No. 28 of 2026

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD) (UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 01 SEPTEMBER 2026

CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENT

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS ***(Oral)***

MOTION

BILL ***(Public)***

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS ***(Written)***

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 Ramtohul	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. 28 of 2026

Sitting of Tuesday 01 September 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

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE – S.O. 69(2)(a) – CHAIRPERSON'S APPOINTMENT

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make in regard to the Public Accounts Committee.

On 06 August 2026, hon. Adrien Charles Duval submitted his resignation as Chairperson thereof. I have, in accordance with Standing Order 69 (2) (a) of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly, appointed hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard to serve as Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee.

I thank you for your kind attention.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
Ministry of Finance
Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

(a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2026). (In Original)

(b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

(c) The Annual Report on Performance of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the financial year 2024/2025. (In Original)

(d) The Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Media Trust for the year ended 30 June 2025.

(e) The Audited Financial Statements of the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the year ended 30 June 2024. (In Original)

(f) The Income Tax (Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-up Tax) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 135 of 2026)

(g) The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (India) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 136 of 2026)

B. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund for the year ended 30 June 2025.

C. Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries

(a) The Financial Statements and Annual Reports of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden Trust for the years ended 30 June 2021 and 2022.

(b) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Ex-Fishermen Investment Trust for the year ended:

(i) 31 December 2014;

(ii) 31 December 2015;

(iii) 30 June 2017;

(iv) 30 June 2018;

(v) 30 June 2019;

(vi) 30 June 2020;

(vii) 30 June 2021;

(viii) 30 June 2022; and

(ix) 30 June 2023. (In Original)

D. Ministry of National Infrastructure

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Road Development Authority for the year ended 30 June 2025.

E. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Dental Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 140 of 2026)

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

The Annual Report on Performance of the Social Security and National Solidarity Division for the financial year 2024/2025. (In Original)

G. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

(a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Central Water Authority for the year ended 30 June 2024.

(b) The Central Water Authority (Dry Season) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 141 of 2026)

H. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

(a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 137 of 2026)

(b) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 138 of 2026)

(c) The Consumer Protection (Pharmaceutical Products) (Maximum Mark-up) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 142 of 2026)

(d) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 143 of 2026)

(e) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 144 of 2026)

(f) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 145 of 2026)

(g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No.146 of 2026)

(h) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 147 of 2026)

I. Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Research

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the University of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2025.

J. Ministry of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives

(a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council for the year ended 30 June 2025.

(b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the National Co-operative College for the year ended 30 June 2025.

K. Ministry of Education and Human Resource

(a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for the year ended 30 June 2024.

(b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Mauritius Institute of Education for the year ended 30 June 2025.

(c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute for the year ended 30 June 2024.

(d) The Education (Control and Use of Personal Mobile Devices on School Premises) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 139 of 2026)

L. Ministry of Local Government

(a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the District Council of Flacq for the year ended 30 June 2025. (In Original)

(b) The City Council of Port Louis (Traffic Centre) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 149 of 2026)

(c) The District Council of Grand Port (Dr James Burty David Food Court) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 150 of 2026)

M. Ministry of Arts and Culture

(a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the financial statements of the National Art Gallery for the year ended 30 June 2019.

(b) The Islamic Cultural Centre Trust Fund (Pilgrimage) (Amendment) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 148 of 2026)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTER OF HEALTH & WELLNESS – SURGERY AT DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL – PRIVATE DOCTOR'S INVOLVEMENT – INQUIRY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr C. Baboolall) *(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 surgery the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness underwent at Dr Jeetoo Hospital, he will –

(a) obtain information as to whether Dr P. S.'s presence is recorded in the hospital documents, indicating whether private doctors are authorised to participate in surgeries at public hospitals and, if so, indicate how many were carried out since December 2024 and whether required clearances were obtained, and

(b) state whether a Board of Inquiry will be set up thereinto and he will request the Honourable Minister to step down pending completion thereof.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate the hon. Member for being now the new Leader of the Opposition.

In regard to part (a) of the Private Notice Question relating to the participation of private doctors in surgeries at public hospitals, I am informed that the Mauritian legislation does not prohibit a private medical practitioner from being present during a surgical procedure in a public hospital, nor does it confer an automatic right for such an access. Such requests are considered on the basis of the Ministry's clinical and administrative procedures, subject to the approval of the hospital surgeon, who is responsible for the operation, and most importantly, with the patient's consent.

Such established occurrences within the public hospital system have been authorised on a number of occasions where the circumstances justified them.

This approach is consistent with the Medical Council's Code of Practice, which recognises the seeking of a second opinion or expert advice where clinically necessary, while requiring that patients are not exposed to unnecessary risks. Where the hospital surgeon considers the proposed presence to be clinically appropriate, I understand that the necessary

administrative approval must be obtained and all applicable professional, confidentiality, patient-safety and operating-theatre requirements must be strictly observed.

In practical terms, any such request is first referred to the hospital surgeon responsible for the operation, who assesses whether the proposed presence is clinically appropriate, having regard to the patient's medical and surgical history, continuity of care, patient safety and the proper functioning of the operating theatre. The surgeon's concurrence is an indispensable prerequisite, and the request proceeds no further if it is withheld, that is, by the surgeon. Where the surgeon agrees, the matter is referred to the Director-General of Health Services or the Senior Chief Executive, as appropriate, for the necessary administrative approval before any arrangements are made.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the joint involvement of Dr. Mohammad Raza Aboobakar and Dr. Pravish Rai Sookha was considered desirable because of the particular expertise of Dr. Sookha in non-invasive surgery, that is, he practices keyhole surgery.

Madam Speaker, over the years, private medical practitioners from Mauritius and abroad have, with the necessary authorisations, been permitted to attend public hospitals as observers, to provide specialist advice, to assist public teams and, in appropriate cases, to perform specialised procedures.

The principle is also consistent with the recognised international practice, under which an external medical observer may be present subject to the patient's consent, the responsible clinician remaining in charge, and the observance of confidentiality, patient-safety and institutional requirements.

Madam Speaker, what I can confirm is that the underlying practice of authorised involvement or presence of private practitioners in public hospitals is not new as it seems to be implied. There are documented precedents extending over many years.

Mauritius has, for many years, engaged visiting specialists and private-sector doctors to provide specialised treatment within public hospitals. During the past 18 months, approximately 60 specialised medical teams, comprising about 100 foreign private medical practitioners, have visited Mauritius. Collectively, they have conducted more than 2,500 consultations and performed over 1,300 complex surgical procedures in our public hospitals,

following the necessary, of course, authorisations and established clinical governance arrangements.

At present, a team of private medical practitioners from India is undertaking cataract surgeries daily within the public healthcare. They will perform above 2,000 such operations within two months. This mission is likewise being conducted under the applicable authorisation, professional registration and clinical governance arrangements.

A further example is Dr. Rittoo, a vascular surgeon of Mauritian origin based in the United Kingdom. During each of his specialist missions to Mauritius, he performs more than 50 complex arteriovenous fistula procedures in public hospitals.

Another important example is the contribution of Professor Patrick Yu-Wai-Man and Dr. Cynthia Yu-Wai-Man, two ophthalmologists of Mauritian origin based in the United Kingdom, who have supported efforts to strengthen the screening and treatment of glaucoma among Mauritian patients.

Other notable examples include Professor David Owens, whose expertise contributed to the establishment of the Diabetes and Vascular Health Centre, and Dr. Wajid Ali Khan and his team from Pakistan, who undertake annual missions to perform complex ophthalmic surgeries. Professor Balaji likewise provides specialist care to patients requiring oral and maxillofacial surgery, while Professor Ramalingam performs complex cochlear implant procedures for children with hearing impairment.

I also refer to eminent foreign practitioners who have, in the past, engaged in pioneering medical interventions, I have in mind, Madam Speaker, Professor Saxena, Professor Cerenne and Professor Hassen Raffa, amongst others.

Many private sector doctors from abroad regularly provide specialised care to patients in our public hospitals and contribute significantly towards alleviating their suffering.

In that same spirit, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has no objection in principle to private sector medical practitioners attending to patients within the public healthcare, provided that the responsible hospital clinicians agree and all necessary administrative approvals, professional requirements, patient-safety measures and clinical governance safeguards are strictly observed.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the facts stated do not warrant the setting up of a Board of Inquiry, and the question of the hon. Minister stepping down, therefore, does not arise.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Baboolall: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr Baboolall: Yes. I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply. But I understand that the doctors he mentioned are specialised doctors who come from abroad. Here, in this matter, is the hon. Prime Minister telling us that it is available for any ordinary Mauritian citizen?

The Prime Minister: I think, Madam Speaker, the principle should be that first and above everything else, we should put the health of the patient first. Whatever doctor we need, it is the health of the patient that comes first.

Madam Speaker: Second question!

Mr Baboolall: Yes. My question, again is: is this available to any Mauritian citizen to request a private doctor to accompany him to the hospital?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Il faut s'asseoir!

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition to allow me to clarify. I think, as I said, it is the patient's wish which must come first. Therefore, if there is a need for such a case, any patient in a hospital, we should abide by the same rule.

Madam Speaker: Okay, do you have another question?

Mr Baboolall: Yes, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether Dr. P. S. took part in the surgical procedure carried out on the hon. Minister of Health and was not merely an observer, as the hon. Prime Minister has claimed?

Mr P. Bérenger: The Minister.

Mr Baboolall: As the Minister has claimed.

The Prime Minister: I did not claim anything. But my understanding, Madam Speaker, is that Dr. Sookha was meant to be there as an observer, first of all. But when they decided to operate – he is specialised in keyhole surgery – he decided then that it is probably better to have a keyhole surgery treatment instead of a full blaster operation cutting the patient with a quite large incision. And that is when he decided he will do that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Chut!*

Mr Baboolall: So, Madam Speaker, …

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let him put his question. Go ahead.

Mr Baboolall: So, it is clear that the hon. Minister has misled the public in telling that Dr. Sookha was just an observer?

The Prime Minister: I cannot say he did because I believe he was under anaesthesia. He probably did not know what happened.

Madam Speaker: Okay, another supplementary?

Mr Baboolall: Yes, Madam Speaker. So, is there any protocol available for the public? Can the hon. Minister table any protocol for any Mauritian citizen to have access to private doctors? How it should be done?

Madam Speaker: You mean the hon. Prime Minister?

Mr Baboolall: The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, there is no protocol. Very often, it is done orally. They decide: 'You know, can you come and help in the hospital?' There is no protocol. Maybe we should look at protocols. Maybe, following the question. But sometimes, it is urgent also. If you are going to go through different stages, the patient might die in the meantime. But we can look at this, whether we should have a protocol or not. But it has happened very, very often.

Many people – I do not want to give examples of names and all this – but it has happened that we have asked people from outside to come in the public hospitals. And I want to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition, today, doctors in public hospitals go and practise in private clinics. We allow it. Should we not allow it then?

Madam Speaker: Alright. There is somebody asking for a question. Will you give way?

Yes!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Dans sa réponse, l'honorable Premier ministre a indiqué que cette pratique existe depuis plusieurs années. Peut-il nous indiquer combien de patients mauriciens et étrangers auraient bénéficié de cette facilité depuis sa mise en place? Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

The Prime Minister: I do not have the exact figures, Madam Speaker, but I know there are many, many such cases.

Madam Speaker: Will you communicate to the Assembly in due course?

The Prime Minister: I can, yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes!

Mr Baboolall: Yes, Madam Speaker, can the hon. Prime Minister at least give one example where a private doctor went and underwent a surgical operation in public hospitals?

Madam Speaker: Be careful! Be careful! We must protect data. We must be careful with the protection of data.

An hon. Member: It is privileged.

Madam Speaker: Is it possible, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: No, it is privileged information, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Exactly!

The Prime Minister: I cannot disclose that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members!

Mr Baboolall: Madam Speaker, …

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members! Go ahead with your question. Give him a chance.

Go ahead, please!

Mr Baboolall: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister is aware that the president of the Government Medical and Dental Officers Association raised serious concerns about the presence of private medical practitioner inside the operation theatre. They are themselves not aware that these types of requests can be made to the RSD.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Are you aware, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: No, no, I am not aware of this, but let me say this, Madam Speaker. We should encourage. We do not have expertise in everything in Mauritius, honestly. I am telling you this honestly. We lack expertise. A lot of people, you know, on their card, they put expert in this and that. They are not experts. It is not true. We need expertise and high-level expertise. That is why we encourage even consultants from abroad to come in. I do that all the time.

Madam Speaker: Your next question, please. You give way to Dr. Aumeer, yes?

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to clarify to the House that the practice of having a private medical practitioner to go and offer his services, be it sub-specialised or specific, should have the prior consent of the doctor working in the public sector, which seems to have happened in this case. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: This was already replied. This was in the main reply.

The Prime Minister: You need both. Not only the consent of the operating surgeon or the doctor, but also the consent of the patient.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Alright. You have one more question?

Mr Baboolall: One more.

Madam Speaker: You have one more? Okay.

Mr Baboolall: So, Madam Speaker, will the hon. Prime Minister agree that if the Minister of Health does not have trust in public doctors and this is what has happened in that case and whether the request was made and if request was made, can he table the copy thereof?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, first part of the question, I cannot see how you can reply. Will you know what…

(Interruptions)

Let me give my ruling, please. Say the first part, please, first. Say it again.

Mr Mohamed: Say it again.

Madam Speaker: Say your question again.

Mr Baboolall: Madam Speaker, it seems that the hon. Minister of Health went to the public hospital and my question is: when did he make such a request to the Ministry?

Madam Speaker: When? Okay.

Mr Baboolall: And if he can table that copy in relation to Dr. P. S.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

The Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, the…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: There is too much noise. I cannot hear the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister should be commended. He could well pay a clinic if he wanted to. I am sure he can. But he decided to

show his trust in public hospitals and he went to a public hospital. Dr. Sookha has expertise in keyhole surgery. They decided to practice keyhole surgery so that he can come and work. In fact, the next day he came to work, I believe.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Thank you everyone. Thank you.

Now we go to the PMQT. Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister. One moment, hon. Members. The Table has been advised that… I am going to stand up.

The Table has been advised that PQ B/1236 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. PQ B/1246 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. PQ B/1256 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands. PQ B/1281, B/1285 and B/1302 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister time permitting. PQ B/1235, B/1271, B/1280 and PQ B/1307 have been withdrawn.

Now I call on the hon. Third member for Port Louis and Triolet.

DOMESTIC FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET – US DOLLARS AVAILABILITY – SUPPLY MEASURES

(No. B/1230) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) 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 availability of United States Dollars on the domestic foreign exchange market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the current demand and supply situation, indicating whether a scarcity thereof is being observed and, if so, the extent and causes thereof, further indicating the measures being envisaged to ensure an adequate and orderly supply thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that there have been some improvements in the availability of foreign exchange in the domestic forex market since the start of 2025.

In fact, in 2025, purchases of foreign currencies by banks and foreign exchange dealers reached a record USD 7.4 billion, while foreign exchange sales also reached a record USD 7.8 billion. This represents an increase of nearly 20% in both purchases and sales compared to 2024.

This improvement of the foreign exchange market has been observed also in 2026. Between January and 26 August 2026, foreign exchange purchases of USD 5.16 billion and sales of USD 5.06 billion were registered on the domestic market.

Nonetheless, we must agree that the forex market remains tight, Madam Speaker. Given the quantum of foreign exchange deposits held by domestic corporates and households and the strong performance registered in some key export-oriented sectors in 2025 and 2026, the apparent shortage of forex may to some degree be due to hoarding of foreign exchange by some businesses, which limits the effective supply of foreign exchange available for transactions at any point in time.

There is also a structural imbalance in the foreign exchange market, Madam Speaker. The significant increase in imports over the past years as a result of this consumption-led economic model of the previous Government has generated a stronger and more persistent excess demand for foreign currency. This has not been fully matched by the growth in foreign exchange earnings, thus affecting the availability of foreign currency in the domestic market.

Madam Speaker, to address these issues, a number of measures have been implemented by Government and the Bank of Mauritius –

(i) The Bank of Mauritius increased its key rate by 50 basis points to 4.5 percent per annum in February 2025 and again by 25 basis points to 4.75 percent in May of this year.

(ii) Instructions have been 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.

(iii) The Bank has enforced stricter regulation on intercompany transactions in foreign currencies as well as swaps and other derivatives.

(iv) Banks have been instructed to ensure that forward transactions are priced in a fair manner and in accordance with market fundamentals.

(v) 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.

Madam Speaker, the Bank of Mauritius has also provided foreign exchange liquidity directly to the domestic market. In 2025, the Bank sold USD 224 million on the domestic forex market and since the beginning of this year, the Bank has already intervened to sell, so far, USD 65 million on the domestic market.

At the same time, the increase in the foreign exchange reserves in the Bank of Mauritius will give it more leeway to intervene in the forex market, should the need arise.

Madam Speaker, the Bank of Mauritius has also acted decisively in May 2026 to tackle distortions in the foreign exchange market as some banks were primarily proposing cross currencies to their clients, instead of USD.

The root causes of this distortion were in the difference in the spreads among different major currencies, that resulted in arbitrage opportunities and the perceived shortage of USD in the domestic market in the first quarter of 2026.

As from 04 May of this year, the Bank of Mauritius harmonised the bid-ask spread for banks and foreign exchange dealers with regard to the USD and other major currencies. Since the introduction of this measure, a notable improvement in the availability of USD proposed to customers have been observed.

Madam Speaker, at the level of Government, we are reinforcing these efforts through structural measures aimed at increasing foreign currency inflows. These include –

(i) Requiring that at least 85 percent of proceeds from sales of villas under the Property Development Scheme be converted into rupees.
(ii) Mandating that businesses earning at least 50 percent of their turnover in foreign currency to pay their tax in full in foreign currency.
(iii) The introduction of the Tourist Fee of 3 Euros per night per tourist, effective as from 01 October 2025 that has helped to increase the foreign exchange availability in the market.

(iv) Requiring 50% of VAT on accommodation services to be remitted in foreign currency.

Madam Speaker, with the adoption of an investment-led and production-oriented growth model, we expect to progressively address the structural constraints.

Our strategy of import substitution by strengthening food security and expanding renewable energy will help reduce our import bill over time.

At the same time, our strategy to boost exports will strengthen foreign exchange earnings. The combined effect of these measures should progressively narrow the demand-supply imbalance and sustainably improve the availability of foreign currency in the domestic foreign exchange market.

Madam Speaker, in parallel, the Bank of Mauritius continues to closely monitor developments in the foreign exchange market and remain ready to take appropriate measures, including intervening where necessary, to maintain orderly market conditions and support the stability of the foreign exchange market.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mr Rookny: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the Prime Minister mentioned that there are harmful hoarding practices being practiced by operators, are there any measures proposed by Government or the Bank of Mauritius to counter same?

The Prime Minister: We intend to speak to them, those we think who are doing that, and if they do not comply, then we will take measures.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have listened attentively to the Prime Minister with regard to what is being envisaged for bringing in dollars through the real estate sector. Is the Prime Minister aware, however, that FDI for IRS, RES and PDS projects *a reculé* by 9% this year? According to the official Bank of Mauritius figures, there has been a decrease of 9% in relation to money investments through RES and other real estate projects, wholly due to the fact that permits and authorisations are being awaited at the level of the PMO and of the EDB, and this is causing 9% decrease in FDI, which is putting pressure on the rupee.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I will tell the hon. Member that whatever he has just said, is actually not true.

Mr A. Duval: I have not yet.

The Prime Minister: It is not true.

Mr A. Duval: Well, Madam Speaker, if I may?

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr A. Duval: Is the Prime Minister aware that the official figures from the Bank of Mauritius will say – if you look at the last table for Quarter 1 2026, you will see for 24 July 2026, under 'Real estate activities' of which IRS/RES/IHS/PDS/SCS, there is a reduction of Rs400 million, Rs400 million in revenue, and it is wholly, totally attributable to the EDB.

Madam Speaker: You are not putting a question.

Mr A. Duval: This is the question. Whether he agrees…

The Prime Minister: Let him!

I am not contesting this, but what you are saying, that it is being held up at the PMO and EDB, is not actually true. They have to go through the procedures, Madam Speaker.

And for the first part, that it has been reduced, but that was what we wanted to do. That is what we wanted. We did not want to do as your Government did, just give permits to everyone to build concrete all over the country.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Juman. Then you, hon. Member.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the situation described by the hon. Prime Minister, can he inform the House to what extent the availability of USD is currently affecting importers, particularly in terms of ability to settle payments for importation?

The Prime Minister: I just explained in my answer, Madam Speaker. There are consequences to what has happened in the past. This consumer-led economy – you are importing everything. Maybe you should go and canvass people to stop importing.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Pierre.

Mr Pierre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Whether Government will consider, like Maldives is doing, imposing selling rates in US dollar and also, imposing on some hotel operators to keep some of those sales in Mauritius, as the hotel industry represent one of the largest contributors to foreign exchange? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: This is actually being done, including by the Ministry of Tourism. We want them not to put their money abroad to get the foreign exchange here.

Madam Speaker: Okay, last question now.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, with regard to the hoarding of US dollars by people who hold US dollars, whether he agrees that notwithstanding the interventions of the Bank of Mauritius – this year 65 million – there is, for the eight months that have passed, in fact, a shortfall of about USD 100 to 200 million monthly. First thing. Secondly…

Madam Speaker: No, one question!

Mr A. Duval: No, it is the same question. The second fact that I am giving is – whether he agrees – that the buyers are resorting to offshore supply and are paying up to Rs50 on the dollar because of the lack of supply in Mauritius. Is it not time for the Bank of Mauritius to ramp up the supply of the dollar, not at the tune of 10 million a month, but a 100 million a month to follow the demand?

The Prime Minister: So, you think the Bank of Mauritius has a big coffer with plenty of money that it will just throw out. We have to keep a reserve. Perhaps you do not realise it. We have to keep a reserve. If there is a run on the rupee, we have to have a reserve. That is essential for any country.

Secondly, if the rupee had not depreciated by 46% over 10 years – what is happening? People are thinking that the rupee will continue to devalue. It is not devaluing at the same

rate. It is gradually coming up to what it should be, but people are speculating. They think they can hold the dollar and they will get more. That is what they are doing. That is the consequences of the 10-year policy when you were in government and allowed.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay, next question, Hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY & RODRIGUES AND OUTER ISLANDS DIVISION – BUDGET REALLOCATION

(No. B/1231) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) 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 reallocation of funds from the budget of the Rodrigues and Outer Islands Division and from the Capital Budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA), he will state –

(a) whether the RRA was consulted prior thereto, and

(b) the financial impact thereof on the finances of the RRA.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, there has been no reallocation yet in the 2026-2027 Budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, so I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the previous Budget, that is, 2025-2026.

The House will recall that in the 2025-2026 Budget, the National Assembly had voted a total grant of Rs5.785 billion in respect of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, that is, for that financial year. Out of this amount, Rs5 billion was for recurrent expenditure and Rs785 million for capital expenditure.

Over and above this total grant of Rs5.785 billion to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, again a sum of Rs4.338 billion was allocated for projects and schemes financed under the national budget but through various other Ministries. This amount also includes water-related projects funded by the Mauritius Investment Corporation. This, therefore, brings the total allocation to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly budget to more than Rs10 billion for fiscal year 2025-2026.

In April 2026, a request for additional funds was received from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to the tune of Rs548 million to meet expenses related to salaries, allowances and pensions, as the previous amount had been exhausted.

After analysing the request, the Ministry of Finance agreed to provide an additional amount of Rs300 million to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The Ministry of Finance analysed the capital budget of the RRA and it was observed that the execution rate was low. This is not only for Rodrigues; this is also for here. On this basis, it was concluded that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly would, in all likelihood, not be able to utilise its entire capital budget by the end of the fiscal year. The same trend was observed over the last 5 years where around 73% of its capital budget was spent.

The Ministry of Finance, therefore, approved the financing of an additional Rs300 million by way of reallocation as follows –

- Rs151 million from the Capital budget of the RRA, and
- Rs149 million from the under-spending item under Programme 0205 - Rodrigues and Outer Islands.

Madam Speaker, reallocation of funds is a common practice in budgeting. Funds are normally reallocated from items where savings are expected to where additional fund is required in accordance with section 22 (1) (ea) of the Finance and Audit Act and the Financial Instructions No. 2 of 2025 – which is in respect to reallocations.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Ministry of Finance had prior consultations with the Rodrigues and Outer Islands Division of my Office.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has, in fact, received an increase in its total budget by an amount of Rs149 million following the reallocation exercise.

I wish to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that on 16 June of this year, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly submitted a request to my Office for the disbursement of Rs99.5 million in respect of various capital projects.

However, since the request was not supported with relevant documents, the request could not be entertained at that time.

These claims will now be settled from provisions made in the current budget and the Ministry of Finance will provide additional funds if all the documents are given as and when required.

This is a common practice in as far as budget implementation and execution are concerned.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one question!

Mr Edouard: I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the reallocation exercise from capital budget is in line with PBB? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: In line with?

Mr Edouard: The PBB.

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is in line. We have done this in the past. Even for Mauritius, we do this.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Collet!

Ms Collet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister undertake to seek information and clarify for enlightenment purposes, which Ministry, which authority between the Ministry of Rodrigues, the Ministry of Finance, or RRA has the legal competence to initiate a *virement* from an allocation voted for the RRA, please?

The Prime Minister: This is done by the Ministry of Finance, by the Financial Secretary who looks at it and examines it. If he needs further information, he asks. And then, he does it.

Madam Speaker: Second question, yes!

Ms Collet: Can the hon. Prime Minister undertake to seek information and further clarify whether the parent ministry, meaning the Ministry of Rodrigues, may validly submit a *virement* warrant on its own initiative in respect of RRA's funds? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Not on its own initiative. It has to go through the procedures that we have laid out.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr François: Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Yes, of course! How would I think you would not get up?

Mr François: Yes, thank you. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, je suis en présence de la réponse orale du chef commissaire de Rodrigues suite à la question du *Minority Leader*, B/80 du mardi 4 août à l'Assemblée régionale sur le même sujet. La réponse reçue donne la perception que notre autonomie est en danger et menacée depuis Port Louis.

Dans cette situation de crise financière avec le Conseil exécutif de l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues à Port Mathurin, est-ce que l'honorable Premier ministre peut rassurer la Chambre et la population de Rodrigues que ce n'est pas le cas, après la réponse qu'il vient de prononcer, et que l'autonomie de Rodrigues est pleinement respectée dans cette situation de crise et de gestion du budget de Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: Not only I can give that assurance, but I have just explained that out of the budget, we gave additional sums when it was requested by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Okay, that is enough for today. We have to move on.

Yes, Hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal!

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – INVESTMENT PROJECTS – SECTOR-WISE & PROJECT-WISE BREAKDOWN

(No. B/1232) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) 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 Rs649.7 billion worth investment projects reportedly declared by the Economic Development Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain a breakdown thereof sector-wise and project-wise, indicating the –

(a) amount thereof –

(i) actually invested;

(ii) at planning/design stage;

(iii) received/to be received in foreign and from foreign investors;

(iv) by non-citizens financed/to be financed by local banks, and

(b) number of –

(i) projects delayed, cancelled or abandoned, and

(ii) jobs created/to be created.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Economic Development Board that, it has in its records some 523 private investment projects for a total amount of Rs649.7 billion. These figures have been mentioned in the latest Newsletter of the EDB published in August 2026.

I am further informed, Madam Speaker, that these investment projects form part of the EDB project pipeline and have a long implementation time frame. For example, the Mixed-Use/Smart City Projects are being implemented in several phases, and we believe it will take over 15 to 20 years to achieve.

Out of these 523 projects, 512 are active, representing a total investment of Rs634 billion, and the remaining 11 projects, amounting to Rs15.7 billion, have either been put on hold or have actually been cancelled.

Madam Speaker, the projects concern various sectors, including real estate development, hospitality, tourism, healthcare, life sciences, renewable energy, logistics and warehousing, agro-industry, blue economy and manufacturing.

With regard to parts (a)(i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) of the question, I am tabling the requested information on the investment projects sector-wise.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am also tabling the requested information.

According to the EDB, 26 projects are facing delays in implementation due to a combination of factors, including investors decisions, permitting and licensing processes, and the evolving international context.

It is estimated that projects already completed and under implementation have generated approximately 18,500 jobs directly and indirectly with a further 7,800 jobs expected to be created as these projects are completed and become fully operational.

Madam Speaker, the EDB is working closely with the project promoters and relevant public sector agencies to facilitate the timely implementation of various projects.

In fact, out of 39 high-value private sector projects, representing Rs47.8 billion in investment that were stalled within the administrative permitting ecosystem in December 2025, the EDB has helped to unlock 32 projects of a total investment of Rs34.4 billion within a period of 8 months. These projects are now at various stages of implementation: some are completed and operational, others are under construction, and some have all permits in hand and are ready to start implementation.

As these projects become operational, they are further expected to stimulate economic activity, and create further employment opportunities, thereby strengthening the foundations for sustained and inclusive economic growth.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms J. Bérenger: Je vous remercie. Parmi les projets d'investissement déclarés, l'honorable Premier ministre peut-il nous dire s'il a l'information, combien de projets sont en fait des projets productifs, générant directement des biens ou des services par opposition aux projets résidentiels, hôteliers ou purement financiers ? Et quel est le montant de ces projets productifs ?

The Prime Minister: I have a list which I am circulating, Madam Speaker. But I can give a few examples. For example, they have projects which are productive and those which are not productive. For example, in education, I do not think we qualify it as being productive as such, but there are projects in renewable energy, in hospitality, and in healthcare services. Some of the projects, I must tell the hon. Member, are being put on hold not because of the delay as such, but information that is required has not been given.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable Premier ministre, est-il au courant qu'un ministre de son gouvernement a déclaré publiquement qu'il trouve ridicule qu'il n'y ait toujours pas de *CEO* à

la tête de l'*Economic Development Board*? Est-ce qu'il est d'accord avec cette déclaration? Et s'il l'est, quelle action est-ce qu'il compte prendre?

The Prime Minister: Let me reassure the hon. Member. As you probably know, there was an issue that was raised about the proposed member who was going to be named as CEO. We have sorted it out. He has been approved. I suppose he could have got his letter yesterday.

Madam Speaker: Time is running. I would like…

Ms J. Bérenger: Si je peux avoir une dernière?

Peut-on savoir le montant de son salaire, sachant que cela avait fait polémique dans l'opinion publique? Peut-on savoir le montant de son salaire, le nouveau *CEO* qui a été *appointed*? Parce qu'on apprend maintenant qu'il a été *appointed*, peut-on savoir le montant de son salaire, s'il vous plaît?

The Prime Minister: This is going to go to the Board, and the Board will decide whether to approve or not to approve.

Madam Speaker: You can come with a question.

No, we will move on. We are going to move on because time is running.

Please, hon. Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil. Yes, hon. Beechook!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Beechook, I am calling you!

Mr Beechook: Yes!

Ms J. Bérenger: *Faire la leçon*! *Samem tou li kone*!

MAURITIUS FILM REBATE SCHEME – PROJECTS FUNDING & REFUND CAP

(No. B/1233) 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 Mauritius Film Rebate Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the number of projects received at the Economic Development Board thereunder, indicating the number thereof approved and quantum of funds disbursed in financial years ending 30 June 2025 and 30 June 2026, respectively, and

(b) whether the guidelines prescribed thereunder have been amended to provide for a cap on the refundable amount.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Film Rebate Scheme was introduced in 2013 to position Mauritius as a competitive destination for local and international film production, while creating employment opportunities for local talents, promoting tourism and enhancing Mauritius' international visibility. That was the objective that was mentioned when they introduced it in 2013.

The Scheme is open to both local and international film producers and covers feature films, television drama series, documentaries, high-end international television commercials, music videos and dubbing projects.

A 30 per cent rebate is granted on qualifying local production expenditure, which may increase up to 40 per cent where the qualifying expenditure reaches at least USD 1 million for a feature film or USD 150,000 per episode for a drama series.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Economic Development Board that during the financial year ending 30 June 2025, 14 applications were received, of which 6 projects were approved. As for the financial year ending 30 June 2026, 11 applications were received and 10 of these projects were approved.

The amount of funds disbursed under the Scheme was Rs102.1 million for the financial year ending 30 June 2025 and Rs9.3 million for the financial year ending 30 June 2026. I wish to emphasise, however, that these amounts disbursed in a given financial year do not necessarily relate to projects approved during that same particular year, as qualifying expenditure and corresponding rebate payments may be spread over one or more financial years.

As regards part (b) of the question, in view of fiscal constraints and the need to ensure value for money, it is envisaged to introduce a cap on the refundable amount. The prescribed guidelines governing the Film Rebate Scheme will accordingly be amended.

This measure is intended to enable a greater number of projects to benefit from the Scheme, while ensuring tangible economic benefits and further enhancing the international visibility and attractiveness of Mauritius as a filming destination.

Madam Speaker, I wish to remind the House about the extent of which the Film Rebate Scheme was abused under the previous Government. Who does not remember Alan Govinden, a close friend of Pravind Jugnauth who had acted as a frontman or lender for him and who paid Rs20 million to Bel Air Sugar Estate for the Angus Road property.

Now, the same person, at that time, was filming "Pioneers of Paradise" for which the EDB had paid him Rs66 million after deduction of Rs21.6 million as taxes.

Today, it is the EDB board which approves the movies that should be granted any rebate based on a rule-based system. Today, is the board but previously, it was the board, it was only the CEO of the EDB who could solely approve such rebates in all opacity.

Mr Beechook: Yes, thank you, hon. Prime Minister. I understand the question of accountability. But doesn't the introduction of a capping jeopardise this industry which attracts foreign direct investment?

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr Beechook: Because this industry heavily depends on fiscal rebates that is being provided around the world to attract production houses.

Madam Speaker: What exactly is the question?

Mr Beechook: My question was: does the hon. Prime Minister not consider that this capping is going to jeopardise the future of this industry because it relies heavily on rebate around the world?

Madam Speaker: Okay.

The Prime Minister: You know, it is the experience of the past, Madam Speaker. There were lots of abuse in the past by the previous regime. I gave him one example; I do not want to give other examples. Maradiva is another example. These people were actually lodged in Maradiva and who paid the bill? Go and check! So, because of the abuse, we are looking at it. But we will keep an open eye, open mind.

Madam Speaker: Okay, time is up. Time is up. Now, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/1237, B/1239, B/1240, B/1241, B/1242, B/1243, B/1250, B/1251, B/1252, B/1253.

Thank you. Now we go to questions to hon. Ministers.

Yes, hon. Henriette-Manan!

LABOUR DISPUTE HEARINGS – INDUSTRIAL COURT IN RODRIGUES – JURISDICTIONAL ISSUE

(No. B/1257) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the discussions held with the Office of the Attorney-General and his Ministry in relation to the jurisdictional issue concerning the hearing of labour disputes before the Industrial Court in Rodrigues Island involving workers residing in Rodrigues and employers domiciled in Mauritius, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/270 at our sitting of the 07 of April 2026, whereby I informed the House that indeed there is considerable inconvenience for a labour dispute involving a worker residing in Rodrigues Island, where his employer is domiciled in Mauritius, because he has to come to Mauritius to resolve that dispute before the Industrial Court. I also informed the House that my Ministry is taking up the matter with the Attorney General's Office to find an appropriate solution thereto.

Madam Speaker, we have been advised by the Attorney General's Office that an amendment to the Industrial Court Act expressly providing for a derogation from the provisions of the Code de Procédure Civile will be required to enable the Industrial Court, Rodrigues Division, to hear cases involving workers from Rodrigues where the employer is domiciled in Mauritius.

I am also informed that my Ministry is pursuing the matter with the Attorney General's Office and further consultations are required to come up with the appropriate legal amendment and possibly consequential amendments.

Madam Speaker, the Industrial Court, Rodrigues Division, can only hear labour dispute cases where the employers are domiciled in Rodrigues. Labour dispute involving workers

from Rodrigues pending before the Redundancy Board and the Employment Relations Tribunal must be heard in Mauritius. Various scenarios are being considered by my Ministry to minimise the hardship faced by workers residing in Rodrigues where their employer is domiciled in Mauritius. It is a complex situation as the Redundancy Board, the Employment Relations Tribunal and the Industrial Court fall under different parent Ministries and the implication thereof have to be thoroughly examined.

Madam Speaker, pending the amendment to be brought to the relevant legislation, my Ministry is exploring the possibility of hearings to be held through video conferencing. We are working with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the various authorities in Mauritius to ascertain whether such measure is feasible and what will be the time frame to implement this measure and how much it will cost to do so.

Madam Speaker: Yes, all right. You have a question? Say so.

Ms Henriette-Manan: Thank you. Hon. Minister, given that Rodriguan workers are being penalised, I thank you for the suggestion of video conferencing. But I will also ask you if you can use your good office to accelerate the procedure with regards to the amendment being proposed by the Attorney General's Office also. Thank you very much.

Mr Uteem: Yes, Madam Speaker, I will look into the matter.

Madam Speaker: Okay, Hon. Beejan, please.

HIGH COMMISSIONER OF MAURITIUS IN WASHINGTON, D.C – OFFICIAL RESIDENCE – EXPENDITURE

(No. B/1258) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the official residence of the former High Commissioner of Mauritius in Washington, D.C., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether it is currently occupied and, if not, indicate the expenditure incurred by Government for the –

(a) maintenance thereof, and
(b) rates payable therefor.

Mr Ramful: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The official residence of the former Ambassador of Mauritius in Washington is situated at Potomac, Maryland. The property,

acquired in 1995 for the sum of Rs1.43 million, comprises *inter alia* 11 bedrooms with attached bathrooms, a functional hall, tennis court and swimming pool. The property has been unoccupied since October 2021, as according to the former Ambassador, the building required certain renovation works.

The former Ambassador then moved to a rented accommodation and the rent paid was as follows –

(i) October 2021 to March 2022 – USD15,300 per month.
(ii) April 2022 to March 2024 – USD 12,000 per month.
(iii) April 2024 to November 2024 – USD 12,400 per month.

So, the total amount spent on rental for the period October 2021 to November 2024, therefore, amounts to USD 467,000, which is approximately Rs21,500,000.

I have to also point out, Madam Speaker, that since October 2021, no renovation works have been conducted in relation to that building.

So, in addition, we also had to incur expenses related to insurance of the property, the unoccupied building, which amounted to some USD 16,979, which is approximately Rs800,000 per year.

I also wish to inform the House that this issue has been raised in the Director of Audit reports for the past few years.

Following my visit to the US in September 2025, I took cognizance of the issue and recommended that the property be sold. Hence, approval of Government was obtained in January 2026 to proceed with the sale of the property for the following reasons –

(i) the property, given its size and condition, is not fit for use as the official residence of the Ambassador;
(ii) maintenance of the building will not be cost-effective in the long run, and
(iii) local authorities have identified several violations to their country code and hence may lead to imposition of fines.

Our Mission in Washington was instructed to initiate the sale procedures in strict compliance with applicable local legislation. In this respect, our Mission, in January 2026, envisaged the services of a real estate through a competitive bidding exercise. Subsequently, an inspection and appraisal exercise was conducted, following which Mission signed all necessary documents with the real estate agent on 27 February 2026.

Our Mission was informed, on 16 March 2026, that the market value of the property, given its conditions, stands at USD 2,050,000. Approval was conveyed to Mission in Washington, on 07 April 2026, to officially list the property on the market at the price of USD 2,050,000. As at 26 May 2026, seven bids were obtained.

Madam Speaker, the sale of the property was therefore concluded on 19 August 2026 for an amount of USD 2.1 million to the highest unconditional offer. After deduction of real estate fees and relevant taxes, net proceeds amounted to USD 2,014,793.80. This amount has been transferred directly from the settlement company to the Accountant General's account in Mauritius. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. A. Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister if he will state whether the value that has been obtained for that property has been substantially lowered because of the state of the building that has been left to degrade by his Ministry over time? And in view of that, has the Minister now reviewed his own…

Madam Speaker: You have two questions in one!

Mr A. Duval: No, this is one question, Madam Speaker. Whether he has reviewed the management of properties owned and held abroad by his Ministry, under his responsibility…

Madam Speaker: No, I do not agree that it is the same question! There are two questions. One is a main question. Your first part, let him reply!

Mr A. Duval: In fact, I was giving the information, but let me rephrase it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I know. You are making a statement!

Mr A. Duval: The question is this, Madam Speaker: Whether he agrees that the value of the property that he has fetched the price…

Madam Speaker: Ne répétez pas!

Mr A. Duval: …has been substantially…

Madam Speaker: Minister…

Mr A. Duval: …lower than what it ought to have been? In fact, it is only for the land that you have recuperated the money because the building has been left to rot. Whether in view of that, he has now reviewed management of properties held abroad under his responsibility because we have seen, Madam Speaker, in other countries…

Madam Speaker: I will not allow a double-barrelled question! It is a double-barrelled question!

Mr A. Duval: Let me put it plainly then! Has the hon. Minister now reviewed the policy of his Ministry for the management…

Madam Speaker: That's it! That's better!

Mr A. Duval: …because it is costing taxpayers' money here, in Washington. We have seen it in Addis Ababa and other.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Minister.

Mr Ramful: Madam Speaker, I was hoping that the hon. Member would have congratulated me as I took immediate action when I was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. This matter has been mentioned in several reports, every year, since 2021. And the previous government did nothing to the expense of public money.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker…

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down!

Minister, could you please, just answer that question? Are you going to review? If I understand well, reviewing the general policy for all *nos biens à l'étranger*.

Mr Ramful: Okay. Well, it is not a matter of reviewing our policy. Every responsible Minister, every Head of the Civil Service must take the responsibility and have an overall management of government buildings. This should have been done by the previous Head of Mission, and not only the one at Washington, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That is what I was saying.

Mr Ramful: There is one in Pretoria as well. Government owns a property in Pretoria and because of the state of that building, which has been left without maintenance by the previous government, we have to rent out another property. I have given instructions for our

Mission to either start to maintain or to find a prospective purchaser for the building. So, it is a matter of the responsibility of the previous Minister or the Head of Mission.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I?

Madam Speaker: No! Next question!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker…

Madam Speaker: No!

Next question, hon. Juman!

PORT LOUIS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL – WORKS DEPARTMENT – LABOUR & EQUIPMENT COST

(No. B/1259) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Works Department of the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House and for the period 1 April to 30 June 2026, obtain information as to the –

(a) approximate cost of labour and equipment attached thereto, and
(b) total cost of raw and other materials used.

Madam Speaker: Time is running!

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that its Works Department has an Establishment of 271 employees, including 250 manual grade workers who are deployed across the eight wards according to operational requirements, priorities, and needs. The department undertakes a wide range of works, including road patching, drain works, maintenance of municipal buildings, markets, pavements, and other public infrastructure, as well as minor and urgent interventions arising from complaints from inhabitants and for the welfare of the citizens.

Madam Speaker, as regard to part (a) of the question, the monthly salary cost of the 271 employees amounts to approximately Rs6.3 million, representing a total labour cost of Rs18.8 million for the period of 01 April to 30 June 2026. For the execution of these works, the department made use of the Council's existing fleets of vehicles, plants, and equipment comprising of –

- 1 van;
- 4 lorries;
- 1 dumper;
- 1 Bobcat;
- 2 trailers;
- 2 backhoe loaders,
- 2 water tankers,
- 1 forklift, and
- 1 crane lorries.

Madam Speaker, as regard to part (b) of the question, the total expenditure on raw and other materials during the same period amounted to Rs1.1 million. This figure should, however, be viewed in its proper context. A substantial part of the department's activities is labour intensive and requires little or no expenditure on materials, including cleaning and unblocking of drains, removal and reinstatement of drain slab, minor repairs, maintenance of market and municipal buildings, cleaning, landscaping, and levelling works across the eight wards.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, April to June is a closing quarter of the financial year, by which time, major programme works had already been completed and much of the relevant budgetary provision utilised. Nevertheless, Rs800,000 was reallocated to the department to enable further works to be undertaken when it was required. The workforce was also mobilised for urgent public health intervention, including cleaning works during the outbreak of leptospirosis, as well as the cleaning of drain, bare lands and canals during outbreak of dengue and Chikungunya. These interventions demonstrate the importance of maintenance and available in-house workforce capable of responding promptly when required.

The Council undertakes works in-house whenever practicable, making use of its own workforce, skill, and equipment. This enables the Council to maintain essential services, response promptly to routine and urgent needs, and at the same time, achieve better value for money than when outsourcing similar works to private contractors.

Madam Speaker, the expenditure on salaries and materials must, therefore, be considered in the context of the full range of works and services actually delivered across the eight wards. This includes routine maintenance, minor works, response to complaints and

urgent public health intervention, many of which are labour intensive and require little or no expenditure on materials.

Consequently, expenditure on materials alone cannot be taken as a measure of volume of work performed or the utilisation of the workforce.

I am tabling the programme of works undertaken by the Council during the period 01 April to 30 June 2026, which provide details of the works carried out during the same period.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Next time, you table maybe half of the reply as well. Yes, hon. Juman, you are alright with that?

Hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 5 – DRAINS CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1260) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the drainage infrastructure in Constituency No. 5, Pamplemousses and Triolet, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the number of new drains earmarked for construction during the current financial year, indicating the locations thereof and the implementation timeframe therefor, and

(b) whether the proposed works are expected to adequately address the flooding problems in the high-risk areas thereof.

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the National Development Unit of my Ministry has recently completed three physical drainage projects in constituency No. 5, namely at –

- Jouvence, d'Épinay,
- Kalimaye Lane, and
- Rue du Jardin at Arsenal with a combined revised contract value of approximately Rs110.09 million.

Two investigative assignments at Khoyratty and Bois Rouge respectively have also been completed.

Moreover, the Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd., under the aegis of my Ministry, has completed the Kestrel Lane Phase 1 Project during the previous financial year although some components were omitted due to land acquisition and wayleave issues.

In addition, during the previous financial year, the Road Development Authority of my Ministry issued a works order for the refurbishment of the existing footpath along the A4 Road between Solitude Lake and Triolet Fire Station at several localised sections covering an approximate total length of 2.3 kilometres. The works estimated at Rs7.75 million are ongoing and are expected to be completed by mid-September 2026.

Madam Speaker, for this financial year, other investigative assignments at Khoyratty and Baie du Tombeau are ongoing and are expected to be completed by the end of this month.

Moreover, the RDA has identified three projects relating to the rehabilitation of existing roadside drainage infrastructure and associated footpath in Constituency No. 5, namely –

(i) refurbishment of the footpath along Japonais Road over a length of approximately 500 metres;

(ii) refurbishment of the footpath at d'Épinay over a length of approximately 350 metres, and

(iii) refurbishment of existing footpath at localised sections in Pointe aux Piments, Arsenal and d'Épinay.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the Land Drainage Authority has identified several flood mitigation projects for Constituency No. 5. These projects are currently listed in Part D of the Public Sector Investment Programme 2026-2027 to 2030-2031 under the category projects under preparation. These projects constitute a comprehensive flood mitigation programme for the constituency. The projects are at different stages, ranging from preliminary identification and technical studies to detailed design, land acquisition, appointment of consultants, securing of wayleaves and rights of entry and preparation of bidding documents.

Madam Speaker, some of the projects under preparation, namely at Avenue Belle Source, Bois Rouge and Canton Nancy have reached an advanced stage, that is, the detailed design and land acquisition stage.

Madam Speaker, although no specific funding for construction has been made during Financial Year 2026-2027, the focus during the current year is on making the projects ready for implementation in the subsequent financial years.

Proceeding to construction before completing the necessary designs, land acquisition, wayleaves, rights of entry, statutory clearances, financial clearance and procurement processes could lead to delayed or disrupted works, extension of time, incomplete project components and substantial cost overrun.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling the consolidated list of drain projects for Constituency No. 5.

As regards part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed that the areas have been identified as flood risk. The proposed projects are intended to address the drainage deficiencies and the flood risk affecting the respective localities.

Once the projects are implemented wholly, they are expected to improve the collection, conveyance, temporary storage and safe discharge of storm water and alleviate flooding to a significant extent in the targeted areas. Madam Speaker, it must, however, be recognised that drainage infrastructure mitigates and manages flood risk. It cannot provide an absolute guarantee against flooding during rainfall events of exceptional intensity.

Its effectiveness will also depend on the completion of all project components, the availability of adequate downstream outlets and regular cleaning and maintenance of existing drains. The RDA and local authority carry out the cleaning and maintenance of drains on a routine and periodic basis, which also comprises the cleaning and clearing of localised sections of drains and gullies as well as the replacement of damaged drain cover slabs.

Madam Speaker, in the same vein, I have convened a meeting on 24 September 2026 with all local authorities to take stock of the actual progress and remedy difficulties encountered.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Rookny: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister agree in terms of timeline for implementation of projects that one of the main problems for the delays caused is delay caused by contractors? In the affirmative, what measures will his Ministry take to remedy same?

Mr Gunness: No, we have various issues, not only contractors. At times, you get delays because of land acquisition. We do not get right of entry. At times, when you go to do the test, you can see that the land itself is not appropriate. But once we give contract, we monitor the contractor. But during the contractual period, they get some problems, probably to displace services that are underneath, which could not be found before giving the contract. So, it has to be sorted out to displace. I take the example in Rivière du Rempart; to displace the water services and telecom services, all these takes time.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East!

ROAD FATALITIES – PENALTY POINT SYSTEM – IMPACT

(No. B/1261) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to road fatalities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof recorded since 31 January 2026 to date and over the period 31 January 2025 to the corresponding date in 2025, indicating whether an assessment of the impact of the Penalty Point System thereon has been carried out and, if so, indicate whether the relevant statistics and findings thereof will be tabled.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, according to statistics provided by the Police for the island of Mauritius, excluding Rodrigues, 83 persons were killed in road crashes during the period from January 31 January 2026 to 30 August 2026, compared with 70 persons during the same period in 2025, which is indeed an increase.

Madam Speaker, as regards whether an assessment has been made on the impact of the penalty point system, which is in line with the penalty point system that have been adopted by other countries. Not only me, but even the local independent experts consider, and rightly so, that seven months down the road might be short for a meaningful and conclusive assessment.

Mr Alain Jeannot, the former Chairperson of the National Road Safety Council under the previous government, has, on his side, commented in the press during the weekend to say: « *Le permis à points seul ne pourra modifier les comportements*. »

Although one cannot know the real final cause of an accident until the court case has been completed and the verdict given, based on what has been reported so far, the 100th fatality, which sadly happened last Friday, has to do with driving without licence, while the four others fatal accidents which followed involved driving under the influence of alcohol in two cases, and the other two because of carelessness. Again, sadly so. Very sadly so!

These cases highlight a grim reality and a broader systemic failure in road discipline that demand our urgent attention. Internationally, experts have coined the fatal five behaviours as follows –

(i) The first one among the five is indeed speeding. Because driving too fast reduces reaction time, while at the same time increasing the force of a crash. This is the most common offence recorded by the police since the implementation of the penalty point system. However, we had not recommended the increase in penalty points at the presentation of the second quarterly report at the end of July, because we have noticed there was a decrease in the overall percentage as compared to the first quarter but we are monitoring the situation.

(ii) The distractions caused by the use of cell phones, texting or looking away from road cause many severe collisions and here not only motorists are concerned but also the pedestrian. The House will recall that four months ago at the end of the first quarter, the range of penalty points was reviewed upward for the use of handheld microphone or telephone handset while driving or riding, which has resulted in a decrease in such cases as at the end of the second quarter. This is concrete evidence-based outcome on how higher penalties in the penalty point system have had an impact on the behaviour of motorists.

(iii) It cannot be denied to what extent driving is impaired by alcohol, drug and other intoxicating substance and to some extent even few medications as they slow down the brain and reflexes. We are bringing major amendments to the Road Traffic Act this afternoon to toughen penalties in such circumstances.

(iv) The fourth fatal behaviour relates to a simple negligence of not wearing the seat belt.

(v) The fifth and last fatal behaviour concerns the lack of safety gear, not wearing helmets of the right standards and not using child restraints for example.

Madam Speaker, there are also other contributing factors, namely poor infrastructure, bad roads layout, lack of proper lighting and poor maintenance resulting in potholes make

roads dangerous and that is why I always appeal to my colleagues, the hon. Gunness and hon. Woochit, for the RDA and the NDU and the local authorities, respectively, to keep our roads in good condition as per their respective jurisdiction under the Roads Act.

The golden hour, the sooner the emergency medical service rescue team of the Ministry of Health arrives at the scene of the accident, the higher the chance of survival of the accidentee. Vulnerable road users, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists face higher risk due to heavy traffic and we have here in Mauritius a high percentage of two-wheelers and our roads and this constitute the highest percentage of fatalities.

Enforcement – in matters of road safety, Madam Speaker, the fear factor is of paramount importance. Without it, without diligent enforcement, no matter how ambitious a piece of legislation may be, it just will not bring the desired outcome and the and attain the objectives.

I have met and discussed with the Commissioner of Police in order to have a foolproof system and the use of body worn cameras will go a long way to enhance transparency and veracity of information going forward in the system.

Madam Speaker, the Road Traffic Act of 1962 is a very old and technical piece of legislation and through the major overhauling being brought to it this afternoon, it ushers new hopes for innocent road users. Madam Speaker, as an ending note, I am tabling a copy of statistics on contraventions issued by the Police Department for offences under the penalty point system during the month of February to July 2026 as requested by the hon. Member. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes.

Mr Juman: Merci, Madame *Speaker*. Merci, l'honorable ministre pour sa réponse. Je voudrais savoir et d'après les statistiques que vous avez…

Madam Speaker: Speak up, please!

Mr Juman: Oui. Je voudrais savoir, Madame la présidente, si l'honorable ministre est satisfait de la campagne de sensibilisation qui a été fait auprès des utilisateurs de véhicules à Maurice et usagers de route ?

Madam Speaker: On peut lui demander, mais cet après-midi, on aura largement le temps de l'écouter. Allez-y. Ne vous répétez pas trop.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is talking about sensitisation. When I took office in end of 2024, we had a traumatic experience of a contract of around Rs12 million that was awarded by the previous Government but which, you know, when I sat down for the end of December campaign, nothing was done. Nothing! I do not know what my predecessor has done. I had to write the storyline and give it to the person and he was paid Rs12 million for doing almost nothing. We had to do it for him. So, we have come up with a new way of doing communication for much less than this and in the days to come, you will see our presence in the media.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Maybe we will have time for that last question. Hon. Dr. R. Daureeawo! We just have five minutes. Let her do her question.

RIVIÈRE DU POSTE – PONT ROUGE FOOTBRIDGE – REPAIR & REHABILITATION

(No. B/1262) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the proposed repair and rehabilitation of the Pont Rouge Footbridge in Rivière du Poste, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the –

(a) reasons for the delay, if any, that occurred in the implementation thereof, and

(b) expected completion date thereof.

Madam Speaker: Not too long, Minister.

Mr Gunness: No, no, no.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Ministry of Local Government that the Pont Rouge footbridge in Rivière du Poste has been closed to the public since 2016 for safety reasons, following recommendations made by the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee. It was observed that the footbridge was in a severely dilapidated state and required urgent intervention to restore safe pedestrian access.

Madam Speaker, the repairs and rehabilitation of the footbridge have so far not been undertaken due to unavailability of funds. However, given the importance of this footbridge to the daily lives and safety of the residents, I am further informed that the Ministry of Local

Government, as a matter of priority, has instructed the District Council of Savanne to initiate action to enlist the services of a consultant.

Madam Speaker, the consultant will, among others, carry out a detailed survey, assess the structural condition of the footbridge and make appropriate recommendations, as well as preparing the scope of works and submit the cost estimate for the project. Madam Speaker, the project will be implemented during the next financial year, subject to availability of funds.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Are you alright? I think we will not have time for another question. So, I will now suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 12.57 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.33 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

The hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

TRAFFIC CENTRES & BUS TERMINALS – ACCIDENTS RECORDED – SAFETY & SECURITY MEASURES

(No. B/1263) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the traffic centres and bus terminals, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reported number of accidents thereat over the past two years, indicating the –

(a) number of fatalities recorded thereat, and
(b) measures being envisaged to enhance the safety and security of pedestrians and bus users thereat, including the provision of proper road markings, handrails, traffic signs and lighting.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to, first, inform the House that the management and maintenance of traffic centres and bus terminals falls under the responsibility of the local authority where those facilities are located.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the TMRSU of my Ministry that since January 2024 to date, 19 accidents, including two fatal ones, have occurred at 10 traffic

centres and bus terminals. Regrettably, one of the two fatal accidents occurred only yesterday, at Flacq. Very sorry to note this. I am tabling the relevant details.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the provision of safety infrastructure, including handrails, properly designed footways, road markings, traffic signs and lighting system, to facilitate the safe and convenient movement of commuters within traffic centres is catered for, at the very outset, at the planning and design stage of these facilities constructed by the TMRSU. However, once these facilities have been put in operation, the responsibility for the maintenance of these infrastructures rests on the respective local authority. Thank you.

I would like to table some additional information, as requested by the hon. Member.

Mr Caserne: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Considering the risk associated with the response that the Minister just gave to the Assembly, may I ask the Minister, whether he will consider to effect a risk assessment with regard to those terminals, the risk associated, so that we can have some counsel or whatever? Corrective measures must be envisaged in light of what he will answer.

Mr Osman Mahomed: We can certainly do that. But, about the accident which occurred in Flacq yesterday, the TMRSU will effect a visit tomorrow and as a matter of priority, will undertake the necessary road marking, if ever there is a need for it. But like I mentioned, once these facilities have been put in operation, the responsibility for maintenance of these infrastructures rests on the respective local authority, which also has civil engineers, but we will help to the extent possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, the hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River! He arrives just in time!

METHADONE SUBSTITUTION THERAPY PROGRAMME – REGISTERED PERSONS – INCURRED EXPENDITURE

(No. B/1264) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme, he will state the –

(a) number of persons registered thereunder gender-wise and by age group, geographical location and duration of treatment;

(b) quantity of methadone distributed and expenditure incurred therefor and in relation thereto over each of the past five financial years and average annual cost per person treated, and

(c) percentage of persons treated who are, to date, employed, self-employed, undertaking vocational training, unemployed, or following rehabilitation programmes.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme was introduced in Mauritius, in 2006, to curb the spread of HIV which was acute among people who inject drugs, with over 92% of new annual HIV cases. Since its inception, the programme has served as a cornerstone of national harm reduction, demonstrating significant public health outcomes.

With regard to part (a) of the question, as at 10 July 2026, around 8,118 beneficiaries were on the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme, assessing their daily doses at 70 dispensing points throughout the country, including five sites within prison settings. These include 7,675 males and 443 females. Their age group as classified are as follows –

- Between 18 to 24 years old – 2.8%;
- Between 25 to 34 years old – 33.5%;
- Between 35 to 49 years old – 44.9%;
- Between 50 and 64 years old – 16.5%;
- Above 65 years old – 2.3%.

Beneficiaries usually receive their daily doses of Methadone in dispensing sites nearest to their place of residence. The 70 dispensing sites are found across the island, with –

- 15 sites under Dr. Jeetoo Hospital;
- 8 sites under Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre, Beau Bassin;
- 12 sites under SSR Hospital;
- 8 sites under Flacq Hospital;
- 10 sites under Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital;
- 3 sites under Mahebourg Hospital;
- 9 sites under Victoria Hospital;
- 1 site is under Dr. Yves Cantin Community Hospital;
- 4 sites in prison settings.

Regarding the duration of the treatment, this depends on a case-to-case basis and each treatment plan is tailor-made to meet the specific needs of each patient. A number of patients may relapse and leave the programme for a certain period and rejoin the programme at a later stage. A number of patients can be under treatment for an indefinite period of time.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am tabling the quantity of Methadone procured and expenditure incurred over the past five financial years.

The House may wish to note that in 2025, the monthly expenditure incurred per patient under Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme was approximately Rs1,363, as detailed hereunder –

- cost of Methadone flasks - Rs369;
- cost of logistics - Rs412;
- cost of human resources - Rs582.

Therefore, the average annual cost per person is approximately Rs16,356.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that my Ministry has no statistics, as no study has been carried out on the percentage of persons treated, who are employed, self-employed, undertaking vocational training or unemployed.

However, regarding the rehabilitation programme, I am informed by NADC that it is –

(a) it is collaborating with NGOs and the Rehabilitation Centre at Petit Verger Prison to strengthen rehabilitation services for inmates on Methadone treatment;
(b) partnerships with the private sector are being pursued to facilitate their employability and successful reintegration into society, and
(c) Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme will be aligned with the National Drug Control Master Plan 2026-2030, under the Prime Minister's Office, specifically with the National Programme for Rehabilitation and Reintegration developed by NADC.

Last but not the least, the House may wish to note that my Ministry runs three residential rehabilitation centres, namely Frangipane Centre, Centre Orchidée, and Nénuphar Centre. The first two are situated in the compound of Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre and are dedicated to male adults and female patients, including minors, respectively. The third centre is situated in the compound of Long Mountain Hospital and is dedicated for male minors.

The rehabilitation process includes a significant psychosocial aspect carried out by psychologists and healthcare professionals in collaboration with various non-governmental organisations.

A range of therapies are offered as part of the rehabilitation programme including family therapy, group therapy, art therapy, emotion management, sports, cognitive behavioural therapy, music, basic life skills. A new residential rehabilitation centre in compound of Bruno Cheong Medical Centre will open its door in the forthcoming weeks.

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

BAZIR BRIDGE, SAINTE CROIX – FOOTHPATH OBSTRUCTION

(No. B/1265) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the Bazir Bridge at Sainte-Croix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from the Road Development Authority, information as to the urgent measures being envisaged to clear the obstruction on the pedestrian footpath thereat to ensure the safety of pedestrians and prevent them from having to use the carriageway.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Road Development Authority is responsible for the care and maintenance of main roads and motorways, including maintenance, upgrading and construction of footpath. The Bazir Bridge is located along the Port Louis Central Flacq Road A2 at Le Hochet Terre Rouge near junction with Allée Père Laval.

The hon. Member is referring to an obstruction on the pedestrian footpath at this location. I wish to state that there is a very short and limited pedestrian footpath on which there have been some encroachment.

I am requesting the RDA to carry out the necessary cleaning of the footpath. The RDA recognises that the absence of a dedicated pedestrian facility may constitute a safety hazard for pedestrians. Therefore, to address this issue, the RDA is planning to construct a footbridge on the left-hand side of the Bazir Bridge in the direction of Port Louis together with the footpath at the end of the bridge. This will enable pedestrians to be safely channelled

away from the carriageway and will thereby improve safety for both pedestrians and other road users.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is, however, no road reserve available to accommodate the proposed footpath. Consequently, two plots of land of a total extent of 42.58 metres square need to be acquired from two adjoining private plots. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are 19 land owners, and letters of offer for the acquisition of the two plots of land have been issued to the land owners on 19 October 2023.

As at date, positive replies have been received from some owners while queries raised by other owners and the valuation department are being addressed with a view to finalising the acquisition process. Subject to availability of funds, the RDA will proceed with the works once the land acquisition is completed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues! Hon. Second Member for Rodrigues. You feel sleepy where you are! More comfortable!

INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION – MAURITIUS' REGIONAL COOPERATION

(No. B/1266) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Indian Ocean Rim Association, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the position of Mauritius in respect of regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region across the Priority Areas and Cross-Cutting Issues thereof;
(b) the reasons for the importance attached to the role thereof;
(c) the Action Plan thereof for the next five years, and
(d) whether a corresponding national plan has been formulated in relation thereto and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Ramful: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius attaches significant importance to the Indian Ocean Rim Association as a key platform for regional cooperation. Mauritius is actively involved in the implementation of the IORA cooperation agenda which spans across six priority areas of cooperation –

(i) maritime safety and security disaster risk management;

(ii) trade and investment facilitation;

(iii) fisheries management;

(iv) academic science and technology cooperation;

(v) tourism, and

(vi) cultural exchanges.

Also, two cross-cutting issues –

- blue economy, and
- women's economic empowerment.

Mauritius is also a founding member of the IORA and hosts its secretariat in Ebène. Mauritius is expected to assume chairmanship of the IORA from 2027 to 2029 subject to approval by the IORA Council of Ministers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, with the Indian Ocean's growing geostrategic importance, IORA constitutes a vital platform for Mauritius to work alongside countries sharing common interest and to address challenges that cannot be effectively tackled alone. Our dependence on the Indian Ocean for trade connectivity, tourism, fisheries and other economic activities makes the IORA particularly relevant to Mauritius.

IORA also provides Mauritius with a platform to advance its interest as a Small Island Developing State, particularly on maritime security, fisheries, tourism, the blue economy, climate resilience and scientific cooperation.

As regards part (c) of the question, the IORA Action Plan 2022-2027 guides cooperation among member states across the six priority areas and the two cross-cutting issues. It seeks to strengthen implementation of regional projects, capacity building, partnerships and practical cooperation while supporting sustainable development of the Island Ocean region.

The next Action Plan 2028-2032 is being drafted by the IORA Secretariat in consultation with member states.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (d) of the question, there is no separate stand-alone national plan specifically dedicated to the implementation of the IORA Action Plan.

Instead, Mauritius implements its IORA commitments through the relevant policies, programmes and work plans of the concerned ministries and public institutions.

My Ministry will ensure that Mauritius continues to play an active role in the IORA and will also ensure that Rodrigues also benefits from these areas of cooperation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

GRAND PORT DISTRICT COUNCIL – WELFARE ACTIVITIES – TRANSPORT FACILTIES

(No. B/1267) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the senior citizens of the District of Grand Port, he will, for the benefit of the House obtain from the said District Council, information as to whether consideration will be given for the acquisition of a 60-seater bus for the conveyance thereof for welfare activities and pending same, for arrangements to be made with the Ministry of Land Transport for temporarily putting at the disposal thereof of a suitable bus therefor.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that no provision has been made in its budget estimate for financial year 2026-2027 for the acquisition of a 60-seater bus. The council has, however, been receiving an increasing number of requests for the conveyance of senior citizens for welfare and recreational activities.

In the absence of its own bus, the council presently has recourse to the hiring of buses from private service providers which entail recurrent expenditure. With a view to addressing this situation, the Vice Chairperson of the District Council of Grand Port, on 15 July 2026, made a request to the Ministry of Land Transport for the donation of an electric bus to the council. I am informed that the request has been turned down.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the acquisition of a bus, I am further informed that the matter will be placed before the next meeting of the district council for consideration. Subject to the approval of the council, provision for the acquisition of a suitable bus will be considered in its budget estimate for financial year 2027-2028. In the meantime, the council will continue to make the necessary transport arrangement as appropriate to facilitate the participation of senior citizens in their welfare activities.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Seeburn: I thank the hon. Minister for his positive reply. Being given that the senior citizens of the Grand Port District has been deprived of such facilities for such a long time…

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Seeburn: Can the hon. Minister give priority for this request in the shortest possible delay?

Mr Woochit: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have already replied that no provision has been made for this financial year, but we have recourse for the next financial year.

The Deputy Speaker: I have been informed that PQs B/1256 and B/1268 have been withdrawn.

PORT LOUIS, CITADEL FORT– TOURIST VISITS & INFORMATION

(No. B/1268) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Citadel Fort, in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of –

(a) tourists having visited same since 01 January 2026 to date, indicating the number of tourist guides attached thereto, and
(b) information boards providing historical information installed thereat.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, hon. Ramdass!

WATER SHORTAGE – REDRESS PROJECTS

(No. B/1269) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the recurrent water shortages and water supply cuts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the estimated implementation costs of the projects earmarked to address same, indicating in each case, the expected timeframe for the implementation thereof.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, comme je l'ai indiqué à plusieurs reprises, l'approvisionnement en eau est généralement intermittent à Maurice en raison de l'insuffisance des ressources en eau, des contraintes techniques liées au réseau de distribution et de la demande croissante. La CWA a mis en œuvre plusieurs mesures pour remédier à cette situation.

L'an dernier, le gouvernement a approuvé un plan Marshall pour la mobilisation de l'eau actuellement en cours de mise en œuvre. Ce plan repose sur six piliers et porte principalement sur les *boreholes, des* eaux en surface, le CPF et des eaux de fuite. Les eaux après avoir été utilisées par le CEB pour produire l'électricité et aussi les eaux traitées par la *Waste Water Management Authority* et le dessalement. Le gouvernement a alloué environ R 228 millions dans le budget 2026-2027 à ces projets.

Par ailleurs, d'importants projets d'infrastructure hydraulique sont en cours de réalisation tels que la construction du barrage de Rivière des Anguilles. Les offres reçues sont actuellement évaluées au CPB. L'agrandissement du réservoir de la Nicolière dans le Nord et la modernisation du barrage de La Ferme à Bambous. Dans le souci d'efficacité hydrique afin de réduire les pertes d'eau non facturées, la CWA mène des projets de remplacement de tuyaux et de compteurs défectueux. Le fond alloué dans le budget actuel s'élève à R 1.2 milliards.

M. le président, le plan directeur de gestion intégrée durable de l'eau, actuellement en cours d'élaboration par l'AFD détaillera les différents projets envisagés pour améliorer l'approvisionnement en eau et sa finalisation est prévue pour le 1er trimestre de 2027.

M. le président, concernant la circonscription de l'honorable membre, la circonscription numéro 11 principalement, la CWA informe que ces localités sont desservies par les zones d'approvisionnement sud et est. La durée actuelle de la distribution d'eau varie par jour dépendant de la pression et les interruptions de la circonscription numéro 11 sont principalement dues aux vieux tuyaux que nous avons actuellement, et défectueux, et à la disponibilité de ressources en eau, les pressions ou fluctuations de pression comme je l'ai dit un peu plus tôt. J'ai également appris que les projets réalisés pour la circonscription numéro 11 comprennent d'abord la modernisation des tuyaux principal vers le réservoir de Quatre Sœurs et la mise en service d'un nouveau forage à Clavet.

Ensuite, il y a un forage à Nouvelle France que nous nous travaillons dessus, nous sommes en train de *drill* ce forage à Nouvelle France avec un *yield* potentiel de 1400 m³ par jour. Outre le remplacement des environ 10 km de vieux tuyaux en amiante entre Deux Frères et Quatre Sœurs, ce qui est prévu dans le cadre du programme de remplacement par la ligne indienne. Pour les années à venir, la CWA prévoit d'entreprendre des projets supplémentaires pour 2027. De renouvellement des canalisations pour la circonscription à savoir, rénovation de la conduite principale reliant le réservoir de 16eme Mile au réservoir de Nouvelle France, y compris une nouvelle connexion. Dans le secteur de Solesse, une région de Solesse, rénovation d'environ 1.2 km de conduit principal entre le poste de police de Nouvelle France et le rond-point.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, I do not want to stop you but this question does not make reference to Constituency No. 11. I do not know why you are concentrating on No.11.

Mr Assirvaden: J'ai voulu simplement éclaircir l'honorable membre.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no mention of Constituency No. 11. It is a general question. So, if you have finished, you stop here.

Mr Assirvaden: J'ai terminé, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Ramdass: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister making a reference to desalination. Can he enlighten the House as to whether this is part of Government strategy to address, to curb this recurrent water shortages throughout the island and in particular in Constituency No.11?

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la question n'était pas sur la circonscription numéro 11. Mais, je dirais que le dessalement que nous voulons faire concerne d'abord le nord et pour pour le sud, là où votre circonscription, l'honorable membre, c'est principalement la Rivière des Anguilles Dam qui est concernée. Dans les deux trois ans à venir, si nous arrivons à construire ce dam, ça va soulager la région où vous êtes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. The hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – NEW SPORTS BILL – REGIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

(**No. B/1270) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a new Sports Bill, he will state whether provision will be made therein for the –

(a) setting up of a Rodrigues Regional Olympic Committee as a semi-autonomous body under the Mauritius Olympic Committee;
(b) direct executive representation for the Rodriguan sports authorities and administrative autonomy therefor, and
(c) a dedicated allocation of Olympic Solidarity development funding thereto.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. During the course of the preparation of the new legislation on sports, I visited Rodrigues on two occasions to discuss with the sports community on the island concerning a specific provision in respect of Rodrigues that could be included in the legislation. One of the proposals made by the sports community was the setting up of a Rodrigues Regional Olympic Committee.

I am also informed by the Mauritius Olympic Committee that following a meeting with the *Mouvement Sportif Rodriguais* on 30 August 2026, a proposal for the setting up of a Rodrigues Regional Olympic Committee has been submitted by the MSR to the MOC. I am further informed by the MOC that the proposal is still under consideration and the MOC will inform my Ministry of any development on this matter in due course.

It is important to note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Mauritius Olympic Committee is an autonomous body under the aegis of the International Olympic Committee. I must emphasise that under the Olympic Charter, it is the Mauritius Olympic Committee that has exclusive jurisdiction over Olympic matters in our country. This autonomy must be respected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to assure the House that adequate provision will be made in the new legislation in respect of the promotion and development of sports in Rodrigues within the context of its autonomy. However, since any proposed legislation has to follow a strict administrative process before being introduced into the National Assembly, it will not be appropriate for me at this stage to elaborate or disclose any of its provisions.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr François: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has took full cognizance of the principal objectives of the A*ssociation Mouvement Sportif Rodriguais* (MSR) for the establishment of the Cross, and whether he himself will state if he is agreeable with the objectives as submitted by the MSR and with due respect to the autonomy of the MOC.

Mr Nagalingum: I am agreeable to this proposal made by the Rodriguans. I met with them. I know that the Mauritius Olympic Committee met with the Rodriguan delegation, I think last week but like I said, it is not the Ministry who is responsible for that, it is the committee of Olympic which is responsible.

MAURITIUS – POVERTY & EXTREME POVERTY – MEASURES & PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED

(No. B/1271) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the families living in pockets of poverty and extreme poverty, respectively, in Mauritius, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof region-wise, and

(b) state the measures and programmes being implemented to improve the living conditions and economic prospects thereof and provide social, psychological, educational and economic support thereto.

(Withdrawn)

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

DISTRICT OF BLACK RIVER – IRREGULAR WATER SUPPLY – HOUSEHOLD AFFECTED

(No. B/1272) Mr B. Babajee (The First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the District of Black River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of households currently affected by irregular water supply, indicating the frequency and duration thereof, further indicating –

(a) the contingency arrangements in place therefor, including the number and location of available emergency water-storage tanks, and

(b) whether drilling of additional boreholes and recourse to the utilisation of surface-water sources and private water resources will be envisaged.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la CWA m'informe que le district de Rivière Noire est alimenté en eau par six réservoirs principaux : Bon Asile, Beau Songes, Palmyre, Eau Bonne, Bois Puant et l'Embrasure, qui desservent collectivement environ 13 500 foyers. Ces réservoirs reçoivent principalement des forages situés dans la région.

L'approvisionnement en eau est intermittent à Rivière Noire, tout comme le village de du Morne, qui bénéficie normalement d'une alimentation intermittente. Cependant, en raison de la sécheresse actuelle et de la diminution des ressources en eau disponibles dans la région, la CWA a réduit la distribution d'eau dans le district de Rivière Noire à une fois par jour pendant environ 6 heures, généralement entre 15h et 21h. L'approvisionnement est géré à un volume et une pression plus élevée pendant la période disponible.

M. le président, la CWA informe aussi qu'en cas de perturbation du calendrier ci-dessus, elle a mis en place des dispositions d'urgence pour déployer des camions citernes afin d'optimiser la mobilisation des ressources en eau dans cette région de Rivière Noire, de la Gaulette, de Tamarin, et la CWA installera prochainement un CPF au réservoir de Bois Puant. Ce filtre aura une capacité de traitement de 2500 m³. Donc, on a passé une commande pour 15 CPF.

Les CPF qu'on met dans les rivières pour pomper de l'eau. Nous avons passé une commande pour 15 CPF. Le gouvernement nous a alloué plus de R 300 millions. Ce filtre, donc, comme je disais, aura une capacité de 2500 m³ qui pourra alimenter la région de Case Noyale, la région de la Gaulette et la région du Morne. La livraison des 15 CPF était attendue pour le 27 août, le mois dernier. Mais malheureusement, la livraison a été repoussée.

Donc, nous allons recevoir à partir de septembre, 5 CPF en lot, ce qui a chamboulé les plans de la CWA et qui a accumulé des retards pour ce projet-là. Concernant la partie (b) de la question, la CWA a indiqué qu'elle n'a pour le moment aucun projet précis de forage supplémentaire dans le district de Rivière Noire.

La CWA et la Commission des ressources en eau, évaluent actuellement les ressources en eau disponibles afin d'améliorer l'approvisionnement dans cette région. Il est clair qu'à l'avenir, il faudra revoir l'utilisation de l'eau douce et des eaux usées dans cette région.

Il est clair qu'à l'avenir, il faudra revoir l'utilisation de l'eau douce et des eaux usées dans cette région, des effluents traités tertiairement pour envoyer à Saint Martin – Saint Martin qui rejette à la mer 55 000 m³ par jour – à des fins potables et non potables, afin d'améliorer l'efficacité de la gestion en eau dans cette région, notamment dans des zones connues pour être confrontées à un stress hydrique.

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

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – INVALID'S BASIC PENSION – MEDICAL GUIDELINES REVIEW

(No. B/1273) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the ongoing review of the medical guidelines for the allocation of the Invalid's Basic Pension, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and the Attorney General's Office, he will state whether the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been consulted in connection therewith, having regard to the difficulties encountered by applicants from Rodrigues Island in respect of their applications and appeals and, if not, why not.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that under the prevailing system, a medical assessment is carried out by medical practitioners of my Ministry to determine the eligibility of Invalid's Basic Pension or Disability Allowance or Carer's Allowance. The medical guidelines, which were last updated in 2016, serve as a tool for assessment of claims.

As part of the reform of the disability pension, my Ministry has reviewed the medical guidelines, in consultation with the medical practitioners and specialists serving the Medical Board and Medical Appeal Tribunal. The amended medical guidelines have already been approved by the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Due to lack of funds in the last budget, its application, together with the introduction of a new Inclusive Living Allowance could not start this year. Instead, a technical committee will be set up for implementation of same.

In the meantime, the amended medical guidelines have been sent to the Attorney General for views and comments. As soon as same will be received, a meeting will be convened with the Ministry of Finance and the Attorney General for further implementation.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry will consult the Rodrigues Regional Assembly before implementing the new medical guidelines and policy change in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that applications for the Invalid's Basic Pension are being processed at the Social Security Division in Rodrigues through the Ministry's computerised system. Moreover, whenever the exercise of medical boarding has been done, the awarding of cases as well as payment are processed and effected promptly. However, I have also been informed that there are difficulties encountered with regard to the medical assessment process, where the medical boards are not always adequately handled and scheduled in a timely manner. This issue will be looked into.

With regard to the Medical Appeal Tribunal, I wish to inform the House that there was a backlog in the normal processing of the appeal cases. As soon as I was apprised of the situation in this Assembly, my Ministry took immediate actions and 99 appeal cases were examined in June 2026. Medical Appeal Tribunal sessions are henceforth to be scheduled in Rodrigues thrice a year or as soon as 30 cases are received, irrespective of the normal scheduling. All the above is being done in collaboration with the Commission for Social Security in Rodrigues. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

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

AFRISIDS BLUE ECONOMY PROJECT – RODRIGUES' FINANCIAL ALLOCATION BREAKDOWN

(No. B/1274) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the grant agreement of USD 639,000 signed under the UNDP-implemented AfriSids Blue Economy Project, he will state the financial allocation and share earmarked specifically for Rodrigues Island thereunder, giving a breakdown of the budget allocated for local equipment, infrastructure, and administrative support within the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to the PQs B/1274 and B/1275 together, as they are interrelated.

The African SIDS Project is being led by the United Nations Development Programme, with the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa. The project is being implemented in six African SIDS countries, namely Mauritius, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles.

The grant agreement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, signed between the Ministry of Agro-Industry and the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa for the grant of USD 639,000, specifically for the implementation of certain activities in the Republic of Mauritius, under the African SIDS Project…

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, sorry to stop you. You said you are replying to B/1274 and?

Dr. Boolell: B/1274 and B/1277.

The Deputy Speaker: B/1277?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, because they are both interrelated questions.

The Deputy Speaker: You did not say B/1277.

Dr. Boolell: The grant agreement, signed between my Ministry and the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa for the grant of USD 639,000, is specifically for the implementation of certain activities in the Republic of Mauritius, under the African SIDS Programme, that is, supporting sustainable, inclusive blue economy transformation in African SIDS. As such, all planned activities will be implemented in both Mauritius and Rodrigues, although no financial allocation has been specifically earmarked for Rodrigues. The activities will be carried out in Rodrigues under the grant funding and it will comprise –

(i) training of fishers in Rodrigues and officers of the Marine Academy and Research Centre of the Commission for Agriculture on seamanship, navigation and safety at sea, long-line fishing technique and the use of appropriate gears on fish aggregating devices;

(ii) training of fishers and fishmongers, including women and female officers of the Marine Academy and Research Centre on post-harvest cold chain management

and post-harvest value addition technique such as gutting, filleting and vacuum packaging. Essential knowledge and skills required for the management of their own enterprises will also be dispensed;

(iii) training of trainers on capacity building technique to enhance the skill of relevant officers in Rodrigues, and

(iv) upgrading of the RodMoFAD (Rodrigues and Mauritius Fish Aggregating Devices) mobile application, with safety option similar to an automatic identification system beacon, which would broadcast distress signals and GPS coordinates. The upgrading will also allow data capture on biomass and estimated catch around fish aggregating devices;

(v) equipment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, such as long-line gears, tuna hooks, ice boxes to preserve fish catch, life jackets, waterproof bags, solar-powered GPS, post-harvest equipment and fish display units will be procured in bulk under the grant granted up to the sum of USD 639,000. These equipment will be allocated to Rodrigues for distribution to their fisher community.

I wish to reassure the House that Rodrigues will be fully on board on this project. Discussions have already been initiated with the Commission for Agriculture regarding the implementation of the activities and officers of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly also virtually participated in the inception workshop held on 17 August 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Mr Edouard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister how many fishers and cooperative societies are expected to benefit from this?

Dr. Boolell: As of now, I cannot give a reliable reply, but you can rest assured that there are ongoing discussions with our friends from Rodrigues.

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

QUEEN VICTORIA COMMUNITY CENTRE – INFRASTRUCTURAL CONDITIONS – RENOVATION

(No. B/1275) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Queen Victoria Community Centre, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain

information as to the current infrastructural conditions thereof, indicating whether the urgent renovation thereof will be envisaged.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund that the Queen Victoria Community Centre, presently, does not require any major structural repairs. However, upgrading works are required to the volleyball pitch, tarmac and fencing, at an estimated cost of approximately Rs800,000.

I am informed by the Sugar Industry Welfare Fund that due consideration may be given to undertaking these upgrading works subject to availability of funds.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Beechook: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that several reports have been prepared by the regional offices, highlighting the danger of the existing structures in the compound of the community centre, have been sent to the office of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund? Until now, no measures have been undertaken. I wish to inform the hon. Deputy Prime Minister that it is really dangerous for people to go and have community activities over there.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that no such information has come to me yet. I will have to make an inquiry thereon.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Beechook: May I request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to please schedule a site visit, which will also be an opportunity for our constituency to welcome you in the wonderful village of Queen Victoria, so that we may chart a way forward to solve the issues in that particular remote locality, whereby these people rely heavily on community activities for their daily life?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Of course, I will with pleasure.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or.

FISH CATCH – FOREIGN INVESTMENT

(No. B/1276) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in

regard to the stated objective of increasing the annual fish catch from 5,000 to 15,000 tons within the next three years, he will state the measures taken to date to attract foreign investments in the fishing industry for the attainment thereof, indicating the outcome thereof as at to date.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. The reply being lengthy, I will circulate it. *(Reply placed in the Library of the National Assembly*)

AFRICAN SIDS PROJECT – RODRIGUES PILOT PROJECTS

(No. B/1277) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the proposed Grant Agreement with the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa under the African Small Island Developing States Project, he will state whether consideration will be given for Rodrigues Island to be a potential site for any of the national demonstration or pilot projects earmarked thereunder and, if so, indicate whether discussions have been initiated with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in relation thereto, giving details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/1274)

CASE NOYALE – TAXI LICENCE APPLICATION – NUMBER APPROVED/REJECTED

(No. B/1278) Ms V. Leu-Govind (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the invitation for the submission of applications for the issue of taxi licences for the village of Case-Noyale in 2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the number thereof received, indicating the –

(a) number thereof –

(i) approved, and

(ii) rejected and subsequently approved following review/appeal, and

(b) criteria for the issue thereof, including regarding the requirement for a certificate of character.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that according to records at the NLTA, an invitation for submission of applications for taxi licences was issued on 10 July 2018 for Case Noyale. The deadline for submission of applications was 20 July 2018.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that two applications had been received at the closing date. These applications were considered by the then NTA's board – it was not NLTA then – on 05 September 2019. The first application was rejected on the ground that the applicant was the holder of a C-carrier vehicle to operate a goods vehicle, while the second application was rejected on the ground that the application had obtained marks below the prescribed passing level and was therefore not qualified.

The second application subsequently lodged an appeal against the decision of the NTA board on 12 November 2019. The appeal was lodged after the coming into operation of the National Land Transport Authority Act 2019 on 16 September 2019. According to provisions laid down at the at Section 19 of the NLTA Act 2019, all appeals lodged after the coming into operation of that Act had have to be determined by an appeal committee established for that very purpose.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the records available at the level of my Ministry, however, indicate that the appeal was determined by the then Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail in breach of the provisions of the NLTA Act. The appeal was allowed by the then Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail on 13 January 2020 and a licence was subsequently issued to the applicant by the NLTA to operate a taxi from Case Noyale on 15 January 2020.

By virtue of section 22 AC of the NLTA Act 2019, only appeals filed with my Ministry prior to the commencement of that Act could be determined by the then minister, even if the Act had already come into operation. No appeal filed after 16 September 2019 could, therefore, be considered by him. It would appear that the appeal was allowed by the by the Minister at a time when he had no jurisdiction to determine that appeal and he acted beyond the powers conferred upon him in law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, the invitation expressly required applicants to be –

(a) Residents of the locality in respect of which they were applying and produced documentary evidence to that effect;

(b) Holder of a valid driving licence for taxi;

(c) Have a clean criminal record for the preceding three years;

(d) The full-time driver if the application was successful;

(e) Provide a full-time service to the inhabitants of the locality if the application was approved, and

(f) not have previously been the holder of a taxi licence which had lapsed, been revoked or transferred to a third party.

The production of a certificate of character by an applicant was not a requirement when the application was invited in July 2018. However, I am given to understand that in the normal course of processing of the application, the NTA sought a comprehensive police report on both applicants. The police report on the second applicant who had been granted a licence on appeal by the then Minister of Transport and Light Rail reveals that the person concerned had, on 08 September 2020, been convicted for the offence of drug dealing, that is, offering cannabis for sale, and was fined Rs90,000 plus Rs500 rupees as cost. That was in 2010.

Adjusted for time value of money, this Rs90,000 would, today, represent a much higher value down the line 16 years later. So, depicting the gravity of the offence committed. Thank you.

Ms Leu-Govind: In light of this case, can the hon. Minister state whether the NLTA has granted taxi licence to other applicants whose certificate of character disclosed conviction for minor offences? If not, explain the circumstances and criteria under which the license in the present case was granted.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will have to find out this information from the NLTA.

Ms Leu-Govind: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Ms Leu-Govind: Can the hon. Minister state whether the Ministry or NLTA has reported the alleged irregularity to the police? If not, whether he intends to request that the matter be referred to the police for investigation?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to confess that this matter was not of knowledge at the Ministry nor the NLTA because we have no establishment. It came to light when the hon. Member asked the question. So, what I propose to do is to ask the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry to seek legal advice, firstly, and accordingly take the necessary action that deem to be taken in such cases.

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

Mr Beejan: B/1279.

The Deputy Speaker: You have to follow your question.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 – POTHOLES & STREET LIGHTING REPAIRS

(No. B/1279) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to Constituency No. 6, Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of requests received since January 2025 to date from Village Councillors and members of the public for the –

(a) repairs of potholes on local roads, and

(b) provision of additional street lighting thereat, indicating, in each case, the number thereof acceded to, giving a breakdown thereon a village-by-village basis.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that since January 2025 to date, a total of 52 requests for repairs of potholes on local roads have been received in the eight villages falling within Constituency No. 6, of which, 16 have already been attended to.

With regard to additional street lighting, a total of 260 requests has been received over the same period, of which, 182 have been attended to, leaving 78 outstanding.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the delay in pothole repairs during financial year 2025-2026 was mainly due to due to the limited financial resources, shortage in the supply of bitumen

and hot premix asphalt, and constraints in manpower. The council presently has only one road works team covering 19 villages in Constituencies No. 6 and No. 7. Works have, therefore, been prioritised according to road condition, agency, and public safety.

Since the beginning of this financial year 2026-2027, the council has improved its road maintenance programme with 795 stock pile already laid and approximately eight tons of hot premix asphalt has already been used for patching works across the two constituencies.

Most importantly, all 36 outstanding pothole requests for the Constituency No. 6 have been programmed for September 2026. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards to street lighting, the council presently has approximately 100 lanterns in stock, which are sufficient to cater for the 78 outstanding requests. These have also been scheduled for September 2026 subject only to adverse weather or other circumstances beyond the council's control.

In addition, Rs5 million has been earmarked for this financial year for the procurement of approximately 500 solar lanterns subject to the procurement exercise.

A further Rs3 million has been provided for the following two financial years bringing the overall provision to Rs8 million for additional lighting, replacement of faulty lanterns and extension of the street lighting network.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the detailed village by village breakdown of the requests received, attended to and outstanding in respect of both pothole repairs and additional street lightings.

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL AWARD – 60TH & 70TH ANNIVERSARY – CELEBRATIONS & COST

(No. B/1280) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the 60th anniversary of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in Mauritius, he will state whether –

(a) funds have been earmarked for the holding of activities to mark same and, if so, list the activities envisaged and, if not, why not, and

(b) officials of his Ministry will be attending the 70th anniversary celebrations of the Award scheduled for November 2026 at the Windsor Castle in the United Kingdom and, if so, indicate the estimated cost thereof.

(Withdrawn)

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

(Interruptions)

No, your question is supposed to be replied by the hon. Prime Minister – PQ B/1281.

So, we go to PQ B/1282.

ADOPTION BILL – INTRODUCTION

(No. B/1282) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of the Adoption Bill in the Assembly, she will state where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the proposed Child Adoption Bill has been under consideration for more than 10 years. Upon assuming office in November 2024, I took cognizance of this long-awaited proposal and decided that the legislative process should be expedited. On 17 January 2025, Government approval was obtained for my Ministry to issue drafting instructions to the Attorney General's Office in respect of the Child Adoption Bill. Since then, several meetings have been held with the representatives of the Prime Minister's Office and the Attorney General's Office and senior officers of my Ministry in relation thereto.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that a final draft of the Child Adoption Bill has just been submitted to my Ministry. The draft Bill will be submitted to Cabinet very shortly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE – CONDUCT OF NURSES – COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1283) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the National Cancer Centre, he will state the –

(a) protocol governing the frequency and conduct of nurses' rounds in the wards for patients' monitoring, indicating the number of complaints received regarding the standard of care provided thereto and the nature thereof and actions taken in relation thereto, and

(b) measures being envisaged to further improve the quality of care, including palliative care, and the overall wellbeing of the patients.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the established protocol at National Cancer Centre provides for regular ward rounds to be conducted by the Charge Nurse as part of the multi-disciplinary approach to patient care. During such rounds, the Charge Nurse is responsible for monitoring the conditions of patients and ensuring the proper coordination and continuity of nursing care. The Charge Nurse is required to accompany the medical team during medical rounds, duly record the instructions and advice provided by the attending medical practitioners and ensure that the prescribed care plan is appropriately communicated and implemented. This process is aimed at ensuring proper documentation, patient safety and continuity of care.

I am further informed that my Ministry has received 65 complaints relating to the National Cancer Centre from January 2026 to date. Of these, 57 have already been resolved and eight are being followed up. The complaints relate to nursing care and communication, medical services, waiting time and access to services, patient records, diagnostic services, laboratory and pharmacy services, as well as other administrative and operational matters.

Each complaint was duly recorded and referred to the relevant officers for investigation and appropriate follow-up action. Where necessary, the staff concerned were counselled and reminded of the importance of maintaining effective, respectful and empathetic communication with patients and their relatives, as well as ensuring the timely and appropriate delivery of services. While the complaints covered a range of issues from communication concerning treatment and patient management to broader concerns regarding the quality and standard of care provided, these matters cannot be viewed in isolation from the prevailing workforce challenges. Staffing shortages, workload pressures and the resulting strain on available personnel may have a direct bearing on service responsiveness, patient communication and the overall quality of care.

Addressing these concerns, therefore, requires not only appropriate follow-up at the individual level, but also continued efforts to strengthen workforce capacity and ensure that staff are adequately supported to deliver safe, timely and patient-centred care. To palliate the shortage of nursing officers, my Ministry has, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Kauvery Hospital, negotiated the recruitment of 60 specialised nurses

comprising 30 nurses with a minimum of three years experience and 30 nurses with a minimum of ten years experience.

The specialised nurses will be recruited in critical areas, namely –

- critical care ICU;
- cardiac care;
- oncology nursing;
- dialysis;
- nephrology;
- operational theatre, and
- emergency and trauma care.

Establishment clearance was obtained on 03 August 2026 to enable the Ministry to proceed with the recruitment exercise while financial clearance was sought on 30 June 2026 and is awaited. The recruitment of these specialised nurses forms part of the measures being undertaken by the Ministry to strengthen the nursing workforce and improve the quality and continuity of patient care.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Health and Wellness recognises the importance of ensuring that patients at NCC receive not only appropriate clinical treatment but also comprehensive palliative, psychosocial and supportive care with due regard to their dignity and overall well-being. Accordingly, measures are being pursued and considered to further improve the quality of care at the centre, including accelerated and targeted recruitment of qualified nursing officers and a review of relevant service arrangements with a view to attracting and retaining an adequate nursing workforce and mitigating the impact of staff attrition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, work is also being undertaken to improve working conditions and staff retention and to address concerns raised by health care professionals and their representatives, recognising that a stable, adequately staffed and supported workforce is fundamental to the delivery of quality patient care and to reducing absenteeism. At the same time, the Ministry continued to emphasise the importance of upholding appropriate clinical nursing standards, notwithstanding the existing staffing challenges. The participation of nursing officers in multi-disciplinary ward rounds together with the proper recording,

communication and implementation of medical instructions and care plans remains an important component of patient safety and continuity of care.

With regard to palliative care, the Ministry is committed to further enhancing services for patients with life-limiting advanced illnesses so as to ensure that the physical, emotional, psychosocial and spiritual needs are appropriately addressed. This includes appropriate management of pain and other symptoms together with the strengthening of specialised training and the allocation of all of necessary resources for the provision of quality palliative care.

Beyond staffing and clinical care, my Ministry is also addressing wider systemic issues that may have an impact on the patient experience, including ensuring the consistent availability of essential medicines and improving communication with patients and their families with a view to reducing unavoidable hospital visits and ensuring that patients are adequately informed regarding their treatment and follow-up.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness recognises the gravity of the challenges being faced at the National Cancer Centre and remains committed to taking all necessary and appropriate measures to address these issues and ensure that patients receive safe, compassionate and high-quality cancer care while safeguarding their dignity, comfort and overall well-being.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Would the hon. Minister state how compliance with these protocols and procedures is actually monitored at the NCC? How compliance is monitored?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are trying to do our utmost best and whatever is humanly possible is being done, but I am conscious of the difficulties and hardships that are faced by those patients who are in the hospital. I can only request you to be a bit patient. We are going to do the needful. Let us say within a month or two, additional staff will be put and then proper care will be given to them.

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

AMBULANCES – OPERATIONALITY – REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE & RENEWAL

(No. B/1284) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the ambulances, he will state the number thereof at the disposal of his Ministry, indicating the –

(a) number thereof –

(i) fully operational;

(ii) temporarily out of service for repairs/maintenance, and

(iii) permanently decommissioned or awaiting replacement, and

(b) measures being envisaged for the adequate maintenance and renewal thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that my Ministry currently has a fleet of 65 ambulances at its disposal. With regard to part (a) of the question, 40 ambulances are presently fully operational and are deployed across the public health service to cater for patient transport and other operational requirements. 25 ambulances are currently undergoing repairs or maintenance. Of these, 20 are expected to be returned to service upon completion of necessary repairs and maintenance work and the remaining five ambulances, which are included among the 25 vehicles presently out of service, have been assessed as being beyond economic repair, mainly on account of their age, conditions and in certain cases, damage sustained in accidents. These vehicles are no longer considered roadworthy and are being envisaged for replacement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry is conscious of the importance of maintaining a reliable and adequately equipped ambulance fleet to ensure continuity and responsiveness of patient's transport services. Accordingly, provision has been made for acquisition of five new ambulances under the current budget, as part of the Ministry's ongoing fleet renewal programme. The procurement process for acquisition of these vehicles has already been initiated. The acquisition of these five ambulances will enable the Ministry to progressively replace vehicles that have reached the end of their economically useful life while strengthening the operational capacity of the ambulance fleet. At the same time, the Ministry will continue to ensure that the existing fleet is subjected to necessary maintenance, servicing and repairs with a view to maximising vehicle availability, reducing downtime and ensuring the ambulances remain safe and roadworthy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the objective of my Ministry is, therefore, twofold –

(i) to maintain optimised availability of existing ambulance fleet;

(ii) to pursue its progressive renewal through acquisition of new ambulances so as to ensure an adequate, reliable and sustainable ambulance service across the public health system.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Ramdass: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to whether his Ministry has a proper preventive maintenance programme for its ambulances based on the age, the mileage and the usage of the vehicles, as opposed to having them repaired as and when they break down?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have got a set of rules and conditions which we have maintained. Unfortunately, in the past, it was done in a very haphazard way. Now, we have got an efficient system and as a result of which, I have just mentioned, 25 ambulances are undergoing repairs. In this way, I can assure the hon. Member that all ambulances which are there, plus five which we are going to put up – I hope – will suffice for us.

The Deputy Speaker: Your question will be replied by the Prime Minister.

The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, RODRIGUES – SERVICES & STATUS UPGRADE

(No. B/1286) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Crève-Coeur, in Rodrigues Island, he will state whether consideration will be given, in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, for the upgrading of the services and status thereof to that of a Regional Hospital, having regard to the demographic changes in Rodrigues Island, the increasing demand for complex health care services and the forthcoming Plaine-Corail Airport Development Project.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commission for Health and Others that it has enlisted the elaboration and technical assistance of expert consultants from the World Health Organization in finalising a feasibility study for the construction of a modern hospital at Camp Pintade. The final report is expected by August 2026, following

which, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will engage in discussions with all authorities concerned for financing and implementation of the project.

I wish to reassure the hon. Member that my Ministry will continue to work closely with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to ensure that health care services in Rodrigues evolve in line with the island's changing needs. In this regard, due consideration will be given to the demographic evolution of Rodrigues; the increasing demand for specialised and complex health care services; the expected developments arising from the planned airport development project as well as the findings and recommendations of feasibility study in determining the future development of health care infrastructure and services in Rodrigues.

I wish to inform the House that presently general medical treatment, including community medicine, is dispensed at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Rodrigues. I am further informed that these services are currently supported by 23 generalist practitioners, of whom, 13 are under the Establishment of Rodrigues Regional Assembly and 10 are officers of my Ministry serving on a tour of service on a roster basis. Unlike the system in Mauritius, where hospital care and domiciliary care are delivered by different cadre of medical officers under separate Ministries, generalist practitioners in Rodrigues provide both hospital-based and domiciliary health care services, thereby ensuring continuity of care for the population. Specialised facilities pertaining to AIDS, internal medicine and psychiatry are also dispensed at Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

To further complement specialist care in Rodrigues, my Ministry sends, on a monthly basis, specialist doctors in the fields of anaesthesia, paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology, orthopaedic surgery, radiology, general medicine and general surgery for patients requiring specialised care and attention all year round. My Ministry also provides regular specialist services in the field of cardiology, dermatology, ENT, neurosurgery, oncology, ophthalmology, oral surgery, plastic surgery, orthodontics, physical medicine, gastroenterology, and nephrology, at varying frequencies, and depending on the needs of the Commission for Health and Others.

In addition to the provision of specialist doctors to complement tertiary care in Rodrigues, several measures have also been implemented to strengthen health care delivery in Rodrigues. These include –

- the enhancement of diagnostic and clinical services;

- upgrading of medical equipment, and
- the continuous training of health care personnel.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for emergency cases requiring medical intervention not available in Rodrigues, patients are transferred to Mauritius by air, under the supervision of SAMU services. In 2025, 206 patients were referred from Rodrigues to Mauritius for medical treatment. For this year up to 31 July 2026, 119 patients have been referred from Rodrigues to Mauritius for this purpose. Government is fully aware of the demographic changes in Rodrigues, including the increasing proportion of elderly persons which is expected to almost triple by 2064. This will be compounded by the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases and the resulting demand for more specialised and complex health care services. In this context, my Ministry is considering consultations with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to conduct an assessment of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, through the Geriatric Medicine Unit, with a view to identifying measures that will further strengthen services for older persons, including appropriate infrastructure, equipment, staff training and multidisciplinary models of care.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the hon. Member that my Ministry will continue to take all necessary measures in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to ensure the continuous improvement and strengthening of health care services for the people of Rodrigues.

Mr François: Just for the sake of clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. From what I understand, in the meantime, you are not considering the upgrading of the QEH to, as I said, regional hospital. That is not the case?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to depend on the Commissioner for Health because they do have a programme. I am made to understand they are getting the support of the WHO at the same time. So, let us try to see what will be the outcome. It is only then that we are going to think of upgrading at least the existing hospital. We cannot do both at the same time because since last year, I remember, they have been repeatedly insisting that they must have a new hospital. So, we are just waiting for the outcome of the discussions that they are having with the WHO.

Mr François: In the same vein, may I ask the hon. Minister, pending the new hospital at Camp Pintade and the situation at QEH, whether emphasis is being made for continuous training and more training to the personnel thereat?

Mr Bachoo: As far as training is concerned, definitely, the answer is in the positive. That is why I have stated that we are trying to look for ways and means on how we can at least improve the services, particularly as far as the geriatric wards are concerned. So, I do hope that we can send some additional doctors as and when we are going to recruit because we have got a big problem of recruitment and of shortage of doctors, even in Mauritius here.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 11 – SPEED TABLES INSTALLATION – IMPLEMENTATION TIME FRAME

(No. B/1287) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the installation of speed tables in Constituency No. 11, Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, information as to the expected timeframe for the implementation thereof, and

(b) state whether consideration will be given for the prioritisation of areas identified as posing particular risks to the safety of vulnerable road users, including school children and the elderly.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the TMRSU that works orders for the implementation of raised speed tables at several locations across the island have already been issued and works are currently underway.

As regards Constituency No. 11, which is part of the substantive question, four raised speed tables have been implemented on a priority basis since last year at the following locations –

(i) Bananes Village near Social Welfare Centre;

(ii) Deux Bras Village along Deux Bras-Cent Gaulettes Road - 2 raised tables were implemented, and

(iii) Rivière des Créoles Village near Social Welfare Centre.

Additional locations within the constituency have been identified where the implementation of raised tables is being considered, and these include –

- La Rosa Village near Government School for the safety of school children;
- along Flacq-Mahebourg Road at Bois des Amourettes - the proposed raised table will be implemented near the Government School and football ground for the safety of children and other pedestrians.

The implementation of these proposed raised tables will be undertaken as soon as the necessary wayleaves from the relevant highway authority are obtained and subject to the availability of funds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as a matter of principle, the TMRSU usually gives priority to areas identified as posing particular safety risk to vulnerable road users, including school children, elderly persons and areas with high pedestrian activity. Interventions are determined on the basis of the specific characteristics and safety requirements of each location.

Where the implementation of a raised table is not technically feasible, the TMRSU considers alternative traffic calming measures. In this regard, consideration is currently being given to the use of rubber road humps along unclassified roads. Such rubber road humps, you must have already seen, have already been installed at various locations across the island and have proved to be an effective alternative to raised speed tables. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Seeburn: I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Can the hon. Minister also consider the roads which have been newly resurfaced along the villages of Rivière des Créoles, Vieux Grand Port, and Bambous Virieux? If those areas could be prioritised?

Mr Osman Mahomed: I shall certainly ask the Director of the TMRSU to touch base with you, hon. Member, on the way forward in these locations you have mentioned.

Dr. Prayag: I wish to thank the hon. Minister for the raised tables all over the island. However, I wish to request that in your capacity, if you could expedite matters so that the painting of these raised tables in red as quickly as possible? We have been receiving quite some complaints concerning the time for the painting.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I am aware there is a problem with one of the contractors because the contractor has quoted very low prices and he is having some financial difficulty

to cope with his own quoted prices. But we are looking into the matter on a case-to-case basis. He will have to deliver.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix.

SUGARCANE CROP SEASON – SEASONAL WORKERS – EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION

(No. B/1288) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the Sugar-cane Crop Season 2022 and ensuing ones to date, he will state the –

(a) yearly number of registered seasonal workers, indicating the number thereof –
  (i) employed by sugar estates, contractors and small planters, and
  (ii) having filed complaints regarding wages, working conditions, non-payment of benefits and employment termination and number of inspections effected and contraventions booked in connection therewith, and

(b) measures being envisaged to ensure employment protection and social security coverage thereto.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 113 (2) of the Workers' Rights Act provides *inter alia* that where an employer intends to employ seasonal workers, he shall, on or before 31 March of each year, inform the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority of the number of seasonal workers he will require for the following crop year.

The Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, in consultation with my Ministry and recognised trade union and the employer then determines the number of seasonal workers to be employed.

As regards part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority that for Crop Year 2022 to 2026, the number of seasonal workers employed by sugar cane growing companies, sugar milling companies and job contractors are as follows –

- Year 2022: 2,754;
- Year 2023: 3,184;
- Year 2024: 2,702;
- Year 2025: 2,454, and
- Year 2026: 2,739.

I am also informed that normally seasonal workers are not employed by small planters as they rather recruit workers and labourers at random.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that for the period 2022 to 26 August 2026, a total of 1,723 complaints were received at my Ministry from seasonal workers as follows –

- Year 2022: 282 complaints received;
- Year 2023: 271 complaints received;
- Year 2024: 312 complaints received;
- Year 2025: 366 complaints were received,
- January 2026 till August 2026: 492 complaints.

Most of the complaints are for non-payment of wages, non-payment of benefits and termination of employment. Of the 1,723 complaints, 1,700 have already been disposed of and 23 cases pertaining to non-payment of wages are being processed for court action. There has been no inspection made and no contravention was booked during that period.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the Workers Rights Act has the following provision for employment protection and social security coverage for seasonal workers. Section 13 of the Act caters for the specific situation where workers may be employed on fixed term agreements, including any work or activity which is of a temporary, seasonal and short-term nature or short-term work arrangement that are normally project related and aligned to changes in the product market.

As I have already mentioned, Section 113 (2) of the Act empowers the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority to determine the number of seasonal workers who can be recruited each year, thereby reducing the risk of abuse. In addition, the provisions of the Workers Rights Act which safeguard the employment rights and conditions of work for workers are equally applicable to seasonal workers.

These safeguards include equal remuneration for work of equal value, payment of remuneration to workers, joint liability on remuneration for job contractor and principal, refund of travelling expenses, protection against termination of employment, and joint liability of employer and job contractor to contribute to the portable retirement gratuity fund.

Furthermore, Section 86A of the Workers Rights Act deters employers from terminating the employment of workers after a short period of time and re-employing them on a new contract to deprive them of the status of continuous employment.

Thus, an employer may be required to refund the Workfare Programme Fund, the amount of transition unemployment benefit paid to a worker whose employment was terminated by him under certain circumstances and that same worker was re-employed by that employer. Failure to refund the said amount constitute a criminal offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000. Any prosecution under this section is to be initiated not by my Ministry, but by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally, the remuneration regulation governing the terms and condition of employees of the sugar industry, agricultural and non-agricultural, also provide the following protection for seasonal workers, namely regarding payment of end of year bonus, productivity bonus, disturbance allowance, field employees allowance, special leave on the occasion of his marriage, marriage of his children, death of a close relative, and provision of uniform and protective equipment.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Lobine.

Mr Lobine: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister, in view of the growing numbers of complaints being received by his Ministry, has he received representations from trade unions in this particular sector with the view to see to it that amendments to the law or to the regulations are brought to further protect those seasonal workers? It seems that the growing numbers of complaints is with regard to non-payment or termination of their contract of employment.

Mr Uteem: Actually, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did not give the breakdown, but most of the complaints is in relation to the termination of employment. There are very few in relation to non-payment of wages. As I said, there is only 23 cases now pending before the court. The reason for the complaint for termination of employment is because previously, employees, seasonal workers had to file a complaint for termination of their agreement to be admitted to the workfare programme.

But following advice that we have received from the State Law Office, following a dispute with one of the sugarcane industry employers, we have been advised that a seasonal worker which has a contract of fixed duration is not entitled to workfare programme.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Beechook.

Mr Beechook: Since the seasonal workers are not entitled to the workfare programme because of the nature of the job which is limited in time, can the hon. Minister and the hon. Minister of Agriculture come up with a mechanism which will ensure a continuity of revenue? Just like the case in Rodrigues, whereby there is the closure of the octopus seasons, fishermen do benefit from some sort of allowance which compensate the loss of revenue because there is no activity during a specific period of time.

Mr Uteem: I welcome this suggestion by the hon. Member and I will take up the matter with the hon. Minister of Agriculture but at the end of the day, it will be for the employer to agree to employ these people on other sectors. We are talking about the Cane Industry. If they cannot employ the seasonal worker for cane plantation in the intercrop season, I am sure that they can find something else to give to these employers.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have a question on this issue, hon. Lobine?

Mr Lobine: Yes. Thank you, hon. Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider amending the laws or the regulations to protect these seasonal workers? With regard to the legal advice obtained from SLO, whether he will consider bringing amendments to the law to protect those seasonal workers, which will be on the increase in the years to come?

Mr Uteem: It is not a matter of protecting them. It is a matter of whether a person who is employed for six months per year should receive money for the remaining six months while he is not working. Now, there is a committee at the level of my Ministry working on reviewing the whole Workfare Programme system because in the past there has been abuse and genuine cases are not receiving the Transition Unemployment Benefit. But I certainly take on board the suggestion of the hon. Member and I will convey that to that committee.

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

MEDICAL TREATMENT ABROAD – MEDICINES PROCUREMENT – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. B/1289) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to patients having recourse to medical treatment abroad, he will state the measures in place to enable them procure prescribed medicines not available in local pharmacies or registered for use in Mauritius, indicating –

(a) the timeframe for obtaining the necessary approval therefor, and

(b) whether Government provides any financial assistance towards the cost of importing same.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Overseas Treatment Unit has been established in 2001 and it aims at providing financial assistance to patients requiring treatment not available in our public hospitals. According to my Ministry's existing policy, financial assistance is granted to patients based on recommendation of a medical board whose mandate is to assess the condition of the patient and to submit a report highlighting as to whether treatment is available in Public Health Institutions or whether the same warrants *inter alia* treatment abroad as well as the urgency of treatment required.

Under the Overseas Treatment Scheme, financial assistance up to Rs1.3 million is provided for treatment of patients irrespective of age who cannot be treated locally except for child cancer and paediatric schemes in cases where patients require stretches, Rs1.5 million is provided as financial assistance. Over and above the Overseas Treatment Scheme, my Ministry also provide financial assistance –

- under the Child Cancer Scheme since March 2025, which was previously under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and
- under Paediatric Scheme.

Both schemes provide unlimited financial assistance to patients up to 25 years. The financial assistance caters for payment of hospital bills, which also include claims for medication that was administered to the patient during their treatment. The claims from those hospitals may also include medication that are not available locally and which our patients bring along when they come back to Mauritius. The Overseas Treatment Scheme involves the use of significant public funds and concerns some of our most vulnerable patients. It is therefore imperative that these schemes operate with the highest standards of transparency, accountability and clinical integrity.

In this regard, a major reform of the Overseas Treatment Department is being implemented with the introduction of a rigorous and independent audit framework. A comprehensive clinical audit of the Child Cancer Scheme has been conducted by a team of specialist doctors covering a large sample of records to identify *inter-alia* any weaknesses or irregularities that may have occurred.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, based on the findings of the audit, the team is working on the review of the Child Cancer Scheme with a clear standard operating procedure and strengthened protocols for patient follow-up as well as accountability amongst others. An audit of the other two schemes will also be carried out which will be reviewed accordingly with standard operating procedures.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that when patients are sent abroad for treatment, where a prescribed medicine is not available locally, patients are allowed to bring such medicines procured by their hospitals to Mauritius upon approval by the treating doctor. The cost of such medicines is included in the hospital bills and are met under the financial assistance granted by the Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the medicines are not registered with Pharmacy Board and not available in our local market, the following procedure which is in place at the Pharmacy Board to facilitate patients to bring their medications. The procedure is as follows –

1. submission of a medical certificate and a letter of justification from the treating doctor;

2. submission of a valid prescription from the treating doctor;

3. full details of patients or persons traveling with medications, ID number, passport number and flight details and details of medications, dosage, quantity, duration of treatment.

Once the above procedure has been followed, authorisation clearance is given by the Registrar's Office or Director Pharmaceutical Services Office within 24 hours. The Customs Office of the Mauritius Revenue Authority is apprised simultaneously to facilitate clearance of those medications.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry does not provide any financial assistance towards the cost of importing these medicines. However,

alternative medicines are being provided in our hospitals to those patients benefiting from financial assistance under the Overseas Treatment Scheme.

Concerning patients proceeding abroad for treatments at their own cost, I am informed that upon their return, they may seek financial assistance from National Solidarity Fund which operates under the purview of Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity for refund. The NSF provides one-off financial assistance of up to Rs50,000 for the purchase of expensive medicines which are not available in public hospitals only. The household income should not exceed Rs40,000 per month and this scheme is not limited to patients who have undergone treatment abroad.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay!

The hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

ROSE-BELLE – SHRI GAJANAND MANDIR – PUBLIC SEPTIC TANK

(No. B/1290) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the public septic tank located near the Shri Gajanand Mandir in Rose-Belle, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the current state thereof, indicating the last time same was inspected and the findings thereof, and

(b) whether –

(i) any work has been undertaken thereat, and

(ii) the complete replacement thereof is being envisaged and, if so, indicate the timeframe therefor.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the District Council of Grand Port that the septic tank is regularly monitored with site visits carried out on a fortnightly basis and emptying undertaken accordingly. The latest inspection was carried out on the 23 August 2026, during which it was observed that the grease traps were contributing to an overflow problem. Following a complaint from the Acharya of the Shri Gajanand Mandir, a further assessment was carried out by the head of the Public Infrastructure

Department who recommended that the existing septic tank be upgraded with an absorption system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to in order to provide a durable solution to the problem, the District Council will construct an absorption pit of approximately 8 metres by 2.5 metres deep together with the necessary associated works. The scope of works will include excavation and removal of debris, laying of geotextile, spoils and aggregate, emptying the existing septic tanks, repairs of the septic tanks and the repairs or replacement, as required, of the existing pipes and grease traps. The estimated cost of the upgrading works is around Rs300,000. The works are scheduled to start on 16 September 2026, immediately after the Ganesh Chaturthi festival and are expected to be completed within approximately six weeks.

As regard to the complete replacement of the septic tank, I am informed that on the basis of the technical assessment carried out, complete replacement is not presently considered necessary. The recommended course of action is to upgrade the existing installation with the proposed absorption system and to undertake the necessary repairs and replacement of the defective components. The Council will continue its fortnightly monitoring and emptying arrangements pending completion of the upgrading works so as to minimise the risk of further overflow and inconvenience in the area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposed intervention therefore addresses both the immediate operational problem and the longer-term functioning of the facility and the Council has already established the scope, cost and implementation time frame for the works. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, I do not think we will have time for another question. Time is over.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/1292, B/1293, B/1294, B/1295, B/1297, B/1298, B/1299, B/1300, B/1301, B/1305 and B/1309.

Hon. Prime Minister!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2026) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL
(NO. XV OF 2026)

Order for Second Reading read.

(4.00 p.m.)

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2026) be read a second time.

Let me begin, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by expressing my sincere gratitude to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister for the importance he has consistently attached to the issue of road safety and for his strong leadership in driving this legislative reform forward. The measures contained in this Bill reflect the Government's determination and my personal commitment to strengthen our response to dangerous behaviour on our roads, and above all, to better protect the lives and safety of our citizens.

At the heart of this legislation is a simple but important principle. The use of our roads carries responsibilities. Every driver, rider, pedestrian and passenger has a duty to act with care and consideration towards other road users, as I had extensively explained during the debates, in December last year, on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill that brought about the reintroduction of the Penalty Points System. Two important Bills targeting the same objective, in a span of merely nine months, can but only demonstrate our resolve to tackle the road safety pandemic hands-on.

I was listening to journalist Prem Sewpaul on radio, this morning, on the situation of road safety, and he expressed his hopes for future governments down the line – I mean a long way down the line – not to come and erase all that we have been doing in terms of amendments to the law because in the past it has happened. I have said it before, that driving is a strictly regulated privilege and not an absolute right. It is the primary duty of any government to read through the data collected on road accidents and to come up with the legal provisions to cope with the evolving realities and challenges of road use, deter abusing behaviours and ensure that vehicles remain a simple commuting means rather than an active hazard for all other road users.

The rising threat of alcohol, drugs, synthetic drugs and other illicit substances behind the steering wheel cannot be ignored. Between 01 January to 30 August 2026, the Police recorded 2,205 cases of drivers exceeding the permissible alcohol limit and 617 cases involving persons driving under the influence of drugs during routine control checks. I wonder how many more such offenders are on the roads without being detected. When dangerous behaviour on our roads places lives and safety at risk, our laws must provide the authorities with effective and proportionate enforcement tools. This need is underscored by the persistent number of road fatalities recorded despite the implementation of the Penalty Points System on 30 January 2026, which system is in line with the Penalty Points Systems that have been adopted by other countries, as I had explained in my Parliamentary Question B/1261 earlier this afternoon.

The Bill before the House today introduces a series of important measures to give effect to Government's decision to provide for the seizure of motor vehicles and disqualification of a driver from driving in cases of driving under the influence of alcohol, drug and and intoxicating substance, and to provide for the offence of road rage which was never defined in our laws until now.

The Bill also caters for cases of fatal accidents while driving without a driving licence, a provisional driving licence or an international driving permit. It also provides for stricter penalties for causing death by dangerous driving or by careless driving when under the influence of alcohol, drug or an intoxicating substance as well as road racing.

Other matters relating to traffic management and road safety have been dealt with, including prohibition of the use of hand-held mobile phones and other interactive communication devices while driving or cycling or use of digital driving licence and online

payment of fines for traffic offences under the Fixed Penalty Notices, excluding those carrying penalty points, while also addressing the problem of excessive noise emission from exhaust pipes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to take the House through the principal provisions of the Bill. Clause 3 of the Bill provides for the introduction of the digital driving licence. The digital driving licence will be an electronic version of the driving licence and will provide motorists with a convenient and secure means, providing that they hold a valid driving licence through the KOREK! Super App that my colleague, the Minister of ICT, has set up.

A person driving a motorcycle on a road will thus be able, when requested by the police officer, to produce either his digital driving licence, and in case he is not able to do so, only his original driving licence will be accepted, as per Clause 4 of the Bill, as this clause repeals the possibility of producing a photocopy of an up-to-date original driving licence that has all along been accepted on our roads. This amendment is timely as it addresses the growing number of motorists suspected of driving with forged photocopies of a driving licence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one cannot know the final cause of an accident until the court case has been completed and the verdict given. Based on what has been reported so far, the hundredth fatality, which sadly happened last Friday, has to do with driving without licence, while the other four fatal accidents which followed in the last few days, involved driving under the influence of alcohol, in two cases, and the other two have to do with carelessness and carefree attitude on the roads. Again, very sadly so. These cases highlight a grim reality and a broader systemic failure in road discipline that demand our urgent attention. Not only me, but even local independent experts here think, and rightly so, that seven months down the road might be too short for a meaningful and conclusive assessment of the Penalty Points System. And one of them, Mr Alain Jeannot, like I said this morning, the former Chairman of the National Road Safety Council under the previous government, has gone further to add, in a newspaper interview of last weekend, that *le permis à points seul ne pourra modifier les comportements*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at international level, experts have coined the fatal five behaviours as follows –

(a) The first among the five is indeed speeding, as it kills because driving too fast reduces reaction time while at the same time increasing the force of the crash.

(b) Secondly, the destruction caused by the use of cell phones, texting or looking away from the road causes many severe collisions. Here, not only the motorists are concerned, but also the pedestrians, and for which I am seriously envisaging to come up with regulations against pedestrians using mobile phone while crossing the road, as the case is in Italy, and some of the countries are following suit as well.

The House will recall, four months ago, the range of penalty points was reviewed upward for the use of hand-held mobile phone or telephone headset while driving or riding, which has resulted in a decrease in such cases. This is concrete evidence-based outcome on how higher penalties in the Penalty Points System have an impact on the behaviour of motorists.

In the same vein, provisions are being made in the Bill to address the third fatal behaviour. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it cannot be denied to what extent driving is impaired by alcohol, drug or intoxicating substance, and to some extent, even a few medications, as they slow down the brain and reflexes. We are toughening the law this afternoon to introduce the seizure of motor vehicles and the possible disqualification of drivers where they are driving under the influence of alcohol, drug or an intoxicating substance. To some extent, even a few medications as they slow down the brain and reflexes.

We are toughening the law this afternoon to introduce the seizure of motor vehicles and the possible disqualification of drivers where they are driving under the influence of alcohol, drug or an intoxicating substance. The fourth fatal behaviour relates to a simple negligence of not wearing the seatbelt. I remember clearly when Mr Jean Todt asked the hon. Prime Minister at Bagatelle to fasten his seatbelt in the back seat of the car because he had not done so yet. Therefore, highlighting the use of seatbelt because it renders a person more vulnerable in case of a crash.

The fifth and last fatal behaviour concerns the lack of safety gear. Not wearing helmets of the right standard and not using child restraints have proven to also lead to thousands of preventable deaths every year globally.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by virtue of clauses 5, 6 and 7 of the Bill, new offences are being introduced and stricter penalties will now apply to any person who causes the death of another person by driving a motor vehicle dangerously on a road, causing death while driving

without a valid or a professional driving license or international driving permit and causing death by careless driving when under the influence of alcohol, drug or intoxicating substance.

Provision is also made for the disqualification for that person from holding or obtaining a driving license in Mauritius for a minimum period of five years. Community service shall not apply to such person. A district court or intermediate court have the jurisdiction to trial an offence and may impose any penalty provided for the offence of causing death by dangerous driving.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clauses 8 and 9 of the Bill seek to strengthen the provision dealing with persons found to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or an intoxicating substance. The existing provision relating to detention is reworded so that a person may be detained at a police station until his physical state appears to be no longer impaired.

Thereafter, for the purpose of determining whether the person should be disqualified from driving, he will be brought before a magistrate at the earliest opportunity along the lines of the procedure provided under the District and Intermediate Courts Criminal Jurisdiction Act in relation to security for keeping the peace. Where a magistrate is unable to reach a decision on the same day, the person will be directed to surrender his driving license, provisional driving license or international permit on the date of the order until decision is reached. The Bill also increases the maximum period of disqualification from six months to 12 months.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, modern technology has brought enormous benefits, but it has also created new risks for road safety. No person will be permitted whilst driving a motor vehicle or riding a cycle on a road, that means two-wheelers, or public place to use a handheld mobile phone or a handheld interactive communication device. The purpose is clear. It is intended to reduce distraction while driving.

It also puts an end to the controversy that has arisen on the use of Bluetooth technology in four-wheelers, which I wish to remind the House was deemed illegal for the last 16 years, even during the prime ministership of Pravind Jugnauth, whom I am told, has recently commented on this Bluetooth issue at one of his public gatherings. Let me be bold to state that the use of Bluetooth was prohibited during his prime ministership, which he did not seem

to be aware of. Otherwise, he would not have commented on it. Today, we are addressing this anomaly through this Bill, as I had promised.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another very important and increasingly seen phenomenon is addressed in this Bill at clause 11 through the insertion of a new section in the principal Act relating to road rage. Road rage is not simply a matter of discourtesy or frustration on our roads. Aggressive behaviour can escalate rapidly into violence, threats, damage to property and serious breaches of the peace. The Bill defines at long last road rage to cover a range of conduct including assaulting or threatening to assault another road user.

Firstly, it is defined as follows –

"(b) uses aggressive, threatening, violent, abusive or insulting words, or engages in aggressive, threatening, violent, abusive or insulting behaviour, towards another road user;

(c) uses an offensive weapon with the intention to cause harm to another road user;

(h) causes public fear or commits an act likely to trigger an offence of public order or a breach of the peace."

The definition of road user is deliberately kept broad. It includes drivers, riders, cyclists, passengers, pedestrians and other persons using a road or a public place.

The Bill makes it clear that where conduct constituting of road rage starts on a road or public place and continues or end in a private place. It does not cease to constitute an offence merely because the conduct has moved to that private place. Upon conviction, a person found guilty of road rage will be liable to a fine not less of Rs50,000 and not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months. This provision sends a clear message that the road cannot become a place where anger, intimidation or violence is allowed to prevail. For the purpose of enforcement, I would invite the police to also make maximum use of safe city cameras across the island to ensure that no offender is left unsanctioned.

In the light of the above. I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would now have realised that the applicable fine of Rs100,000 and imprisonment term of 12 months are not to be confused with the amendments earlier proposed to the public gathering as he seems to have commented in the press during the weekend relating those two.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the most critical issues addressed through clause 12 of the Bill is the seizure of motor vehicles when driving or cycling under the influence of alcohol, drug or other intoxicating substance.

As mentioned earlier, the police recorded 2,205 cases of drivers exceeding the permissible limit of alcohol and 617 cases involving person under the influence of drugs during the period spanning from 01 January to 30 August 2026. There is no denial that impaired driving remains a significant road safety concern. Driving under the influence of any intoxicating substance does not only endanger the person behind the wheel but places all road users at risk.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I feel compelled to point out that this Bill indeed brings about the strongest message against addiction. In as much as those who decide to hit the road now run the risk of paying dearly for the consumption of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances. We are sending the strongest message against addiction. One of the most significant reforms contained in this Bill is the introduction of a mechanism for the seizure of a motor vehicle in specified circumstances involving drugs and alcohol and intoxicating substance.

The Government has taken the position that where a person is found in circumstances indicating that his physical condition is impaired, the immediate priority must be the protection of the driver, rider and or any other road users. The Bill, therefore, provides for the seizure of a motor vehicle where among other where among other circumstances –

(i) a breath test indicates that the proportion of alcohol in the person's breath, blood or urine exceeds the prescribed limit;

(ii) a drug test indicates that the person is under the influence of a drug;

(iii) The person fails to provide the required specimen for testing while the police officer has reasonable ground to suspect that the person's physical state is impaired, and

(iv) the person fails to undergo a field impairment test while the police officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that his physical state is impaired.

In such circumstances, the police officer may, in the public interest and for the safety of the driver and public safety, take custody of the motor vehicle and take, or cause it to be

taken, to a place of safety. The cost of towing and other associated costs as applicable will be borne by the driver or owner of the vehicle. Once the vehicle is brought to a place of safety approved by the Commissioner of Police, seals will be affixed to it unless the condition of the vehicle or other practical circumstances make this impossible or impracticable. The vehicle will remain under the control of the police until it is released by the order of the Commissioner of Police or otherwise disposed of, in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill also creates an offence for any person who breaks or empowers the seal, remove the vehicle from the place of safety pending the order of the Commissioner of Police or damages the vehicle while it is kept at the place of safety. A person convicted for such an offence will be liable to a fine of not less than Rs50,000 not more than Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. The expenses incurred by or on behalf of the Commissioner of Police in relation to such an offence may also be recovered as a civil debt.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill also establishes a procedure for the release of a seized motor vehicle. As such, a seizure notice will be issued to the registered owner and the owner or a person authorised in writing by him may apply to the Commissioner of Police for the release of the vehicle.

The Bill provides for a seizure fee of Rs2,000 for each period of 24 hours or part thereof, a non-refundable application fee of Rs5,000 and a one-off release fee of Rs10,000 where a vehicle remains unclaimed for three months, the Commissioner of Police may dispose of it by public auction or otherwise. The proceeds will first be applied towards the payment of the applicable fees and charges with any surplus being paid to the owner where the surplus is not claimed within 12 months of the sale of or disposal of the vehicle, it will be forfeited to Government.

The Bill further provides for regulations to be made to ensure the effective implementation of this new seizure mechanism. I wish to emphasise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that these provisions are directed at protecting the public from an immediate and serious road safety risk. They are not intended as a substitute for the criminal process. They establish a mechanism for securing the vehicle in circumstances where the continued presence of that vehicle on the road may endanger the public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I call upon my colleague, the hon. Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms to examine the appropriate legal and administrative measures to address cases where a person entrusted with a public service vehicle, ambulance, police car or whatever, including drivers of emergency vehicles, when they are found to be driving under the influence of alcohol, drug and or an intoxicating substance. Public officers entrusted with such responsibilities must be held to the highest standards of conduct given the nature of their duties and trust placed in them.

As regards rented vehicles like contract cars, the onus would rest on the owner of the vehicle to appropriately predefine the responsibilities of the hirer. Similarly, for corporate vehicles or private companies, management companies must establish clear arrangements with their personnel such as drivers regarding the financial liabilities resulting from a conviction under the new legislation. The principle is straightforward. The consequences of dangerous and unlawful driving should, as far as practicable, fall upon the offender.

The Bill further, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through clause 13, strengthens the penalty for illegal road racing. The existing fine of Rs1,000 is being replaced by a fine of not less than Rs50,000 and not more than Rs100,000 and in as much as the offence of road racing does not come under the fixed penalty notice, the fines I have just mentioned will be in addition to the applicable 8 to 10 points under the Penalty Point System.

Illegal road racing presents an obvious and unacceptable danger not only to those participating in it, but also to other road users and persons in the vicinity. In this respect, I am aware that my colleague, the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports is working on the project of a motor racing track which was announced in last year's budget and also on the proposed new temporary circuit for which we had conducted a site visit earlier at Anjalay Coopen Stadium. I would respectfully request him to expedite the implementation of the projects, whichever comes first, because for the sake of providing for those who are fond of motor racing and of other speed lovers a safer alternative for their place of practice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the police have observed instances where drivers fail to comply with directions to stop at police checks, particularly where there is a suspicion that the driver may be under the influence of alcohol, drug and other intoxicating substance. The Bill makes provision for the increase of the fine for failing to stop vehicle when directed to do so from Rs1,000 to a range of Rs25,000 to Rs100,000. Compliance with lawful direction

to stop is fundamental to effective road safety enforcement and the loophole has been addressed through clause 14.

I wish to reiterate my plea to the Commissioner of Police to make optimal use of the safe city cameras and truck offenders who escaped from the police net.

In matters of road safety, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the fear factor is of paramount importance. Without it, without diligent enforcement, no matter how ambitious a piece of legislation may be, it just will not bring the desired outcome and attain the objectives.

The Bill also addresses certain technical and evidential matters through clause 16. Currently, specific laboratory instrument for the Forensic Science Laboratory were being prescribed through regulations made by the Minister of Land Transport. This Bill clarifies that there will be no requirement for specific laboratory instrument used by qualified expert of the Forensic Science Laboratory to be prescribed for the purposes of carrying out analysis. The Bill provides for the admissibility in proceedings under the Road Traffic Act of specified evidence consisting of a measurement or record obtained through a device approved by the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the long-standing issue repeatedly flagged by the Director of National Audit Office regarding the non-payment of fines for road traffic offences is being addressed by embracing information technology. Accordingly, fines payable under the fixed penalty notices, other than offences carrying penalty points, will be rendered possible electronically, henceforth. I trust that the IT system of the police and that of the judiciary, which has been the subject of discussions at the level of my Ministry, and I suppose at the Ministry of ICT as well, be operationalised within the least possible delay.

Another issue addressed by the Bill is excessive noise emission through exhaust pipe. The Bill creates a specific offence relating to the use of a motor vehicle with an altered silencer where the noise caused by the escape of exhaust gases is made greater by alteration. This offence will now carry a penalty of Rs10,000. Gone are the days when the driver or the rider will exclaim that their vehicle is not his. He, whomsoever is the user, will be penalised. Also, this eliminates the risk associated with the measurement of noise level, very often disputed at court level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill also makes an amendment to the definition of ‘emergency vehicle’. Vehicles of the Mauritius Prison Service will be included within the

definition that when they are being used for the transfer of urgent medical evacuation of detainees. This will allow such vehicles being used for the purposes to be equipped with sirens or flashing emergency lamps.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Road Traffic Act 1962 is a very old and technical voluminous piece of legislation. Through this major overhauling being proposed, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2026 ushers in new hopes for innocent road users. It is a Bill about responsibility, about discipline, about enforcement, and about sanctions and modernisation.

It seeks to strengthen the consequences of some of the most dangerous behaviours on our roads. It gives the police an important new tool to deal with drivers under the influence of drug, alcohol and intoxicating substance through the seizure of their vehicle and disqualification of licence amongst others. It criminalises those who drive without a driving licence. It addresses aggressive and violent conduct through the new offence of road rage. It clarifies the law concerning handheld mobile phones and interactive communication devices. It strengthens the penalties for illegal road racing and for failing to stop when directed by the police. At the same time, it modernises the way motorists interact with the traffic enforcement system through the digital driving licence and electronic payment of certain types of fixed penalty notices, and it also addresses the practical problems of excessive noise emissions and makes other targeted amendments to improve the administration and enforcement of the Road Traffic Act.

Road safety is not the responsibility of Government or the police alone. It is a shared responsibility. We must recognise that a moment of recklessness can have consequences that last a lifetime. A decision to drive after consuming too much alcohol or to drive under the influence of drug, to use handheld device while driving, to engage in road racing, or to respond to frustration with aggression can place innocent lives at risk.

Our objective through this Bill is, therefore, not simply to increase penalties and to collect more money through fines, as some of our most vociferous critics are claiming. Our objective is to strengthen the culture of responsibility and discipline that must accompany the privilege of using our roads. However, a well-crafted piece of legislation cannot achieve this objective on its own unless key players act with diligence. The success of this new law ultimately rests upon the enforcement agencies meaning the police and also the judiciary. I am confident that if applied appropriately, the measures proposed in this Bill will advance

this objective and equip the authorities with stronger, more effective tools to safeguard road users.

My Ministry will accompany the implementation of the provisions of this Bill through a communication and an educational campaign, and they are expected to promote safer road safety behaviour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2026) to the House.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, we will break for half an hour.

At 4.33 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.17 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr C. Baboolall): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, before I begin, I ask this House to pause for a moment in solidarity with the people of Nepal, where a catastrophic glacial flood, at the border of Tibet, has now claimed over 700 lives, with thousands still missing and search efforts continuing as this House sits today. My thoughts, and I hope this House's thoughts as well are with that country today.

Madam Speaker, this is my first speech in this House as Leader of the Opposition, and I want to use this opening moment to say plainly what I believe this Office and this Parliament itself are actually for, before it will shape everything, I say today, and everything I intend to say in this Chamber going forward.

Madam Speaker, none of us sits in this Assembly because of ourselves. We sit here because the people of this country, in every constituency, are represented in this Chamber. They sent us here to speak for them, not merely at them. A law this House passes does not belong to this House; it belongs to the fisherman, the planter, the nurse, the driver, the parent walking a child to school along a road with no pavement. They are the ones who will live

inside whatever we vote into force today, long after this debate is forgotten. That means they are owed something this House too often forgets to give: the chance to know what is being proposed in time to say what they think of it before it becomes law and they must obey. I say this as the governing principle of everything that follows today.

Madam Speaker, because a Road Traffic Bill is, in the end, exactly this kind of law. It touches every single person in this country who has ever walked, driven, or stood on a road, which is to say, it touches everyone. I do not intend, in this speech or in any other I give from this side of the House, to treat this Chamber as a place where laws are handed down to the people. I intend to treat it as a place where the people's own voice is given to the room; this Bill, as I will now show, threatens to take away from them.

I rise to speak on this Bill. On its face, it asks nothing controversial of this House. Drink driving has cost this country lives it does not need to lose.

Madam Speaker, I supported firm penalties against drunk driving. I support the genuine road rage offence. But I ask this House calmly and directly: What precisely is the emergency in a Road Traffic Amendment Bill? A budget carries a fiscal deadline. This House can at least understand, even when we disagree with how it was handed. A Road Safety Bill carries no such calendar. There is no reason this Bill could have received a normal Second Reading; a normal interval for public and experts’ comments on a separate day. Except one that compresses all stages into a single sitting is almost the most reliable way to ensure that a few Members have had the time to read it in full without the scrutiny it deserves.

Madam Speaker, this House has seen this pattern before this year on the Finance Bill. The identical mechanism, the identical Standing Order, the identical absence of breathing room between stages. I said then that a vote cast on a Bill nobody had time to read is not representation. I say it again today. On a Bill that I will now show to this House contains a clause with real consequences for the right of every citizen in this country to stand on a road and be heard.

Madam Speaker, when a government reaches for the same agency mechanism twice in a year on two Bills with nothing in common, except that each contains something worth rushing past this House, that pattern is no longer a coincidence. It is a method. I ask this House to name it as one before we go in a single clause further.

Madam Speaker, I ask every Member of this House to turn to Clause 11, which inserts a new section, 123AN into Road Traffic Act, titled simply Road Rage. Subsections (a) through (f) are exactly what that title promises: assaults, threats, the use of offensive weapon, forcing open another's vehicle, damaging another person's property. No one should object to a single word of that. Then, Madam Speaker, comes paragraph J. It makes it an offence carrying a fine up to Rs100,000 and imprisonment up to 12 months for any road user who blocks, obstructs, hinders or restricts the free passage of another road user or vehicle on any road by any means, including through an illegal gathering, demonstration, sit-in, barricade or the placing of a vehicle or an object.

Madam Speaker, I ask this House to sit with that sentence for a moment. I do not agree what the hon. Minister has stated that this is not what it seems, because I do not believe it has yet been read for what it actually does. A demonstration, a sit-in are not descriptions of road rage. They are descriptions of the fundamental, lawful, constitutionally recognised right of the people of this country to assemble and to be heard. This clause does not merely address the driver who blocks a road out of anger. As drafted, it sweeps in the trade unionist who marches down a road in protest.

The citizen who sits down in front of a gate to be heard. The very forms of peaceful demonstration this country's own history were built on and files every one of them under the same offence and the same penalty as a man who smashes another's driver's windscreen with a weapon.

Madam Speaker, let me be concrete. A clause read in the abstract rarely reveals what it will do in practice. Picture a nurse off duty sitting peacefully on a road outside a hospital gate next week, protesting a staffing shortage. A police officer approaches and says: ‘You are obstructing the free passage of this road.’ She answers: ‘I am protesting peacefully, exactly as this country has always allowed.’ Under this Act, as it stands today, that exchange ends here. Under Clause 11 of this Bill, paragraph J does not ask whether her protest was peaceful, only whether it obstructed passage and a sit-in obstructs passage by its very design.

The nurse now faces the same charge, the same courtroom, and potentially the same fine and prison term as the man who smashed a stranger's windscreen in a fit of rage. Madam Speaker, that is not a hypothetical grievance. That is a plain reading of the paragraph in front of us today. Frederick Douglas, speaking on the struggle for freedom, said that power

concedes nothing without a demand. John Lewis, decades later, urged people never to be afraid to make what he called good trouble, necessary trouble.

Madam Speaker, I do not raise these words lightly, and I do not compare our circumstances to theirs. I raise them because both men understood something this House must not forget today: The right to stand in a road and be counted has never anywhere been granted quietly. It always had to be defended, clause by clause, exactly I am defending it now.

Madam Speaker, I do not ask this House to take my word alone that this drafting is a genuine outlier. As I have looked before, raised concerns like the Hydrographic Services Bill, and how other jurisdiction in the Westminster traditions actually handle exact tension between road obstruction and the right to protest. Consider the United Kingdom, a country that has in recent years taken a considerably harder line against disruptive protest than this House has ever proposed.

Even there, the offence of wilfully obstructing a highway sits in its own dedicated provision. Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 entirely separately from any road rage or dangerous driving offence. Even there, in a country now criticised internationally for the severity of its protest laws, that offence still preserves a statutory defence of lawful excuse.

A defence the courts have expressly held can include the right to protest weighed against how reasonable the obstruction was in the circumstances. A group of taxi drivers protesting fuel prices by driving slowly through rush hour traffic, to take one example directly from the UK policing guidance, faces fine, not imprisonment. A fine. And only after a court has weighed whether their conduct was reasonable.

Madam Speaker, that is the standard even a government tightening its protest law felt obliged to preserve. A separate offence and a lawful excuse defence, and a proportionate graduated penalty. Clause 11 of this Bill offers this country none of these three. It offers no separate provisions. Protest sits in the same clause as assault. It offers no lawful excuse defence on the face of the text I have before me and it offers from the very first drafting exposure to imprisonment, not merely a fine. If the United Kingdom's own tightening of its protest law stops short of what this Bill proposes, Madam Speaker, this House should ask itself very seriously why Mauritius is being asked to go further. Madam Speaker, this House has been here before this year when Government proposed in this very budget that preceded

this Bill to quadruple the fine for participating in an unlawful gathering from Rs25,000 to Rs100,000.

It was met with such sustained public and legal objection that the measure was quietly withdrawn from the Finance Bill altogether. I do not believe this House should treat what is now before us as a coincidence. Rs100,000, Madam Speaker, the identical figure has returned, not through the front door of a public gathering bill this House would recognise and scrutinise as such, but through the side door of a road traffic amendment dressed in the language of road safety.

I say this plainly, Madam Speaker, I will not support any clause that criminalises peaceful assembly under the cover of a road safety bill. This country's own path to self-government was not paid by people who stayed silently at home. Fishermen have marched on this very city. Sugar workers have stood in the street long before independence and their standing there is precisely why this House exists in the form it does today. A Parliament that forgets whose shoulders it stands on is a Parliament at real risk of pulling the ladder up behind it.

I ask the hon. Minister to remove the words ‘illegal gathering’, ‘demonstration’, ‘sitting’, ‘barricade’ from paragraph (g) entirely, or at the very minimum to introduce a lawful excuse defence model on the very provision the United Kingdom itself has preserved and to confine this offence as to what its title actually promises, rage, not protest.

Madam Speaker, my second concern is narrower, but not less serious. Clause 6 inserts new section 123BA – creating an offence of causing death while driving without any form of licence, carrying a minimum fine of Rs200,000 and up to 5 years imprisonment on first conviction.

I do not dispute that this conduct deserves serious punishment. What I dispute is subsection (3), which expressly exclude the Probation of Offenders Act, the Community Service Order Act and Part X of the Criminal Procedure Act from applying to any person sentenced under this section. Removing entirely a Magistrate's ordinary discretion to consider the individual circumstances of the case before them.

Madam Speaker, this House should be very cautious before it removes judicial discretion by statute. We ask our Court to weigh circumstances precisely because two cases that look identical on paper are really identical in fact. Montesquieu, whose thinking on the

separation of powers still underpins the very structure of the Government we sit in tonight, warned that when the power to judge is not separated from the power to make law, there is no liberty at all because the citizen would then leave in fear of the same body that writes the rule, also deciding in advance precisely how it will be applied to him. A mandatory sentencing flaw does not go that far, Madam Speaker, but it walks some distance down that road. It tells every Magistrate in this country that Parliament no longer trusts them to do the job we appointed them to do.

Other Commonwealth jurisdictions have experimented with mandatory minimum of this kind, and have, in the years since, spent considerable judicial and public effort unwinding them, precisely because they produced outcomes that offended the very sense of proportion they were meant to guarantee. I ask this House not to walk that same path a second time when the first country's experience is already available to us to learn from.

Madam Speaker, my third concern touches fairness rather than liberty. The new Part VIIIB inserted by clause 12 allows police to seize a vehicle on the basis of a failed or refused breath or drug test or on reasonable suspicion alone. Before any conviction, before any Court has heard a word of evidence, I do not oppose the principle that a suspected drug driver should simply be waved back on the road but the Fifteenth Schedule sets out a storage fee of Rs2,000 per day, non-refundable application of Rs5,000 and a one-off release fee of Rs10,000. None of which, on my reading of this Bill, are refunded to a person later acquitted or never charged at all. I ask the hon. Minister to confirm whether that reading is correct and if it is to bring an amendment ensuring that a citizen who is cleared of the underlying offence is made whole for fees imposed on a seizure that trial ultimately found no basis for.

Madam Speaker, I raise two further gaps in the same part, both of them practical rather than constitutional, but no less real to the citizen who actually lives through a seizure. First, on the timeline of release. Clause 12 new section 123AQ requires the seizure notice to state the date by which an application for release may be made but nowhere in this Bill is there any maximum period within which the Commissioner of Police must actually process that application once it is submitted. Madam Speaker, the storage fee of Rs2,000 per day continues to accrue for every day that vehicle sits waiting whether that delay is caused by the owner or by the administration processing his file. I ask the hon. Minister to confirm what maximum turnaround time Government intends to guarantee and whether any day lost to administrative delay rather than to the owner's own doing will be excluded from the fee.

Second, Madam Speaker, on where a seized vehicle is actually kept. This Bill requires that information to be disclosed to the owner. In the seizure notice only after the vehicle has been taken. Madam Speaker, the public is entitled to know in advance and as a matter of general publication where seized vehicles across this country are held, under what security and under what conditions. Not to learn it for the first time, family by family, only once their own vehicle has already disappeared from the roadside. I ask the hon. Minister to at least publish the list of approved places of safety under this Part so that no citizen is left, even briefly, not knowing where their own property has been taken.

Madam Speaker, this Bill more than doubles or in some cases quadruples existing fines and extends minimum disqualification periods from two years to three and from five years to seven. Under clause 21 alone, I do not object to firmer penalties for genuinely dangerous conduct. I asked in the same spirit I have asked of other Bills this year: has any road safety impact study accompanied these as specific figures? Or were they, as this House has heard, admitted to other legislations this year, primarily as a political decision? This House deserves the evidence, not only the penalty.

Madam Speaker, before I raise what is missing from this Bill, let me, first, give credit precisely and specifically for three things it gets right. Clause 6, the new offence of causing death without a licence, is a serious and proportionate response to a genuine wrong. Clause 10's extension of the mobile phone, ban to tablets, smart watches, and every interactive device a driver might hold, with a clear Rs3,000 fixed penalty, closes a real gap in our law. And the move to a digital licence and online fine payment is modernisation this country should have had years ago. I say this plainly, Madam Speaker, so that nothing I say can be dismissed as reflective opposition.

But, Madam Speaker, I want this House to sit with one number before I go further. Half of the people this country loses on its road are motorcyclists. Not a fifth, not a third – half. And in 27 clauses across every schedule and every amendment this Bill proposes, there is not one word, not one about how a person actually earns the right to ride a motorcycle in this country. Madam Speaker, that is not a road safety Bill. This is a Bill about sharks that never once mention the sea.

According to the National Land Transport Authority's own published figures, as at the end of June this year, Mauritius had 761,531 registered vehicles, and 261,510 of them, some 34% of our entire fleet, are motorcycles. Compare that to Reunion, a territory with a broadly

comparable number of cars on its roads, where motorcycles make up barely 4% of the fleet – twelve times the proportions of motorcycles. Madam Speaker, the result follows exactly where the arithmetic leads it. Half of all road deaths in this country are motorcyclists. Official police statistics recorded 69 road deaths in the first six months of this year alone – a rise of nearly 10% on the same period last year. With this country now on course on the trend, Le Mauricien itself had published for its worst year of road death on record, potentially double of what we recorded only two years ago.

Madam Speaker, this Bill's entire answer to that crisis is to raise the storage fee on a seized vehicle to Rs2,000 a day. This House is not being asked to punish after the fact that it has done nothing in this Bill to prevent beforehand. I am told our own officers are too often positioned out of sight, waiting in the roadside bush to issue a fine after the driver has already passed the point of danger, where other jurisdictions position their officers visibly on the road itself to warn a rider before the danger arrives, not to profit from it after. I raise this, Madam Speaker, as a fair question for this House to examine, not as an accusation against any individual officer doing the job this Government has asked them to.

Madam Speaker, I do not come to this House only to criticise. I come with a proposal built on the system that has already worked elsewhere. And I ask the hon. Minister to consider it in the spirit it is offered, as this side of the House's genuine contribution to a Bill that still has time to become what it should have been from the start.

First, Madam Speaker, immediately, the learner's permit moratorium that has run since 2018, nine years now, in which a young rider can be handed a provisional paper without ever sitting a definitive examination. Nine years is not a transition. It is an abdication.

Secondly, a genuinely graduated motorcycle licence in three tiers –

- A rider novice tier from 17, restricted to a 50-cc machine, on a learner plate, with no-passenger.
- A rider restricted tier from 19, capped at a machine of no more than 660 cc. We do not even have 600 cc here, but still, under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme.
- A defined list of machines under a strict power-to-weight limit, expressly excluding 1000 cc sports motorcycle, with zero alcohol tolerance, no-passenger

for a minimum of 12 months. And only at 21, after two full years without a recorded accident, full unrestricted access to any motorcycle on the market.

Third, Madam Speaker, an equivalent graduated system for car licences: 50 hours of logged supervised driving, including five hours at night, recorded in a proper log book, followed up by a probationary plate capped at 90 km/h, with zero alcohol tolerance for the first three years on the road.

Fourth, a dedicated, physically separated motorcycle lane. It can be Albion to Port Louis or where motorcycles are used by riders.

Fifth, officers redeployed to visible, preventive road duty – seen, not hidden – rather than position to catch a driver only after the danger has already passed.

Sixth, a modern three-dimensional simulation component added to the driving examination so that a young driver or rider is tested against realistic hazards before they meet them for the first time on a real road, not after.

Seventh, a reduced drinking driving limit to 0.05 for professional drivers, those carrying passengers or goods for a living rather than the standard 0.08 in recognition of the greater responsibility that livelihood carries.

Madam Speaker, this Bill triples the penalty a family faces after they have already lost someone. I am proposing tonight how this House saves that person before that family ever has to face it at all. I ask the hon. Minister to take this proposal into the constructive spirit it is offered, and to bring it, or bring something like it, back to this House because a seizure fee and a digital licence, however welcome, will not put a single one of these safeguards between 17-year-old on a road that is currently allowed to kill him.

Madam Speaker, when I raise a point, I do not raise it lightly, and I raise it as a Member who has personally and formally requested on the exact matter, I am about to describe. Clear road markings, proper signage and traffic signals fall within the hon. Minister's own portfolio under this very Act, so does the placement of speed humps at known danger points. This is not, as I might once have assumed, a matter for a different Ministry to answer for. It is a matter for this hon. Minister, today, on this Bill.

Madam Speaker, in my own constituency, at Deep River, this country has now lost five lives. At the same stretch road, five, Madam Speaker, not scattered across the island over

decades, but repeated fatalities at the identical spot. A spot I have myself formally requested be fitted with a speed hump and proper warning signage, precisely because everyone in that community already knew long before the fifth death that this stretch was a killing ground waiting to claim its next name. An innocent person lost his life there again only recently. I do not raise it to make a private grief into a political point. I raise it because this Bill tonight doubles and quadruples the penalty for a driver who gets it wrong on a road exactly like that one.

While offering this House no corresponding agency, no fund, no commitment to fit the hump, paint the marking or fix the sign that might have meant there was no driver and no victim at Deep River at all. Madam Speaker, I want to be precise because I do not want a single word of this section be mistaken for opposition to speed humps themselves. This country needs more of them, not fewer. Properly placed, properly signed, properly lit at every stretch of road of our own communities have already identified through bitter experience as dangerous.

The failure I am describing is not that humps exist. It is that too few exist in too few of the places where this country has already paid the price of their absence in lives. Deep River is only the example I know best because I have lived it alongside the families who buried their own there. I invite any hon. Member of this House to name a stretch of their road in their own constituency where the community has asked formally, repeatedly, for a hump, a light or a marking that has still not come. I do not believe a single hon. Member would come back empty-handed.

Madam Speaker, a government is judged less by the laws it passes than by the roads its own people are made to drive on the very next morning. This House can raise every fine in this Bill tenfold and it will not on its own prevent a sixth death at Deep River. Punishment without prevention is not safety policy. It is a tax collected after the country has already failed to act. I ask the hon. Minister directly and specifically tonight: Will he commit to a national audit of known fatal and repeat accident sites – Deep River is among them – with a published timeline for the humps, signage and traffic signals each one requires?

This House doubles and quadruples fines today for the driver. I ask with equal seriousness: when will this House hear an equivalent funded commitment from the Government to the roadside itself?

Madam Speaker, I began crediting what is genuinely good in this Bill and I close the same way: digital licences, online payment, a rear road, radio funds for a real road rage. This House should pass all of it and pass it gladly. Road deaths are not an obstruction to any hon. Member in this Chamber. Every one of us has, at some point, sat with a constituency grief over a life a drugged or reckless driver took from them. I do not come to this to this House to make that task harder.

Madam Speaker, a Parliament's duty is not only to punish what is dangerous. It is to guard with equal seriousness against the quiet erosion of what is free. Those two duties are not in tension today. They can both be honoured in the very same Bill by the very same vote if this House simply insists that road rage clause says what it means and means what it says. I do not believe a single hon. Member on the Government benches actually want this House remembered as the Parliament that made it a criminal imprisonable offence to sit down peacefully in a road.

I believe instead that paragraph (g) was drafted quickly, folded into a Bill about drunk driving and digital licences, and has not yet been read by this House with the care it deserves. I have given it that reading today so no hon. Member can later say they were not told. I ask the hon. Minister to accept the amendment to paragraph (g) of clause 11, which I have set out today, either its removal or at the minimum a lawful excuse defence equal to the preserve even by a government far more determined than ours to restrict the right to protest.

Grant it, and this Bill has our full support. I will say so as plainly as publicly as I raise this concern tonight. Leave it as it is drafted and this House should know precisely what it is really being asked to pass, not a road safety Bill alone, but a second attempt in six months to make it more dangerous for a Mauritian citizen to stand in the street and be heard.

Madam Speaker, I will close on this. A road belongs to every citizen who has ever walked it in protest as much as to every driver who has ever driven in a haste. This House can protect both users of that road today or it can quietly choose one over the other and call it road safety. I trust this House to choose rightly.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Ramtohul!

(5.56 p.m.)

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Dr. A. Ramtohul): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. Referring to our manifesto of the 2024 campaign, I will cite –

> *« Rendre nos routes plus sûres afin de réduire le nombre d'accidents et de victimes sur nos routes. »*

Today, this Bill is realising a key milestone of this measure and this is the change we are bringing under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. I listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition with a lot of care and attention. I would like to just remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that since we took office, this Government has witnessed several peaceful protests while Section 154 of the Roads Act mentions that "any person who deliberately or negligently obstructs the passage of a motor vehicle on a road shall commit an offence."

At no point in time, I saw the application of that law, which implies that people could actually exercise their freedom of association freely in this country. For a full decade, this country has not had a government as liberal as this current Government.

Now, Madam Speaker, at first sight, this is a Bill about road traffic. But when we look more closely at what is before the House, it thrusts into prominence that this Bill is grounded on how the State responds to a changing society. It is about safety and accountability. It is about ensuring that our legislation keeps pace with new forms of behaviour and new risks on our roads.

More importantly, from the perspective of my Ministry, it is also about ensuring that our laws keep pace with technology and with legitimate expectations of the population that increasingly works, communicates and transacts digitally. The main objective of this Bill is to strengthen our legal framework in relation to driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or intoxicating substances, including provision for seizure of vehicles and possible disqualification.

I recall the hon. Prime Minister was very bold in his statement with regard to this very paragraph because there has been too much of misuse of that kind of facility from people who have been very negligent on the roads. This has led to crying mothers. It has led to lost babies. It has broken families. We have seen so many of them being created out of negligence and reckless driving of people because they are not conscious enough or because they realise that the law is not strong enough.

This is why this amendment was so necessary. It also creates the offence of road rage, introduces an offence of causing death while driving without the appropriate license or permit, and provides for stricter penalties for a number of serious road offences. These are not significant matters. Behind every road fatality, Madam Speaker, there is not just a simple statistic. There is a family that receives a phone call nobody should ever have to receive. So, when a government strengthens legislation against dangerous behaviour on roads, it is not simply increasing figures in a schedule. It is affirming the value we place on human life.

This Bill accordingly strengthens penalties for serious offences while also creating specific offence of road rage as you mentioned, covering aggressive, threatening, violent and abusive contents towards the other road users and Section 154 of Roads Act makes it clear that the augmentation brought forward does not stand grounds. It also expands the law concerning handheld devices while driving.

Now, that itself tells us something important, that society changes, technology changes, behaviour changes, and therefore, the legislation must evolve. My colleague, hon. Minister of Land Transport has adequately addressed those road safety measures in detail. I want to concentrate my intervention on two provisions, which fall directly within the transformation agenda that my Ministry is pursuing across Government. They will be among the provisions of this Bill that ordinary Mauritians will experience most directly in their everyday lives. More than 800,000 Mauritians hold driving permits.

So, the first is Section 46 about the digital driving licence, and the second one is about the online payment of fines for traffic offences under fixed penalty notices. I would like to explain these two measures quickly. So, from digital information to a digital driving licence, within this context, this Bill introduces into the Road Traffic Act a legal definition of a digital driving licence, as an electronic version of a driving licence in such form as may be prescribed. It then does something very concrete.

Section 46 is amended so that the old requirement referring to an up-to-date photocopy in the actual size of the original driving licence, and showing the latest endorsement is replaced with reference to digital driving licence because the previous system was very much prone to manipulated photocopies of driving licences. Therefore, we are moving from a photocopy to a legally recognised digital credential and this represents decades of

technological evolution. When we deployed the digital penalty point system through KOREK, motorists were already able to access details relating to their digital driving licence.

However, this was not recognised as a digital driving licence because it did not have the force of law. So, this amendment Bill actually brings or bestows that legal recognition upon this driving licence. It is no longer merely a question of displaying digital driving licence information on the application. There is a fundamental distinction, Madam Speaker, between what used to happen and what is now going to happen.

A Ministry can build an application, engineers can develop a platform, systems can exchange information but unless the law recognises the digital equivalent, that citizen will continue carrying paper, and this is what we want to avoid. This legislation closes the gap between technical possibility and legal validity. We take a simple example, a driver leaves home in the morning, perhaps he is rushing to work, perhaps she has to drop her child at school and there is a routine side roadside check. Traditionally, the interaction has depended on physical documentation of the prescribed copy. But now, the user can simply brandish the digital driving licence on the mobile device. The policeman, using the EPA-20 device, can read the QR code of that digital driving licence and verify the authenticity online, which means that the possibility of people manipulating driving licences is now gone. So that will not happen once this law comes into force, Madam Speaker.

I will now move to the online payment of fines. What used to happen earlier on, when somebody has a fixed penalty notice, he would need to specify the court at which that person will go to pay that fine. So, the first phase that we undertook was to avoid that constraint. We made it possible for people to go to any court to pay that fine. Therefore, there was no need to go to a specific court. So that one was removed. The second phase now, is to allow the online payment of that fine, which implies that people will be able now to just get onto a site, onto a portal, put in the credentials under MauPass, and pay their fine online. That is the next step that we have undertaken and this will bring not just convenience to people; it will also bring efficiency in the economy. Why? Because people will not need to take time off from their work and to go queue up and we want to avoid queues in as much as possible.

Madam Speaker, my ambition for KOREK is very simple. I do not want Mauritians to download KOREK just because Government asks them to. I want Mauritians to open KOREK because it is useful. There is an enormous difference. People adopt technology when technology solves a problem. If KOREK allows somebody to access his penalty point system,

that to us is useful. We are adding value. If tomorrow it allows that person to present a legally recognised digital driving licence, it becomes even more useful. If it allows eligible traffic fine to be paid without going anywhere, it is then even more useful. This is how digital adoption is being built by our Government through utility, through value added to people.

Here, Madam Speaker, I think we must acknowledge a problem that we inherited from the past. For too many years, the State's approach to digitalisation was often to reproduce existing bureaucracy electronically. So, if somebody is doing his work in a certain manner, which could include good practices and not so good practices, then digitalisation back then was just to automate the process as it was but with our current approach, we are reviewing that process so that we eradicate any malpractices and we automate on the new defined practices and this is transformation that we are bringing. In the earlier model, it was not transformation. It was bureaucracy with Wi-Fi. This is what it used to be. We have to do better.

The former regime had more than enough time to understand that putting a computer on a desk does not create a digital government. This is the shift we are bringing. I will put it in another way – for years, the citizen adapted to government these few ways of working. These are our opening hours, they said; this is our counter, they stated. Bring this document, bring that document, come back another day.

So, this is what we want to avoid now with this digital driving licence, which is now easily accessible, and we will have measures as well to also apply for replacement of those licences, and this will be coming under KOREK. Government must adapt to the evolving demands of citizens and not the other way round, because public administration exists for the public.

Madam Speaker, this digital driving licence is not just an ICT project. The online payment of traffic fines is not simply an ICT project. For these reforms to work, technology, transport, law enforcement, legislation and public administration must work together, and we have worked together with the Ministry for Transport, just like we did for the SAP pensions applications with the Ministry of Social Security and therefore, Government systems must increasingly behave as one Government. This means we move away from silos and we interoperate. It is equally important not to confuse convenience with leniency.

This Bill makes certain administration or administrative interactions easier, and it also makes dangerous behaviour considerably more consequential. For example, it creates the offence of causing death while driving without the appropriate licence or permit. On conviction, the Bill provides for substantial fines and imprisonment, together with a minimum five-year disqualification from holding or obtaining a driving licence. So therefore, it is establishing a new framework for seizure of motor vehicles as well. We believe that these measures put together create a new way of looking at traffic offences and also a new way of looking at the dangers facing people on the roads.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the history of public administration has largely been a history of citizens carrying proof to Government. Carry your identity, carry your licence, carry your certificate, carry your photocopy, carry your receipt has been what we have seen in the past. Carry one document from one government department to prove something to another government department. This was the story. Now the digital state gives an opportunity to rethink that relationship and information should move where appropriate, and it is moving where appropriate.

So, what is happening in order for the driving licence to be produced? The system actually produces it in real time, which implies that data is read from the driving licence department, verified against the central population database, and then presented to the user for verifiability by policemen who are carrying out a check. This is the system that we have established, and this is how we put interoperability into action.

Through KOREK, we continue building a platform through which everyday interactions with Government can become progressively simpler. The previous regime had years to speak about e-government. But, Madam Speaker, you build it and we are building it by removing one queue at a time, one unnecessary paper at a time, one unnecessary journey at a time and one outdated procedure at a time. This is the work that we have undertaken, and we will continue on this route because the real test of digital transformation is not whether Government has new technology or not. It is whether the citizen has a better experience. This Government has chosen to build that for the future of our new generation; a future where our roads are safer, where the law keeps pace with society, where public services keep pace with technology.

Madam Speaker, this is the kind of digital Mauritius we are building, and it is for these reasons that I fully commend the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2026 to the House.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you so much.

Yes, hon. Chief Whip!

(6.11 p.m.)

Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Je voudrais à mon tour intervenir sur ce projet de loi qui touche à ce qui compte le plus pour chacun de nous : La sécurité de nos concitoyens sur nos routes et le droit de rentrer chez soi chaque soir, sain et sauf. Nous le savons tous dans cette auguste Assemblée, la route continue de faire des victimes à Maurice. Trop souvent, ce sont des vies fauchées pour des raisons qui auraient pu être évitées : la conduite sous l'emprise de l'alcool ou de la drogue ; l'usage du téléphone au volant ; l'agressivité entre usagers de la route ou tout simplement l'absence de permis de conduire.

Madame la présidente, derrière chaque statistique sur les accidents de la route, il y a un visage ; il y a une famille ; une vie brisée. Un décès sur nos routes n'est jamais un simple chiffre dans un rapport. C'est un parent qui ne rentrera plus chez lui. Un enfant qui grandira sans son père ou sa mère. Une famille qui devra vivre avec une absence irréparable et des victimes ; des victimes qui garderont toute leur vie les séquelles d'un comportement irresponsable. Madame la présidente, la liberté de conduire ne peut jamais signifier le droit de mettre la vie des autres en danger. Face à cette réalité, nous avons le devoir d'envoyer un message clair : conduire est une responsabilité et non un droit absolu.

Je voudrais mentionner quelques avancées que je salue. Ce projet de loi apporte des réponses concrètes sur des situations que nos concitoyens dénoncent depuis trop longtemps. Et je salue dans son principe la volonté du gouvernement de durcir le cadre légal. D'abord, la création de l'infraction du *Road Rage*, à travers le nouvel article 123AN, vient enfin nommer et sanctionner des comportements que beaucoup vivent au quotidien sur nos routes : agression verbale, intimidation, obstruction volontaire de la circulation, mais qui jusqu'ici, n'avait pas de traitement légal spécifique.

La possibilité de saisir un véhicule en cas de conduite sous l'emprise de l'alcool ou de la drogue, à travers la nouvelle partie VIIIB, constitue un signal fort de dissuasion. C'est une

mesure qui, je l'espère, fera réfléchir avant de prendre le volant dans ces conditions. Je salue aussi l'introduction d'une infraction spécifique par le fait de causer la mort en conduisant sans permis, avec des peines sévères et une disqualification minimale de 5 ans, comblant un vide que plusieurs familles de victimes ont dénoncé pendant plusieurs années. Le durcissement des peines pour les cas de mort causés par une conduite dangereuse ou par une conduite imprudente sous l'emprise des substances, à travers les amendements aux articles 123B et 123D, envoie un message clair : la vie humaine doit primer sur tout le reste.

L'introduction du permis de conduire numérique et le paiement en ligne des amendes pour les *Fixed Penalties Notices* constituent une modernisation bienvenue de nos services publics qui facilitera la vie de nos concitoyens. Et enfin, je salue la disposition visant à sanctionner les échappements modifiés qui augmentent le bruit. Cela répond à une nuisance qui empoisonne la vie de nombreux riverains, notamment dans les zones résidentielles.

Madame la présidente, il y a une préoccupation de terrain qui est le bruit sur nos routes la nuit. Et je souhaite profiter de cette intervention pour attirer l'attention de la Chambre sur une préoccupation exprimée par de nombreux habitants de Belle Rose-Quatre Bornes, la Circonscription No. 18, concernant les nuisances sonores causées par certains véhicules qui traversent nos quartiers en pleine nuit diffusant une musique à un volume assourdissant. Ce comportement perturbe le sommeil de nos familles. Ce comportement perturbe nos personnes âgées, les malades, nos malades dans nos circonscriptions, les jeunes enfants et tous ceux qui doivent se lever tôt pour aller travailler. La route est un espace partagé, mais nul ne devrait imposer son bruit au détriment du droit des autres à la tranquillité.

Plusieurs pays, notamment la France, le Royaume-Uni, l'Australie, la Nouvelle-Zélande, le Canada et certains États américains, sanctionnent déjà ce type de comportement avec des amendes, voire l'immobilisation du véhicule en cas de récidive.

Je plaide ce soir, donc, pour ce que nous renforcions notre législation afin d'interdire clairement la diffusion de musique à un volume excessif depuis un véhicule et de prévoir des sanctions dissuasives, particulièrement durant la nuit, à proximité des zones résidentielles, à proximité de nos hôpitaux, des écoles et des lieux de culte. Protéger la tranquillité publique, c'est aussi protéger la qualité de vie de nos concitoyens. Mais aussi, Madame la présidente, se retrouver – je suis sûre que plusieurs collègues, ici présents, ont dû faire l'expérience – derrière un véhicule qui circule le matin avec des amplificateurs diffusant de la musique à plein régime peut déstabiliser le conducteur qui le suit.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais maintenant parler de quelques points – et je suis contente que le ministre soit présent – sur lesquels j'appelle à la vigilance. Cela dit, Madame la présidente, je me permets d'attirer l'attention du gouvernement sur quelques points qui méritent réflexion, non pas pour freiner ce *Bill*, mais pour s'assurer qu'il produise réellement les résultats escomptés sur le terrain.

La mise en œuvre pratique de la saisie des véhicules : Est-ce que nos postes de police, est-ce que les *place of safety* sont-ils réellement équipés pour gérer un afflux de véhicules saisis dans le respect des délais stricts prévus par la loi, notamment les deux jours impartis pour notifier le propriétaire ?

L'impact social – l'impact social des frais de saisie et de libération prévus dans le Quinzième *Schedule*. Je pense en particulier aux familles à revenus modestes qui dépendent souvent d'un seul véhicule pour se rendre au travail ou emmener leurs enfants à l'école. Il est essentiel que la sévérité de la loi ne se transforme pas en double peine pour ceux qui ont moins de moyens financiers. La nécessité d'accompagner ce durcissement des peines est une véritable campagne.

L'honorable ministre l'a précisé tout à l'heure, la nécessité pour ces durcissements de peine de mener une véritable campagne de sensibilisation, notamment auprès des jeunes conducteurs. Car la loi seule, aussi sévère soit-elle, ne suffira jamais à changer durablement les comportements sur nos routes. Et puis enfin, la formation et les ressources mises à disposition des forces de l'ordre, comme des *bodycams*.

Je souhaiterais et nous souhaiterons tous que nos policiers, qui font un travail extraordinaire, un travail noble, soient bien équipés et qu'ils aient aussi pour leur propre protection des *bodycams,* entre autres, pour l'application des nouvelles dispositions sur le *road rage* et les tests de dépistage, afin que ces nouvelles infractions soient appliquées de manière juste et cohérente à travers le pays.

Aussi, je me permets ce soir de demander à l'honorable ministre si, dans notre stratégie nationale, le gouvernement envisage d'introduire le permis de conduire progressif qu'on appelle en anglais *graduated driver licensing*. Un système qui existe déjà dans plusieurs pays et qui vise à mieux encadrer les jeunes conducteurs durant les premières années de conduite. C'est une humble proposition. Ce dispositif, à mon humble avis, permettrait d'accompagner les nouveaux titulaires d'un permis à travers différentes étapes avec certaines restrictions

temporaires afin de leur permettre d'acquérir progressivement de l'expérience et de développer les bons réflexes sur la route.

En conclusion, Madame la présidente, ce *Bill* va dans son ensemble dans la bonne direction. Il traduit une volonté sincère de mieux protéger la vie humaine sur nos routes et je le soutiens dans son principe. Mais une loi, aussi bien rédigée soit-elle, ne vaut que par la manière dont elle est appliquée sur le terrain et par l'accompagnement que nous offrons à nos concitoyens pour en comprendre le sens. J'invite donc le gouvernement à veiller à une mise en œuvre juste, cohérente et accompagnée d'une véritable pédagogie auprès de la population.

Nous devons toutes et tous dans cette auguste Assemblée garder à l'esprit un seul objectif : que chaque Mauricien puisse prendre la route en toute confiance et rentrer chez lui chaque jour en sécurité. Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister of Labour!

(6.23 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madam Speaker, let me start by congratulating hon. Baboolall on his maiden speech as Leader of the Opposition.

I stand here in support of the Bill introduced by my co-constituency representative, hon. Osman Mahomed. The purpose of the Bill, Madam Speaker, is to make our road safer and reduce the number of road accident. A couple of months ago, we took the bold, unpopular decision of reintroducing the Penalty Point System.

It has done its way and it has reduced the number of road offences. But it is not enough. We have reached 100 fatal cases since the beginning of the year. In the past two weeks, we have had four road accidents. The driver involved in some cases was driving under the influence of alcohol. In one case, he did not have a licence. We all remember, Madam Speaker, what happened last year. What happened last year when, unfortunately, a contract bus was transporting hotel people in the region of Le Morne had a road accident and a worker, a lady, passed away, leaving an eight-month-old child. The driver did not have a driving licence.

This is why, Madam Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to introduce new offences and to toughen penalty sanction of certain road traffic offences. Now, what are the new offences?

The first one is what I have just alluded to. Causing death while driving without a licence, without a provisional driving license or without an international driving permit. The second offence which we are introducing relates to the use of handphones and handheld interacting communication devices. This is in Section 70.

Previously, Madam Speaker, it was an offence while you are driving to use a handheld phone. The law is being amended to extend the type of electronic device that you cannot use while you are driving. Because today things have evolved. You do not just use phone. You can use a laptop; you can use an iPad; you can use interactive devices. Some people can even play games while driving. So, it is not limited to phone. Section 10 today clearly defines making an offence what is handheld interacting communication device.

Third offence which the Bill introduces is using a motor vehicle with altered silencer. Previously, it was an offence for the owner to have a motor vehicle with a modified silencer. Now we have introduced a new offence to make the user/the driver of the vehicle, whether it is a motorcycle, whether it is a car, the user is now responsible/guilty of an offence.

I am sure a lot of people have suffered silently every evening with these motorcycles. We call police officers and we tell them to come and inspect. But by the time they come, it is too late. They do not ever catch the motorcyclist. So, with this new offence, we hope that the police will be able to stop all these motorcyclists who run with modified silencers and who use the vehicle. Even if it is not under their name, they will also be committing an offence.

Finally, the fourth new offence that is being introduced is one where the hon. Leader of Opposition spent a lot of time on: the offence of road rage. I take note that the hon. Leader of Opposition is not against criminalising road rage. He is agreeable to Section 11 to the new offence of road rage. However, he takes exception to one section, which is the new Section 123AN subsection (1)(g), where a person blocks, obstructs, hinders the free passage of road users.

As rightly pointed out by hon. Dr. Ramtohul, there is already an offence under the Road Traffic Act, Section 154, which makes it an offence.

Madam Speaker: The Road's Act.

Mr Uteem: Sorry, no. That is the Road Traffic Act.

Madam Speaker: It was the Roads Act. Not the Road Traffic Act, I think?

Mr Uteem: It is the Road Traffic Act. It is the Act that is being amended today.

Madam Speaker: The original Act.

Mr Uteem: The 1962 Act that is being amended today. Already 154 makes it an offence to cause obstruction but when we read this new section, it says –

> "blocks, obstruct, hinders or restrict the free passage of another road user or vehicle on any road by any means including (…)"

This is the word that the hon. Leader of the Opposition seems to omit –

> "including through an illegal gathering, demonstration, sitting, barricade or the placing of a vehicle or an object;"

So, it is not targeting illegal gathering. We are not through the back door, as suggested by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, trying to amend the Public Gathering Act to make it an offence to hold a gathering. No. We have in mind cases where after, you know, shortage of water supply, after a road accident, people come down to the street, block the traffic, infuriated and in their moment of infuriation, they commit anything. They destroy property, they destroy vehicles, they block the passages and very often they lose their self-control and assault people and some of it can be fatal as well. This is what this section aims at, not preventing illegal gathering. It is road rage, people who are angry, who needs to control their themselves instead of blocking the road. That is the aim and I can reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that if ever a case like this goes to Court, Hansard can be can be referred to. The aim has never been and will never be to have any restriction on freedom of association of holding public gathering in this country.

So, I was saying, Madam Speaker, that this Bill introduces new offences and then increases the sanction for existing offences. For example, causing death by dangerous driving. The fine is being increased from Rs50,000 to Rs100,000 for first case and then second and subsequent case from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000. Then the minimum disqualification is being increased from two years to three years in case of first offence and from five years to seven years in case of second and subsequent offence.

Causing death by careless driving, when under the influence of alcohol, drug or intoxicating substance. The hon. Minister mentioned that since the beginning of the year, the police has issued contravention in the case of 2,205 cases of drivers driving with excess

alcohol in their blood and 617 cases of drivers driving under the influence of intoxicating substance, drug and we are talking about only cases where through random checks.

A lot of people criticise police officers who supposedly are hiding and then you know taking speedometer and stopping vehicle. This is how the police come to know if you are driving under the influence of alcohol or under drug. You have to have a suspicious conduct on the road. You have to be driving with excessive speed. That is when the police have a suspicion and stops you and that is when the police find out that you are driving with excess alcohol or drug.

So, these figures are understated. There must be many more and as the hon. Minister pointed out, the aim of we are doing today is we are dissuading people from driving with alcohol. We are not telling them not to drink but if you drink, rent a bob, get someone else to drive instead of you. Of course, taking drug is illegal, so you cannot even drive when you are under the influence of drug. So here also, just like in the case of death by dangerous driving, when there is death by careless driver under the influence of alcohol, drug and intoxicating substance, the fine is being increased and the minimum disqualification is being increased from three years to five years in case for first time offenders and from five years to 10 years in case of second time offenders.

On top of that, additional sanction if the driver, *chauffard*, is taken before the magistrate and the magistrate for any reason is unable to deliver a judgment on the same day, but the person after *cellcule de dégrisement* comes to the magistrate court, then we are introducing a new penalty where the magistrate can temporarily take the driving licence of that person because he has been found to be driving under the influence of alcohol and drug – so, again, as a means of deterrence.

The hon. Leader of Opposition takes objection to the fact that we are removing the possibility of the magistrate to impose a community sentence. We make no apology for it, Madam Speaker. This is what we want. We want to deter people who are driving under the influence of alcohol or drug. That is why the sanction is fine, prison, disqualification. And I will tell you, for me, personally, the law does not go far enough. Unfortunately, the Director of Public Prosecution, when he sent his comments, he said, and I quote –

> "Courts in Mauritius continue to be lenient in their approach to sentencing. Courts in Mauritius continue to be lenient in sentencing when there is death caused by reckless driving, caused by drivers under the influence of alcohol, under the influence of drug."

And, so, the DPP is saying: please, increase the sentencing so that when we appear, we plead before the magistrate court, we can ask for tougher sentence.

Unfortunately, I say unfortunately, because we have not been able in the time limit to change the custodial sentencing. We have only increased the fine and the disqualification period. Sentencing will come, but first, we have been advised by Attorney General's Office that he needs further consultation because he needs to come up with sentencing guidelines together with the Chief Justice Office because it concerns administration of justice.

But again, let this be very clear. This Government has zero tolerance for people who drink and drive or who use drug. This is why we have introduced this new concept of seizure of vehicle.

Again, I do not understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, well, maybe in his *toge d'avocat* became *le défenseur des personnes dont le véhicule va être saisi. Il n'est pas d'accord R 2000 par jour. Il n'est pas d'accord que dans le* notice of seizure*, ce n'est pas assez explicite quand vous allez devoir retourner le véhicule. Il n'est pas d'accord qu'on doit payer R 2000, le chauffeur doit payer R 2000 si c'est la faute de la police*

Let us read what this section says.

Madam Speaker: He said if the person is acquitted, then maybe you should consider – as far as I remember – should consider reimbursement. This is what I seem to remember.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, under what circumstance can you seize? Not under any circumstances can you seize a vehicle. First, under the new section 123AP, seizure of motor vehicles for offences under section 123E. What does 123E deals with?

Section 123E deals with driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle when under the influence of intoxicated drink or drug. We are not talking about seizing the vehicle anyone who had done a speeding offence or has parked wrongly or has obstructed the passage. We are talking about very serious offences; this is when the Police can seize. And not only after there is a suspicion that this offence has been committed, the police officer, and I read –

"The police officer shall, in the interest and safety of the public, take custody of the motor vehicle and take or cause to be taken the motor vehicle to a place of safety."

So, first, it is limited to cases where the driver is under the influence of alcohol or drug. The public is not safe if he continues driving. What does the Police do? He knows that the driver is driving under the influence of alcohol, and says, 'Okay, I do not have the power to seize the vehicle. So, you can drive home.' This is what we are trying to avoid – cases where you get someone who refuses to give his sample. He refuses and we suspect that he has been taking drugs. We suspect that he has been taking alcohol beyond what is permissible. And it is not safe for road users to allow this person to go back in his car on the road. That is when the Police is able to carry out the seizure. So, it is not under any circumstances where you can just simply seize the vehicle.

Madam Speaker, I would like to end by drawing attention to something which many people tend to overlook. Road accidents kill people, destroy families, take away the life and the livelihood of someone but there is also an economic cost to road accident that is caused by someone under the influence of drug or alcohol or driving without a permit. When there is a road accident, there is road congestion; everybody is delayed. There is damage to property. Very often, someone will go and crash against a barrier or a lamp post – public property. It will have to be repaired. The car will have to be repaired. The insurance premium will go up but more importantly, when you are dealing with a driver who is driving without a licence the influence of drug or a driver under the influence of alcohol driving in excess of the permitted limit, there is no insurance cover for such driver. So, what happens to the victim? The driver is drug intoxicated; he goes and kills someone. The insurance says, "No. Exclusion clause – I do not cover any such type of insurance. Go and see your insurance." There are exclusion clauses. What happens to the family? This is why, Madam Speaker, for the population to understand, the aim is not to collect revenue, to impose tough fine. The aim is very simple: We want safer roads. We want less road accidents. That is why I am supporting this Bill.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Prime Minister!

(6.44 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Bill in front of us today concerns something more fundamental than traffic management, more fundamental than penalties, and more fundamental than enforcement of regulations. At its heart, this Bill concerns the protection of human lives, responsibility that each one of us has when using our roads.

Every year, Madam Speaker, you hear, you see on the papers several families receive a devastating news that a husband or a wife or a child, a son, a daughter or a friend, a parent will not be coming home because he or she has passed away or has badly been injured in a road accident. The fundamental point at times is that a whole family is decimated by the behaviour of a irresponsible and reckless driver, a *chauffard* in other words.

For those families, friends and relatives, the consequences do not end when the accident is cleared and the traffic resumes. Their lives change forever. Children may grow up without a parent. Parents may have to live with the loss of a child. A family may suddenly find itself dealing, not only with grief, but also with financial, emotional and social consequences that can last forever.

Road accidents have significant socio-economic consequences for our country, extending far beyond the immediate costs of a vehicle or property damaged or medical treatment. They result in loss of life, very often permanent disabilities and injuries, and they place a financial and emotional burden on these families. The wider social impact includes reduced household income, increased dependency on social protection and diminished quality of life.

This is why I have repeated many times: one death on our roads is one too many! It is unacceptable that so many people continue to lose their lives on our roads! 102 fatal accidents already registered by the end of last month. We need, Madam Speaker, to take the bull by the horns. *Il faut un remède de cheval*. Human lives are at stake! We cannot simply accept the status quo just because that is the way it has been so far!

You know, Madam Speaker, in April of 2025, I was at a summit in Ethiopia and I met the Secretary General of the UN. I asked him whether he could send his Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr Jean Todt, who was in Formula 1 before that, to Mauritius to assess the situation, to give us his advice. He came, he assessed the critical situation of road accidents and he made recommendations to address safety challenges.

As highlighted by Mr Todt during his visit, road safety begins with behaviour. Fastening seat belts, as hon. Osman Mahomed just said. Even myself when I got back on the road, before I put my seatbelt at the back, he stopped the car and he said, 'Prime Minister, you have not put your seatbelt yet'. New cars, by the way, have an alarm which prevents you, not to go along without it. He spoke about banning mobile phones while driving, and, of course, and never driving under the influence of illicit substances. These are simple actions with life-saving impact. These must be reinforced by strong legal frameworks.

We had far-reaching discussions and further to his advice, we increased our contribution to the UN Road Safety Fund in the last budget. Building on this momentum, we can look forward to securing further assistance from the Fund to bolster our national road safety initiatives.

By the way, when he spoke of helmets – he examined a lot of helmets and he told us most of them are unfit. There have to be some regulations for helmets as well. We have not done so yet because it is too early, but we will be doing that.

Madam Speaker, Government has adopted a comprehensive approach to road safety. We reintroduced the Penalty Point System in January this year to deter reckless driving and encourage accountability.

However, there is still an upward trend which confirms what we already know, that existing punitive measures alone are insufficient for shifting fundamental driver behaviour. But we need, nevertheless, to introduce further legislation through the targeted approach that we are making. It must bite. It must have an effect.

These upcoming legal adjustments are designed to close enforcement loopholes, significantly stiffen penalties for repeat offenders, and grant law enforcement broader powers to crackdown on dangerous driving habits. By reinforcing the current framework with these stricter statutory changes, we aim to establish a more robust deterrent and curb the escalating frequency of road accidents.

To achieve our goal, we are simultaneously ramping up enforcement and expanding our technological capabilities while exploring the full potential of safe city cameras and artificial intelligence to detect offences. We have to systematically reinforce our legislative framework to foster behavioural shifts required from every road user.

I listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He is right in saying – one thing that I agree with him – that we should not have the Police hiding somewhere in a bush and just coming out with a speed gun. This is not the right approach. This gives rise to other problems. He is aware of it. But this is something that we have to address. But with the new technology, I mentioned it I think, one day responding to a question, that with AI today, you can actually – in Europe, they are doing it, in France, Germany – detect from AI whether somebody is using his mobile phone or not. So, we have to use new technology.

As hon. Mahomed said, road safety is not merely a question of infrastructure or law enforcement. It is also a matter of culture. This is a fundamental point. We can amend the law. We can increase penalties, install cameras wherever we want and give Police stronger powers, but no government can put a Police Officer beside every driver, on every road, at every moment of the day. It is impossible!

Ultimately, road safety depends upon the decisions made by individuals. It depends on –

- whether the driver decides to slow down;
- whether a person who has consumed alcohol decides not to drive or to drive;
- whether a driver puts the mobile phone away;
- whether a motorcyclist respects the rules;
- whether a motorist gives way to a pedestrian on a crossing – we have seen this before, and
- whether a person responds to frustration with patience rather than aggression.

Speaking of slowing down, I saw the hon. Leader of the Opposition say that we need to have more speed humps, I think. I do not think that is the answer. Speeds humps have its own problems. When you have an ambulance or a fire engine, the lorry has to go, it slows down because of the hump. This is also a problem. We should put the humps, I think, wherever it is essential, near schools, things like that, but not all over the place. He agrees with me.

The law must establish the boundaries, but society must develop the right culture, the right attitude. Government can provide leadership, but every road user must accept his or her responsibility.

The Bill before the House today, Madam Speaker, addresses some of the most serious risks on our roads, including driving under the influence of alcohol or drug or intoxicating substance, dangerous and careless driving resulting in death, driving without a licence resulting in death, illegal road racing, road rage, distracted driving and failure to comply with police directions.

At the same time, the Bill modernises our traffic administration through measures such as the Digital Driving Licence – it is a big step forward – and electronic payment of traffic fines. People do not have to queue up all day to pay fines. These provisions must, therefore, be seen as part of a single objective: to make our roads safer, to save lives and facilitate what can be facilitated.

Let me first address the issue of driving under the influence of alcohol or drug or any other intoxicating substance. There can be no ambiguity in the Government's position on this matter. Driving under the influence is one of the most serious risks that a person can deliberately create on our roads.

You know before, Madam Speaker, somebody who had the means would run away, go to a clinic. The law said the Police cannot go to the clinic. We changed that law. Even if you go hide in a clinic today, the Police can have access to you and test your blood. If you refuse to giving your blood – I think hon. Uteem was saying that – the assumption is, therefore, that you were above the limit.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that between 01 January to 31 August of this year, the Police recorded 2,205 cases of drivers exceeding the permissible alcohol limit and 617 cases involving persons driving under the influence of drugs. These figures are a serious reminder that impaired driving remains a significant road-safety concern.

This is why, Madam Speaker, as a responsible Government, we are taking a firm position. The Bill strengthens the penalties for causing death by careless driving while under the influence of alcohol, drug or any other intoxicating substance. It also provides for the seizure of motor vehicles in specified circumstances involved in that kind of driving. I think hon. Uteem made the point.

You know, Madam Speaker, in Dubai, you go through a red light, the Police are allowed to seize your vehicle whether it is a Ferrari or a Rolls Royce or whatever it is! I have seen pictures. They have shown me. All these cars being held because of an infraction of one law.

So, the seizure mechanism being introduced is not intended to replace the criminal process. It is a preventive measure intended to address an immediate public-safety risk. Where a person is found in circumstances indicating that his physical condition is impaired, the authorities must have the ability, within the parameters of the law, to prevent that vehicle from continuing on the road and to safeguard the life, not only of the driver, but also to prevent him from potentially causing harm to others. As hon. Uteem rightly said, the Police cannot say: 'Okay we have fined you. You can carry on.' It cannot be like this!

Another important provision of this Bill concerns the situation that, in fact, concerns all of us – causing the death of another person while driving without a driving licence or a provisional driving licence or an international driving permit. I agree with the hon. Stéphanie Anquetil. I did speak about this graduated licence.

In Canada, it is a very strict test. And once you pass, you have to have, just like here you have a Learner on the back, you have another sticker which you have to put on the vehicle. I do not know why they put 'R' in green, but it means that this driver is a new driver. Therefore, likely not to have the experience that another driver would have. You have to be careful with him or her.

A person should not have the legal authority to drive if he or she is under the influence of… Never! They should never be driving. If that person, nevertheless, chooses to take control of a motor vehicle, and through that unlawful conduct, causes the death of another human being, he or she will have to bear the full consequences of his or her irresponsibility.

This is an important statement of principle. Driving, Madam Speaker, is a responsibility. It is not an entitlement. The right to use a motor vehicle on our roads comes with legal obligations. Where a person has no legal authority to drive, and nevertheless chooses to do so, causing the death of another person, the consequences must reflect the seriousness of that conduct.

The Bill also strengthens the penalties for causing death by dangerous driving. We must distinguish between an unfortunate mistake that can happen and conduct that is so dangerous

that it places the lives of others at serious risk. When dangerous driving results in death, the consequences are irreversible. That person has already died. No penalty can bring back a loved one. It is over. But the law must nevertheless establish a clear accountability and provide an effective deterrent.

The same principle applies to illegal road racing. Public roads, they are not meant to be race tracks, Madam Speaker. I know there has been demand for a proper road racing track. This is also in the pipeline. It will come.

Roads are shared spaces used by families, by workers, by pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, including public transport and emergency vehicles. When people choose to race vehicles on public roads, they are not simply taking a risk with themselves. They are imposing a risk on everyone around them.

The Bill, therefore, provides substantially stronger penalties for illegal road racing. Incidentally, Madam Speaker, Government is seriously considering, as I say, the proper race track as a joint public-private sector venture.

The Bill also introduces a specific offence of road rage. This is an area where legislation must respond to a behavioural problem that cannot be normalised. This is increasing in Mauritius for some reason. Road safety relies heavily on mindful driver behaviour and a collective commitment to protecting all road users. When motorists avoid distractions like mobile phones, adhere strictly to speed limits, respect the right to way for pedestrians and cyclists, the risk of preventable collisions drops significantly. Cultivating patience behind the wheel and maintaining an awareness transform our streets from high stress corridors into shared, predictable spaces where everyone can travel safely.

A disagreement between two motorists should not turn into an aggressive behaviour. Frustration should not turn into threats. A dispute of a traffic manoeuvre should not end in assault or damage to another person's vehicle. Yet, we have seen how quickly anger can escalate when people are behind the wheel.

This Bill, therefore, Madam Speaker, recognises a range of aggressive and violent conduct as road rage, including threats of assault, abusive or insulting behaviour, damage to vehicles or property, or other conduct capable of causing fear or resulting in the breach of the peace. The offence applies broadly to road users, including drivers, riders, cyclists,

passengers and pedestrians. Our road, Madam Speaker, belong to all of us and every road user has the right to use them without fear of intimidation or violence.

The reintroduction of the Penalty Point System was an important step by this Government. But we have never regarded it as a final solution – it is not. I know that hon. Osman Mahomed is regularly monitoring the performance of the new system and is advising Government on what is on what is working and what may need to be further changed.

The Bill also brings aspects of our traffic administration into the modern age, as I said. The digital driving licence will provide drivers with a convenient and secure means of demonstrating that they hold a valid driving licence, including through the KOREK super App that hon. Dr. Ramtohul has provided. Additionally, provisions have been made for the electronic payment, as I said, for fixed penalty notices. These notices must not carry penalty points, by the way. These measures are part of Government's broader programme of digitalisation and modernisation of public services. A modern State must use all the technology that it can, not only to make services more convenient, but also to make them more efficient and effective.

At the same time, the Bill addresses the problem of excessive vehicular noise like you mentioned, caused by altered silencers. This is also a question of respect for communities through which our roads pass. People have the right to peace in their own homes and road users must understand that responsible driving means respecting other members of society.

Just the other day, a director of a hotel rang me to say, the tourists are complaining about the excessive noise that they are making, not just with the altered silencers, but also loud music. There is a common principle which runs through all these provisions. Whether we are dealing with drink driving or drug driving or dangerous driving or unlicensed driving, road racing, road rage, the underlying issue is responsibility.

We need to change the way we think about road safety. We should not be asking: what is the penalty if I am caught? We should be asking: what risk am I creating for myself and others? This is why we say that there has to be a change in attitude and mentality.

Government has a responsibility to provide the framework for that change. I insist that an effective enforcement of the Road Traffic Act by the Police is essential to achieving the objectives of road safety legislation. Laws, Madam Speaker, can only serve its intended purpose when road users are aware that violations will be detected, that they will be

appropriately sanctioned. Strong enforcement also reinforces public confidence in the law and promotes a culture of responsibility and compliance among road users.

The introduction of body worn cameras for Police and road traffic enforcement officers will contribute significantly to reducing corruption, enhancing accountability in the enforcement of the road traffic legislation. Body worn cameras can discourage both the solicitation and offering of improper payments, while also protecting the officers from unfounded allegations. So often, we have seen everything has been done correctly and then, I am sorry to say to my friend lawyers, a lawyer comes and advises the client: 'Say all this is untrue'. With a camera, body worn camera, this is not going to be possible.

The Bill duly takes care of the common issue being encountered by Police Officers in their routine checks, that is, drivers failing to stop their vehicles at Police checkpoints despite being signalled to do so. The fine for this offence is being significantly increased to deter such behaviour. I do not know, I am sure hon. Members have seen in France. So many times this has happened recently. Police stopping a vehicle, they refuse to follow the sign, the Police shoot. So many deaths have happened in France. It happens very often in the US as well.

Madam Speaker, you know, at the passing out parade on Saturday, I said the uniform of a Police Officer needs to be respected, needs to be trusted. Every interaction they have with a member of the public is an opportunity also for them to demonstrate integrity, professionalism and respect for the law. They are entrusted with powers that must never be misused for personal gain.

The public expects them to enforce the law without fear or favour and I am confident that the Force will rise to that responsibility and contribute to making our roads safer and our society more secure.

Good governance, however, extends beyond the state apparatus. Citizens share an equal stake in the framework, requiring mindfulness of their own civic duties and obligations to uphold the public good.

Madam Speaker, we are not seeking to impose penalties simply because an accident has happened. We are seeking to ensure that conduct that creates serious and unacceptable risk is met with appropriate consequences. We are strengthening the law where the existing

framework is not sufficient, providing the Police with preventive powers where there is an immediate danger, and therefore, we are also modernising the tools that the State can use.

The objective is not to collect more fines or to disqualify more drivers.

The objective is not to seize more vehicles.

The objective is to save lives!

The ultimate measure of success will not be the number of fines issued, but will be the number of lives saved.

Hon. Minister Uteem has dealt with this question of magistrate discussion – it is in specific cases that we are talking about. And also, about the illegal gathering that I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition is thinking we are preventing gathering. That is not what the Bill says.

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker. I wish to reiterate that the Government has a fundamental duty to protect the citizens and fully intend to fulfil its obligation. This Bill represents another critical step in that direction. It is a measure built on responsibility, accountability and prevention. Ultimately, it is a Bill about human life.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Minister. Your winding up.

(7.09 p.m.)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, as we conclude the stages of this vital piece of legislation, I wish to place on record my sincere gratitude to all hon. Members who have contributed to the passionate debates on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2026. They are, respectively, hon. Leader of the Opposition, hon. Dr. Ramtohul, hon. Anquetil and hon. Uteem, who has added that the law has not gone far enough. He said that.

Allow me to reiterate my gratitude to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister for the importance he has consistently attached to the issue of road safety and for his strong leadership in driving this legislative reform forward. The measures contained in this Bill reflect this Government's determination to strengthen our response to dangerous behaviour on our roads, and above all, to better protect the daily lives and safety of our citizens.

Madam Speaker, during my intervention on the Bill today, I set out in details the principal measures contained therein and put forth the reasons why Government considers these amendments necessary. I trust that the debate has allowed the House to appreciate the broader objectives which underpin this legislation. I repeat it, the objective is straightforward: to make our roads safer and to strengthen the protection of all road users.

Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his inaugural intervention – he said so himself – on such a complex and important Bill. I have listened carefully to the comments raised, and I have to mention that the introduction of this new section, through Clause 6, has been in fact recommended by the DPP. He had written a comprehensive letter to me which we discussed about. Hon. Uteem, who was acting Attorney General, was privy to a copy of this letter, and whatever he has said, vehemently so, will be considered, if not fully now, but in due course. He spoke about the courts as well and the magistrate's discussion, but that is going to be for future consideration.

In view of the aggravated circumstances brought about someone driving without licence, who goes on to cause the death of another person, the House will recall that we had such an unfortunate death recently. s important if we want to treat such offences seriously to protect road users. Sections 123 AB and 123 AD also provide that section 153 of the Criminal Procedure Act will not apply.

The new Bill complements the Bill passed in the National Assembly, in December 2025, that sought to bring about the reintroduction of the Penalty Points System. It comprises several decisions of Government taken over the last nine months. What we brought about in this Bill today did not come suddenly. These were several decisions taken at policy level in Cabinet meeting and communicated, and this major overhauling is a summarisation of all this.

I recall, for example, that the impoundment of vehicle was first evoked by the hon. Prime Minister, following fatal accidents which occurred during Maha Shivaratri pilgrimage of 2025 – so, it is not coming out of the blue – and reiterated this year as well in a similar context. I am rebutting what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, that we brought a piece of legislation out of a sudden. No, several decisions, policy decisions, were taken over time and well thought of.

In regard to the apprehension raised by the Leader of the Opposition about Clause 11 on the road rage – hon. Uteem and the hon. Prime Minister have also mentioned about it –, it will be for the court to determine whether in any particular circumstances any person has blocked, obstructed, hindered or restricted free passage of another road user. It goes without saying that the court will consider the version of the defendant brought before the court. You are a seasoned barrister; you will know what I am talking about. I also note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition with regard to the seizure mechanism being introduced, which I should emphasise is not intended to replace the criminal process.

With regard to the recent fatal accident which occurred at Deep River, Beau Champ, I am informed that the TMRSU of my Ministry has already carried out – in fact, we had spoken together, you remember? We had spoken with the Director of the TMRSU, and he is here today. Action has been taken. But you will surely agree that I will not be in a position to answer for fatal accidents that occurred before this Government came into power. Will I? For the recent one, yes. We are taking strict action on this.

I have to point out that a road safety assessment is being undertaken by the TMRSU islandwide to enable my Ministry to take data-driven decisions. Specific attention is being paid to accident prone areas as a matter of priority for the implementation of traffic calming measures. An islandwide survey is also ongoing in relation to traffic signages and road markings and work orders are being issued under the framework agreement on a priority basis.

I mentioned this morning, I rely a lot on my colleagues, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and the Minister of Local Government, because the TMRSU being a small unit will not be able to cover the whole island. And here, I have in mind the potholes on the road and the road markings which have faded away over time. The TMRSU draws for the first time, but the maintenance of the signages and the road markings are up to the highway authority, as defined in the Roads Act.

Coming to the place of safety raised by the Leader of the Opposition and hon. Anquetil as well, I have been made aware that the Police have identified a few designated places, and several other places are yet to be identified across the island. These identified places will be equipped with all security facilities, including fencing and CCTV surveillance cameras in all divisions, including Rodrigues. Every vehicle owner will, in the notice of seizure, be made

aware of the place of safety where his vehicle will be kept. I will make sure that this is taken care of in the prescribed notice of seizure in due course.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has adopted a very friendly tone, soft tone, with concrete propositions. He has asked me a lot of questions. I would like, at this stage, to ask him one question, if I may. The press had published his declaration of assets. He has seemingly 37 motorcycles meant for rental in Rodrigues – 37. He is an amateur of motorcycle clearly so, but what perturbs me is they are meant for rental.

(Interruptions)

So, he is directly concerned with this issue. But I do not recall the hon. Leader of the Opposition has declared his interest whilst he was vehemently harping on the seizure of vehicle which include motorcycles. That is a moot point.

(Interruptions)

This is what I gathered. It is for rental.

Madam Speaker: Easier to find a place for a motorcycle than a motor vehicle. To be kept!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: But the press goes on to say that he also has properties in Rodrigues which are rented. I do not know, but it is in the press.

Madam Speaker: It is private.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is in the press – Defimedia. You know Defimedia had published your list of *avoirs*.

I am also comforted that the Police are diligently working on the Graduated Licensing Scheme system, raised by hon. Anquetil, which is a pertinent question. Hon. Anquetil, this is in our Government Programme, and I can tell you the Police is working very hard on this and they are very keen about it. Gone will be the days when licence seekers go to the Line Barracks only to pass the exam. They will have to go to the Line Barracks after they have learned how to drive and ride. This is the four-step graduated licensing scheme. The

representative of the Police, at almost the highest level, is here, and my plea to him is to move forward on this the soonest possible. And he has said he will do it.

Madam Speaker, the views expressed across both sides of the House reflect our shared, national anguish over the loss of lives on our public roads and our collective determination to put an end to the carnage. Over the course of today's debates, we have addressed the hard truth from the devastating reality of the unlicensed and underage driving, underscored so tragically just a few days ago, to the persistent threat of drink driving, drug impaired motoring, mobile phones destructions, reckless driving, road racing and road rage as well as the inconveniences caused by excessive vehicular noise emission amongst others.

Madam Speaker, it is high time that each one of us recognises that road safety is not only about speed, alcohol or mechanical conditions. It is mostly about behaviour which imperatively requires a change of mindset. The hon. Prime Minister used the word culture, which is right. Frustration on the road must not become aggression. A disagreement between motorists must not become an assault. A dispute over a manoeuvre must not escalate into threats, intimidation or damage to property.

You know what kind of harm this does to our country while video is being circulated all over the world. Canada has advised its own citizens while traveling to Mauritius to be wary about road safety because of what they see on the social media. So, we have to be stern. We want a road culture. Madam Speaker, the objective is not to give unchecked powers to the authorities. The objective is to give the enforcement agencies appropriate and effective tools to deal with conduct which presents a genuine risk to public safety.

There must, therefore, be a balance between effective enforcement and respect for the rights of individuals. Government is confident that the framework established by this Bill achieves this balance. Madam Speaker, with the valuable inputs of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, which I mentioned earlier, we will move the agenda still forward until we achieve the objective we have set for ourselves. We have the resolve for this. I take the opportunity upon my colleague, the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure, which I mentioned earlier, for the road maintenance.

Before I conclude, let me place on record my deepest appreciation and gratitude to the hon. Attorney General and his team. Drafting a complex multifaceted piece of legislation like the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2026, which will change the landscape going forward,

while meticulously balancing public safety imperatives, constitutional safeguards and technical precision is no small feat, you will surely agree. I am also thankful to the officers of my Ministry. I drive them a lot. I thank them. I take this opportunity to thank them today.

The Commissioner of Police and other the other stakeholders who have diligently worked in the finalisation of this Bill. Let us continue to work together towards safer roads, greater responsibility among road users and ultimately fewer lives lost on our roads.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL

(NO. XV OF 2026)

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2026) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2026) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 20 October 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Yes, adjournment matters!

MATTERS RAISED

(7.27 p.m.)

ROUTE 240 (GRAND BAIE TO FLACQ) – BUS SERVICES EXTENSION

Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Bon Accueil & Flacq): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a humble request to the hon. Minister of Land Transport – today's hero.

Madam Speaker: Speak up!

Mr Ramkalawon: Whether the services provided by the bus route 240, Sottise, Grand Baie to Flacq, could be extended to the village of L'Aventure as part of its itinerary? Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): Madam Speaker, I will certainly look into it. I have taken good note as well.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry I did not hear anything. It does not matter. You will do the needful?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Yes, Miss…

(7.28 p.m.)

HENRIETTA – PONT-VANTARD – DANGEROUS JUNCTION

Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci. Étant donné le projet de loi à l'agenda et les avantages mentionnés par l'honorable ministre lui-même des ralentisseurs à certains endroits, ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Transports terrestres et concerne les habitants de Camp Bellin, à Glen Park, qui vivent avec un problème d'insécurité sur la route Henrietta, particulièrement au niveau du Pont-Vantard.

À cet endroit se trouve une jonction avec un virage qui empêche de voir les véhicules qui arrivent, ce qui cause régulièrement des accidents. À cela s'ajoute le fait que des véhicules

y circulent souvent à des vitesses excessives, mettant davantage en danger les habitants et les piétons qui empruntent cette route au quotidien. Vu le caractère résidentiel de la zone et cette configuration dangereuse, le risque est réel et va en s'aggravant.

Les habitants avaient d'ailleurs exprimé leurs inquiétudes à travers une pétition que j'ai partagée au ministre, accompagnée d'une demande officielle. Mais je saisis l'occasion, aujourd'hui, pour lui demander à nouveau, plutôt, de faire le nécessaire pour qu'un ralentisseur soit installé au niveau ou aux abords du Pont Vantard, route Henrietta, afin de ralentir la circulation à l'approche de cette jonction dangereuse et d'assurer la sécurité des habitants de la localité. Merci.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): Madam Speaker, I would have just replied to say point noted and I will look into. But I have to tell the House and I said it earlier this morning, a practical or rather a legal impediment that we are facing these days is one of the contractors that the TMRSU has awarded the contract through the Central Procurement Board has seemingly quoted very low prices for him to get the tender. Now, he is not able to *rann lapel.* Every time they ask him to do an intervention at a specific location – I do agree the hon. Member had spoken to me about it –, he bolts away. He bolts away!

Madam Speaker: Oh, that is your problem.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is. But, Madam Speaker, I hope my colleagues in the House will understand, this is beyond me. We will have to sack him but if we sack him, we will have to float a tender again; it is going to take a long time again but we are looking into it.

Madam Speaker: Find a good solution.

Mr Osman Mahomed: We are looking into a solution, yes.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Beechook!

(7.30 p.m.)

BAGUETTE BREAD – SUBSIDISED PRICE – NON-COMPLIANCE

Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Merci Madame la présidente. Ma requête est adressée à l'honorable ministre du Commerce et de la protection

des consommateurs. Mais en son absence, je m'adresse à l'honorable Premier ministre qui, j'en suis certain, dirigera ma requête à celui ou celle qui assurera la suppléance. Je ne suis pas certain, c'est peut-être l'honorable membre de la circonscription numéro 3.

Madame la présidente, le prix d'une baguette de 200 g est fixé à R 8 l'unité. Ce prix est rendu possible par l'État car l'État, à travers la STC, vend la pochette de 25 kilo de farine au prix subventionné de R 217.50, c'est-à-dire 33,5 % moins cher que le prix de marché. En revanche, nous constatons avec regret que la baguette à R 8 est invisible sur les rayons de supermarché et dans les boulangeries.

À la place, l'on trouve des baguettes saupoudrées de quelques graines de sésame ou de graines de pavot qui se vendent entre R 10 et R 15 en supermarché et en boulangerie. Le prix de ce qu'on appelle les *fancy breads* n'est pas contrôlé par l'État. Je lance un appel à l'honorable ministre suppléant concerné de mettre fin à cette pratique. Il est inacceptable que les boulangeries et supermarchés ne proposent de baguettes à 200 g à R 8, contraignant ainsi les consommateurs à payer plus cher pour ces *fancy breads*. La taxe payée par les contribuables mauriciens doit servir à alléger le portefeuille des consommateurs et non enrichir les boulangeries et les supermarchés. La baguette à R 8 doit être disponible à tout moment pour les consommateurs.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

The Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives (Mr A. Ameer Meea): Yes, Madam Speaker, I have taken good note of the request and the concern of the hon. Member. I shall transmit the message to the Ministry of Commerce and I am sure that they will do the needful. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(7.32 p.m.)

PORT LOUIS – MOTORWAY M1 – FLEXIBLE BOLLARDS – HAZARD STATE

Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you. My request is addressed to the Ministry of Land and Transport, my good friend hon.

Osman Mahomed. My request concerns all users of the M1 Motorway entering into Port Louis at the level of Bell Village where we have the so-called Saint Louis flyover. One must have noticed – all of us – there are a number of flexible bollards that have been installed to have a lane separation for some who go directly towards Caudan or those who go towards Bell Village. Many of these bollards have been destroyed, are in a very poor shape and are missing, causing trouble. Many cars are zigzagging, causing a problem of security which you have just mentioned today, and becoming a hazard and accidents for people going to Port Louis. I humbly request you to have the TMRSU to have a site visit on their own and to have it replaced since we are having major conferences in this country towards the end of the year. Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): It is not in my habit to pass the buck around, but this one, really, by law, does not fall under me because this is a motorway. It falls under my immediate neighbour which I hope he will answer.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

The Minister National Infrastructure (Mr A. Gunness): Obviously, I will transmit the message to the RDA to act quite quickly on that.

Madam Speaker: And you will see to it that it is done.

Mr Gunness: It is done.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

(7.34 p.m.)

MOTORWAY – MOTORCYCLES OVERTAKING – ROAD ACCIDENT

Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member of Savanne & Black River): May I ask the hon. Minister of Land Transport again, who is the vedette today. If he can inform the House whether action will be taken concerning these motorcycles overtaking left and right, even on the mid of the motorway, whether action will be taken against them concerning road accident. Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport (Mr Osman Mahomed): Madam Speaker, this is enforcement. This befalls under the police. Mr Rambhursy who is here would have taken

good note of this. He is one of the top guys at the Police Force. It is not in my remit. I can assure you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, it is enforcement. We all know what it is.

Yes, okay! Thank you very much everybody. We suspend the Sitting.

At 7.34 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 20 October 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CASINOS OF MAURITIUS – PROPOSED DISINVESTMENT PROCESS – IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/1235) 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 the proposed disinvestment process of the Casinos of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation Ltd., information as to whether the potential impact thereof on the employment, terms and conditions of service, salaries, pensions and other acquired rights and benefits of the 600 employees thereof has been assessed and, if so, indicate the measures being envisaged to ensure that no employee is adversely affected.

(Withdrawn)

SUICIDE CASES – CAUSES & PREVENTION

(No. B/1236) 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 suicide, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

(i) the number of reported cases thereof on a yearly basis over the past five years, giving a breakdown thereof by age group, and

(ii) whether any study has been carried out to identify the principal causes and contributing factors thereof, and

(b) state the measures being taken and/or envisaged, in collaboration with the relevant Ministries and stakeholders to address the causes and curb the incidence thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Health and Wellness): I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from 01 January 2021 to 23 July 2026, a total of 662 cases of suicide have been reported to the Police.

According to the latest available data from the World Health Organisation, the suicide rate was 9.2 per 100,000 population in 2021. In Mauritius, the corresponding rate is 11.4 per 100,000 population for the year 2025.

With regard to part (a)(i) of the question, the breakdown of statistics on suicide by age group, as provided by the Commissioner of Police, is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly

With regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed by the Police that no formal study has been undertaken on reported cases of suicide. Although Mauritius has not yet conducted a comprehensive nationwide study of all reported suicide cases, a number of local research studies have examined suicide, suicide attempts and suicidal behaviour and have provided useful evidence on the epidemiology, risk factors and prevention of suicide.

The principal studies carried out in Mauritius include –

- Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Suicide in Mauritius: A Case-Control Study (Ameerbeg, 2005) conducted at the Mauritius Institute of Health and funded by the Mauritius Research Council;
- Self-harm by Poisoning in Mauritius (Naga, 2007);
- Suicides in the Island of Mauritius over a Decade (2000–2010) (Goorah et al., 2013), and
- Suicidality among Adolescents in Mauritius (2021) based on data from the Global School-based Student Health Survey.

Collectively, these studies indicate that suicide and suicidal behaviour are multifactorial and arise from a complex interaction of biological, psychological, social and environmental factors.

The available evidence suggests that the principal contributing factors include –

- depression and other mental health disorders;
- interpersonal and family conflicts;
- relationship breakdown and domestic violence;
- alcohol and substance misuse;
- financial hardship, unemployment and other socio-economic stressors;
- loneliness, social isolation and inadequate family or social support;
- anxiety, bullying and exposure to violence, particularly among adolescents, and
- poor coping mechanisms following stressful life events.

The studies further indicate that young people, particularly adolescents and young adults, constitute an important at-risk group. The studies also recommend strengthening mental health services, promoting early identification and intervention for persons at risk, expanding school-based mental health programmes, enhancing family and community support systems, improving suicide surveillance and continuing public awareness and stigma reduction initiatives.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has, in 2017, participated in the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS), a collaborative surveillance initiative designed to assist countries in measuring and assessing behavioural risk and protective factors among adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years.

The survey uses a self-administered questionnaire to collect data on health-related behaviours, including mental health indicators such as suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among 3012 students. According to the study, 16% of students reported that they seriously attempted suicide during the 12 months before the survey.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) and the *Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille* (BPF), in line with their respective mandates, conduct awareness campaigns throughout the island to sensitise members of the public on crime prevention issues, including suicide prevention by organising workshops and forums for pupils of primary and secondary schools as well as for youths. Parents are also sensitised on their roles and responsibilities towards their children through Parental Empowerment Programmes conducted for Parent-Teacher Associations, women and senior citizens, with a view to helping prevent suicide. Members of

the public are also provided with relevant information and advice during safety and security campaigns and exhibitions across the island.

My Ministry has also undertaken the following initiatives with regard to suicide prevention. Pamphlets are being distributed in all health institutions. In addition, psychologists regularly deliver talks on suicide prevention in educational institutions, youth centres and workplaces, with a view to promoting mental health awareness and reducing stigma.

There is also the Life Plus Hotline 188, which operates on a 24/7 basis and attends to emergency calls by providing counselling and bereavement support to families. The hotline is operated by two lifecare officers at Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre. In 2025, the officers attended to 1,251 calls and 24 postventions (on site family counselling post-suicide). In addition, the life care officers regularly deliver talks and conduct sensitisation campaigns in educational institutions, social centres and women empowerment centres.

I am further informed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource that between June 2021 and June 2026, the National Education Counselling Service (NECS) reported 183 cases of suicidal tendencies (41 primary and 142 secondary learners). While no formal study has been carried out by the NECS on reported cases of suicide, analysis of cases referred to the service indicates that the main factors associated with learners' psychological distress include academic pressure, bullying and peer conflicts, the influence of social media, family-related difficulties and mental health concerns.

I am further informed that to support learners at risk, the NECS provides individual counselling, parental counselling and referrals to specialised mental health services where required. Counselling Units (*Service d'Écoute*) and Student Care and Counselling Desks have been established in state secondary schools to provide early intervention and support to students in distress. Furthermore, awareness and sensitisation programmes are conducted in schools on mental health, suicide prevention, stress management and coping strategies. Case conferences involving relevant stakeholders are also convened, where necessary, to develop coordinated intervention plans for learners identified as being at risk.

Suicide prevention requires a coordinated and sustained multisectoral approach. Continued attention should also be given to emerging challenges, including the influence of digital platforms and social media. While further research is required to better understand their impact on mental health and suicidal behaviour, exposure to harmful content,

cyberbullying, online pressures and negative online interactions may contribute to emotional distress, particularly among vulnerable young persons.

NATIONAL CANNABIS POLICY REFORM – TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP – OPERATIONAL DETAILS & REPORT FINALISATION

(No. B/1237) 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 the Technical Working Group on the National Cannabis Policy Reform, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Agency for Drug Control, information as to the –

(a) constitutive date and composition thereof, indicating the expertise held and institutional affiliation of the members thereof;
(b) number of meetings held to date;
(c) expertise sought from international organisations and stakeholders, and
(d) where matters stand as to the finalisation of the report thereof.

(Withdrawn)

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR'S LICENCE EXAMINATION – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUANCE

(No. B/1239) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) 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 Driving Instructor's Licence Examination scheduled to be held on or about 03 October 2026, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

(a) the eligibility criteria therefor, and
(b) whether any public notice or official communiqué inviting applications therefor was issued and, if so, when.

(Withdrawn)

MBC – ALLEGED FRAUD CASES & FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES – INQUIRY UPDATE

(No. B/1240) 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 alleged cases of fraud and other financial irregularities at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation over the period 2015 to 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the names of the suspects, indicating in each case –

(a) the nature of the alleged offence, and

(b) where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

FCC – INQUIRIES (NOV 2024-01 SEPT 2026) – STATISTICS DETAILS

(No. B/1241) 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 Financial Crimes Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of inquiries the Commission has initiated since November 2024 to date, indicating the number thereof completed and referred to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice and/or for decision to prosecute and the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ARRESTED PERSONS – PRIVATE HOSPITALS ADMISSIONS – APPLICABLE PROCEDURES

(No. B/1242) Ms V. Leu-Govind (Third 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 arrested persons admitted to private hospitals on medical grounds, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the procedure applicable therefor, indicating the circumstances under which same is authorised and under whose authority and whether, prior thereto, the said persons need to be examined by a Police Medical Officer and/or a Medical Officer of a public health institution and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT– KPIs & TARGETS 2026-2027 – PERFORMANCE ACHIEVED

(No. B/1243) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) 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 Direct Investment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the key performance indicators and targets set therefor for the current financial year, indicating the –

(a) performance achieved to date in relation thereto, and

(b) measures and initiatives being implemented for the attainment thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ENERGY SECURITY – MAURITIUS-INDIA AGREEMENTS – AREAS OF COOPERATION & BENEFITS

(No. B/1246) 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 the recent Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement signed by Government with the Government of the Republic of India in respect of energy security, he will state the areas of cooperation envisaged thereunder and expected benefits for Mauritius, including, *inter alia*, whether same provide for price advantages, preferential pricing mechanism and/or other financial benefits.

Reply (The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection): As the House is aware, Mauritius faces a severe risk of energy insecurity, the geopolitical tensions around the world, in particular, in the Middle East, is exacerbating that risk. Government has therefore proactively sought to address the problem of energy insecurity, which can significantly impact on our development, by seeking the assistance and cooperation of Government of the Republic of India.

During the State Visit of Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to India in September 2025 and February 2026, he personally took up the matter with the Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi, for assistance in the procurement of petroleum products under a G2G arrangement. We are grateful to Shri Modi Ji and his Government for having positively acceded to our request at this critical juncture.

As a result of our ongoing discussions with the Government of the Republic of India, on 20 August 2026, two complementary agreements were signed, namely –

(a) a Memorandum of Understanding on a Government-to-Government basis with the Government of the Republic of India, and

(b) a Sales and Purchase Agreement between the State Trading Corporation (STC) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) which guarantees the supply of petroleum products to Mauritius for the next five years up to 31 August 2031.

The Government-to-Government (G2G) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Cooperation in the Oil and Gas Sector establishes an institutional framework for a longer-term energy partnership between the two countries. Importantly, the MoU establishes a long-term framework for India–Mauritius cooperation in petroleum supply, energy security, capacity building and biofuels.

In line with the provisions of the MoU, a separate General Supply Framework was also concluded between the State Trading Corporation and Indian Oil Company Ltd, in the form of a Sales and Purchase Agreement. This accompanying five-year STC–IOCL Sales and Purchase Agreement provides Mauritius with assured access to its petroleum import requirements, thereby strengthening energy security, reducing exposure to supply disruptions and supporting more resilient and sustainable energy planning.

The MoU and the SPA are two complementary instruments: the MoU provides the long-term institutional framework for cooperation, while the STC–IOCL Sales and Purchase Agreement translates that framework into a concrete five-year commitment for the supply of essential petroleum products.

The primary objective of the two agreements that were signed is about ensuring energy security for our country in a time when there are major threats of disruptions in supply in the global market. Importantly, the two agreements ensure that we are protected from excessive price volatility.

Besides providing security of supply and price stability, the MoU also covers cooperation in areas such as –

- knowledge-sharing, technical collaboration, training and capacity building for Mauritian officials and professionals;
- cooperation in biofuels, including research and development and the exchange of expertise, and
- any other programmes or areas of cooperation that may subsequently be agreed between the two Governments.

This MoU further complements the MoU signed with the Government of India in August 2025 for cooperation in the power sector.

Regarding the expected benefits, as I have already stated, they include –

- first and foremost, energy security for at least the next five years;
- second, protection against excessive price volatility;
- third, an economy that is better protected from external shocks;
- fourth, flexibility to negotiate the commercial terms and respond to changing market conditions;
- fifth, payment flexibility of 60 days of the bill of lading date, or two days after the start of discharge, whichever is later;
- sixth, to effect payment initially in US dollars and at a later stage, in Mauritian rupees or Indian rupees, and
- seventh, a much-needed cooperation in capacity building to foster the development of our energy sector.

Given the global situation in the energy sector, I am confident that the two agreements signed with the Government of the Republic of India will help in building resilience for our economy and society.

AIRPORT HOLDINGS LTD. – PROPOSED DISMANTLING – CORPORATE STRUCTURE REORGANISATION

(No. B/1250) 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 Airport Holdings Ltd., he will state whether consideration will be given for the dismantling thereof and the reorganisation of the corporate structure thereof and relisting of Air Mauritius Ltd. on the official market of the Stock Exchange of Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – AIRCRAFT FLEET RENEWAL

(No. B/1251) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) 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 information as to whether, following the disposal of five aircrafts during the voluntary administration thereof, a

new long-term aircraft renewal programme is being envisaged to restore the fleet thereof and ensuring the long-term competitiveness and sustainability thereof as a strategic engine for tourism, connectivity and economic growth.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE – POLICE OFFICERS – VACANCIES & DEPLOYMENT

(No. B/1252) 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 the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

(a) number of Police Officers currently in post, gender-wise, indicating the respective posting thereof;
(b) existing vacancies, grade-wise;
(c) ratio of Police Officers to total population, and
(d) whether a data-driven deployment system is in place, particularly, regarding the specialised units.

(Withdrawn)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD – INVESTOR PERMIT – APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

(No. B/1253) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) 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 Investor Permit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the number of applications therefor received, approved and pending, since January 2025 to date, indicating the –

(a) aggregate proposed investment that same represent, and
(b) average time taken between the submission of a complete application therefor and the issue thereof.

(Withdrawn)

TRUTH AND JUSTICE COMMISSION REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS ROAD MAP

(No. B/1256) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) 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 Report of the Truth and Justice Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

(a) the number of recommendations thereof implemented over each of the past ten years, indicating whether the High-Powered Committee set up to monitor the implementation thereof is still operational and, if not, why not, and

(b) whether consideration will be given for the publication of an implementation roadmap for the remaining recommendations.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AUTHORITY – MISSION'S OUTCOME – GOVERNMENT POLICY

(No. B/1291) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to special education needs in Rodrigues, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Special Education Needs Authority, information as to the purpose and outcome of the official mission effected by the said Authority in Rodrigues on or about 01 to 04 June 2026, and

(b) state Government policy regarding those having attained the age of 20 years and above.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that a delegation comprising the Director of the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA), an Inspector from the SEN Unit of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource, a Quality Assurance Officer of SENA and an Occupational Therapist from SENA effected an official mission to Rodrigues from 01 to 04 June 2026.

The main objectives of the mission were to assess SEN resources and support services in SEN schools, discuss the establishment and maintenance of comprehensive databases of learners, plan and coordinate the admission process for the 2027 academic year, carry out an inventory of the SEN Resource Development Centre at Petit Gabriel, and strengthen

collaboration between SENA, SEN schools, the Inspectorate and the Commission of Education.

The mission revealed a number of challenges in the SEN sector in Rodrigues, including an increasing demand for admission in SEN NGO schools, the absence of a standardised admission and transfer protocol, the need for proper screening and diagnosis prior to placement, the absence of categorisation of SEN schools according to specialised services, inadequate access to adapted curricula and Individual Education Plans, and the absence of therapy services on the island.

It was also noted that there are currently no SEN Integrated Units in mainstream schools, no comprehensive and updated database of SEN learners, no designated SEN Inspector for Rodrigues, and a need for a structured protocol for the recruitment and allocation of Teacher Assistants and Carers.

As regards staffing, the mission further identified the need for professional training and capacity building for staff working in SEN schools, particularly in autism, sensory integration, adapted teaching strategies, caregiving and support, disability-specific interventions, therapeutic skills and the development and monitoring of Individual Education Plans.

Following the mission and the debriefing with the Commission of Education of Rodrigues, a number of recommendations were discussed and agreed upon.

These include the development of a comprehensive admission protocol for SEN learners, categorisation of SEN schools, establishment of an updated SEN learner database, development of staff recruitment and allocation protocols, provision of guidelines on appropriate Teacher/Teacher Assistant/Carer-to-learner ratios, and the establishment of a dedicated SEN structure, including a SEN Inspector at the Commission.

It was also agreed to strengthen collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Human Resource, the Ministry of Health, NGOs and therapy providers, and to establish a pilot SEN Integrated Unit in a mainstream school in Rodrigues.

Furthermore, the SENA Paramedical Team and the Allied Health Professionals Unit are expected to support screening and reassessment exercises in Rodrigues, including screening for admission to Grade 1 in 2027. Consideration is also being given to the establishment, with

the support of the Ministry of Health, of a Special Education Needs Board comprising relevant health and allied health professionals to support screening, assessment, educational placement, therapy services and capacity building.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Government's policy is to ensure that learners with special educational needs are provided with appropriate support and opportunities for continued development, participation and inclusion, according to their individual needs and abilities.

Attaining the age of 20 years does not, in itself, mean that support for a person with special educational needs ceases. The approach is to promote a transition towards greater independence and participation in adult life, including through appropriate educational, vocational, therapeutic and other support services, in collaboration with the relevant Ministries, agencies and other stakeholders.

In this context, Government is also pursuing an inclusive and coordinated approach to SEN provision, with emphasis on early identification, appropriate placement, individualised support, life skills and preparation for further education, training, employment and independent living, as appropriate to the needs and abilities of each learner.

I wish to reiterate that Government remains committed to strengthening the SEN framework in Rodrigues and to ensuring that learners with special educational needs receive appropriate and equitable educational and support services throughout their development and transition to adulthood.

MOLASSES SALE – DISTRIBUTION BREAKDOWN

(No. B/1292) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the revenue generated from the sale of molasses over the past financial year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain the detailed breakdown of the distribution thereof by category of stakeholder, indicating the methodology and formula used for the computation of the amount payable thereto.

(Withdrawn)

192nd ARRIVAL OF INDENTURED LABOURERS' COMMEMORATION – ACTIVITIES

(No. B/1293) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the forthcoming commemoration of the 192nd anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius, he will state whether his Ministry proposes to hold any activity in relation thereto at the Old Labourers' Quarters in Trianon and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH DEPARTMENT – ACCIDENT UNIT – CASES REPORTED

(No. B/1294) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the Accident Unit of the National Occupational Safety and Health Department, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

(a) monthly number of occupational accident cases reported thereto since January 2026 to date and table the details and outcomes thereof, and

(b) number of officers responsible to investigate same, indicating the prescribed timeframe for the carrying out thereof and whether delays have occurred therein and, if so, why

(Withdrawn)

PUBLIC CEMETERIES – BURIAL SPACE SHORTAGE – NEW CEMETERIES ESTABLISHMENT

(No. B/1295) Ms V. Leu- Govind (Third Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the shortage of burial space in public cemeteries and the consequent recourse to common graves, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether consideration is being given for the establishment of new cemeteries island-wide and, if so, indicate the proposed locations thereof and expected implementation timeframe therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF VACOAS-PHOENIX – EMPLOYEE'S DEMISE – WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

(No. B/1296) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to an employee of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix who recently passed away, he will –

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether complaints were received therefrom regarding alleged workplace harassment and psychological pressure, including in connection with an alleged leak of official recruitment documents and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any, and

(b) state whether an independent inquiry will be initiated thereinto.

Reply: Before replying to the question, I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the family of the Late employee of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, who passed away on 20 August 2026. Out of respect for the deceased and her family, I do not propose to disclose in the House any information of a private or personal nature which is not necessary for the purpose of answering this question.

With regard to part (a), I am informed that no complaint or representation was ever made by the deceased, either to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, to my Ministry or to the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, alleging workplace harassment or psychological pressure, in connection with the alleged leakage of official recruitment documents.

I am further informed that, following previous anonymous allegations of workplace harassment at the council, the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations conducted enquiries and interviewed the officers concerned, including the deceased. The allegations were not substantiated by the officers interviewed.

With regard to part (b), I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that enquiry is ongoing. It would, therefore, not be appropriate for me to comment on matters falling within that enquiry.

In these circumstances, and on the information presently available, there is no factual basis to establish that the deceased had made any complaint of workplace harassment or psychological pressure, or that such allegations had been substantiated in relation to her.

I believe it is important that we respect both the ongoing enquiry and, above all, the privacy, dignity and reputation of the deceased and her family, and refrain from speculation on matters which have not been established.

RICHE MARE, CENTRE DE FLACQ – HALLOOMAN ROAD & TAGORE ROAD – FLOODING

(No. B/1297) Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the recurrent flooding occurring along Hallooman Road and Tagore Road, in Riche Mare, Centre de Flacq, during heavy rainfalls, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority, information as to the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

DRUGS, ALCOHOL, GAMBLING & INDEBTEDNESS ADDICTS – TREATMENT & REHABILITATION

(No. B/1298) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to persons suffering from addictions, particularly from drugs, alcohol, gambling and indebtedness, he will state the health facilities available in public hospitals for the treatment and rehabilitation thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS & HEAVY FUEL OIL – BIDDERS & QUOTATIONS – SAHARA ENERGY RESOURCE LTD CONTRACT

(No. B/1299) Mr G. Lesjongard (Fifth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the supply of petroleum products and heavy fuel oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to whether new contracts have been signed therefor since April 2026 to date and, if so, in each case –

(a) give the list of bidders with corresponding quotations and total amount of premium payable thereunder, and

(b) table copy of the contract awarded to Sahara Energy Resource Ltd.

(Withdrawn)

QUATRE BORNES – RENGANADEN SEENEEVASSEN AVENUE – SPEED BREAKER & HUMP

(No. B/1300) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Renganaden Seeneevassen Avenue, in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, information as to whether consideration will be given for the installation of a –

(a) speed breaker in front of the main entrance of the Kovil situated thereat, and

(b) speed hump near Gopal Lane for the safety of pilgrims and other road users

(Withdrawn)

DR YVES CANTIN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL – ADDITIONAL AMBULANCES – DEPLOYMENT

(**No. B/1301) Ms V. Leu-Govind (Third Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Dr Yves Cantin Community Hospital and the Black River region, he will state whether consideration will be given for the allocation of additional ambulances thereto and, if so, indicate the number and expected deployment date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE – PUBLIC HEALTH & BORDER CONTROL MEASURES

(**No. B/1303) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public health and border control measures introduced in May 2026 to minimise the risk of the Ebola Virus Disease, he will state –

(a) whether the efficacy thereof has been assessed and whether any case thereof has been determined in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island, respectively, and

(b) the measures being contemplated in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in relation thereto.

Reply: On 17 May 2026, the World Health Organisation (WHO) determined that the outbreak of Ebola disease caused by the Bundibugyo virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Ebola disease is a severe and potentially fatal disease in humans. The case fatality rate varies according to the virus species and the circumstances of the outbreak. In the case of the current Bundibugyo virus outbreak, WHO has reported case fatality rates in previous outbreaks ranging from approximately 30 per cent to 50 per cent.

As at 26 August 2026, according to the latest information available from the World Health Organisation, the outbreak in the DRC had resulted in more than 5,500 reported cases, including around 2,500 confirmed deaths in DRC, while Uganda had reported 20 confirmed cases and two deaths. No new case has been reported in Uganda since 21 June 2026.

The continued transmission of the disease in the DRC together with international travel and population movements means that the possibility of importation into Mauritius cannot be

excluded. In these circumstances, and as a precautionary measure to safeguard public health and minimise the risk of importation and onward transmission of Ebola disease in Mauritius, my Ministry has implemented a range of preparedness and response measures. These measures include, *inter alia* –

(i) the activation of an updated National Preparedness Plan for Ebola Virus Disease in May 2026, covering Mauritius, Rodrigues and the outer islands. The plan provides for surveillance at ports of entry, health profiling of incoming passengers, hospital and laboratory preparedness, contact tracing and passenger monitoring;

(ii) At the airport, measures included verification of flight declarations, thermal screening, scrutiny of passport and health declarations, and assessment of possible exposure in affected countries;

(iii) Travellers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and South Sudan were subject to enhanced entry controls, including mandatory 21-day quarantine for Mauritian citizens and eligible permit holders who had been in those countries during the preceding 21 days, while other foreign nationals who had been there were temporarily barred from entry. As from 08 August 2026, Uganda was removed from the list of countries subject to Quarantine in Mauritius as MOH of Uganda declared Uganda Ebola free on 28 July 2026;

(iv) Where quarantine is indicated, eligible passengers are transferred directly from the airport to the Sir Anerood Jugnauth Recreation Centre in Riambel using designated transport, thereby minimising unnecessary contact with members of the public;

(v) Persons undergoing quarantine are subjected to active health surveillance, including monitoring of body temperature and assessment for symptoms of Ebola disease. Health monitoring is undertaken twice daily during the quarantine period.

To date, no confirmed case of Ebola Virus Disease has been detected in Mauritius, and no confirmed case of Ebola Virus Disease has been detected in Rodrigues.

In view thereof, it is to be pointed out that there are no risks from Air Mauritius Aircrafts landing at Plaine Corail as all foreign passengers or nationals disembarking at SSR International Airport are already subject to screening for Ebola prior to embarkation proceeding to Rodrigues on Air Mauritius. The only risk to encounter a passenger who visited Ebola Risked Countries prior to landing in Rodrigues will arise from the flight of Air Austral originating from Reunion Island and flying directly to Rodrigues.

Nevertheless, surveillance and preparedness remain ongoing owing to the continued possibility of importation through international travel.

However, the absence of cases should not, in itself, be interpreted as the sole indicator of the effectiveness of the measures. Operational readiness is more appropriately assessed on the basis of the country's ability to detect, notify, isolate, investigate and contain a suspected imported case promptly and safely.

As such, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that the efficacy and operational readiness of the measures have been assessed through –

- continuous epidemiological surveillance, monitoring of travellers;
- review of measures at points of entry;
- assessment of preparedness of health facilities;
- review of infection prevention and control arrangements;
- assessment of laboratory and specimen-referral capacity;
- verification of isolation and case-management arrangements;
- review of quarantine and contact-monitoring procedures;
- assessment of logistics, supplies and personal protective equipment, and
- continued coordination among the services involved in preparedness and response.

As part of national preparedness efforts, a specific Ebola preparedness and readiness assessment was undertaken in Rodrigues on 17 to 18 June 2026. The assessment examined the principal components required for an effective response, including –

- coordination, surveillance and contact tracing;
- rapid response capacity;
- points-of-entry preparedness;
- isolation and case management;
- infection prevention and control;
- laboratory and specimen-management arrangements;
- quarantine arrangements, logistics and essential supplies;
- risk communication; and training and preparedness of health personnel.

The assessment confirmed that a number of core public health capacities and mechanisms were already available in Rodrigues. At the same time, it identified areas requiring further strengthening to ensure full operational readiness should an imported case occur. Areas identified for further strengthening include mainly –

- formalisation of Ebola-specific operational procedures;
- laboratory and specimen-referral arrangements;
- isolation and quarantine procedures;
- specialised training of relevant personnel, and
- conduct of simulation exercises to test operational readiness.

The Commission of Health & others of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly informed that the following measures, amongst others, have been strengthened –

- Staff involved in screening of passengers have been adequately increased at health counters from only one Public Health and Food Safety Inspector to three Public Health and Food Safety Inspectors alongside three personnel dedicated to health surveillance to enable rapid screening at the health counters and temperature screening, respectively, with particular attention to incoming flights from Reunion Island;
- Multi -stakeholder meetings and training sessions have been held at Plaine Corail Airport to disseminate information on Ebola risks and expected course of action for each stakeholder;
- Staff involved in health surveillance and decontamination have been adequately trained in communicable disease control with special attention to Ebola Virus Disease and infection prevention and control;
- All personnel to be involved in prevention and control of Ebola have been granted access passes to relevant sections of the airport to ensure a timely, effective response and decontamination;
- Standard Operating Procedures have been updated for the implementation of relevant sections of the Quarantine Act regarding the management of incoming passengers with epidemiological links to Ebola affected countries, and
- Stocks of Personal Protective Equipment and all materials to be used in prevention and control of Ebola Virus Disease have been adequately increased to maintain vigilance and readiness to eventual management of any case.

In respect of part (b) of the question, based on the findings of the assessment, collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will focus on further strengthening preparedness and operational readiness.

The proposed areas of collaboration include, *inter alia* –

- strengthening and formalising coordination mechanisms for Ebola preparedness and response;
- clearly defining roles, responsibilities, notification channels and command arrangements in the event of a suspected case;
- strengthening surveillance and early-warning mechanisms;
- ensuring prompt notification, investigation and management of suspected cases;
- reinforcing preparedness at the airport and seaport, and
- establishing clear procedures for travellers with a relevant travel or exposure history.

FINANCIAL SERVICES INSTITUTE – BOARD MEMBERS – REMUNERATION & BENEFITS

(No. B/1304) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the Financial Services Institute, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names of the Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and other members of the Board thereof, indicating, in each case, the qualifications, professional experience, dates and terms and conditions of appointment thereof, including the quantum of fees, allowances and other benefits drawn.

Reply: I am informed that the Financial Services Institute (FSI) Company Ltd was set up under the Companies Act 2001 and was incorporated on 19 March 2018. The company is wholly owned by Government and receives an annual grant appropriated under the vote of my Ministry.

The continued development of Mauritius as an International Financial Centre depends not only on its regulatory framework and range of financial products, but also on the availability of suitably qualified and skilled professionals.

FSI plays an important role in the financial services sector as a neutral, government-owned institution connecting policymakers, regulators, industry and academia to address skills gaps and strengthen Mauritius as an International Financial Centre. Its proposed evolution into a professional standards body would support consistent competency pathways, professional recognition and relevant CPD standards across the sector.

To become financially sustainable, FSI is diversifying beyond one-off training through corporate programmes, memberships, professional credentials, strategic partnerships, national

capability initiatives and regional delivery across Africa. The objective is to build recurring revenue and progressively reduce dependence on government funding.

I wish to inform the House that the Board of Directors of the Financial Services Institute Company Ltd was reconstituted in March 2026.

I am placing the requested information in the Library of the National Assembly.

With regard to the Chief Executive Officer of the Financial Services Institute, Mr Nitin Ramphul was appointed as Chief Executive Officer following approval of the Board on 04 March 2026. Mr Ramphul assumed duty on 01 May 2026 under a three-year contract ending 30 April 2029.

BAICHOO MADHOO GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – NEW PRE-PRIMARY BUILDING – OPERATIONALITY

(No. B/1305) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Baichoo Madhoo Government School, he will state whether the opening of the new pre-primary building thereat, reportedly completed in 2023, is expected to become operational for the 2027 academic year and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

CEB HOME SOLAR PROJECT – PHOTOVOLTAIC KITS – MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS

(No. B/1306) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CEB Home Solar Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of photovoltaic kits installed thereunder to date, indicating –

(a) the number thereof which are currently non-operational and the reasons therefor, including the number of reported cases of inverter failures, and

(b) whether, following the transfer of ownership thereof to the beneficiaries, the responsibility for the maintenance and repairs thereof has also been transferred thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Central electricity Board (CEB) that, as at date, a total of 4,667 Photovoltaic (PV) kits have been installed under the Home Solar Project (HSP).

It is to be outlined that Phase 2B of the Home Solar Project which comprises the development of 2000 PV kits is currently ongoing.

Out of the number installed, 193 kits have been removed at the request of the beneficiaries.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the number of PV kits reported as non-operational as at 25 August 2026 is 253, and the principal causes are –

(i) Residual Current Device (RCD) tripping;

(ii) Failure of surge protection devices;

(iii) Damage to cables arising from site conditions, and

(iv) Faulty inverters.

Out of the 253 non-operational sites 191 are due to inverter failure. I am informed by the CEB that the faulty inverters have been sent to the contractor for replacement. The solar PV kits are usually covered by at least 10 years manufacturers' warranty.

Appropriate remedial measures are being taken by the CEB to restore the faulty kits.

With regard to part (b) of the question, in line with announcement made in the Budget speech 2026-2027 to enhance the inclusiveness of our national renewable energy policy, CEB is carrying out an exercise to transfer the ownership of the solar PV kits to some 1,000 beneficiary households, thereby enabling them to benefit from 100 percent of the electricity generated, compared to only 50 percent previously.

In addition, the ownership of a PV kit provides the beneficiary household with energy autonomy and security by reducing their dependence on grid-supplied electricity.

As part of this empowerment process, the beneficiaries are expected to undertake basic maintenance activities, such as cleaning the solar panels, resetting of circuit breakers and promptly reporting any abnormality or malfunction to the CEB. Beneficiaries may also seek assistance from the CEB regarding the operation and maintenance of their PV kits.

PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT – PROTOCOL TO THE CONSTITUTIVE ACT OF THE AFRICAN UNION (2014) – RATIFICATION

(No. B/1307) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Protocol to the Constitutive Act of the African Union relating to the Pan-African Parliament adopted in Malabo in 2014, he will state the number of African Union Member States which have, to date, signed and ratified same, indicating whether the Republic of Mauritius is included therein and, if not, why not and whether Government intends to initiate the necessary process therefor.

(Withdrawn)

EXCISE DUTY – SUGAR-SWEETENED PRODUCTS – IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/1309) Mr G. Lesjongard (Fifth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperative whether, in regard to the proposed budgetary measure to increase excise duty on the sugar content of sugar-sweetened products, he will state where matters stand, following the recent decision to stall the implementation thereof.

(Withdrawn)