

Minister's Statements and Speeches

PUBLIC BILL

THE APPROPRIATION (2022-2023) BILL 2022

(NO. IX OF 2022)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(20.06.2022)

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: Page 141, Item 21110.005 - *Extra Assistance*. I will request the hon. Vice Prime Minister to give complete details as to who the beneficiaries are and the pay package for each one of them.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, Extra Assistance refers to payment of salaries, passage benefits and gratuity of 5 advisors, increase is due to revision in salaries following implementation of the PRB Report. For the advisers, they are –

- (a) Mr Hiranand Boolchand Dansinghani;
- (b) Mrs Savitri Dookhee;
- (c) Mr Suresh Munbodh;
- (d) Mr Elvissen Adaken, and
- (e) Mrs Lucinda Roberts - Holmes

And the sum that we have for each one of them –

- (a) Mr Dansinghani – the basic salary is Rs103,875;
- (b) Mrs Savitri Dookhee – Rs73,800;
- (c) Mr Munbodh – Rs103,875;

(d) Mrs Holmes – Rs110,125; (e) Mr Adaken – Rs66,200.

The Chairperson: Page 141, hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. *Sub Head 4-107- Scholarships and Capacity Building-* There is an increase in the amount. Can I have some details on same?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can I have the number of the Vote, please?

Ms Tour: The Sub Head 4-107.

The Chairperson: Make sure your question is appropriate hon. Ms Tour!

So, we move on page 141, hon. Dr. Boolell?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 20 – *Allowance to Minister*. Not that the Minister does not deserve her allowance but can I call upon the hon. Minister...?

The Chairperson: No, this is not, we are on ...

Dr. Boolell: I have the right to.

The Chairperson: No, Committee of Supply *sa*.

Dr. Boolell: Oh, but still you know, allowance to Minister. I have a right to put the specific question to the hon. Minister in relation to alleged leakage of exams. Yes of exams paper. No it is relevant.

The Chairperson: Let us agree.

Dr. Boolell: I will ask the hon. Minister to give us, enlighten us and to be focus in relation to the specific question I have asked on the alleged...

The Chairperson: You are taking the time of the House!

Dr. Boolell: On the alleged leakage of exam papers.

The Chairperson: Come with a PQ! Let me take somebody else. Page 142, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Let us agree to disagree!

Mr Bhagwan: Item 22900.999 – *Expenses icw National Examination Board* - Rs5 m. Can we have some indication whether the Board has been set up and who are the members chairing that Board? Are we paying them?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The Board has not been set up yet.

The Chairperson: You have the reply?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: *J'ai répondu.* The National Examination Board has not been set up yet, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: So, we move on. Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 142, Item 22120.008 - *Fees to Consultant (Transaction Advisor for PPP Projects)*. There is a budgeted amount of Rs30 m. May we have more details please as to the Transaction Adviser?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The provision has been made for the recruitment of Consultants, Transaction Advisers for six Public-Private Partnership projects. I will tell you which projects we are talking about. It is the University of Technology. An agreement has already been signed with Landscape for 10 arpents on 05 November. It is for the project of coming up with an auditorium and students hostel, national research and education network, research centre for students, one stop shop centre and a resource centre for student enterprise and innovation centre, a language centre, amongst others. Construction is tentatively expected to be completed in May 2026. Not yet recruited.

The Chairperson: Page 142, hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under *Item 22130 - Studies and Surveys*, can the hon. Minister provide further details about which studies and surveys? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: So far, Mr Chairperson, the surveys are for four studies that have been carried out on around Grade 6 pupils. And then, we are talking about studies and surveys for consultations for the SACMEQ Project and the final study of the SACMEQ Project is expected to be over by June 2022.

The Chairperson: Page 142, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 142 Item 22900.801 - *Health and Wellness Activities (a) Drug Use Prevention (Rebound) Programme*, a sum of Rs4 m. is

earmarked for 2022-2023. Can the hon. Minister give us some details regarding this programme?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, we have got the Drug Use Prevention (Rebound) Programme. The provision will cover the fees for Consultants, accommodation costs, contextualisation of the Programme, drafting workshop, validation workshop, Training for Trainers workshop, and printing of materials and resources. We have a number of projects coming under this. This is the Drug Use Prevention (Rebound) Programme. We are other programmes for health information, education and communication materials as well.

The Chairperson: Page 142, hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Items 22900.955 – *Gender Mainstreaming* and 22900.995 – *Expenses icw Akademi Kreol Repiblik Moris*. Can I have some details about these two items please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, we are referring to the development of a gender policy at the Ministry and studies to determine factors that should be addressed to increase performance of boys at schools with a view to come up with appropriate interventions. Universities and institutions of higher learning and other training institutions also to develop their own gender policy statements.

The Chairperson: Page 142, hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 142, Item 22900.922 *Conferences/Seminars/Workshops (a) Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) 2022 Triennale Conference*. Will the Minister give more details regarding this item?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, Government has agreed to the request of ADEA to host the ADEA Triennale 2022 on education and training in October 2022. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa, a Pan-African Organisation regrouping 54 Ministers of Education in Africa will be holding a global event in October this year. It is going to be a three-day conference which will be held in hybrid mode targeting around 600 participants; 300 in person and 300 virtually.

The Chairperson: Page 142, hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Assirvaden: A la page 142, Madame, à l’item 22900.995 – *Expenses icw Akademi Kreol Repiblik Moris*. Est-ce qu’on peut avoir des renseignements sur ce *Akademi Kreol Repiblik Moris* pour R 1.2 millions ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are talking about the setting up an operationalisation of a *Commission terminologie* with the aim to develop further autography, grammar, lexicon usage and norms of the *Kreol Morisien* as a standard language.

The Chairperson: Page 142, hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Item 22120.024 – *Capacity Building Programme*. Can we have some details on the Rs4 m. earmarked?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are talking of a provision made for the Academy for Educational Professional. It is, in fact, for the Resource Persons to be recruited for the process and we have Training Coordinators as well and Conveners. Other costs are related to logistics and the use of technology for blended approach.

The Chairperson: Page 143, hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112.402 - *Upgrading of Schools - Multipurpose Halls and Playfields in Secondary Schools*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister provide more details on this?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are referring to projects to be carried out at Pailles SSS, Rivière du Rempart SSS, GMD Atchia SSS, John Kennedy College, Bon Accueil SSS and Quartier Militaire SSS.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Mr Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under the Item 26313.071 -*Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (c) Private Pre-Primary Schools*. With respect to grants to private pre-primary schools, may I obtain from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister a list of the pre-primary schools that will benefit from this grant and confirmation that all of them have the necessary licences and fire clearances?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the grants are provided solely to registered pre-primary schools and we have 518 pre-primary schools and they are all covered.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Mr Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 31112.002 - *Construction and Extension of Schools*, may we have more details as to the number of schools that would be involved in this construction and extension programme?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are referring here to construction and extension of schools at Mount Ory Government School for a pre-primary unit, Sir Anerood Jugnauth Government School, again for a pre-primary unit; construction of a pre-primary school in M. Bérenger Government School for which the bidding documents are ready for launching.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Mr Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 143, Item *31112.002 Construction and Extension of Schools*, can we know if the schools have already been identified and can we have the names of these schools?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The hon. Member would note that I have just given the names of the schools and the last one is Burrenchobay Government School.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Already canvassed. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha!

Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha: Thank you, Chairperson. Item *31112.401 -Upgrading of Office Buildings*, can we know what office buildings are being upgraded?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is, in fact, the upgrading of office buildings and we are talking about the buildings of the ...

The Chairperson: Maybe you can circulate the reply.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I will circulate.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: At page 143, Item *26313.201 - Current Grant icw Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education*, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister explain how this Rs10 m. will be used for that purpose?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, yesterday I have mentioned while we have reached another step in our educational reform and we are coming up now with the technical and technology stream and we will be working towards this.

The Chairperson: Page 143, hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Thank you, Chairperson. Item *28211.042 - Transfer Youth Club*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us more details about the Transfer Youth Club? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The transfers to non-profit institutions refer to health clubs, youth clubs and other clubs as well as a transfer grant to secondary schools for UNESCO clubs and the amount of Rs210,000 for Financial Year 2021-2022 has not been spent because of COVID-19 and the amount has been reduced this year for only Rs100,000.

The Chairperson: Page 143, hon. Wochit!

Mr Wochit: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.099 - *World Hindi Secretariat*, can we know why this budget has been decreased compared to last year?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Again, Mr Chairperson, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, less activities have been carried out and there are savings. There is a slight decrease in the budget and this can be explained by most of the activities being carried out online due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: Page 143, Mr Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Chairperson. Under Item 26313.071 - *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (d) Continuous Capacity Development Programme*, can the hon. VicePrime Minister inform the House how many people have been trained under this programme?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, most of the officers in the various schools go for training; we do not have the exact figure but as and when required, depending upon the requirements of the school, training is carried out.

The Chairperson: Page 144, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 22090 – *Security*, there is always controversy of allocation of tender to security companies; can we be enlightened as to which companies have been allocated this contract, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the security services are RSL Security Services Ltd and the funds will be used for the provision of night security services in 216 primary schools, and 180 schools by RSL and the other schools will be covered by Rapid Security Services Ltd.

So, the name of the contractors, I have just mentioned, RSL and Rapid Security Services; there are two of them. The contract value for the schools is Rs1.9 m. for 23 primary schools and Rs5.1 m. for 43 primary schools.

The Chairperson: Page 144, hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. At page 144, under Item 22120.025 - *Fees to Oriental Language Teachers*, may we be provided with the number of Oriental language teachers currently and if the Vice-Prime Minister could table the number of teachers per Oriental language?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We have, Mr Chairperson, 731 evening schools and 1,579 teachers. The breakdown for Teachers of Oriental Languages –

- Hindi – 703;
- Urdu – 417;
- Tamil – 118;
- Telegu – 47;
- Modern Chinese – 12;
- Marathi – 34;
- Arabic – 247;
- Sanskrit – 1.

The Chairperson: Page144. Hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900.996 - *Natation Scolaire Programme*, an amount of Rs8 m. is earmarked for 2022-2023. Can we know what are the schools concerned with this programme and how is this amount of Rs8 m. going to be spent?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, as from this year, all schools will be concerned, all primary schools. The amount is disbursed for the transport of students as well as for the coaches, who are helping out, coaches from the Mauritius Sports Council.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Page 144, last line, Item 26313.034 - *Mauritius Examinations Syndicate*, we are being asked to vote Rs125 m. Can we have an idea of the composition of the Board, who is chairing the Board, the amount paid to them, and whether, it is the same Board which is responsible for the PSAC; whether it is that institution and the composition of the Board?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Yes, Mr Chairperson, I will table the composition of the Board. The payment is as per the PRB, Rs934.

Mr Bhagwan: Who is chairing the Board?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is the SCE of the Ministry of Education.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you. Item 22070 - *Cleaning Services*, there is, as we see, a drastic fall in the Budget, from Rs90 m. to Rs7.5 m. Will that not negatively impact on the quality of services and the health of the children?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, in fact, the decrease is arising because the cleaning services will be provided by Mauri-Facilities Management Co. Ltd and the payment will be met under the Vote of the Ministry of Finance.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.034 - *Mauritius Examinations Syndicate*, can the hon. Vice Prime Minister tell us the number of staff attached to the MES. How many are suspended and if possible provide the reason?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, I can say that for the time being there is one person suspended at the MES.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Hon. Vice Prime Minister, we have the Item 21 - *Compensation of Employees*, may I know if the sum includes the item Discipline Assistant formerly known as *Surveillant* because provision was made to recruit 257 Discipline Assistants in 2021-2022, but we do not note in 2022-2023?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The assistants have not been recruited yet, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

Mrs Mayotte: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 22900.996 - *Natation Scolaire Programme*, peut-on savoir pourquoi il y a une baisse dans le budget alloué, s'il vous plait ?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the current school year has been extended till next year. So, we are providing for only part of the year.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under Item 22030.007 *Rent of which Rental of Line for Network Services*, there is an amount of Rs35 m. budgeted this year and there was Rs32 m. last year. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, whether today, all of our primary schools are fully equipped with Wi-Fi?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Yes, Mr Chairperson, this is so.

The Chairperson: Page 144. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22030 – *Rent*, can the hon. Vice Prime Minister provide the information as to which buildings are concerned and who are renting the buildings?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is provision for payment of rental for buildings, parking slots and other events required. We have the MITD Building for which rent is paid. Then, we have houses for the Chinese voluntary teachers who come over to Mauritius for primary schools. Then, we have Ken Lee Building, Port Louis, the Mutual Aid Building and Zone 1 Stores in Port Louis. We have as well in Zone 3, Gopal Building and in Zone 4 Ebène Heights.

The Chairperson: Page 145. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Item 28211.060 - *RCEA Schools (Operation Grant) of which Maintenance of Toilets & Classrooms*, can I ask the hon. Vice Prime Minister to provide the list of schools? Because for example, in my Constituency, in Raoul Rivet Government School, there is a serious problem in the toilets of that school having been reported time and again.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, all our schools are included in this list. And we have here for RCEA Schools Rs7 m. which is provided for the cleaning of toilets.

The Chairperson: Page 145. Hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.823 - *Acquisition of Equipment for Early Digital Learning Programme*, there is an increase in the budget. May we know the reason for this increase?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, this is for the provision of tablets to Grade 6 students next year.

The Chairperson: Page 145. Hon. Mr R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On page 145, Item 28212.004 - *Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project*, can the hon. Vice Prime Minister explain why there has been an increase of Rs8 m. on this item?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is because we have included more schools and the amount paid for the meals has increased also.

The Chairperson: Page 145. Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. On the same Item 28212.004 *Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project*, hon. Vice Prime Minister, do we get any support also from the World Food Programme in respect of cash and grant?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, Mr Chairperson, I do not think it is so.

Dr. Boolell: No support from the World Food Programme?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, Mr Chairperson.

The Chairperson: Page 145. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 145, Item 31112.402 - *Upgrading of Schools*, will the hon. Vice Prime Minister table the complete list of schools and the nature of work for the upgrading of these different schools? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It will be done, Mr Chairperson. We shall table the list.

The Chairperson: Page 145. Hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under same Item 31112.002 - *Construction and Extension of Schools*, can the Minister give the list of schools and the contractors which have been allocated for these projects?

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

The Chairperson: Page 145, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you. Items 31122.802 and .823 - *Acquisition of IT Equipment and Acquisition of Equipment for Early Digital Learning Programme*, could we know the name of the supplier for the IT Equipment and whether any tender was launched?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, for all IT equipment, tenders are normally launched, and I believe this must be the case for this as well. As for the acquisition of equipment for early Digital Learning Programme, we have an agreement with the Government of India through one organisation under the Ministry of Education in India EdCIL, they are the one providing. Now, I will find out for the name for the contractors that are supplying.

The Chairperson: Page 145, hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. On the same Item with regards to *Acquisition of Equipment for Early Digital Learning Programme*, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister how many students are concerned by this programme?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It concerns all primary school students. We have completed for Grades 1 to 5 and we are embarking on the project for Grade 6 this year.

The Chairperson: Page 145, hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 145, Item 21110.005 - *Extra Assistance*, Rs85 m. has been earmarked. Will the hon. Minister give us the details regarding how this sum of money will be spent?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, extra assistance refers to the payment of allowances made to Supply Teachers and to some General Workers who are on contract, those who are the ex-PTA General Workers, and for cash in lieu of leave, and also for the payment of end of year bonus. Increase is due to the revision of salaries.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 28212.012 - *S.C and H.S.C Examination Fees*, there is a sharp drop from Rs200 m. being provided for this financial year as compared to last year, it was Rs290 m. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister why is that so?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, this year, the exams have been postponed to November. So, part of the students have been taking exams in June and the remaining amount for the next examinations. They already have savings.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 146, Item 26313.123 - *Mahatma Gandhi Institute*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister provide us details as to why there is such a big increase in the budgetary provision?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, this would be due to the PRB, and the increase in salaries as a result of PRB.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Under Items 22070 and 22090 - *Cleaning Services and Security*, this is quite a huge amount. Can the hon. Minister give us some details about it?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, there is a decrease in provision, cleaning of schools will henceforth be provided by Mauri-Facilities which is an exempt organisation for the procurement of cleaning services. Payment for cleaning services provided by Mauri-Facilities will be under the vote of the Ministry of Finance.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Ms Tour!

Ms Tour: Item 22120 – *Fees of which Healthy and Supportive School Environment Initiatives*, may we know the nature of those initiatives?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the provision has been made for the grant to school health clubs, Rs5,000 per school. We have 69 State Secondary Schools and 79 Private Secondary Schools. We have to develop the school health clubs and also for the promotion of the well-being of students.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Grants being allocated to Private Secondary School Education Authority, I refer to Item 26313.133 - *PSEA - Performance Grant to Private Secondary Schools*. If the Minister could enlighten us as to the specific criteria, how this grant is allocated which in itself is a good thing?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the performance grant aims at rewarding schools for achieving relevant performance targets and the performance grant is an element of

the comprehensive grant formula. It is for payment at rewarding academic performance and improving performance at SC and HSC Examinations, for achievement in sports competition and also participation in extra-curricular activities.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Last items on that page, Items 31112.002 and .402 - *Construction and Extension of Schools and Upgrading of Schools*, can the hon. Vice Prime Minister table a list of all the Secondary Schools which has been constructed or extended or upgraded and the amount spent on the schools?

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

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 146, Item 26323.073 – *Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA)*, there is a sharp drop in the amount voted for this year and still more for next year, may we know why is it so?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the provision had been made for the upgrading of IT infrastructure, including upgrade of software, servers and security licenses. This has already been done and there is only a small amount left to be done. That is why.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Last line, Item 31112 .402 – *Upgrading of Schools*, can the Minister inform the House whether schools in Constituency No. 20 is on the list of the coming financial year for upgrading, especially in the village of Petite Rivière and Albion?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The list of schools will be tabled. I can see Constituency No.

20. So, I am tabling the list and you will be able to see.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Under same item, since the hon. Vice Prime Minister will be tabling the list, I wanted to know if it includes school from Curepipe?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I am just tabling the list.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Mrs Navarre Marie.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, thank you! Item 26323.027 – *Mauritius Examination*

Syndicate, we are asked to vote a sum of Rs7 m., could we know what this amount is meant for?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the amount is meant for consultancy services, consultancy fees for infrastructural works, servers at the MES and IT equipment, printing equipment and an MES vehicle.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Item 28211.041 – *Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association (MSSSA)*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us a breakdown and indicate the activities organised by the MSSSA, during the last financial year?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The MSSSA organises nine sports disciplines at regional and national level annually, and the promotion of individual sports competition like table tennis, badminton, athletics are also carried out. But, because of the sanitary measures this year, there was a reduction in the number of activities performed.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Ms J. Bérenger.

Ms J. Bérenger: Item 22090 – *Security*, may we know who are the beneficiaries, please?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: So, again, the contracts are with existing providers and the providers are RSL Security Services and Top Security Services Ltd.

The Chairperson: Page 146, hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 22900.802 – *Other goods and services, Expenses in connection with Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)*, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give more details on this programme?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The OECD Programme for International Students Assessment is an international assessment that measures competencies in 3 major domains of study namely, reading, mathematics and science, with a focus on students' abilities to think critically, and apply their knowledge creatively in novel context. It is administered among 15year-old students every 3 years. Since 2000 when PISA was first introduced, more than 90 countries have participated in it, and we are planning to have the next edition and a pilot study will be undertaken in 2024, targeting around 2 000 sample students. The main study is targeting approximately 6 300 students and will take place in 2025.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 26313.157 – *Institute of Technical Education and Technology (ITET)*, for which we are being requested to vote for a first time here - because last year there was no provision - Rs50 m. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what is it about?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The ITET is an Institute of Technical Education and Technology. Now, it is going to regroup around 6 institutions which were previously at the MITD, and will be responsible for preparing students for diplomas and higher certificates and higher national diplomas in the technical *filière*.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Lobine.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 147, under the same item 26313.157 - *Institute of Technical Education and Technology (ITET)*, may we know from the hon. VicePrime Minister, who is the Chairperson of this institute, and also, who are the Board members.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I would table the Board members. The Chairperson, is Mr Matabadul. I am tabling the list of all members.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Dr. Gungapersad.

Dr. Gungapersad: Page 147, Item 31122.802 – *Acquisition of IT Equipment of which Online Digital Pedagogy (Virtual Classroom)*, may we have more details regarding same from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Certainly! We are referring here to funds that will be used to acquire IT Equipment for secondary schools. 200 PCs for replacement in computer labs as well as laptops and projectors; as well as boot camp for hands-on training of educators to use techno pedagogical strategies in teaching and learning; acquisition of IT equipment for online digital pedagogy for the virtual classroom. So, we will need touch screen laptops with projectors for each classroom, once-off Wi-Fi equipment and etc.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Yes, thank you! Item 26323.157 – *Institute of Technical Education and Technology (ITET)*, along with the composition of the Board, could the Minister provide us also with the composition of the council?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It is the same thing. The council and the Board is the same. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the same Board.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Dhunoo!

Mr Dhunoo: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31112 – *Non Residential Building .042*

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Construction of Building – Regional trading Centre at Beau Vallon, .442 – Upgrading of Building – Technical Education Centres, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister provide details on both projects and who are the contractors who have been allocated these projects?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Now, for Beau-Vallon, the contract was awarded to the Tianli Construction Co. Ltd. So, the funds have been used for the payment of consultancy services for the project, for the design and build. And the project is a design and build and it is a turnkey project. I see that the Consultants are Lux Consult Mauritius and the contractor is Tianli Construction Co. Ltd.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Ramful!

Mr Ramful: Under the same Item 31112.042 – *Construction of Building – Regional Training Centre at Beau Vallon*, can we know the expected completion date for the project?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I see here that the site was handed over in January 2021, and expected completion date is November 2022.

The Chairperson: Page 147, hon. Woochit!

Mr Woochit: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Item 31122.999 – *Acquisition of Other Machinery and Equipment*, can we know what are the machinery and equipment and why the budget has been decreased by Rs5 m.?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The funds decrease, it is because, I am told here, that the Act was proclaimed in January 2022 and the Council set up in February 2022. Once the ITET is fully operational, new requirements will be worked out for machinery and equipment in line with the new fields of curriculum. There are new fields of curriculum also being chosen, so, there is a difference.

The Chairperson: Page 148, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you, Item 26323.0149 – *Special Education Needs (SEN) Authority of which (a) Upgrading of SEN Schools run by NGOs/RCEA (b) Acquisition of Pedagogical tools and materials*. Can we have details on these two projects from the hon. Vice Prime Minister, please? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, the provision is here made for a one-off grant to SEN Schools run by NGOs – Rs2.7 m and the disbursement of the one-off grant to schools which have submitted new projects –

- (a) upgrading of SEN schools run by NGOs;
- (b) grant of Rs100,000 will be provided to SEN institutions run by NGOs and the 8 institutions run by SeDEC for repairs and renovation of buildings;
- (c) acquisition of pedagogical tools and materials;
- (d) grant of Rs50,000 will be given to 45 SEN institutions run by NGOs and 8 run by SeDEC; and then also we have
- (e) acquisition of vehicles, and
- (f) an adapted 16-seater high roof microbus and office equipment for CELA.

The Chairperson: Page 148, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson. Item 28211.023 - *Special Education Needs Schools*. Will the hon. Vice Prime Minister can give us a better outlay as to how this money is spent because we are talking of other expenses. What does it entail, please? Thank you very much.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We have other expense, transfers to Non-Profit Institutions, this is the point you have asked. The increased provision made is for the payment of grants that I have just explained right now for the upgrading of the Institutions as well as for the purchase of new equipment. We also have contribution to the monthly salaries of the staff, carers, psychologists, occupational therapist and speech therapist and also a basic per capita grant amounting to Rs6,000 per student.

A yearly per capita grant of Rs5,200 which covers teaching aids and utilities as well as hot meals provided to students on a daily basis.

The Chairperson: Page 148, hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Already canvassed.

The Chairperson: Page 148, hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Page 148, Item 22120.043 - *Fees for Adaptation of Textbooks*. The fees will be paid to whom and what adaptation will take place regarding the textbooks? By whom?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, Mr Chairperson, there are certain people at the level of the MIE also at the level of an NGO *Lizie Dan La Main*, or *Lois Lagesse* that who normally help in adapting schools. However, now fees for adaptation of textbooks, for the adaptation of activity books for grades one to six and for digitalisation of textbooks as I have said at the level of the MIE and two NGOs, *Lizie Dan La Main*, and if I am not mistaken, or *Lois Lagesse Trust Fund*.

The Chairperson: Page 148, hon. Nagalingum!

Mr Nagalingum: Just been canvassed by hon. Dr. Gungapersad.

The Chairperson: Page 149, hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Item 28212.020 - *Student Scholarship Schemes for Vulnerable Households*. I see the provision of Rs3 m. has remained the same as compared to last year. In view of the increase in cost of everything, didn't the Vice Prime Minister find it necessary to request for more funds because life has become so expensive now?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Chairperson, this should go to the Ministry of Finance I believe but we have already increased last year the amount two year's back if I am not mistaken, the amount given to students. I have just mentioned that we have paid the tuition fees, we gave the monthly stipend and a maximum of 100,000 to academic year and they have four academic years that are funded.

The Chairperson: Time over!

Vote 4-1 Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Rs18,300,000) was, on question put, agreed to.

Minister's Statements and Speeches

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2022-2023) BILL 2022

(No. IX of 2022)

(18.06.2022)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, first, to congratulate my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance for having identified the appropriate strategies and the right mix of policies for the well-being of our people as well as for ensuring the sustainability of the economy prosperity of our country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this budget focuses on three strategy areas: inclusiveness, restoring the purchasing power, stimulation of economic growth and concurrent resilience building. It also places people, our people, at the centre of our strategy. I reiterate that we need to congratulate the Minister of Finance for the measures which primarily target the neediest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know what the outcry has been; fundamentally, people have been complaining about their eroding purchasing power, and this budget response to that apprehension. There are so many measures targeted at curbing rising prices, leaving much more resources in the hands of people. In fact, the list is quite exhaustive –

- subsidy on basic commodities: flour, rice, milk, cooking gas;
- more than 20% increase in respect of social aids;
- incentives in respect of private home investment with a refund of up to 5% of the loan amount up to a maximum of half a million rupees;

- termination of the Municipal tax, widening the scopes for households to save and increase their purchasing power, and
- without forgetting the 13,000 social housing units to be constructed.

That is just part of the list, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me reiterate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that our people and responding to their concerns, are at the very heart of this year's budget. *M. le président, le budget démontre clairement que les préoccupations du peuple mauricien, leur intérêt, demeurent la priorité primaire de ce gouvernement. L'accent a aussi été mis sur l'investissement et la croissance économique.*

Never before, Mr Speaker, Sir, has so much support been given to boost the production of goods and services. Incentives and measures taken will inevitably have a ripple effect on economic growth. I strongly believe in the soundness of boosting local primary sector output as well as the reemergence of the tea sector. All these will palliate the threat of food crisis. *M. le président, le pôle de la transformation des fruits sera également bénéfique ;* the rebate on freight cost to enterprises involved in exports. All these, Mr Speaker, Sir, show how considerate the Minister of Finance has been.

If you listen to the echoes that reach us from outside, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will get only positive vibes which unfortunately does not seem to be the case for some on the other side of the House. What is true, nevertheless, is that my colleague Minister has now come up *avec brio* with a balancing act; he has ably reconciled the necessity of easing the burden of the average family and improving its purchasing power while simultaneously laying out the ecosystem for a postpandemic economic take-off.

M. le président, je présume que le mal être de nos collègues de l'Opposition relève précisément du fait qu'ils n'arrivent pas à digérer ce tour de force qui est *beyond expectations*. *To add insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir,* ils nous réclament à cor et à cri qu'on retourne au peuple le pouvoir d'achat. Mais c'est justement ce qu'on fait. C'est justement

ce que nous sommes en train de faire, M. le président. Alors pourquoi ne pas le reconnaître ?

M. le président, permettez-moi d'exprimer aujourd'hui mon étonnement, mon incompréhension vis-à-vis l'attitude et les propos des membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre par rapport aux mesures budgétaires annoncées par l'honorable Dr. Padayachy. A les entendre,

on dirait qu'ils vivent dans une bulle ; qu'ils sont tout à fait inconscients des défis multiples que le monde dans son ensemble a fait face durant ces deux dernières années. Nous savons tous que le double choc de la pandémie et la guerre en Ukraine ont perturbé la vie des peuples à travers le monde. Mais les membres de l'Opposition donnent l'impression qu'ils ne sont pas du tout au courant de ces difficultés encourues par les gens. Sont-ils si déconnectés que cela, si déconnectés de la réalité, M. le président ? Ou font-ils semblant ? En fait, la vérité c'est que le budget Padayachy les a mis hors-jeu ; ils sont abasourdis et ne savent plus quoi faire ; ils ont perdu leurs repères, les arguments qu'ils avancent sont fades, blêmes, sans conviction et souvent contradictoire comme l'a si bien fait ressortir hier l'honorable Dr. Husnoo lors de son intervention. Le budget a été au-delà de l'attente des gens et surtout de celle des membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government led by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, our Prime Minister, has taken a series of measures to ensure the protection and wellbeing of the people of the Republic of Mauritius. Je ne parlerai pas des mesures prises pour accompagner le peuple mauricien durant la pandémie, le confinement ou encore les mesures prises pour assurer la protection du peuple mauricien que ce soit en termes de vaccins, ou de médicaments ; je ne parlerai pas de tout l'effort mis pour assurer que les personnes âgées, les jeunes à l'école soient vaccinés. Mais M. le président, il est bon de noter aussi que le ministre des Finances a su satisfaire les besoins du peuple, surtout les plus vulnérables, en apportant le soutien si nécessaire dans ces moments difficiles tout en assurant la relance de l'économie à travers des mesures concrètes pour stimuler la croissance.

À travers ce troisième budget, l'honorable ministre des Finances a été fortement applaudi et d'ailleurs nous savons bien qu'il a été nommé le meilleur ministre des Finances du continent africain et nous lui en félicitons. M. le président, permettez que je cerne l'aspect concernant les allocations. Cela dans le but d'éclairer la lanterne de nos amis de l'Opposition qui ont une fixation sur le pouvoir d'achat.

Faisons les comptes, M. le président, 350,000 personnes percevront une allocation mensuelle de R 1,000 soit plus d'un quart de la population. 300,000 personnes verront leurs prestations de retraite augmenter. En termes de foyers qui sont exemptés de la taxe municipale sur leur résidence, 110,000 familles en seront les bénéficiaires. 100,000 de nos contribuables paieront moins d'impôts et se retrouveront avec un supplément de ressources financières à leur disposition et cela impactera certainement positivement sur le pouvoir d'achat.

M. le président, prétendre que le Budget n'apporte aucune aide à la population relève de la démagogie pure et simple. Et c'est indéniable, peu importe ce que l'Opposition veut faire croire, ce budget a créé un *feel good factor* et la population est nettement consciente de cela.

Je disais tout à l'heure, M. le président, que le Budget a pris en compte l'écosystème humain, le bien-être de la population, une amélioration de la qualité de vie. Que ce soit le service de santé, que ce soit le système moderne de transport, le gouvernement a toujours mis l'être humain au centre de son action. Ces mesures viennent s'ajouter bien sûres aux facilités, assistances et subventions que les familles reçoivent déjà.

Aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement a assuré que l'éducation est réellement gratuite, du primaire au tertiaire: l'enseignement supérieur gratuit ; les manuels scolaires gratuits ; les frais d'examens gratuits. Et là, je voudrais quand même attirer l'attention de cette auguste Assemblée sur la vision de notre Premier ministre. Et je dois dire que c'est lui qui a toujours souligné que l'argent ou les moyens de devrait pas être une barrière dans l'avancement des jeunes mauriciens. Dès notre arrivée au gouvernement 2014, il s'est assuré qu'on redonne les subsides sur les frais d'examen. Et sachez, M. le président, que le montant que le gouvernement contribue pour les frais d'examens tourne autour de R 300 millions annuellement.

M. le président, nous ne sommes pas arrêtés à cela. Je viens de le dire ; l'enseignement supérieur gratuit coûte à l'État R 600 millions. Mais qu'avons-nous fait ? Le Premier ministre, dans sa vision, a voulu démocratiser l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur. Et, aujourd'hui, pleines de familles peuvent envoyer les enfants continuer leurs études dans nos universités.

M. le président, peut-être que je devrais faire ressortir aux jeunes parlementaires qui peut-être ne sauraient pas comment la situation était il y a quelques années de cela. Vous savez, dans les familles il fallait attendre qu'un élève puisse compléter leurs études, prendre part aux examens. L'année où l'un des enfants devrait prendre part aux examens de Cambridge, l'autre enfant devait attendre. Il sacrifiait une année de leurs études parce que les parents n'avaient pas les moyens de payer les frais d'examens. Mais ce gouvernement-ci, M. le président, a assuré que les élèves, que les jeunes mauriciens puissent continuer leurs études en toute quiétude.

Parlons des manuels scolaires, M. le président. Depuis notre arrivée en 2019, nous avons assuré que les manuels scolaires des Grade 1 à 9 soient gratuits et cela coûte plus de R 100 millions à l'État. M. le président, on ne peut oublier la déduction de l'ordre de R 500,000 par enfant pour ceux qui ont des enfants à l'université.

M. le président, la baisse des impôts de 15% à 10 % a été réduite pour les familles dont les revenus mensuels ne dépassent pas les R 50,000. *The State, Mr Speaker, Sir, is ensuring that more resources remain with the people to cater for their needs.*

M. le président, je voudrais là faire ressortir que ces gens qui sont en train de nous pointer du doigt sont les mêmes qui avaient enlevé toutes ces facilités des jeunes de la République. Je ne reviendrai pas sur les propos qu'ont déjà tenus mes amis sur le fait que certains avaient même trouvé que ça coûtait trop à l'État d'offrir un pain dans les écoles pour nos enfants. M. le président, que ce serait-il passé si le gouvernement n'avait pas pris toutes ces initiatives depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir en 2015 ?

M. le président, à travers le monde, la situation créée par la pandémie, par la guerre, a donné lieu à beaucoup de défis *and governments across the world have developed coping strategies, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

But this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, under the able leadership and guidance of our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has been unflagging in its determination to have a prompt and effective response. And Government initiated such a large number of proactive and interim actions that were instrumental in the containment of the pandemic and reversing its spiralling consequences. Today, despite the toll of the pandemic and the war, all forecasts point to –

- (i) a reduction in unemployment from 9.1% last year to 7.8%;
- (ii) a boost in the exports of goods and services slated to reach Rs169 billion;
- (iii) an increase in investment rate to 21.2% of GDP;
- (iv) a jump in FDI as well as in tourist arrivals reaching up to 1 million this year; (v) a declining public sector debt.

And this is no all, Mr Speaker, Sir. The GDP is expected to exceed its pre-pandemic level to reach Rs520 billion by 2022 as against Rs465 billion in 2021. Mind you, such figures are not being pulled from a conjurer's act. They come from the forecast of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Finance has rightly chosen the theme of the Budget to be 'With the people, For the people'. He transcribes this into reality. Allow me to refer to just a few of those measure, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have already mentioned the provision of subsidies,

the price control and certain essentials, the regressive mark-up regime for pharmaceutical products which will also prove to be a timeless measure, especially for the elderly. These measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, will have a highly positive pay off for everybody. And what I should add with regard to the increase in old age pension, is that the very people who have been telling us again and again that we should not increase the pension, in 2014, they were saying that it is unsustainable; in 2019, they were saying that we were bluffers. And today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have done it without increasing taxes. And we have shown to them that we act differently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we did not stop at the old age pension. All basic pensions have increased. The invalidity pension will also no longer be accounted as revenue for the purpose of tax computation.

M. le président, il ne faut pas oublier, ces gens qui nous disaient qu'il ne fallait pas augmenter la pension de vieillesse et, aujourd'hui, nous sommes fiers de dire que la pension de vieillesse est passée de R 3,623 à R 11,000 en juillet 2022 ; ces mêmes personnes sont maintenant, *they have the cheek, Mr Speaker, Sir, of coming us and saying: ' Trop peu; trop tard; fallait donner plus; ce n'est pas assez' et j'en passe.* M. le président, les personnes âgées ont toujours eu une attention spéciale et une considération particulière par ce gouvernement car nous croyons et nous reconnaissons leurs contributions dans le développement de notre île.

M. le président, ce qui sont sur le *Social Register of Mauritius*, eux aussi, nous savons qu'il y a eu une augmentation sur toutes les prestations sociales pour ceux qui sont sur le registre que ce soit le *Child Allowance*, les *subsistence allowance* et autres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all recall the loud and prolonged table thumping that reverberated across this Assembly when the Minister announced the tax rebates or again the abolition of the Municipal Tax on the family home for some 110,000 families. *Mais que disaient les gens de l'Opposition ? Qu'on aurait dû venir avec les taxes rurales. Mais, M. le président, nous, nous avons cessé l'histoire de 'us against them', ville contre village, et aujourd'hui nous avons trouvé la formule qui marche.*

M. le président, pendant que tous les indicateurs laissent clairement comprendre que la situation revient à la normale, que l'optimisme est de rigueur, même pour les institutions internationales d'ailleurs, certains de l'autre côté de la Chambre parlent de *worsening economic situation*, de *money illusion*. Allez-comprendre, M. le président.

Certains disaient même qu'on allait subir le même sort que le Sri Lanka ou la Grèce, c'est tout ce qu'ils trouvent à dire, M. le président, les oiseaux de mauvais augure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been a deep rooted philosophy in the MSM Party, a Party to which I am proud to belong. A Party which has always believed that we should first stimulate growth, create employment, increase the size of the national cake and redistribute it such that everyone gets a fair share and deservedly so. That, Mr Speaker, Sir, is what inclusive growth is all about. The Budget is dictated by the economic imperative and conviction that this Government will leave no one behind, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will make it a point to stress that all the above benefits that will accrue to our citizens, especially those who are the most vulnerable ones, will be supplementing what already sustains under our Welfare State. We are in fact consolidating the Welfare State, ensuring that all citizens have a fair deal and I dare believe our Welfare State is one of its kind, if not, unique in this part of the world. We want, Mr Speaker, Sir, the rising tide to lift all vessels, boats and ships alike.

Let me, Mr Speaker, Sir, now turn to the education sector. The Budget 2022-2023 has a direct allocation that stands at Rs18.3 billion for the sector. Accordingly there is a clear recognition that education is the key to our development agenda. It also recognises that investments in human capital should be sustained since every child of the Republic has to grow into a productive citizen contributing positively to the emancipation of society.

The direct budget allocation for this financial year which stands at Rs18.3 billion will allow us to do so. The fundamental notion of equity is inbuilt in the education sector. The hon. Minister of Finance does recognise this, keeping in view, the sustained investment he has been making in education over the years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will briefly expatiate on a number of major thrust areas that this Budget supports and propels. In the pole position is the consolidation of the free education. *Je viens de le dire, M. le président, nous avons bouclé la boucle en ce qui concerne l'éducation gratuite à tous les niveaux de l'éducation incluant l'enseignement supérieur.*

Allow me, at this stage, to express my sincere gratitude to the Minister of Finance for the introduction of two additional scholarships on the economic side under the Sir Anerood Jugnauth National Scholarship Scheme. I am also grateful, obviously, for this recognition of the incredible achievements of the late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the stalwart in his own right and who rightly again, is acknowledged as the Father of the economic development of the country. But I am also deeply grateful for the acknowledgement because it is thanks to him and his

mentoring that I am in the political arena today. The scholarships can hence be seen as a tribute to and as a symbolic token of the motivation and incentivization that he has given to so many young persons as they embarked on their professional careers. On both counts, I believe that the scholarships for the first girl and first boy student in the economic strand will throw into relief the paramount necessity for hard work, perseverance and determination; qualities that Sir Anerood clearly exemplified in his lifetime and that we want to sustain in our system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the second thrust area is the advancement of the educational reform programme we had embarked on upon since 2015. I will not go back to the number of transformation that has been successfully brought to the sector. I have had the opportunity to highlight many of them through responses to PQs. The results are there for all to see. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not dwell on the long list of infrastructural projects, constructions, extension and upgrading to be undertaken in those primary and secondary schools. Suffice it to say that Government will continue to invest in building infrastructures in schools to enhance the learning and physical environment; around Rs350 m. has been provided in this Budget for that purpose.

M. le président, permettez-moi à ce stade de répondre aux propos de l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad. L'honorable Dr. Gungapersad durant son intervention avait fait mention des gymnases qu'il attendait sans cesse. Je voudrais attirer son attention, M. le président, que nous au ministère, nous dans ce gouvernement, nous pensons à l'éducation comme un ensemble et tous les enfants de la République ; qu'ils habitent le nord, le sud, l'est ou l'ouest, sont nos enfants. Je n'ai pas trop compris ce qu'il venait dire à plusieurs reprises 4 à 14. Je présume qu'il faisait allusion aux circonscriptions 4 à 14. Est-ce que Dr. Gungapersad, qui à plusieurs reprises durant son intervention, nous a rappelé qu'il a été recteur, chef d'établissement scolaire ? Est-ce que lui, quand il parle des enfants du pays, il parle des enfants du pays en tant que des enfants de telle ou telle circonscription ? L'honorable Dr. Gungapersad, à plusieurs reprises durant son intervention, nous a rappelé qu'il a été lui, chef d'établissement d'un collège MGI, qu'il a trouvé le travail certes difficile, mais qu'il a été chef de département, chef d'établissement scolaire. Il a trouvé bon de venir dire dans cette Assemblée que nous sommes en train de regarder certaines écoles et pas les autres. J'ai la liste, M. le président, et je lui demanderai d'aller voir dans the *Estimates* quelles sont les écoles, qu'est-ce que nous sommes en train de faire.

Nous avons récemment construit des gymnases à Quartier Militaire, à Rivière du Rempart, à Pailles, à Vacoas. Mais M. le président, est-ce que Dr. Gungapersad vérifie ses dires

avant de venir dire des choses dans cette auguste Assemblée ? Je lui demanderai en tant que chef d'établissement scolaire de transmettre les valeurs aux jeunes et de réaliser qu'on ne vient pas débiter n'importe quoi dans cette Assemblée sans avoir vérifié ses dires.

Dr. Gungapersad nous disait que la *HRDC* est en train de donner des *stipend* aux jeunes pour qu'ils aillent se former, mais il se fait porte-parole de certains élèves qui sont venus lui dire qu'au lieu d'avoir R 10,000, ils ont reçu que R 4,000. M. le président, est-ce que Dr. Gungapersad a pris la peine de vérifier qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? C'est vrai qu'il y a un *stipend* de R 10,000, mais il faut aussi être présent l'école, être présent pour la formation pour recevoir ce *stipend*. Et le paiement se fait par *pro rata*. Si au lieu de venir encourager les jeunes d'aller vers ces formations et d'aller profiter de cela, il est en train de dire que ce sont des promesses. Mais enfin ! Il faut être responsable. Quand on aspire à être celui qui s'occupera du portfolio de l'éducation, on doit démontrer un peu plus de grandeur d'âme, M. le président.

M. le président, il a été plus loin, et je dois dire j'étais choquée par la façon dont il a parlé, avec l'agressivité que l'honorable Ms Ramyad a bien fait ressortir, n'est pas digne d'une personne qui est supposé d'être imbu des *Gandhian principles*, venant d'un *MGI*. Il n'a pas démontré de patience du tout. Il ne sait pas que pour venir avec un gymnase, il nous faut avant tout que les officiers du *MNI* puissent travailler les spécifications, venir avec les designs, et finalement les *tender procedures*. La patience est une vertu que l'on doit surtout garder, M. le président.

Il y a quelque chose d'autre qu'il a dit que je trouve vraiment inconcevable. Quelqu'un qui a été dans le secteur éducatif, quelqu'un qui a été responsable de l'éducation de nos enfants, il est venu à l'Assemblée, venir dire qu'il y a eu un *leakage* du papier de PSAC que les élèves vont composer en août. M. le président, est-ce qu'il a pensé aux enfants ? Il a voulu venir créer des doutes dans la tête des gens, et je trouve que c'est terrible, vraiment inacceptable, venant d'un honorable membre de cette Assemblée, venir dire ici que les papiers ont été *leaked*.

M. le président, si jamais il y a eu des gens *who attempted to get information and when this became known*, la MES a pris les dispositions qu'il fallait. *All confidential information that could have been compromised, have been put aside*. Il parle de *leakage* de papiers, on n'a même pas encore envoyé les informations en Angleterre où les papiers sont *printed*. Mais enfin, venir créer des doutes, venir pointer du doigt à une institution ! Il a pris la peine de venir nous lire la lettre qu'il a écrit à la MES après les examens pendant la pandémie.

M. le président, on a oublié ce qu'il disait aux gens autour quand on avait les examens? Quand on a pris la décision d'étendre l'année scolaire, quand on a pris la décision de renvoyer les examens, il disait toutes sortes de choses. Il allait sur les réseaux sociaux, critiquer. Et là, aujourd'hui, il vient dire qu'il avait écrit une lettre pour remercier la *MES* pour le bon travail effectué. Mais franchement ! M. le président, quand on vient dire des choses pareilles, est-ce qu'on a à cœur l'intérêt des enfants ? Ces enfants-là vont prendre les examens en Août. Est-ce qu'on vient les reconforter ? Est-ce que c'est ça qu'on s'attend d'une personne qui ne cesse de nous dire qu'il a été chef d'établissement, et qu'il sait comment le travail doit se faire ? Il vient nous pointer du doigt ? Impensable, M. le président !

Franchement, *MES leakage* ! C'est vrai, il y a eu quelqu'un qui a essayé d'entrer dans les données, mais faites bien attention, la *MES* a pris les dispositions qu'il fallait. Et, tout de suite, on a agi. Eh bien, alors, est ce qu'on va dire aux enfants qui vont prendre les examens qu'il y a eu *leakage* de papier ? On va le mettre sur les journaux ? On va créer des doutes ? On va pointer du doigt une institution ? Et, j'ai entendu l'honorable Juman à la radio ce matin qui disait que la directrice est toujours là. Mais enfin, franchement ! En tout cas, ces gens-là demandent à faire une introspection.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Je leur demande de bien réfléchir et de voir comment est-ce qu'ils réagissent ? Est-ce que c'est ça les valeurs qu'ils veulent transmettre ? Et, quand on les écoute ici à l'Assemblée nationale, ils sont toujours en train de nous pointer du doigt. Ils sont tous les donneurs de leçons.

M. le président, il est venu nous parler des psychologues. Sachez que dans le budget de l'année dernière, nous avons prévu le recrutement de 34 psychologues. Pendant qu'il parlait ici, il y avait 18 psychologues qui avaient déjà leur lettre en main pour venir se joindre au ministère de l'éducation, appart des 34 que nous avons déjà.

M. le président, on ne vient pas dire n'importe quoi ici. Nous sommes des gens qui travaillent ; tout ce que nous avons prévu dans notre programme électoral, nous les avons implémentés.

M. le président, je ne vais pas m'attarder plus longtemps sur ce type, parce que franchement, je m'attendais à ce qu'il démontre beaucoup plus de hauteur lorsqu'il est devenu député dans l'Assemblée. J'espère qu'il est conscient *of the damage they have caused to our students*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come back to what I was saying earlier. When we talk about education sector, we talk about the infrastructure certainly, but we also talk about the software. I said I did not want to go over everything that we have done, but we have been collaborating with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. We have been collaborating with institutions and today, we can proudly say that 14,000 students of Grade 4 have all been trained in swimming, *la nation scolaire est une vérité aujourd'hui dans nos écoles*. We have more than 10 000 students who engage after school sports activities. We are not stopping there. We have introduced the Outdoor Education Programmes that we would do in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Mauritius Sports Council. We want our young people to grow and to really become productive citizens, and we want them to be *vraiment bien dans leurs peaux*. The various forms of the software part that I am talking about. In the first place, no education system can operate without an investment on constant deskilling and reskilling of teachers and school leaders. *Nous avons créé une plateforme d'échange pour les professionnels de l'éducation*. The academy for education professionals *est déjà en œuvre*.

I am pleased to highlight that the Budget makes provision for funds that will help to initiate capacity-building programmes to facilitate sharing and good practices, through our academy for education professionals. I also welcome the initiative in the Budget for the *passport culture* to be provided to youths aged between 15 and 25 years old for the purchase of books, musical and sports equipment, as well as arts and cultural activities. This is a major component of the reform in the education system. It ensures the overall development of the child and creates opportunities for talents to be exhibited and tapped.

This is also a tacit recognition that the consolidation of the reform programme depends heavily on an inter-ministerial and inter-institution of partnership, and collaboration that has always characterised my Ministry. In the domain of digital learning, that also, hon. Dr. Gungapersad pointed out. I wish to draw his attention and that of the House that the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation has already awarded the contract for the provision of high speed connectivity in 155 secondary schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, who can possibly question the reliance upon information technology in practically all sectors in today's world. Whether it is a world of work, the world of leisure, the world of social interaction, we are all aware of the extent to which NTEC proved to be a powerful and invaluable partner when schools had closed down due to the pandemic.

In fact, we have a feeling that it is fast gaining ground today, and that instead of provoking exclusion NTEC rather opens up new opportunities for inclusion in teaching and learning. The how is easy to answer. For one thing NTEC carries with it the concept anytime, anywhere learning. For another, it has shown the efficacy in assisting learners with disabilities, and for encouraging personalized learning. This has proved to be the case in Mauritius, as well, which incidentally explains our investment in technology in schools and for learners with disabilities. I strongly believe that our educational processes can be enriched by technology, and certainly it plays a highly contributory role in improving learning. Blended learning, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a new name of the educational game and we cannot afford to miss the boat. Obviously, NTEC in school is not something of a novelty in education institutions; my Ministry has been investing massively in it.

D'ailleurs, on envisage même de travailler avec les partenaires étrangers pour la formation de nos professionnels dans ce domaine. Ce qui est important à retenir, M. le président, c'est le fait que nous n'avons pas été forcés par la pandémie pour tourner vers la numérisation. En effet, le *Student Support Portal*, donc l'apport a été probant durant la pandémie, a été créé bien avant que celle-ci ne fasse surface. Personne n'avait alors réalisé l'importance capitale de ce portail numérique.

Dès 2019, M. le président, nous avons un portail numérique qui permet aux jeunes d'avoir accès à des leçons. Et cela nous a été d'une grande aide pendant la pandémie. La même chose s'applique au *Early Digital Learning Programme*. Le nombre de fois que les membres de l'Assemblée nous blâment de ne pas éliminer l'inégalité et l'iniquité dans le system éducatif. On parle de *digital divide*, laissez certains apprenant hors du circuit. Mais, c'est précisément dans cet esprit qu'on a investi dans le *Early Digital Learning Project*. Dès leurs arrivés à l'école, ils sont exposés à la technologie. Et mon collègue, l'honorable Mme Jeewa-Daureeawoo a aussi porté son aide pour les enfants durant la pandémie et on a aussi dit qu'elle est venue avec des tablettes qu'on a remises aux élevés qui, donc les parents étaient sur le *Social Register*.

The Early Digital Learning Project that had initially been initiated at the lower primary level, is now being rolled down to cover the entire primary education cycle. And for this purpose, I am pleased that an amount of Rs360 m. has been made available in the current Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot have a rest on our laurels. It is important for us to benchmark our education system against international standards. I am consequently highly appreciated of

the provision made in this Budget for Mauritius to participate in the 2024 edition of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This is a worldwide learning assessment of the OECD.

As the House certainly knows, PISA is an international assessment that measures competencies in three major domains of study namely, reading, mathematics and science. The focus is on the capability of 15-year-old students to think critically and apply their knowledge, creatively in other context. We have also been laying emphasis on the study of STEM, Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and we know that it is extremely vital for a country to innovate, improve its productivity and bring about social uplift and STEM will help in that.

Again the pandemic has shown us how important science can be and hence interest in these subjects should constantly be buoyed and sustained. Here, I must express my appreciation for the tremendous work and the role played by the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre in popularising the uptake of science by youth. The Centre has established strong partnership with international bodies and institutions and such partnerships are paying rich dividend.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to another area which is very dear to me, that of technical and technology education. We have now come to the next stage of our reform agenda where our focus has to be on the technical and technology education. Mr Speaker, Sir in an ever-changing technological landscape, in addition to knowledge, learners are required to acquire a set of skills and that is today's new currency for learning and development but as importantly these skills and competencies have to be future proof given the dynamism and the fast evolving workplace.

What are the skills set that we are looking for? Creativity and innovation skills certainly but also higher order skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, soft skills like flexibility, adaptability as well as social and pluricultural skills. We know that countries like Singapore, South Korea, Germany, Finland have gradually adapted their education and training systems to the needs of the day. They are channelling around 50% of their upper secondary education population to technical and technology education. This is particularly timeous when such key economic sectors like creative industry, healthcare, Freeport, logistics, ICT and life science, amongst others, are fast gaining prominence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to announce that we are transforming the technical and technology education sector in Mauritius. We will need to address the high skills' needs of the country by creating more opportunities especially pathways for students to pursue studies in

technical and technology education. This will see a transformation of the entire technical education landscape.

The Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd (PML) has already identified its niche, semi-professional areas and is operating in full swing despite its brief history. Its students' population has today reached 3,200 and is diversely represented comprising as it does of Mauritians, Rodriguans and African learners. We know that PML has been a success story. We know also that the Institute of Technical Education and Technology is called upon to deliver post Grade 11 demand driven quality technical and technology education courses. To round off the whole exercise, we are now in the process of diversifying the education offering at Grades 10 and 11.

This will be a new, credible, coherent and high-quality learning pathway that promotes learner achievement towards skills for the future. This pathway will be an attractive and alternate one so that students may choose between the general or the technology education. I will stress the fact that this technology education pathway will be of equal standard and repute with the general education.

To guarantee the process Mr Speaker, Sir, we are embarking on a venture that will have major long-term impacts on the systemic transformation of education. The House will recall the decision conveyed in this very Assembly regarding the establishment of the National Examination Board to be affiliated to the University of Mauritius. This Board will set the examination standards and have the responsibility for the award of the qualifications at secondary level for *kreol morisien*. The same will apply to the technology education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this represents a major landmark in our education. Allow me to add that Mauritius is going further in its reform to rebrand and modernise technical and technological education. Mauritius has to address the demand for the fifth industrial revolution and the future of work and jobs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a few words on higher education. Major actions are underway to develop Mauritius into a knowledge hub. To increase credibility and visibility, we must have a robust framework, sound quality assurance mechanism and effective and efficient funding mechanism to steer and monitor performance in the sector. Thus, a Reform Regulator Framework is in place for registration of private higher education institutions and accreditation programs for both the public and private education institutions. Furthermore, to facilitate mobility of students, a credit value and a transfer system is being adopted.

Let me also add that we are implementing a common admission platform and a Learner Management System and also providing for the students' accommodation facilities the hall of residence at Côte D'Or for students of both private and public institutions in line with our vision to attract more international students. Moreover, this year the principle of equity has also led to the waving of the Administration fee for students from families under the SRM. This will also apply for full-time courses at the MITD as well as other recognised public tertiary institutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me close this part and take up the next area which relates to the panoply of measures for the pre-primary and SEN sector. We have said that the Budget is one about inclusion. The hon. Minister of Finance has been kind enough to listen to my earnest request to go the extra mile for those who militate for the well-being of our SEN learners. Let me highlight the grant of Rs100,000 for repairs and renovation of buildings and further funds of Rs50,000 for the purchase of equipment and pedagogical tools and materials.

Further, the DBM will now provide a loan at a concessionary rate for the upgrading and embellishment of Special Education Needs school infrastructure. Meals will also be provided to all students in Special Education Needs Schools irrespective of their age and I am sure that the SeDEC and other NGOs will equally appreciate the increase in their grant to a tune of Rs155 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are also coming up with Standardised Individual Education Plan that has been designed and validated by the Paramedical team. We are also ensuring the continuous professional development of all staff in Special Education Needs Schools and as a caring Government, we have also seen to it that transport facilities be provided to all Special Education Needs learners irrespective of their age. This is a long awaited measure and we are certainly facilitating the conveyance of these learners as well as alleviate accessibly and mobility restrictions encountered by many families.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Special Educational Needs sector has been fully supported in this Budget and this is a huge step towards inclusion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the early childhood sector is an extremely important one and in fact we should really think and should really be talking about a triple dividend benefit of investing in the early childhood sector. There is a global recognition of the importance to be attached to this subsector and we know that everybody recognizes it including UNICEF that investing in early childhood development is one of the most cost efficient and powerful strategies to achieve

fair and sustainable development and accordingly, I have to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for the funds provided. A one-off grant of Rs6,250,000 has been earmarked to support the private pre-primary schools.

New pre-primary schools are being set up at Le Morne, at Mont Ory. Some R95 m. will also go towards that monthly per capita grant for children attending private pre-primary schools. The ECCEA equipped teachers and its own personnel with innovative knowledge, deep research, oriented skills.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been talking about holistic development of children. We have ensured that children manage to get what they need to get at school, that when we go to school, we don't look at the uni-dimensional person but we want them to develop all their competencies. We want them not only *à reussir dans leur vie mais aussi à réussir la vie*. I am sorry, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not embarked on a major reform in education just to witness people emerging out of the system showing unidimensional features only.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not go any further, but I would just like to answer a few more things that have been stated here. We have been talking about violence in schools. Violence in school is a reflection of society and we are taking steps at the level of schools. We have come up with programmes such as *la gestion des émotions*. We have a new directorate which relates to health and wellness. We are taking measures to try to help students get over and to cope with stress. We have our department for counselling, and everything is being done to help our students. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just stated, we have increased the number of psychologists attached to the Ministry.

Before ending, I will fail in my duty if I do not take up the points raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Mr Speaker, Sir, he had during his intervention stated a few things that I need to reply to.

Il est venu dire, M. le président, que le ministère démontre une méchanceté vis-à-vis les écoles secondaires privées. Et que nous ne sommes pas en train de leur donner suffisamment de ressources, nous sommes en train de les efforcer vers la médiocrité, et en resserrant leur budget, nous les poussons vers la médiocrité. M. le président, je voudrais faire ressortir une chose.

Voilà ce qu'il avait à dire –

« La situation est grave. Il y a un manque aigu de financement. Et ces écoles suffoquent et sont condamnées à une mort lente. Nous parlons des écoles confessionnelles

catholiques, des écoles hindoues, des écoles musulmanes et des autres écoles privées
(...) »

M. le président, laissez-moi dire qu'on n'a jamais resserré le budget de qui que ce soit. *Let us talk facts, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

Pour les écoles privées, l'État contribue plus de 5 milliards de roupies. Au contraire, durant l'année écoulée, nous avons eu une augmentation de la compensation qu'on donne pour l'utilisation des *school premises*. On a alloué plus de R 100 millions. On est passé de R 200,000 par mois à R 300,000 par mois pour l'utilisation des infrastructures des écoles. Nous payons tous les salaires de tout le personnel de ces écoles ; non enseignant et enseignant. Et cela tourne autour de R 4, 000, 490, 000. Nous donnons aux collèges, au-delà de ces R 4 milliards, R 590 millions chaque année. Le système leur envoie la somme. Ces écoles reçoivent tout l'argent voulu, et c'est *front-loaded*. On leur donne avant.

Tout ce que le ministère a demandé, c'est que ces écoles nous donnent les justifications pour les dépenses encourues, et nous remettent les reçus. C'est tout ce que nous avons demandé ! D'ailleurs, au cours des dernières réunions que j'ai eues avec les représentants, ils étaient d'accord que c'est important de remettre tout cela. Mais sans aucune raison, on continue à critiquer ? Nous avons une responsabilité ! Cela m'étonne venant de leader de l'Opposition qui passe son temps à nous dire que *public funds have to be accounted for*. Est-ce qu'il veut me dire que je devrais *dish out public funds*, de l'ordre de 5 milliards aux écoles privées sans leur demander d'être redevables? *Without any accountability, Mr Speaker, Sir? Is this what they are expecting from me?* Ces gens-là s'assoient sur le *Public Accounts Committee, isn't it?*

Et là, je veux parler de ces sommes sans parler d'autres choses que nous donnons aux écoles –

- *staff cost* – R 4, 490,000,000
- *management grant* – R 590, 000, 000
- *performance grant*, qu'on donne aussi – R 20,000,000
- *PTA matching grant* – R 4,000,000

R 5,104,000,000 que nous donnons chaque année et que nous venons d'augmenter après l'évaluation des établissements. Nous ne sommes pas arrêtés à cela. Ceux qui louent des bâtiments, on leur donne le montant total de l'argent qu'ils payent pour ces bâtiments. Total ! Et on vient nous dire que nous faisons preuve de méchanceté ? M. le président, on ne comprend

pas du tout ce qu'on vient débiter ici. Laissez-moi dire, *additional measures*, il y a le *school feeding programme*. Je ne vais pas aller dans les autres détails.

Mais pour le primaire aussi, *grant-aided* - 745 millions de roupies. Les *allowances* et le tout reviennent à 816 millions de roupies que l'État donne aux écoles primaires *grant-aided*.

M. le président, c'est injuste de venir pointer du doigt le ministère ou l'État venant dire que nous sommes en train de coincer ou de resserrer le budget, pousser ces écoles vers la médiocrité. Chacun doit prendre ses responsabilités. On doit prendre les responsabilités de nos propos. Moi, je prends les miennes ici dans ce Parlement. Je dirai au leader de l'Opposition qu'il devrait vraiment réfléchir avant de venir dire des choses, et je lui demanderai aussi s'il est en train de me demander de prendre *tax payers' money, public funds* et de remettre cela aux écoles sans leur demander d'être redevables, M. le président ?

M. le président, je crois qu'il est important que nous fassions preuve de responsabilité, et quand on arrive à cette auguste Assemblée, il faut bien que l'on réalise qu'on a des droits mais aussi des devoirs. C'est triste que durant les interventions de certains membres de l'Opposition, on a pu voir *some bitterness. And very often, they come up with points, with views that we cannot really accept.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been saying that again and again, this Government is committed to investing in and empowering our people, our human capital, and no one will deny this Budget is a people-centered one. Whether it is the worker, the investor, the entrepreneur or the retired person, there is something for each and everyone. And in fact, hon. Dr. Padayachy's Budget is fully in line with the philosophy enunciated in its epigraph.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very true: the only true and sustainable prosperity is indeed shared prosperity. And this Government fully subscribes to this view.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

