistance?

The Chairperson: This has already been asked, hon. Baloomoody. Maybe I don't know whether the Prime Minister will reply.

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of salaries of two members on contract. Mr Reshad Jeewon: Rs89,000 monthly and Mr Bhagwansingh Dabeesingh: Rs89,000 monthly.

The Chairperson: We move to page 71, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With respect to capital expenditure, item *31132.110*, Rs6 m. have been earmarked in the 2018/2019 estimates with respect to Computerisation Project of the Assessment Review Committee. Can the hon. Prime Minister apprise us as to whom the contract has been allocated?

The Prime Minister: What was the question about?

Dr. Boolell: To whom the contract has been allocated, if you could apprise us, please?

The Prime Minister: I do not have this information here. It has not been allocated because of the project status: submission of bids was closed on Wednesday 12 June 2019. So, it has not yet been awarded.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: On the same item, the project value is Rs6.5 m. So, we awarded Rs6 m. last year and now, this year again, we are awarding Rs6.5 m. Can we know where matters stand?

The Prime Minister: It says not spent because it has not been awarded.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem, on page 71!

Mr Uteem: Just before that item *31122.802- Acquisition of IT Equipment*, may we know from the hon. Prime Minister who was awarded the contract for the supply of IT equipment?

The Prime Minister: Acquisition of IT Equipment, provision is made for the replacement of old photocopiers and acquisition of PCs, laptops and printers for additional staff.

The Chairperson: We move to page 72, hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 72, item *22030-Rent*, an estimate of Rs300,000 was made for last year and this year there is no estimate. May we know why?

The Prime Minister: No provision made as payment for rental of parking slots is being met under subhead 2-701 General.

Vote 2-7 Finance and Economic Development (Rs2,800,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.21 p.m.)

Vote 2-8 Central Procurement Board was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for two pages. Page 73, no question. Page 74, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can the hon. Prime Minister enlighten the House on item *22120.006-Fees to Assessors*? May I know if these assessors are in-house or whether they have been recruited on contract basis and how many are there, please?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of fees to assessors. I do not know whether they are in-house or on contract. Well, I have a list of evaluators, a very long list, I can table this list.

The Chairperson: Please table. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item *21111.100- Overtime*, every year we make provision for Rs1.4 m., may I know from the hon. Prime Minister why is it that we always have to pay overtime to Central Procurement Board?

The Prime Minister: Payment made for overtime to Procurement Officers for assisting evaluation of bids after office hours and on Saturdays. Overtime is also paid to Office Auxiliaries for cleaning of office premises and to support staff as and when required.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 74, item .005- *Extra Assistance*, may we have more details about this item?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for the remuneration to Chairman, two Vice-Chairman and three members, one IT Technician and two Civil Engineers. The decrease follows the non-recruitment of the one Civil Engineer, one Mechanical Engineer and one Statistician.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900-*Other Goods and Services*, there is a sudden increase from Rs200,000 to Rs1.6 m. May we know why and what are the goods and services and also details for that.

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to shifting of funds for service charge formally provided under item 22030-*Rent* and now made under category other goods and services and item service charges.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody, page 74!

Mr Baloomoody: *Extra Assistance .005*, Rs13 m. budgeted last year and Rs11 m. this year. So, may we know who are benefiting from this huge amount?

The Prime Minister: Extra Assistance, I have just answered, there is a decrease here.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 74, item 22040-*Office Equipment and Furniture*, can we know about the increase from Rs800,000 to Rs1.2 m.

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to the implementation of a PBX system. The provision made for procurement of computers, tablets, laptops, PABX and other petty equipment for the new procurement officers and also there are provisions for purchase of office chairs, tables, filing cabinets for new recruits.

Vote 2-8 Central Procurement Board (Rs69,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.26 p.m.)

Vote 2-9 Treasury was called.

The Chairperson: Page 75, hon. Lepoigneur.

Mr Lepoigneur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I can see on item *21110.001 (4)-Accountant/Senior Accountant and (5)-Accounting Technician*, we are recruiting four Accountant/Senior Accountants and eight Accounting Technicians. Have these been advertised on the PSC list or they have already been recruited?

The Prime Minister: For item (4), four additional posts of Accountant/Senior Accountant have been provided –

- 2 for the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in Government, and
- 2 for the maintenance of the Government Asset Register and task relating thereto.

I believe for these ones the process will be ongoing. (5) Accounting Technician, 8 additional posts of Accounting Technicians have been provided for the implementation of the Government Asset Register, Centralise Payroll and Central Public Sector Cash Management Framework. So, this will be done and I believe that the posts will be advertised and the recruitment process will then follow its course.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 75, item *21110 (19) - Principal Internal Control Officer*, may we know why there is no provision and if the post does not exist?

The Prime Minister: Post of Principal Internal Control Officer has been transferred to Prime Minister's Office following upgrading of the post at Treasury.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance, on page 76!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I can see under item *22060 – Maintenance*, there is Rs21 m.; same was it for last year, may we know why?

The Prime Minister: Maintenance of IT equipment –

- Renewal of Oracle Licences - Rs15,521,000;
- IT Applications, servers and Oracle support - Rs4,779,000, and

- Network Equipment, PCs and Printers - Rs300,000

Making Rs20,600,000.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 – *Rent*, may we know who is the recipient?

The Prime Minister: Rental of building, office spaces, Rabadia Building Port Louis, lessor Rabadia Investment renting so much space, ATSA, monthly rate payable Rs667,386.90 for the period of July to December 2019 and Rs680,978.46 for period January to June 2020. Then, we have the Voucher Room at Farquhar Street, Port Louis, the lessor Messrs Abdool Raheem and A. Ramanjurry. I can provide the other information so as not to waste time and then, there is the Flacq Cash Office, the lessor is Mrs A. Koteea. Then, Pamplemousses Cash Office, the lessor is Mr Yousuf Domun and Voucher Room, No. 2, Queen Street Port Louis, lessor Mr A. Kong Cheong. I shall provide the other information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 22900 - *Other Goods and Services*, may we know what are these other goods and services?

The Prime Minister: There is increase in provision due to an increase in number of transaction, namely –

- 1) Service charges, that is, bank charges in connection with payments effected in foreign currencies by Commercial Banks and the Bank of Mauritius.
- 2) Charges payable to the Bank of Mauritius in respect of transaction effected by the Treasury through the Mauritius Automated Clearing and Settlement System.

The Chairperson: Time is over!

Vote 2-9 Treasury (Rs140,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.31 p.m.)

Vote 2-10 Statistics Mauritius was called.

The Chairperson: Page 79! There is nobody.

(Interruptions)

No, sorry, Page 78. Page 79, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Chairperson. Item 22130 - *Studies and Surveys*, there is a considerable increase after the Financial Year 2021/22, from Rs36 m. to Rs159 m., then the year after to Rs210 m. May I have some clarification on this considerable increase, please?

The Prime Minister: The decrease in provision is due to reduction in census of economic activities and Living Condition Survey, no CEA will be conducted in Financial Year 2019/20 and the Living Condition Survey will be terminated in August 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jhuboo! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, under item 22030 – *Rent*, there is Rs11.9 m. of rent. May we know which building do that relates to?

The Prime Minister: Provision made for payment of rent at LIC building, inclusive of parking and service charges payable to Life Insurance Corporation of India for a total space of 2,074.47 m².

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: The same page, item 22120 – *Fees*, from Rs11 m. this year and Rs13 m. for next year. May we know who are the beneficiaries?

The Prime Minister: Increase in provision due to statistical capacity building on analysis and dissemination on Living Condition Survey (LCS results). There are also fees to Chairperson and members of the Board and Committees.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, I am interested in item 21210 - *Social Contributions*, can the hon. Prime Minister clarify why Statistics Mauritius and on what basis is paying social contributions and to whom?

The Prime Minister: Provision refers to contributions to NSF in relation of staff and offices on contract as required under the National Savings Funds Act of 1995. Government contributes 2.5% of the basic salary for Civil Servants and at retirement, an employee receives a lump sum (Contribution plus accrued interest over and above other retiring benefits).

The Chairperson: Hon Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22060 – *Maintenance*, can we have some details regarding to the amount earmarked for 2018/19 which is Rs6.5 m.?

The Prime Minister: Decrease due to maintenance works at Rose Hill Sub Office not being carried out.

Vote 2-10 Statistics Mauritius (Rs189,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.35 p.m.)

Vote 2-11 Valuation Department was called.

The Chairperson: No question on page 80. Page 81, hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: Item 22030 – *Rent*, may we know which rent we are talking about?

The Prime Minister: Rental of office spaces at NeXTeracom Tower 2 at Ebene. The lessor is NeXTeracom Limited.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah, page 80!

Mr Rutnah: Page 81 or 80?

The Chairperson: You had a question on page 80?

Mr Rutnah: No, page 81!

The Chairperson: Okay, page 81 then!

Mr Rutnah: May I take the Prime Minister to item 22900, which is the last item, *Other Goods and Services*. For the last financial year, I note a colossal amount of Rs17,700 m. was provided while a further Rs700,000 is provided this year. What they couldn't afford to do with Rs17 m. or what extra will they do with Rs700,000 this year?

The Prime Minister: Well, there is a reduction due to 'no provision being made as the update of valuation roll has been delayed'. The delay is due to enhancement being made on the valuation module of the LAVIMS.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. Item 22900, last year we voted - sorry.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Last line, 31132.801- *Acquisition of Software*, so there is an amount Rs12 m. earmarked for this year and Rs23 m. budgeted for the next year. May we know from the hon. Prime Minister who is the supplier of those software?

The Prime Minister: The implementing agency is Airbus Defence and Space. There is a provision of Rs10 m. for the enhancement to the valuation component of the LAVIMS. It is planned to start the enhancement task in January 2020.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Same page, item 21110.004- *Allowances*, last year we had an allowance of Rs3.5 m. and this year Rs6.8 m. Can we know who are the beneficiaries for these allowances, and then the provision goes back to Rs3 m.

The Prime Minister: The increase to provide for responsibility allowance, allowance in lieu of duty remission, allowance to officers performing work additional to their workload to update valuation list which has a backlog of 17,000 cases in respect of General Grades.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Item 22120-*Fees*, there is an increase of Rs1.9 m. to Rs2.5 m., may we know what are these fees?

The Prime Minister: The increase in provision is due to the training of a higher number of officers at the Civil Service College and for the continuous professional development in accordance with PRB Report 2016 and an increase in number of staff eligible for refund of subscription fees to professional bodies and for capacity building programme. There are also fees to Chairperson and members of Board of Committees, and fees for training also.

Vote 2-11: Valuation Department (Rs150,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.41 p.m.)

Vote 2-12: Corporate and Business Registration Department was called.

The Chairperson: We have two pages and five minutes. Page 82, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Mr Chairperson, I seize there is at item 21110.001(17), the post of *Procurement and Supply Officer/Senior Procurement and Supply Officer*. For the year 2019/2020, no provision has been made. Can we know why that is the case?

The Prime Minister: The post of *Procurement and Supply Officer/Senior Procurement and Supply Officer* has been reduced following upgrading of the post at the Corporate and Business Registration Department.

The Chairperson: Page 83, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Last line, item 31132.401- *Upgrading of ICT Infrastructure Extensible Business Reporting Language*, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister who was awarded the contract and where matters stand as far as completion of that project is concerned?

The Prime Minister: This is for the extensible business reporting language; provision made for the payment to Mauritius Network Services for electronic filling of financial statements in XBRL format for large companies so as to create a standardised format for financial reporting.

The Chairperson: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, item 22030-*Rent*, an amount of Rs17.9 m. was earmarked for 2018/2019, can we have the details pertaining to this amount please?

The Prime Minister: There is a long list, I shall circulate the details. Renting of office space, I see at MaxCity Property Fund, and the lessor in one part is Jayray Properties Limited, and then there is another lessor Southwark Investment Limited. I shall circulate all the details.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I take the hon. Prime Minister to item 22060, in relation to *Maintenance*. Last financial year, this department received Rs15,400 m. and this year there is a further provision for Rs12,450 m. What maintenance work have they carried out last year and what are they proposing to carry out in the next financial year for so much money? Obviously if the hon. Prime Minister does not have the particulars now, perhaps he could circulate it at a later stage.

The Prime Minister: There is a decrease in provision due to the implementation of the second phase of XBRL Project which is at its initial stage, thereby requiring less maintenance costs. The other maintenance includes buildings with minor repairs, plant and equipment, repairs to photocopy and fax machines, vehicles and motorcycles repairs, and servicing of two official cars attached to the CBRD and then IT equipment. There is a list which I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Item 21110.005 - *Extra Assistance*: Rs1.1 m., Rs1.5 m. may we know who is the beneficiary of this extra assistance?

The Prime Minister: First of all, the provision is made for the payment of stipend of Rs125. per day and Rs2,000 monthly to trainee students from University of Mauritius. The increase is due to a higher number of trainees.

Vote 2-12: Corporate and Business Registration Department (Rs122,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.46 p.m.)

Vote 2-13 Registrar-General's Department was called.

The Chairperson: We have five minutes for 2 pages. Page 84! Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can I take the hon. Prime Minister to *Item 21110.001(16) - Assistant Financial Officer*. I see for both financial years, there are six Assistant Financial Officers whereas for last year's estimates, the amount provided was Rs1,581,000, whereas for the same number of employees, it is Rs1,865,000 for this financial year. May we know why?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry; I do not have this information. The full year provision made in 2019-2020 is for two additional posts created in 2018-2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 82, under *Item 21110.001(11) – Analyst/Senior System Analyst*, there are two funded posts for years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, but there is an increase in the Estimates, may we know why?

The Prime Minister: The full provision is made for year 2019-2020.

The Chairperson: We move to page 85! Hon. Rutnah! Can I request you to go directly to the Item No., please?

Mr Rutnah: Yes, indeed, Mr Chairperson. I intend to do this so that all hon. Members can follow the items. I will go straightaway to *Item 22060 – Maintenance*. I am very wary about these maintenance figures in Departments. Can we know why last year a sum of Rs16,804,000 was earmarked and what maintenance have they carried out and what are they proposing to carry out in the next financial year for another Rs17,100,000?

The Prime Minister: I shall just say that there is an increase in provision in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract. There is a long list which I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: At page 85, *Item 22060 - Maintenance*, can we know the names of the contractors involved?

The Prime Minister: Yearly maintenance agreement contract with the Norway Registered Development Company for Hardware and Software amounting 215,000 USD per annum. Then there are fees for daily system ...

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Order!

The Prime Minister: ...operational monitoring by the same company, NRD, and then you have the provision for IT security audit of the MERP system by an audit firm.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: At page 85, under *Item 31132.401 - Upgrading of ICT Infrastructure*, Rs39 m. may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether it relates to LAVIMS, because we keep having to pay for all these ICT upgrades?

The Prime Minister: It is the provision made for the replacement of the existing e-registry project hardware.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the same *Item 31132.401 - Upgrading of ICT Infrastructure*, may we have the name of the equipment provider and maintenance provider as well?

The Prime Minister: I just mentioned earlier that the supplier is NRD. It is the same company. But for maintenance, I believe, it must be the same company.

Vote 2-13 Registrar-General's Department (Rs145,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.52 p.m.)

The Chairperson: Hon. Members, we will move to page 349, Centralised Services of Government.

Vote 24-1 Centrally Managed Expenses of Government was called

The Chairperson: We have 6 minutes for one page. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Mr Chairperson, under *Item 22120.003 - Commissions of Enquiry and Committees* with a budgeted amount of Rs4 m. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how much is budgeted for the Commissions of Inquiry on the sale of Britam Kenya and how much is budgeted for the Commissions of Inquiry on the former President of the Republic?

The Prime Minister: How much is budgeted for?

Mr Uteem: Under the *Item 22120.003 – Fees - Commissions of Enquiry and Committees*, there is an amount of Rs4 m. We know there is currently pending two commissions of enquiry, one on the sale of Britam Kenya and the other one is on the former President of the Republic. So, I am asking how much is budgeted for each of the Commissions of Enquiry?

The Prime Minister: When these Commissions of Inquiry are over, of course, then, we shall have to remunerate the Commissioners, but even if it is not sufficient we shall provide it from Centrally Managed Operations. Right now, it is difficult to say how much because it will depend on how much they will claim also.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: At page 349, under *Item 28211.024 - Financial Support to Religious Bodies*, can the hon. Prime Minister give us details about the religious bodies which have benefitted from this financial support, stating the quantum each religious institution has received?

The Prime Minister: They are beneficiaries under the Per Capita Subsidy. There are 11 federations. I shall circulate the list. Then there are two religious organisations which are not, in fact, taking the subsidy. There are the beneficiaries under the Fixed Grant Scheme, there are six non-affiliated organisations. I am circulating the information.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: At page 349, under *Item 28217.002 – Compensation arising out of Government Liability*. There was an amount Rs50 m. that was budgeted, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister how much of this amount has been paid by Government and also the names to whom it was paid?

The Prime Minister: Provision of Rs50 m. for compensation arising out of Government liability. So, this is what you want to know. I do not have the details to whom,

but I have in terms of accidents involving Government vehicles and other cases. I have the complete list. I can circulate that.

Mr Baloomoody: Chairperson, I'm grateful to the hon. Prime Minister for circulating the list of the beneficiaries of the religious bodies but it does not mention the quantum.

The Chairperson: You require the quantum.

Mr Baloomoody: The quantum that each and every organisation has received.

The Chairperson: Yes. Can we move to hon. Adrien. Duval!

(Interruptions)

On this page! Yes, I'm going to give you the floor.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I ask the Prime Minister with regard to item 22180 *Mission Expenses (Ministers, Delegates and Officials)*, may we know out of Rs160 m. that was provided for last year, how much was spent and will he provide full particulars of the missions undertaken by Ministers and himself?

The Prime Minister: To answer your question, therefore, I am circulating the list and the monthly subsidy and the annual subsidy.

Then, with regard to actual expenditure, you will be very happy to learn that we have spent much less than what has been budgeted in terms of missions, thanks to the cooperation of all Ministers and everybody. So, I shall give the details. The total is Rs105.4 m. I shall circulate the details.

Vote 24-1 Centrally Managed Expenses of Government (Rs2,525,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(11.59 p.m.)

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

The Chairperson: We have three pages and the time is 18 minutes. Page 350. Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Item 21120.001 *Medical Insurance Scheme*, may we know where matters stand with this Insurance Scheme? I see that there was a budget provided last year, of Rs50 m., what was the budget for, has it been spent or still unspent?

The Prime Minister: Well, it has been announced and it is now going to take shape. We are working on it.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Under item *21110.010 Service to Mauritius Programme*, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, how many persons were enrolled under this Service to Mauritius Programme and out of the number of people enrolled, how many was given full time employment after completion of the Service to Mauritius Programme?

The Prime Minister: I can provide part of the information that the provision was made for payment of allowances to 200 interns. Presently, there are 157 interns who have been posted in various Ministries and Departments and provision has also been made for 43 additional interns to be recruited in the course of the year. Now, in post, resigned, terminated, total number, how many have been - I shall have to find out.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item *28211.069 – Support to NGOs (through National CSR Foundation)*, can the hon. Prime Minister provide with regard to the sum of Rs230 m. for this financial year, whether there has already been agreed disbursement for this financial year, if he can provide the list of NGOs that would be granted financing and to what amount?

The Prime Minister: So –

- Rs145 m. for charitable institutions;
- Rs30 m. for rehabilitation programme for alcoholics and drug addicts;
- Rs14 m. for NGO Trust Fund;
- Rs7 m. for Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund;
- Rs6.04 m. for Action Familiale;
- Rs5.46 for MACOSS;
- Rs4.42 m. for Shelter for Women and Children in Distress, Forest Side;
- Rs3.14 m. for Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association;
- Rs1.7 m. for Human Service Trust;
- Rs1.58 m. for *Prévention, Information et Lutte contre le Sida (PILS)*;
- Rs1.58 m. for Chrysalide Centre, and
- Rs10.17 m. for other NGOs.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Concerning item 21120.001 *Medical Insurance Scheme*, we were made to understand that those below Rs10,000 will have 100% of that insurance. So, can the Prime Minister state the number who will be waived so that they can benefit 100% of the insurance.

The Prime Minister: I can answer a PQ on that.

The Chairperson: Yes, thank you. Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Under the same item 28211.069 *Support to NGOs (through National CSR Foundation)*, Rs114 m., can we know to which NGOs this has been attributed, please?

The Prime Minister: Which item?

Mr Lepoigneur: Item 28211.069 *Support to NGOs (through National CSR Foundation)*, Rs114 m., can we know to which NGOs this has been allocated?

The Prime Minister: As at date, Rs114 m. from this item have been transferred to the National CSR Foundation for onward disbursement to the respective NGOs. For the former question, there are 2,100 officers, so no need to ask a PQ.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, item 22120.040 *Expert Skills Scheme*, can we have some particulars about this scheme? Who were the beneficiaries of Rs45 m. last year and who will be the beneficiaries for Rs30 m. in the coming financial year?

The Prime Minister: This is made for the procurement of services of experts and specialised professionals by Ministries, departments and public bodies for timely design, implementation and operationalisation of public sector policies, projects and schemes. As at date, Rs12.5 m. have been spent on procurement of services as follows –

- Rs2.4 m. icw Energy Audits;
- Rs3 m. icw IT Experts;
- Rs2.8 m. icw Project Management;
- Rs3.6 m. icw Services of Engineers, Architects, Quantity Surveyors, and
- Rs0.7 m. icw Procurement and Public Finance.

I can circulate the details of those payments.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 25120.003 – *SME Development Scheme – Interest subsidy on Loans*, a sum of Rs10 m. was allocated for the financial year 2018/19. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether this amount has been fully utilised, this Rs10 m. for the SME?

The Prime Minister: This provision is made to refund MauBank, the interest forgone on SME Development Scheme. The Scheme covers SME in priority sectors such as ICT, manufacturing, bio-farming, handicraft, and renewable energy. As at 31 May 2019, no fund has been disbursed. Claims amounting to Rs8 m. are expected by end of June 2019. The status of the scheme, I see that 573 applications have been received and 408 applications have been approved: 181 for agribusiness, 105 for manufacturing, 61 for food processing, 25 for ICT, 19 for ocean economy and 17 for other sectors and, as at 31 of March 2019, MauBank has approved loan amounting to Rs410 m. and has already disbursed Rs275 m.

The Chairperson: We now move to page 351. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, thank you. *Item 26323.058 - Extra Budgetary Units - National Environment Fund*, 100 m. is budgeted for next year, may I have a breakdown of the use of that Rs100 m. which is going to be funded through National Environment Fund?

The Prime Minister: This is an additional amount which is now being earmarked for the fund but the hon. Member will remember that we have already injected Rs2 billion previously. So, there has been a provision for a number of projects which I can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: *Item 28223. 016 - Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd*, may we know what is the salary of the CEO?

The Prime Minister: The salary of the CEO? That, I will get from the officer. We can circulate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: *Item 28214.001 - Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd*, 20m. was budgeted last year, may we know out of the 20 m. how many have been used and how much we intend to use in the another 20 m. we are forecasting for next year?

The Prime Minister: For breakdown provision - actual expenditure, as at date 14 m. has been spent, I need to get the detail. We can circulate the detail of those 14 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chair. Can I take the hon. Prime Minister to *item 28222.004 - Serviced Sites at Khoyratty and Mont Gout*, can we know what was serviced at those two places?

The Prime Minister: Well, the provision made was for onsite infrastructural works for both Khoyratty and Mont Gout Morcellement Projects for land allocated to some 115 ex-vegetable growers of Riche Terre. This project is being implemented by Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd and is estimated to cost Rs108 m. It includes cost for consultancy services, for detailed design and onsite infrastructure works. This is what the project is about.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Mr Chair. With regard to capital expenditure, *item 31113.999 - Infrastructure Projects in Preparation*, may we know what are the projects that are in preparation?

The Prime Minister: There is a list of 73 projects which are at the preparation stage which are included in the Public Sector Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24. It is available on the website of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and I shall also circulate a list of the projects.

The Chairperson: We move now to page 352. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, thank you Chair. *Item 32155.059 – Shares and Equity Participation - MauBank Holdings Ltd*, Rs2 billion, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister, what will these Rs2 billion be used for by MauBank?

The Prime Minister: To finance the transaction, MauBank Holdings Ltd. took a loan of Rs3.1 m. from the bank and the remaining balance of Rs2 billion was provided to the company by way of an advance from the Consolidated Fund. Fund is now being voted to convert the advance into equity and there will be no cash movement.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. *Item 32255.012 – International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)*, this appears to be a new item for which we are being asked to vote Rs28 m., may I have some more details on this bank please?

The Prime Minister: The provision required in respect of additional shares allocated to Mauritius in 2018, the additional shares are worth US Dollars 24.85 m. which were allocated to Mauritius, out of which the paid-in-portion is US Dollars 3.99 m. The paid-in-portion has to be settled over five years and, accordingly, a provision of Rs28 m. has been made for year 2019/20 and subsequent years.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Chair. There is a huge increase in *item 31132.108(a) - E-Licensing Platform*, from 73 m. to 128 m., may we know why?

The Prime Minister: The provision is made for meeting the costs of associated with the setting up of the E-licensing Platform, I have a breakdown which I shall circulate. Out of the provision of 115 m., it is expected that only 22 m. will be spent by end of June 2019 as claims in respect of the E-licensing Platform are expected to be received in the next financial year.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: *Item 32155.054 - Mauritius Africa Fund Ltd*, 100 m. last year, another 100 m. this year, can we know how much has been disbursed? Where do matters stand?

The Prime Minister: Actual expenditure: the current financial year, Rs100 m. has been injected in Mauritius Africa Fund in connection with the special economic zones in Senegal and Ghana and, as at date, a total amount of Rs180 m. has been injected in Mauritius Africa Fund and Rs1,839,800 fully paid ordinary shares have been issued to the Government. The amount has been used to finance projects in Senegal, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Madagascar through their MAF subsidiaries.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chair. Can I take the hon. Prime Minister to *item 32155.063 - Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd*, may I ask, out of the provision that was made for last year, how much of that money has gone to the promotion of infrastructural work in connection with the *Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien*?

The Prime Minister: This is for the construction of this stadium: the aquatic centre, the gymnasium and also for other offsite works and consultancy services. The actual

expenditure. Rs1.6 billion. has been released in financial year 2018/2019 and a further amount of 400 m. is expected to be disbursed by end of June 2019.

Vote 25-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government (Rs9,391,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.17 a.m.)

Vote 26-1 Contingencies and Reserves was called.

The Chairperson: We have just one page and six minutes. Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I would like to take the hon. Prime Minister to ...

The Chairperson: Can I make the same request again? Can you go directly to the item number, please?

Mr Rutnah: *Item 24 – Interests*, may we know the interest that we have been paying last year and that we will be paying in the current financial year, how much have been accumulated since 2005 onwards?

The Prime Minister: I do not have this information; I think they are calculating. Interest is not voted, it is statutorily charged.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to *Item 33245 - External Debt of which Early Debt Repayment*, we see an amount of Rs15,650,000 for this financial year. Is this the Special Reserve Fund of the Bank of Mauritius, and if so, why is it different from the announced Rs18 m. in the Budget Speech?

The Chairperson: Which page are you referring to, hon. Adrien Duval?

Mr A. Duval: Page 354 !

The Chairperson: We are on page 353, Contingencies and Reserves.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Armance!

The Prime Minister: May I?

The Chairperson: Yes, please, hon. Prime Minister, because we are a bit confused. We are on page 353.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Page 354 is not voted, Mr Chairperson, it is just for the hon. Members to be informed about the situation, but we need to vote 353.

The Chairperson: Yes. If we have no more questions, I will put the question.

Vote 26-1 Contingencies and Reserves (Rs700,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(00.21 a.m.)

Vote 3-1 Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities was called.

The Chairperson: The total time allocated for this Vote is 60 minutes. We start now with page 86. Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I am interested with *item 20100(1) - Deputy Prime Minister*. I see that for the last financial year and this financial year, and the other financial years, the allowance is constant. May we know why the allowance remains constant despite everybody is getting an increase in allowance?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I don't know; they are not giving me the money - I don't know why I am being starved. I think it is the basic allowance and then on top of that they had on all the cost of living. I think so; I wouldn't be able to comment.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: At page 87...

The Chairperson: Page 86, hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: According to the estimate value of 2018-2019, the amount earmarked was Rs3.5 billion for the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and we can see that only Rs2.6 billion has been used. Can we know why these underspent, please?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Provision for the Ministry has decreased as Bagatelle Dam and several pipe replacement projects have been completed. For new contracts which have been awarded and for ongoing projects, payment in initial years is lower and for some projects disbursement is phased over more than one year, that is why the sum has decreased.

The Chairperson: We move to page 87. Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Can I take the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to *Item 21110(19) - Procurement and Supply Officer/Senior Procurement and Supply Officer*. We see that for the last financial year, there was a provision for one Procurement Officer whereas for the next financial year, there is none. What happened to this position?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is being replaced by an Assistant Procurement and Supply Officer for whom provision has been made.

The Chairperson: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Chairperson. With regard to item *21110.001(1) - Permanent Secretary*, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister see with the Permanent Secretary, why it is that for 2018-2019, it was budgeted Rs3.5 billion for his Ministry, but there, it was revised to Rs2.6 billion. You will see, it is part of the summary expenditures at page XVI. Why is it then, if he will see with the Permanent Secretary, that there is an under-spending of a nearly Rs1 billion for the financial year 2018-2019?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am very sorry, could you take me to the part where you are.

Mr A. Duval: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister will see that the summary of expenditures by vote at page XVI, there is an under-spending of nearly Rs1 billion for his Ministry.

My question is: under vote item *21110 (1) Permanent Secretary*, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister see with the Permanent Secretary why it is so with regard to the underspending of Rs1 billion?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Does the hon. Member refer to the figure 3522? To which figure are you referring? 3522. I want to make sure what you are asking.

Mr A. Duval: Let me just rephrase it. Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Just take me to the figure.

Mr A. Duval: Yes. See with the Permanent Secretary, there seems to be from last year an underspending of nearly Rs1 billion for his Ministry, why it is that there is such an amount of underspending?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I don't mean to be rude but which figure are you referring to?

The Chairperson: Which item are you referring to hon. Member?

Mr A. Duval: I am referring to the item Permanent Secretary but the information I gather is from page...

The Chairperson: You cannot do that. You cannot do that, hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: It is in the summary.

The Chairperson: When you refer to an item, you put the question relating...

Mr A. Duval: My question is, Mr Chairperson, whether there has been an underspending of Rs1 billion. If so, gather from the Permanent Secretary why it is so.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Oh, I see.

The Chairperson: Your colleague, I think, did ask that question earlier, hon. Duval.

The Deputy Prime Minister: No, but that was the ...

The Chairperson: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, I think, his colleague, hon. Baboo did ask that question earlier.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes.

The Chairperson: And you replied to that question. Can we move to page 88? Hon. Rutnah, please!

Mr Rutnah: Chairperson, am I to ask question?

The Chairperson: Yes, you submitted your name for page 88.

Mr Rutnah: Yes, I'm so sorry; I was not sure whether you called my name.

The Chairperson: Yes, page 88!

Mr Rutnah: I'm ever so grateful! Can I take the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to item 22030 *Rent?* May we know why there is an increase from last year to this year and to whom these rents are paid to?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Rental for 31,275,88 square feet at ground, first and second floor SICOM Tower for the Ministry. The rent is about Rs1,145,948.24 monthly which goes about Rs36 per square foot. Number of staff is 97.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, under item 26313.098 *Utility Regulatory Authority*, this morning in his speech, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said that the URA is a failure up to now. You said that in your speech this morning. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether this is the reason why...

(Interruptions)

You said so this morning. This is the reason why last year we voted Rs23 m., this year Rs17.8 m. and the next two subsequent years, the sum is zero. Is the Utility Regulatory Authority going for closure?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I don't think it is appropriate at this time that we go into a controversy but I never said so.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Don't argue, hon. Osman Mahomed, please!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, I never said that the URA has been a failure.

The Chairperson: You put a question; let the Deputy Prime Minister reply.

The Deputy Prime Minister: You can't just put words in my mouth with impunity and I don't react. I never said so. Hansard will correct me, and I had my written speech with me, it was written. I know exactly what I said. I said there were problems but it is phasing out but let me answer your question.

The provision has been reduced because we expect that the URA will start receiving licensing fees very soon. Licensing of power producers is due to start by the end of the year. So, we expect that the money will come in and there will be less funding from Central Government,. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo! Hon Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Under item 26313, the same item raised by hon. Osman Mahomed.

The Chairperson: Can you specify the item, please?

Mr Abbas Mamode: Item 26313.098 *Utility Regulatory Authority*, since there was an amount of Rs23 m. last year and Rs17.8 m. this year, how many times did the Authority meet and as an Authority, they are bound to fix the tariff of CEB and CWA also. So, how many times they met and how many people are involved in the Authority?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The CWA does not come within URA yet. According to the law, the Minister may, by amendment of the Schedule, include other utilities. For the moment, it is only electricity, not CEB but electricity. How many times they have met? I don't know. I don't monitor and my Ministry also doesn't monitor the URA. They are big enough, they are independent and they meet as often as necessary.

(Interruptions)

How many people are involved? How many staff? I don't think there are many. Let me tell you! Provision has been made for new staff –

- 1 Internal Auditor;
- 1 Procurement Officer;
- 1 Office Attendant/Driver, and
- 2 Managers.

I suspect there may be one or two others. I see one officer is furiously writing notes. Let me just wait for him. 10 Officers.

The Chairperson: May I remind Members that once you have put your question, you cannot put supplementary questions from a sitting position. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, same item 26313.098 - *Utility Regulatory Authority*, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the composition and the allowance paid to the governing body on that?

The Deputy Prime Minister: To?

Mr Uteem: The controlling, the Chairperson, etc.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We have the Chairperson who is Mr Ah Chuen, who earns Rs110,000 per month, Commissioners are Mr Luchmun Roy, Mr Narain, Rs60,000 each. One Commissioner needs to be appointed, following the demise of Ms Anodin, I am still reflecting over this before taking a decision.

The Chairperson: We move to page 89, hon Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, item 22130.001 (a) *Consultancy for the Adoption of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)*, an amount of Rs4,200,000 has been earmarked. I would like to know if the Consultant has been selected, if yes, I would like to have his name. Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I was looking for the item. Can you just repeat the question? Yes, okay, right, I have got it.

You mean consultancy for LNG? In October 2017, my Ministry appointed Poten & Partners to conduct a feasibility study on the adoption of LNG. The contract amount was USD1,195,670 plus Rs828,000. Funding is shared by CEB, STC and government. Study consisted of two phases – Phase one, assessment of technical, economic and financial feasibility of shifting to LNG including financial models for implementing the project and the whole supply chain from import storage reclassification, electricity generation bumpering and CNG conversion for inland transportation under public private master ship model and phase two, assessment of the environmental and social impact and assisting the appointment of a transaction advisor for the implementation of the project. The consultant has completed phase one of the study, an amount of USD853,839 excluding VAT has been paid to Poten & Partners. Provision in the budget is for outstanding payment under phase one.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Same *item 22130.001(b) – Studies and Surveys - Consultancy on Electric vehicles*, can the Deputy Prime Minister inform us if the contract has already been awarded, if yes to whom?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The consultant EVConsult BV of Netherlands was appointed in April 2019 just now to carry a comprehensive study on the use of electric cars including charging points fiscal and non-fiscal incentives and disposal of batteries. Assignment started in May 2019 and will be completed in August 2019. The contract amount is €49,850 plus VAT.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. Item 22900(b) - *Sensitization for Energy Efficiency Audit (PNEE)*, is this going to be the last year because subsequently no provision have been made for this? Is the Ministry putting an end to this?

The Deputy Prime Minister: 88 Audits have been carried out in private enterprises, phase two consists of pre-audits in industries and SMEs and will be implemented as from July 2019. The question is what happens in 2020 I suppose it will be nil because the provision is for Government contribution to the project.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, *item 22120 – Fees*, there is an increase of Rs865,000 to Rs2.4 m., may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister who will receive these fees and for what purpose?

The Deputy Prime Minister: This is provision for fees for Chairman and members of bid committees, training of staff. Provision for 2018/19 includes fees to IFC for transaction advisory services for water sector reform, IFC submitted its report in April 2018. The exercise has been suspended for two years to enable further consultations. No provision has been made for 2019/2020. The water sector reform study and transaction service is funded by grant from the global infrastructure facility of the World Bank, USD400,000 for IFC...

Mr Uteem: I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is referring to the wrong page. We are talking about the energy not the water, fees for energy...

The Deputy Prime Minister: 22120?

Mr Uteem: No, its 3-102 – Energy Services.

The Deputy Prime Minister: 22...

Mr Uteem: It is the same item but I think you are looking at the wrong page. It's not for the water sector, we are talking about the energy fees.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Okay. I am sorry. Could you give me the item again please?

Mr Uteem: Page 89, *item 22120 – Fees*.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, let me just say what my note is giving. Provision for fees to Chairman and Members of Boards and Committees Rs600,000 - I'll circulate because it's a bit long.

The Chairperson: We will move to page 90 now, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Can I take the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to *item 21110.001(10) - Hydrological Technician*. For the last financial year and this financial year, there is the same number of hydrological technicians, 12 for last financial year and 12 for this financial year, may we know why despite the same number of hydrological technicians, the amount has increased from Rs2,677 m. to Rs3,625 m.?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Because contrary to their Minister, they get increases in salary that is the only conclusion I am driven to.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Yes, *item 26313.139 – Extra-Budgetary Units - Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA)*, there is a contribution of Rs12 m., may I know who heads MARENA and what is his salary?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The CEO is Professor Rughooputh. There are two Rughooputh. I think we are talking of Soonil Rughooputh, the one who was at the University.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. *Item 26210.200 - SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE)*, may I know who represents Mauritius on that Centre? Who is our local representative on that Centre?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Let me check. Yes, Dr. Soonarane is the one who has gone to Namibia on several occasions. There is not one representative as such we send but regularly it is Dr. Soonarane who has been sent.

The Chairperson: We will move to page 91, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Yes, thank you, Mr Chair. *Item 28223.010 - Central Water Authority - Pipe Replacement Programme (a) Beau Bassin and Rose Hill*, can we know to whom the contract has been awarded please?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Pipe Replacement Programme at Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, alright. That has been awarded to Best Construct Ltd.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: *Item 22130.005(b) – Studies and Surveys - Dam Break Analysis*, may I know who is doing the dam break analysis and for which reservoir?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We have done on several reservoirs and I think it is Arteria. Let me check. Now that does not mean that the dam has broken and that they are analysing what has been broken. Let us clear that. It is being carried out on the major dams, that is, Mare aux Vacoas, Midlands, La Ferme, Mare Longue and Piton du Milieu. The study comprises a modelling simulation exercise to identify potential risks related to a dam failure. In the light of the finding, the consultant will recommend measures to reduce any risk of flooding and the abatement of emergency situation. I now recall that you did ask me that question and I did reply to you because the contractor is Studio Pietrangeli SRL. The duration

of the contract is May 2018 to December 2019. The contract amount is Rs391,290 euros and Rs1,620,000, that is, Rs20 m. inclusive of VAT. Amount paid up to date is Rs5 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22130.005 (a) *Upgrading of La Nicolière Reservoir*, may we know whether the work has already been started and who is the contractor? Also, out of this Rs10 m., we can see that only Rs3.5 m. has been earmarked for this year?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Contracts have been awarded to SMEC International Pty. Ltd and Vyas Consulting Engineers Pvt Ltd. for feasibility study on enlargement of La Nicolière Reservoir to improve water distribution in the north. The contract amount is Rs4,384,263 and USD385,223 excluding VAT. Duration is June 2017 to December 2019.

To answer to the second part of the question, Phase I has been completed. The consultancy is nearing completion, so the amount is decreasing.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. If I may take the Deputy Prime Minister to Capital Expenditure Item 28222.014 *in relation to Water Tank Grant Scheme*. May I know, out the Rs50 m. that were allocated last year, how many households have benefited from this scheme and how many households are anticipated to benefit from the Rs100 m. that has been earmarked for the next financial year?

The Deputy Prime Minister: In 2018/2019, we received 8,170 applications. We approved 8,049 applications, so roughly 8,000. The amount disbursed was Rs48,954,040. Since the introduction of the scheme in 2001, a total of 61,188 households have already obtained water tank and a total amount of Rs242,419,336 has been disbursed. For the future, what I can say is that we are issuing new guidelines for application for water tanks and pumps by July 2019. It is premature to anticipate any figure just because the figures have moved, they have increased the threshold.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 22130.005 (c) - *Pollution/Water Quality Monitoring*, for which the budget is being drastically reduced from last year, from Rs4.6 m. to Rs1 m. only, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister why such a drastic cut in the budget for water quality monitoring?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Provision is for payment to the CWA for tests carried out by the CWA Lab to access quality of water and reservoir surveillance in the context of the ongoing water quality testing programme. More tests were carried out in 2017/2018 in view of the IWRM Project for the northern aquifer. The project was completed in December 2017, payments were effected in 2018/2019. 3,252 tests were carried out by CWA. It is because of the northern aquifer that the amounts have reduced.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Ms Sewocksingh: Item 28223.010, under the Pipe Replacement Programme, I cannot find Curepipe on the list, as it is mentioned in the Budget that defective pipes in Curepipe will be replaced. So, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister why Curepipe is not included in the list?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Member is asking me why there is only for Rose Hill. Well, the pipe replacement has been effected, as you know, in La Brasserie. There must be a reason for it not to appear in this particular item. Let me wait for my financial wizard to give me the answer. The contract was awarded for Rs115 m., but I have no explanation as to how or why it is not in that item. It may appear in some other items.

(Interruptions)

Well, give me a piece of paper, don't whisper to me. Apparently, it is funded by CWA under Equity.

The Chairperson: We will move to page 92, hon. Tarolah!

Mr Tarolah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 92, on the top, section (c)- *Montagne Fayence – Ecroignard*, can we know about the progress of the project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The completion date is May 2020. Progress is 5% as at June 2019.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 32145.503 (i) *Construction of New pumping station at Plaine Lauzun*, the project was Rs79 m. I can see still Rs2 m. this year, may I know if this project has been completed and fully operational?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The project was completed in April 2019. Was there any other question the hon. Member wants to know?

(Interruptions)

Whether it is operational! Well, the project has been completed. I am not too sure whether it is operational in the sense whether it has been commissioned. Yes, it is.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Item 28223.015 (e)-*Solar Powered Pumps*, a sum of Rs40 m. ...

The Chairperson: Put your question, hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: There was a sum of Rs40 m., only Rs20m. was used and now in this Financial Year 2019/2020, it is zero. So, have you abandoned the project of solar powered pumps, which is a good project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Can you just tell me what you wanted to know?

(Interruptions)

Okay, right! The project has been completed. So, solar powered pumps, we are talking of solar power pumps, that is, long ago the pumps were powered by electricity. We have 12 solar pumps which have been installed in several boreholes, Alma, Beaux Songes, Belle Vue, Espérance Trébuchet, Telfair, Old Yemen, Palmyre, Clairfonds, La Marie, La Nicolière pipe treatments two units. The work has been done.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the Pipe Replacement Programme and CWA - Other Water Distribution Works, I do not see anything budgeted for my constituency, whether it is Ward IV, Tranquebar, Vallée Pitot, La Paix. So, may I know whether there is any provision for replacement of old pipes or other work in my constituency?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Please can you indicate an item to me so that I can...

Mr Uteem: Yes, but it is not listed there.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Why is it not listed? If it is listed, it is not listed or it is another budget. It does not mean that no work is going to be done at your place. That surely cannot be the case.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: No comments from sitting position! Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: *Item 31113.002(a) - Construction of Dams – (a) Bagatelle*, the value of the project is Rs7,126 billion, I wanted to know like this dam has already been completed, and why for this year there is a sum of Rs19 m. that has been earmarked?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Member is talking of the Bagatelle Dam. The project has been completed on 30 June 2017 and the DLP, that is, the Defects Liability Period, ended in June 2018.

(Interruptions)

Sorry? The provision of Rs19 m. alright. The initial project value was Rs3.3 billion inclusive of whatever, an amount EUR 2 m. was obtained from Coyne et Bellier in an arbitration settlement. That was the first consultant for the project. Payments made as at 31 May 2019, contractor for Rs6.399 m.; fees to consultant Rs3.59m.; Artelia - the provision is for final payments to contractor following completion of outstanding remedial works, that is, Rs15m. Payment to consultant for expert services for technical monitoring of the Bagatelle Dam Rs4m. Pending commissioning of the Bagatelle water treatment plant expected in September 2019, water from the dam is being released in the Grand River North West for distribution to the region of Port Louis through the Pailles Water Treatment Plant. A volume of 5,000m² per day is also being created through mobile treatment plants and channelled to the Rose Hill Reservoir to supplement resources from the four boreholes.

The Chairperson: We will move to page 93 now. Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Mr Chairperson I have got questions in the previous page as it concerns my constituency.

The Chairperson: Yes, but I said the time allocated to each page is six minutes. We have elapsed the six minutes, we move on to page 93.

Mr Rutnah: So be it then.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Rutnah: I am interested in the item relating to loans, *item 32145.503(b) – Central Water Authority - Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant and Associated Works*, the amount spent last year is Rs490 m. and the amount that is anticipated to be spent is Rs180.5 m. for next year. May we know why only Rs490 m. were spent out of the provision that were made for this project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I do not know why you say only Rs419 m. For me, it is a huge sum of money. It is part of the contract sum. In fact, I personally, and my technical staff, we are not very happy about the accounts, but they are going to be balanced up eventually. So, there is nothing I missed in the amounts. The amount is decreasing because the works are almost completed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 32145...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Page?

Mr Baloomoody: Page 93. *Item 32145.503 (i) – Central Water Authority - Construction of New pumping station at Plaine Lauzun*, this was Pailles water treatment plant. So, may we know where matters stand with regard to that construction?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I mean, please, I cannot...

(Interruptions)

Oh! Where matters stand. Project is completed, in April 2019.

Mr Baloomoody: But then, why are we making provision for this year and next year, Rs12 m.?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We need to have provisions surely. Let me just see whether we need provisions for release of retention money.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lepoigneur: Already answered!

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. *Item 32145.503 (b) – Central Water Authority - Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant and Associated Works*, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when will the water treatment plant be commissioned?

The Deputy Prime Minister: According to the latest meeting that we held in my office, since you like to know where meetings are held, it was September-October. Let me check. Yes, it is confirmed.

The Chairperson: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: He has already answered my question.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to item 32145.503 (f) – *Central Water Authority - Rivière du Poste Water Treatment Plant*, it was supposed to be completed by March. May I know why this is being postponed now?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, I am going to give you everything. The project comprises of three contracts –

- (i) Consultancy services
 - Awarded Date: March 2016;
 - Revised Completion Date: July 2019, and
 - Consultant: Jadav & Partners Hydratec

That is consultancy services for feasibility of upgrading the plant.

- (ii) Construction of a new intake Conveyance Pipeline from the intake to the water treatment plant
 - Contractor: Sotravic Limited;
 - Contract amount: Rs70 m.
- (iii) Rehabilitation of the existing water treatment plant. The provision is for the execution of a new intake structure and associated works.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Item 32145.503(j) - *Central Water Authority - Cold Potable Water Meters*, last year there were Rs15 m. which was allocated. Can we know from that amount of Rs50 m. how much cold water meters have been purchased and for this year also how much will be purchased?

The Deputy Prime Minister: That 50,000, it is being processed.

The Chairperson: We move to page 94, hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for item 32145.517- (b) *House Service Connections*, the amount earmarked, I see Rs40 m. and then Rs45 m., whether for this Grand Baie Sewerage Project Phase I B, there is any amount earmarked on this fund and what is the status?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I believe that this is for the house service connections which are being contracted. These are contracts under framework agreement for all house service connections.

(Interruptions)

The question is whether it is for the Grand Baie Sewerage Project? The answer is 'no' as I have told you.

The Chairperson: Can we move to the next question, please. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you! Under item 32155.316 - *Wastewater Management Authority*, there is an amount of Rs1 billion that has been earmarked for this year. Can I know from hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the amount earmarked for completion of projects in Tranquebar area and Ward 4 which was earmarked last year, but I don't see anything in this year's budget.

The Deputy Prime Minister: If the hon. Member will turn to item - just follow me, in the words of my learned colleague, take you to Tranquebar and Vallée des Prêtres Sewerage Project, it is at 32155.316 item (e)

(Interruptions)

Item 32155.316 paragraph (e).

(Interruptions)

It is shares and equity. It is hidden. Alright, I am telling you. It is in there Rs155 m. is the project value. Rs37.4 for 2018/2019 and Rs30.6 m. for 2019/2020.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. If I may take the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to item 32145.517-(c) regarding *Repairs/ Maintenance/ Upgrading of Sewerage Infrastructure*, a provision of Rs113,260,000 was earmarked for the last Financial Year. May we know whether any of these works that have been carried out were contracted out to independent contractors, and if yes, what was the project value?

The Deputy Prime Minister: First of all, to answer the very first part, the amounts have decreased because the projects have been completed. They work very fast. Then, the second part, for submersible wastewater pumps: Sotravic Limited; supply and installation of pumps at Roche Bois Pumping Station: Technic Water Services Ltd; supply of submersible wastewater mixer works for Grand Baie Wastewater Treatment Plant: Technic Water

Services Ltd; wastewater pump accessories at Farfaron Pumping Station: Technic water services Ltd.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 32155.316 - *Shares and Equity Participation*, again with regard to the Ward IV and Tranquebar Project, I know the Ward IV Project is ongoing, but the Tranquebar project is stalled because of technical issues. The contractor has gone down to the site, but he is not able to begin the work because of some technical issues. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether these technical problems have been overcome and the work can commence this year?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, that is not the information that I have. The information I have is that the revised completion date is 11 June 2019, that was a few days back, I suppose or a few days in the future. 2.2 kilometres of street sewer have been laid, 20 houses have been connected and 745 metres of CWA pipes have been replaced. 10 houses have not been connected because of low-lying issues, squatters etc. I suppose these are the houses where there are problems. My note tells me that the project has been completed and that is what was written in my book. I shall check. It seems the hon. Member seems to be adamant, and he knows, he is on the ground. I am going to check.

The Chairperson: May I remind hon. Members that we are left with three pages and we have less than 10 minutes. Page 95, Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Item 31112.001- *Construction of Buildings*, the project value was Rs25 m. and there is an amount of Rs6,500,000 budgeted for next year. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister where matters stand with respect to the construction of this building?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The construction is due to be completed next month, July 2019. There are other constructions, I think, there is a small outhouse of some sort which remains to be done. Yes, the security post remains to be done, and installation of camera and razor blade wires on the fencing.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baboo!

Mr Baboo: Item 31122.802 - *Acquisition of IT Equipment*, from Rs200,000 to Rs2.2 m., can I know why this huge increase?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, because that is radiation safety, they are renewing their IT equipment, they have been new building, they have new software and on

that matter, they are technically assisted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), well that's it. That's the reason why.

The Chairperson: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Rutnah: The item in relation security. Item 22090 - *security*, there is a substantial increase from Rs65,000 to Rs300,000.

The Chairperson: Can you repeat the item number please?

Mr Rutnah: Item 22090 relating to *security*. Although the item was Rs65,000 last year, this year it has been increased up to Rs300,000. May we know why?

The Deputy Prime Minister: First of all, it is not yet procured. Let us not forget, it's a new building, so the whole security system is being enhanced and that means a security system, a security guard on a 24-hour basis. Since it is not yet procured I suppose it is a rough estimate.

The Chairperson: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes, concerning Capital Expenditure, item 31112.001 *Construction of Buildings*, can we know the name of the contractor?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The contract was awarded to Modern Jurassic Building & Construction Limited for Rs24.5 m. Don't ask me more.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, thank you. On that same item, last year, during Committee of Supply, we were told that the building was supposed to be completed on the 07 May this year and now we learn that it's going to be July, so a couple of months of delay. So, is there any cost implication associated with this delay?

The Deputy Prime Minister: We have to go to the contract. I am unable to answer now. Well it's two months, I don't know what are the terms of the contract, but let me see. There are no cost implication according to what I'm told.

Vote 3-1 Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities (Rs2,370,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

(01.20 a.m.)

The Prime Minister: Mr Chairperson, I beg to move that we do report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 25 June 2019 at 10.30 a.m.

Mr Roopun rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(01.21 a.m.)

LA BUTTE - LANDSLIDE

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I know it is late night, but I have to raise an urgent matter regarding my Constituency.

Yesterday morning the inhabitants of Maupin Street and Belvédère at La Butte woke up and they found out that there has been a landslide at the construction site of the Metro.

In fact, this issue was raised earlier, there is some concern regarding the quality of the land there. There was a PQ B/618 and the hon. Minister did mention that Larsen and Toubro Limited was awarded the contract etc. and, as part of their work, I am informed that Larsen and Toubro Limited is undertaking details geo-technical investigation as per the terms of contract etc.

Unfortunately, yesterday, although there was not a heavy rain, the barrier has collapsed and there have been a landslide. And I have been there today myself personally, I have taken photographs and I undertake to produce. They are tricked, manipulated

photographs. They are genuine ones where you will see the slide of the land and what is worse is that we have two poles.

One electrical pole and one I think is for Telecom. The electrical pole, the base has not gone, but they have tied that handicapped electrical pole, the CEB pole with another pole just to get it to stand. You will see there have been some connections between these two poles. This pole has not been removed although, yesterday, we were informed that the CEB will go down there to do the needful. I have been there today at 2.30 p.m., this photo was taken at 2.30 p.m. the pole is still there and the people are very worried.

So, I am pleading to both hon. Minister of Infrastructure and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to look into the matter urgently because the heavy rain has not started yet, and now that the metal barrier has gone down, they have put a *filet*. You will see here now there is a *filet* which is even more dangerous.

So, I am appealing to the hon. Ministers to look into the matter. Besides when I went there today, this morning, there was a car entering that road although it is slippery.

Also, can I make an appeal to all those concerned to look into the matter urgently because people there are worried. We have people residing less than two metres from that places, their houses are on the other side of the road. I beg leave to produce those two photographs.

Thank you.

(01.24 a.m.)

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been there myself on Sunday. Today we have all the engineers from LNT, from Metro Express and I also sent the JICA expert, because I rely a lot on his opinion. JICA has been stabilising this region for the last 30 years.

The report I have from JICA is that it was a shallow surface failure of 3.5 metres by 4 metres and the depth is 50 centimetres. I understand that the people in the vicinity are apprehensive. What I can say is that, in fact, it is not a landslide per se, but anyway whatever it is, I have talked to Larsen & Toubro and the retaining wall is going to be done in two days. So, on Thursday everything should be done. The conclusion of the JICA expert is that no measure is necessary at this particular section apart from what we propose.

Now, as regards to the retaining wall, this is going to be done, it is being done today and tomorrow. The field between the retaining wall and the slope that also will be done and the surface will be done.

As regards to the pole, I will monitor with the CEB. What I would like to reassure also the hon. Member is that we are in contact with the people. In fact, hon. Wong Yen Cheong went there and one of the neighbours who are on the other side of the road did also sent us some photographs.

So, today there was Dr. Mootanah who made a statement about this, and I am going to monitor the situation. I hope that, by Thursday, everything will come back to normal, but as regards the pole, we will see with the CEB to see to it that the pole is taken care of.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

MAURITIUS-SENEGAL – DOUBLE TAXATION TREATY

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a matter which concerns the hon. Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Finance.

There has been conflicting reports in the Press with regard to the Double Taxation Treaty between Mauritius and Senegal. I personally have seen a letter written by the representative of the Government of Senegal, exercising their right under the Treaty to terminate the Treaty with effect from 01 July, meaning next week. But in the Press, it was reported that the Treaty is being renegotiated.

Now, I would be grateful if the hon. Prime Minister could come with a statement because a lot of the people in the Offshore Sector are getting queries from clients who have been using Mauritius structures to invest into Senegal and are not sure what would happened after 01 July.

Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know we have received a correspondence from Senegal and my Office and the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governances are looking into the matter. And, of course, I can report later on to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

MERE THERESA MUNICIPAL CENTRE – SECURITY

Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable ministre des Collectivités locales et concerne l'insécurité qui règne aux alentours et dans la cour du centre municipal Mère Theresa à Chebel.

Donc, des riverains, M. le président, m'ont contacté et ont exprimé leur crainte par rapport à la dégradation de la situation à cet endroit précis. Le centre municipale Mère Theresa, je dois le rappeler, abrite une garderie, une école maternelle, une grande salle de réunion et aussi un jardin d'enfants qui est annexé. Donc, il n'y a aucun contrôle et n'importe qui peut avoir accès le jour comme la nuit. Donc, le personnel qui est affecté principalement à la garderie et à l'école maternelle ne se sent pas en sécurité car les portails restent ouverts toute la journée. Donc, il y a un va-et-vient continu, comme je l'ai, dit toute la journée, et le soir, c'est encore pire. Il y ceux qui viennent dans la cour du centre et restent jusqu'à fort tard et font du bruit, ce qui perturbe, bien sûr, la tranquillité de ceux qui habitent à côté et à l'arrière du centre municipale.

Je fais, donc, un pressant appel à l'honorable ministre pour qu'elle intervienne auprès du conseil municipal et qu'une fois pour toute il se décide à mettre bon ordre et assure un système de gardiennage en permanence. Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development & Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of the issues raised. I will look into.

At 01.30 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 25 June 2019 at 10.30 a.m.