



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2026

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

THE CABINET

(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. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Deputy Prime Minister Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
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
Dr. the Hon. Mrs Jyoti Jeetun	Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning
Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
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
Dr. the Hon. Avinash Ramtohol	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv Woochit, 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. 18 of 2026

Sitting of Thursday 25 June 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)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Food Standards Agency for the year ended 30 June 2024.

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

The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

**BUDGET SPEECH 2026-2027 – PENSION REFORM – COMMISSION OF EXPERTS
& STEERING COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) 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 pension reform announced in the 2026-2027 Budget Speech bringing an end to the universal Basic Retirement Pension by the introduction of the State Age Pension, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the composition of the –

- (a) Commission of Experts set up to make recommendations to reform the various pillars of the pension system –
 - (i) indicating the allowances paid to the members thereof, and
 - (ii) table the Report thereof recommending the means test, and
- (b) Steering Committee on Pension Reform tasked to examine the Report of the Commission of Experts and table the recommendations and report(s) thereof.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as I stated in the Budget Speech, it is an undeniable fact, and I think everybody agrees with this, that the BRP system, in its current form, has many flaws – some of them fortuitous and others structural, but both severely undermine its sustainability.

First of all, being an unfunded – a pay-as-you-go system, it was totally financed by public funds.

Second, it had become an increasingly weighty component of Government budget, accounting for nearly 25 percent of expenditure in 2024/ 2025 fiscal year, more, in fact, and I said this before, more than the budgets for education, for health and also social housing put together. We are spending more on pension than health, education and social housing.

Now, BRP expenditure has risen from Rs5.97 billion in 2010 to Rs13.1 billion in 2015-2016, Rs27.9 billion in 2020-2021, and approximately, Rs55 billion in 2025-2026. In other words, it has almost doubled in four years. Without reform, it is estimated that it will reach Rs100 billion in 2035. Many people escape this. They are just looking in front of the tip of the nose, but not looking ahead. Rs100 billion in 2035, Madam Speaker!

As a percentage of GDP, BRP expenditure has increased from 1.9% in 2010 to 8.1% in 2025-2026.

Madam Speaker, in 2015, the IMF, in an expert report, projected that by 2050, expenditure on BRP, which is, I remind the House, a non-contributory pension, would be at an unsustainable level of over 8 percent of GDP. Because of the irresponsible decisions taken by the last Government, we have already crossed that level now. They said it would be by 2050. Already, Madam Speaker. That is 25 years ahead than projected by the IMF, we have reached that situation. Because of the irresponsibility of the previous Government. This is why we are in this mess. Everybody seems to forget this.

Now, the eligibility age was 60 years, that is, five full years below the statutory requirement age of 65. Perhaps, in Mauritius, people do not realize that this is unique in the world. It is anomalous. The retiring age is 65 years, but you get your pension at the age of 60 years. No country does this! No other country!

Now, fourth, the dependency ratio measured as the number of workers per pensioner, above the age of 65 years, was fast declining – from 16 in 1962 to 4.7 in 2025 and projected to decline to 3.0 in 2049 and 2.5 in 2064, because, as we know, of an ageing population. This means that fewer workers are supporting more and more retirees, which, therefore, places an impossible strain on the public finances.

Fifth, Madam Speaker, the structural flaws in the system have been aggravated by the introduction of CSG by the previous Government again in 2020. It has compounded the deficits and unsustainability. And it was a tax – not a pension; a tax!

Let me remind the House, Madam Speaker, that the concern about the sustainability of the Old Age Pension is not something new. We have not invented this; we have not created this. This has been talked about for more than two decades, but no one had the courage to bell the cat, as we say in English.

As far back as in the Budget Speech presented to the House in 2003 by the then Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger, it was stated at paragraph 161, and I am quoting –

“An important component of our social welfare system is the Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) which is both non-contributory and universal. The BRP in its present form exerts severe pressure on the budget. The fast ageing of the population will render the BRP unsustainable in the longer term. According to projections, the proportion of those

over 60 will double in 20 years' time and triple in the next 50 years. Therefore, reform of the BRP has thus become urgent.”

That was in 2003.

I am still quoting –

“Equally urgent is the need to reform the other pillars of the Mauritian pension system, namely the national pension scheme, civil service pensions and private pensions.”

And he was right to have said what he said.

Now, Madam Speaker, it would also be relevant to quote what the then Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, said in his Budget Speech of 2004- 2005. And I am quoting. He said –

“The BRP is one item of Government transfers that absorbs a lot of our resources. Presently, there are some 116,000 beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension. A 1% increase in BRP costs Government Rs 28 million.”

1% costs Rs 28 million.

I am still quoting –

“A number of reports has questioned the long-term sustainability of the Basic Retirement Pension, especially as our population is fast ageing and the BRP is fully funded out of Government revenues. As a responsible Government, we are studying the issue very carefully to map out our strategy on pension reforms.

We are making a very special effort to increase the BRP rates, in spite of the extremely difficult budgetary situation. [But] this will be accompanied by a major change in the structure of pension rates.

A second fundamental reform that this Budget introduces is the targeting of Government transfers.”

Everybody seems to have forgotten this from the other side.

Ms Anquetil: Yes, *mémoire courte*.

The Prime Minister: Government transfers are simply – listen well – not sustainable.

Mr Lesjongard: May I, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Sorry to interrupt you.

Madam Speaker, my PNQ is very precise. I do not want to hear about what happened in the past.

(Interruptions)

Can I ask, because yesterday you ruled, Madam Speaker, that there are only 15 minutes allocated for a reply?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment. Can we, once more...

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Leader of the Opposition is on his feet, why do we need so much noise? I cannot hear him. Okay? Now, I know what he is saying.

Hon. Prime Minister, bear in mind that he has put specific questions, a (i) and (ii) and then (b). I did not stop you because I could understand you needed to make that introduction, but bear in mind that we have only 30 minutes for the whole exercise. Okay?

The Prime Minister: I am saying this, Madam Speaker, because you have to put it in the context. *Je sais ça fait du mal. Je sais ça fait du mal à l'honorable leader de l'opposition d'entendre ce que son propre leader....*

Ms Anquetil: Très mal.

The Prime Minister: *Oui, non, ça fait du mal* because he introduced targeting.

Mr Lesjongard: But you were against it!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Yes! Yes! Yes, I was. Yes, you are right. I was. It was not even that situation. You made the situation worse.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not speak to me in a sitting position, please!

The Prime Minister: You made the situation worse! It was not that situation then.

And he says –

“ A second fundamental reform that this Budget introduces is the targeting of Government transfers.”

I will refrain from saying more, Madam Speaker. But he says –

“Targeting for all the basic pensions will be introduced as from January next year.”

And then, what happened? He said all this. Okay, we were in the Opposition; we were against it because the situation was not the same. He still *reculé*. He still went back. He was forced to go back, in fact, by the then. Prime Minister, hon. Bérenger. But he went back. There was backpedalling. It was a budget. But this is how it is. You make proposals in the budget, and then, you decide to correct a few things. This is exactly what has happened.

I will skip all this because he does not like me saying this.

Madam Speaker: No, but...

The Prime Minister: In 2025, during the debates on the budget – I need to say this, Madam Speaker – hon. Paul Bérenger, in our Government, then Deputy Prime Minister, summarised in a very concise way the challenges of the BRP on the public finances and the consequences for the future. This is what we are saying. And I quote –

« Relever l'âge de la retraite, the non-contributory pension à 65 ans est inévitable. Je demande à tout le monde, à commencer par les syndicats, aux travailleurs de bien

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will have to say what I have to say whether you like it or not! I will quote! Whether you like it or not, I will quote! I am the one who is answering the question. You are not the one who is answering the question! I will quote!

(Interruptions)

I have to put it in the context, Madam Speaker.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

The Prime Minister: This is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ... of this House, Madam Speaker. The PNQ is only for 30 minutes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: *To pou gagn ankor letan pou reponn!*

Mr Lesjongard: You are not the Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Do not reply!

Mr Lesjongard: Do not reply!

Madam Speaker: Minister Ameer Meea, do not reply in my place!

I will definitely give you more time.

Hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: ... you are going to give me more time!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, you should give...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let me...

Mr A. Duval: Equal time!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister! Hon. Prime Minister, please reply to his specific question and then, I am sure you will get...

(Interruptions)

I am sure...

(Interruptions)

Oh! I am sure, on supplementary questions, you will get the chance to come back on some of the contextualised...

(Interruptions)

Please reply to the question!

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will cut a lot of the quotations, but I have to say this one.

He says –

« Relever (...) l'âge de la pension à 65 ans est inévitable. Nous sommes condamnés à le faire. »

Madam Speaker: Okay, let us start now.

The Prime Minister: Okay, I will go to the rest.

Now, the situation is clearly beyond alarming and unsustainable because of what they did with the CSG and all this.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: We, therefore, Madam Speaker, took the decision to restore the fairness and sustainability of the BRP system, and in this regard, the reform process was initiated last year guided by the fundamental principle that a pension system must be founded on the twin pillars of equity within and across generations.

It will be recalled, Madam Speaker, that in the 2025-2026 Budget Speech, I announced the setting up of a Commission of Experts to make recommendations to reform the various pillars of our pension system, also including revamping the National Pension Fund to replace the notorious CSG.

It was also announced that a Steering Committee would be set up to provide, *inter-alia*, guidance to the Commission on the strategic direction and policy priorities of the reform of the pension system.

Now, regarding part (a) of the question, the Commission of Experts was set up in September 2025 and is chaired by Mr Nureshkumar Prayag, who is an Actuary. It includes experts from the actuarial, economic and statistical fields. I am tabling a copy of their CVs as asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Commission comprises –

- (a) the Chairperson, Mr Prayag, former laureate who graduated in Actuarial Science in Edinburgh;
- (b) Mr Bernard Yen, a former laureate again, graduated in Mathematics and Computer Science at the University of Liverpool and Actuary;
- (c) Mr Ivan Legris, former laureate again, graduated in Economics and Actuarial Science from the London School of Economics;

- (d) Mr Azad Jeetun, Economist, Former Director of the then Mauritius Employers' Federation;
- (e) Mrs Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur, again Economist, Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Mauritius;
- (f) Mr Sattar Jackaria, Actuary, CEO of Eagle Insurance Ltd;
- (g) Ms Aimé Chung Kai Suet, Statistician and Former Director of Statistics Mauritius.

The Commission has been mandated to examine the three pillars of the pension system, namely –

- (i) the Basic Non-Contributory Pensions, including the Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Invalidation Pension and Basic Widows Pension;
- (ii) the Contributory Pension Schemes, and
- (iii) the Voluntary Private Pensions, including personal retirement savings plans and occupational pension schemes offered by employers.

As regards the allowances paid to the members of the Commission of Experts, the Chairperson of the Commission is paid a monthly fee of Rs200,000 and members are paid a monthly fee of Rs100,000, which is nothing!

With regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am tabling a copy of the Interim Report of the Commission of Experts. There is the report.

It is an interim report, Madam Speaker.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the composition of the Steering Committee on Pension Reform as approved by Cabinet on 26 September 2025, chaired by myself is as follows –

- (a) the then Deputy Prime Minister;
- (b) the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries;
- (c) the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity;
- (d) the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning;
- (e) the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations;
- (f) the Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives;
- (g) the Junior Minister of Finance, and
- (h) the Junior Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

Madam Speaker, the Commission made a presentation of its findings and recommendations contained in the Interim Report, which I have just laid on the Table of the Assembly.

The main recommendations of the Commission in this Interim Report are as follows –

- (a) A unified Independent Pensions Regulatory Authority will be established to make recommendations on policy reforms.
- (b) A Central Pensions Administration Bureau will regroup all state sponsored schemes into one place to digitalise and facilitate service to members and pensioners.
- (c) With regard to the Basic Retirement Pension, it will be renamed as State Age Pension as from 01 January 2027, a universal means test will apply individually to eligible beneficiaries based on their taxable income above a threshold of Rs14,000. This threshold, Madam Speaker, of Rs14,000 that is, is the World Bank relative poverty line of 50 percent of median income which is Rs28,000 in 2025 or was.
- (d) A person will be able to elect to receive the SAP from the age 60 to 70. The pension amount will increase by 9 per cent for each year that the benefit is deferred beyond the age of 65. The recommendation seeks to bring fairness by providing individuals with greater choice – they have a choice – regarding the timing of their benefit, while improving the long-term sustainability of the pension system.
- (e) As from 01 July 2027, there will be a revamped mandatory national contributory retirement scheme to replace the defunct National Pensions Fund.

Mr Lesjongard: He has crossed the 30 minutes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am keeping...

The Prime Minister: You asked about the reform, I am telling you about the reform!
Now, what else do you want me to say?

Madam Speaker: I am keeping the time.

The Prime Minister:

The Commission, Madam Speaker, took on board several of the comments and suggestions made by the members of the Steering Committee.

Due to the fiscal situation, Government decided to act immediately on the policy options recommended by the Commission in its interim report.

The recommendations regarding the State Age Pension and the conversion of the National Pensions Fund into the National Pension and Provident Fund have been validated by the Social Pension Specialists of the World Bank.

Madam Speaker, as regards the decision to freeze the means test, preliminary estimates indicate that the budget deficit would increase – automatically, it would increase – by around Rs6.2 billion, that is, 0.7 percent of GDP for the period January 2027 to June 2027.

I wish to bring some clarifications, Madam Speaker, with regard to the Budget Appendix Table B2 at pages 558 and 559 of the Budget Estimates document, whereby there was a technical issue in the figure reported under the item Old Age. The figures have been updated and posted on the website of the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Speaker, I would like to seize this opportunity to place on record my deep appreciation to the members of the Commission of Experts, which I should remind the House, was set up in September of 2025.

The composition of the Commission was endorsed by the Cabinet and it comprises professionals who have excelled in their respective fields, not only locally but internationally. I consider this totally unfair that they are being blamed for decisions announced in the Budget relating to pension reform.

It is a matter of deep regret that some people, both in this House and outside, have made totally unacceptable and disparaging personal remarks on these professionals.

I should also say, Madam Speaker, that I have full confidence in my Chief Economic Adviser, the Financial Secretary and his team at the Ministry of Finance.

Among the members of the Commission, several have occupied important positions – as you will see in the CVs – overseas; and decided to come back to serve the country.

We are doing our level best to attract the diaspora. We want to attract very competent people. I leave it to the appreciation of the population of how such vile attacks on these professionals will encourage the diaspora to come to Mauritius.

I have been informed that following the unwarranted and baseless comments made against them, all the members of the Commission have intimated that they would want to resign. I have made an appeal to them not to take this decision and to complete this important task that has been entrusted to them.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

I will give you time. First question!

Mr Lesjongard: You will give me ‘enough time’, not ‘time’, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I will do my level best! Start!

Mr Lesjongard: *Madame la présidente, l’honorable Premier Ministre a la mémoire courte.* He has forgotten how we canvassed against the means test back in 2004.

The Prime Minister: I just said that! I just said that!

Mr Lesjongard: Et votre Deputy Prime Minister peut vous confirmer ce que vous aviez dit à l’époque.

Now, the hon. Prime Minister in his statement to the House on Monday...

Madam Speaker: Question!

The Prime Minister: Statement *la!* *La to pou fer* statement *la...*

Mr Lesjongard: ...stated that he has taken the decision to freeze the means test. Will he inform the House for how long is he freezing the means test?

The Prime Minister: The means test is out. If that is what you want to know.

Hon. Members: Bravo!

Mr Lesjongard: Everybody is happy if it is out. Not only you in this House; the whole population will be happy.

I refer the hon. Prime Minister to paragraph 302 of the Budget Speech, where he stated “after wide-ranging consultations with all stakeholders”. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether consultations were held with members of his Government concerning the introduction of SAP, and if not, why not?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the answer is yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Wide consultations were...

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Madam Speaker: You are getting short answers. Carry on!

(Interruptions)

Members!

Mr Etwareea: *Li pa pou ena kestion la!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether, at the meeting held in his office on 16 June 2026 wherein were present, *inter-alia*, the hon. Minister of Social Security and other public officials, he assured those present that there would be no reduction in pension payable to senior citizens?

The Prime Minister: No, I did not. We discussed the issues that were being proposed. Hon. Minister Subron, as you know, is a very caring Minister. He wanted to know who will be affected, who will not be affected, the data and all these. That is what we discussed.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House as to who are the members of the unelected clique, denounced by the hon. Minister of Social Security in the

latter's press conference, on 22 June 2026, as having an evil influence on the policies of Government concerning Budget 2026?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, this is why this country – if they come back to government – will be doomed. Because we need experts; we are not experts.

Mr Lesjongard: I did not say that.

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is what you are saying, the unelected. But the unelected, where do you get them? They are experts.

Mr Lesjongard: Your Minister said that!

The Prime Minister: They are experts in the field. I just mentioned the names. Many of them are former laureates – three of them are laureates –economists, statisticians, actuaries. They presented their report because we need experts to look at this. Even your leader said that, that you need to reform the pension.

Mr Lesjongard: ... listen to my leader...

The Prime Minister: How? Do you prefer that I put you to reform the pension?

Maybe he is still your leader. I am not sure he is not the leader. I did not know he was not the leader.

So, how do we do the reform? We take people from the streets and say, 'Yes, come and look at the reform.' *Mo pran Prakash Maunthrooa, mo dir li fer reform!*

An hon. Member: Hajee Abdoula!

The Prime Minister: Hajee Abdoula! This is what you want me to do? You know, Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

You know Leader of the Opposition! You need to have experts. Experts do not decide policies. We decide policies, but they have to present a report. We have to see whether we agree, or we do not agree. This is what happened.

An hon. Member: We do not *bat-bate*!

Madam Speaker: One moment. Hon. Subron is going to be speaking in a while. So, wait.

Mr Lesjongard: But I have to put my questions, Madam Speaker, even...

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: ...if he will be speaking.

Madam Speaker: No, but you cannot put it to the Prime Minister.

Mr Lesjongard: Why not?

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Lesjongard: He is a Member of the Cabinet, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay, you know better.

Ms J. Bérenger: *Ranplas li, Madam! Ranplas li!*

Madam Speaker: Allez, vous voulez venir à ma place encore ?

Ms J. Bérenger: *Me laisse li fer so travay Leader Lopozision!*

Madam Speaker: Mais je suis en...

(Interruptions)

Members!

(Interruptions)

Members!

All I was saying was that hon. Minister Subron is going to be speaking first later on.

Mr Lesjongard: And so what? So what?

Madam Speaker: You will hear...

Mr Lesjongard: So, what?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay. If you do not understand and somebody else who sits and speaks to me all the time in a sitting position, if you do not understand; the people who are listening to me will understand!

Mr Lesjongard: They are also listening to me, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Does the hon. Prime Minister want us to believe that his Cabinet Minister had all factorial hallucinations of an evil clique...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Il continue.

Mr Lesjongard: ... in a public conference? If there is no such clique, hon. Prime Minister, then, the hon. Minister is grossly incompetent for making such a grave accusation and he should be sacked, hon. Prime Minister!

Madam Speaker: Wow!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Minister of Social Security did not say 'evil clique'. You are inventing again! Putting words in his mouth that he did not say.

Mr Lesjongard: No, I am not!

The Prime Minister: He never said evil. Ask him! Ask him!

Madam Speaker: You see?

(Interruptions)

Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House why he has backpedalled on the budgetary measures on the pension's reforms following the meeting of Monday 22 June, less than 72 hours after he has presented the budget to the whole nation? Madam Speaker, this is...

Madam Speaker: That is a good question.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: Let him answer! Yes!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, this is what is called democracy and listening to the voice of the people! This is what it is called.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Like I said, Madam Speaker,...

Madam Speaker: Next question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is not listening.

Madam Speaker: *Non*, next question!

Mr Lesjongard: This is called a humiliating retreat, hon. Prime Minister!

An hon. Member: *Poz to kestion!*

Mr Lesjongard: Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether he will withdraw the Appropriation 2026-2027 Bill, stop the ongoing debates, and come with a new Bill to reflect the fundamental changes brought about to the Estimates by the freezing of the means test?

The Prime Minister: This is what is called demagogy, Madam Speaker!

Ms Anquetil: Yes!

The Prime Minister: The whole budget is actually very welcomed by the population outside; except they have not understood this reform on the pension. This is what we have modified. And that is all.

Madam Speaker: Next question, Leader!

Mr Lesjongard: Voilà!

Madam Speaker, after taking note of the discontent within the ranks of his own Government and the anger expressed by the vast majority of the population of this country, will the hon. Prime Minister finally admit that this reform is an act of electoral fraud, and will he commit to withdrawing the State Age Pension and restoring the universal Basic Retirement Pension, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, that is why I was quoting his own leader. What did he say? And why did he then *reculer*? Why? Why do you think? Ask me!

Mr Lesjongard: I put the question to you.

Madam Speaker: Next question! Next question!

I am giving you time. Next question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Of course you have to, Madam Speaker. This is what you said earlier.

Madam Speaker: Carry on!

Mr A. Duval: *Linn pren 35 minits pou reponn!* Non ?

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. A. Duval! I have counted!

Mr Lesjongard: ...whether he does not find it cruel and cynical to ask an elderly person to opt for an age at which he or she will prefer to get the SAP and be paid one single amount for his or her lifetime?

The Prime Minister: That is why I said, Madam Speaker, earlier that there is a lot of confusion. People have not understood.

First of all, there is a difference between contributory and non-contributory pension. We are the only country in the world where the statutory retirement age is 65 and you start paying pension at 60. You have said; your own leader; the former Deputy Prime Minister has also said – and rightly so – that it is unsustainable. Do you know what the word ‘unsustainable’ mean? Or should I bring a dictionary and show you?

Madam Speaker, the confusion is there. Let me say something. The determination of net income. That has been a confusion.

Mr Lesjongard: What is he replying, Madam Speaker?

The Prime Minister: But I am telling you! You want to know! You do not want to listen? You just want to ask questions. But I am answering your bloody question!

Mr Lesjongard: I did not ask what you are replying, hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am answering your question! If you do not want to listen, do not listen!

There is a difference.

Mr Lesjongard: He is not being relevant to the question.

The Prime Minister: It is relevant because what determines...

An hon. Member: *To pa le ekoute, pa ekoute!*

The Prime Minister: When we spoke about means testing and the sum of Rs50,000, there has been a confusion. Because there is a confusion between what is net income and what is not net income.

Monthly net income includes emoluments, net of tax-exempt income. It includes net income from business or profession, net rental income, that is, after deducting expenditure incurred and repairs, maintenance or whatever of your property, and contributory retirement benefits. That is the exclusion. But people have not understood this. What can I do?

Madam Speaker: Your next question? Or you want your friend to speak?

Mr Lesjongard: No, I have a lot of next questions, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Let me be very precise, hon. Prime Minister. If someone opts to take the SAP at the age of 60, the benefit would be Rs11,598 per month for the rest of his life. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will admit that this is a dishonest and provocative proposal?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I have just said – they have not understood! This is actually false. What he is saying is false!

Mr Lesjongard: What is false?

Mr Mohamed: What you are saying!

The Prime Minister: The sum you quoted is false.

Mr Bhagwan: *To pann kompran ta.*

Mr Lesjongard: What is false?

Mr Mohamed: What you said!

The Prime Minister: What you said is false.

Mr Lesjongard: This is in the document officially circulated, Madam Speaker.

Now, let me ask...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut! Chut!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, ...

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: If an elderly person is enticed and opts for the SAP at 70 years, he will receive Rs24,000 per month, again, for the rest of his life. Hon. Prime Minister, will you confirm that this is a trap knowing that such an elderly person may die before reaching the age of 70 and not obtain his pension? Do not tell me I am wrong now!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Jhummun: *Profet maler!*

The Prime Minister: ...again, he has misunderstood everything. This is why we need experts. You should consult experts as well. Because he does not understand!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut! Chut! Chut!*

The Prime Minister: This is actually not true what he is saying.

Mr Lesjongard: Why?

Mr Mohamed: You are consulting Jugnauth!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: What is not true?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: It is not a fact what you are saying.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

One moment, Members!

The Prime Minister took...

(Interruptions)

Qui c'est qui veut venir encore à ma place de l'autre côté ?

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I was trying to say that as far as I have got the count myself and the Table below, the Prime Minister took 25 minutes, okay? So, I have already given you nine minutes more, but I will give you a few minutes more.

Please ask your question, or your friend. It is up to you!

(Interruptions)

One for you and one for him, okay? *Après, on arrête.*

Mr A. Duval: May I?

Madam Speaker: Oui.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you. Madam Speaker, *on parle de démagogie.*

Madam Speaker: Ça va !

(Interruptions)

Chut ! Chut !

Mr A. Duval: La vraie démagogie, Madame la présidente...

Madam Speaker: Question ! Question !

Mr A. Duval: C'est ça la question. N'est-ce pas là la vraie démagogie...

(Interruptions)

N'est-ce pas là la vraie démagogie – c'est une question – que les rapports de l'IMF et du FMI, qui datent de 2014 et de 2015, parlent *of the unsustainability of the pension system* et que ce gouvernement a promis de hausser, malgré ces deux rapports, la pension à R 21 500 par mois et a supprimé *l'income tax* sur les pensions ? Et aujourd'hui, dans le dos de la population, à coup de 18 millions de rémunération à la commission...

Madam Speaker: This is not a question!

Mr A. Duval: Est-ce que le gouvernement ne trouve pas ça étant la réelle démagogie et trahison ? Je demande au Premier Ministre la question...

Madam Speaker: This is not a... This is not a...

(Interruptions)

One moment!

Mr A. Duval: Je demande au Premier Ministre de revenir sur le système de pension électoral parce que ce gouvernement n'a aucun mandat pour amender cette réforme, ce système !

Madam Speaker: Go ahead!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Aucun mandat. You promised the country.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I know he decided to sit next to the MSM before then he switched sides.

Sa pa trahizon sa?

(Interruptions)

You switched sides. You switched sides in the middle because you thought they were going to win the election.

(Interruptions)

Because you thought they were going to win the election. That is why you switched sides.

(Interruptions)

You switched sides. Ça, c'est la trahison.

(Interruptions)

Tu as trahi. Tu as trahi. C'est toi qui as trahi. C'est une trahison que tu as fait. Et on t'a foutu dehors parce que tu ne valais plus rien.

Mr A. Duval: I told you why.

The Prime Minister: And you wanted... and you remember, you wanted, you know...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please!

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am sorry, Madam. But this, Madam Speaker, is a mixture of demagogy, ignorance and venom. That is what it is. They do not understand. He is now saying, do not bring any reform.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Yes!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Leave it as it is? So, let the country crash? You will not be here. You will not be here. But the young of this country will have no pension if you do not reform the pension. You are doing *demagogy, c'est ça la démagogie. Au lieu de gouverner pour le peuple, ils gouvernent pour eux-mêmes.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition. Not speech like we just heard, a question.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Madam Speaker, I have taken cognizance of the documents circulated by the hon. Prime Minister with regard to members of the Commission. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to state whether any assessment was carried out regarding potential conflict of interest by members of that Commission? Because they are all in the private sector.

The Prime Minister: We looked at this but it is a small country. You have very few experts. You have very few people with their abilities and their competency. Otherwise, what do we do? Where would you get the experts? I take experts from the UK like we did before?

Mr Lesjongard: But not in the ...

The Prime Minister: You do not want Mauritians to work. Now you want experts from the UK to come here to tell us what to do with the pension. We chose to have Mauritians who have expertise.

Madam Speaker: But you yourself, hon. Prime Minister, you do not believe that there is any *conflit d'intérêt*?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, everybody has a conflict of interest in this country. You have somebody who is working there. Yesterday we heard about conflict of interest. Everybody has. But we have to get the experts to do the job and that is what we did.

Madam Speaker: Okay. That's it. Thank you everybody. It was not easy but thank you nonetheless.