The category of students eligible to participate were aged between 14 and 18 years and included girls and boys. The event comprised Ashley Barbe (Anse aux Pins Primary School), John-Paul Soubhanya (Anse Royale Secondary School), Miguel Mal- brook (Anse aux Bois Bolus Secondary School), Mikhail Rudchenko (International School), Russell Asschel (Beau Vallon Secondary School), and Tanmay Raghwa- ni (Independent School).

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NISTI, Xavier Etiette, proudly pointed out, "As Team Manager, I am very satisfied with the overall performance. This year saw more participation (175 countries) than last year's edition held in Dhali (165 countries)." Team Seychelles came out 121st last year, and this year, out of 175, we have reached 46th place globally. An amazing feat for our local youth, and Etiette said, "[...] We have shown much more under- standability of the Seychelles flag; our youth have done wonders. We already have many developed countries such as Australia, Singapore, and China for instance, and the results show that many African (and Island State) nations are doing well. It goes to show that globally, for this generation, science, technology and innovation is no longer monopolised by countries that are more developed. Innovation now starts at a young age; it is easier to access to information, and the pool of knowledge today is accessible to day to day. It's about the way we use it!" Since the organisation could not organise a location to house all national participants, it was decided that the competition would be done virtually. All teams had 13 weeks between 1 July and 25 September, working on an array of subjects. These ranged from social media posts on how lockdown was spent (and many other subjects), designing and building a paper plane and a launcher, designing an overhead-engineered device built from transporting a ball, designing and modelling a robot mechanism to automate an everyday task, and much more. Etiette admitted that the biggest difficulty was the challenge of designing a safety system (or equipment), be it at work or at home. "This is because innovation is by nature something new, and when the team did their research, many ideas already were in existence. [...] We managed to come out with something that we believe is original, and once submitted, if the product can be commercialised, we can look into getting Intellectual Property (IP)," he added.

One of the team members present at the conference was Doctor Ralph Etienne-Cummings PhD, Johns Hopkins University. He noted, "I have been involved with the First Global Challenge with [Etiette] for a few years, discussing ideas and projects that would be appropriate. I have also been involved with First Global on the US side, and having seen it from that perspective, I thought that I could be of help to our local team, here." Etienne-Cummings stated that now he is physically in Seychelles, he is in a better position to assist our local team, and provide additional guidance.

He expressed, "One of the things that I believe I can bring to the table is that I am involved in one of the top robotics programs in the world, mainly focused on medical robotics, but at the same time there are different types of robotics too […] I have also worked on climbing machines, self-driving cars, and more. With that experience, I hope to provide additional guidance." When interviewing the team members, they stated that the experience was fun, informative and what was important was making new friends. Asschel, from Beau Vallon Secondary School reiterated that the most challenging aspect of it all was designing the safety pre- caution challenge, "[...] because everything we thought up of was already created. It was quite a hard task." The design itself was a helmet that could be used for firefighter's, as well as the police. Its addi- tional functions included radia- tion detection, heat detection, danger alerts and a few other applications. Etiette was asked the team how they feel given that in terms of ranking, last year Seychelles was in the 106th and this year they have managed to shoot up to 46th place. Rudchenko from Independent School expressed the pride the team feels, "[...] especially knowing how we worked; we put in a lot of hours. It feels good to know that we've got a lot of the dedication we put into it, and that the time that could've been spent elsewhere, paid off really well! Especially when we compare to last year, we've put a lot of effort into it, and we're happy we're doing better."

Estico from International School added, "Personally, and on behalf of the team, we truly are proud of what we have achieved because there is a real improvement on Seychelles' track record for First Global. Hopefully, we will be able to do the same next year, and all the years to come. Actually, even if we don't reach the top ten or first place, that would be something!"

Governor Abel shared a com- parative analysis between 31 August and 21 September for the MMSME sector relief scheme applications. Applications received have in- creased by 4.27% in number and increased by 19.05% in value; the approval rating has increased by 14.50% in number and increased by 17.21% in value; application rejections have increased by 14.55% in number and increased by 26.18% in value, and pend- ing requests have decreased by 10.17% in number and decreased by 1.84% in value.

As far as the large enterprises, 11 re- quests have been received (value of SCR42,584,489), 23 are pending (value of SCR8,401,233), 49 have been rejected (value of SCR8,663,526), and 88 have been approved (value of SCR2,985,210).

In terms of economic sectors, the trend mirrors that of the en- compassing MMSME category. For the MMSME sector, CBS (as at 21 September) has received 34 requests from banks (call lodg- ing) for approval; 25 have been rejected (value of SCR4,134,589), and 88 have been approved (value of SCR1,854,531,190).

For the MSME sector relief scheme, as of 21 September, 275 requests have been received (value of SCR3,802,492,285), 53 are pending (value of SCR2,655,912,256), and 138 have been approved (value of SCR4,739,135,39).

In respect of the latter, four bank requests have been made (as at 21 September), two have been approved, for a total of SCR8,600,080, or 571% of the available SCR14 million. The third main sectors who have been approved loans for large enterprises are tourism, trade and manufacturing.

Prolonged gossip may worsen economic situation

(Continued From Cover) CBS states that local economic activities are yet to pick up, and that the economic system is not enough to cater for the demand. "We continue to emphasise in light of the current economic paradigm, that the economy in its totality needs to swiftly recover to prev- ious standards. This is because the majority of our expenditure comes with force components. I reiterate, CBS is not impos- ing anything to do with restric- tions. What's important is in- dividual decisions. Reckon at our spending priorities, to reduce the already existing pressure on the force market, because if the pressure continues or worsens, we will lose reserves, and the ex- change rate will depreciate," said Abel.

In terms of force, compared to the last time the Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS) addressed the public, the situation remains mostly the same.

However, what has been noted, and what the public faces, is that the exchange rate continues to depreciate given the amount of force that our economy continu- ously demands in contrast to the supply on the market. This is, de-