



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 28 APRIL 2026

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(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed, GCSK	Minister of Housing and Lands,
Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan, GCSK	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries
Hon. Govindranath Gunness	Minister of National Infrastructure
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Christian Harold Richard Duval	Minister of Tourism
Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Gavin Patrick Cyril Glover, SC	Attorney-General
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Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

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Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research
Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
Dr. the Hon. Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM	Minister of Education and Human Resource
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Hon. Ranjiv Wochit, OSK	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Mahendra Gondeea, OSK	Minister of Arts and Culture

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 07 of 2026

Sitting of Tuesday 28 April 2026

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT**OBITUARY****MR LOUIS PERCY LAFRANCE**

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is with sadness that we have learnt of the demise of Mr Louis Percy Lafrance, a former Member of Parliament. Mr Percy Lafrance passed away on 25 April of this year at the age of 70.

Mr Lafrance first stood as a candidate in the 1982 General Elections for the Legislative Assembly under the banner of the MMM-PSM for the Constituency No. 17 and he was returned as Second Member of the said Constituency.

Mr Percy Lafrance then contested the 1983 Legislative Assembly General Elections under the banner of the Mouvement Militant Mauricien for the same Constituency, Curepipe-Midlands, but was not returned.

In April of 1984, when late France Canabady resigned from Parliament, Mr Lafrance replaced him as a Best Loser.

In 1985, Mr Percy Lafrance served as Mayor of Curepipe.

In August 1987, he stood for the General Elections for the same Constituency, that is, Curepipe and Midlands, under the banner of l'Union MMM-MTD-FTS, but he was not returned. He, however, continued to do social work for the Mouvement Chrétien pour le Socialisme, of which he was an active member since the 70s.

With these words, Madam Speaker, may I request you to kindly direct the Clerk to convey the profound condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I fully associate myself to the tribute paid by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Louis Percy Lafrance.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey our deep condolences to the bereaved family.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Louis Percy Lafrance, former Member of Parliament, by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Office of the Speaker

The Special Report of the Public Accounts Committee, First Session of the Eighth National Assembly on the Warehousing of Pharmaceutical and Medical Disposables-Central Supplies Division (CSD), Ministry of Health and Wellness, stemming from the Director of Audit Reports (2021-2024).

B. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

(a) The Annual Report of the Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission for the financial year 2024/2025.

(b) The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Poverty Reduction Fund for the year ended 30 September 2025.

C. Ministry of Housing and Lands

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Town and Country Planning Board for the year ended 30 June 2025.

D. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

The Annual Report on Performance of the Solid Waste Management Division for the financial year 2024/2025. (In Original)

E. Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

The National Pensions (Non-Contributory Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 47 of 2026)

F. Attorney-General

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Curatelle Fund for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

G. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Waste Water (Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 48 of 2026)

H. Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Research

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council for the year ended 30 June 2021.

I. Ministry of Arts and Culture

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Malcolm de Chazal Trust Fund for the period 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2022.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**FUEL OIL SUPPLY – OPEN INTERNATIONAL BIDDING EXERCISE – BIDDERS
DETAILS**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer whether, in regard to the Open International Bidding exercise for the Supply of Fuel Oil launched on 10 December 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation (STC), the list of bidders who participated therein, indicating the –

- (a) name of the successful bidder, and
- (b) fuel grade supplied to the Central Electricity Board (CEB) since December 2024 to date and, in each case –
 - (i) give a breakdown in terms of product cost, freight and insurance, and
 - (ii) indicate the premium rate per metric ton charged by the supplier and the total amount paid over that period by the CEB and total amount of premium paid by the CEB to the STC per consignment supplied since January 2026 to date, indicating whether any revision thereof has been applied.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Minister.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, before replying to the specific parts of the question, I wish to inform the House that the State Trading Corporation is responsible for the procurement of fuel oils required for national needs, including supplies for the Central Electricity Board for electricity generation and to local industries.

Fuel oil contracts are normally awarded on an annual basis, generally for the period 01 April to 31 March of the following year so as to ensure continuity of supply, competitive pricing and orderly planning of national requirements.

I am informed that the annual contractual requirement for the period concerned covered approximately 319,000 metric tons of the three principal grades of fuel oils, namely –

- HSFO 180 CC, mainly for inland trade and industrial use;
- HSFO 180 SR for electricity generation, and
- HSFO 380 SR for electricity generation.

Provision is also made for the optional procurement of VLSFO 180 CST on an as-needed basis for bunkering purposes.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the initial annual contract for the supply of fuel oil for the period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 was launched through an open international bidding exercise on 05 January 2024 through the Government e-Procurement System.

Following evaluation of bids by the Bid Evaluation Committee, recommendation was made in favour of Coral Energy DMCC, being the substantially responsive bidder. The Board of the STC approved the award on 31 January 2024 and the then Government was apprised thereof on 09 February 2024, and the formal agreement was signed on 27 February 2024 after submission of a 5million USD Performance Security by the supplier.

The agreed premium under that annual contract was USD 69.80 per metric ton for the principal grades of fuel oil on a Delivery at Port basis.

I am further informed that, on 26 July 2024, Coral Energy DMCC notified the STC that its corporate legal name had changed...

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: One moment. Are you raising on a point of order?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, please. My PNQ refers to the open international bidding exercise on 10 December 2024, not in July or whatever.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I need to explain this so that people and the House...

Mr Lesjongard: No, we do not need ...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: ... can understand.

Madam Speaker: Could you...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am almost finished.

Madam Speaker: May I? May I?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am almost finished; I just need one minute.

Madam Speaker: May I just give a...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: *Mo pou larg to pese deor, sa mem to pe dekouyone!*

Mr Lesjongard: What is this, Madam Speaker? The question...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: After submission of a...

Madam Speaker: Minister...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: ...USD 5 million Performance Security...

Madam Speaker: Reply to his question and then you can...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am coming! I am coming! I am coming!

The agreed premium under that annual contract was USD 69.80 per metric ton for the principal grades of fuel oil...

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, the answer is not related to the PNQ!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: ... on a Delivery at Port basis.

Madam Speaker: Minister!

Mr Lesjongard: He cannot go on answering something that I am not asking.

Madam Speaker: Minister!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Okay. Okay. Do not worry, I will have plenty of time to come...

Madam Speaker: You cannot both...

Mr Lesjongard: You cannot have plenty of time. You have only 30 minutes!

Mr Mohamed: There is relevance!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, you have to have a look at the time, please, Minister.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I have enough time. My answer is very short today.

Mr Mohamed: It is relevant!

Madam Speaker: Okay. Today, you are going to be short, okay?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes.

So, the agreed premium under the annual contract was USD 69.80 per metric ton for the principal grades of fuel oil on a Delivery at Port basis.

I am further informed that on 26 July...

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, again, he is not ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: ...Coral Energy DMCC notified the STC that its corporate legal name has changed to 2Rivers DMCC – people need to know why 2Rivers DMCC won the contract – of which, the Board of the STC subsequently took note.

Mr Lesjongard: My question, again, ...

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: Ça fait mal ! Ça fait mal ! Ça fait mal !

(Interruptions)

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: As at 19 December 2024, eight consignments had already been delivered under the contract, totalling –

- 36,072 MT of HSFO 180 CC;
- 97,244 MT of HSFO 180 SR, and
- 99,461 MT of HSFO 380 SR.

There, nevertheless, remained contractual balances still to be supplied.

However, difficulties arose as from 17 December 2024 when the STC became aware of a public announcement by the United Kingdom authorities, indicating sanctions against 2Rivers DMCC. The STC immediately sought clarification from the supplier and requested confirmation regarding its ability to continue deliveries.

Thereafter, on 19 December 2024, the supplier informed the STC that, due to banking compliance constraints linked to the sanctions, it was not in a position to proceed with further supplies and payments, and proposed termination of the contract. People need to know this!

Madam Speaker, in view of the strategic importance of fuel oil used mainly for electricity generation, the matter was examined urgently and it was decided to proceed with an emergency procurement exercise to secure supplies and avoid disruption.

At that time, available national stock levels were reported to represent approximately –

- 61 days for FO 180 SR for the CEB;
- 59 days for FO 380 SR for the CEB, and
- 32 days for HSFO 180 CC for inland trade.

Although emergency procurement provision allowed procurement from a single supplying case of urgency, the STC, nevertheless, sought quotations from a number of established operators active in the petroleum sector so as to obtain competitive offers.

The emergency procurement exercise was accordingly initiated on 19 December for the replacement supply of the remaining three consignments, which had not been delivered under the existing contract.

The objective was to ensure that there would be no interruption in the availability of fuel oil required for electricity generation and industrial activity while preserving adequate buffer stocks at national level.

Given the urgency of the matter, the procurement process was undertaken on an accelerated basis so that replacement deliveries could be arranged at the earliest opportunity. Targeted arrival of the first emergency consignment was around 20 January 2025, having regard to normal shipping lead times and logistical requirements.

Invitations were sent to several potential suppliers, including entities such as OQ Trading Ltd, Vitol Bahrain E.C., BB Energy (Gulf) Ltd, Saudi Aramco, Sahara Energy Resource Limited, Bunker One, Peninsula Petroleum (Mauritius) Ltd, and Stonewin Capital LP.

At bid opening held on 20 December 2024, four bids were received, namely from –

- Aramco Trading Fujairah FZE;
- Vitol Bahrain E.C.;
- BB Energy (Gulf) DMCC, and
- Sahara Energy Resource Limited.

Following evaluation, the bids were ranked and Sahara Energy Resource Limited emerged as the lowest substantially responsive bidder. Management thereafter requested the bidder to review its prices downward, following which, revised premiums were obtained as follows –

- HSFO 180 CC - 91.9 USD per metric ton
- HSFO 180 SR - 97.9 USD per metric ton
- HSFO 380 SR - 86.4 USD per metric ton

The emergency contract covered approximately 29,000 metric tons for one immediate shipment, comprising—

- 3,500 MT of HSFO 180 CC;
- 13,500 MT of HSFO 180 SR;
- 12,000 MT of HSFO 380 SR.

The total premium value was estimated at USD 2,680,100 while the overall consignment value, based on the applicable Platts posting, was estimated at that time at approximately USD 15.05 million.

I am further informed that a second emergency procurement exercise was done on 23 December 2024 for the supply of fuel oils for the period February and March 2025. All the above-mentioned suppliers were again invited to participate through a procurement exercise and four bids were again received.

The emergency contract for two shipments of fuel oils in this exercise was awarded to Sahara Energy Resource Ltd at the following premium rate –

- HSFO 180 CC - 7,000 MT at USD 78.02 per metric ton;
- HSFO 180 SR - 28, 000 MT at USD 84.55 per metric ton;
- HSFO 380 SR - 25,000 at USD 72.25 per metric ton.

The interim arrangement enabled continuity of supply pending the commencement of the next annual contract and ensured that the operational requirements of the Central Electricity Board and local industries continued to be met without disruption.

Madam Speaker, it is to be noted that Sahara Energy Resource Limited was, at that point in time, the STC's supplier of white oils and had successfully delivered consignments to the satisfaction of the Corporation.

Thereafter, in parallel with the temporary emergency arrangements, the STC proceeded with a separate Open International Bidding exercise for the next annual requirement covering the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, so as to restore supply under a regular competitive contractual framework.

The bidding exercise was launched on 10 December 2024. At the opening of bids held on 16 January 2025, five bids were received from international suppliers and were examined in accordance with the prescribed technical, commercial and contractual criteria.

Following completion of the evaluation process, recommendation made in favour of Sahara Energy Resource Limited, being the lowest substantially responsive bidder. The Board of STC approved the award on 12 February 2025.

I am informed that the contract covered 340,000 metric tons of fuel oils for the annual period concerned. The estimated premium component for the three principal grades of fuel oils was approximately USD 20.99 million.

As part of its due diligence exercise, the STC also carried out verifications on the successful bidder, including checks against ineligibility lists of major international financial institutions and confirmations regarding sourcing arrangements and compliance with applicable sanctions clauses.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed that the price payable by the STC for each consignment generally comprises two main components –

1. the prevailing international benchmark price of a petroleum product based on the applicable market reference quotation, and
2. the contractual premium quoted by the successful supplier.

The premium is an all-inclusive supply and logistics component. It generally covers freight, marine insurance, supplier's margin, loading and discharge port charges, deviation costs, bunkers, tank cleaning, security charges where applicable, financing and operational risks, as well as delivery to Mauritius on a DAP basis.

As regards part (b)(ii), under the annual contract awarded to Sahara Energy Resource Ltd for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the premium rates were as follows –

- HSFO 180 SR - USD 78.04 per metric ton;
- HSFO 380 SR - USD 68.74 per metric ton.

I wish to draw the attention of the House that the contract agreement was tabled on 14 April 2026.

Madam Speaker, as regards for part (b)(iii) of the question, I am informed that, on 23 January 2023, an Agreement was signed between the State Trading Corporation and the Central Electricity Board for the sale of Fuel Oil, namely HSFO 180...

Madam Speaker: I can't see (b)(iii).

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: (b)(ii), sorry.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: They changed the question.

So, namely HSFO 180 SR and HSFO 380 SR, for the period covering 01 February 2023 to 31 January 2026.

I am further informed that, under the provisions of that Agreement, the quantities, product specifications and premium chargeable to the CEB are reviewed annually through an addendum signed by both parties. The standing Agreement was subsequently extended up to 31 March 2026 by way of an addendum.

It is also to be highlighted that the premium chargeable to the CEB for both grades of Fuel Oil includes the premium payable by the STC to its supplier, together with administrative and other operating expenses incurred for the importation of the product and delivery of the same to the CEB's shore tanks.

For the sales period covering 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the total premium chargeable to CEB for HSFO 180 SR was worked out at USD 99.39 per metric ton, comprising the supplier premium of USD 78.04, a survey fee of USD 0.15, a contingency fee of USD 6.20, and an administrative fee of USD 7.

For HSFO 380 SR, the total premium chargeable to CEB was worked out at USD 82.09 per metric ton, comprising the supplier premium of USD 68.74, a survey fee of USD 0.15, a contingency fee of USD 6.20, and an administrative fee of USD 7.

I am further informed that the contingency component covers risks and costs associated with the importation of fuel oil, including shifting charges, compensation for off-specification products, contribution to the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund and other related risks. No margin is charged by the STC to the CEB.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c), the information requested consists of detailed shipment-wise figures and premium data extracted...

Madam Speaker: There is no part (c).

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Okay. So, I will table the different figures.

Madam Speaker: Yes, because it is very difficult even for me; I suppose for the general public as well.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, your first supplementary question.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister has been mostly irrelevant when he has replied to my PNQ...

Madam Speaker: Don't comment! Please, come...

Mr Lesjongard: And, I hope you will give me enough time to put my supplementary questions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I will give you time but no comments, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, the actual contract with Sahara Energy Resource Limited expires end of May and the hon. Minister has stated that the country has secured supply for fuel oil up to the end of May 2027. Can the hon. Minister inform the House when the tender for supply for fuel oil was launched?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, there was a tender in January. However, the first two lowest bidders were not qualified because we did a due diligence on these two companies and unfortunately, we could not allocate the tender. Thereafter, the war has arrived and we had to go direct, as an emergency procurement. In fact, we went through the Cabinet after the decision of the Board of the STC.

Madam Speaker: Yes, second supplementary!

Mr Lesjongard: I think the hon. Minister is getting confused, Madam Speaker. Can I...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Not at all! *Ki* confused?

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Minister what mode of procurement exercise was used?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: We do not understand the question. Did you?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, there was a tender and once the due diligence was made...

Madam Speaker: We got that!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: ... and it was not positive on the first two bidders. Then as the war arrived, we had to take a decision because in the meantime, people have heard that one consignment could not come to Mauritius, and we had to supply from Singapore. In the meantime, we launched an international tender for 48 hours and the price was excessively very expensive and we had to take a decision.

The price for the emergency procurement was around USD 200 for the premium, very expensive and we got a better price.

Madam Speaker: Okay, third question! No comments, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Again, Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. Minister is not understanding what I am asking him!

Madam Speaker: No comments, I said!

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the contract he mentioned, which was awarded on an emergency basis, may we know the duration of the contract? It starts from when and ends when?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: The contract starts from 01 August for one year. It's as simple as this. I have to say, it is unlike the MME.

Mr Lesjongard: No, Madam Speaker!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: MME, there was no emergency, they go direct and they decided everything in an office.

Mr Lesjongard: He doesn't know what to answer!

Madam Speaker: One moment! One moment!

If it's 01 August, it can only be 25, can't it? It is so obvious!

Mr Lesjongard: No, but then, can I repeat my question, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Non!

Can I repeat my question? My question is with regard to a tender exercise starting from May 2020 this year to May 2027. I am not asking about August, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: He is talking of 2026. This month.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Oh yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, the previous agreement which, in fact, I deposited at the House, was over on 31 March and then it was extended to May.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, that I know.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: Then my question is: May is next door, Madam Speaker; what do we do? This is my question.

Madam Speaker: Question! Question!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I already answered this question. In fact, we went direct because of the war and there was an emergency tender for one consignment only and the price was excessively very high – over 200 dollars for the premium and we went directly. Cabinet was apprised of this.

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat in case you have already.

Mr Lesjongard: So, if you went directly, Madam Speaker...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: He is repeating the question.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Minister to inform the House, who were the persons who carried out the negotiations with the supplier and whether the State Trading Corporation had received Government's authority before starting negotiations with the supplier and if this is the case, can he table the letter which gives the STC authority to start negotiation with the supplier?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: First of all, I do not meet suppliers unlike the previous government. It is the STC, the management team which negotiates if need be.

Madam Speaker: You do not meet suppliers.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I do not meet.

Madam Speaker: Yes, alright. Next question! Question!

Mr Lesjongard: Okay, he made reference to premium. When he replied to the question, he said that there is an increase of about USD18 per metric ton with regard to the present contract. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the CEB has to pay this premium in US Dollar and the reasons the payment has to be made in US Dollar?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: First of all, the agreement which was signed between the STC and the CEB, I want to ask him, who signed...

Madam Speaker: No, do not!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Who signed?

Madam Speaker: Do not ask him!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Who signed or when was it signed? It was signed when he was the Minister of Energy.

Mr Lesjongard: It is not a question of signature. It is a question of increase. There is USD 18 increase per premium.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am willing to table the agreement if need be.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I then...

Madam Speaker: You cannot both stand at the same time.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister confirm that under the present contract, the annual premium charges for two months only, for one year, that is, represents a total amount of USD 6.5 million which is around Rs305 million which the CEB has to pay in US Dollar. Do you find this normal, hon. Minister?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, first of all, we would not be here today if he did not cancel the MRPL contract when the previous government, our Government...

Mr Lesjongard: It has nothing to do, Madam Speaker.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In 2006 when we signed a G-2-G agreement with India when the Mangalore MRPL was supplying Mauritius with a preferred price.

An hon. Member: *Ban kriminel!*

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Well, his government unfortunately cancelled the contract despite their former...

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, he is wasting the time of this House.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Their former DPM said that is illegal. It was illegal to cancel the contract.

Madam Speaker: You put question to him, he has to...

Mr Lesjongard: He has to be relevant, Madam Speaker, in answering the question.

An hon. Member: *Gagn dimal.*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, the present contract with Sahara Energy Resources Ltd was extended for a period of two months, that is, up to 31 May 2026. Now, given that this extension was approved on 09 February well before the Middle East conflict started, can the hon. Minister inform the House and give reasons as to why no competitive tender exercise was carried out at that time for the supply of fuel oil?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: There was a tender, I said in January. However, the two lowest bidders were not approved...

Madam Speaker: You said it twice. Okay.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: ...because of due diligence.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We are not like them; they did not do due diligence when they were in power.

Madam Speaker: Okay. We heard this twice, three times now.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I have to say it because he is asking.

Madam Speaker: No more on this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: I come back again to the CEB. Can the hon. Minister inform the House under which contractual clause, were such adjustments authorised and was prior approval sought from the CEB or the parent Ministry?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: There is an agreement and I know that the hon. Minister of Energy is not agreeable with his agreement when he was Minister. We are discussing between the two ministries and we hope to find a solution in the coming days.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is a question directly to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, as minister responsible for consumer protection, did you intervene so as to reduce the rate of premium paid by the CEB to the STC, as that increase will definitely impact on the cost of production of electricity and also, we know that tariffs will be increased by 15% next month?

Madam Speaker: Did you intervene, hon. Minister?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Well, the two ministries are presently working on the agreement to see whether we can lower the different fees.

Madam Speaker: Good! I got a few more minutes for you.

Mr Lesjongard: Sorry. ... as Minister responsible for Consumer Protection *et la population va être frappée le mois prochain avec une augmentation de 15 % des tarifs d'électricité, Madame la présidente.*

Madam Speaker: You are making a statement.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I have to make. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether STC is revising the price structure of Mogas and Gas Oil and whether, the tax and duties rate will be revised so as to alleviate the problem of Mauritian families, Madam Speaker?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We will decide when the time comes.

Mr Lesjongard: You will decide?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I need to add an information.

If they really care for the population, when they allocated the tender to Coral Energy GMCC, why did they give the contract to Coral Energy GMCC even though the price was more expensive? At that time, it was USD 89 per metric ton and for BB Energy Gulf DMCC was USD76.56 per metric ton. Where was he?

Madam Speaker: Okay, I am... You have not finished?

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the payment of fuel oil to Sahara Energy Resources Ltd is being made in an account located in the Isle of Man?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I am not aware because I am not part of the management of the STC.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay. I want to give a question to the hon. Chief Whip. Yes.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Je remercie l'honorable ministre pour sa réponse. L'honorable ministre peut-il informer la Chambre les raisons pour lesquelles le contrat signé en 2006 avec la MRPL, l'une des principales raffineries de pétrole en Inde a été annulé ? Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: *Raison?* We have heard about this, so now she is asking for reasons.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Personally, I am not aware but we can guess because of commission.

Mr Lesjongard: What you can guess, there is no...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: The previous Government was after commissions.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Time is up! Time is up! Thank you, everyone.

Now we go to questions. Give me a few minutes because lots of questions have been withdrawn. There are a few people who are not present today. So, as we go along, I will tell you. Give me a minute.

For the moment, the Table has been advised that PQs B/493, B/499, B/500, B/506, B/507, B/508, B/515, B/517 and B/531 have been withdrawn.

So, now, I call on the Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil, hon. Beehook!

**DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENCES – POLICE OFFICERS
ARRESTED/SUSPENDED (2014-2026)**

(No. B/493) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drug trafficking offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of police officers arrested and/or suspended in connection therewith since 2014 to date, indicating the number thereof convicted and where matters stand regarding the remaining cases.

(Withdrawn)

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – MR S.M., DEPUTY CEO – CONTRACT &
APPOINTMENT DETAILS**

(No. B/494) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr. S. M., Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) his date of appointment and the terms and conditions thereof, and

- (b) the circumstances under which his contract was renewed, indicating the terms and conditions of his new contract.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Economic Development Board that Mr S.M. was appointed as Deputy Chief Executive Officer on 11 April 2023 on a 3-year contract. This post was neither advertised internally nor externally. Mr S.M. was handpicked by the previous Board. The terms and conditions of his appointment were as follows –

- (a) a basic monthly salary of Rs 400,000 with an annual increase of 3.2%;
- (b) a gratuity of 20% of the annual basic salary, payable at the end of each year;
- (c) passage benefits equivalent to 5% of the annual basic salary, and
- (d) a chauffeur-driven car.

I am further informed that at its meeting held on 16 March 2026, the Board of Directors of the EDB did not renew the contract, but extended it for a further period of one year, on the same terms and conditions.

The decision to extend his contract was taken by the Board of Directors of the EDB because they felt that since the CEO of the EDB will be leaving by the end of May 2026 to take another appointment abroad, it might be better to extend his contract for a period of one year to ensure continuity at this important economic institution.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Beechook!

Mr Beechook: Madam Speaker, will the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether the post of Deputy CEO, which is not part of the statutes of the EDB and ought to have been advertised, therefore, will he consider nullifying the renewal of this contract because right from the beginning...

Madam Speaker: No, no! No statements!

Mr Beechook: ...this post was supposed to be advertised and go through job interviews, etc.?

The Prime Minister: As I said, it was not advertised at the time. But it is the Board that decides, not me. They decided because of continuity; to ensure continuity, they extended the contract for one year. Already some months have passed.

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay.

Now, I shall call on the Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or, hon. Beejan!

**CYBERCRIME UNIT – CURRENT COMPOSITION – REPORTED CASES –
CAPACITY STRENGTHENING**

(No. B/495) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Cybercrime Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) current composition thereof;
- (b) number of cases reported thereto since November 2025 to date, indicating the outcome thereof in each case, and
- (c) measures being envisaged to strengthen the capacity thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Cybercrime Unit is headed by an officer of the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police, who is accountable to the Deputy Commissioner of Police Crime. The Unit is presently staffed with 16 other officers of different ranks, comprising another Assistant Superintendent of Police, one Police Inspector, eight Police Sergeants, and six Police Constables.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that for the period 01 November 2025 to 23 April 2026, a total of 116 cases has been referred to the Cybercrime Unit for investigation. Out of these, one case has been filed before the court, six cases have led to arrests, with the persons concerned released on bail with conditions, and enquiries in the remaining cases are ongoing.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, Government is aware of the existing operational constraints of the Cybercrime Unit and is taking steps to strengthen its operational capacity in view of the increasing volume and complexity of cyber-related offences. In this respect –

- (i) a more integrated operational framework has been established, whereby the Cybercrime Unit works in close coordination with the Police IT Unit, which provides 24/7 technical and digital forensic support for investigations;
- (ii) the collaboration has been further enhanced through a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 28 January 2026 between the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-MU), the Mauritius Police Force and the Data

Protection Office for the operation of a Digital Forensic Laboratory under the Police IT Unit, and

- (iii) training is being provided to officers through a range of international organisations and partner jurisdictions to enhance their expertise in areas, such as digital forensics, cyber investigations and emerging cyber threats.

Madam Speaker, still, I feel there is room for improvement. Therefore, I have asked for the assistance of the Government of India during my State visit in September 2025. Following the request, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation was engaged in discussion with Maharashtra Cyber, a specialised cybercrime investigation and cybersecurity unit of the Maharashtra Police Force in India, with a view to enhancing the operational capacity of the Cybercrime Unit.

In November 2025, a delegation from Maharashtra Cyber visited Mauritius, and in December 2025, a Mauritian delegation led by the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation visited Mumbai to pursue further discussions with the Maharashtra Cyber Police on specific areas of cooperation.

However, after looking at their proposal, I have decided to deal directly with Delhi. These engagements have led to ongoing structured discussions focusing on key strategic areas of collaboration, including the establishment of a Command-and-Control Centre as a centralised platform for cybercrime response, the development of enhanced digital forensic capabilities to address complex investigations, and the strengthening of national cybercrime response mechanisms.

Alongside these initiatives, and in line with the Government's Programme of 2025-2029, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation is working on amendments to the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act to further reinforce the legal framework.

These amendments will provide for an enhanced oversight and auditing of critical information infrastructure as well as stronger safeguards for child online protection. They will also strengthen the obligations of service providers to implement robust cybersecurity measures, comply with mandatory security standards and audits, report and respond promptly to cyber incidents, and cooperate fully with investigators. Drafting instructions have already been conveyed to the Attorney General's Office for the preparation of the amendment Bill.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Third Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or!

**MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY – TAX REVENUE COLLECTION –
OUTSTANDING AMOUNT (MARCH 2026)**

(No. B/496) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to tax revenue collection, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the total amount thereof outstanding as at 31 March 2026, giving a breakdown thereof, indicating the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) measures being taken or envisaged to recoup same.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) that as at 31 March 2026, the total amount of tax revenue outstanding at the level of the Authority amounted to some Rs 25.7 billion. The breakdown is as follows –

- (a) Rs14.9 billion under Corporate Income Tax;
- (b) Rs7.1 billion under Value Added Tax;
- (c) Rs2.8 billion under Personal Income Tax;
- (d) Rs352 million under Betting and Gaming Taxes;
- (e) Rs254 million under Tax Deduction at Source, and
- (f) Rs249 million under other taxes collected by the MRA.

In addition, an amount of Rs615 million was due under the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG)*, and it has not been paid.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the main reasons for the accumulation of tax arrears include –

- (a) taxpayers filing returns without paying the full amount of the tax payable;
- (b) unpaid tax on assessments raised by the MRA on taxpayers for under-declaration or non-declaration of income;
- (c) cases under objections or appeal having been determined, but where the tax due has not been fully paid, and
- (d) penalty and interest payable on tax due to the MRA.

I am further informed, Madam Speaker, that the amount outstanding under corporate tax includes the case of Avago Technologies Trading Ltd., where the tax payable is around Rs 6.6 billion. This amount has become payable under the determination made by the Assessment Review Committee in regard to this case. However, the taxpayer has subsequently appealed to the Supreme Court without paying the tax due. Recovery actions have been initiated by the MRA and are under dispute at the moment at the Supreme Court.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the MRA has informed that it has a specialised unit, namely the Debt Management Unit, which is responsible for the recovery of arrears. This Unit uses the various powers conferred to the MRA under the Mauritius Revenue Authority Act to recover tax debts.

The most common and effective recovery powers are “attachment orders” on bank accounts and inscription of immovable property. Where the bank accounts of a debtor are frozen, the banks are required to remit the money in those accounts to the MRA to clear the tax debts. In cases where the debt exceeds Rs200,000, an inscription on immovable properties of the debtors is systematically taken.

Madam Speaker, with a view to speed up the recovery of the amount of tax due, Government has, in the last Budget, renewed the Tax Arrears Settlement Scheme giving taxpayers a waiver of penalties and interests if the total amount of tax is paid. Additionally, two new schemes, namely the Tax Dispute Settlement Scheme and the Voluntary Disclosure Settlement Scheme were also put in place to improve tax compliance. A total amount of Rs2.27 billion has been collected under these 3 schemes up to March 2026.

I am further informed that the MRA is currently working on new ways and means to speed up recovery of tax arrears. In this context, the MRA has already deployed more human resources to its Debt Management Unit. The MRA is also coming up with additional mechanism with a view to accelerating the recovery of outstanding amounts.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Etwareea, fine? Okay.

Now, we have the hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart!

DETAINEES – PROHIBITED ITEMS POSSESSION – REPORTED CASES (2023-2026)

(No. B/497) **Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to prohibited items found in the possession of detainees within correctional facilities after attending court, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the past three years, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) investigated and dealt with, and
- (b) in respect of which charges have been lodged against the detainees and any other person.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that all detainees are systematically searched upon their return from Court. From 01 January 2023 to 23 April 2026, 48 cases have been reported where prohibited items were found to be in the possession of detainees returning from Court.

With regard to part (a) of the question, out of the 48 cases, 35 cases concerning prohibited items such as dangerous drugs, mobile phones, or SIM cards have been reported to the Police for investigation as they are suspected to be linked to criminal offences.

As regards the remaining 13 cases, involving prohibited items such as cigarettes, lighters and flintstones, disciplinary actions have been taken against the detainees at the level of the Prisons Department. Such actions relate to confinement in a separate cell, forfeiture of privileges or earnings and loss of remission.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of the 35 reported cases, three cases have been filed and one detainee has been charged with the offence of Possession of Heroin with aggravating circumstances under sections 34 and 41 of the Dangerous Drugs Act. Police enquiry is ongoing in the remaining cases.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Dr. Prayag, are you okay?

Now, we have the hon. Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central!

PUBLIC BODIES – ALLEGED CORRUPTIVE PRACTICES – INQUIRIES

(No. B/498) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to alleged corruptive practices in Ministries, State-owned enterprises and parastatal bodies, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Crimes Commission, information as to the number of reported cases thereof as at to date, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) currently under investigation, and
- (b) wherein inquiries have been completed, prosecution initiated and convictions secured or awaiting determination.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Financial Crimes Commission that since the establishment of the Financial Crimes Commission in March 2024, 327 cases of alleged corruptive practices in Ministries, State-owned Enterprises and Parastatal Bodies have been reported to the Commission. The House may wish to note that the Financial Crimes Commission also took over 136 cases of alleged corruptive practices from the defunct Independent Commission Against Corruption.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Financial Crimes Commission has informed that 204 cases are currently under investigation.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Commission has informed that inquiries have been completed in 11 cases, out of which –

- (i) four cases have been referred to the Office of the DPP, and
- (ii) seven cases have been lodged before the Intermediate court.

In addition, convictions have been secured in four cases, out of which, determination is awaited in two cases.

It is also to be noted, Madam Speaker, that during the course of investigation, 248 cases were set aside as the Financial Crimes Commission determined that they do not fall within the purview of the Commission.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, one question!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has any information from the Financial Crimes Commission as to if foreign forensic auditors will be required or have recourse to in an attempt to speed up investigations for which the general public is awaiting to see that those who squandered the coffers of the State during 2014 to 2024 are taken care of?

The Prime Minister: We are having recourse to former members of Scotland Yard to help the Police and the Financial Crimes Commission on this.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTION – COMBATTING CRIMES – LEGISLATION SAFEGUARD

(No. B/499) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the interception of telecommunications, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether same is being resorted to combat crimes and, if so, indicate whether consideration is being given for the introduction of legislation to safeguard against the misuse, abuse or illegal use thereof, including the setting up of an independent oversight body therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MR A.C.P. & TWIN BROTHER'S ARRESTS – REASONS/CIRCUMSTANCES & DEPARTURE OBJECTIONS

(No. B/500) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr

A.C.P. arrested on or about 03 April 2026 and the subsequent arrest of his twin brother, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the reasons therefor and circumstances thereof, indicating the items seized in the course thereof and whether same include illicit drugs and, if so, give details thereof, and
- (b) whether they are currently subjected to objections to departure.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Yes, next question! Hon. Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles, Dr. Ms Daureeawo!

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. B/502!

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Oh, I missed Mr Beehook. I am so sorry!

Okay, hon. Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil!

Bear with me, Miss!

SAINT LOUIS POWER PLANT – TURBINES PROCUREMENT – ALLEGED CORRUPTION

(No. B/501) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into allegations of corruption in relation to the procurement of turbines for the Saint Louis Power Plant of the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the names of the persons arrested and interrogated under caution in connection therewith as at to date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Financial Crimes Commission that the then Independent Commission Against Corruption initiated investigations on the procurement of turbines at a contract value of Rs4.2 billion for the Redevelopment of the Saint Louis Power Station in June 2020 based on three sources, namely –

- (i) a local press article dated 09 June 2020;
- (ii) a referral from the Central Electricity Board, and
- (iii) a press release from the African Development Bank denouncing an alleged act of corruption in the award of the tender for the Redevelopment of Saint Louis Power Station Project by the Central Electricity Board to (BWSC), Denmark in March of 2016.

Madam Speaker, the Commission has further informed that investigation has been completed and the matter has been transmitted to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on 29 January 2026.

Madam Speaker, regarding the names of the people arrested, these cannot be disclosed as the matter has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for further action.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, now it is your turn!

HUMAN TRAFFICKING – REPORTED CASES – VICTIMS PROTECTION MEASURES

(No. B/502) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to human trafficking, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of reported cases thereof over the past two years, indicating the number of prosecutions initiated in connection therewith and the outcomes thereof, and
- (b) additional measures taken or being envisaged to combat same, indicating the mechanisms put in place for the protection of the victims thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, for the period 01 January 2024 to 24 April 2026, a total of 26 cases of human trafficking have been reported. Out of these, prosecution has been initiated in four cases, of which three

are currently under trial and one has resulted in conviction. The remaining cases are still under enquiry.

With the increasing number of foreign workers in the country, the scourge of human trafficking presents a growing challenge which Government is addressing through strengthened enforcement coupled with enhanced legal and institutional framework as well as preventive measures. At policy level, the National Action Plan 2022-2026 for combatting human trafficking is being reviewed with the collaboration of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and amendments have been brought to the Combatting of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Act to apply tougher penalties for perpetrators and enlarge the powers of investigation of the Police. Some of the key operational measures already in place to combat human trafficking are as follows –

- (i) vigilance is maintained at the airport and the harbour by the Passport and Immigration Office through vigorous screening. Around 5,330 passengers have been refused entry in Mauritius over the past two years for non-compliance of entry procedures and suspected irregular or unlawful intent;
- (ii) continuous crackdown operations are carried out by the Passport and Immigration Office Tracking Team to search for illegal/missing foreigners to prevent them to become the prey of traffickers. Since 01 January 2026, around 272 cracks down operations have been carried out and 2,138 foreigners have been arrested for illegal stay;
- (iii) reinforced coordination with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, the TIP Task Force of Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the TIP Unit of the Police and the Passport and Immigration Office for detection of cases of human trafficking as well as for sensitisation campaigns on the risk and indicators of human trafficking, and
- (iv) strengthening training and capacity-building of Police Officers, including dedicated modules in recruit courses, to enhance detection, investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. Police Officers also benefit from international training courses from the United States Department of State and the IOM on Human Trafficking.

Madam Speaker, with regard to protection of victims, I am informed that comprehensive mechanisms have been put in place to ensure their safety, care and rehabilitation. These include the provision of shelter facilities for both male and female victims, access to medical and psychological support, legal assistance and arrangements for education of minors in cases where victims are accompanied with their children. Victims are also provided with international communication facilities and, where appropriate, are safely repatriated to their country of origin.

A victim-centred standard operating procedure has been implemented with the collaboration of the IOM and key stakeholders have been trained for the referral of cases of human trafficking as well as support to the victims.

Furthermore, close collaboration is maintained with NGOs operating shelters, with dedicated Police liaison officers, regular monitoring, and necessary protection measures to ensure that victims are safeguarded and that there is no contact with alleged perpetrators.

Cases of human trafficking are often complex in nature and require careful handling of victims to enable them to depone effectively before Court, which is the key to securing convictions. The Government remains fully committed to protecting victims and has put solid systems in place to combat this phenomenon.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, you are alright? Very good! Now, the hon. First Member for Savanne & Black River.

INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL ROUTES – MIDDLE EAST CRISIS IMPACT – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

(No. B/503) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to international air travel routes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the impact of the Middle East crisis on the flights operated between Mauritius and Asia, in particular China, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for positioning Mauritius as an air corridor between Asia and Africa and seeking a strategic partnership for Air Mauritius Ltd. with an airline from the Middle East.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of the House that information regarding this question have been obtained from the Department of Civil Aviation as the regulator and Air Mauritius Ltd.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that currently, three airlines, namely Air Mauritius, Air India, and Indigo, operate on the Mauritius-Asia route. The destinations are: New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai in India and also Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. In addition, Air India and Malaysia Airlines have codeshare agreement with Air Mauritius, connecting Mauritius with Asia.

As regards China, I am informed that China Southern Airlines and Air Mauritius were operating direct flights on the Mauritius-China route. China Southern Airlines ceased operations on 28 November 2015 whereas Air Mauritius continued till 31 January 2020. There is presently no direct flight between Mauritius and China, although I believe that China Southern Airlines are discussing with Air Mauritius and Civil Aviation to restart the route.

I am informed by the Department of Civil Aviation that, so far, the Middle East crisis has not affected the operation of scheduled flights between Mauritius and Asia by Air Mauritius, Air India and Indigo.

However, the crisis has led to a significant increase in Jet-A1 fuel prices throughout the world and this has affected the costs of operation of Air Mauritius as well as the prices of air tickets. A Committee has been set up by Air Mauritius to explore all the opportunities to mitigate the impact of rising Jet-A1 fuel costs. Air Mauritius is closely monitoring the situation and will take appropriate action as circumstances would warrant.

Concerning part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, according to Air Mauritius, the concept of 'air corridor' between Asia and Africa via Mauritius was implemented with effect from 11 March 2016. However, this concept was terminated in 2017 as there were several structural flaws which eventually led to the operations running at a loss. There is no plan to re-establish such a corridor for the time being.

Air Mauritius has enlisted the services of a consulting firm to conduct a network and fleet review.

Currently, Air Mauritius is embarking on a set of game changing strategies aimed not only at improving the performance of the company but also to build resilience in the face of emerging challenges.

Air Mauritius is not immediately envisaging a strategic partnership with any airline at this stage but they are looking at it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, you are okay? Right! Again, the hon. Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil – very popular today.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE – PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT – INCENTIVE PACKAGE – FINANCIAL COST & BENEFITS

(No. B/504) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed establishment of a Special Economic Zone at Côte d’Or, he will state the –

- (a) proposed incentive package for prospective promoters, developers and operators thereof;
- (b) estimated financial cost thereof to Government, and
- (c) anticipated tangible benefits for the Mauritian economy in terms of foreign direct investment and job creation.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, at the launch of the Mauritius-India Business Meeting last September in Mumbai, I had announced the setting up of a Special Economic Zone in Mauritius. This SEZ would have world class facilities for excellence in IT, Artificial Intelligence, high tech manufacturing, and other transformative investment.

The SEZ at Côte d’Or, being developed on 83 arpents of land, will be a premier innovation-driven zone for businesses that define the economy of the future.

The setting up of the SEZ is part of our strategy for economic renewal and transition to a new economic model, which is investment-driven. Through this zone, Government is laying the foundation for a new pillar which will promote a technology-driven economy.

During my visit to India in February 2026, at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, I appealed to the business community to avail of the facilities under the SEZ to make Mauritius a trusted digital gateway between Africa and Asia.

A Steering Committee has been set up to oversee implementation of the SEZ and to ensure that the necessary ecosystem is put in place to attract high-net-worth investors. This Committee is chaired by the Financial Secretary and comprises representatives of the relevant

Ministries and institutions. It is working on all the aspects of the SEZ implementation, including the development of an incentive framework for the zone.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the Steering Committee has recommended a package of incentives to attract investors in the SEZ. The proposed package will be offered under a new scheme. The scheme will also be available for the development of similar approved zones across the country. The package covers both fiscal and non-fiscal incentives and has been developed based on a benchmarking exercise of incentives being offered by other similar SEZs across the world. The holders of the proposed Golden Visa will be able to participate in the new scheme and benefit from the package of incentives.

Once approved by Cabinet, the details of the incentive package will be made public.

Madam Speaker, we are ensuring that the package of incentives will be comprehensive enough to cater for the needs of different categories of investors in the zone.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the SEZ at Côte d'Or will be fully serviced with infrastructure which include roads, electricity and water as well as wastewater by December of this year.

This will require an investment of around Rs1 billion, out of which, Government is financing some Rs882 million. The remaining investment will be made by Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the SEZ will be a transformative, game-changing opportunity that will drive the next wave of investment in Mauritius and strengthen the country's global economic positioning. It will also provide the opportunity to position Mauritius as a safe and stable investment jurisdiction in the midst of the pervading uncertainties at the international level.

It will support economic diversification, enabling Mauritius to transition into a hub for AI, advanced technology and manufacturing. International experience shows that Special Economic Zones are proven catalysts for FDI, for job creation, and economic growth. Being the first AI-focused SEZ in the region, Mauritius is well-positioned to emerge as a leader in AI innovation and data-driven economy.

This will enable a structural shift from traditional sectors to knowledge-based and innovation-driven industries, enhancing global competitiveness. The SEZ aims to attract leading global technology companies and AI-Data and Disaster Recovery Centres,

positioning Mauritius as a producer and exporter of AI services and not just being a consumer.

In terms of employment, the SEZ is expected to generate high-value jobs in targeted sectors.

At this point, Madam Speaker, we are in the process of launching an Expression of Interest inviting investors to invest in the SEZ. We will be in a better position to assess the level of Foreign Direct Investment and the impact on job creation from the SEZ after this exercise.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you. The hon. First Member for Vacoas & Floréal!

BANK OF MAURITIUS – FOREIGN CURRENCY RESERVES – QUANTUM SOLD

(No. B/505) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the country's foreign currency reserves, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the quantum of foreign currency sold on the domestic market over the past two years, on a yearly basis, indicating the sources thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/505 and B/511 together, as they relate to the same subject matter.

As I have previously stated in this august Assembly, this Government and the new administration at the Bank of Mauritius have implemented a series of measures to rectify the chaotic situation that prevailed in the domestic foreign exchange market prior to November 2024. A pronounced mismatch between demand and supply has led to substantial shortages of foreign currency on the local market.

Let me remind the House of some of the key measures taken –

- (a) The repo rate was raised by 50 basis points to 4.5 percent per annum in February 2025;
- (b) Instructions were given to commercial banks to ensure that all dealings in foreign exchange, including swaps and other derivatives, are effected through financial institutions duly licensed by the Bank;
- (c) The Bank enforced stricter regulation on intercompany transactions in foreign currencies as well as swaps and other derivatives;

- (d) Banks were instructed to ensure that forward transactions are priced in a fair manner and in accordance with market fundamentals, and
- (e) The regulatory arbitrage between the Financial Services Commission and the Bank of Mauritius regarding the purchase and sale of forex by Treasury Management Companies was discontinued.

At the level of Government, Madam Speaker, we have reinforced these efforts through structural measures aimed at increasing foreign currency inflows. These including –

- (a) requiring that at least 85 percent of proceeds from the sales of villas under the Property Development Scheme be converted into rupees, and
- (b) mandating that the businesses earning at least 50 percent of their turnover in foreign currency pay their tax in full in foreign currency.

In addition, the introduction of the Tourist Fee of 3 Euros per night per tourist, effective as 01 October 2025, has helped to ease the foreign exchange shortage.

As a result of these measures, Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that conditions in the domestic foreign exchange rate have improved. In 2025, both purchases and sales of foreign currency by banks and foreign exchange dealers reached historically high levels, reflecting increased market activity and a notable easing of liquidity constraints in the forex market.

A similar positive momentum has been observed since the start of this year. Transactions in foreign currency by banks and foreign exchange dealers have increased by around 11 percent from the beginning of the year up to 22 April 2026. This reflects a continued strengthening of activity and confidence in the foreign exchange market.

As market conditions have improved, the Bank of Mauritius has had to intervene to a lesser extent in the foreign exchange market in 2025. The Bank sold USD 224 million on the forex market during the year, compared to USD 372.3 million in 2024.

This reduction in the volume of sales reflects the gradual easing of pressures in the market. The trend has continued into 2026, with the Bank selling USD 40 million on the domestic market from January to 23 April 2026.

I am further informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the sales of US dollars on the market were sourced from official foreign currency reserves at the Bank of Mauritius.

The situation, Madam Speaker, is improving, especially in view of the overall surplus in the balance of payments. The combined effect of raising the key rate, enhancing regulation, targeted interventions, and structural measures has led to better liquidity conditions and increased supply of foreign exchange.

The Bank of Mauritius is continuously monitoring developments in the market and is having monthly meetings with the treasurers of banks through the Mauritius Financial Markets Committee. The Bank stands ready to take appropriate actions as may be required to ensure an adequate and orderly supply of foreign currency.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one question because time is up!

Ms J. Bérenger: Est-ce qu'il pourrait nous donner plus de détails sur la provenance des devises des réserves ?

The Prime Minister: I don't have all the details of the provenance from the Bank of Mauritius, but I can look into the matter. But I know, as I said, some measures are being taken. For example, on property, they have to pay now in rupees. This is increasing. Also, the three euros for the tourists, this also is coming to the foreign reserve.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Time is up now! Time is up!

I have to inform you that B/514 has been withdrawn.

So, now we go to questions to Ministers!

The hon. Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil, Mr Ramkalawon!

SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SYNTHETIC DRUGS – MEASURES

(No. B/518) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the secondary schools, he will state the number of reported cases of introduction, possession and consumption of synthetic drugs thereat over the past ten years, indicating the measures being taken to prevent the recurrence thereof.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Member for this question which is of national importance. Let us be clear when we speak of synthetic drugs in our schools, we are not discussing mere statistics. We are discussing of a genuine predatory threat which spares almost no one, be it the children or adults.

Based on the records on my Ministry between 2016 and March 2026, we have identified 80 suspected cases across our state and private secondary schools. Each of these cases was immediately handed over to the police authorities for rigorous investigation as per the established protocol guiding heads of schools.

Madam Speaker, one single case is an outrage. One single case is a call to arms. My Ministry does not merely remain concerned; we are engaged in an unrelenting offensive to purge this scourge from our school premises and the corridors of learning.

Our strategy is built on a three-pronged shield to protect our children –

- (1) fearless prevention;
- (2) uncompromising deterrence, and
- (3) compassionate support.

Madam Speaker, regarding prevention, we are sensitising our children through two specific school programmes, namely –

- the Get Connected Programme, and
- the Rebound Programme.

The Get Connected Programme targets our Grade 7 and Grade 8 students. This initiative builds a foundation of emotional regulation and responsible decision-making. We are strengthening the protective factors of our children before they are ever approached by a dealer.

The Rebound Programme targets our Grade 10 students. We are deploying an interactive media driven curriculum designed to dismantle the myths of drug culture. It turns peer pressure into peer leadership.

Deterrence – the safety of our school does not stop at the perimeter fence. In a high-level collaboration with the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit and the Crime Prevention Unit, we have intensified patrols and crackdown operations.

Psychosocial support – we recognise that substance abuse is often a cry for help through the National Educational Counselling Service. We have shifted from a reactive to a pro-active model. We are identifying at-risk students through early behavioural markers,

ensuring that intervention happens in the counsellor's office, and proper counselling exercise takes place with a view to protecting our children.

Madam Speaker, along with the above preventive measures, we are also investing in capacity building. For instance, the school project entitled 'School Training Capacity Building of Ministry of Education and Human Resources' is being implemented jointly by the National Agency for Drug Control (NADC) and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource with the objective of strengthening leadership and professional competencies within the school system. The target audience includes Rectors, Deputy Rectors, Educators, Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, Head Masters as well as the PTA members. The implementation period of the project extends from 13 March 2026 to September 2026.

Madam Speaker, the expected outcomes are –

- (1) Improve leadership capacity among school leaders to foster safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment with a focus on student's well-being and the prevention of risk behaviours;
- (2) Enhance ability of schools to implement evidence-based prevention strategies, promote a positive school culture and active engaged educators, students and parents in sustained school development efforts.

Madam Speaker, a school should be a sanctuary; a place of light for learning and growth. We cannot win this fight alone. This requires a whole of society's mobilisation. We need parents to be vigilant, communities to be vocal and enforcement to be ruthless and visible. This Government will not flinch. We will not relent, and we will certainly never be complacent. We are reinforcing our sensitisation campaigns, revamping our detection system and expanding our support networks because the protection of our children is a non-negotiable priority. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Ramkalawon!

Mr Ramkalawon: Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister to reactivate the *Brigade des Mineurs* which had a major role in combating substance abuse in schools?

Madam Speaker: Ça ne relève pas de lui. Ça relève du ministère des Genres.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. Member that we are actually working under the chairmanship of the Attorney General on what we call children in

conflict with law. In that committee, we are going to bring those suggestions and see what would be the way forward.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has noted if there is any relationship between the consumption of synthetic drugs in those secondary schools and the possession of offensive weapon, as has been depicted recently?

Dr. Gungapersad: I thank the hon. Member. Definitely, we are going to look into that matter. Perhaps we do not have evidence-based data as at now. Definitely this is going to be an area that we need to ponder on, we need to carry out investigation on that in order to have reliable data, in order to take informed decisions in the future.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Dr. Aumeer, it is your question now.

LAW PRACTITIONERS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION – COMPOSITION

(No. B/519) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the Law Practitioners Complaints Commission, he will state the composition thereof.

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker, section 5(1) of the Law Practitioners (Disciplinary Proceedings) Act 2025 provides that the Law Practitioners Complaints Commission shall consist of a Chairperson, two Vice-chairpersons and 9 other members. Section 5(3)(a) of the Act further provides there shall be an Appointment Committee that shall decide on the nomination of the chairperson, vice-chairpersons of the Complaints Commission.

The Appointment Committee composed of myself as Attorney General, Mr Antoine Domingue, Senior Counsel as Chairperson of the Bar, Mr Dave Boolauky, President of the Law Society, and Mr Patrice Avrillon, Chairperson of the Chamber of Notaries, has decided to nominate former Chief Justice Marc France Eddy Balancy, GOSK, as Chairperson and former judge, Jacques Benjamin Gerard Marie Joseph, and Mr Kritananda Naghee Reddy, former Assistant Solicitor General at the Attorney General's Office as Vice-chairpersons of the Complaints Commission.

Section 3(b) of the Act further provides that where the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons are nominated by that Appointment Committee, the Attorney General shall appoint them. The above names have been contacted and are agreeable to...

Madam Speaker: Serve as.

Mr Glover: Serve as members of that Commission. The nine other members of the Complaints Commission who have been nominated by their respective associations are as follows –

For the Bar –

- Mr Yusuf Hassam Aboobaker – Senior Counsel;
- Mr Subhas Chandra Lallah – Senior counsel, and
- Mrs Varuna Roy Bunwaree.

For the Chamber of Notaries –

- Mr Patrice Avrillon;
- Mrs Bibi Swaleka Jagan, and
- Mrs Koonavathi Gooriah, and

For the Law Society –

- Mr Bebakur Rampoorab – Senior Attorney;
- Mrs Ayesha Jeewa – Senior Attorney, and
- Mr Navin Rama.

However, Madam Speaker, the Chairperson and the Vice-chairpersons have not as yet been appointed by myself as there are some other issues that need to be finalised before the Complaints Commission becomes fully operational.

As the House know, under section 7(2) of the Act, there is provision that there shall be a Secretary to the Complaints Commission who shall be a public officer. I wish to inform the House that I have liaised with the hon. Chief Justice so that a Senior Court Officer be appointed as the Secretary of the Complaints Commission. The Chief Justice has agreed in principle to the suggestion and we have already earmarked the person that will be soon appointed.

In addition, that same section 7 of the Act provides other public officers who will have to be designated to assist the Complaints Commission in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its powers under the Act. These persons are yet to be appointed and I expect that

these people will be appointed as and when the Chairperson and the Vice-chairpersons will be appointed.

Furthermore, I have been on the lookout for appropriate premises to house the Complaints Commission. Several buildings have been earmarked and were visited. I wish to inform the House, the building at Caudan, where the Mauritius International Arbitration Centre (MIAC) is housed, has been identified to locate the Complaints Commission. I have personally visited the premises and met with the management of MIAC and I have obtained their verbal agreement subject to a formal agreement being finalised. Once these administrative issues have been sorted out, I will make the necessary appointments for the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons of the Complaints Commission.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, one question.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A very simple question. Hon. Attorney General when do you expect that the Law Complaints Commission will be operational given that there was a 30-day mandatory period between the day of enactment of the law and its start of operation. Thank you.

Mr Glover: The hon. Member is right, the law came into operation earlier in January and we are absolutely late but administrative matters are, unfortunately, the order of the day in this Government and we are trying by all means to try and beat the deadline, we could not do it but I hope that within four weeks, the Complaints Commission will be up and running.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Attorney General. Next question hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues. Yes.

MAURITIUS POST LTD – FINANCIAL SITUATION – IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

(No. B/520) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the current financial situation of the Mauritius Post Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the impact thereof on the employees, indicating the measures being envisaged to address same.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Ramtohul: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Member for this question and with your permission I wish to recall my responses to PQs B/424, B/515 and B/434 where I referred to the financial situation of Mauritius Post Ltd.

Madam Speaker, the MPL is indeed facing serious financial difficulties and cash flow pressures and I am informed by MPL that for the year ending 30 June 2025, it recorded an operating loss of Rs282 million. At the same time, shareholders deficit stood at Rs1.7 billion while the pension liability amounted to Rs2.6 billion.

Moreover, the company has fully utilised its overdraft facility of Rs177 million to support its day-to-day operations. Additionally, it has encashed a fixed deposit of Rs200 million to meet its financial obligations amongst others. This situation is already impacting employees both in Mauritius and in Rodrigues. It is public knowledge that payment of sick leave benefits dues in February 2026 was actually postponed to March 2026 which was eventually paid three days later than scheduled.

Madam Speaker, in order to address this situation, Mauritius Post is implementing in a phase manner a series of short and medium-term strategic measures both in Mauritius and in Rodrigues aimed at stabilising the organisation and improving its cash flow position.

In terms of human resources management, emphasis is being laid on improving productivity and efficiency through internal reorganisation, capacity building and redeployment where necessary both in Mauritius and in Rodrigues.

At the operational level, revenue enhancing measures have been introduced including an increase in postal tariffs, the revision of rates for postal services and a review of commissions charged to organisations. At the same time, the cost optimisation initiatives are being pursued such as a freeze on recruitment and promotions and tighter control over overtime payments.

Furthermore, the company is accelerating the development of its e-commerce and parcel related services through partnerships with international entities. Additional initiatives include the expansion of digital and advertising services, the rental of unused space in post offices, increased digitalisation of customer interfaces and a review of operational processes to enhance efficiency and service delivery.

In conclusion, in the medium to long term, the company is also envisaging structural reforms through strategic partnerships and the exploration of new markets with a view to

diversifying its activities and ensuring its sustainability in an increasingly digitally and competitive environment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes. Yes, one question.

Mr Edouard: Thank you. May I ask the hon. Minister what is being done to address delays in the payment of salaries?

Dr. Ramtohul: Indeed, there was a delay in the payment of salaries one time, it was a one-off event. We do not expect to have further such events recurring. However, all the measures that I have mentioned in my response are collectively contributing to ensure that such events do not recur. We are all very well aware that all post offices across the globe are undergoing serious challenges and Mauritius is no exception and we face the same situation.

We actually deplore the omission of the previous government in terms of relooking at what Mauritius Post Office could have done back then – things that were not done. This is why today, this Government is having to pay back for the omissions of the previous government and this is very, very sad for the employees of the Mauritius Post. Really sad.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Edouard, you are alright? Hon. François!

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the employees in Rodrigues, a basic question to reassure them. May I ask the hon. Minister whether those who are to retire soon are still eligible for their lump sum, pension scheme and other retirement benefits entitlements?

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you for this supplementary, hon. Member. The employment contracts of different employees for Mauritius Post stipulate different conditions of employment and the conditions of employment are being applied as per those statutory provisions. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, one more.

Mr François: Yes, if you allow me. As you are talking about the post service, may I ask the hon. Minister in relation to the postal services in Rodrigues whether he is aware of the situation prevailing at one of the sub offices, I seize this opportunity to raise that.

At Malabar which is no more suitable to cater for the high volume of parcels thereat, will he be looking into it so we can relocate and find a wider space for this post office at Malabar, Rodrigues.

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you, hon. Member. Your question actually confirms my previous statement with regard to the lack of actions and the omissions of the previous government. This, Madam Speaker, should have been taken onboard much earlier and we are experiencing an influx of parcels – which is actually positive because this is promising to the fact that we will be able to successfully implement the reorganisation and the business review plan of Mauritius Post Ltd.

So, certainly we will give effect to the point raised by the hon. Member.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr François: Thank you.

Madam Speaker: So, you will look at point Malabar issue.

Dr. Ramtohul: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. On this, I will raise for one and a half hour.

At 1.00 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 8 – WATER PIPE LAYING WORKS – TIME FRAME

(No. B/521) Mr G. P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water pipe laying works carried out in Constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire and Moka, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, the list of roads concerned therewith, indicating the ones which have not been thereafter reinstated, indicating the reasons and timeframe set therefore.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la CWA m'informe que des projets de pose de tuyaux d'une longueur d'environ 23,7 km ont été mis en œuvre dans le cadre du programme de remplacement des tuyaux de *pipe replacement programme* dans la circonscription No. 8, donc, Saint-Pierre. Bonne Veine-Quartier Militaire, Vuillemin, Nouvelle Découverte, Verdun et St Julien D'Hotman.

Les travaux de remise en état des routes sont terminés, à l'exception des régions de Verdun et de Saint-Julien-d'Hotman où respectivement 1,1 km et 1,6 km de route doivent être remis en état.

M. le président, j'apprends également que la région de Verdun, le contrat de réfection de la chaussée, donc pour refaire le chemin a été attribué à Transinvest Construction Ltd le 15 avril 2026. Les travaux de remise en état de la route devraient commencer en mai 2026, dans quelques jours j'espère et s'achever en mai 2026. Donc, un mois, en quelques semaines, on essayera de terminer ce travail.

Concernant la région de Saint-Julien-d'Hotman, j'ai été informé que la réfection définitive de la route sur 3,8 km sur les 5,4 km a été achevée. Cependant, en raison d'une enquête menée par la Financial Crime Commission sur l'entrepreneur, les travaux ont été suspendus en 2025. Le 13 avril 2026, ce mois-ci, suite aux conclusions de l'enquête de la FCC, la CWA a enjoint l'entrepreneur de se mobiliser sur le site et de terminer tous les travaux en suspens. Donc, on n'a pas payer l'entrepreneur pendant une année, le restant. Donc, les travaux sont restés bloquer et après l'enquête, la FCC nous a informé que l'entrepreneur peut continuer le travail, notamment la pose des tuyaux, y compris la mise en service du tuyau principale d'ici juin 2026.

Les 1,6 km restants de remise en état de la route seront effectués une fois les travaux de la pose des tuyaux terminés et devraient être achevés d'ici fin juillet 2026 ou début d'aout.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes! Any Supplementary? First Member for Vacoas & Floréal!

13 ROAD PROJECTS – CYCLE LANES INCORPORATION – FEASIBILITY STUDY – ACCIDENT REDUCTION

(No. B/522) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the incorporation of cycle lanes into 13 road projects, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to whether –

- (a) copy of the feasibility study thereof, if any, will be tabled, and
- (b) assessments of the usage levels, impact on accident reduction and user satisfaction thereof have been carried out and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not, indicating whether consideration will be given therefor.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House may be aware, in 2020, the then Government adopted a policy decision to include cycle lanes in all newly constructed roads.

In line with this Government Policy, the RDA has implemented cycle tracks as part of major road infrastructure projects since 2020. These tracks, typically located on one side of the road and having width between 2.6 metres and 2.8 metres, were intended to encourage cycling as an alternative eco-friendly mode of transport.

At present, there are 13 road projects where cycle lanes have been or are being incorporated across 33km at a cost of about Rs546 million.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that no feasibility study was undertaken prior to the implementation of the cycle lanes as this was pursuant to a policy decision of the former government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in my speech during the debate on the Budget 2025/2026 in June 2025, these cycling infrastructures are mostly located outside residential zones and have no connection whatsoever to neighbouring villages or existing conurbations. It should therefore come, as most surprised, that most of these infrastructures are lying idle.

I am informed by the RDA that prior to these cycle lanes becoming fully operational, a series of soft measures must be implemented to ensure the seamless integration of the new infrastructure into the existing Net Transport Network. These include –

- (a) A National Cycling Master Plan must be developed to not only map the existing cycle tracks and identify opportunities to extend and interconnect them into a continuous safety network but also integrate cycling planning into urban mobility strategies especially near schools, Smart Cities, Business Parks and Transit Stations;
- (b) With a view to improving connectivity and accessibility, existing cycle tracks should be linked with new dedicated lanes, footpaths and green corridors. In addition, proper way finding signage, lighting, crossing and end of trip facilities, bike racks, a rest area should be provided;
- (c) Campaigns should be launched to encourage cycling for short commutes, health benefits and environmental impact. Moreover, local councils and private sector should be engaged as partners to promote community cycling events, and

- (d) a nationwide cycling infrastructure inventory and usage monitoring system should be implemented to assess demand, plan upgrades and measure impact.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, given that this is a relatively new policy, I am envisaging to set up a committee to be chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry and comprising all relevant stakeholders, namely –

- representatives of the Ministry of Housing and Lands;
- the Ministry of Land Transport;
- the Ministry of Local Government;
- the Police Department;
- the TMRSU, and
- the RDA.

This committee will be responsible for assessing the usage level of cycle lanes, their impact on accident reduction and overall user satisfaction with a view to guiding future policy decisions, alternate use of these facilities and improvements, if any.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes !

Ms J. Bérenger: Je vous remercie. Avant de s'engager dans des *new dedicated lanes*, est-ce que le ministère envisage une étude ou même un audit indépendant pour s'assurer de l'utilité, de la rentabilité et de la sécurité des pistes existantes et des nouvelles pistes envisagées ?

Mr Guinness: *Comme je viens de le dire, M. le président, on a mis un comité qui va faire tout ce travail* that the hon. Member is saying. This committee will look into the proper usage of the existing cycle lanes and for the future. It costs a lot of money. You can imagine, half a billion rupees has been invested in these cycle lanes. I can say that they are lying almost idle. In some, you will see grass. *C'est décalé avec la route principale*. If you go to La Brasserie Road, you are not even going to see the cycle lanes. So, a whole study will have to be done. Then, we are going to decide.

The Deputy Speaker: Another one!

Ms J. Bérenger: Est-ce qu'on peut avoir un timeline pour le *National Cycling Master Plan*?

Mr Guinness: I cannot put a timeline. What I will do, I will ask the RDA to work rather fast because, anyway, for the forthcoming projects, for example, for the M4 Project, we have not inserted cycle lanes in the M4. This is the next big major project that will come. They can work at their ease because in that project, there is no cycle lane. So, they will take their time and produce a masterplan.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or.

**NORTHERN REGION – FARMERS’ CENTRE – WHOLESALE MARKET
FACILITY CONVERSION**

(No. B/523) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the fruit and vegetable sellers of the northern region, he will state whether consideration will be given for the conversion of an existing Farmers’ Centre in the said region into a mini wholesale market for the procurement of products as opposed to having to procure same from the National Wholesale Market at Wooton, Belle-Rive, for enhanced cost-effectiveness.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Government is fully cognisant of the operational constraints that may be faced by fruit and vegetable sellers, particularly those operating in regions located at some distance from the National Wholesale Market at Wooton.

Now, while the National Wholesale Market presently operated by the Agricultural Marketing Board has been established to bring aggregation in the marketing of agricultural produce, it is not intended to operate in isolation nor as the sole channel of distribution. Government is, in fact, pursuing a progressive decentralisation and facilitative approach aimed at bringing markets closer to the stakeholders and enhancing accessibility across regions.

In this context, the proposal to make use of existing infrastructure, including farmer service centres for the setting up of satellite or mini wholesale facilities, is being given due consideration by the Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Agricultural Marketing Board that such approach would enable improved proximity of supply for operators, not only in the northern region, but also in the eastern region if we reduce logistical and transportation costs, greater participation of planters, auctioneers and traders at the regional level and a better alignment with Government's broader objectives in terms of environmental sustainability. By bringing

aggregation and distribution points closer to production zones and end markets, transport distances can be reduced, thereby lowering fuel consumption, easing road congestion and ultimately reducing the carbon footprint associated with the movement of agricultural produce, enhancing the freshness of agricultural produce.

A short supply chain allows fruits and vegetables to reach markets more rapidly and with less handling. This not only improves quality for consumers, but also reduces spoilage and losses for planters and traders and enhances regulatory oversight at the regional level. In fact, it would also allow the Pesticide Regulatory Office to engage more closely with planters, traders, distributors through the proximity-based monitoring and sensitisation.

Now, relevant technical assessment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will be undertaken by my Ministry with a view to determining the feasibility, operational model and modalities under which such decentralised facilities will be implemented in an efficient and sustainable manner. These assessments are expected to be completed within a short term with a view to informing subsequent destination.

Government remains committed to fostering a hybrid and inclusive marketing system where the National Wholesale Market operates in synergy with regional distribution points and existing market structures.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister agree that the previous government's decision to have a centralised wholesale market at Wooton has a main impact on the high price of vegetables and fruits in the northern region or any region far from Wooton?

Dr. Boolell: The reply obviously is found in the question that you have put to me. It goes without saying! I recall when we had debates on the amendment to the Agricultural Marketing Board in relation to the setting up of the National Wholesale Market, we highlighted the dangers, and we even said, without fear or prejudice, to the then Minister that there will be costs overrun – there have been costs overrun – and that we would end up with a white elephant on a sand castle.

Basically, this is where we are! So, there was no vision. It was mainly a decision taken without giving thought to all the implications. Today, we have landed up, as I have said, with a white elephant on a sand castle.

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister if a consultation could be arranged at the earliest possible with the small planters of the northern region, especially in Constituencies No. 5, 6 and 7? Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: I always entertain whenever a request is made. I have met our friends several times. Since there is a legitimate request from a very distinguished MP of the constituency, I will bow and certainly entertain your request.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one last question.

Mr Ramkalawon: Yes, one question.

The Deputy Speaker: One last question!

Mr Ramkalawon: One last question. While awaiting the decentralisation, is there any consideration to change the time schedule for the operations being carried out?

Dr. Boolell: Well, I cannot be specific. We will not act like fools and rush where angels fear to tread, but we will certainly entertain your legitimate request.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES ISLAND – FOREIGN WORKERS – WORK PERMITS & COMPLIANCE MECHANISM

(No. B/524) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to foreign workers working in Rodrigues Island, he will state the –

- (a) number of work permits –
 - (i) issued over the past five years, indicating the industries and employment grades concerned therewith, and
 - (ii) applications awaiting determination, and
- (b) monitoring mechanism in place to ensure compliance with the relevant labour laws.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that over the past five years, work permits have been issued in respect of 20 foreign workers to take up employment in Rodrigues for the period January 2021 to date. Only six of those work permits are still active.

I am tabling a list of the foreign workers in Rodrigues, the sectors in which they are employed, and their respective grades.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, my Ministry is in the presence of two applications for work permit for foreign workers to work in Rodrigues, and these are under consideration at the level of the Ministry.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that there is a Labour Office in Port Mathurin, which operates under the aegis of the Commission of Tourism, ICT, Employment, Labour and Industrial Relations within the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The primary role of the Labour Office is to ensure that employers comply with the labour legislation, through inspection at work places, handling of complaints reported by workers to recover their legal dues, and as a last resort, through court action against non-compliant employers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that it has been reported to my Ministry that employers in Mauritius have been redeploying their foreign workers to Rodrigues. These workers are holders of a work permit or a certification of exemption to work only in Mauritius. Without the prior authorisation of my Ministry, employers are not allowed to transfer foreign workers to Rodrigues.

Last week, officers of my Ministry and myself held meetings in Rodrigues with the Commissioner, Head of Departments and officers of the Commission. We agreed that my Ministry will not issue any work permit to foreigners to work in Rodrigues without the prior clearance from the Commission. My Ministry is also working with the Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Commission in Rodrigues for the issue of lodging accommodation permits for premises where the foreign workers in Rodrigues will reside.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, one question!

Mr François: Thank you, hon. Minister. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has implemented any capacity building or training for the local public officers in Rodrigues to deal with those foreign workers, mainly in regard to inspection and registration of complaints? If not, will your Ministry, in collaboration with local authorities, consider this much needed request?

Mr Uteem: Absolutely, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Last week, we had a very fruitful meeting, where we have agreed to make sure that the labour officers in Rodrigues will get

adequate training either in Mauritius or officers from my Ministry will come to Rodrigues to do the training or we will do it by way of video conferencing.

We are also working on the legal implication because there seems to be an issue with the lodging accommodation permit, which is issued by my Ministry and not the RRA. So, we are taking all this into consideration, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes!

**COMOROS ISLANDS – SUBSIDISED FLOUR – ALLEGED EXPORTATION –
CORRECTIVE MEASURES**

(No. B/525) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the recent alleged exportation of subsidised flour to the Comoros Islands, he will –

- (a) state whether any loophole has been identified in the regulatory and licensing framework of his Ministry which could have enabled same and, if so, indicate the corrective measures being envisaged, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the estimated quantity thereof exported and the estimated corresponding financial loss to Government incurred.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in September 2025, someone came to see me at the office to inform me about the alleged exportation and sales of subsidised flour to Comoros Islands. My Ministry has started an internal investigation and found that the fraud began no later than July 2024.

In view of the seriousness of the allegations and the possible diversion of flour intended for subsidised bread production in Mauritius, on 14 October 2025, the Mauritius Police Force was requested to investigate into the matter with a view to determining the source of procurement of the flour exported by Mr Moindze.

On 23 December 2025, the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID) has informed my Ministry that according to records kept at the Passport and Immigration Office, Mr Abdoulhakim Moindze was presently abroad and his expected date of return was

unknown. As such, no statement was recorded. An officer-in-charge of PIO was instructed to notify the CCID upon the arrival of Mr Abdoulhakim Moindze for investigation.

Subsequently, on 06 March 2026, a request was also made to the Financial Crimes Commission to investigate into the matter and to determine whether any offence falling under its purview may have been committed.

As reported in the press, Mr Abdoulhakim Moindze was arrested on 18 April 2026 by the Financial Crimes Commission. Mr Baboo Virendranathsingh Gowreesunkar, a 54-year-old director of Ryder Xpress Co. Ltd. was also arrested on 20 April 2026. He is suspected of having conspired with Mr Abdoulhakim Moindze while acting in his capacity as Director of Ryder Xpress Co. Ltd. The investigation is still underway.

In addition, my Ministry is working on corrective measures which include the introduction of specific regulations to prohibit the export of subsidised goods without prior authorisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, since July 2024 till date, 287.5 metric tons of flour have been exported to Comoros Islands. Investigations are still ongoing to determine with certainty the exact origin of all quantities concerned and whether all or part thereof consisted of subsidised flour.

As for the corresponding financial loss to Government, it would be premature to state a definitive figure at this stage, as same will depend on the quantities conclusively established as having benefitted from subsidy support and, subsequently, diverted from their intended purpose. Once investigations are completed and verified facts are available, we will be in a better position to state the extent of the financial loss.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, question!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Can the Minister inform the House whether selling a bag of flour at Rs108 to bakers constituted a significant loophole in this massive fraud? Thank you.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is definitely a loophole which was here, and the Government has come with corrective measures. We eliminated the price of

Rs108, which is now Rs217.50. We also have to mention that the cost price of a bag of flour is Rs650. So, now we have a subsidised price at Rs217.50 per bag.

The Deputy Speaker: Last one!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Can the Minister inform the House about the current status of the subsidy account? I understand that *R 7.20* is being collected from the sales of Mogas and Gas Oil to finance flour, LPG and *du riz ration*. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: This is very far from your question! Your supplementary is very far from your main...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: She is asking about the subsidy in fact.

Ms Anquetil: Subsidy account.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: How it is being financed.

In fact, we have a deficit in the subsidy account. Let me give you the details –

- as at 30 June 2022, there was a deficit of Rs871 million;
- as at 30 June 2023, there was another deficit of Rs243,000;
- as at 30 June 2024, another deficit of Rs109 million;
- as at 30 June 2025, Rs681 million.

So, the total is Rs1.9 billion. This is why we have come with corrective measures.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

**MAURITIUS & RODRIGUES – PIG BREEDING – MARKET DEMAND –
FACILITIES & SUPPORT**

(No. B/526) **Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to pig breeding, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of pigs

currently being reared in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island respectively, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) yearly market demand for pork and pork products and import sources thereof, and
- (b) facilities available and support provided to the pig breeders.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Food and Agriculture Research and Extension Institute that currently 24,385 pigs are being reared in Mauritius. As for Rodrigues, the Commission For Agriculture of Rodrigues has informed that for the period January to December 2025, about 14,200 pigs were reared in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, statistics available at Statistics Mauritius show that the import of pork products for the year 2025 for Mauritius was around 1,300 tons and these products were imported from Spain, Brazil, France, China, Denmark, Australia, Italy and Turkey. As for local pork production for the year 2025, 695 tons of meat were delivered to the market after slaughter at the Mauritius Meat Authority. For statistics on pork products for Rodrigues, the Commissioner For Agriculture of Rodrigues has informed that the Ministry, based on assumptions made and on slaughter statistics for the past few years, it is estimated that the demand for pork in Rodrigues for both consumption and processing is approximately 485 tons per year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the facilities and support available to breeders by this Government comprise of Feed Subsidy, Breeder Support Scheme and Grant Scheme. Under the Feed Scheme, pig breeders registered by Small Farmers Welfare Fund are provided vouchers of Rs20 per kg of feed purchased up to a maximum of 800 kg per breeder. For Financial Year 2025-2026, 122 pig breeders, out of 128 registered pig breeders of Mauritius, have benefited from this scheme.

As for the Breeder's Support Scheme introduced in 2025, breeders can avail of subsidies and grants for amongst others reinforcing bio-security at farm level, acquisition of green technologies, drilling of borehole facilities, acquisition of modern and innovative technologies and product packaging and marketing. 15 applications received for these schemes are under process by the Small Farmers and Welfare Fund awaiting further information from applicants.

As regard the Grant Scheme, breeders are provided subsidies for the purchase of agricultural equipment; upgrading, construction of pigsty, acquisition of CCTV and rainwater harvest. To date, one breeder has benefitted from purchase of equipment for a sum of Rs100,000, two breeders have received a total of Rs221,500 for upgrading of farm and another two breeders' application for a total of Rs129,410 have been approved. For the subsidy for acquisition of CCTV camera, one application was received for an amount of Rs15,540 and same has been approved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to facilities provided to pig farmers, I am informed that during the Financial Year 2024-2025, a Pig Feed Scheme was implemented to support pig farming. However, it has not been implemented in the Financial Year 2025-2026 due to lack of funds and an excess of pigs on the market but this will be redressed. In addition to this, at least three Meat Subsidy Campaigns are implemented yearly to provide farmers with a reliable market.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Edouard!

Mr Edouard: Thank you. I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. May I ask the hon. Minister if there is specific support for the market in Mauritius of excess pigs from Rodrigues?

Dr. Boolell: We can dare to venture, but you can rest assured that there is parity of esteem in respect to the facilities being extended to Rodrigues and I have said, if there is a shortcoming, it will be addressed; forcefully and meaningfully.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr François: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister, the last consignment of live pigs exported to Mauritius from Rodrigues dated back in 2015, may I know whether there is discussion by your Ministry with local authorities in Rodrigues to resume live importation of pigs with all required sanitary and/or veterinary protocols?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, as you said, subject to that there is full compliance to sanitary and phytosanitary laws, certainly this could be entertained, but I cannot give you a decisive reply.

Mr François: Just one more question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Rightly so, you mentioned that there is a surplus of around 14,000...

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mr François: ... pigs in Rodrigues. *Coson pe pous kok dan rodrigues M. le président ek la vieillesse.* Will the hon. Minister confirm whether there is an established protocol or trade agreement for possible export of pork or pork products to neighbouring countries like Seychelles?

Dr. Boolell: But this matter has to be raised at the level of the Indian Ocean Commission and we have to make sure that you know, there is compliance to sanitary and phytosanitary norms. If the market is there and available, not only Seychelles, but as member of SADC, we can certainly widen circle of opportunities and look for markets in many of these countries.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. First Member for Savanne & Black River!

BLACK RIVER (LA BALISE) BOAT PASSAGE – DESILTING WORKS PROGRESS

(No. B/527) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Black River (La Balise) boat passage, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of times desilting works were carried out thereat, indicating –

- (a) the date of the last such exercise, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for the urgent desilting thereof on account of the presence of silting thereat currently causing navigational difficulties to users thereof.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the hon. Member that my Ministry is not responsible for dredging or desilting works at La Balise boat passage as this does not fall under our jurisdiction.

Therefore, the District Council of Black River has neither carried out desilting works at La Balise boat passage, nor does it have the legal mandate to undertake such coastal dredging works.

I am also informed that the District Council has not received complaints regarding navigational difficulties at that particular location. However, within its inland mandate, the Council has undertaken desilting works in nearby rivers channels, namely at Rivière Saint-

Martin in September 2019, October 2021, February 2023 and February 2026, and at Grande Rivière Noire in February 2023.

I am also informed that the Land Drainage Authority completed cleaning and desilting works along Rivière Saint-Martin over approximately 3.5 km up to A3 Black River Road in February 2023.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although this matter does not fall under the District Council's direct responsibility, I caused inquiry to be made in good faith with all relevant authorities concerned. The Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries has advised that La Balise boat passage is presently practicable for navigation and no complaints have been registered from fishermen regarding thereon.

The Beach Authority has also confirmed that it has no mandate to dredging or desilting in the lagoon or river mouth area as its role is confined to beach management only.

I am further informed by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change that a request submitted by La Balise Marina in April 2025 for dredging at the Rivière Noire mouth could not proceed as such works requires an Environmental Impact Assessment under item 27 of the sixth schedule of the Environment Act 2024 and no application has been submitted by the promoter till date.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a separate request was made in January this year by the Commissioner of Police for urgent desilting works at the National Coast Guard berthing area at Black River, where sediment deposition was affecting the safe berthing and operational deployment.

Following a site visit by several authorities, the Ministry of Environment issued in March 2026, a no objection for desilting works strictly limited to that particular operational area, subject to given environmental safeguards. I am further informed that the Police Department and the Ministry of National Infrastructure are currently finalising the technical specifications, following which, a bidding exercise will be launched soon for implementation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, therefore, wish to reiterate that the District Council of Black River is not the responsible body for coastal dredging or desilting at La Balise. Nevertheless, all relevant authorities have been consulted and where intervention is required, the authorities are taking the necessary actions through appropriate legal technical and environmental procedures to go ahead with the Commissioner of Police's request.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka!

**MOHUNLALL MOHIT GOVERNMENT SCHOOL, L'AVENIR –
ELECTRICITY SUPPLY ISSUES**

(No. B/528) Mr G. P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Mohunlall Mohit Government School, situated at L'Avenir, he will state whether the electricity supply issues occurring in a few classrooms thereat have been addressed and, if so, when and, if not, indicate the timeframe therefor.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the disruptions to the electricity supply at Mohunlall Mohit Government School situated at L'Avenir are currently localised to five classrooms within a single block. This situation is the direct result of water ingress caused by roof leakages. I must emphasise that the electrical supply to these specific rooms was disconnected by the Energy Services Division (ESD) as a proactive and essential safety measure to protect both students and staff.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, upon consultation, the ESD advised that no viable quick fix or medium-term electrical bypass could be safely implemented while the water ingress persisted. Consequently, the only sustainable solution is to resolve the structural leakages before reinstating power. To this end, a comprehensive assessment of the entire school compound has been completed.

I can confirm the following timeline of actions taken by the Ministry –

- On 11 February 2026, invitations for bids were officially launched.
- 25 February 2026, procurement process closed followed by a rigorous evaluation.
- On 27 April 2026, the contract was formally awarded following and endorsement by the Zonal Bid Committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, physical works onsite are tentatively scheduled to commence during the first week of May 2026. The scope of work which includes extensive roof repairs and associated remedial tasks is expected to last four weeks. Immediately upon completion of these repairs, the ESD will be directed to conduct a safety inspection and reinstate the power supply. We anticipate the classrooms will be fully operational by early June 2026.

In the interim, I have been assured that robust contingency arrangements are in place to ensure that pedagogical activities continue without hindrance. The safety and educational continuity of our learners remain our absolute priority. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQs B/533, B/541, B/543, B/546, B/548, and B/558 have been withdrawn.

The hon. Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil!

NPF & NSF – CREDIT BALANCES & INVESTMENT RETURNS

(No. B/529) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the National Pensions Fund and the National Solidarity Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Investment Committee thereof, information as to the –

- (a) balance currently standing to the credit thereof, and
- (b) investments effected since 2015 to date, indicating the profit or loss realised thereon.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the National Pensions Fund was established under Section 37 of the National Pension Act 1976 which shall be administered by the Minister of Social Security in accordance with Finance and Audit Act.

Contributions into the fund were being made by both employers and employees of the private sector at the rate of 6% and 3%, respectively, under the National Pensions Scheme. However, the previous government stopped the contribution scheme in August 2020 and introduced the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) as from 01 September 2020.

I am assuming that the hon. Member is referring to the National Savings Fund instead of the National Solidarity Fund. The National Savings Fund (NSF) was established under Section 3 of the National Savings Fund Act 1995 with the objectives –

- to provide for the payment of a lumpsum to every employee on his retirement and in respect of every employee at the time of his death, and
- to set up and operate for the benefits of employees such schemes, including loan schemes, as may be prescribed.

Employers contribute 2.5% in respect of each employee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 38 of the National Pensions Act provides for the setting up of an NPF/NSF Investment Committee under the chair of the Financial Secretary. Any surplus remaining in the National Pensions Fund and the National Savings Fund may, at any time, be held on deposit with the government or invested in such manner as the NPF and NSF Investment Committee may determine.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the fund value, that is, the balance standing to the credit of the National Pensions Fund stood at around Rs165.1 billion. The fund value of the National Savings Fund stood at around Rs50.26 billion as at December 2025.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I add, for the attention of the House, that the regeneration of the National Pensions Fund to replace the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* is presently one of the attributions of the Commission of Expert on Pension Reforms, set up by the Cabinet in September 2025, with a view to overhaul the national pensions system.

A ministerial committee on pension reforms has also been set up by the Cabinet to provide guidance to the commission on strategic direction and policy priorities for the reform of the pension system.

To access and act on the recommendations of the commission under the chair of the hon. Prime Minister, the following hon. Ministers form part of the Steering Committee: the hon. Deputy Prime Minister; the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries; the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity; the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning; the hon. Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations; the hon. Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives; the hon. Junior Minister of Finance, and the Junior Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

As at date, no meeting of the Steering Committee on Pensions Reform has been held.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the fact that these two funds are investment funds and they constantly buy and sell on a day-to-day basis. As a matter of example, NPF has purchased some Rs222 billion of government instruments over the past 10 years. These investments have matured and have been reinvested.

As at 31 December 2025, the NPF's return on investment was 7.25 and the NSF's return on investment was 7.21%. As at 31 December, the annual returns of both the NPF and the NSF since 2015 are being tabled.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

FISHERMAN REGISTRATION CARD – PLASTIC/E-IDENTITY CARD

(No. B/530) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fisherman Registration Card, he will state whether consideration will be given for the introduction of a Plastic or E-Identity Card.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at date, there are 2506 registered fishermen or fishers and in accordance with Section 120 (3) of the Fisheries Act – every fisherman must be issued with a Fisherman Registration Card along with a Fisher Identity Card.

Moreover, Section 121 of the Fisheries Act provides that every registered Fisher shall have in his or her possession, his or her Fisher Identity Card while engaging in fishing or fishing related activities.

The Fisher ID Card which is a hard and waterproof plastic card contains the following details –

1. Full name, address of the Fisherman;
2. Fisherman Registration Number;
3. Name of Fisheries Post where the fisherman is registered;
4. Mode and ground of fishing, and
5. Name of the Fish Landing Station concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hence, there is today both a plastic Fisher Identity Card and a Fisher Registration Card which is a 14 pages paper booklet. Now, being given that the Fisher Registration Card may be prone to damage when in contact with water, a plastic Fisher Identity Card has been issued to every single registered Fisher around the island.

As at now, both Fisher Identity Card and Fisher Registration Card are serving the purpose for which they are meant.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member of Rodrigues. B/532!

MOGAS & GAS OIL – MONTHLY VAT PAYABLE

(No. B/531) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mogas and Gas Oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the estimated monthly amount of Value Added Tax payable thereon respectively, under the prevailing price structure.

(Withdrawn)

CLIMATE CRISIS – VULNERABLE PERSONS – SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

(No. B/532) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the social protection of vulnerable persons against the impact of climate crisis, he will state the –

- (a) measures in place or being envisaged to mitigate the effects thereof and assistance provided to those affected thereby, and
- (b) mechanisms for –
 - (i) the sustainable financing thereof
 - (ii) the rapid disbursement of funds in case of climate-related disasters, and
 - (iii) ensuring long-term financial resilience in the post-disaster period.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius being a small island developing state is highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards such as severe tropical cyclones, flash floods, sea-level rise, massive beach erosion and heat waves among others.

As such, the country and our people are at great risk and are exposed to changing climate conditions and crisis. Having registered our first climate related disaster in 2013 with the death of 11 of our citizens, Mauritius has put in place its first major legal and institutional framework to mitigate climate risk and response to climate emergencies.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act was enacted in 2016. During the last 10 years, various shortcomings of this legal framework have been highlighted

especially when two workers tragically lost their lives during the Belal cyclone torrential rain in January 2024.

Being part of the Ministerial Committee presided by my colleague, hon. Minister Reza Uteem, I am informed that the new legal framework on torrential rain to protect the lives of workers without discrimination will be a reality shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, climate issues are cross-sectional and intersect with many Ministries and institutions. My Ministry, which has been historically responsible of Evacuee Centres for cyclonic conditions, has seen its mandate in 2015 extended to open the 156 Evacuee Centres under its responsibility, upon a request from the National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC) in the event of torrential rain, flooding or any other national disasters. These Evacuee Centres are supplied with basic amenities such as bottle water, biscuits, bake beans, now, canned tuna and yoga mats.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that in accordance with the Social Aid Regulations 1984, a cyclone allowance of Rs250 is payable to persons per night spent at the Evacuee Centres and a flood allowance amounting to amounting to Rs250 is payable for damaged foodstuffs per person per day for a maximum of three days upon presentation of a Police Memo.

When this new Government took office, based on the responsibility or pre/post responsibility of my Ministry, I reframed this Ministry's role in the context of climate crisis unfolding in the Republic of Mauritius and on its people. I created a Climate Unit in my Ministry to work for the recognition and integration of the concept of climate-related victims within climate policy frameworks of the new Government.

The climate crisis is not only an issue of reduction of carbon emission under Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for countries like ours. Climate crisis has become a living reality generating climate-related victims with loss of lives, personal belongings and affecting the very livelihood of the people, especially the most socially vulnerable and the climate vulnerable people.

Thus, my Ministry has reshaped the climate policy of our country towards what is called the climate jargon "adaptation and mitigation" with emphasis, on the affected people, that is, climate-related victims.

The hon. Member is right in asking on measures put in place or being envisaged to mitigate the effects on vulnerable peoples and assistance provided to those affected. The Social Integration Division of my Ministry has, for the past several years, had several projects.

The Deputy Speaker: If you have got long to go, you can circulate the answer – if you so wish. You have already taken more than five minutes.

Mr Subron: Yes. I can circulate it. That is not a problem, with pleasure.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr François: Can I put a supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, of course, you can put a supplementary.

Mr François: Thank you, hon. Minister – a very interesting subject.

Will the, hon. Minister be agreeable with me that social protection to climate change is a bit underrepresented in our NCD 3.0, as it is mostly related to absorb the impact shocks but not a sustainable social protection system? I mean a system which should look into environment and development process through cross sectoral policies to avoid and minimise residual loss and damage. May I know whether Mauritius applied for any funds under the Loss and Damage Fund created during COP 28 to strengthen resilience and to help people affected or victims of climate change?

Mr Subron: I thank the hon. Member and this is in fact the next part of my answer – I will circulate. I am just mentioning that there are several mitigating measures that we are envisaging (flood proofing, flood barriers, properly equipped Evacuee Centres, providing water harvesting system, early warning systems and maybe relocation of socially vulnerable and climate vulnerable people) and that we will be presenting together with the Ministry of Environment.

In fact, the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) and some of the measures will be presented in the conference that will be held in Mauritius – the Mauritius Climate Investment Fund. What we are aiming at is trying to get the global climate fund to be used for climate related victims. Most of these funds, because of the budgetary constraints, will be kind of non-budgetary but external or other source of fund. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL KREOL – CONCEPT & ORIENTATION REVIEW – TOURIST ATTRACTION

(No. B/533) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Festival International Kreol, he will state whether consideration will be given for a review of the concept and orientation thereof with a view to enhancing its cultural heritage and content, incorporating symposiums

and conferences, increasing local and foreign participation and developing same into a major annual tourist attraction.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central.

ENERGY TRANSITION – RENEWABLE RESOURCES – WIND ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

(No. B/534) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the country's objective to accelerate its energy transition in terms of renewable energy sources, he will state the existing wind energy infrastructure in Mauritius, indicating the –

- (a) future proposed developments thereof;
- (b) targets set therefor, and
- (c) challenges and opportunities thereof.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, le CEB m'informe qu'il existe actuellement un parc éolien à la centrale de Plaine des Roches d'une capacité installée de 9,35 mégawatts, et qui fait l'objet d'un contrat, d'un PPA, signé le 15 juillet 2013 qui a été inauguré après par le gouvernement de 2014-2015. Le parc éolien comprend 11 éoliennes qui représentent environ 0,3 % du mix électrique national.

Il convient aussi de noter, M. le président, qu'un projet de parc éolien à Plaine Sophie, d'une capacité de 29,4 mégawatts avait été initié dans le temps entre 2018-2019, mais finalement abandonné en novembre 2020. M. le président, l'énergie éolienne est l'une des composantes de notre stratégie nationale en matière d'énergie renouvelable. Mon ministère, le CEB, MARENA, EEMO, entend diversifier le bouquet énergétique renouvelable en combinant à moyen et à long terme des technologies éprouvées comme l'éolien, le *solar* et d'autres technologies telles que l'éolien en mer.

Concernant les points (a) et (b) de la question, M. le président, le CEB propose – là, actuellement, nous proposons d'étendre le parc éolien de Plaine des Roches d'une capacité supplémentaire de 15 à 20 mégawatts. Le régime de vent et de performance des turbines étant déjà connu, parce que nous l'avons fait en 2013, nous sommes en train d'acquérir environ 90

hectares de terre à Plaine des Roches pour le développement de ce projet. Le CEB prépare actuellement l'appel d'offre qui sera lancé d'ici juin de cette année-ci. Le projet sera mis en œuvre selon le modèle d'un IPP et produira environ, je l'espère, autour de 20 mégawatts.

Mon ministère, M. le président, étudie activement le développement de l'énergie éolienne en mer. Une étude préfaisabilité menée par l'Université Technique du Danemark a identifié un potentiel d'environ 100 mégawatts, notamment dans la région nord-nord-est du pays. D'autres études sont en cours d'élaboration avec le soutien des partenaires internationaux.

M. le président, il faut bien se dire que notre stratégie en ce qui concerne l'énergie renouvelable repose sur cinq axes solides. Depuis une année, nous travaillons sur la stratégie pour atteindre 60 % d'énergie renouvelable, non pas en 2030, mais en 2035. Donc, on se donne autour de 10 ans, 2026-2035, autour de 9 à 10 ans pour arriver à 60 % d'énergie renouvelable. Donc, j'ai gardé les 60 % d'énergie renouvelable, mais nous avons *reset* pour repousser à 2035. Donc, les cinq axes reposent d'abord sur l'énergie solaire ; les 405 mégawatts lancés en termes de *tender* qui a été lancé la semaine dernière, l'énergie solaire, les 10 par 10 mégawatts, 100 mégawatts, les 3 x 40 mégawatts, 120 mégawatts et aussi le vent, le parc éolien de Plaine des Roches que nous voulons agrandir.

Ceci dit, nous avons aussi l'intention de valoriser la bagasse. Et comme personnellement je l'ai dit à plusieurs reprises – je crois l'avoir dit à plusieurs reprises, il n'y a pas de bagasse. La bagasse, à mon avis, n'a pas d'avenir si nous ne faisons pas ce que d'autres pays ont fait avant nous, c'est de *phase out* le charbon graduellement par la biomasse. Et en parlant de biomasse, nous parlons de *wooden chips*. Au fil des années, dans les 3 ans à venir, nous voulons remplacer le charbon par au moins 15 % de charbon qu'on va brûler en l'entrecoupe ensemble avec la bagasse. Donc, c'est la biomasse. Nous avons aussi lancé le *household project* sur les toits des maisons. Cela forme partie des cinq axes que nous avons identifiés pour les 10 ans à venir ; *les households*.

Donc, vous mettez un panneau de 10 kilowatts sur votre maison sans la permission du CEB. Je l'ai dit à plusieurs reprises, l'un des blocages que j'ai remarqués depuis très longtemps et aussi en tant que ministre, c'est que le CEB prend son temps – 4 mois, 5 mois, 6 mois, une année pour vous donner la permission de mettre des panneaux pour être autonome chez vous. À mon avis, c'est une aberration. C'est pour cette raison que j'ai demandé de lever cet obstacle pour que dorénavant, n'importe qui dans ce pays qui veut être autonome de 10

kilowatts ; vous mettez sur votre maison et vous avez l'autonomie pour vous personnellement et de revendre aussi avec le CEB.

Nous avons aussi, dans notre politique, M. le président, la batterie ; le stockage. Notre problème à nous, c'est de 6 heures à 10 heures, de 6 heures à 9 heures du soir, nous avons la pointe. Le CEB est sous la pression. Donc, ce que nous avons fait, c'est que dorénavant depuis une année, tous les projets d'énergie renouvelable de ce pays est obligé d'être équipé de la batterie. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons acheté, il y a une année, une batterie de 20 mégawatts qui sera opérationnelle en fin juin ou juillet de cette année-ci. Donc, ces 20 mégawatts que nous avons achetés de batterie, va nous aider en termes de pointe. Nous pensons aussi acheter d'autres batteries. Donc, tous les projets que vous voyez dans les journaux, tous les projets que nous avons mis en public, ce sont des projets avec batterie. Donc, c'est obligatoire.

Dernier point de notre axe dans la stratégie énergétique, M. le président, c'est l'efficacité énergétique, la sobriété énergétique, l'efficience énergétique. Moi je l'appelle le négawatt – pas le mégawatt. C'est le mégawatt non utilisé. C'est le professeur Joël de Rosnay – quand mon ami l'honorable Osman Mahomed était à la tête de Maurice Durable, c'était le négawatt. Donc, la campagne d'efficience énergétique qui commence encore une fois à partir de juillet de cette année-ci, sera une campagne d'efficience énergétique agressive pour éviter le gaspillage ; faire comprendre à la population, faire comprendre aux entrepreneurs que l'audit énergétique, l'économie énergétique, la sobriété énergétique nous fera gagner en mégawatt.

Donc, ces cinq axes, M. le président, notre stratégie énergétique pour les cinq, six prochaines années ou neuf ans, ce sera autour de ces projets.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you still need a further question?

Dr. Aumeer: Merci, M. le président, bien sûr.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes?

Dr. Aumeer: Puis-je demander au ministre concerné, dans la volonté d'agrandir le parc éolien de Plaine des Roches, quelle sera la contribution sur les 60 % que vous voulez réaliser à 2035, sur la *national grid* de par les fermes éoliennes ?

Mr Assirvaden: Ce que ce que j'ai dit un peu plus tôt, M. le président, c'est que les parcs que nous avons à Plaine des Roches contribuent très peu, je peux dire très peu, 0,3 % de

notre mix énergétique. C'est pour cette raison que nous croyons au ministère qu'un bouquet énergétique fera l'affaire du pays. Vous savez, nous avons des demandes en pointe et nous avons aussi des demandes en *base load* comme on dit dans le jargon. Donc, le *base load*, il y a peut-être deux technologies qui peuvent répondre au *base load* – le charbon, l'huile lourde.

Donc, nous sommes obligés d'avoir un bouquet énergétique. Un bouquet énergétique, vous avez le vent, vous avez le soleil, vous avez l'efficacité énergétique, vous avez la bagasse, vous avez la biomasse, les *wooden chips*, mais aussi la batterie. Donc, la partie éolienne va contribuer très minimement, si je peux dire à notre bouquet énergétique, mais cela va contribuer à ce que ce soit un vrai bouquet. Vous savez comment c'est un bouquet ; avec des roses et autres choses ? Donc, notre bouquet énergétique va comprendre beaucoup de fleurs. Merci.

Ms Anquetil: Tu connais ça bien. Tu t'y connais en bouquet !

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes!

TWAHA ACADEMY – ALLEGED MINOR ILL-TREATMENT CASES – INQUIRY & MEASURES

(No. B/535) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the alleged cases of aggression and ill-treatment of two minors at the Twaha Academy, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Family Support Unit, information as to whether an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof and the measures taken in connection therewith.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been made aware of seven alleged cases of child ill-treatment at the Twaha Academy Boarding School.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 01 April 2026, the Family Support Service of Flacq was contacted by the Bel Air Rivière Sèche Police Station to report that two minors, M. Z. Z. H. M., aged 15 and, M. A. I., aged 14 had stated that one Mr A. P., Principal at the Twaha Academy Boarding School, had once given them a cigarette to smoke, after which, they felt dizzy.

The officers were informed that the two minors had been convened to record their statements on 02 April 2026. The Police was advised to inform the minors and their parents

to attend the Family Support Service of Flacq after recording their statements at the police station.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 02 April 2026, the Bel-Air Rivière Sèche Police Station was contacted by my officers as neither the minors nor their parents had attended the Family Support Service of Flacq. The Police informed that the minors, in the presence of their respective mothers, had recorded their statements at the Bel-Air Rivière Sèche Police Station and that an alleged case of child ill-treatment had been entered under OB 1158/26 as a pre-measure against the principal of the institution, Mr A.P. It is to be noted that no case of sexual abuse was reported under that OB number.

However, the Family Support Service of Flacq contacted the parents of the minors and explained the services offered by the Ministry, but the parents declined that their children be medically examined and did not wish any psychological support. They were, however, provided with the contact details of the Family Support Service for future reference.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 07 April 2026, the Bel-Air Rivière Sèche Police Station informed the Family Support Service of Flacq that a 13-year-old minor, M.S.N.B., had recorded a statement in the presence of his mother in connection with an alleged case of child ill-treatment, and OB1245/2026 was entered. As per the statement, the child had been slapped on his cheek by the principal of the institution, Mr A.P.

On the same day, the minor M.S.N.B., accompanied by his mother, attended the Family Support Service of Flacq, where he reported that he had been a victim of both physical and verbal abuse by Mr A.P. On the following day, he was medically examined by the Police Medical Officer at Line Barracks.

My Ministry has provided the minor and his mother with psychological assistance. A review had been scheduled for 23 April 2026. Follow-up sessions are being maintained by the FSS of Flacq.

On 09 April 2026, another minor, M.S.D.A., 11 years old, made a statement to the police station, in the presence of his father, to the effect that he was, on several occasions, assaulted by Mr A.P., the last time being in March 2026, with a mop stick. He was examined by the Police Medical Officer on 14 April 2026.

On 11 April 2026, one person named M.M.H.N., now 18 years old, reported that when he was 17 years old and a student at Twaha Academy Boarding School, he was assaulted by Mr A.P. He did not want to be medically examined.

On 13 April 2026, another minor, S.Z.B., aged 13 years, accompanied by his mother, made a statement at Bel-Air Rivière Sèche Police Station in connection with OB1158/26 child abuse case.

On the same day, minor S.Z.B. and his mother attended the Family Support Service of Flacq. He related that he joined Twaha Academy Boarding School since November 2025, and in February 2026, Mr A.P. had hit him with a bamboo stick. He further stated that in March 2026, Mr A.P. had hit him on his head as he was scratching his eyes during prayer time. On the same day, minor S.Z.B. was seen by a psychologist of my Ministry, and the case was referred to FSS Triolet for further assessment.

On 21 April, minor M.A.I., aged 14 years, student of the Twaha Academy Boarding School, stated, in the presence of his mother, that he was assaulted by Mr A.P. on several occasions, but he refused to be medically examined.

On the same day, another minor, M.Z.Z.H.M., aged 15, student of the Twaha Academy Boarding School, made a statement, in the presence of his mother, that he was assaulted by Mr A.P. on several occasions.

I am informed that a police enquiry is ongoing on the allegations made against the principal of the Twaha Academy Boarding School. I am further informed that the Twaha Academy Boarding School has ceased its operation since 31 March 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I will allow you a supplementary, but be careful. There is still a police enquiry going on, and we do not want to prejudice the police enquiry.

Ms Anquetil: Oui, il n'y a pas de problème.

The Deputy Speaker: So, be careful with your supplementary!

Ms Anquetil: Ne vous inquiétez pas, M. le président. Ne vous inquiétez pas.

M. le président, je vous remercie de me donner l'opportunité de poser quelques questions supplémentaires. La ministre peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre, dans cette affaire

aussi grave et traumatisante, comment se portent les enfants victimes, ainsi que leurs familles ? Merci.

Ms Navarre-Marie: M. le président, à ce jour, ce matin, je n'ai pas eu les nouvelles des enfants et des parents.

The Deputy Speaker: Last one!

Ms Anquetil: S'il vous plaît, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question and I will see whether...

Ms Anquetil: La ministre peut-elle déposer sur la table de l'Assemblée un relevé précis et daté du nombre de séances de soutien psychologique effectivement dispensées aux victimes et à leurs parents ? Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Ms Navarre-Marie: M. le président, je ne suis pas en présence de ces informations *right now*.

Ms Anquetil: Une dernière, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Allez, une dernière !

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre peut-elle indiquer à la Chambre si son ministère a réellement la capacité d'assumer un suivi psychologique régulier et efficace compte tenu du nombre d'enfants qui se sont manifestés – vous avez d'ailleurs listé les victimes –, ainsi que de leurs familles, ou admet-elle que les ressources actuelles sont insuffisantes pour répondre à l'ampleur des besoins ? Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Ms Navarre-Marie: M. le président, je pense que les psychologues sont suffisamment qualifiés pour *support the families*. Mais, toujours est-il que les ressources ne seront jamais suffisantes.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 9 – PUBLIC TRANSPORT – ADDITIONAL BUS ROUTES & TAXI LICENCES

(No. B/536) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to public transport in Constituency No. 9, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the provision of additional bus routes and Public Service Vehicle (Taxi) Licences thereat and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Constituency No. 9, Flacq-Bon Accueil, spans over a reasonably wide geographical area. It comprises several villages and residential zones with Central Flacq serving as the principle socio-economic hub.

I am informed by the NLTA that the constituency benefits from an extensive bus service network of 37 routes. Public transport services in the constituency are mainly provided by individually-owned buses, operating under Bus Owners Cooperative Society Limited, along some 34 routes as well as by the NTC on Route 56, the Triolet Bus Service on Route 29, and Divla Ltd on Route 240.

These 37 routes may be broadly grouped as follows –

- 6 routes serving the North, which include regions such as Goodlands, Grand Baie and Rivière du Rempart;
- 7 routes serving the region of Port Louis;
- 9 routes serving the regions such as Curepipe, Rose Hill and surrounding areas;
- 8 routes serving the eastern coastal belt, including regions such as Belle Mare, Palmar, Trou d’Eau Douce and Poste Lafayette;
- 5 routes serving as local and circular routes within the outskirts of Central Flacq.

In view of the extensive nature of this network, I am tabling the full list of bus routes to and from Constituency No. 9.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the NLTA that it has received representations from inhabitants of some localities on poor bus services. Following an assessment, it has been observed that the issue at hand is not so much the absence of routes,

but rather the adequacy, frequency and the financial viability of services on certain existing routes.

The routes identified by the NLTA having inadequate services are –

- (a) Route 218 (the description is in the list);
- (b) Route 55A, and
- (c) Route 54.

Services along these three routes are provided by buses of other routes on a roster basis under the trip-based payment under a contract between the NLTA and Flacq Bus Owners Cooperative Society Ltd.

It is worth underlining that previously, twice buses were licensed along route 218 and two buses were also granted licences for route 55A. All these buses could not continue providing services along these routes as they were uneconomical. The operators were bound to seek transfer of their licences to other routes.

The grant of licences along these routes will therefore not solve the transport problems of residents of those regions, as after a period of time, the new operators will not be able to sustain the services.

The better solution, according to the NLTA, would be to increase substantially the number of paid trips being provided under the contracts with the cooperative society both during week days and weekends. This arrangement, hopefully, will better meet the needs of commuters and although it may be costly, the more so, as the Flacq Bus Owners Cooperative Society Ltd is requesting for a substantial increase in the rate of payment per trip.

The NLTA has also informed that Constituency No. 9 has a total of 686 taxi cars licensed to operate from 77 bases of operation, besides the 333 taxis licensed at hotels. Therefore, a total of 1,019 taxis, out of 7,803 which is a total of 13%, the highest among all the 20 Constituencies. Mr Anil Bachoo will surely agree with me. These taxi cars mostly operate as “taxi train” known as separate pairs and complement transport needs along corridors which bus services are either not operational or the services are inadequate.

To end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as part of my broader approach to closely monitor public transport issues across all constituencies, I shall shortly, as discussed, convene a meeting with the hon. Members of elected for Constituency No. 9 to discuss the matters in

detail. I wish to underline that similar exercises have been carried out in other Constituencies since my becoming Minister of Land Transport and have proven to be constructive in addressing ground-level concerns. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Beehook: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister urge the NLTA to carry out a thorough investigation that will include checking whether annual revenue returns are being done by current taxi operators at the MRA in order to track and if needed, cancel the PSV licences of those taxis which are inoperational today and allocate them to people who are willing to offer the service.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I definitely welcome this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I think, this problem is a chronic problem around the country. Taxi drivers are supposed to provide taxi services but they don't adequately do so.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche & Grand River South East!

OVERSEAS MEDICAL TREATMENT – BENEFICIARIES (JANUARY 2021 TO DECEMBER 2025) – NATIONAL MEASURES

(No. B/537) **Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to overseas medical treatment, he will state the number of Mauritian patients having resorted thereto over the past five years, indicating the –

- (a) countries and medical conditions commonly concerned therewith, and
- (b) measures being implemented to strengthen public healthcare services at national level.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry provides financial assistance under Overseas Treatment Scheme for patients requiring medical treatment not available in our public health institutions in Mauritius.

According to my Ministry's policy, provision is made for financial assistance under the following schemes –

- i. patients over 25 years old, a total of Rs1.3 million, and

- ii. under the Child Cancer Scheme and Paediatric Scheme unlimited assistance for patients up to 25 years old.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a total of 1,851 patients have benefitted from financial assistance under the above schemes from January 2021 to December 2025. I am further informed that, since this Government took office, a total of 786 patients, for period for December 2024 to April 2026, have received financial assistance including 105 patients under the Child Cancer Scheme. These Schemes are being reviewed. There have been complete abuse and over-exaggeration with the colossal amount of funds disbursed for treatment.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am, with your permission, tabling the information as requested.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry is continuously implementing a series of measures aimed at strengthening public healthcare services at the national level. These measures include sustained massive investment in healthcare infrastructures, state-of-the-art equipment and human resources. These measures would, to a large extent, reduce our dependency on foreign hospitals for treatment of our patients.

During this financial year, an allocation of approximately Rs18.5 billion has been earmarked for the health sector, reflecting Government's commitment to modernising and strengthening public healthcare delivery across all levels of care.

At the primary care level, the following measures are being implemented –

- prevention, early detection and community-based management of diseases, particularly non-communicable diseases;
- diabetic retinal screening and diabetic foot care are being decentralised to community level, and
- structured programmes for early intervention and lifestyle modification for diabetes and pre-diabetes patients, supported by the development of specialised diabetic care centres.

At the secondary level –

- Regional hospitals are being continuously upgraded with improved diagnostic and treatment facilities, and

- Specialised services are being decentralised to improve accessibility and reduce pressure on tertiary institutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the tertiary care level –

- the Trauma and Emergency Unit in each Regional Hospital has already been set up under the supervision of Emergency Physicians;
- the Kidney and Renal Transplant Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital has already been operationalised;
- a Bone Marrow Transplant Unit will also be operational once the set-up is ready;
- Interventional Cardiology Services have been extended to Rose Belle Hospital;
- the Vascular Surgery Unit at Flacq Hospital is already operational;
- the New Eye Hospital at Moka is already providing significant ophthalmological care to patients, and
- Specialised Ophthalmology Services have been decentralised to Flacq and Souillac hospitals.

Other major projects in the pipeline include –

- the construction of an AYUSH Centre of Excellence at Côte d’Or to promote and develop traditional systems of medicine, and
- the construction of a new SSRN Hospital aimed at modernising and expanding the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital to strengthen healthcare infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to emphasise that my Ministry is also having recourse to the services of foreign doctors from United Kingdom, Australia, India and South Africa to assist us in complex super specialised surgeries. These experts are specialised in the fields of Vascular Surgery, Ophthalmology, Neurosurgery, Interventional Radiology, Renal Transplant, ENT, Head and Neck Surgery, Oncosurgery amongst others. Such foreign visits also offer a golden opportunity for our local doctors to keep abreast with modern techniques and care management already in place in advanced countries.

From November 2024 to date, 84 specialised foreign doctors came to Mauritius to undertake complex surgeries such as in fields of Ophthalmology, Orthopaedics, Renal as well

as Cardiac and Vascular Surgeries. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at present there is an Onco-surgeon from Apollo Hospital, India, who is conducting complex surgeries at the National Cancer Centre.

Diagnostic and emergency healthcare services are also being strengthened through the expansion and upgrading of CT scan and MRI facilities across public hospitals, including ongoing procurement and installation of additional imaging equipment at key institutions such as Flacq Hospital, Rose Belle Hospital and Victoria Hospital. A PET scan is operational at the National Cancer Centre, Phoenix.

A national programme is being implemented for the replacement and modernisation of ageing radiology equipment, while efforts are underway to enhance equitable access through the establishment of CT scan and MRI services in underserved regions, including the Flacq and southern regions. In parallel, SAMU capacity is being reinforced through expansion of ambulance fleet to strengthen both emergency response and inter-hospital patient transfers.

During this Financial Year, four additional SAMU ambulances have been procured.

The Deputy Speaker: You got a lot to go? You can circulate.

Mr Bachoo: I am concluding now.

The Deputy Speaker: Conclude.

Mr Bachoo: Because the question was such, it requires a lengthy answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, but if it is a long answer, we can always circulate it.

Mr Bachoo: Only one or two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, carry on.

Mr Bachoo: So, during this Financial Year, four additional ambulances have been procured and my Ministry will procure some additional ambulances during the next Financial Year. A comprehensive set of measures is also being implemented to strengthen sexual and reproductive health services across the continuum of care. These include –

- Strengthening maternal and newborn care;
- Expanding family planning and fertility services including adolescent and youth friendly health services;
- Reinforcing sexually transmitted infections, and HIV prevention, and

- Enhancing women cancer screening services.

In addition, the services of a fertility expert from India have been enlisted and will be provided at the SSRN Hospital.

My Ministry is also reinforcing a comprehensive harm reduction strategy as part of its public health response. In parallel, needle and syringe programmes, addiction treatment services and residential rehabilitation facilities are being strengthened through the drug users and administrative panel to support rehabilitation and integration.

My Ministry is further transferring the human resource capacity in the health sector. Some 138 trainee nurses will join the nursing cadre in June 2026 upon completion of the training. The scheme of service has been amended to allow direct recruitment of qualified nursing officers and 1000 additional nurses are being trained over the next three years.

Since September 2025, 139 medical and health officers have been recruited including 106 with the Public Service Commission and 33 on contractual basis. In addition, 14 specialist and senior specialist have been recruited since July 2025 in the fields such as orthopaedic, urology, obstetrics and gynaecology and paediatrics. These specialists will also include emergency physician who will service the trauma and emergency unit in each of the five regional hospitals.

Through continuous investment across infrastructure services and human resources and through a balanced approach encompassing prevention, treatment and rehabilitation and specialised care, Government is progressively strengthening the capacity of our public health system to meet the evolving needs of the population. This strategy is ultimately aimed at ensuring the equitable access to quality health care locally, improving health outcome for all citizens and reducing dependence on overseas medical treatment in a structured and sustainable manner.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member.

Mr Baboolall: Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. As rightly pointed out by the hon. Minister, diagnostic is very important. Is he aware that the MRI, City Scan at National Cancer Centre and Candos hospital are not working properly and this is causing serious issues to the patients and appointment are being given in December 2026?

Mr Bachoo: Well, I am made aware that at the cancer hospital, there has been a slight problem but that has already been looked into but I would like to add up that the last 10 years, much investment was not made in that equipment and that is the reason why this situation. For example, in Victoria it must be above 10 years old and repeated breakdowns do occur but we have taken the decision probably in the forthcoming budget, we have to change. We are going to have one additional MRI, a new MRI to be set up in Victoria Hospital.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue!

BOIS PIGNOLET – WATER LEAKAGE – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/538) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the recent water leakage along the main road at Bois Pignolet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the causes thereof, indicating when same will be remedied.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la CWA m'informe que la région de Bois Pignolet, située dans la circonscription No. 4 – Port Louis Nord et Montagne Longue, compte un total de 836 abonnés.

La conduite de distribution principale le long de la route principale de Bois Pignolet est constituée d'un vieux tuyau en amiante-ciment de 100 mm, sujet à des ruptures fréquentes en raison de son âge, de son état, provoquant ainsi des fuites. Suite à plusieurs plaintes, la Central Water Authority a récemment traité trois fuites importantes détectées sur la conduite de distribution principale. Deux autres fuites mineures ont également été détectées et seront réparées d'ici fin avril, donc si c'est réparé ou sera réparé dans les jours à venir 2026.

M. le président, j'ai également été informé par la CWA que dans le but d'améliorer la fiabilité de l'approvisionnement en eau dans la région à long terme, environ 1.2 km de tuyau le long de la route principale de Bois Pignolet sera remplacé dans le cadre de la phase 2 du programme de remplacement des tuyaux, financé par la ligne de crédit indienne, les R 1.2 milliard que nous avons reçues de l'État indien.

Donc, l'attribution du contrat pour les travaux de remplacement des tuyaux est prévue pour septembre de cette année-ci.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member.

Mr Caserne: Merci, M. le président. Je remercie l'honorable ministre pour sa réponse. Juste pour lui dire que la situation cause pas mal d'inconvénients à toutes ces abonnés, ces habitants de Bois Pignolet. Ma question est, est-ce qu'il peut transmettre le message au niveau de la CWA pour que ces fuites où il n'y a pas mal de perte actuellement puissent être réparées dans un délai assez rapidement pour soulager la situation actuelle au niveau de Bois Pignolet ? Merci.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je note et je transmettrais mais je dois dire aussi que ces tuyaux en amiante-ciment, des tuyaux datant plus de 60 ans donc, c'est difficile. Si nous mettons, je l'ai dit l'autre jour, si nous mettons trop de pression dans les lignes, les tuyaux s'effritent, se cassent. Si nous ne mettons pas suffisamment de pression dans les tuyaux, certaines personnes en hauteur n'arrivent pas à avoir l'eau. Donc, c'est pour cette raison que nous sommes obligés d'envoyer des camions citernes.

Donc, je vais transmettre mais j'ai appris – j'ai posé la question moi aussi pour demander pourquoi on ne répare pas. Nous préférons réparer les grosses fuites et laisser pour un petit peu plus tard les autres petites fuites. Donc, nous sommes un peu divisés en ce qui concerne la réparation car il n'y a pas mal de fuites dans cette région. Donc nous espérons très vite remplacer ces tuyaux avec l'aide indienne et je suis sûre que la situation va s'améliorer.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or!

**MAURITIUS TELECOM – E-BILLING SYSTEM – SETTLEMENT DELAYS –
PENALTIES WAIVERS**

(No. B/539) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the e-billing system implemented by Mauritius Telecom, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether consideration will be given for the waiver of the penalties incurred by subscribers of Internet and fixed line services, in particular, senior citizens, for delays in the settlement of their bills on account of having no access thereto.

Dr. Ramtohul: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for the question. I am informed that Mauritius Telecom has introduced e-billing as part of its green initiatives. This implies that customers can receive their bill in electronic forms instead of paper or by e-mail or SMS. Enabling e-billing for mobile prepay, post-paid services and fixed

telephony were implemented in 2021 and 2022 and I am further informed that e-billing is being implemented across fixed and mobile services.

Customers who do not have access to email may actually opt for SMS e-bill while paper bills remain available on request and can be collected free of charge at the outlets. Assistance is also being given to customers through hotline over and above the outlets, offering options such as SMS notifications as we just mentioned, especially for elderly and vulnerable because we know they are constrained.

Today, 82% of customers receive their bills electronically. Other remaining customers including businesses and certain Government services still receive their paper bills.

In fact, since 2022 there have been 3540 complaints with regard to our bills around fixed line services. However, these customers prefer paper bills and those requests have been addressed.

I am also informed that there are no recorded cases where customers were penalised and this is a substantive part of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because there is question on whether they have been penalised. So, they have not been penalised. In fact, customers are given 30 days to pay their bills and a penalty of 10% can be applied.

However, for request for waiving, Mauritius Telecom is giving due consideration to certain requests. In cases which are genuine, the requests are being acceded to and further information, I am sure will provide suggestions to Mauritius Telecom because they have an independent board for them to make information available with regard to the vulnerable and the old people. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have a supplementary?

Mr Beejan: Thank you. Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister propose a procedure to apply for a waiver on retroactive basis especially for the senior citizens and vulnerable persons?

Dr. Ramtohul: Yes, thank you for this supplementary question hon. Member. We will certainly convey this message to the board of Mauritius Telecom for them to give effect to the request. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil!

CULTURAL DESK – ONE-STOP SHOP – SETTING UP

(No. B/540) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a cultural desk that would act as a one-stop shop for concert organisers and artists, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gondeea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to the proposed setting up of a cultural desk that would act as one-stop-shop for concert organisers and artists, I wish to inform the House that this project is a key measure set out in the Government Programme 2025-2029, and it is a priority for Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since taking office, I have ensured that substantial progress has been made towards the implementation of this project. The cultural desk is being developed by my Ministry with the technical support of the Economic Development Board, using the National Electronic Licensing System as its digital backbone.

I am pleased to inform the House that a mock-up of the online platform has already been developed and will be finalised after addressing some challenges identified during this exercise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is important to underline that this project is a complex and multi-layered exercise. It requires the integration and collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders across ministries, departments and institutions, including the Police Department, local authorities, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Tourism Authority, the Beach Authority, the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, the Mauritius Sports Council, the Mauritius Society of Authors and Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd.

At present, the system governing the organisation of concert is highly fragmented. Event organisers are required to obtain up to 15 clearances from multiple institutions for manual processes and physical submissions. In case of incomplete applications, organisers are required to restart the process, thereby creating delays and placing an additional burden on artists. This has, over time, discouraged many operators in the sector and constrained the organisation of cultural events.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to ensure that the cultural desk effectively addresses these shortcomings, extensive consultations had to be carried out with all stakeholders concerned. I am informed that around 12 meetings have been held both at the level of my

Ministry and by the Economic Development Board in addition to several one-to-one technical sessions with individual stakeholders to map out their respective procedures, requirements and constraints.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these consultations have brought to light a number of systemic issues which have to be resolved prior to finalisation of the system. These include significant divergence in processing timeline across institutions with some clearances being issued within a few days while others may take up to 30 days.

In addition, there are inconsistencies in payment procedures with certain institutions requiring payment prior to the issuance of clearances while other process payments afterwards. Such disparities, if not addressed, would undermine the objective of creating a streamline and user-friendly one-stop-shop.

Another constraint relates to the adoption of one line payment system. While some government institutions are already integrated with the e-payment gateway, others continue to rely on manual payment processes. In this regard, my Ministry has scheduled a meeting with the Accountant General Department and the Ministry of Finance, tomorrow, with a view to harmonising and standardising online payment mechanism across all relevant institutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in parallel, procedures will be harmonised, timelines standardised and operational requirements aligned across institutions. The objective is to ensure that the cultural desk does not merely replicate existing bottlenecks in digital form, but instead delivers a genuinely simplified and efficient process for users.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also wish to highlight that certain delays encountered in the implementation of this project were attributable to bottlenecks at the level of the local authorities where procedures differ from one authority to another and where inputs were not always provided within the expected timeframe.

Upon being apprised of this situation, I convened a meeting with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Local Government together with Chairpersons and Chief Executives of the local authorities to address all these issues. Following this intervention, progress has improved significantly with inputs being consolidated and integrated into the system designed in collaboration with the Economic Development Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once finalised, the system will be presented to the artist community for their validation as soon as possible. Thereafter, the Economic Development

Board will conduct training sessions for artists and event organisers to ensure that they are fully equipped to use the platform effectively.

At the level of my Ministry, officers will be specifically assigned to the culture desk.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, do you have a lot to go? Because time is nearly over.

Mr Gondeea: Nearly 50 seconds.

At the level of my Ministry, officers will be specifically assigned to the culture desk to ensure that the system remains fully functional and operational and to provide direct assistance to artists in case of any problems for the electronic filling of application on the platform.

Let me be very clear: this reform is long overdue. For years, artists and event organisers have been calling for a one-stop-shop to facilitate the organisation of cultural events. Their appeals were not adequately addressed by the previous government. On the contrary, the process became increasingly restrictive with authorisation for public concert, often difficult to obtain. Thereby, adversely affecting livelihood across the creative sector.

This Government has taken a deliberate and firm decision to change that. We are putting in place in modern, transparent and efficient system that will remove unnecessary barriers, restore confidence and enable our artists and cultural entrepreneurs to fully express their talent and contribute to the growth of our creative economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry remains fully committed to ensuring that the cultural desk becomes a truly facilitative, user-friendly and transformative tool for the cultural sector.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/542, B/544, B/545, B/547, B/550, B/553, B/554, B/556, B/557, B/559, B/560, B/561, and B/562.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

(4.18 p.m.)

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – AGREEMENT – LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a Statement on the Chagos Archipelago.

In my reply to the Private Notice Question of last Tuesday, 21 April 2026, I referred to the decision of the UK Government not to proceed in the House of Lords with the Bill titled “Diego Garcia Military Base and British Indian Ocean Territory Bill”, which it had introduced with a view to ratifying the agreement between Mauritius and the United Kingdom concerning the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia.

I wish to keep the House informed of further developments.

On 22 April 2026, I received a phone call from Mr Jonathan Powell, the UK Prime Minister’s National Security Adviser, who reiterated the commitment of the United Kingdom to the Agreement on the Chagos Archipelago despite this decision of the UK Government. I explained to Mr Powell that my Government would in due course review the situation and take a decision on the way forward accordingly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply to the PNQ on the 21 April 2026, officials from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office were coming to visit Mauritius that very week.

Mr Robbie Bulloch, Director of Overseas Territories and Polar Directorate at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office together with the Lead Negotiator, Mr Peter Candler, Mr Paul McKell, the Legal Director of that department came to Mauritius last week at the request of the UK Government. They held talks on 22 April 2026 with the Attorney General and the officers of his Office and my Office.

They also called upon me on 22 April 2026.

During the talks, the United Kingdom highlighted that the signature of an updated UK-US Exchange of Notes in respect of the military base in Diego Garcia is a prerequisite for the “Diego Garcia Military Base and British Indian Ocean Territory Bill” to be taken forward in the UK Parliament. The United Kingdom indicated that while an updated Exchange of Notes had been agreed by the US agencies, it had not yet obtained the approval of the US President and could not therefore be signed. The United Kingdom assured Mauritius that it remains committed to the Agreement which it had signed with Mauritius on the Chagos Archipelago.

The United Kingdom informed Mauritius that once the updated Exchange of Notes would be signed by the United Kingdom and the United States, the “Diego Garcia Military Base and British Indian Ocean Territory Bill” would again be introduced in the UK Parliament.

Mauritius underscored that it would not be able to wait for too long for the ratification of the agreement on the Chagos Archipelago by the United Kingdom. We indicated that we would have in due course to review the situation and decide on the way forward.

It was agreed that Mauritius and the United Kingdom would hold a virtual meeting in one month’s time, that is, towards the end of May of this year in order to take stock of developments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the United Kingdom has agreed that pending the ratification of the Agreement on the Chagos Archipelago, the following actions could be taken –

- (a) organisation of a heritage visit for the Chagossians to the Chagos Archipelago in line with a request made by Mr Olivier Bancoult and other Chagossians for a visit in a letter they had addressed to me earlier;
- (b) a formal delegation of the Chagossian community would be allowed to visit the UK and to engage with MPs and other organisations as well as the UK Press to put forward the views of the original native Chagossians to correct the deliberate misinformation being propagated by some Chagossians living in the UK;
- (c) participation of Mauritian scientists in the annual expedition of the UK’s Chief Scientific Adviser to the Chagos Archipelago and the rat eradication expedition to Peros Banhos;
- (d) visit of a UK delegation to Mauritius to undertake a maritime security capability needs assessment;

- (e) follow up to the workshop on the Chagos Archipelago Marine Protected Area organised by the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration of my Office from 30 March to 01 April 2026 in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London and with the support of the British High Commission;
- (f) completion of work on outstanding issues relating to the implementation of the agreement between Mauritius and the United Kingdom on the Chagos Archipelago, and
- (g) implementation of further actions under the Strategic Partnership Framework which Mauritius and the United Kingdom signed on 22 May 2025.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER BILL

(No. II of 2026)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026).

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle!

(4.24 p.m.)

Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Merci, M. le président.

M. le président, d'abord, permettez-moi de commencer par féliciter l'honorable *Attorney General* pour avoir présenté devant cette auguste Assemblée ce projet de loi : le *Certificate of Character Bill* No. II de 2026. Un projet de loi, M. le président, qui à première vue peut paraître tout simple et sans histoires. Mais, un projet de loi qui en réalité, poursuit un objectif fondamental. Un objectif fondamental, car il s'agit d'abord de réduire les obstacles à l'emploi que font face les citoyens ayant déjà été condamnés par une cour de justice. Mais non

seulement de promouvoir la réintégration, mais aussi la réinsertion des citoyens qui ont été condamnés par une cour de justice.

M. le président, en parcourant ce projet de loi, en fait, je ne peux m'empêcher de constater – je me réjouis même en fait – que ce projet de loi s'inscrit pleinement dans la philosophie de ce gouvernement. Ce projet de loi en fait, M. le président, s'inscrit pleinement dans la mission même de ce gouvernement. Et en préparant mon discours pour aujourd'hui, en fait, j'ai pris le soin de parcourir un petit peu le *Government Programme*, le document qui a été lu par son Excellence le président de la République en janvier de l'année dernière et je vais me permettre, *allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to quote a very short extract of this document which is at page 21, paragraph 44 of the Government Programme 2025-2029. I quote –*

“It is the conviction of Government that our country needs a social pact to reimagine our future together as one people, as one nation.

Government aims at a qualitative leap towards a more inclusive society, where the needs, rights, dignity and a sense of humanism of our people shape the social system of the Republic.”

And the last bit, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the most important one –

“Fundamental reforms will be brought to the outdated social security and social integration operational system of the country.”

M. le président, this Bill, in fact, *ce projet de loi*, the Certificate of Character Bill, in my very humble view, is in fact a concrete step precisely in this direction. *En réalité, M. le président, ce projet de loi vise à renforcer des provisions déjà existantes, des provisions qui existent déjà dans nos lois, notamment le Equal Opportunities Act. Effectivement, j'ai eu l'occasion de parcourir un petit peu le Equal Opportunities Act et on peut voir sous la section 3, the definition section, that the term ‘criminal record’ already exists within the definition of ‘status’ in section 3 of the Equal Opportunities Act. This piece of legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Equal Opportunities Act 2008, already prohibits discrimination by employers, especially where the offence is not relevant to the nature of the job which is being contemplated by a prospective employer or by an existing employee.*

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, in fact, under the Equal Opportunities Act, there may already be existing laws and in fact, it is precisely to be found under section 10 and 11 of the Equal Opportunities Act. But that being said, whilst there may be already laws

existing under the Equal Opportunities Act, as I said, sections 10 and 11, *on ne peut que constater, M. le président*, that the reality on the ground tells us a completely different story. And, in fact, as a practicing barrister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have seen a growing trend for employers to systematically ask for potential employees to provide them with a character certificate in this recruitment process. In fact, we have seen very recently, there has been a massive recruitment process in the LGSC and we all know that all these candidates, for the post of scavenger, have been requested to provide character certificates. *Et comme moi, je suis sûr que beaucoup de mes collègues ont été approchés par ceux qui ont été recrutés, par certains, bien sûr, qui ont été choisis pour nous dire que malheureusement, ils ont un antécédent.* And regrettably, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they will be excluded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, whilst this practice of asking for Certificates of Character, in fact, I am not too sure myself if it fully complies with data minimisation principle under the Data Protection Act. That is itself debatable but one thing is sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us be frank and conceit, no applicant for a job can possibly envisage the possibility of challenging this request by a prospective employer to provide a Certificate of Character. We know how cumbersome this can be in terms of the procedure to fight a case before a court of law, etc. So, they simply comply, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They submit, and too often, they are excluded.

Donc, M. le président, sous l'actuel système, sous l'actuelle loi, les sections 10 et 11 de l'*Equal Opportunités Act*, nous faisons face, ici, à une contradiction fondamentale. D'une part, nous avons d'un côté l'employeur qui peut demander aux employés potentiels de fournir un certificat de moralité et d'autre part, la loi telle qu'elle existe, nous dit que ce potentiel employeur ne peut pas discriminer sur cette base.

But then, again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how does the applicant go about proving discrimination? How does he show that the decision of the employer to reject his application was due to his criminal record, when he has no visibility or whatsoever on the recruitment process? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in reality, the existing provisions under section 10 and section 11 of the Equal Opportunities Act, in fact, become more theoretical than practical.

C'est précisément là, M. le président, que ce projet de loi intervient. Quand nous parcourons ce projet de loi, justement la clause 4 du projet de loi, M. le président, goes further. In fact, clause 4 of the Bill makes it now clear that an employer shall not act on

criminal record and shall not discriminate an employee or a prospective employee as the case may be, where the criminal record is not related to the employment.

Now, one may argue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this is just a repetition of the existing laws. I am afraid no, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is not just a reinstatement of the law. It is not just a reinstatement of sections 10 and 11 of the Equal Opportunities Act. Instead, it constitutes the introduction of an enforceable protection in our laws, which may now be invoked by employees and potential employees. *Ceux qui se sentent lésés, M. le président.*

En fait, quand nous regardons encore une fois ce projet de loi, clause 12 vient justement apporter un *consequential amendment*. *If we look at clause 12, it brings a consequential amendment* à la section 10, justement, de l'*Equal Opportunitites Act* dans le but, précisément, d'aligner le cadre légal afin de garantir, à la fois, une cohérence mais aussi, M. le président, une efficacité plus accrue.

Donc, M. le président, on peut dire que ce projet de loi, le *Certificate of Character Bill* va encore plus loin. Il réaffirme une vision essentielle de notre système de justice pénale, à la fois un système de justice pénale rétributif parce qu'il est impératif, bien évidemment, que tout système pénal soit rétributif, mais plus important que tout, faudrait-il encore que ce système soit un système qui préconise une justice restauratrice. *This is precisely the purpose of this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. A system that does not only punish, but a system that also rehabilitates. A system that also reintegrates, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I once read that the greatest glory of man is not in his never falling, but in rising every time he falls. When we look at the content of this Bill, the Certificate of Character Bill, it is precisely what this Bill brings about. It gives a real meaning to these words: that the greatest glory of man is not in his never falling, but in rising every time he falls – precisely, the purpose of this Bill. A second chance – to provide a conducive environment for those who have failed, not to fail again but to be provided with a second chance to succeed. An opportunity, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to rise again. After all, what is the purpose, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of a criminal justice system if it is not to allow a person – after accountability of course – to stand up again, to work, to contribute to society? As we would say, *d'apporter sa pierre à l'édifice, M. le président.*

Dans la même foulée, M. le président, ce projet de loi, plus particulièrement la clause 5, nous apporte des réponses concrètes. Des paramètres tangibles, notamment comme je l'ai dit sous la clause 5, qui préconisent une augmentation du seuil des amendes qui passent maintenant de R 5 000 à R 50 000 et une réduction du délai qui passe maintenant de 5 ans à 2 ans. Un chiffre beaucoup plus juste, M. le président, et qui reflète la réalité – *the exigencies of the Mauritian society*.

In fact, the combined effect of what is sought to be attained under this Bill, is abundantly clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Under this Bill, a minor offence cannot, should not and will not follow a person for life. In fact, after a reasonable period of time, the person ought to be able to move forward, without being permanently defined by his past.

M. le président, nous ne pouvons maintenir un système où un citoyen de ce pays est victime de son passé. Comme dit le français, M. le président, le passé est un cadavre qu'il faut enterrer mais, il peut néanmoins nous servir d'exemple afin de mieux bâtir l'avenir et c'est justement ce que préconise ce projet de loi. Il est essentiel, ici, de souligner que ce seuil s'applique, non seulement à l'amende qui est imposée puisque la clause en question prévoit une amende à la hauteur de R 50 000. Il est important, ici, de préciser que ce seuil s'applique à l'amende qui est réellement infligée, c'est-à-dire bien qu'une offense puisse prévoir une peine maximale de R 500 000, ce qui sera pris en considération, c'est l'amende qui sera imposée par une cour de justice, et cela, garantissant, M. le président, non seulement une appréciation plus juste, mais aussi plus individualisée par la cour.

M. le président, je tiens aussi à saluer une disposition particulièrement importante, mais aussi particulièrement avant-gardiste de ce projet de loi – la clause 5 (g). Celle qui prévoit, M. le président, qu'aucune condamnation ne figurera sur un certificat de moralité lorsque l'infraction a été commise avant l'âge de 18 ans, bien sûr, sauf pour les infractions plus graves qui sont prévues sous le *First Schedule*. Et, là, je me réjouis de l'annonce qui a été faite par l'honorable *Attorney General* la semaine dernière, qui avait revu justement à la baisse la liste d'offenses figurant sur le *First Schedule*, que nous accueillons justement.

Donc, cette provision, M. le président, sous la clause 5 (g), qu'aucune condamnation, comme je dis, ne figurera sur un certificat de moralité lorsque l'infraction a été commise avant l'âge de 18 ans. *This in itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, comprises a very powerful and necessary safeguard*. Parce que nous devons justement reconnaître une réalité très simple, M.

le président, nous faisons tous des erreurs, les jeunes en particulier. Les jeunes font tous des erreurs. Qui peut prétendre ici n'avoir jamais commis d'erreurs de jeunesse ?

Nous faisons tous des erreurs, M. le président mais ce qui est le plus important, l'essentiel en fait, c'est que ces erreurs ne doivent en aucun cas devenir une condamnation à vie. Je vois le regard amusant et amusé de mon camarade, mon collègue l'honorable Beehook qui en dit long, M. le président.

A mistake in youth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should not close the door to a future in adulthood. *C'est précisément ce que préconise cette section, la clause 5 (g), que j'accueille favorablement, M. le président.*

The Deputy Speaker: You have two minutes to go!

Mr Ramdass: M. le président, avant de terminer, sur une autre note, j'aimerais bien faire état d'une situation. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, j'avais adressé une question à l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell par rapport à la situation des pêcheurs de ma circonscription, *a question which unfortunately could not be reached due to time constraints*. Et pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, j'avais adressé cette question justement par rapport à la situation des pêcheurs de ma circonscription et à travers l'île, qui sont contraints de produire un certificat de moralité afin de se procurer d'une carte, *a fisherman card*, qui est émise par le ministère.

The Deputy Speaker: You have one minute to go!

Mr Ramdass: *Yes.*

Donc, ces pêcheurs, M. le président, sont des gens simples, des gens honnêtes, des gens qui travaillent, qui ont les mêmes aspirations que nous tous, de gagner leur vie et de subvenir aux besoins de leur famille. Et ces pêcheurs, M. le président, il n'est pas rare, il n'est pas inhabituel qu'ils aient, à un moment ou un autre de leur vie, qu'ils aient eu une condamnation pour une infraction simple.

M. le président, ne serait-ce pas absurde ? Ne serait-il pas injuste qu'un pêcheur condamné pour un simple cas de larcin, un simple cas de *simple larceny*, de *simple assault* soit lésé, soit privé de sa carte de pêcheur uniquement pour cette raison ? Évidemment, sa carte de pêcheur et tous les bénéfices, tous les avantages qui y sont liés.

Donc, M. le président, vous conviendrez certainement qu'une personne comme lui, qui essaie de gagner sa vie, ne représente absolument aucun danger pour la sécurité maritime et aucun danger pour la sécurité des citoyens de ce pays. Avons-nous, M. le président, le droit moral de réellement priver un homme ou une femme dans cette situation de son gagne-pain pour cette raison ? La réponse est non, M. le président. *That would be most unfair. Not only most unfair, but also most unreasonable.* Et c'est précisément ce type d'injustice que ce projet de loi, je l'espère, M. le président, nous permettra de corriger.

M. le président, pour conclure, *for too long, our system has not only punished wrongdoings, but it has prolonged that punishment way beyond what justice requires. It has followed people into job interviews, into opportunities, into application for a fisherman's card, into application for a PSV license, into applications even for registration of an ONG.* Bref, *into one's desperate attempts, desperate and legitimate attempts, to rebuild his life after a failure.*

M. le président, en guise de conclusion, je dirais ceci : ce projet de loi n'est pas simplement une réforme technique. *It's a statement of principle. A reflection of the philosophy of this government. A reflection of the social policy of this government. That justice must be fair. That punishment must be proportionate. That every citizen of this country deserves a chance, a second chance. This is precisely, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why I support this bill. Thank you very much.*

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I suspend the Sitting for half an hour.

At 4.41 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.36 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Dr. Prayag, I think it's your turn. The floor is yours!

(5.36 p.m.)

Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to intervene on the Certificate of Character Bill.

I would like to start by commending the hon. Attorney General for bringing forward this piece of legislation. The Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026), which proposes to repeal the 2012 Act and introduce an improved framework more than a decade later. I am not

suggesting that the Certificate of Character Act 2012 was not in itself a significant improvement. What I am saying is that this new legislation comes at the right moment in our history and is well positioned to address the realities of a new era.

By this new era, I refer to, firstly, the post-COVID period, where some of our citizens have been convicted for offenses, such as failing to comply with curfew orders under the Public Health Act, which in some cases, simply meant not wearing a face mask during curfew.

Secondly, a labour market is increasingly characterised by competition, including from expatriates, sometimes to the detriment of our fellow citizens who may be denied employment opportunities due to minor offences reflected on their certificates of character.

Thirdly, a context in which fines and penalties have significantly increased in recent years, resulting in a greater number of convictions being recorded and subsequently appearing on certificates of character.

Madam Speaker, the certificate of character remains in certain sectors an important administrative and regulatory instrument. It is used to assess suitability for employment, licensing and other positions of trust. I fully recognise that in such context, background verification serves a legitimate purpose in safeguarding public interest.

However, the issue before us is not its existence, but rather the manner in which the system operates. As a medical practitioner, my intervention on this Bill focuses primarily on its social, rehabilitative and psychological dimensions. This legislation will bring many positive changes. It reflects the same philosophy that guided the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act of 2025, that is, facilitating access to justice.

This new Certificate of Character Bill will reduce barriers to employment and promotes the social reintegration of persons who have been convicted of offences. It reflects the maturity of our country. I believe that bringing forward such legislation was long overdue.

Madam Speaker, in jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, mechanisms exist whereby after a defined period, often around five years, depending on the nature of the offence, certain convictions are no longer disclosed.

This allows individuals, particularly those involved in minor offences, to reintegrate into society without being permanently penalised. The introduction of this Bill demonstrates

our willingness to align with such progressive approaches. In the past, many individuals felt compelled to plead guilty to offences, often due to financial constraints or simply to bring matters to an end.

However, it is important to note that this legislation complements the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act 2025. With improved access to legal representations, individuals are now better equipped to contest charges rather than opting for expedient guilty pleas without fully understanding the implications. This Bill introduces, for the first time, a structured approach to recognising rehabilitation. The knowledge that, after a certain period, one may obtain a Certificate of Character free from past convictions, can act as an incentive for behavioural reform. Conversely, a system that imposes a lifelong stigma may discourage individuals from attempting to improve their circumstances, thereby undermining the very objective of rehabilitation.

In its previous form, the system was rigid. It did not adequately take into account the age at which the offence was committed, the time elapsed since the conviction, or the subsequent conduct of the individual. The lack of differentiation led, in certain cases, to disproportionate outcomes. We have seen situations where individuals at teenage or pre-university age entered guilty pleas, often without the benefit of proper legal advice, and without a full understanding of its long-term implications. These entries remained on record and were reflected in certificates of character, thereby creating barriers to employment, education, and social reintegration. Clause 5(g) of this Bill is therefore a very important provision as it offers a second chance to many individuals who committed offences under the age of 18.

Madam Speaker, we must agree that this Bill raises a fundamental issue of proportionality and rehabilitation within our system. It is therefore my considered view that the framework could be further strengthened through the introduction of a structured review mechanism. I propose the setting up of a dedicated committee or even consideration of the Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy to be empowered with clearly defined statutory authority to review rehabilitation processes and examine specific cases upon application, particularly in relation to certain offences under Schedule One.

Such a body could be mandated to assess the age of the individual at the time of the offence, the nature of the seriousness of the offence, the time elapsed since the conviction or the entry, the existence of any subsequent offences, and lastly, evidence of rehabilitation,

including employment, education, or community engagement. Based on these criteria, the body should be empowered to determine whether certain entries may be expunged, filtered, or withheld from disclosure in defined circumstances. Madam Speaker, I may be considered bold in stating that Section 10(f) of the existing Equal Opportunities Act appears less permissive than the proposed Clause 12.

The consequential amendment under this Bill, in as much as the new formulation, may confer broader discretion upon employers. The shift in wording from 'irrelevant to the nature of employment' to 'related to his employment', may in practice widen the scope for subjective interpretation.

I would, therefore, propose that the word 'directly' be inserted before 'related' so that the provision reads 'directly related to his employment', thereby limiting the risk of misuse by employers acting in bad faith. We must ensure that individuals are not unfairly discriminated against on the basis of past convictions.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to address Clause 9 relating to offences and proceedings which provides that any person who tampers with, forges or fraudulently alters a Certificate of Character shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding Rs50,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

In my view, this penalty may not be sufficiently dissuasive, particularly when considered against the backdrop of increased threshold in other offences where fines have been raised to Rs50,000 from Rs5,000 and imprisonment terms extended up to five years. This is an aspect that may warrant reconsideration. The introduction of a review mechanism as proposed would not weaken the system. On the contrary, it would enhance its credibility by ensuring that outcomes are proportionate, evidence-based, and aligned with modern practices of justice. We must ensure that our legislative framework evolves in a manner that safeguards society while also recognising that individuals who have genuinely reformed should not be subjected to indefinite consequences.

It is in that spirit that I support this Bill and with these words, Madam Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Ramkalawon!

(5.46 p.m.)

Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Madam Speaker, fellow hon. Members of this House and the citizens we serve, I would like to start with a quote –

“True Morality is not found in the absence of mark on a paper but in the presence of the will to improve. A certificate may document the past but it cannot measure the potential of the human spirit.”

I stand before you today in this Chambre of justice to advocate for a fundamental shift in how we perceive potential, opportunity, and the inherent dignity of every human being. I rise in full support of the Certificate of Character Bill, a forward-thinking reform that seeks to repeal the existing Certificate of Character Act 2012. I would like to take a sociological point of view rather than legal one which most of my friends have taken.

Madam Speaker, for too long, we have allowed a system of barriers to dictate who is ‘worthy’, of participating in our economy and our society. We have used the lack of a morality certificate, a document often rooted in historical bias or past mistakes, as a permanent gatekeeper. By doing so, we have inadvertently created a cycle of exclusion that traps individuals who are trying to turn their lives around. This Bill is not about ignoring accountability. It is about recognising the capacity for change. When individuals offend, it is frequently within the context of limited opportunities and social disadvantage.

However, after serving their sentence, it is both just and rational that they be given an opportunity to rebuild their lives. This legislation is vital for it restores dignity through work where employment is more than just a pay check. It is the bedrock of self-worth and social integration. By removing the mandatory requirement of a morality certificate for employment, we open doors for thousands of our fellow citizens to contribute their skills, pay taxes, and support their families.

I will further add that supporting the Bill helps break the cycle of recidivism that is denying employment to those who have stumbled in the past, is a guaranteed path to further hardship. If we want a safer and more stable society, we must provide the pathways to honest work. A person who can earn a living is a person who can build a future.

When we use a document to define a person's worth, we cease to judge them as an individual and begin to judge them as a statistic. Justice demands that we look at the person standing before us today, not as the ghost they were yesterday. Speaking about economic empowerment, our economy relies on the full participation of its people.

By widening the labour pool and allowing employers to judge candidates based on their present capability and character rather than a static document, we foster a more dynamic and inclusive marketplace.

Madam Speaker, this Bill is about correcting an injustice done in the past. Under the previous law, a fine exceeding a mere Rs5,000 could follow an individual for up to five years. Let us be honest. Rs5,000, in today's economy is no longer a meaningful indicator of serious wrongdoings. This government has had the clarity and the courage to act. By raising the threshold to 50,000 and reducing the period to two years, we are saying loud and clear, minor offences should not define major portions of a person's life. That is fairness, that is proportionality, that is modern governance!

Madam Speaker, from a sociological standpoint, this Bill strikes at the heart of what we call structural exclusion. When individuals are denied employment because of unrelated past offences, we are not protecting society, but instead, we are destabilising it. We are pushing people to the margins. We are closing doors instead of opening pathways. And let me say this categorically as mentioned earlier, unemployment fuels vulnerability, vulnerability fuels recidivism, and recidivism undermines national security.

This Bill breaks that cycle by expressly prohibiting discrimination where the offence is not related to the employment. This Government is making a powerful statement. A person's past shall not outweigh his potential. A society that believes in reintegration demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and shared progress. And this is one of the visions of this Government. And I quote from the speech of the President of the Republic of our country –

“Fundamental reforms will be brought to the outdated social security and social integration operational system of the country.”

Madam Speaker, by reducing barriers to employment, the Bill helps to create a more equitable society in which individuals are judged not solely by the past, but by the willingness to contribute positively in the present. I agree that while it feels unfair to the applicant, employers often act out of a sense of risk management while hiring people as if an employee who, with a record commits a crime at work, the company could be responsible for negligent hiring or for roles involving data, money or vulnerable people, a clean certificate is often seen as a baseline for trust.

In some sectors, like banking, security and Health Care, law forbids hiring anyone with specific types of record. However, in many countries, including recent reforms in places like

Mauritius, Canada and the UK, laws are changing to prevent blanket rejections. Under spent convictions, laws, minor offences are often removed from a Certificate of Character after a certain period, for example, five to ten years of good behaviour. The suffering caused by a Certificate of Character denial is a cycle of economic exclusion and permanent stigma.

For the individual, it feels like they are being punished twice, once by the Courts and indefinitely, by the job market. Madam Speaker, and dear colleagues, I would here like to take the example of Japan. Japan has a unique cultural and legal approach to background checks. There is no legal requirement for employers to conduct background checks. In fact, it is culturally discouraged for private employers to probe into a person's criminal past unless it is directly relevant to a specific licensed profession like law or medicine. The impact is huge as a person with a past mistake can often re-enter the workforce without the paper trail of a certificate blocking the path.

While the US is known for rigorous checks, many states like California, New Jersey and Illinois have passed “Ban the Box” laws. Employers cannot ask about your criminal history on the initial job application. They can only run a background check after they have decided you are the best candidate and made a conditional offer. Here as well, the impact ensures the person is judged on their skills first, preventing the suffering of immediate rejection before they can even interview.

In some developing nations or countries with less centralized digital recording, certain regions like Southeast Asia or West Africa, the concept of a formal Certificate of Character for private employment simply does not exist as a standard practice. Recruitment is based heavily on personal references and vouching rather than a police database.

In Spain, under the GDPR Article 10 and specific Spanish laws, criminal record data is considered highly sensitive. In Spain, most private employers are not allowed to ask for a criminal record certificate. My point here is to debate the fact that the Character of Certificate in many countries are not just; rather people are given second chances.

Of course, it is important to acknowledge that this reform must be implemented with appropriate safeguards. The reference to certain criteria ensures that considerations of public safety and trust are not overlooked. There will always be a need to balance the rights of individuals with the protection of a broader community. However, these safeguards should be proportionate and should not undermine the central objective of the Bill, that is, to facilitate genuine opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration. It is also worth noting that

international trends increasingly support such approaches. Many jurisdictions have recognized that overly punitive systems, particularly those that impose long-term collateral consequences are counterproductive. By contrast, policies that promote reintegration have been shown to reduce reoffending rates and enhance social stability.

In this context, the proposed Bill places Mauritius on a progressive path, aligning it with global best practices in criminal justice and social policy. And, this will enable the society the civil society to contribute in improving the law and order.

In conclusion, the proposed Certificate of Character Bill represents a vital step towards a more just, inclusive and forward-looking society. It acknowledges the realities of social life, the importance of second chances and the transformative power of opportunity. By supporting this Bill, we affirm our commitment to a system of justice that is not only firm, but also compassionate and pragmatic.

I am delighted that most offences committed under the Quarantine Act 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic will no longer appear on Certificates of Character. I warmly congratulate the hon. Attorney General for this thoughtful and humane consideration. Who could forget the innocent Bangladeshi expatriate worker who, during the lockdown, was found roaming the streets and responded to police officers with his now famous “chicken, chicken” remark? And who does not recall a *Dada*, a *Chacha*, a *Tonton*, who was booked under the Quarantine Act for selling a handful of vegetables. *Tras enn la vie*, as we say. Once booked, these minor infractions were destined to remain on their Certificate of Character for life.

Thanks to this Bill, such individuals will now be freed from the burden of offences committed during that extraordinary COVID-19 period. This measure restores dignity and fairness, ensuring that citizens are not permanently penalised for acts committed in times of unprecedented hardship.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you for respecting the time. Yes, now we have hon. Ms Leu-Govind!

(5.58 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Arts and Culture (Ms V. Leu-Govind): Merci, Madame la présidente. Madame la présidente, le Certificat de caractère est aujourd'hui plus important

qu'un degré ou même qu'un doctorat. *The Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026)* va venir corriger ce déséquilibre. Ce projet de loi va remplacer la loi actuelle par un cadre plus moderne et plus équilibré. Afin de réduire les obstacles à l'emploi et à la réinsertion sociale pour des personnes ayant été condamnées, tout en maintenant les garanties nécessaires pour les infractions les plus graves.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi tout d'abord d'exprimer mes sincères remerciements au Premier ministre, à l'*Attorney General*, ainsi qu'au gouvernement pour avoir porté ce projet de loi qui est très important. Je tiens également à saluer le fait que certaines préoccupations soulevées dans cette Assemblée ont été prises en considération.

En effet, lors de mon intervention le 15 avril 2025 pendant le débat sur le *National Drug Control Bill*, j'avais attiré l'attention de cette Chambre sur la nécessité de repenser le système du certificat de moralité. J'avais alors proposé qu'après une période d'environ 10 ans, sans récidive, certains délits ne figurent plus sur le casier judiciaire d'une personne. Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, nous constatons que cette réflexion a été entendue. Je remercie le gouvernement d'avoir pris en considération cette proposition dans le cadre de cette réforme.

Avec votre permission, Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de citer une des chansons du grand chanteur Ras Natty Baby qui vient de nous quitter. Même après son départ, ses paroles resteront toujours vivantes dans nos cœurs –

« *La zistis drwa egal pou tou.* »

Avec un certificat de moralité, la justice n'est réservée qu'à ceux qui ont des contacts politiques. C'est uniquement eux qui méritent une deuxième chance. Comment pourrait-on oublier l'épisode du fils de l'ancien Commissaire de Police qui avant même d'être jugé ou condamné, avait obtenu la grâce présidentielle ? Le *DPP* avait fait appel, mais le gouvernement d'alors avait muselé le *DPP*. Aujourd'hui, ici même dans cette auguste Assemblée, nous avons rendu au *DPP* sa lettre de noblesse et son indépendance. Au fait, faut-il être la famille d'un leader de l'opposition ou d'un Premier ministre qui a été, lui, condamné une première fois par la cour pour corruption et qui a ensuite fait appel au *Privy Council*, alors que toi, petit malheureux qui n'as pas les moyens de faire appel au *Privy Council*, tu es condamné à vie ? En plus, ce même accusé par le baron pour financement de trafic de drogue n'était même pas interrogé. Et si c'était un simple citoyen, Madame la présidente, on sait tous, perquisition, *planting* et prison !

C'est à ce même Premier ministre que le peuple a donné une deuxième chance. Une première chance, une deuxième chance, pour qu'au final, on s'est retrouvé en 2024 avec un pays saigné à blanc et laissé à genoux. Et ce même Premier ministre est sorti du tombeau pour venir demander une troisième chance pour les prochaines élections. Madame la présidente, est-ce que les allégations ne sont valables que pour les simples citoyens ? Et il faut saluer l'inclusion des offenses relatives au financement des trafics de drogues dans le premier *Schedule* du *Bill*, Madame la présidente. Ce sont toujours les petits poissons qui se font attraper dans les filets, pendant ce temps, les gros requins nagent en toute liberté et en toute impunité.

Madame la présidente, cependant, il est important de rappeler la réalité. Le problème du certificat de moralité ne concerne pas qu'uniquement le document lui-même. Il concerne surtout ce qui va se passer après. Madame la présidente, aujourd'hui, dans notre pays, le certificat de moralité est exigé pour des démarches administratives et professionnelles. Mais lorsqu'un certificat de moralité mentionne une condamnation, même ancienne, la porte se ferme souvent immédiatement.

Aujourd'hui, si nous voulons vraiment combattre l'exclusion, nous devons aller au-delà du texte de loi. Il est important que la *PSC* et le *LGSC* donnent l'exemple en recrutant les ex-détenus qui répondent certainement aux critères nécessaires, Madame la présidente. Nous devons changer les mentalités. Alors, cette personne doit pouvoir se relever parce qu'un certificat de moralité ne doit pas être une barrière à la réinsertion, ni une double peine imposée par la société.

Madame la présidente, une société forte n'est pas une société qui enferme les individus dès leurs erreurs passées. Une société forte est une société qui croit que l'avenir peut être différent du passé. Et aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, nous faisons un pas important dans cette direction. Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci beaucoup. Nous avançons bien là. Maintenant, l'honorable Narsinghen !

(6.05 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr H. Narsinghen): Madame la présidente, je vous remercie de me donner la parole. Comme toujours, je prendrais, cet après-midi, une démarche beaucoup plus pédagogique et je donnerais un petit plan de cette petite intervention.

D'abord, une petite introduction. J'essaierais de réfuter certains points du leader de l'opposition malgré le fait qu'il ne soit pas là. Et je parlerais aussi de la vision nationale et aussi inclusive de ce projet de loi, des fondements légaux et philosophiques dans ce projet de loi, de l'impératif économique de ce projet de loi, de la réforme de l'approche carcérale, de comment notre prison doit devenir une école et aussi un centre de formation. Ensuite, si j'ai le temps, des *best practices*, le rôle model international. Et aussi parler de comment élargir ce concept. On est en train d'élaborer une théorie : la théorie de la deuxième chance.

So, coming to some of the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I am just going to summarise it. He agreed with the theory we are trying to build: the theory of second chance. But then, he mentioned, at the same time, swimming in over-contradiction, saying that the law is being too lenient, and at the same time, there are insufficient safeguards. Also, that it may pose certain threats to employers. I am really surprised.

Madam Speaker, when we are passing a law –the Attorney General and his team – we have to understand that we have to listen to all parties and we have to look at all the stakeholders. It is an exercise of equilibrium. If we have read the great legal philosopher Roscoe Pound, you will understand what we mean by jural postulates and how to strike the right balance. So, unfortunately, I think the Leader of the Opposition has been swimming in controversy.

By contrast, I have to commend the position taken by hon. Baboolall, who has joined the Opposition. He adopted, I would say, a very responsible approach.

(Interruptions)

So, Madame la présidente, pendant des décennies...

Madam Speaker: Et il est présent !

Mr Narsinghen: Bien sûr ! Il faut le féliciter.

Pendant des décennies, Madame la présidente, notre système judiciaire s'est montré d'une efficacité redoutable pour punir, mais, malheureusement, d'une réticence regrettable à pardonner. Et aujourd'hui, nous avons l'occasion de corriger une faille systémique qui a condamné des milliers de nos concitoyens à une véritable mort civile, un état où une erreur de jeunesse devient une barrière permanente à une vie digne et productive. Donc, il est grand temps d'offrir une deuxième chance à celles et ceux qui ont fauté certes, mais qui ont évolué, appris et méritent d'être réintégrés pleinement dans notre société.

Madame la présidente, c'est une réforme porteuse de sens. Le *Certificate of Character Bill* n'est pas un simple ajustement procédural comme certains ont voulu nous faire croire. C'est une déclaration forte de notre foi dans la capacité de l'être humain à changer, à se racheter et à reconstruire une vie.

Avant 2006, Madame la présidente, il y avait un vide juridique. En 2006, le Parti travailliste, avec ses alliés, évidemment, a introduit un premier cadre légal pour réglementer le certificat de moralité. Je dirais, une avancée certes, mais encore prudente. Je dirais, trop prudente. Cependant, en 2012, une nouvelle réforme est venue améliorer la situation des personnes condamnées pour des délits mineurs. Un progrès encore réel mais, à mon goût, encore insuffisant.

Aujourd'hui, nous franchissons une étape décisive, si je peux le dire ainsi, un véritable *hat-trick*. Je n'aime pas trop aller dans la politique partisane, mais je dois dire, un *hat-trick* du Parti travailliste, avec son leader, où à chaque fois, trois fois, il a essayé d'apporter des réformes, évidemment, avec ses alliés. Donc, qu'est-ce que nous constatons ? Il y a une constance politique au service des plus vulnérables de notre société.

Évidemment, ce projet de loi, vous allez voir, Madame la présidente, a une vision nationale et inclusive. Et il faut le dire sans détour, les délits mineurs touchent souvent les plus défavorisés, même s'il ne faut jamais tomber dans la généralisation. Les riches, comme vous le savez, commettent plus ce qu'on appelle des crimes en col blanc et souvent, ils sont défendus par les ténors du barreau. Par exemple, voler une mangue peut faire condamner une personne à 2-3 mois de prison mais, par contre, ceux qui ont volé R 7-8 millions ou plus, R 80 millions, ont seulement une amende.

Madame la présidente, nous, comme législateurs, apportons notre pierre à l'édifice. Je comprends qu'il faut respecter ce grand principe de la séparation des pouvoirs. Cependant, je demanderais aux autres institutions de faire un effort pour effacer, du moins, cette perception ou cette réalité d'un droit à deux vitesses. Impérativement, il faut le faire.

Aussi, Madame la présidente, contrairement à certains discours dangereux, la criminalité ne se limite pas à une ou deux communautés. Elle traverse toute la société. Prétendre le contraire est non seulement faux, mais profondément injuste. Heureusement, sous l'impulsion du Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, et l'*Attorney General* et

d'autres personnes, nous poursuivons l'œuvre de Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, c'est-à-dire bâtir une nation unie et juste.

Madame la présidente, il faut savoir que ce texte ne tombe pas du ciel. Ce texte a une base juridique. Mon collègue a pris une vision sociologique, et je parlerai de cette base juridique et philosophique. Quels sont les fondements juridiques ? Nous voyons que dans notre Code pénal, peut-être que certains de nos concitoyens ne le savent pas, que le droit pénal est calqué sur le droit français. À l'intérieur de ce Code pénal – déjà le Code pénal à l'époque faisait cette distinction claire et nette entre ce qu'on appelle les crimes, les délits et les et les contraventions. Malheureusement, pendant toutes ces années, nous avons été d'une certaine façon plus bonapartiste que Napoléon. Il ne fallait pas.

C'était clair et net qu'il fallait faire cette distinction entre les crimes graves. L'*Attorney General* a déjà pris toutes les précautions. Quand je faisais des cours à l'université, j'expliquais aux étudiants qu'il ne faut pas lire seulement le texte central. Il faut absolument lire les cédules aussi. Et là, l'*Attorney General* et son équipe en a pris tous les soins. D'ailleurs, le leader de l'opposition avait mentionné qu'il ne faut pas laisser les gens qui ont commis des fraudes, bien sûr. Les cédules ont pris en considération les remarques du leader de l'opposition. Donc, Madame la présidente, c'était une injustice et l'injustice a été corrigée.

Ce projet de loi introduit aussi le concept de condamnation effacée, ce qu'on appelle en anglais, le *spent conviction*. Il reconnaît qu'après avoir purgé sa peine et démontré une conduite irréprochable, un individu ne doit pas être prisonnier de son passé – plusieurs de mes collègues ont dit cela.

Les fondements philosophiques. Je ne vais pas m'étaler et faire un cours sur la criminologie. D'ailleurs, je ne suis pas criminologue, mais beaucoup plus juriste. En gros, il y a cette théorie et je prendrai seulement deux ou trois –

- La théorie de la rétribution, c'est-à-dire en bref, œil pour œil. Donc, une théorie qui est complètement dépassée et qu'il faut s'en débarrasser.
- La théorie de la dissuasion, basée beaucoup plus sur la peur.
- La théorie de la réhabilitation. La majorité des criminels, il faut le reconnaître, sont des malades, des névrosés, et il faut punir aussi. Je suis d'accord qu'il faut

punir mais, il faut aussi guérir et réhabiliter. Malheureusement, il faut concéder que pendant tout ce temps, ces pauvres gens-là, malades, ont été opprimés.

Donc, ce projet de loi opère, ce que j'appelle, un basculement nécessaire vers la réhabilitation. La punition doit avoir une fin, sinon, nous faisons plus œuvre de justice – la justice dans le sens le plus large, – sinon, on va vers ce qu'on appelle la vengeance. Il faut impérativement faire cette distinction claire et nette entre la justice, les droits positifs – on ne peut pas faire cette équation entre la justice et le droit positif et la vengeance.

Madame la présidente, je concède qu'il faut aussi trouver un équilibre entre les victimes – il ne faut pas oublier les victimes –, les condamnés et aussi l'intérêt général de la société. Donc, il faut protéger la société. Il faut respecter les droits des victimes. D'ailleurs, là, je ferai un appel à l'*Attorney General* pour envisager, dans les mois à venir, comment apporter un mécanisme d'indemnisation aux victimes. Là, on est en train de voir les condamnés, mais à l'avenir, il faut voir ce mécanisme – comme en Angleterre – d'indemnisation pour les victimes, à l'image de ce qui existe dans d'autres pays. Punir, oui. Réhabiliter, c'est impératif. Indemniser, mais aussi pour les victimes. Je n'oublie pas les victimes. Voilà l'équilibre que j'avais énoncé au début.

L'impératif économique, c'est un paradoxe. Nous faisons face à une grave crise démographique. Nous faisons face à une pénurie de main-d'œuvre. Nous importons la main-d'œuvre. Pendant que nous importons des travailleurs étrangers – d'ailleurs, il faut bien les traiter – des milliers de Mauriciens restent exclus du marché du travail à cause d'un certificat de moralité entaché par un délit ancien et mineur. Malheureusement, c'est un gaspillage du capital humain. Ce projet de loi actuel transformera les exclus en contribuables productifs.

Là, je fais un appel à l'*Attorney General*, ce qui est très, très important, Madame la présidente, que nos prisons ne doivent pas être des lieux d'entreposage humain, mais des centres de formation et de réhabilitation. Je me demande à quoi sert de former un détenu et subséquemment à sa sortie, on lui refuse toute opportunité. Donc, ce projet de loi garantit que la réinsertion ne sera pas un mirage.

Madame la présidente, je suis sûr que l'équipe de l'*Attorney General* s'est inspirée des bonnes pratiques internationales. Les pays scandinaves que nous voyons ont des faibles taux de récidive grâce à une approche scientifique et de la réhabilitation. Le Royaume-Uni, nous avons vu, ils ont passé une loi, le *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act*, qui permet l'effacement de

certaines condamnations. Nous nous alignons, donc, sur des standards internationaux très, très intéressants.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais, avec votre permission, faire un petit aparté. Nous sommes en train de construire cette nouvelle théorie de deuxième chance. Il faut étendre cette théorie de la deuxième chance. Je viens sur un point fondamental et là, je fais un appel, malheureusement le Premier ministre n'est pas là, mais ...

Madam Speaker: Il vous écoute.

Mr Narsinghen: Je fais un appel à d'autres ministres comme le ministre, Pentiah, le ministre de la Santé et aussi d'autres ministres pour donner une deuxième chance. Moi je constate que dans ma circonscription, il y a des gens qui n'ont pas les cinq *credits*, il y a des gens qui n'ont pas ce qu'on appelle *five passes* – ils sont exclus pour le recrutement et comment moi j'ai vue, j'ai des amis, j'ai des membres de ma famille qui à l'époque, 40 ans de cela, avaient seulement deux *credits*, qui sont devenus des professeurs des universités en Angleterre et en France.

Donc, je demande et je fais une plaidoirie pour qu'à l'avenir, on essaie de récupérer ces gens-là aux vues de cette crise démographique et cette crise dans le marché du travail.

Donc, voilà, Madame la présidente, je pense que ce projet de loi va solutionner beaucoup de problèmes. Ce projet de loi a essayé d'avoir un équilibre. Donc, je dirai votons pour ce projet de loi, votons pour un île Maurice plus inclusif, votons pour un Maurice qui croit en son peuple, votons pour la deuxième chance.

So, I strongly –I am not only commanding, Madam Speaker, I am commending strongly this Bill. Thank you for your attention.

Madam Speaker: Thank you so much.

Hon. Pierre!

(6.21 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Tourism (Mr S. Pierre): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I am going to give you back the few minutes that the hon. Member took because listening the very valid point...

Madam Speaker: No, he was alright. Half a minute, just half a minute.

Mr Pierre: Listening to all my colleagues, I think I will just summarise what all of them already mentioned.

Few months back, I came to see the hon. Attorney General with regard to a specific case and he was mentioning that this Bill was in preparation and would come to the Assembly. So, this afternoon, I would like to, almost evening, tell you a story of a young gentleman named Mathieu, *nom fictif, qui a aujourd'hui presque 20 ans qui avait commis un crime quelques années de cela, trois à quatre ans, et c'est peut-être aujourd'hui avec ce projet de loi, une opportunité pour nous, à l'état de donner un visage plus humain.* Mathieu avait commis un vol à l'étalage pour nourrir sa sœur Sara, nom fictif également, mais l'histoire n'est pas fictive. C'est malheureusement une histoire vraie. Commis un vol pour nourrir sa sœur puisque Mathieu et sa sœur sont issus de parents toxicomanes, vivant dans la rue qui n'avaient pas d'issue et n'ont toujours pas d'issue. Mais Mathieu avec l'aide de quelques personnes, veut reprendre sa vie mais heureusement après ce projet de loi, ce ne sera que chose du passé. Mathieu pourra enfin peut-être prétendre avoir un emploi.

Un vol à l'étalage pour quelques centaines de roupies et très souvent quand on parle de projet de loi, beaucoup de projets de loi, et si le temps le permet je reviendrai aussi sur le First Schedule que j'ai revu plusieurs fois. Je sais que hon. Attorney General, a renvoyé une nouvelle copie. Nous ne sommes pas ici en train de parler d'absoudre les criminels ou de ne pas sanctionner. Aujourd'hui quand on parle de – j'ai écouté le chef de l'opposition, beaucoup de mes collègues, la population peut-être a tendance de croire qu'on va absoudre les criminels ; il ne s'agit pas de cela. Nous sommes uniquement en train de demander de ne pas condamner une deuxième fois une personne qui a déjà payé le prix. Nous ne sommes pas en train de revoir les peines ni les condamnations.

Mon collègue, l'honorable Ramdass, a fait un exposé de long en large. Beaucoup de choses que je voulais dire je ne les reprendrai pas. Nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre de les recondamner puisque comme l'honorable Narsinghen vient de dire, ces gens sont en prison pour être réhabiliter. La société, notre système est fait ainsi, que ces gens qui ont failli une fois, et je suis sûr qu'ici, nous tous, dans cette Chambre et beaucoup de membres de la population qui m'écoutent ce soir, ont failli, peut-être pas selon les lois en vigueur sous la République de l'île Maurice, mais failli d'une manière ou d'une autre. Que celui qui n'a jamais failli jette la première pierre.

Tout ce qu'on demande, il s'agit de ce projet de loi, il vient dire qu'il a payé son crime. Il a payé le prix. Aujourd'hui, donnons un visage humain à l'état. C'est-à-dire, des fois, on juge trop vite puisque quand il s'agit des autres, nous sommes prompts à juger, à condamner, à sanctionner, à mettre le prix même de la sanction. Nous devenons tous juges quand il s'agit des autres.

Mais posons-nous, juste une minute, la question – si Mathieu, 20 ans, nos lois peuvent dire qu'il est majeur, 20 ans, si c'était mon fils, je l'appellerai mon bébé. Si c'était votre garçon, il serait toujours, même majeur, votre garçon votre enfant. Mais voyez-vous, il s'agit de quelqu'un d'autre. On oublie d'essayer de comprendre l'histoire mais quand on comprend aujourd'hui la situation, le contexte, le cadre, on devient peut-être plus compatissant.

C'est ce visage, et je remercie l'Attorney General, toute son équipe, le gouvernement, qui amène aujourd'hui ce projet de loi. Vous savez pourquoi. Quand j'ai regardé le Schedule One, j'ai essayé de comprendre de quel crime peut-être qu'on pourra proposer et je suis sûr que tous mes amis ici dans cette Chambre ont essayé de faire la même chose – de se dire est-ce qu'on ne pourrait peut-être pas enlever ce crime du Schedule One ? Et c'est là où on comprend le travail difficile et compliqué puisque nous avons une responsabilité que je comprends, en tant qu'Etat.

Mais il ne s'agit pas aujourd'hui de venir définir un crime par apport à un autre crime. Nous parlons aujourd'hui de donner une deuxième chance. L'honorable membre, Leu-Govind, a bien mentionné, nous avons tous droit à une deuxième chance. En écoutant un de mes collègues qui parlait et nous avons une belle opportunité également, désoler de reprendre ce que vous avez dit puisque c'est une vérité – nous avons beaucoup de ministres ici dans la Chambre et je suis sûr que vous allez réfléchir sur ces quelques mots.

Dans le Schedule One, il y a beaucoup de crimes mentionnés. Je ne suis pas en train de parler d'absoudre ou de réduire les peines, mais posons-nous une question, je n'ai pas la réponse – que faisons-nous avec ces personnes qui ont commis un crime, dans quel contexte ce n'est pas à nous de juger, de poser la question, quel que soit leur crime ? Ils ont payé le prix. Que faisons-nous ? N'avons-nous pas plus des risques de les laisser à eux-mêmes et de leurs demander de se frayer un chemin dans la société ? Puisque comme l'honorable membre a dit, ce certificat de moralité, aujourd'hui, il a plus de prix qu'un diplôme.

Est-ce justement pour ce pêcheur, pour celui qui nettoie les rues, les jardins, les jardiniers, est-ce qu'ils ont besoin d'un certificat de moralité ? Et là je ne parle pas des crimes

mineurs, je parle des certains crimes dans le Schedule One. Je suis sûr que vous aurez peur de faire rentrer quelqu'un chez vous si vous n'êtes pas sûr de sa moralité. Mais nous pouvons tous commettre un crime. La science a prouvé aujourd'hui que nous pouvons tous faillir et nous faillissions tous.

Aujourd'hui, l'orientation de ce débat, c'est de lancer une réflexion. Puisque ce projet de loi déjà ramène, donne un visage plus humain, il nous faut continuer dans la discussion, dans la réflexion, nous dire que faisons-nous ? Est-ce que nous sommes constamment en train de punir ou de réhabiliter ? Lançons-nous, aujourd'hui. Nous tous ici – j'ai entendu de très, très bons discours, de très bons débats –, mais ce n'est qu'un commencement. Cela ne doit pas s'arrêter ici.

Puisque nous ne sommes pas que des législateurs, nous sommes aussi des chirurgiens. Un chirurgien, est-ce qu'il refuse d'opérer quelqu'un qui a un passé médical ? Même s'il a fait plusieurs opérations ? Le serment d'Hippocrate ne l'oblige pas à intervenir ? Et n'est-ce pas notre rôle de continuer de réhabiliter ?

C'est cela aujourd'hui mon appel à travers ce projet de loi. Mathieu, aujourd'hui, une fois cette loi votée, pourra avoir un travail. Il pourra nourrir sa famille, ne serait-ce qu'au moins sa sœur qui lui tient tellement à cœur.

Je vais conclure en parlant du contexte des crimes commis. On oublie souvent. En allant trop vite, on oublie. Je ne vais pas revenir sur ce dont beaucoup d'entre vous ont parlé des crimes col blanc qui, très souvent, passent par la grande porte alors que celui qui a besoin de manger. Je ne suis pas en train de justifier un crime par rapport à un autre crime. Je dis juste, à travers ce projet de loi : essayons de comprendre, donnons une deuxième chance et comprenons que Mathieu n'a jamais voulu voler.

Mathieu a toujours voulu vivre comme tout le monde. Mathieu a toujours voulu avoir la chance que vous avez, que nous avons, que beaucoup de Mauriciens ont. Mais, malheureusement, la situation que nous avons créée, que l'État a créée ou a permise, il s'est retrouvé pris dans un engrenage. Il a commis un crime punissable par la loi. Mais, aujourd'hui, ce projet de loi lui donne espoir. Je réitère mes remerciements à l'*Attorney General* et à toute son équipe. Je pense que nous sommes sur la bonne voie.

C'est ici, pour moi, ce pont construit pour l'avenir. Même si ce projet de loi a pris son temps comme beaucoup d'autres projets, je pense que nous sommes sur la bonne voie.

Aujourd'hui, pour nous, c'est la lumière au bout du tunnel et pour beaucoup de milliers de Mauriciens.

Merci beaucoup, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci. J'ai noté que vous n'aviez pas de notes. C'est un peu rare. Merci et bravo.

Honorable Ms Anquetil !

(6.33 p.m.)

Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Madame la présidente, permettez-moi, en préambule, d'adresser mes sincères remerciements au ministre de la Justice, l'honorable Gavin Glover, pour avoir porté ce projet de loi avec courage, clarté et humanité.

Ce texte mérite toute notre attention, car il ne traite pas seulement d'une procédure, il ne traite pas seulement d'un document administratif, il traite au fond de la manière dont une société regarde ses citoyens après qu'ils ont fauté, après qu'ils ont purgé leur peine et au moment où ils cherchent à se relever. Madame la présidente, je ne me lève pas seulement comme députée. Je ne me lève pas seulement comme *Chief Whip*.

Je me lève ce soir comme Stéphanie Anquetil. Je me lève avec un nom, une mémoire, un héritage, un nom profondément lié aux luttes du monde du travail, aux combats syndicaux, à la dignité humaine, à la justice sociale. Ce nom, Madame la présidente, m'oblige à ne jamais rester silencieuse face à l'injustice. Il m'oblige à défendre la dignité humaine. Ce nom m'oblige à continuer de porter la voix de celles et de ceux que notre société juge parfois trop vite, écarte trop facilement ou condamne bien au-delà de la peine prononcée.

Madame la présidente, il faut avoir l'honnêteté de le dire. Pendant trop longtemps, dans notre pays, trop de nos concitoyens ont continué à être punis bien après avoir purgé leur peine. Ils ont été jugés par les tribunaux. Puis, ils ont été rejugés par la société. Ils ont été condamnés par la loi. Puis ils ont été condamnés par le regard des autres, par le refus d'embauche, par les soupçons permanents, par les portes refermées. Voilà la vérité, une réalité dure, une réalité injuste, une réalité profondément inhumaine.

Madame la présidente, car derrière un certificat de moralité, il n'y a pas seulement un document. Il y a une vie. Il y a un père qui veut retravailler pour nourrir sa famille. Il y a une mère qui veut reprendre sa place dans la société. Et puis, il y a un jeune. Il y a un jeune qui

veut sortir d'une erreur et reconstruire son avenir. C'est précisément cette injustice que ce projet de loi vient corriger.

Aujourd'hui, nous faisons un autre choix. Avec le *Certificate of Character Bill 2026*, nous affirmons un principe simple, juste et profondément républicain. Une personne ne doit pas être condamnée à vie par une faute pour laquelle elle a déjà répondu devant la justice.

Madame la présidente, ce projet de loi ne nie pas les fautes. Il ne les efface pas artificiellement. Il ne remet pas en cause l'autorité des tribunaux. Mais il fixe une limite claire. La peine ne doit pas devenir perpétuelle dans ses effets sociaux. La justice ne doit pas se transformer en exclusion permanente. La sanction ne doit pas se prolonger indéfiniment dans la vie professionnelle et dans la vie sociale.

Madame la présidente, ce projet de loi marque un véritable changement de philosophie. Nous passons d'un système qui enferme l'individu dans son passé à un cadre légal qui reconnaît enfin son droit à la reconstruction. Les dispositions proposées sont claires. Les amendes n'excédant pas R 50 000 disparaîtront du certificat après deux ans au lieu de cinq ans. Les peines d'emprisonnement inférieures à trois ans seront effacées après 10 ans. Et surtout, les faits commis avant l'âge de 18 ans n'y figureront plus du tout.

Cette dernière avancée est essentielle, car un mineur ne doit pas porter toute sa vie le poids d'une erreur de jeunesse. Une société juste, Madame la présidente, c'est faire la différence entre la nécessité de corriger et la tentation de condamner définitivement. Une société responsable sait tendre la main à celui qui a trébuché, surtout lorsqu'il était encore en construction. Mais ce projet de loi va encore plus loin.

Il introduit dans notre droit du travail un principe fondamental. Un antécédent judiciaire ne peut pas à lui seul justifier une exclusion professionnelle lorsqu'il n'a aucun lien avec les fonctions concernées. Autrement dit, un employeur ne pourra plus écarter un candidat de manière injustifiée pour une condamnation sans rapport avec le poste.

C'est une avancée majeure, une avancée juridique certes, mais surtout une avancée humaine. Parce que le travail est souvent la première condition de la réinsertion. Sans emploi, il n'y a ni stabilité, ni autonomie, ni véritable seconde chance. Sans emploi, la réhabilitation reste un mot vide. Sans emploi, on enferme à nouveau l'individu dans la marginalisation. En modifiant *l'Equal Opportunities Act*, nous faisons entrer dans notre législation une exigence de cohérence. Si nous voulons une société plus sûre, plus stable et plus juste, alors nous

devons aussi permettre aux personnes réhabilitées de reprendre pleinement leur place dans cette société.

Madame la présidente, au fond, la question qui nous est posée aujourd'hui est simple. Croyons-nous, oui ou non, à la possibilité pour un être humain de se relever ? Croyons-nous, oui ou non, qu'une faute, une fois sanctionnée, ne doit pas anéantir toute possibilité d'avenir ? Croyons-nous, oui ou non, que la justice doit laisser une place à la réhabilitation, à la dignité retrouvée, à la seconde chance ?

Pour ma part, la réponse est claire. Oui. Oui, j'y crois. Oui, j'y crois ! J'y crois parce qu'un pays ne se grandit pas en accablant définitivement ceux qui cherchent à se reconstruire. J'y crois parce que la fermeté n'exclut pas l'humanité. J'y crois parce qu'une République digne de ce nom doit savoir punir avec justesse mais aussi permettre le relèvement.

Madame la présidente, sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam et dans la continuité des valeurs portées par le Parti travailliste, nous faisons ici un choix de société. Le choix d'une justice plus équilibrée, le choix d'une justice plus humaine, le choix d'une justice qui ne renonce ni à la responsabilité ni à la dignité. C'est pourquoi, Madame la présidente, je soutiens ce projet de loi avec conviction, avec force et avec une profonde émotion. Je le soutiens parce qu'il corrige une injustice réelle. Je le soutiens parce qu'il protège la dignité de nos concitoyens. Je le soutiens parce qu'il affirme que la justice ne consiste pas seulement à punir mais aussi à permettre de reconstruire. Aujourd'hui, nous avons l'occasion d'adopter un test juste, utile et profondément nécessaire. Ne manquons pas à ce rendez-vous. Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Pentiah, after this big advocacy from everyone. Now, it is your turn.

(6.42 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr L. Pentiah):
Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Pentiah: Allow me please to start with the following citation, and I quote –

“The true measure of justice is not only in the enforcement of the law, but in its impact on society whether it promotes fairness, inclusion and human dignity.” – The United Nations.

Madam Speaker, a law is only as strong as the lives it improves. And justice must build trust rather than create division. For long, colleagues practicing at the bar in law, retribution has been the fundamental principle of justice. It is almost inevitably the human instinct that when someone commits a criminal offence, then he or she deserves to suffer for it. He or she has to pay for it. I must say, this has not been about revenge. Instead, and in lieu, it has been argued to be about fairness.

The punishment must fit the crime. Wrongdoing does not go unanswered. Retribution has remained essential to serve two fundamental purposes. First, through punishment or penalties, the Criminal Justice System declares what it will not tolerate. The Criminal Justice System declares what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour. Secondly, where punishment or penalty is fair and measured, it builds public trust. The rule of law depends on that trust. It has even been argued that without retribution, justice has no backbone.

Madam Speaker, need I say that retribution focuses almost entirely on punishment? It has done little to change the offender. Locking people away does not fix why they broke the law in the first place. Poverty, ignorance, addiction, mental illness, amongst other things, remain the untouched root causes. Offenders often serve their time, get out and face with no other alternative but to reoffend to survive. Retribution alone may create a cycle of harm.

Madam Speaker, the above shortcomings pave the way, as we have mentioned before, to rehabilitative justice in penal law. Rehabilitative justice asks a different question. How can a person stop offending? The core belief is simple. People can change. People can learn to live within the boundaries of the law, given the right support.

Hence, the relentless efforts of this Government to provide the long-awaited support with the appropriate legal framework to ensure that not only the law enforcement agencies function independently and effectively, but this Government aims to promote fairness, inclusion and human dignity as it has always advocated. People come first.

Madam Speaker, rehabilitative justice is to prevent reoffending. It means addressing the real causes of criminal behaviour. This Government is committed to address issues such as education, learning job skills, rehabilitation for those struggling with drugs and alcohol abuse, treating mental illness, proper community support, and therefore, give the hope that everyone deserves to have a second chance, where the past cannot dictate the future, *qu'après les ténèbres, il y aura la lumière*.

Madam Speaker, this Government is slowly but surely continuing to build the bridge towards a better tomorrow with a safer society. Yes, we admit it will take time and continuous efforts. Because one cannot undo a decade of erosion to our socio-economic fabric and institutional degradation. We are not magicians and nor do we sell irresponsible dreams. This Government is committed towards a better tomorrow where peace prevails, where justice reigns and liberty is lived with respect and responsibility.

Madam Speaker, this brings us to the third “R” of the criminal justice system, often referred to as Restitutive justice. While retribution punishes the offender and rehabilitative justice focuses on the offender, restitutive justice focuses on the repair of the harm caused by the offender. It has been argued that restitution promotes fairness and accountability. It forces the offender to face the real-world and the consequences of his or her action. That recognition can be a first step towards genuine change.

Madam Speaker, there has been evolution in the fundamental principles of criminal justice system from retribution to rehabilitation and restitution. Jurisdictions around the world, often referred to as developed jurisdictions of criminal justice, have evolved from retribution to rehabilitation to restitution.

Madam Speaker, this Government dares to go beyond these 3 R’s. The Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026) brings in between its lines within its 14 clauses and its 29 pages, the fourth R, the principle of redemption in our criminal justice system.

Madam Speaker, redemption is the fundamental belief that a person who has done wrong can become better. They can change. He or she can repair his or her moral standing. Society can accept the person again. This is not about excusing the crime. It is about believing that the past does not have to be the future. Redemption is closely tied to forgiveness, second chances and personal transformation. Unlike retribution which looks backward at the offence, redemption looks forward at the person. Unlike restitution which focuses on material compensation, redemption focuses on inner change. The question it asks is this; can someone who broke the law become a good citizen? The answer of this Government is ‘yes’.

In this Government, we believe that people grow, people learn, people often regret what they have done and choose differently. In penal law, redemption appears in practical forms. Conditional discharges and parole give an offender a chance to prove they can and have changed. Record expungement allows a past conviction to be sealed after a certain period.

Hence, the provisions of the Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026). The Certificate of Character of a person shall no more be another certificate of condemnation denying him/her the opportunity to reintegrate his community after he has paid his dues. Reintegration programmes help former prisoners find housing, find work and find a way back to their community. These are not acts of leniency, they are recognition that people can learn their way back.

Madam Speaker, redemption gives offenders a reason to try. If no second chance exists, why bother changing? If the record follows you forever, why not offend again? If after you pay your dues, you still cannot meet the basic needs of your child, your family or yourself, why not offend again? Madam Speaker, redemption breaks that logic, it creates hope. That hope motivates real effort, a reformed offender is a gain for public safety, a gain for the society and a gain for humanity.

Redemption may not universally be accepted, Madam Speaker. Some crimes feel so severe, people's opinions can be harsh. Certain offences generate permanent distrust no matter how much time has passed. Redemption also requires real effort from the offender. It cannot be granted to someone who refuses to change and society must be willing to accept them back. Without jobs, housing and basic respect, redemption remains empty words. This Government has responsibly taken a big leap forward to address these issues through the Certificate of Character Bill before the House. People do not remain fix, they can change. A justice system that leaves no room for a second chance is a cruel system. It locks people in the worst moment and throws the key away. The Certificate of Character Bill, before this House, offers a way out. It moves our criminal justice system beyond punishment and towards healing for the individual, for the community and the nation as a whole consequently benefits.

Madam Speaker, very few of us who encountered Victor Hugo's chef d'oeuvre – *Les Misérables* can ever forget Jean Valjean....

Madam Speaker: *Les Misérables*.

Mr Pentiah: *Les Misérables* – struggles from many years of imprisonment to rejection by the society and constant persecution by Javert. While reading, quite a lot of us condone Javert; the way he behaved, the way he acted, the way he persecuted Jean Valjean and we somehow felt emotions towards Jean Valjean. We cannot identify ourselves with the approach that the policing or the Police officer who believes that the law must be followed without

exception. Then came the God-sent act of kindness of the Bishop that paved the way for Jean Valjean to change his life and decide to become a good and honest man.

Les Misérables were the impact of poverty and injustice where the importance of compassion over harsh judgment and where redemption and second chances give lessons to learn with humility and call for a responsible Government to act responsibly. I quote, Madam Speaker –

« Il n'y a ni mauvaise herbe, ni mauvais hommes. Il n'y a que des mauvais cultivateurs. » - Victor Hugo

Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: Tell us where! Tell us!

Mr Pentiah: Madame la présidente...

Madam Speaker: Victor Hugo dans?

Mr Pentiah: Les Misérables.

Madam Speaker: Toujours dans Les Misérables ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Pentiah: Madame la présidente, l'histoire retiendra le sens des responsabilités de ce gouvernement vers un avenir meilleur et ces cultivateurs qui ont mis notre pays et l'avenir de nos enfants en péril.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I commend the Certificate of Character Bill (No. II of 2026) to the House and I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sukon, yes?

Dr. Sukon: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

Madam Speaker: Adjournment!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 05 May 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the House stands adjourned! We have adjournment matters. Yes, Mr Beehook?

MATTERS RAISED

(6.57 p.m.)

BUILDING AND LAND USE PERMIT – APPLICATION PROCESSING DELAYS

Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Merci, Madame la présidente. Je souhaite attirer l'attention de cette auguste Assemblée sur un problème qui touche non seulement mes mandants, mais la population dans son ensemble et il nous incombe d'y remédier. Lorsqu'un citoyen dépose – comme l'exige la loi – une demande de permis de construction, communément appelé *Building and Land Use Permit* auprès des Collectivités locales, la législation prévoit que cette demande soit examinée dans un délai de huit jours par un inspecteur, puis dans un délai de cinq jours par un *Head Planner* avant d'être soumise avec ou sans recommandation au *Planning Committee* des *District Councils*, des municipalités.

Cependant, lorsqu'une demande de *BLUP* requiert l'avis ou l'approbation d'autres instances tel que la *Land Drainage Authority*, la *RDA*, la *TMRSU*, le ministère de l'Environnement, la *FAREI*, les *Veterinary Services* et j'en passe, il n'existe aucune disposition légale les contraignant à se prononcer dans un délai raisonnable. Ainsi, un mois, deux mois, voire trois, six, neuf, un an, chaque institution procédant à son propre rythme sans obligation de célérité...

Madam Speaker: Et pas de concertation !

Mr Beehook: D'accord ? Ce vide administratif, Madame la présidente, pénalise lourdement les demandeurs. Très souvent, les demandes de *BLUP* expirent et les citoyens doivent reprendre la procédure depuis le début. Pendant ce temps, qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Les coûts de construction augmentent +5, +10, +20% en un an. Les délais pour signer une offre bancaire de financement expirent et bien des projets finissent par être abandonnés. Dans

un esprit de justice ou de compassion envers nos concitoyens, je demande par la présente au ministre des Collectivités locales, ainsi que tous les ministères concernés de s'imposer un délai maximum de 15 jours pour la délivrance des avis et autres approbations afin de garantir l'octroi des *BLUPs* dans un délai raisonnable et respectueux dans l'attente de la population.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Quinze jours chacun.

Mr Beehook: Non, mais c'est parallèle.

Madam Speaker: En même temps ?

Mr Beehook: C'est une offre parallèle.

Madam Speaker: En même temps ?

Mr Beehook: Oui, en même temps. Un délai de 15 jours. Il y a un vide administratif qui pénalise les demandeurs.

Madam Speaker: M. le ministre!

The Minister of Local Government (Mr R. Woochit): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the question very well. So, LDA, Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, the RDA, FAREI are not on the National Electronic Licencing System (NELS). So, it takes time. Sometimes, we have that PER, with have KIA which take time but I seize this opportunity to make a request/an appeal to all the colleague Ministers which are concerned for the clearance of these. It should be aligned with our timeframe, in fact, to facilitate the processing of the permits. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I am sure your colleagues have heard you but it is not the first time we are talking of lots of different entities dealing with one problem. You remember last week?

Mr Woochit: We are bringing the reform of the Local Government Act and we will liaise with the Attorney General's office and with EDB also. We can help and we can find solutions for this.

Madam Speaker: But you have heard the plea of Mr Beehook. Everyone is happy? Okay, thank you!

At 7.01 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 05 May 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

BANK OF MAURITIUS – DIRECTOR OF SUPERVISION – ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

(No. B/506) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the post of Director of Supervision at the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) role and responsibilities assigned thereto, and
- (b) names of the incumbents for the period 2014 to 2024.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – STRATEGIC PARTNER – SHORTLISTED PARTNERS

(No. B/507) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Holdings Ltd., information as to whether the latter is seeking a strategic partner therefor and, if so, where matters stand, indicating the names of any shortlisted partners.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS PRISON SERVICE – DRUG & MONEY LAUNDERING OFFENCES – INTERDICTED OFFICERS

(No. B/508) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drug-related and/or money laundering offences within the Mauritius Prison Service, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the number of officers having been, over the period November 2024 to date –

- (a) interdicted from duty, indicating their respective ranks and dates of interdiction;
- (b) dismissed from the service;

- (c) provisionally or formally charged therefor, and
- (d) found guilty thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**BANK OF MAURITIUS – FOREIGN EXCHANGE SHORTAGE – REMEDIAL
MEASURES**

(No. B/511) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to foreign exchange, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to whether there is a shortage thereof on the local market and, if so, indicate the extent and impact thereof and the measures/strategy being envisaged to address same.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/505)

**GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY – BOOKMAKERS' LICENCES –
NUMBER**

(No. B/514) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to bookmakers licences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the number thereof issued since 2025 to date to –

- (a) individuals, and
- (b) companies, indicating in each case whether the licence granted is for operation inside or outside the race course.

(Withdrawn)

**COVID-19 PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT FUND – RS 3 BILLION – SILVER
BANK DEPOSIT**

(No. B/515) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the then COVID-19 Projects Development Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to who authorised the deposit of Rs 3 billion thereof into the Silver Bank in 2023, indicating whether the selection of the said bank was made pursuant to a bidding exercise.

(Withdrawn)

**ELECTORAL REFORMS PROPOSALS – PUBLIC CONSULTATION & REVIEW
PROCESS**

(No. B/517) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the public consultation exercise in respect of the proposed Electoral Reforms, he will state the number of proposals received as at closing date, indicating –

- (a) whether a special team or committee has been set up to consider same, and
- (b) the timeframe for the preparation of a summary of the main proposals and whether same will be circulated prior to the drafting of any new legislation in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**ALALILA PLATFORM – REGULATORY APPROVAL & TAXI OPERATORS’
REPRESENTATIONS**

(No. B/541) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the introduction of the Alalila platform powered by Uber in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether –

- (a) it is in presence of representations from some taxis operators regarding same, and
- (b) the approval of the Authority was sought and obtained prior thereto and, if so, indicate the conditions attached thereto and, if not, indicate the actions that will be taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

**SHELTER CAP L’ESPOIR – ACTING SHELTER MANAGER– QUALIFICATION
REQUIREMENTS**

(No. B/542) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Shelter Cap L’Espoir, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the identity of the current Acting Shelter Manager, indicating the scheme of duties thereof and qualification requirements therefor.

(Withdrawn)

**CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS – MAURITIAN CANDIDATES’
PERFORMANCE – REMEDIAL MEASURES**

(No. B/543) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the performance of Mauritian candidates in the last Cambridge International Examinations, he will state the –

- (a) remedial measures being envisaged to address same, and
- (b) responsibility of the different authorities, particularly, the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division, in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**MINISTRY OF LAND TRANSPORT – APPEAL COMMITTEE – PENDING
APPEALS – REMEDIAL MEASURES**

(No. B/544) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Appeal Committee of his Ministry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number and type of appeals pending before the Board thereof over the past two years, indicating the –

- (a) timeframe set for the consideration thereof, and
- (b) measures being envisaged to address the delays in determining the appeals.

(Withdrawn)

**WATER SUPPLY – MUDDY/MURKY WATER COMPLAINTS – REASONS &
REMEDIAL MEASURES**

(No. B/545) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether it is in presence of complaints to the effect that same is muddy or murky and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) remedial measures being taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**BROWN SEQUARD HOSPITAL – MORTUARY – UNCLAIMED CORPSES –
MEASURES ENVISAGED**

(No. B/546) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the unclaimed corpses at the mortuary of the Brown Sequard Hospital, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, indicating in each case since when same have been lying thereat;
- (b) the measures being envisaged in relation thereto, and
- (c) whether his Ministry has received requests from medical colleges for the handing over thereof for research purposes and, if so, where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**BEL AIR-TROU D'EAU DOUCE – TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY – NEW BUS
ROUTE – TAXI LICENSE ISSUANCE**

(No. B/547) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to transport connectivity between Bel Air and Trou d'Eau Douce, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the –

- (a) introduction of a new bus route along same;
- (b) extension of the existing Route 55 from Trou d'Eau Douce to the proposed Mini Traffic Centre, and
- (c) issue of Public Service (Taxi) Licences for operation along same.

(Withdrawn)

**MARE CHICOSE LANDFILL STATION – MAINTENANCE CONTRACT –
CONTRACTOR'S DETAILS**

(No. B/548) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the contract for the transportation, operation and maintenance of the Mare Chicose Landfill Station, he will state the company to which same was awarded and when, indicating whether his Ministry is in presence of information to the effect that same has been sub-contracted and of any adverse report against the contractor and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

**RESIDENCE LAVANDE HOUSING COMPLEX, DAGOTIERE – VESTED SITE –
MAINTENANCE MEASURES**

(No. B/550) Mr G. P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Residence Lavande Housing complex at Dagotiere, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to –

- (a) whether the site has been vested in the Moka District Council and, if not, why not, and
- (b) the measures in place for the regular maintenance of the green spaces and amenities thereat.

(Withdrawn)

**ELECTRICITY TARIFFS – 15% INCREASE – IMPACTS – MITIGATING
MEASURES**

(No. B/553) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the announced 15 percent increase in electricity tariffs as from May 2026, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) whether the impact thereof on households and small businesses has been assessed, indicating the mitigating measures being envisaged regarding vulnerable consumers, and
- (b) the number of households having had their electricity supply disconnected over the past year for non-payment of bills.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 7 – WOMEN’S CENTRE – EXPECTED REOPENING

(No. B/554) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Women’s Centre in Constituency No. 7, Piton and Rivière du Rempart, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the expected timeframe for the reopening thereof, indicating the works undertaken or envisaged thereat.

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN WORKERS – LICENSING, COMPLIANCE & SAFEGUARDS

(No. B/556) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the recruitment of foreign workers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain the –

- (a) list of the agencies currently authorised therefor, indicating the beneficial owner/s in each case;
- (b) number of licences refused, suspended or revoked over the past three years, indicating the reasons therefor, and
- (c) monitoring mechanisms in place to prevent abuse, the charging of illegal fees and collusion therein.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO.18 – DRAINS CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/557) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the construction of drains in Constituency No.18, Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**TRUST FUND FOR EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS – MR N. V.'S REVOCATION –
INQUIRY & IRREGULARITIES**

(No. B/558) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the revocation of Mr N. V. as Chairperson of the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, he will state –

- (a) the reasons therefor, indicating whether an inquiry was conducted prior thereto, and
- (b) whether –
 - (i) he has taken cognizance of allegations of irregularities thereat and of interference by the Chief Executive Officer thereof in the management of the Fund made by Mr N.V., and

- (ii) the governance structure and operation of the Fund will be reviewed.

(Withdrawn)

PESTICIDES REGULATORY OFFICE – STAFF REDUCTION – REASONS

(No. B/559) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Pesticides Regulatory Office, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reasons for the reduction in the number of officers posted thereat.

(Withdrawn)

SAINT-CROIX – SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE – DEMOLITION – NEW BUILDING

(No. B/560) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the demolition of the building housing the Saint-Croix Social Welfare Centre to make way for a Multi-Use Games Area project, she will state whether provision has been made for the construction of a new building to house the said centre and, if not, why not and, if so, where matters stand, indicating the reasons for the delay in the implementation thereof and the expected start and completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BAMBOUS – BLACK RIVER DISTRICT COURT – RENOVATION & FUNDS ALLOCATION

(No. B/561) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the building which formerly housed the Black River District Court at Bambous, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the current state thereof, indicating –

- (a) since when same is closed;
- (b) whether funds have been earmarked for the renovation thereof and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof, and
- (c) whether security services are provided thereat.

(Withdrawn)

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSION – APPLICATIONS (NOV 2024-APR 2026) – PROCESS EFFICIENCY

(No. B/562) Dr. Ms R. Daureawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

whether, in regard to applications for the Basic Invalidity Pension received since November 2024 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Medical Board, information as to the number thereof rejected, indicating the reasons therefor and the number thereof allowed on appeal, further indicating the average time taken for the determination of an appeal and measures being envisaged to enhance the efficiency and fairness of the determination process.

(Withdrawn)

**RESIDENCE NHDC LAVANDE, DAGOTIERE – BUS SERVICES & ROUTES –
AVAILABILITY**

(No. A/26) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the safety of approximately 4,000 residents, including schoolchildren of Residence NHDC Lavande, Dagotière, who need to cross the Valetta bypass to avail themselves of bus services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether bus routes Nos. 17C, 105, 135 and 226A and 226B will be reviewed or new bus routes will be introduced thereat.

Reply: As per the 2022 Housing and Population Census published in May 2024, the Village of Dagotière, comprising Lower and Upper Dagotière, has an estimated population of approximately 7,600 inhabitants. The area has limited local economic and educational facilities, with residents mostly travelling to Port Louis, Curepipe, St Pierre and Rose Hill for their daily socio-economic activities.

Residence Lavande, located in Upper Dagotière, is already adequately served by existing bus services, namely Route 105 (Vuillemin – Rose Hill) and Route 135 (Vuillemin – Port Louis), operating throughout the day at frequencies of 10 to 15 minutes during peak hours and up to 50 minutes during off-peak periods.

Connectivity is further enhanced through additional services as follows –

- (a) two express services to Port Louis on Route 135 at 07h00 and 07h10;
- (b) one dedicated school service on Route 105 at 07h15;
- (c) two school-day services on Route 17B at 07h00 and 07h15;
- (d) one weekday service on Route 17F at 07h00, and
- (e) one return trip from Curepipe to Upper Dagotière at 14h50 on school days.

Route 17C (Curepipe – Camp Thorel) has been discontinued for more than 10 years due to lack of economic viability.

According to the National Land Transport Authority, only Routes 226 and 226/A do not provide a loop service via Upper Dagotière. These two routes are already a relatively long one of approximately 40 kilometres and are subject to complaints regarding adherence to their timetable, mainly due to traffic congestion along its itinerary. Any extension of this route to serve Residence Lavande would likely exacerbate public dissatisfaction as it will increase the time taken for the trip and place additional strain on both the bus crews and commuters.

The problem, as outlined by the hon. Member in the question, is more an issue of road safety where intending passengers have to cross Valetta bypass to avail of services along route 226 and 226/A. The Traffic Management Road Safety Unit is working on a signalised pedestrian crossing at that locus. The project is at design stage and is expected to be completed by November 2026.

The TMRSU will be instructed to carry out a site visit at the locus concerned and to consider whether any measures can be taken at the least possible delay pending the implementation of the signalised pedestrian crossing at that locus.

In view of the above, it is not considered necessary at this stage to review existing routes or introduce additional bus services for Residence Lavande, Dagotière.

The situation will nevertheless continue to be closely monitored by the National Land Transport Authority, any new services required would be subject to a prior technical assessment covering both operational feasibility and road safety considerations following a joint site visit with the NLTA and TMRSU during peak hours to consider any road safety measure earlier and to also assess how to best resolve the problem faced by residents of Residence Lavande.

The Ministry is also in the process of implementing a Fleet Management System (FMS), which will soon come into operation. This system will enable real-time monitoring and better management of bus fleet operations, including tracking of vehicles, adherence to schedules, and optimisation of deployment. It is expected to enhance operational efficiency, improve service reliability, and strengthen overall regulatory oversight of public transport services. In this respect, the FMS will contribute to improved service delivery across the network, including in areas such as Dagotière, by allowing more responsive and evidence-based management of existing services.