

## Minister's Statements and Speeches

### **THE APPROPRIATION (2021-2022) BILL (NO. X OF 2021) COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (22.06.2021)**

*(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)*

*Consideration of the Appropriation (2021-2022) Bill (No. X of 2021) was resumed.*

(11.36 a.m.)

*Vote 4-1 –Vice –Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology was called.*

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Under item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance* on page 134, can I have more details about how the Extra Assistance sum will be used?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Extra Assistance refers to salary compensation, allowances, provisions for salaries and passage benefits, cash in lieu of leave and end of year bonus. That is it.

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

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you. Can I move to page 135?

**The Chairperson:** No. 134. Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

**Mrs Foo-Kune Bacha:** 135...

**The Chairperson:** Next page! Page 135.

Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes, thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 135, Item 22030 – *Rent*, there is an amount of Rs33 m., there has been an increase of Rs8 m., can I have a detailed breakdown of this figure?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The rental building refers here to the rent for the Head Office at the MITD, the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division. So, we have additional parking spaces as well. So, we have for the Head Quarters at the MITD, the amount is Rs19,379,236. The Head Quarters again, at the MITD House, another area of 179 m<sup>2</sup> amounting to Rs691,529 and then, we have the Quality Assurance Inspection at the NPF Building, Level 10, Rs3,186,105; Phoenix Central, 588 m<sup>2</sup> Rs3,992,724 and for Phoenix Wear Ltd at Pont Fer, Phoenix Rs7,456,726.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Under item 26313.201 - *Current Grant icw Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education*, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister who are the beneficiaries of that grant and why has it been reduced from Rs15 m. to Rs10 m.?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Can you please give me the number of the item again?

**Mr Uteem:** Item 26313.201.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The grant refers to grants for parastatal bodies, MIE, MGI, MES and Open University of Mauritius and for the MIE, it is around Rs7 m., MGI Rs2 m., Open University of Mauritius Rs3.5 m., and Technical Education Centres Rs2.5 m.

For the MIE, it was for the payment of panel members, for the writing and vetting of textbooks, allowances to trainers, consultants for development of curriculum framework and development of material for training.

For the MGI, again payment to panel members, panel coordinators, administrative cost pertaining to the preparation of textbooks.

For the MES, development of materials for training, payment to resource persons for the preparation of papers.

Open University of Mauritius – development of resources for Grades 7-9 in connection with the students support platform.

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

**Ms Ramyad:** Under the same item, there is *the Extra-Budgetary Unit for the World Hindi Secretariat* which is decreasing from Rs10 m. to Rs6 m.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** This is because we still have funds from last year. Due to COVID, lots of programs could not be carried out.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Under item 22130, we have *Studies and Surveys*, there is allocation of Rs1 m. for next current year but afterwards we do not have any allocation. Which *Studies and Surveys* are we talking of? And why we do not have any provision for the years after?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** One second. We are in fact talking about studies and preliminary project preparation prior to the elaboration of the NYCBE and then the SEACMEQ final study. The SEACMEQ is the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality. It is the final stage of that study; that is why there is no further provision.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Page 135, adequately canvassed. Page 136.

*(Interruptions)* **The Chairperson:** Order!

*(Interruptions)* Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I need to ask questions. Ministers can circulate their long answers giving details. Circulate the answers. This is the procedure that we have been adopting over the years so that Members may have the opportunity to ask questions.

*(Interruptions)* **The**

**Chairperson:** Order!

**Mr Bhagwan:** So many answers have been circulated!

**Mr Assirvaden:** Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Chairperson:** Order! Let me handle the business of the House, please. I have a time allocated. I am handling it ...

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** I have been lifting my hand since...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Chairperson:** Order! Let's hear your point of order!

**Mr Assirvaden:** M. le président, on se retrouve dans ce côté de la Chambre, à l'arrière de vous. Derrière! Donc, vous ne nous voyez pas. Je demanderai à ce que et vous et la *Clerk*, puissent nous regarder de temps en temps pour qu'on puisse aussi savoir que nous demandons des questions. Merci.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Chairperson:** Order! Let me just reply to hon. Bhagwan. First of all, I take note of what you have said. I am sure the Minister will take note.

Hon. Patrick Assirvaden, surely I know the Clerk is trying her best to look at the back. I will try to look at the back as well.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Good. And with regard to time allocated, I am sure the Whip must have done the job. I am not going to get into that. Page 136. Hon. Quirin!

**Mr Quirin:** Yes, thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 136, Item 31112.002 - *Construction and Extension of Schools*, an amount of Rs90 m. was earmarked for 2020-2021. Can we know from that amount, how much has been spent and can we have a breakdown of the amount spent, please?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Of the total amount, Rs25,854,562 have been used and the sum goes to projects of construction and extension of schools. I have got here a list of schools where these projects have been undertaken. I can circulate the list. It is the list that I will circulate.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Mr Chairperson, Item 31112.402 - *Upgrading of Schools - Multipurpose Halls and Playfields in Secondary Schools*, Rs5 m. has been earmarked. Can we have details about which schools we are talking of?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Which number, please?

**Dr. Gungapersad:** 31112.402.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We have a list of schools that I am going to circulate.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. Hon. Assirvaden!

**Mr Assirvaden:** A l'item 26323.071 – *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority*, est-ce qu'on peut avoir des détails sur ce montant, je vois R 1.8 m. à R2.8m.?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We are dealing with Item 4-101.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Page 136.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It is on which page?

**The Chairperson:** Page 136, Item 26323.071.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Okay. *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority*, Item 26323.071?

**The Chairperson:** Yes.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Your question was with respect to?

**Mr Assirvaden:** Est-ce qu'on peut avoir des détails concernant les montants R 1.8 m. à R2.8m. ?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Okay. So, the extra budgetary unit for Early Childhood, we have Rs800,000 meant to meet the expenses in connection with the purchase of Office and IT equipment for the head office and Rs1 m. for the purchase of equipment and furniture for the authority.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dhunoo!

**Mr Dhunoo:** Item 31112.402 – *Upgrading of Schools - Multipurpose Halls and Playfields in Secondary Schools*, an amount of Rs5 m. has been earmarked. May we know the list of schools being upgraded and if a contract has been allocated? If yes, who are the contractors?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I am tabling the list of schools and the list of contractors as well.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. I will take one more. Hon. Ramful!

**Mr Ramful:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 21110.005 – *Extra Assistance*, can I have some details about this?

*(Interruptions)* At the

bottom of the page, Primary Education!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We are moving to primary. The Extra Assistance is meant for the payment in respect of the Project Manager for ZEP and for supply teachers and ICT Support Officers.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Page 137, hon. Juman!

**Mr Juman:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. With regard to Item 22030 – *Rent*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us details about the rent and the rental agreement?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Item 22030. *It is not on page 136.*

**Mr Juman:** Page 137.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Which Item?

**Mr Juman:** 22030.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** For the rent, we have rental of building, rental of parking slots and rental of facilities for events. I am going to table the list and the amount spent.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dr. Boolell!

**Dr. Boolell:** On page 137?

**The Chairperson:** 137, that is correct.

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you, very much. Item 22070 – *Cleaning Services*, I see a substantial increase from last year's amount which was budgeted to be Rs77 m. to Rs90 m. for this Financial Year 2021-2022. Can I ask the hon. Vice- Prime Minister to give us a breakdown in respect of contract allocated to whom and how are the services being delivered?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The provisions are made for the cleaning of school premises, school compounds which include the whole school, the veranda, lawn-mowing, truncating of trees, high-water pressure cleaning etc. and the list of contractors will be tabled.

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

**Mr Ameer Meea:** On page 137, Item 22030.007 – *Rental of Line for Network Service*, can I ask the Vice Prime Minister, it is in relation to what line for network services and also the percentage of schools that are connected to this network?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The Rental for line of network services is meant for paying the rental for all the primary schools. It covers all the primary schools in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Do you have the actual figure of how many schools are already connected to this network?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** All schools.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Mrs Tour!

**Mrs Tour:** Item 28212.004 – *Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project*, there is a decrease of Rs5 m. May we have details of the decrease?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Well, it is probably because there are two schools which are getting hot meals. The reduction is based on the actual trend in the number of students in the schools, a change in the school population.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. David, last one.

**Mr David:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 137, Item 22090 – *Security*, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister the reason behind the significant increase from Rs47 m. to Rs76 m. and as well, may I have the name of the security services providers? Thank You.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** So, the extra amount refers to the need to provide security services at night in primary schools because of the presence of the tablets and all, we are requiring more security.

**The Chairperson:** Page 138, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

**Mrs Navarre-Marie:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.823 – *Acquisition of Equipment for Early Digital Learning Programme*, can we know for which grade we are asked to vote a sum of Rs230 m.? Can we know which grades are concerned and whether there have been late deliveries in tablets and also what is the situation regarding distribution of tablets in schools?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We are talking about Grade 5 and the tablets have been distributed in all schools. There is no delay as such. The tablets were present in class. The slight delay noted initially was due to the class management system but the tablets were there and were being used in class.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Armance!

**Mr Armance:** Under the same item hon. Minister, I can see there was a sum of Rs60 m. voted last year, may we have the details on how was it spent, what amount has been spent?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The Rs60 m. was meant for the acquisition of equipment for the early digital learning programme, so, it was an amount left that was used in the next Budget.

**Mr Armance:** How much has been spent?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** All of it.

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

**Ms Ramyad:** For Item 22900.935 – *Summer/Winter School Programme*, there is a new allocation of Rs4 m. Can we know the details about what it consists of?

**The Chairperson:** Repeat the number please. Are you on page 138?

**Ms Ramyad:** No. On page 137.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** What is the number please?

**Ms Ramyad:** Item 22900.935.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The Summer/Winter School Programmes are meant for the expenses for co-curricular activities carried out during vacation in selected schools. Provision has been made for the payment allowance for the personnel involved, the meals and the school materials, etc.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha! We are on page 138 right now.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120.007 – *Fees for Training of which Healthy and Supportive School Environment Initiatives*, we have a sum of R1 m. earmarked for this item as from next year, can we have some more details about this?

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, would you table it at a later stage?



**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Can we have another question in the meantime? *C'est à la page 138 que nous sommes là?*

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Yeung Sik Yuen!

**Mr Yeung Sik Yuen:** Page 137.

**The Chairperson:** Pardon? We are already on page 138, follow your page. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Page 138, item 31122.823 – Acquisition of Equipment for Early Digital Learning Programme, there is a budget for Rs230 m., will the Minister explain to us what will be acquired and who has been awarded the contract and for which grade are we talking of?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The funds will be utilised to meet the hardware costs for EDLP in terms of devices, racks and electrical installations for Grade 5.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. We are moving to page 139. Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 31122.002 – Construction and Extension of Schools, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister circulate the list of all the schools that are going to be constructed and extended together with the contract value and if the contract has already been allotted, the name of the contractor?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I will circulate the whole list with the name of contractors.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Assirvaden!

**Mr Assirvaden:** Thanks, Mr Chairperson. Item 28212.012- *S.C and H.S.C Examination Fees*, le ministre peut nous dire le pourquoi dans la colonne 2020/2021, c'est nil?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** *Parce que les examens ont été renvoyés pour 2021.*

**Mr Assirvaden:** *Donc l'argent n'a pas été utilisé?*

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** *L'argent a été utilisé cette année-ci.*

**Mr Assirvaden:** Okay.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. R. Duval!

**Mr R. Duval:** Item 28211.041 - *Mauritius Secondary School Sports Association (MSSSA)*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give the breakdown and the amount of money disbursed?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The amount of fund going to non-profit institution is Rs19.000,019.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Bhagwan!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Item 28212.012 - *S.C and H.S.C Examination Fees*, can we have a breakdown between S.C and H.S.C, just to have an idea and how many students are concerned for the financial year 2021/2022?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The fees were meant for a total number of 19,628 students and this comprises both S.C and H.S.C students and the total amount spent is Rs296,303.446.

**Mr Chairperson:** Hon. Dhunoo!

**Mr Dhunoo:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.802 - *Other Machinery and Equipment – Acquisition of IT equipment of which Online Digital Pedagogy (Virtual Classroom)*, the sum has increased from Rs5 m. to Rs11 m., can we have a breakdown and the name of the contractor?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The IT equipment refers to equipment for Online Digital Pedagogy and of this, 256,000 only have been utilised as at date.

**The Chairperson:** Last question! Hon. Dr. Boolell!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 26323.123 – *Mahatma Gandhi Institute*, I take note of a substantial increase in relation to the budget earmarked for the financial year 2021/2022 from Rs6 m. to Rs16 m., can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister enlighten the House as to how this sum is going to be spent and whether there is any allocation of contract to be awarded and if so to whom? Thank you.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** This is meant for electrical works, renovation and lighting and electrical system of the MGI auditorium, the furniture, equipment, acquisition of vehicles and also renovation of the green room. I guess the contract has already been allocated so I will ask for the contractor's name and I will inform the House.

**The Chairperson:** Page 140. Hon. Ms. Bérenger!

**Ms Bérenger:** Thank you. Item 31112.042 – *Construction of Building – Regional Training Centre at Beau Vallon*, can we have more details about this project, when it will be completed and the name of the company to whom the contract has been allocated, please?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The contract has not yet been allocated. We are still at design stage. The project value is Rs219 m. but the contract has not been awarded yet.

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

**Ms Ramyad:** On page 140, Item 28211.023 – *Special Education Needs Schools*. There is a budget allocation of Rs137 m. Can we know the details about the schools which are getting these allocations?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It is a contribution going for the salaries of the staff: the managers, teachers, carers and all the workers, as well as psychologists and occupational therapists. A basic of per capita grant amounting to Rs6,000 per child; a yearly per capita grant amounting to Rs5,200, which covers the cost of teaching aids, etc., and a supplementary feeding programme of Rs75 per meal per day for each learner.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Lobine!

**Mr Lobine:** Yes, thank you, Mr Chairperson. It is with regard to page 139 Item 26313.122 – *Rabindranath Tagore Institute*. Can we know why there has been a reduction in the budget being allocated to that Institute?

**The Chairperson:** You should follow the page. It is page 140. Hon. Ramful!

**Mr Ramful:** Item 31112.042 – *Construction of Building - Regional Training Centre at Beau Vallon*. Can we know exactly the location of the project? Is it going to be on the football pitch of Beau Vallon?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I think that we have already earmarked an area for the building and another plot for the football pitch; half of it.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Armance!

**Mr Armance:** Under Item 28211.023 – *Special Education Needs School*, can I know what amount has been disbursed out of the Rs125 m. and if the hon. Minister can table a list of schools that beneficiate from this budget?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** This whole amount is disbursed to the schools, and I am going to table a list of the SEN schools. There are around 54 SEN schools.

**The Chairperson:** We will take a last question. Hon. Quirin! No? Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22120.043 – *Fees for Adaptation of Textbooks*. May we have an idea what exactly we are talking of, adaptation of textbooks?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It is an adaptation of textbooks –

- (a) for students with special education needs, those with visual impairment; Grade 4 and Grade 6;
- (b) Adaptation of primary schools readiness;
- (c) Grade 1, mathematics for intellectually impaired students, for all autistic students;
- (d) exemplary mathematics Grade 1 chapter;
- (e) teachers' information book for intellectual disability and autism, and (f) videos as support material work.

**The Chairperson:** We have passed the time for page 140. Page 141! Hon. Bodha!

**Mr Bodha:** I have a question on page 140.

**The Chairperson:** Okay, fair enough. We have passed the time.

**Mr Bodha:** My question is very simple. It is the number of students for special education needs...

**The Chairperson:** Okay, I will give you this one, exceptionally.

**Mr Bodha:** ...the number of students who are undergoing special education needs in Mauritius.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It is 2,377.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Page 141. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28212.020 – *Student Scholarship Schemes for Vulnerable Households*. I find that there has been a massive drop from Rs8 m. to Rs3 m. in the budget allocation for these kids. Will the hon. Minister explain why?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It is most probably due to the fact that the family income is not according to the eligibility criteria set.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.821 – *Acquisition of Braille PC/Notebook*. Can the hon. Minister inform the House of the number of students eligible for the Braille PC/Notebook?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I will find the number and give it to the hon. Member.

**The Chairperson:** Next question, hon. Armance! Next question, not next page. Page 141!

**Mr Armance:** On Item 31122.821 – *Acquisition of Braille PC/Notebook*. Can the hon. Minister table the list of the beneficiaries?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** There are 12 beneficiaries of the Braille PC/Notebook, but I don't have the names. So, I will just give the hon. Member the number. I don't think we can give the names of these children.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28212.010 – *Postgraduate Scholarship Schemes (b) Post graduate scheme for Laureates*. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister if she has the figures of the laureates that actually come back to Mauritius?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I will table it.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Bodha!

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I would like to refer to Item 28212.011 – *State of Mauritius/Additional Scholarships*. Can we have the number of additional scholarships and the selected areas of studies, please?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** This will be tabled, Mr Chairperson.

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you.

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

**Ms Ramyad:** Under Item 31112.002 – *Construction and Extension of Schools - Setting up of SEN Resource and Development Units in 5 Primary Schools*, may we know the five primary schools earmarked?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Rose Belle, Curepipe, Quatre Bornes, Port Louis and Black River. These schools have not been identified yet.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Ms J. Bérenger! Last question on page 141.

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Thank you. Item 31122.999 – *Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment*. Can we have a breakdown of those machinery and equipment, please?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We are referring here to acquisition of Braille PCs and notebooks.

**The Chairperson:** You shall table?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** For other machinery and all, we are referring to Braille PCs.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. Page 142. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

**Dr. Boolell:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission (iv) Africa scholarships*, I see that the budget earmarked has been reduced by Rs2 m. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister the number scholarships awarded and how many students have taken advantage of this facility being extended by the Government of Mauritius?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Since the start of the programme, 99 students have benefited from it.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Lobine!

**Mr Lobine:** Under *Sub-Head 4-108 – Tertiary Education, Recurrent Expenditure*, item 22130 – *Studies and Surveys*, may we have details as to the studies and surveys that have been conducted?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The studies and surveys refer to an EU funded study on the action plan of polytechnics.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Mrs Navarre Marie!

**Mrs Navarre Marie:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission (HEC)*, could we know who heads that Commission, please?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Dr. Mohee.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dhunoo!

**Mr Dhunoo:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 28212.032 – *Transfers to Households – Scholarship Scheme to Students with Disabilities*, I see that there has been a decrease of Rs1.8 m. Can we know why?

**The Chairperson:** Give your item number again! Which page are you?

**Mr Dhunoo:** Page 142.

**The Chairperson:** Give the detailed item properly!

**Mr Dhunoo:** 0.32, the first page, Scholarship Scheme to Students with Disabilities.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We advertise for this scholarship every year and the number of people who are eligible get the scholarship, and the budget is accordingly decided upon.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Bodha!

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On top of the page, item 26 – *Capital Expenditure, 26323.125 – Extra-Budgetary Units – Mauritius Institute of Education*. The budget moves from Rs16 m. to Rs29,750,000. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to explain how this new budget has increased?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I have the question again, please?

**Mr Bodha:** Yes, it is item Capital Expenditure 26323.125 – *Extra-Budgetary Units – Mauritius Institute of Education*. The budget moves from Rs16 m. to Rs29,750,000. If we could get an explanation, please.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The increase in provision is due to the refurbishment of the external ends of the MIE Tower, the ERP Financial System and the renovation works at the MIE canteen.

**The Chairperson:** I can take only one last question. Hon. Ms Ramyad!

**Ms Ramyad:** Under the item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission –(a) (v) Research Fund*, Rs20 m. has been reduced to Rs15 m. May we know how the research fund has been used, for which researches in 2020/2021?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I can table the list of the research carried out and I must say that the payment for research goes stepwise. So, once the project has been approved, every year there is a certain amount that is provided for that particular research. So, that is why there is a discrepancy.

I am going to table the list of projects of research work being carried out.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Now, page 143. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** At page 143, under Item 26313.150 – *Higher Education Commission – (d) Université Des Mascareignes – Scholarship (Robotics and Artificial Intelligence)*, there is provision for Rs5 m. May we know – for University of Mascareignes I am talking – what are the criteria and the number of students who will benefit from these scholarships?

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dr. Gungapersad, I am minded to tell you these are policy decisions; what kind of criteria. I will take a better question.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We will submit the criteria.

**The Chairperson:** Would you reply VPM?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I am going to table it.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Quirin!

**Mr Quirin:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

**The Chairperson:** Come into agreement the two of you. Who is going to talk.

**Mr Quirin:** I was before him.

**The Chairperson:** You were first, I know!

**Mr Quirin:** Page 143, Capital Expenditure. Item 26323.150 – *Extra-Budgetary Units – Higher Education Commission – (g) Open University of Mauritius*. I see that the amount earmarked for this Financial Year with regard to the grant allocated to Open University of Mauritius, has been reduced. Can we know the reason for that decrease, please?



**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Open University of Mauritius has a large number of students and derives revenue from the students admitted there. The number of students is extremely high. There are students who are mature students and they pay for that.

**The Chairperson:** I will take one from hon. Bhagwan, and then come to you, hon. Osman Mahomed, obviously.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Page 143, item 28211.071 – *Transfers to Non-Profit Institutions – Higher Education Advisory Council*, can we know the composition of the Council and who are the members?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** This Council has not been set up yet.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** I refer the hon. Minister to item 26313.150 – *ExtraBudgetary Units – Higher Education Commission – (b) University of Mauritius, (c) University of Technology, Mauritius*, at the top of the page for which I see there is an appreciable increase in the next year, which is good. Can I ask the hon. Minister, whether this fund comprises a specific item to enhance the rank of the University of Mauritius, so as to enhance the employability of our young graduates, should they go to International Market tomorrow? Because University of Mauritius is today ranked 2,276<sup>th</sup> and University of Technology, Mauritius is 6,949<sup>th</sup>.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We are, today, Mr Chairperson, talking about the funding not the projects of the University.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Just be reminded about not putting questions on policy decisions. Hon. Dhunoo, then I will come to you, hon. Ameer Meea. Do not get impatient, I will come to you.

**Mr Dhunoo:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under item 26313.151 – *Quality Assurance Authority* on page 143, it seems that the amount estimated last year was Rs5 m. Now, it seems to be tripled, Rs12.5 m., now Rs15 m. Can we know why this increase?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The Quality Assurance Authority has been set up. Now, we are going for the recruitment of the officers and cadres there, so, obviously, the funding has increased.

**The Chairperson:** Last question, hon. Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes, page 143, item 26323.150 – (c) *University of Technology, Mauritius*. Since we are on figures, the amount has been doubled this year, Rs35 m. to Rs70 m. May we know what is the reason for such an increase?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The grant to the universities are determined by the Higher Education Commission depending on the projects to be implemented. So, most probably for the University of Technology, they have a number of additional courses being offered, and so on so forth; so recruitment of staff as well.

**The Chairperson:** I can squeeze a last question, hon. Doolub!

**Mr Doolub:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26323.143 – *Grants – Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd*. The grant has increased from Rs10 m. to Rs26 m. Can we have the reasons thereof?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Polytechnics Mauritius is coming with 23 additional courses and, therefore, this amount will go for the recruitment of resource persons.

**The Chairperson:** Page 144! Hon. Dr. Gungpersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31132.801 – *Intangible Fixed Assets – Acquisition of Software*. May we have an idea about which software we are talking?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** This is required for the purchase of software for creating marketing materials to be used by the High Education Desk.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. I do not see more hands raised. Page 147, hon. Ms Ramyad!

**Ms Ramyad:** For Item 37 - *Primary School Educator* in 2020-2021, there were 3,177 funded posts but this year we see a decrease to 2959 posts, can we know the details for such a decrease?

**The Chairperson:** Can you repeat the Item Number, please!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** There have been a number of promotions, educators have been promoted to the position of Deputy Head Teachers and Head Teachers; normally we have to replace them as well.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. Page 147, hon. Bodha!

**Mr Bodha:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. It is at Item 45 - *Support Teacher*, the number has been multiplied by 2; from 235 to 470, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us an idea why?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** The fact that we are extending the support to students in high grades as well, initially we started with Grades one and two, we want, at least, two support teachers per school. So, the number has been increased.

**The Chairperson:** I move to Page 148. No hands raised! Page 149, hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Page 149, Item 33 – *Rector*, there is going to be an increase from 47 rectors to 63. Does that mean that there is a project to construct more schools?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** We have already 63 Secondary Schools, there were some people on actingship, now they are going to be recruited on a permanent basis.

**The Chairperson:** Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, Mr Chairperson. I think the hon. Minister mentioned the number of Secondary Schools we have. Now, why the number of senior educator for secondary does not tally with the number of secondary schools that we have?

**The Chairperson:** No, these are policy decisions.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** It depends on the school population as well.

**The Chairperson:** Anyone on page 149? Page 150, hon. Uteem!

**Mr Uteem:** Item 74 - *General Worker*, there is a reduction from 416 to 357, may we know why?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Because a number of activities have been carried out by Mauri Facilities.

**The Chairperson:** Page 150, nobody else! Page 151!

*Vote 4-1 Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Rs17,000,000,000) was, on question put, agreed to.*