



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

**SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY**

**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION**

**TUESDAY 06 JUNE 2023**

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### **(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)**

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications,
	Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Louis Steven Obeegadoo	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management
Hon. Alan Ganoo, GCSK	Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, GCSK	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation
Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram	Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development
Hon. Darsanand Balgobin	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Sudheer Maudhoo	Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Mrs Kalpana Devi Koonjoo-Shah	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Avinash Teeluck	Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage
Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

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**MAURITIUS****Seventh National Assembly****FIRST SESSION****Debate No. 11 of 2023****Sitting of Tuesday 06 June 2023**

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

**The National Anthem was played**

*(Mr Speaker in the Chair)*

**PAPERS LAID**

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

**Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training**  
**Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Competition Commission for the year ended 30 June 2022.

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### CONTAINER PORT PERFORMANCE INDEX 2022 – PORTS’ RANKING

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the port of Port Louis, will he state whether he has taken cognizance of the ranking thereof in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 and, if so, further state if he will consider commissioning a study on the present state of affairs thereat.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall reply to this Private Notice Question together with Parliamentary Question B/683 as they relate to the same subject.

I take it that both the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central are referring to the World Bank Report entitled “The Container Port Performance Index 2022: A Comparable Assessment of Performance based on Vessel Time in Port”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have indeed taken note of this Report released by the World Bank in May 2023 and the bulk of what I shall dwell on is in fact an echo of its contents.

The study first started in 2019 and, so far, three editions of the report have been published for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The Container Port Performance Index is intended to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement that will ultimately benefit all stakeholders, from shipping lines to national Governments and to consumers. It is expected to serve as a reference point for improvement for key stakeholders in the global economy, including national Governments, port authorities and operators, development agencies, supranational organisations, various maritime interests and other public and private stakeholders in trade, logistics, and supply chain services.

The Report acknowledges that one of the major challenges to stimulating improvement in the efficiency of ports has been the lack of a reliable, consistent, and comparable basis on which to compare operational performance across different ports.

The Report further recognises that, while modern ports collect data for performance purposes, the quality, consistency and availability of data, the definitions employed, and the capacity and willingness of the organisations to collect and transmit data to a collating body have all precluded the development of a robust comparable measure to assess performance across ports and the time factor. The introduction of new technologies,

increased digitalisation and the willingness on the part of industry stakeholders to work collectively towards system-wide improvements have now provided the opportunity to measure and compare container port performance in a robust and reliable manner.

However, the Report further draws attention to the fact that the Container Port Performance Index is based on available empirical objective data pertaining exclusively to time expended in a vessel stay in a port and should be interpreted as an indicative, but not a definitive measure of container port performance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should also be pertinently pointed out that the data used to compile the Container Port Performance Index 2022 includes 10 of the world's largest liner shipping companies that collectively operate close to 80 per cent of global fleet capacity. The liner shipping companies provide a series of data points comprising operational time stamps and other information such as move counts for each individual port call undertaken globally. The data are provided monthly and cover the full global networks of each liner shipping company and its subsidiaries.

Following receipt from the shipping lines, the port call data undergoes several validation and quality checks before mapping to historical Automatic Identification System vessel movement data, which ...

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The Report is a public document; we can read the public document. I expected the Prime Minister not to just read the public document which is not correct. I think you should not waste time.

**The Prime Minister:** I am not wasting time, Mr Speaker, Sir. The question is about the Report. What do I answer? Yes or no, and that is it? That is it?

**Mr Speaker:** Allow me.

**The Prime Minister:** Do you want an answer 'yes' or 'no'? Let me explain to you and to the population which is watching us; people do not know about this Report. So keep cool.

**Mr Speaker:** Both of you are cool now.

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I am cool, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, I was saying this Automatic Identification System vessel movement data which enables tracking and verification of the shipping line data.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the World Bank Report itself draws attention to the fact that although the Automatic Identification System is generally reliable, it also has limitations

that can impact the transmission and quality of the data captured. Some factors that may affect the signal could be the Automatic Identification System transponder being turned off deliberately, problematic reception, high traffic density areas, weather conditions, or anomalous positions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the third edition of the Report includes ports that had a minimum of 24 valid port calls within the 12-month period of the study for 2022, compared to 20 calls in earlier iterations. The number of ports included in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 is 348.

The two top-ranked container ports in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 are: Yangshan Port in China in first place followed by the Port of Salalah in Oman in second place. Three ports in the Middle East are ranked in the top ten namely, Salalah, Kahlifa and Hamad, as three of the large Chinese gateways, Yangshan, Ningbo and Guangzhou.

Port Louis ranks 327 and the 21 remaining ports ranked below Port Louis include –

- (i) Hamburg in Germany;
- (ii) Manila in Philippines;
- (iii) La Spezia in Italy;
- (iv) Houston;
- (v) Los Angeles;
- (vi) Long Beach;
- (vii) Oakland and Charleston in USA;
- (viii) Durban and Cape Town in South Africa,
- (ix) Prince Rupert and Vancouver in Canada.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ranking of Port Louis Harbour for the three editions is as follows –

Year 2020	-	344 out of 351 ports
Year 2021	-	323 out of 370 ports
Year 2022	-	327 out of 348 ports

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Acting Director General of the Mauritius Ports Authority that the Mauritius Container Terminal at Port Louis Harbour operates on a Fixed Berthing Window Scheme which allows the port to better plan and manage vessel arrivals, berth allocation, and cargo handling operations thereby reducing waiting times and minimising congestion for vessels.

Port Performance at Port Louis Harbour is measured using two main parameters, namely Ship Productivity and Crane productivity as recommended by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Thus, Crane Productivity measures the number of equivalent container movements per crane working hour whereas Ship Productivity is the output achieved per ship working hour and is used to measure the efficiency of ship operations. Ship Productivity is the most important measure to ship operators as it determines the total time for loading and unloading of containers. At Port Louis, the average crane productivity was around 21.1 moves per Gross Crane Hour in 2022.

The waiting time to secure a berth for handling operations was 1.8 hours in 2022 and the berth occupancy was 67.1%, indicating the availability of berth to service additional vessels without any congestion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Ports Authority, along with the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd, have analysed the Container Port Performance Index 2022 and found that the Index is based solely on the total time elapsed from when a ship first entered a port up to when it unberthed. In brief, the factors taken into consideration in the Report include –

- (i) the time container ships enter the port waters;
- (ii) waiting time at anchorage;
- (iii) time taken by pilot and tug services to berth the vessel at quay;
- (iv) duration of cargo container handling operations, and
- (v) unberthing and departure.

It must be noted that –

- (i) a vessel is considered to be in the Port once it crosses the Port limits and registers with the Harbour radio station. However, from the Report it could not be ascertained what time has been considered as the arrival time of vessel as data has been obtained from Automatic Identification System of vessels;
- (ii) the zone for vessel waiting and arrival referred to in the Report does not necessarily tally with the port limits of Port Louis;
- (iii) there are some feeder vessels that stay for a longer period at anchorage waiting for transhipment containers from mother vessels which impacts on the time of stay of the vessels in port;

- (iv) at times, vessels stay at quay after completion of cargo operation to unload bunker fuel or carry out other ancillary activities which increase the time spent in the port;
- (v) the Report contains only the findings of the study, but does not include any data that can be compared to figures compiled for the Port Louis Harbour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the average total time spent in port per vessel in 2022 stood at around 44.4 hours, whereas average time spent at berth by vessel for cargo handling operations was 33.5 hours and pre-berthing delays amounted to 1.8 hours and the remaining 7.10 hours in port are spent on all non-container handling operations such as bunkering, removal of garbage, sludge or waiting for containers arriving in mother vessels within the port limits.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since vessels are serviced according to the Fixed Berthing Window Scheme, there has been no outcry from shipping lines about delays in operations, but the report fails to capture this positive aspect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is determined to make Port Louis a hub in the region, and, to achieve that position, an amount of Rs8.4 billion has been invested since 2015 on port projects as compared to Rs2 billion for the period 2005 to 2014. These include –

- (i) procurement of Tug Sir Edouard at the cost of Rs450 m. in August 2016;
- (ii) chartering of two big tugs as from the year 2023 at the cost Rs160 m.;
- (iii) upgrading and strengthening of berths at the Mauritius Container Terminal at the cost of Rs6.82 billion, and
- (iv) commissioning of the Vessel Traffic System in 2020 at the cost of Rs60 m.

The Mauritius Ports Authority is also implementing a number of projects to further improve efficiency and port performance. To that effect, a digitalised Vessel Clearing System at the cost of Rs7.5 m. is being implemented to facilitate entry of vessels at Port Louis. The system is expected to go live in July 2023.

The consultancy contract for the review of the Port Master Plan at the cost of Rs25 m. has been awarded on 30 May 2023. This Report, which will pave the way for future port development projects up till 2050, is expected by April 2024.

Four small tugs at the approximate cost of Rs700 m. would be procured. Moreover, the Mauritius Ports Authority is also proposing to procure two big tugs at the cost Rs1.2 billion. These acquisitions would significantly enhance marine services at Port Louis.

Additionally, the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd has invested an amount of Rs2.2 billion for the period 2015 to date for the procurement of key modern equipment to increase productivity, as compared to an amount of Rs1.53 billion for the period 2005 to 2014. These include the purchase of Super Post Panamax Ship to Shore Cranes, Rubber Tyred Gantry Cranes, Reach stackers, Tractors and Trailers.

Furthermore, the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. appointed a Consultant to carry out a technical assessment on the existing equipment and make recommendations accordingly. To that end, the Consultant has recommended in his Report of February 2023 the disposal of three cranes procured in 1998 and their replacement by two Super Post Panamax Cranes. Recommendations have also been made for the acquisition of additional yard equipment. These equipment are expected to cost Rs2.2 billion and would further increase efficiency and performance of the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for all these reasons, the question of commissioning a study on the present state of affairs at the port does not arise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is fully alive to the fact that our port, which is our only maritime gateway, is a vital component of our national transport network and supply chains and acts as a catalyst for economic development. Government will therefore continue to invest massively in the modernisation and expansion of the port infrastructure and port operation with a view to further improving port productivity indicators and transforming the Port Louis Harbour into a major transport logistics and maritime hub connecting Europe, Africa and Asia, as highlighted in the Government Programme 2020-2024.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope you will give me additional time to cover this extremely important subject. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister, despite billions of rupees spent apparently on equipment at the port and at the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd., he will agree that the productivity and efficiency situation has constantly deteriorated at the port of Mauritius, and he seems also to challenge the findings of the World Bank.

I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that - he has just said that the average moves, I think, is about 21 per crane - those cranes that were bought

can actually accommodate 40 moves per hour? So, we are doing half of the moves that we should be doing on these cranes that were very expensively bought.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not challenging the Report of the World Bank. As I have stated in my reply, the World Bank itself has cautioned against certain limitations with regard to this Report because it is based on the time that the ship enters a port and the time taken for it to leave the port.

As I have already stated, if you peruse the Report, you will see that, apart from loading and unloading containers and cargo, there are other ancillary activities that are carried out in a port. The ship can for example stay in the port for repairs and bunkering. In fact, if you peruse the Report, you will see that the authors themselves say that those ancillary activities have not been taken into account, but only the time that the ship comes and leaves. Therefore, we need to know a division of the time taken for and by the different activities of the ship. We do need to know when it calls at a port, and what does it do, so that we can compare like with like.

Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine! I do not pass judgment,...

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I should have the chance...

**The Prime Minister:** You put a question and you do not want me to answer?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I should have the chance to talk.

**Mr Speaker:** Do not embarrass me!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** You mean, I cannot ask any supplementary question in a PNQ?

**Mr Speaker:** No! This is not my concern. Do not embarrass me!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** This is not your concern? It is.

**Mr Speaker:** The Prime Minister is replying to your question.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** It is my right to ask supplementary questions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** So, you talk.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I am asking for...

**Mr Speaker:** You talk. When you finish, you tell me.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I have finished.

**Mr Speaker:** Take your time!

**The Prime Minister:** The Leader of the Opposition is wasting time because I am replying and what I am saying is very relevant and pertinent to what has been said in the Report itself, Mr Speaker, Sir. People should understand and should know it.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Can I ask another question?

**The Prime Minister:** But let me answer! When you ask a question, I do not interrupt you, let me answer!

Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine that in this classification of the ports, if I take one example, the port of Hamburg in Germany, one of the most modern and efficient ports, is classified just below Mauritius? There are also ports in the United States, in Canada which are well renowned and are classified after the port of Mauritius. We could have done better maybe, but I think we should try not to gauge so much from that Report. As I say again, the difficulty is that even the World Bank itself states that this report has limitations.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an abuse!

**The Prime Minister:** And it is pertinent that I quote –

“The performance of a port may be assessed based on a myriad of measurements, such as: terminal capacity or space utilization, cost, landside connectivity & services, or ship to shore interchange. The CPPI - that is this report - is based on available empirical objective data pertaining exclusively to time expended in a vessel stay in a port and should be interpreted as an indicative measure of container port performance, but not a definitive one.”

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to ask the Prime Minister - he is the Minister for ports - about a report paid for by Government costing Rs25 m. delivered to Government in June 2021, two years ago, by Price WaterhouseCoopers. Is he aware of this report and does he know that this report in many ways is even worse than the World Bank report? It is 268 pages and it shows clearly that Mauritius is or can lose its hub status to other ports in the region – it says so black on white – like Madagascar which is fast developing. And does the Prime Minister know that none of these 50 Recommendations or so has been implemented by his Ministry?

**The Prime Minister:** This is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir. A number of Recommendations have been implemented. But let me say one thing, I know the report very well and there is one fundamental issue that the report has highlighted. It is the fact that the Cargo Handling Corporation is overstaffed with regard to the operations that it is

conducting. Would you believe that we have, in fact, inherited a situation wherein - just to give you one example - from 2006 to 2009, 700 workers have been recruited? Do you think it is now going to be easy to negotiate with the trade unions in order to try to restructure this organisation? Let me say it frankly that this is one of the main problems that we are facing.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition talks about productivity and efficiency. Of course, we need to know for example the conditions prevailing with regard to payment of salaries and the acquired benefits. That report, in fact highlights those issues. So, we need to see how we can discuss with all the partners concerned and how we can improve the efficiency of such an institution.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** I am very sad to note that the Prime Minister has nothing more to do than blame the poor workers of the Cargo handling Corporation and they will note that. They will note that.

Considering the workers, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one person there, Mr P. E. P., who is presently the MD of Cargo Handling. Would the Prime Minister table a copy of his qualifications? I would like to know what his qualifications are because I am told that he has no relevant qualifications to handle exactly the thousands of people working in the port and secondly, no prior experience in the port at all before being appointed. This Mr P. E. P., who had some sort of backing, I don't know? So, would you kindly circulate a copy of his CV for the benefit of the House?

**The Prime Minister:** The Leader of the Opposition says that I am putting the blame on those poor workers and he asks me a question as to whether I am aware about the findings of the report. I hope he will acknowledge if he has read the report carefully, that one of the issues – I have said it clearly – that has been mentioned in the report is the issue of staffing. And this is what I said. I am not blaming the workers; I am saying what is contained in the report. I am aware of it.

I do not know the other question that you mentioned.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr P. E. P.

**The Prime Minister:** I do not have the qualifications. I shall undertake to circulate them to the National Assembly, of course.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Why I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, that you are picking on the workers because this report – and I will circulate it later – gives every single reason, for instance,

the Navix operational system is only half operated. There are three cranes not working at the moment and no fitness certificate.

**Mr Speaker:** Put your question!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** No, but I have to explain!

**Mr Speaker:** You explain too much!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** If you want me to go away, I can go away.

**Mr Speaker:** You waste your own time!

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Now, there are so many things that have gone wrong at the port and it is extremely unfair in this House to pick only on the workers as if they are responsible for the person who is now General Manager or responsible for the cranes that are not working or responsible for the fact that three reach stackers have been purchased with some weird method and two have already broken down after two months.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am asking the Prime Minister to tell us which of these 50 Recommendations - or more, I have not counted all of them – he thinks he or his Ministry has actually implemented? It would be interesting for everyone to know because I cannot find anything that has been implemented.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition is again making *une fixation sur les travailleurs*. I have answered clearly and I repeat it again that one of the issues which are mentioned in this report concerns staffing. Now, let me repeat, maybe the Leader of the Opposition did not listen carefully to so many measures that have been implemented in terms of investment in the port –

- (i) extension of the Mauritius Container Terminal berth from 560 metres to 800 metres;
- (ii) expansion of the container yard, increasing the capacity from 550,000 TEUs to 750,000 TEUs;
- (iii) deepening of the navigational channel, enabling vessels up to 15,000 tonnes capacity to be accommodated;
- (iv) construction of the cruise terminal capable to handle up to 4000 passengers at a time;
- (v) land reclamation at Fort William of 35 hectares to enable future port development projects;

- (vi) procurement of three Super Post-Panamax ship-to-shore cranes and associated yard handling equipment;
- (vii) upgrading of the CCTV camera system and access control, and
- (viii) replacement of the Vessel Traffic System.

Now, there are actually some projects that are in the pipeline –

- (i) the procurement of four small tugs of 15 tonnes Bollard Pull;
- (ii) the procurement of two big tugs of about 80 tonnes Bollard Pull, and
- (iii) the implementation of a Vessel Clearance System to facilitate submission and processing of documents by different stakeholders on a common platform for clearance of vessels.

I do agree that there are other projects that have to be revisited. In fact, in the Master Plan, the list of projects has been mentioned and it is pertinent that I inform the public that the development of the island terminal, a Marina at the Caudan and a Fishing Port at Fort William will be revisited in the New Port Master Plan. I have already said that a Consultant has already been appointed and the report – I think I mentioned it – is expected some time next year.

**Mr Speaker:** Time over! Hon. Members, the Table had been advised that PQ B/681 has been withdrawn. Prime Minister's Question Time.

Hon. Juman!

### **HOME SOLAR PANEL PROJECT – LAUNCHING CEREMONY – INCIDENT**

**(No. B/672) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the incident which occurred during the official launching ceremony of the Home Solar Panel Project Phase 2 at Residence Muguet, Long Mountain on 27 May 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the outcome thereof, and
- (b) if any arrest has been effected as a result thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that between 14.00 hours and 15.30 hours on Saturday 27 May 2023, an inauguration ceremony for the Home Solar Panel Project Phase 2 was organised by the Central Electricity Board in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Around 200 persons including distinguished personalities attended the function.

At around 14.15 hours, whilst Ms A.S., Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme for Mauritius and Seychelles, was addressing the audience in English, one Mr D. H., aged 54, of no calling, and residing at Colombo Road, Long Mountain, came near the podium and uttered filthy words in a loud tone to the address of the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities.

The Police officer on duty thereat ordered Mr D.H., who was smelling strongly of liquor, to behave himself and took him outside the marquee. Once Mr D.H. was outside the marquee, he hastily entered a private car and drove away. Later, at around 17.13 hours, the Police found Mr D.H. in the vicinity of his house. He was arrested and brought to Long Mountain Police station where he was informed that he would be charged for the offence of “Rogue and Vagabond”.

Whilst at the Police station, Mr D.H. was requested to submit to a breath test which he refused. He also refused to provide samples of blood and urine. Consequently, he was booked for the following offences after having been informed about them –

- (i) failing to provide specimen for breath test;
- (ii) failing to provide a sample of blood or two samples of urine;
- (iii) driving motor vehicle with alcohol concentration above prescribed limit.

As he was drunk, he was detained in Police cell at Piton Police Station pending sobriety.

On Sunday 28 May 2023, he was interviewed for his defence statement but he refused and stated that he would give his statement in presence of his Counsel. Thereafter he was released and was requested to call at Long Mountain Police Station for enquiry on Monday 29 May 2023 in company of his counsel.

On Monday 29 May 2023 at 09 o’clock in the morning, Mr D.H. called at Long Mountain Police station and informed the Police that his Counsel was not available and he would give his statement on Friday 02 June 2023.

However, on Tuesday 30 May 2023, he called at Long Mountain Police station in the company of his Counsel and his defence statement was recorded. On the same day, he appeared before the Pamplemousses District Court on a provisional charge of “Rogue and Vagabond”. He was, thereafter, bailed out upon furnishing a surety of Rs2000 and a recognisance of Rs10,000.

**Mr Speaker**, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police, that the enquiry is proceeding.

**Mr Juman**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister said that he refused to provide specimen of a breath test. Was he caught in his car or at his place three hours later?

**The Prime Minister**: According to the information that I have, he was arrested at his place. I just mentioned that. Let me check. He just drove away in a car. I do not know whether it was his car but at around 17.13 hours, the Police found Mr D.H. in the vicinity of his house where he was arrested and brought to Long Mountain Police station.

**Mr Juman**: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister must be aware *que le gouvernement est si impopulaire que même le DPM...*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker**: No! Please!

**Mr Juman**: Let me finish! Let me finish!

**Mr Speaker**: Let me finish first! You cannot ask the Speaker to let you finish.

**Mr Ramano**: *Twa ki pou desid sa ?*

**Mr Speaker**: I am on my feet and there is only one orator, hon. Juman, not you! You do not have the floor! Put your question! This is a supplementary question; put your question directly to the main question.

**Mr Juman**: M. le président, parce qu'il y a un ministre qui a été insulté dans sa circonscription. La question, c'est ça.

*(Interruptions)*

Le gouvernement est si impopulaire que même l'honorable député Dhunoo et le DPM Obeegadoo ne semblent pas avoir échappés aux insultes dans leur circonscription...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker**: No! No! I stop you if you do not have questions!

Hon. Tour, put your question!

**Ms Tour:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Would the hon. Prime Minister have information on when the Home Solar Project started and the source of funding thereof?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Prime Minister:** It was conceptualised and developed following measures enunciated in the Budget Speeches 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. In fact, Measure 185 of the Budget Speech 2017-2018 stated, and I quote –

“Some Rs700 m. will be invested in the ‘Solar Home Project’ comprising the installation of 10,000 roof top solar panels over the next 5 years for low income households in the social tariff category.”

The deployment of the 10,000 solar photovoltaic kits under the HSP was planned for implementation in five phases including a pilot phase. Initially, solar PV kits of 1 KW would have been installed on the rooftop of houses of eligible and qualified socially vulnerable households. This was done on a pilot basis. However, considering the falling prices of the photovoltaic and also the benefits to be derived by the eligible households while reaching the target of the project more effectively, it was decided then to upgrade the size of the PV kits to 1.5 KW.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, a feasibility assessment for the HSP was prepared by the CEB and submitted to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) for funding through the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities under the title ‘Deployment of 10,000 Solar Photovoltaic PV kits of 1 KW each to households in the social tariff category’.

While the funding proposal was under consideration by IRENA, in the meantime, the CEB kick-started the implementation of the first phase of the project which aimed at deploying 1,000 Solar PV kits of 1 kW. This exercise was fully funded by the CEB to the tune of Rs62,510,833 for capital investment.

The Phase 1 of the project was successfully completed in November 2021 and a total of 996 solar PV kits were installed in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Now, we have the Phase 2 where we have sought the funding from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD). On 12 January 2019, a loan agreement was signed between the ADFD and CEB for an amount of 36.73 million AED, that is, equivalent to about USD 10 million.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether the Counsel defending that person is actually an active member of PTR Party? Thank you.

(*Interruptions*)

**The Prime Minister:** I believe so.

**An hon. Member:** *Pe insit dimoun fer dezord!*

**Mr Juman:** *Met li dan prizon!*

(*Interruptions*)

**An hon. Member:** *Pe insit dimoun fer dezord.*

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order! Both sides!

(*Interruptions*)

Both sides of the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Both sides of the House, order!

**Mr Bhagwan:** *Onorab Dhunoo fer twa pa gagn somey!*

(*Interruptions*)

**The Prime Minister:** I am informed that his Counsel is Mr M.D. ...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**The Prime Minister:** ...who is actually a member of the Labour Party.

**Mr Juman:** *Pa pe kapav desann dan sirkonskripsion!*

**An hon. Member:** *Ki pa pe kapav desann?*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Juman:** *Demann Obeegadoo!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

Now, order! Let us finish on that count!

**Mr Assirvaden:** Le Premier ministre vient de faire mention...

**Mr Speaker:** Supplementary?

**Mr Assirvaden:** Oui, bien sûr ! Le Premier ministre vient de faire mention de l'arrestation d'un habitant de la localité de la circonscription numéro 4 suite à l'incident impliquant votre ministre de l'Énergie. Est-ce-que le Premier ministre peut confirmer à la Chambre que la personne se sentant offensée, donc, votre ministre de l'Énergie, a fait une déposition à la police contre cette personne arrêtée ?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me enlighten this hon. Member on legal matters. I can understand he is not versed in them. Let me *allumer son ampoule qui est peut être brûlée*. Hon. Assirvaden, I mentioned the charge is for rogue and vagabond. Regarding evidence which has to be gathered by the Police, I believe, the Police has, for example, already taken statements. Of course, I am not here to reveal from whom statements have been taken because there is an enquiry which is ongoing. I am sure you will appreciate that when an enquiry is ongoing, there are certain things that I can disclose publicly, but there are other things that will not be appropriate for me to disclose.

**Mr Assirvaden:** Votre ministre est un homme public !

**The Prime Minister:** Why are you interrupting?

**Mr Speaker:** Wait!

**The Prime Minister:** Let me finish. When you asked the question, did I interrupt you? *Soyez poli, M. Assirvaden!*

**Mr Assirvaden:** Je le suis, je le suis ! Pas de leçons de vous !

(*Interruptions*)

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just said, the enquiry is ongoing, and ultimately, when the case will be completed, it will follow its course and if anyone has to answer for a charge, he will have to answer.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **LA TOUR KOENIG - SCRAP YARD - COPPER INGOTS SEIZURE**

**(No. B/673) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the 20 tons or more of copper ingots seized on a scrap yard at La

Tour Koenig on Monday 10 April 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the name of the company allegedly involved therein, and
- (b) if the sources thereof have been identified.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that following an intelligence report from the Financial Intelligence Unit received in March 2023, the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team and the Major Crime Investigation Team initiated an enquiry into a suspected case of Money Laundering and other likely criminal offences.

In the course of investigation, credible and reliable information was obtained that the case was linked to theft of copper to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom.

In that respect, on Monday 10 April 2023 at 14.45 hours, following intensive intelligence gathering, and after continuous surveillance operations, the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team searched the premises of Tradeway International Ltd, a scrap metal yard, situated at Industrial Park, La Tour Koenig, by virtue of a Search Warrant issued by the District Magistrate of Black River Court.

During the search, 1062 ingots of copper each weighing around 22 kgs, 242 emptied PVC plastic cover insular from which copper wires have been removed, 24 moulds and 62 raffia bags, containing rolls of copper wires were found and secured by the Police as exhibits. An enquiry has been initiated into the case with respect to money laundering.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that twenty-one persons have been interviewed, out of whom, six persons have been arrested and released on bail, namely –

- (i) Mr D. P., Director, Tradeway International Ltd;
- (ii) Mrs R. B., Company Manager, Tradeway International Ltd;
- (iii) Mr V. B., Shipping Manager, Tradeway International Ltd;
- (iv) Mr F. S., Manager Procurement, Mauritius Telecom Ltd.;
- (v) Mr M. S., Director, GWS Technologies Ltd, and
- (vi) Mrs V. S., Director, Richmont Capital Ltd.

They have all been provisionally charged for the offence of Conspiracy to Money Laundering.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, the emptied PVC plastic cover insulars were identified as being the property of Mauritius Telecom. An in-depth enquiry has been instituted into this case.

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Taking into consideration that there is an ongoing enquiry, can the hon. Prime Minister provide information with regard to the shareholders and the Directors of Tradeway International Ltd situated at La Tour Koenig? Thank you.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Tradeway International Ltd has three Directors, namely Mr C. M., Mr S. M., and Mr D. P. Mr C. M. is the only shareholder of the company.

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Can the hon. Prime Minister provide the information as to whether statements have been recorded from the Directors and the shareholders of Tradeway International Ltd that he mentioned?

**The Prime Minister:** I am informed that statements have been recorded only from Mr D. P., the Director of Tradeway International Ltd. He was then arrested and charged for conspiracy of money laundering. He was released on bail on 24 May 2023 after furnishing a surety of Rs100,000.

Concerning Mr C. M. and Mr S. M., no statement has been recorded from them as they are abroad.

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Much has been said about this case in different quarters of the media as well. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that there are few directors or shareholders who are not in Mauritius. Can he inform the House if there has been any action initiated on behalf of the Government or on behalf of the Police for the recording of their statements?

**The Prime Minister:** According to records, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr S. M. is the brother of Mr C. M. and is also the Director of Tradeway International Ltd. since 21 July 2020. He was born in India. He is the holder of a valid occupational permit as professional. He left Mauritius for France on 22 February 2023 and he is still abroad.

Mr C. M., who is also Director of Tradeway International Ltd since 20 November 2012, was born in India and is also a citizen of Mauritius by registration since 04 August 2021. He left Mauritius for Dubai on 08 April 2023, and therefore, he could not be interrogated in connection with the case, but nevertheless, depending on the progress of

the enquiry, the possibility of seeking assistance for the repatriation of Mr C. M. may be explored for the recording of statements as he is a Mauritian by registration.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Tour!

**Ms Tour:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware if Mr M. S. has any foreign Bank account?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to draw attention of the House that I, myself, while speaking at some political public meetings, have put a few questions, and I recall that, on one occasion when Mr M. S. was on radio, he was pressed with questions as to whether he held any foreign Bank account. After quite some time, he finally answered to say that neither he nor his wife has any Bank account abroad. But we leave it to the enquiry to reveal whether he is telling the truth or whether he is lying. We shall see.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Abbas Mamode!

**Mr Abbas Mamode:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can we know whether the hon. Prime Minister is aware of the imposition of any objection to departure for Mr M. S. and Mrs V. S.?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that prohibition orders have been issued by the Magistrate of Port Louis South, prohibiting Mr M. S. and Mrs V. S. to leave the country until the determination of their case by virtue of Section 14 of the Bail Amendment Act 2002. Their passports have been secured by the Police. Only Mrs V. S. has entered a case contesting the Prohibition Order and the case is coming for arguments on 07 June 2023.

**Mr Lobine:** Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that despite seizure of those copper ingots, the scrapyard at La Tour Koenig is still operating? No seizure has been made and the licence has not yet been suspended. Is he aware of that?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not aware of the continued operation of that company as indicated by the hon. Member. What I have answered relates to whatever has been seized as exhibit for the purposes of the enquiry in this case. I shall find out from the Police and also from other authorities whether any other action is being contemplated and which is in line with what the hon. Member has stated.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dhunoo!

**Mr Dhunoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, the company profile and business activities of Tradeway International Ltd and whether FIU also is doing an enquiry on them?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the FIU started investigating into the alleged case of money laundering to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom as far back as 2021. Four ex parte applications were made by the FIU before the Judge in Chambers on 28 March 2023 with a view to obtaining a Restriction Order in respect of the number of persons. These ex parte applications were granted on 29 March 2023 by the Judge in Chambers after she considered affidavit evidence before her and such orders are not granted on the mere asking of the FIU.

The Judge in Chambers must be satisfied that the FIU has valid grounds for moving for a Restriction Order before she can grant the restraining order. Restriction Orders granted by the Judge in Chambers are valid for a period of 12 months and can be renewed. The test which the FIU must satisfy before successfully obtaining a Restriction Order is set out in Section 27(1) (a) of the Asset Recovery Act which reads as follows, and I quote –

“Where property is reasonably believed by the Enforcement Authority to be recoverable under Sub-Part B of this Part and to be proceeds or an instrumentality or terrorist property, it may apply to a Judge for a Restriction Order in respect of that property.”

While a Restriction Order is in force, authorities such as the FIU, MRA and Police must use these 12 months diligently to further enquire into the cases. A Restriction Order prevents a person from disposing of his property while the Restriction Order is in force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is highlighted that proceedings before the Judge in Chambers are privileged and that only the parties to the case have access to the rulings and orders of the Judge in Chambers. In pursuance to Section 31 of the Asset Recovery Act, a party who is under a Restriction Order may apply to the Judge in Chambers for a variation or a rescission of the Restriction Order.

Currently, I am told that some parties who have been the subject matter of Restriction Orders have applied for variation of the orders. It will thus be for the court to decide whether to grant a variation or not.

**Mr Uteem:** The hon. Prime Minister mentioned that at the origin of this case, there is a theft to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom. So, may I know from the hon. Prime

Minister whether at the time the theft was committed to the prejudice of Mauritius Telecom, Mr M. S. was his adviser and was neither questioned nor harassed as long as he remained his Advisor?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Member did not listen properly and carefully to me. I have never mentioned a case of theft. You must pay attention to my answer, not to anybody else speaking in this House. Maybe let me repeat what I said for his benefit, and I hope he listens carefully. I said that the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team and the Major Crime Investigation Team initiated an enquiry into a suspected case of money laundering and other likely criminal offences. So, it will be for the enquiry to reveal ultimately, if ever – I said if ever, I do not prejudge the issue – any offence has been committed.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

**Mrs Mayotte:** I have listened carefully and properly, Mr Speaker, Sir and my question has already been canvassed. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – COST INCURRED**

**(No. B/674) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to official overseas missions undertaken by Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament since 2019 to date, he will state the number thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) countries visited;
- (b) composition of the delegation, and
- (c) costs incurred, giving details thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the policies, procedures and rates of *per diem* payable to officials, including Ministers and Members of the Parliament proceeding on official missions overseas, are clearly spelt out in circulars issued by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

Funding for overseas missions is provided under the “Centrally Managed Expenses of Government” vote of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development.

For the last five financial years, funding for the overseas mission has been provided as follows –

- (i) Rs160 m. for the Financial Year 2018/2019;
- (ii) Rs122 m. for the Financial Year 2019/2020;
- (iii) Rs48 m. for the Financial Year 2020/2021;
- (iv) Rs70.1 m. for the Financial Year 2021/2022, and
- (v) Rs174 m. for the Financial Year 2022/2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main policy guidelines for mission overseas in accordance with the Circular Letter No.10 of 2017 issued by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development are as follows –

- (i) missions have to be prioritized on the basis of their importance;
- (ii) arrangements need to be made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade for missions abroad not warranting the formal presence of a Minister or official, for our Embassies/Missions to be represented on same;
- (iii) for any mission, the number of delegates should be kept to the minimum, except for missions where specific technical expertise may be required;
- (iv) the route chosen should be the most economical and direct one;
- (v) the most appropriate officials should be designated for any mission, taking into account the expected objectives and outcome of the mission, and the level of representation required as well as the technical skills demanded, and
- (vi) maximum use should be made of teleconferencing and other modern telecommunication facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is apposite to note that funds earmarked for overseas missions are used to pay only for the following –

- (i) international travel such as airfare and train ticket;
- (ii) *per diem* to meet costs of accommodation, meals, internal transportations and all other related expenses;
- (iii) entertainment allowance for mission abroad only, where applicable;
- (iv) hiring of cars for mission abroad only, where applicable, and
- (v) registration and training fees.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

**Mr Speaker:** Time over!

**Mr Armance:** Just one question.

**Mr Speaker:** Time over!

*(Interruptions)*

It will be placed in the Library.

The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn, B/678, B/679, B/680, B/686, B/689, B/690.

Also PQs B/692, B/696, B/723, B/725, B/726 and B/739 have been withdrawn. I now call on MP Dr. Gungapersad to proceed.

### **PRIMARY & SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS –**

#### **WATCH & SECURITY SERVICES – CONTRACTORS' LIST**

**(No. B/691) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the watch and security services in primary and secondary public schools, she will give a detailed list of the contractors whose services have been enlisted therefor since January 2015 to date, indicating the terms and conditions therefor.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, watch and security services are provided in primary and secondary schools as per two contracts namely one for night watch and security services and the other for day time watch and security services. The procurement exercises that are carried out by my Ministry are through competitive bidding exercise based on approved specifications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of watch and security services, I am tabling the list of contractors as well as the terms and conditions of their contracts.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, given that millions of public funds are spent in the watch and security services, will the hon. Minister inform the House if cases of theft were reported in primary and secondary schools and to indicate the items stolen and the value of same?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that there has been a number of cases where tablets have been stolen from schools and I am also told that they are normally replaced by the service provider, those responsible for night services or day

time security services. I don't have the exact value right now but I will be pleased to inform the hon. Member once I get the values.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House the number of contracts, if any, which have been terminated as a result of their failure to respect the terms and conditions and what steps have been taken to ensure that the watch and security services provided to primary and secondary schools are satisfactory for the welfare of students, staff and other stakeholders?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there is a monitoring service, monitoring system at the level of the Ministry. If I find it, I will table the information to the hon. Member.

#### **PAILLES-GUIBIES SEWERAGE PROJECT – PHASE 2 – COMPLAINTS**

**(No. B/692) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Pailles-Guibies Sewerage Project – Phase 2, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to –

- (a) if the contractor has appointed a Health and Safety Officer for the project, and
- (b) the number of complaints received as at to date pertaining to –
  - (i) road accidents;
  - (ii) human injuries, and
  - (iii) damaged properties, indicating the quantum of compensation disbursed by the contractor as a result thereof, if any.

*(Withdrawn)*

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **STC - MODERN WAREHOUSE - RATION RICE STORAGE**

**(No. B/693) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the construction of a modern warehouse for storage of ration rice and other commodities by the State Trading Corporation, at Jin Fei, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) estimated cost thereof, and

(b) source of funding thereof, indicating if same will be levied from Mogas and Gas Oil.

**The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to the question. With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the estimated cost for the new warehouse is around Rs1 billion. A more realistic figure will be available once it will be worked out by a Consultant.

With regard to part (b) of the question, given the strategic importance of the project, I am informed that the STC intends to approach financing institutions to raise the required funds to construct the warehouse. There is currently no provision in the price structure of Mogas and Gasoil to collect funds for the construction of a warehouse by the STC.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, before I start with my supplementary. Did the Minister say Rs1 m.?

**Mr Bholah:** Around one billion.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** One billion.

**Mr Bholah:** Billion.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Billion. *Milliard*? Okay. No, this is what I wanted to clarify. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what we call - *après la mort, la tizan* . Can I ask the hon. Minister why is it that it is only after the discovery of rice which was found to be unfit for human consumption, that it is only then that the STC has taken the decision to build a new storage facility?

**Mr Bholah:** No, this is not so, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the project was announced in the Budget Speech 2019-2020 but after the budget was voted, the hon. Member will appreciate that we had the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19 and STC had put this project on hold.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we all knew what happened that rice was contaminated and had to be thrown away. I don't know exactly how much the country has lost in terms of monetary terms for this rice but can I ask the hon. Minister, if in the meantime, he can assure the House, the Country, the Nation that measures are taken so that such a thing does not occur again until this new storage facility is being finalized?

**Mr Bholah:** Of course, the STC has taken all steps in order to avoid recurrence of such things in the future.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon Mrs Mayotte!

### **PATIENTS - SURGERIES IN INDIA – 2019 TO DATE**

**(No. B/694) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to patients having undergone surgeries abroad in India since 2019 to date, he will state the number thereof.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the total number of patients who proceeded to India for surgeries and treatment since 2019 is as follows –

- 335 patients in 2019;
- 176 patients in 2020;
- 173 patients in 2021;
- 335 patients in 2019;
- 176 patients in 2020;
- 173 patients in 2021;
- 277 patients in 2022, and
- 191 patients in 2023 as at 31 May 2023.

**Mrs Mayotte:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister give us more information about the hospitals in India where cases are referred? Thank you.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, yes I have a table of the different treatment, for example, for cardiac patients, they have been sent to –

- Manipal Hospital, Bangalore;
- Apollo Hospital, Chennai;
- Apollo Hospital, Mumbai;
- Narayana Hospital, Bangalore, and
- Artemis Hospital, Delhi.

As far neurosurgical treatment, they are sent to –

- VIMHANS,
- Apollo Hospital, Delhi, and
- Apollo Hospital, Chennai and Mumbai.

**Mrs Mayotte:** Can the hon. Minister state how the follow up of the patients' post-operations are done in Mauritius?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, before these patients are sent abroad, there is a communication line between the treating doctors in Mauritius and those where these patients would be sent. So, following their surgeries, the post-operative follow up being done in Mauritius with the collaboration between surgeons, i.e, the doctors in India and in Mauritius.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **MSC SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURES – CLEANING & MAINTENANCE**

**(No. B/695) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation whether, in regard to sports infrastructures falling under purview of his Ministry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to the number thereof, indicating the amount of money spent in terms of cleaning and maintenance thereof annually, giving a list thereof.

**Mr Toussaint:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the list of sports infrastructures that are managed and maintained by the Mauritius Sports Council including the amount of money spent in terms of cleaning and maintenance on each site from 03 July 2022 to 21 May 2023. Thank you.

**Mr Juman:** *Mr Speaker, Sir, je peux demander à l'honorable ministre s'il est au courant de l'état actuel de nos infrastructures sportives, surtout les stades, les gradins et autres infrastructures? Et s'il est au courant de l'état d'abandon, qu'est-ce qu'il compte faire pour remédier à la situation.*

**Mr Toussaint:** M. le président, la question est très vague. Est-ce que l'honorable membre fait référence à un stade ou un gymnase en particulier ? Je pourrais répondre à ce moment-là.

**Mr Juman:** L'exemple de Stade Anjalay Coopen.

**Mr Toussaint:** Oui. Il a été rapporté récemment qu'au niveau du Stade Anjalay, il y a un souci avec les pigeons. Je profite de l'occasion pour lancer un appel à la population qu'il faut arrêter de nourrir les pigeons parce qu'ensuite ils viennent - je ne suis pas expert en pigeons. Le *Mauritius Sports Council* a commencé une série de nettoyage par rapport au Stade Anjalay et il me semble aussi qu'on avait le même souci au stade de George V. D'après les photos qui ont été circulé, qui m'ont fait parvenir, le nettoyage a commencé et ils ont mis au propre les gradins.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

## **PUBLIC CONCERTS & EVENTS - CONDITIONS IMPOSED**

**(No. B/696) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to public concerts and events, he will state the conditions imposed by his Ministry for the holding thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

## **NATIONAL GENDER POLICY - RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(No. B/697) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the National Gender Policy launched on 08 March 2022, she will state the number of –

- (a) times the National Steering Committee thereof met under her chairpersonship, and
- (b) recommendations implemented by the public and private sectors, including the media and the Civil Society Organizations.

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will provide combined replies to PQs B/697 and B/729 as both relate to the National Gender Policy 2022-2030.

I wish to inform the House that the National Gender Policy 2022-2030 aims at providing guidelines that underpin Government's commitment to integrate gender in all planned actions and provides the basis upon which every sector is guided to develop their sectoral gender policies and implementation plan.

Mr Speaker Sir, in line with the recommended actions of the National Gender Policy, my Ministry, in its capacity as National Gender Machinery and lead agency for gender mainstreaming, has strengthened the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming by reviewing its functioning and *modus operandi* with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the strategies underpinned in the policy document whilst adopting a holistic approach.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Gender Policy comprises five recommendations, namely –

- 1) Setting up of National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming (completed);
- 2) Setting up of Inter-Ministerial Gender Technical Working Group (completed);

- 3) Reinforcement of Gender Cell;
- 4) Development of Action Plan for Public Sector, and
- 5) Setting up and launching of Gender Technical Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming in Private Sector, Academia and the Civil Society Organisations.

An initial meeting, Mr Speaker, Sir, was held under my chairpersonship with Supervising Officers of all Ministries and Departments concerned to stress on the need to align the recommendations of the National Gender Policy within their programmes and activities as well as to provide guidance on the implementation thereof.

In order to implement these recommendations, a Gender Cell has been set up in each Ministry. The Gender Cell is chaired by the Gender Focal Point, who should not be below the rank of a Deputy Permanent Secretary, and is usually co-chaired by an alternate member from the Technical Cadre. Senior Managerial Officers as well as a representative of each department/section are the members of the Gender Cell. The said Cell meetings are held on a regular basis in the presence of a representative of my Ministry as and when required to provide for technical assistance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been observed that, due to a lack of understanding of gender issues, officers are very often unaware of the broad gender concepts, thus this impedes on the permeation of gender in all sectorial policies and programmes. Therefore, in a bid to raise awareness on Gender Concept and Gender Mainstreaming amongst different cadres of the implementing Ministries, a series of capacity building have been carried out to provide the Officers with entry points to identify the gender gaps in their respective sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the following measures have also been taken at the level of my Ministry –

- 1) assistance and reinforcement across Ministries and Departments were provided to their respective Gender Cells based on the discussions and outcomes of the National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming;
- 2) two inter-Ministerial Gender Technical Working Committees have been held with Gender Focal Points of all Ministries to guide the process of gender mainstreaming in line Ministries and to take cognizance of gender responsive actions taken at the level of those Ministries/Departments;

- 3) Gender Cells have been consolidated in all Ministries with continuous support and technical assistance, in terms of provision of information, education and communication on gender issues which are of course duly adapted in their particular sectors so that they are able to identify whatever gender gaps within their respective sectors and devise the ways to address these effectively, and
- 4) action is being taken at the level of my Ministry to mainstream gender across all sectors of the economy, namely the private sector, the Academia, like I mentioned, the media and the civil society organisations. Each of these sectors will be assisted through a well-defined guideline for the gradual elimination of outstanding gender gaps. My Ministry is currently working on the guidelines which would be launched shortly.

I am, Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, submitting a copy of the report, which includes the list of recommendations and I also wish to inform the House that this document is accessible on the website of my Ministry.

Thank you.

**Ms Anquetil:** Je vous remercie, M. le président. Concernant le comité national, peut-on savoir de la ministre qu'a fait chaque ministère concrètement sur la politique du genre ?

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, that would be quite lengthy for me to give it as an oral reply. I would be very happy to table the reply to the House.

**Ms Anquetil:** Je vous remercie, M. le président. La ministre pourrait-elle nous indiquer s'il existe un *Term of Reference* sur la fréquence des réunions de chaque comité. On a compris qu'il y a quatre comités ; le comité national, privé, les institutions académiques, et le comité avec les medias. Sur quelle fréquence se rencontrent-ils? Merci.

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am actually very grateful for the Member of Opposition to put this question so I can enlighten the House and the population at large.

Mr Speaker, Sir, just to put everything back into perspective, the meeting in connection with the whole setting up of the gender technical working group on gender mainstreaming for the four sectors that I have mentioned, was held on 17 May 2019 at the municipal hall of Port Louis in the presence of the international consultant, Mrs Lichuma who, herself, developed these four technical guidelines for the establishment of this platform.

For this meeting, seven representatives of each sector were present. In a nutshell, the following were encapsulated during the meeting –

- (i) For the private sector, Business Mauritius has agreed to act as the convener for the media and the academia. There was nobody who was agreeable to act as convener.
- (ii) For civil society organisations, the MACOSS agreed to act as convener.
- (iii) In general, though divergent views were there related to the guideline which you're mentioning, especially as regards the conveners, finally it was agreed that these guidelines will be prepared in line with the binary definition.

Unfortunately, thereafter, following the COVID-19 pandemic, it was viewed with a lot of concern that the gender cells at the level of public sector were almost inactive. Therefore, the Ministry deemed it more appropriate to reengineer and re-dynamise the institutionalisation of the gender cells in the public sector first, prior to going to the other four sectors. The Ministry started this in July of last year after the restriction of the pandemic was removed or reduced to ensure that all the gender cells are activated and fully institutionalised in the public sector.

Thus, given that the Gender Unit which is also the machinery, as I have said earlier on, initiated the following actions, like I said earlier on, with the launching of the policy, the National Steering Committee was held, it does not mean that... although we have encountered delays which I have explained why. The work has been ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir. Around 2,979 targeted audiences have already been sensitised in an ad hoc manner at grass root level. Assistance as resource person are also being provided to the Mauritius Civil Service College in delivering set courses on the gender mainstreaming and gender concept in parallel.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry ensures actions towards reactivating and refreshing the commitment of these technical working groups for all four sectors and to that effect, the Ministry is pursuing all its effort in redesigning and developing a new version of the guidelines for the four sectors.

The guidelines set specific principles and rules within each of these technical working groups that they should follow and which will help pave their way towards and take onus in mainstreaming gender in their sector. And in that vein, my Ministry is

proceeding with the printing of the guidelines which will be launched in due course in the presence of those four respective sectors.

Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME – FUNDS DISBURSEMENT**

**(No. B/698) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development whether, in regard to the Wage Assistance Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the –

- (a) source of funds thereof;
- (b) total amount disbursed, and
- (c) mode of reimbursement thereof.

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, suite à l'impact de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur notre économie, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été mis en place en 2020 par ce gouvernement afin d'apporter un soutien financier aux employés du secteur privé qui se seraient sinon retrouver au chômage technique.

Le gouvernement a également mis en place le *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* et a accordé une subvention unique pour les travailleurs indépendants afin de préserver les moyens de subsistance de ces derniers.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, les sources de financement pour payer l'allocation dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* sont le *Consolidated Fund* et le *National Resilience Fund*.

Dans le cadre de ce régime, avant janvier 2021, un travailleur percevant jusqu'à 50 000 roupies par mois recevait une allocation équivalente à son salaire de base plafonné à 25 000 roupies. Ces montants ont été augmentés de 375 roupies à partir de janvier 2021 pour tenir compte de la compensation salariale.

Pendant les deux périodes de confinement national, l'allocation au titre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été versée à tous les travailleurs éligibles. Après la levée partielle du confinement, nos frontières sont restées fermées aux touristes et les arrivées de touristes sont restées faibles par la suite. Par conséquent, le *Wage Assistance Scheme* a été maintenu pour les travailleurs du secteur du tourisme pendant cette période.

En outre, afin d'empêcher la résurgence et la propagation de la COVID-19, un certain nombre de locaux ont dû rester fermés au public, tandis que d'autres entreprises ont été autorisées à ouvrir sous réserve de restrictions sanitaires strictes. Certaines régions ont également été déclarées zones rouges et certaines activités d'attroupement ont été interdites. Ces entreprises ont continué à bénéficier du *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé par la *MRA* qu'un montant total de 20,75 milliards de roupies a été déboursé dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme*.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (c) de la question, la *MRA* m'a informé que certaines entreprises ont retiré leur demande et ont volontairement remboursé, en totalité ou en partie, le montant précédemment perçu dans le cadre du programme.

Le deuxième mode de remboursement a été l'introduction d'un COVID-19 Levy pour récupérer une partie du montant de l'aide financière versée dans le cadre du *Wage Assistance Scheme* aux entreprises qui ont réalisé des bénéfices.

Le prélèvement était payable sur une période de deux ans et ne dépassait pas 15 % du revenu imposable de l'entreprise pour chacune des deux années. Le premier paiement de la taxe a été effectué dans la déclaration d'impôt sur le revenu soumis en 2020/2021.

Afin d'alléger le fardeau des difficultés financières de certaines entreprises et aussi prenant en considération la compensation salariale en 2023, le gouvernement a décidé d'annuler toutes les dettes impayées, y compris les pénalités et les intérêts, du COVID-19 Levy au 20 janvier 2023.

Merci, M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** The Table has been advised that PQ B/705, B/706, B/730, B/732 have been withdrawn.

Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

*At 1.01 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Please be seated. Hon. Ittoo!

#### **HOLYROOD NO.1, VACOAS – NEW BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/699) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the

project for the construction of a new bridge along Royal Road, in Holyrood No.1, Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in a reply made to Parliamentary Question B/494 on 25 May 2021, the House was informed that the Holyrood bridge is located along a non-classified road and as such does not fall under the purview of the RDA.

The reconstruction of the bridge was at that point in time being undertaken by the NDU but then, after a study and taking into consideration the complexities of the work that needed to be done, that work has been handed over to the RDA. Actually, the existing bridge is very narrow and is in a degraded state representing a safety hazard to road users.

Moreover, the Holyrood Road No. 1 wherein the bridge is located is a busy shortcut for traffic connecting the west to the upper Plaines Wilhems. Therefore, given the degraded nature of the existing bridge and its complexities, NDA has awarded a project to Gamma Construction Ltd on 28 February 2022. The work started on 17 March 2022 with an initial expected completion of 14 September 2023.

The scope of works comprises construction of a new bridge with two end spans of 12 metres and a middle span of 15 metres, road works, construction of footpath and drain, relocation of services.

As at date, the RDA is working on the clearing of sites and excavation. Foundation works on one site have been completed. Delays have been encountered on the project due to larger and deeper foundation which were required owing to poor ground conditions, re-roofing of major pipes of the Central Water Authority and the bad weather condition in that region.

With a view to proceeding with remaining works, full closure of Holyrood No. 1 road is required and a Traffic Diversion Scheme is being worked out with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. Works are now expected to be completed on December 2023.

**Mr Ittoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As the hon. Minister must be aware, that new link road from La Vigie to Beau Songes through La Marie will intersect with the existing Holyrood road to Beau Songes. My question to the hon. Minister would be whether, that stretch from the bridge to the intersection would also be catered for by the RDA in the project.

**Mr Hurreeram:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I said in my reply earlier, this road is a very busy one and is being used as a shortcut. Therefore, the RDA is now considering to link that newly built bridge to the motorway that will link La Vigie to Flic en Flac.

Thank you.

**Mr Ittoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question to the hon. Minister is with regards to the announcement made in the budget speech with regards to cycle tracks. Will provision for cycle tracks also be made in this new stretch? Thank you.

**Mr Hurreeram:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that La Vigie till Flic en Flac, the whole stretch, provision has been made for cycle lanes. Therefore, in the same logic, we are also providing for a cycle track from the Holyrood bridge to the roundabout linking the new motorway to Flic en Flac and that stretch will have around 700 metres of cycle track.

Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **CONSTITUENCY NO. 9, FLACQ & BON ACCUEIL – DRAIN WORKS – 2014-2023**

**(No. B/700) Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to Constituency No. 9, Flacq and Bon Accueil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Flacq, information as to the number of drain works carried out thereat since 2014 to 2019 and 2020 to date.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Flacq that 40 street drain projects have been carried out in Constituency No. 9 from 2014 to 2019 and 55 from 2020 to date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am hereby tabling the list of drain projects for the two periods requested.

**Mr Nuckcheddy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister please inform the House if any request has been made by the District Council so that there is a waiving of LDA's approval on what we call the absorption drains.

**Dr. Husnoo:** I think that it has been discussed at the level of RDA and I think that they have agreed that we can do the absorption drains.

**Mr Nuckcheddy:** I think that the LDA is under the purview of the Ministry of National Infrastructure. Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there are any negotiations in that sense because actually the approval time that is being taken by LDA is too long and that is delaying some of the projects in the Constituency No. 9.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Actually, you know, there are a lot of drain works that are going on around the country. I think that is why. I think that the LDA itself is swamped by so many projects. I think that is what is happening but they are looking after the projects. There are some very big projects, some minor projects but they are looking at all the projects.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **RADIOTHERAPY SERVICES – AVAILABLE FACILITIES – CANCER PATIENTS**

**(No. B/701) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the radiotherapy services in public hospitals, he will state the facilities thereof available for cancer patients over the last 3 years to date.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to radiotherapy services, I am informed that presently teletherapy and brachytherapy services are being offered at Victoria Hospital.

The Radiotherapy Department is equipped with –

- (i) one Linear Accelerator;
- (ii) two Cobalt-60 units;
- (iii) one Brachytherapy Machine, and
- (iv) one 2D Simulator with cone beam CT.

**Dr. Aumeer:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, the Linear Accelerator which is far better than the Cobalt machine, is in use at present?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this Linear Accelerator dates back to more than 25 years. Every year, the apparatus has some issues and breaks down. At present, the apparatus is not working.

**Dr. Aumeer:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has been appraised by officers of his Ministry or the physicians working there about the continuous use of the Cobalt machine – what we so call the teletherapy – in terms of its limitations for the cancers that we have in Mauritius?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously. That is why the New Cancer Centre project is coming up. I believe my colleague, Dr. Husnoo, knows very well about it, how the Prime Minister has been engaged personally in the setting up of the New Cancer Centre. I will just give you a brief. The New Cancer Centre will be equipped with two new 3 Dimensional Linear Accelerators, one High Dose Rate Brachytherapy and at present, the evaluation exercise for the Linear Accelerators with treatment planning has already been completed and tender documents have been prepared.

So, this is the reason why there is a New Cancer Centre. We are not only building, but also coming up with the new techniques, new machines, especially for the treatment with radiotherapy.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I have a supplementary?

**Mr Speaker:** Exceptionally!

**Mr Bérenger:** Thank you. Can we have an indication when the New Cancer Centre at Solferino will be operational?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** By end of this year.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **AU FREE MOVEMENT PROTOCOL - SIGNATURE & RATIFICATION**

**(No. B/703) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the African Union Free Movement of Persons Protocol, he will state where matters stand as to the signature and ratification thereof.

**The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr M. Seeruttun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this parliamentary question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment was adopted by the 30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session in the African Union Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 29 January 2018.

As at date, 32 countries have signed the protocol and only 4 countries have ratified it. The Republic of Mauritius has neither signed nor ratified the African Union Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. However, it has gradually adopted some of the provisions of the protocol. The country is at an advanced stage in the relaxation of visas, easing of movement of labour, professionals, and trading services for the African region and beyond.

The Republic of Mauritius already has a liberal visa regime towards the majority of the AU member states who are exempted from visa requirement to enter Mauritius for short stay visit purposes. However, citizens of the following 6 African Union Member States, namely Libya, Mali, Saharawi Republic, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan are required to apply and obtain a visa prior to travel to Mauritius, as stipulated in the Eleventh Schedule of Passport Regulations.

On the other hand, Mauritius has neither signed nor ratified the COMESA Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, the Right of Establishment and Residence and nor the Protocol on Facilitation of the Movement of Persons in SADC region. It however implements an open visa policy and has exempted all COMESA and SADC member states from visa requirements for short stay visit purposes, that is –

- (i) a tourist visa up to 180 days in a calendar year, and
- (ii) business visa up to 120 days, provided that the period of stay during each trip does not exceed 90 days.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Republic of Mauritius does not intend to sign or ratify the African Union Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment at this stage.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes!

**Mr Léopold:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many EU countries have signed and ratified the protocol?

**Mr Seeruttun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I said in my reply that there are 32 countries that have signed the protocol and 4 of them have to date ratified the protocol. The 4 that have ratified the protocol are namely Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

## **DOMESTIC & NON-DOMESTIC USE – WATER CONNECTION**

### **APPLICATIONS – 2015 TO JUNE 2023**

**(No. B/704) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to new water supply connection, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, for each of the years 2015 to 2022 and for the period January 2023 to date, information as to the number of applications received for –

- (a) domestic, and
- (b) non-domestic connections, indicating the number thereof outstanding.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that its customers are categorised in three categories, namely –

- (1) Domestic Consumer;
- (2) Non-Domestic Consumer, which includes Commercial, Industrial, Business Consumers (Hotel) and Vegetable and Livestock Producers, and
- (3) Public Sector Agencies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the Central Water Authority that since year 2015 till 31 May 2023, a total number of 71,822 applications have been received for new water supply for domestic connections and 7,693 applications received for non-domestic connections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling details on the applications received and those outstanding as from year 2015 onwards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worthy to highlight that there are several issues, according to the Central Water Authority, that impede the processing of new water supply connections and these include –

- way leave from the Road Development Authority and other local authorities for fixing of new supply connection;
- delay by the applicant to carry out pipe laying works;
- delay by the applicant in paying the financial contribution to the Central Water Authority;
- delay in submission of missing and additional documents by the applicant;
- bad weather conditions;
- temporary shortage of meters and other fittings;

- dispute between applicant and family and neighbours, and
- other technical issues such as no service main, low pressure owing to elevated areas and encrusted cast iron pipe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to addressing the above and to accelerate the process for new water supply connections, the Central Water Authority has set up a Geographical Information System, that is, a GIS platform to georeference its water pipe water network and appurtenances with coordinates.

Moreover, a Joint Standing Committee between my Ministry and the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, with representatives of the Road Development Authority and the public utility bodies has been set up to facilitate wayleave issues.

The scope of work of the contractors fixing the new connections and the number of connections per contract is also being reviewed by the CWA. It is expected that the above measures would ease the process of new water supply connections. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you. Looking at the information tabled for the year 2023, there have been 2,961 applications received since January 2023. According to the information provided to us, 2,657 of the connections are outstanding. So, for domestic consumers who have applied since January 2023, 90% have not been connected to the water supply. Can I know from the hon. Minister, if he is in a position to state today whether CWA has sufficient meters to connect these outstanding 2,657 domestic consumers?

**Mr Lesjongard:** Yes, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the two main reasons for these figures are pending wayleaves and procurement of meters. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, after COVID-19, there has been delays in the procurement of meters. That is why we have these outstanding numbers.

Third thing also, Mr Speaker, Sir, is with regard to appointment of contractors and the number of connections to be done by the contractors.

There also, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have requested CWA to increase the number of connections to be done by the Contractor on a weekly basis.

**Mr Uteem:** Doesn't the hon. Minister agree that rather than subcontracting connection of these water supplies, the CWA should actually increase its manpower and carry out the connection in-house?

**Mr Lesjongard:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, many of those connections are done in-house and we use the CWA labour to do part of the connection but still, there is not sufficient labour to be able to cope with the demand in new water supply connection. We also need Contractors, Mr Speaker, Sir.

With regard to recruitment of workers of the CWA, Mr Speaker, Sir, as it is, the CWA has recruited a number of workers recently and we are putting those workers at good use. Mr Speaker, Sir, in case we find that in the future we need to recruit, we will do so.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **NATIVE TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY & NATIONAL PARKS ADVISORY COUNCIL - COMPOSITION**

**(No. B/705) Ms J. Berénger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Native Terrestrial Biodiversity and National Parks Advisory Council, he will state –

- (a) the composition thereof, indicating the –
  - (i) number of meetings held since January 2023 to date, and
  - (ii) respective dates thereof, and
- (b) the recommendations made by the Council to the Minister with regard to the conservation of wildlife.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - GOVERNMENT STRATEGY**

**(No. B/706) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to Artificial Intelligence (AI), he will state Government strategy for the promotion, development and adoption thereof in Mauritius, indicating how his Ministry is ensuring that AI systems are developed and used in an ethical and responsible manner.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **CEB – STAFF PENSION FUND & MANUAL WORKERS PENSION FUND - QUANTUM OF DEFICIT**

**(No. B/707) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard, to the Central Electricity Board staff pension fund and the Central Electricity Board Manual Workers Pension Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the respective quantum of deficit thereof as at 31 December 2022, if any.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Central Electricity Board has two Defined Benefit Pension Schemes, namely, the CEB Staff Pension Fund and the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund which were established on 01 January 1974 and on 01 January 1976 respectively, in accordance with Section 8 of the CEB Act. Both funds are governed by the Private Pensions Scheme Act 2012, FSC Rules and its Constitutive Documents.

Each Fund is administered by a governing body consisting of six members out of which, three members are appointed by the Central Electricity Board and the remaining three members are elected by the members of the Annual General Meeting. As at February 2023, both Pension Funds had a total of 1,384 pensioners and 1,559 members.

Since, 01 September 2016, the CEB is implementing a Defined Contribution Pension Scheme and both the Defined Benefit Pension Funds are closed to new entrants since that date.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to an actuarial valuation, there has been a net defined benefit liability since 1989 for the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund and since 1991, for the CEB Staff Pension Fund. The main reasons behind the financial position of these initially Defined Benefit Pension Funds are due to various increases in salaries and conditions of employment following successive salary reviews and the implementation of the different collective agreements over the years. Moreover, the actual returns of the Fund assets have been lower than expected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the estimated net defined benefit liability as from 31 December 2022 is Rs5.7 billion.

It is worthy to highlight that following an actuarial valuation by the Pension Funds in 2017 and in order to alleviate the effects of the shortfall, the Central Electricity Board approved that a contingency plan be developed for these Pension Funds. Accordingly, in November 2020, the Central Electricity Board approved a ‘Contingency Funding Plan’ with annual contributions of Rs484 m. and Rs312.9 m. over a period of 18 years, to the CEB Staff Pension Fund and the CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund respectively.

Thus, Rs350 m. was injected by the Central Electricity Board in the Pension Funds in September 2018, Rs748.5 m. in February 2021 and Rs796.9 m. in September 2021.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to safeguarding the pension benefits of its current and past employees, the CEB had appointed a Consultant last year, to among others –

- a) take cognizance of the updated actuarial valuation reports of the CEB Staff Pension Fund and CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund and to advise on ways and means to reduce the short fall in both Pension Funds, and
- b) advise on the merging of the conditions of service and salary scales of manual and staff grades and eventually, the staff and manual pension funds.

The Consultant has recently submitted its report with the following recommendations –

- Review of the updated actuarial valuation reports of the CEB Staff Pension Fund and CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund;
- Appointment of an external Investment Advisor;
- Introduction of Performance Fees and Key Performance Indicators for Investment Manager;
- Investment strategy be revisited to ensure that investment risk is minimised, and assets are invested to closely match future cash outflows. Investment strategies such as Liability-Driven Investments or Pension Obligation Bonds would help to achieve this goal;
- Pension Plan Investments in Real Estate/Direct Property Investment;
- Conversion of Defined Benefit into Defined Contribution Scheme, and
- Merging of the Staff Pension Fund and Manual Workers Pension Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these recommendations are being considered by the Central Electricity Board.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Assirvaden:** M. le président, si j'ai bien compris la réponse du ministre, il y a un déficit de R 5.7 milliard dans les deux fonds de pensions. Le *Staff Pension Fund* et les *Manual Workers Pension Fund*. Donc plus de R 5.7 milliard. La direction du CEB, comme l'a précisé le ministre, a pris l'engagement de renflouer, d'alimenter ces deux fonds à la hauteur de R 800 m. par an. Un versement de R 400 m. est dû depuis juin de l'année dernière. Le ministre, peut-il indiquer à la Chambre pourquoi la direction du CEB

a refusé de verser ces R 400 m. dû comme c'est prévu dans l'accord pour renflouer ce fond ?

**Mr Lesjongard:** M. le président, effectivement, l'honorable membre a bien donné des chiffres. Il y a un déficit de R 5,7 milliards depuis 31 décembre 2022. M. le président, ce déficit remonte à beaucoup d'années de cela et c'est malheureux, je dois le dire.

Ce matin, le Premier ministre a éclairé l'ampoule de l'honorable membre mais ça ne s'allume toujours pas. Pourquoi je dis ça ? Parce qu'il a été président de ce conseil d'administration et pendant les années où il a été le président du conseil d'administration de cette organisation, on n'a jamais injecté de l'argent dans ses fonds. C'est pourquoi le déficit aujourd'hui est autant.

Deuxième chose, nous avons pris l'engagement et nous avons versé de l'argent dans ce fonds pour la première fois, M. le président, et nous allons le faire. Qu'il reste rassuré que le CEB va faire le nécessaire en ce qui concerne ces deux fonds de pension parce que comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, ils ont recrutés un consultant qui est venu de l'avant avec les recommandations et nous allons veiller à ce qu'on implémente ces recommandations, M. le président. Merci.

**Mr Assirvaden :** M. le président, la vérité est malheureusement tout autre et le ministre essaye de noyer le poisson. Ceci dit...

**Mr Lesjongard :** En, c'est vous que je dois ...

**Mr Assirvaden :** Permettez-moi de poser la question. Pourquoi vous êtes pressé ?

**Mr Lesjongard :** Vous êtes indécent de poser cette question-là vous-même.

**Mr Assirvaden :** M. le président, le fait demeure que le ministre est en poste depuis trois ans. Ce fonds de pension aujourd'hui a un déficit de R 5.7 milliards et le ministre depuis trois ans ne fait absolument rien.

**Mr Lesjongard :** Ah !

**Mr Assirvaden :** Absolument rien alors que l'avenir de 2,600 employés sont concernés par ce fonds de pension. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer la vérité c'est que

...

**Mr Speaker:** You would be making a speech. Put your question. You already put the question.

**Mr Assirvaden :** Non, est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer ?

**Mr Speaker:** You already put the question.

**Mr Assirvaden** : Non, ce n'est pas encore, je pose la question maintenant.

**Mr Speaker**: So what are you doing?

**Mr Assirvaden** : Non, mais j'ai dit au ministre d'attendre et de me laisser expliquer ma question.

**Mr Speaker**: But you can't do this. This is a supplementary question.

**Mr Assirvaden** : La vérité, est-ce-que le ministre peut confirmer ?

**Mr Speaker**: You don't have time to explain any question. Put your question directly.

**Mr Assirvaden** : Est-ce-que le ministre peut confirmer que la vérité c'est que R 3.6 milliards des fonds du CEB ont été pris par le ministère de Finances pour mettre dans le *Consolidated Fund* et c'est pour ça que le CEB n'a pas pu payer les R 400 millions dans ces deux fonds de pension des travailleurs ?

**Mr Lesjongard** : Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Mais je pense que cette ampoule ne va jamais s'allumer, ça c'est clair.* Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I have stated that we have already put money into that fund and we will do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker**: You have finished?

**Mr Lesjongard**: Yes, I have finished.

**Mr Speaker**: So, next question.

#### **TEENAGE PREGNANCY - REPORTED CASES – 2019 TO 2022**

**(No. B/708) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to teenage pregnancy, she will state the number of reported cases thereof for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, indicating the –

- (a) number of the teenagers having dropped out of school and the support given thereto, if any, to continue their schooling during and post pregnancy, and
- (b) maternal mortality rate thereof.

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah**: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Child Development Unit of my Ministry that the number of reported cases of teenage pregnancy for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stands at 309, 244, 238, and 172, respectively.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology that school drop outs among teenage

pregnant girls for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stand at 6, 11, 11, and 12, respectively.

I am also informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as per the policy of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, leave of absence is granted to these girls during their pregnancy and post-delivery period. This allows them to take care of their health, prepare for the delivery and take care of their babies during the first months postpartum. Their right to education is also safeguarded by allowing the students to resume school after they have delivered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the National Education Counselling Service has been providing support to teenage mothers and their families through the interventions of Educational Social Workers and Educational Psychologists so that we can ensure the students' well-being and their continuous education. The National Education Counselling Service also collaborates with other stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations such as *Mouvement D'Aide à la Maternité* to empower and guide teenage mothers and their families regarding issues surrounding pregnancy and to ensure their smooth integration back in school.

Psychosocial support through counselling sessions with the Educational Psychologist and regular home visits from the Educational Social Worker are also provided to these students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry further assists these teenage mothers through psychological support whenever required. Officers, together with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association conduct sensitisation and awareness programmes at regular basis.

In respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness that the maternal mortality rate per 1,000 livebirths among teenagers in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stands at 1.0, 4.1, 0 and 0 respectively. Thank you.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Vu le nombre alarmant du grossesse précoce, est-ce que l'honorable ministre a l'intention d'appliquer les recommandations de la rapporteuse spéciale des Nations Unies qu'une éducation sexuelle obligatoire face partie du cursus scolaire ou si elle a l'intention de conseiller à la ministre de L'Education de le faire ?

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah :** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would agree with the hon. Member that it is a matter of concern that our society faces, like so many other societies across the world by the way, of this scourge but it is not totally correct to say that it is as alarming as being

portrayed by the hon. Member because we have been experiencing a decreasing trend in the reported cases of teenage pregnancy and also of maternal mortality rate as I have just said earlier in my main response but I also agree that education remains the core solution to this problem and I can reassure the House and the population that among all the stakeholders I have mentioned in my main reply, we do work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to sensitise, to bring solutions, to educate and there is a module as far as I understand on sexual education which happens, most likely, to have room for improvement and we shall be working on that Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Vu la vulnérabilité de la santé des adolescentes enceintes, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire quel soutien prénatal leur sont offertes afin de réduire les taux de mortalité maternelle ?

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah :** Mr Speaker, Sir, once again I refer to the hon. Member to the maternal mortality rate that I have just provided to the House and we have had a zero teenage maternal mortality rate for the past two years. So, that is already a good job being done but as to what preventive measures are undertaken there is a panoply of support, therapeutical services which is provided free of charge, sensitisation programmes across the whole island through our social welfare centres, our community centers, drop-in centers. *C'est fait en long et en large.*

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **ST BRANDON ISLAND - SALVAGE OPERATION – DECEMBER 2022**

**(No. B/709) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to the shipwreck at St Brandon Island in December 2022, he will state if the salvage operation has now been completed and, if so, give details of the cost incurred in relation thereto, including insurance claimed as at date, if any.

**Mr Maudhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply made to his Parliamentary Question B/30 at our Sitting of 28 March 2023. In the case of fishing vessel Yu Feng No. 67, the operation was a wreck and pollutants removal operation as the vessel was no more salvageable. As opposed to salvage which means saving the vessel, in a wreck removal operation the vessel is recovered from being completely destroyed but cannot be used anymore.

Wreck and pollutants removal operation has not been completed. So far, no further payment has been made to the salvage company except for the mobilisation cost as mentioned in my reply of 28 March 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 11 May 2023, my Ministry had a meeting with the Taiwanese delegation who was in Mauritius to participate in the IOTC meeting to discuss about the need for pollutants and wreck removal operation of fishing vessel Yu Feng No. 67. On 12 May, an official letter was addressed to the Taiwanese Authorities on this matter for diplomatic channel and a copy handed over to the head of the Taiwanese delegation. I am informed that a reply is still being awaited from the Taiwanese authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that as at date, an amount of 50,257,604.36 representing cost of personal use of deployment and assets, salvage operations as well as accommodation and food provided to rescued crew members compiled by the Shipping Division of my Ministry, following submission from various Ministries, governmental bodies and other organisations in respect of the grounding was submitted on 01 June 2023 to the owner and insurer for reimbursement. However, compiling of claims is still ongoing and further claims will be forwarded to the owner and insurer.

My Ministry is following up the matter with the owner and insurer of the wrecked vessel with a view to recouping the above expenses incurred to date. Concurrently, my Ministry is consulting the AG's office regarding legal avenues possible for obtaining prompt settlement of all claims.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at 01 June, no oil pollution has been reported, as confirmed by the NCG.

**Mr Armane:** M. le président, le bateau a fait naufrage en décembre de l'année dernière. Ma question date de mars de cette année-ci, et on est en juin. Est-ce que le ministre est en train de nous confirmer qu'il est entrain de laisser le bateau à l'abandon sur les récifs de St Brandon, y compris le diesel qui s'y trouve et je rappelle à la Chambre que le ministre n'était pas en mesure de me confirmer le volume de diesel et de polluant qui se trouvent actuellement sur le bateau, et qui, je le rappelle, est sur le récif de St Brandon.

**Mr Maudhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in my main response to the Parliamentary Question B/30, I did say that all that solid pollutants were removed through the Indian ship.

With regard to the diesel on board, still in the vessel, I had informed that Government decided that the responsible for the wreck and pollutants removal operation

would henceforth be looked into by the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management and at the level at the NDRMC, under the chair of the VPM. This is where it is treated now.

**Mr Armane:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that the Minister is not aware that the diesel can cause serious environmental pollution in the area of St Brandon and the surroundings. This is my first point. I would like to know from you, there was a due diligence exercise that was supposed to be carried by the office of the Attorney General. Can you please give us the output of the due diligence, if it has been done?

**Mr Maudhoo:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry conducted a due diligence exercise with regard other representations made by the salvage company as to whether the proposed plan of action could really have been executed being given the weather conditions and sea conditions at the casualty side are always rough with heavy swells.

The report of the due diligence exercise has been submitted to the State Law Office. I am informed that there was a meeting yesterday at the AG's office for the way forward with regard to the additional claim by the salvage company.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **SHELTERS – CHILDREN 18 YEARS OLD – STRUCTURE**

**(No. B/710) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to children placed in shelters, she will state the structure put in place by her Ministry for the accompaniment thereof on turning 18 years old.

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Child Development Unit of my Ministry that as at date, there are 52 children aged between 16-17 years admitted in different residential care institutions and that reintegration plans are prepared for those children as from the age of 17 years so that they are successfully reinserted and mainstreamed. Schooling and skilling, as appropriate, are prominent in the *prise-en charge* of those 17-year-old residents.

Moreover, once these children reach adulthood, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry ensures that they are either reintegrated within their family setting, be it biological, next of kin or acquaintances, who were willing to accommodate them. However, those who cannot be reintegrated in family settings are placed with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), which are mandated to rehabilitate young adults.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the National Children Council (NCC) under the aegis of my Ministry has a series of programmes for children who are about to leave the residential care institutions so as to prepare them for their reintegration in mainstream society.

As at date some 34 children have benefited from training programmes. It is to be noted that once a child is 18 years old, he/she is an adult and as adult, he/she has a right to self-determination.

Nevertheless, the Family Unit of my Ministry, in collaboration with NCC and other NGOs carries out a follow up on the children when they leave our Residential Care Institutions (RCIs). Thank you.

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Ma question n'était pas par rapport au *RCIs*. Ma question concernait les jeunes qui atteignent la majorité, qui doivent quitter les *shelters*, et qui n'ont pas de famille pour les accueillir. Clairement, la ministre parle de *reinsertion plans*, de *rehabilitations plans*.

**Mr Speaker:** No! You are taking the path of debate.

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Mais il n'y a aucune structure mise en place !

**Mr Speaker:** Please! Please! Listen to me! You are taking the path of a debate. You must be having good questions. Shorten the questions; put a direct question to the Minister!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** La ministre nous dit que ce sont les ONG qui accueillent ces jeunes à l'âge de 18 ans. Ne pense-t-elle pas que c'est la responsabilité de l'État de donner un emplacement à ces jeunes pour qu'ils puissent démarrer dans leur vie d'adulte. Parce que quand ils atteignent la majorité...

**Mr Speaker:** You see, you continue...

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Ils sont littéralement jetés à la rue!

**Mr Speaker:** Please! Listen to me!

**Mr Bérenger:** *Ey aret kriye!*

**Mr Speaker:** *Aret kriye! Aret kriye!* Please, listen to the Speaker!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** I continue with my question.

**Mr Speaker:** Do not listen to your father! Listen to the Speaker!

**An hon. Member:** Hey! Come on!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** So cheap of you!

**Mr Bérenger:** Shame on you!

**Mr Speaker:** What I mean ...

**Ms J. Bérenger:** So cheap!

**Mr Speaker:** Please!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** So cheap!

**Mr Speaker:** Please! What I mean, what I mean...

**Dr. Boolell:** Decorum!

**Mr Speaker:** Decorum! Yes, she should have decorum! She should have decorum!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** You should have decorum as well!

**Mr Speaker:** You are right!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** You should have decorum as well!

**Mr Speaker:** Let us follow the advice of hon. Dr. Boolell! Decorum!

**Mr Bérenger:** You are beyond this!

**Mr Speaker:** What I mean is you put your question directly to the Minister.

**Ms J. Bérenger:** I have already asked my question!

**Mr Speaker:** Do not make debate! Do not make statements!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** I have already asked my question!

**Mr Speaker:** Never!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** I have asked! Si la ministre ne pense-t-elle pas que c'est la responsabilité de l'État...

**Mr Speaker:** That's all!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Et pas celle des ONG...

**Mr Speaker:** That's it!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** D'accueillir ces jeunes qui atteignent la majorité, de leur donner un logement pour qu'ils puissent commencer leur vie d'adulte alors qu'ils n'ont pas un sou, ils n'ont pas d'emplois et qu'ils sont littéralement jetés à la rue.

**An hon. Member:** *Bien bon!*

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has probably not paid due attention to the announcement made by the Minister of Finance in his Budget presentation, whereby an allocation of Rs20,000 is being given to any child in this country, be it from the shelters or across the island.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** So, *sans un sou, vous dites ? Sans un sou!* And responsibility of the State? We are fully taking care of our responsibility from the time a minor who has been suffering from distress or harm is placed under the care of *l'État* in those Residential Care Institutions. Therefore, it is extremely misleading for the hon. Member to purport that we are not fulfilling our responsibilities. Thank you.

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Ce n'est certainement pas R 20,000 qui leur permettra de commencer leur vie d'adulte décemment. Dans le budget justement - et je regarde que la ministre vient de faire ce commentaire déplorable - parce que j'ai écouté le discours du budget avec attention.

**Mr Speaker:** You are moving... If you are not putting any question, I will stop you!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Dans le discours du budget, il est mentionné deux *halfway homes* pour les mineurs sortant du CYC. Est-ce que la ministre est-elle au courant qu'actuellement, il n'y a que 9 enfants dans le CYC, dont 3 qui iront directement en prison malheureusement ?

Donc, est-ce que ces *halfway homes* - souvent elle accuse l'opposition de ne rien proposer, de faire que des critiques, je viens lui proposer une solution-là. Est-ce que ces *half-way homes* ne peuvent pas être utilisés aujourd'hui pour accueillir ces jeunes qui atteignent la majorité pour au moins leur donner un logement pour qu'ils puissent commencer leur vie d'adulte ?

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, not only is this supplementary not even related to the main question, but to indulge her with a reply because she is quite passionate as I am about this topic, we will give it a due consideration.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

## **MACONDÉ ROAD CLOSURE – EXTENT, COST & SAFETY MEASURES**

**(No. B/711) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, whether in regard to the closure of the road at Macondé, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the –

- (a) nature of the works to be undertaken thereat, indicating the –
  - (i) estimated cost thereof;
  - (ii) expected duration thereof, and
- (b) measures taken to ensure the safe transit of the inhabitants thereat.

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, over the past few years, severe rock falls have occurred during heavy rainfall at the bottom of the cliff at the Black River Savanne Coast Road B9 Macondé, endangering road users thereat.

As a result, the road had to be closed and traffic diverted through Baie du Cap-Chamarel-Case Noyale (B104) Road with a view to addressing this issue.

The Road Development Authority is implementing a project namely, the Design Build for Purging of Rocks and Provision of Rock Net at Maconde. The aim of the project is to stabilise the Maconde cliff over a length of 500 metres and to make the roads safer for road users.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the RDA that the scope of work comprises of the following –

- (i) design of rock nets;
- (ii) removal of loose rocks in the area;
- (iii) procurement and complete installation of rock nets over an approximate area of 3,600 m<sup>2</sup> with all necessary fittings, cables, anchors, among others, and
- (iv) traffic diversion and management scheme.

The project has been awarded to Sotravic Ltd. for an amount of Rs39.9 m. exclusive of VAT for a duration of five months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, with a view of ensuring safe transit of inhabitants thereat, a consultation exercise with Members of Parliament of the constituency, representatives of the NDU, of the District Council of Savanne and Black

River, Force Vive of Baie du Cap and Choisy villages was held on 17 April 2023 to explain the project and discuss appropriate measures to be taken. It has subsequently been agreed to proceed as follows –

- (i) the road will be completely closed from 04 May 2023 between 08.00 hours to 15.30 hours to enable the contractor to proceed with the works safely for a period of three months;
- (ii) the traffic will be diverted on the Baie du Cap-Chamarel-Case Noyale (B104) Road. Provision for a shuttle has been made as from 08.00 hours to 15.30 hours from Baie du Cap to Case Noyale, and as from 07.30 hours to 15.30 hours from Case Noyale to Baie du Cap at an interval of 30 minutes for each trip for both directions.
- (iii) the road will remain open at night and there will be no road closure during weekends and public holidays.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the above measures will ensure that inhabitants of the region and commuters will face minimal inconveniences owing to the ongoing works. The road closure will end on 04 July 2023 and the project will be completed in September 2023.

Thank you.

**Mrs Mayotte:** Can the hon. Minister state the reasons why the works that were supposed to start in 2021, started only in May 2023?

**Mr Hurreeram:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to explain, and this is one of the reasons why some projects do get delayed at time.

So, in fact, true, the project was awarded to Sotravic Ltd. in September 2021 and given that at that point in time, the road from Case Noyale to Chamarel (B104) had been temporarily closed in the context of the ongoing works where landslides and slope stability treatment were being carried out, we couldn't implement this project as we needed another avenue. Otherwise, we would have closed the village completely. We would have closed B9 and B104. So, we waited for the project of B104 to be completed.

Then, we reached the end of the year. So, we did not want to close that road for the end of year. Then, we went into Maha Shivratri, and then we decided to wait for the Easter school holidays to be over and then, we will start with the works. So, this is exactly what we did for the convenience of the inhabitants out there. Thank you.

**Mrs Mayotte:** Merci, M. le ministre. Alors je voudrais juste attirer votre attention sur les détails que vous venez de donner sur le service d'autobus, des navettes, les horaires d'autobus. Je vous demanderais de veiller fermement...

**Mr Speaker:** Put your question! Put your question!

**Mrs Mayotte :** ... à ce que les travaux prennent fin en temps et lieu au mois prévu et de voir également ...

**Mr Speaker:** This is not a question! This is not a question! You stop there! You stop there, you have no question!

**Mrs Mayotte:** Non, je... M. le président.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question! Dr. Aumeer!

#### **RUISSAU LE POUCE, TRANQUEBAR – FLOODING – REMEDIAL MEASURES**

**(No. B/712) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the entrance of Ruisseau Le Pouce in Tranquebar, he will state where matters stand as to the remedial measures being envisaged to avoid repetitive flooding and overflowing of water during torrential rains and flash floods thereat.

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the region of Ruisseau du Pouce and Tranquebar has been declared as a high-risk flood prone on 01 August and 23 September 2019, respectively, by the Land Drainage Authority following numerous flooding events thereat.

The NDU had implemented two drains projects near the entrance of Ruisseau du Pouce at Jules Mallac Street near the Kalimata Mandir and at end of Pouce Street and Jules Mallac Street, Tranquebar, for an amount of Rs23.2 m. in 2019 and 2020. These projects have contributed at attenuating the risk of flooding in the region.

In addition, the NDU appointed a Consultant to carry out the design and supervision of the upgrading of storm drain and provision of retaining wall at Nazareth, Tranquebar. Following the finalisation of the detailed design report by the Consultant, the LDA submitted its 'no objection' to the implementation of the project.

Subsequently, the NDU invited bids for the appointment of a Contractor in June 2022. However, one bid was received and was non-responsive. The bidding exercise was therefore cancelled in November 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to fast-track the implementation of the National Flood Management Programme, the DICL was created under the aegis of my Ministry and was entrusted the responsibility of this project.

The project was therefore handed over to DICL in November 2022 for implementation and the scope is as follows –

- (i) construction of a masonry and gabion wall along two sides of Pouce Stream over a stretch of 400 metres;
- (ii) desilting works along Le Pouce Stream over a stretch of about 125 metres, and
- (iii) riverbed lining work with reinforced concrete along Le Pouce Stream over a stretch of 400 metres.

It is expected that the bid will be invited for the appointment of a Contractor shortly. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Aumeer:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Does the Minister have any time plan as to when the plight of these 150 families will be sorted out with regard to the implementation of the projects he just mentioned?

**Mr Hurreeram:** I have just explained the whole thing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Aumeer:** Time plan of the execution, not of tender.

**Mr Hurreeram:** We need to find a contractor first!

**Dr. Aumeer:** My next question: does the Minister have any information whether officers of his Ministry will conduct or plan to conduct a site visit and assess the plight of these 150 inhabitants together with the help of the elected Members of Parliament there?

**Mr Hurreeram:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at the Ministry, we have very competent engineers; they have already done their job. We have appointed a Consultant to advise. So, they are doing their job.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **MEDICINES SHORTAGE – REASONS & REMEDIAL MEASURES**

**(No. B/713) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to

medicines, he will state if there is a shortage thereof on the local market and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) reasons therefor, and
- (b) remedial measures being envisaged, if any.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, stock monitoring of drugs on the local market does not fall under the control of my Ministry. No official correspondence from suppliers on shortage of medicines on the local market is reported to my Ministry. It has only been reported in the press and social media.

However, if the hon. Member would have provided us with the specific drugs, I would have supplied the information.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. As you mentioned that it has been reported in the press, so, I would have believed that you have read the newspaper because in Défi Quotidien...

**Mr Speaker:** No! No, no, no, no! Please, you must be having very good question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Of course, I do as usual!

**Mr Speaker:** Go directly to your supplementary question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I am coming! I am coming but you should let me do my job!

**Mr Speaker:** No, no, no, no!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I am paid to do that!

**Mr Speaker:** Just respect the quality, the propriety of a supplementary question. That's all! Go directly!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Can I ask the hon. Minister if his Ministry is in favour of parallel imports as is the case in other countries because parallel import would have eased access to medicines at much lower prices?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding parallel import, there is a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Commerce as well and the technicians who are working on the different modalities and how this would be implemented. We have to wait for that Committee to report before we know how to proceed with parallel import.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** But, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been long since we have been having this issue.

**Mr Speaker:** Put a question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** It is coming, Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr Speaker:** No!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Let me introduce...

**Mr Speaker:** But you take too much time!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** ...my subject. I know how to do my job!

**Mr Speaker:** You don't...

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I have been here for more than 13 years.

**Mr Speaker:** Please, listen to my ruling!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** You cannot be showing me how to do my job!

**Mr Speaker:** Please, listen to my ruling! So many questions left every Tuesday, so many questions!

*(Interruptions)*

You take too much time in your supplementary questions!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I have only two supplementary and now you are stopping me...

**Mr Speaker:** It does not matter! I am giving you your two supplementary questions but it should be proper questions! Go ahead with your question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Can I ask the hon. Minister again if he is aware of the monopolistic situation that we have in Mauritius in terms of importation of medicine?

**Mr Speaker:** Good question!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** And my question is again, would you agree with me that without...

**Mr Speaker:** No, now you are doubling your question.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** No, my question is coming.

**Mr Speaker:** The first question! Please, go ahead. Reply to the first question.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I have not finished!

**Mr Speaker:** No, you cannot! This is supplementary question!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Ameer Meea...

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes.

**Mr Speaker:** You are a seasoned politician and parliamentarian.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Of course.

**Mr Speaker:** You know, you know. I know that you know and you know that you know.

*(Interruptions)*

I know yes and you also you know!

*(Interruptions)*

So, Minister, reply to the first question!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member should have given me notice of the question of parallel import. The question is on the shortage of drugs on the local market. Be specific about that. You should have told me which drug is not available. I will give you information for any drug.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I shall send you the list.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Give me the list first for every drug. There is not one brand. I will give you. Analgesics there are – Paracetamol: 190 brands and dosage.

Give me the specific drug that is not available, I will give you the reply for that. If you do not have questions on...

*(Interruptions)*

No, you do not have questions on shortage...

**Mr Speaker:** Now you are debating!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ...of drugs and you are coming up with other now.

**Mr Speaker:** Okay, finish with that. Next question!

**(No. B/714) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the proposed extension of the Metro line to the North, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Limited, information as to where matters stand.

**The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to Parliamentary Question B/714. I thank the hon. Member for this Parliamentary Question.

This Parliamentary Question demonstrates the inherent trust that the hon. Member has in the light rail system as a modern method of transit. This Parliamentary Question bears testimony to the fact that the Metro Express project is necessary for the development of the land transport system in Mauritius and that it is a viable, worthwhile and feasible project. In fact, our citizens all across the country are anticipating the extension of the light rail alignment in their region. The light rail leads to the development of the areas surrounding the alignment and its stations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the vision of the Government is to extend the light rail network throughout the island in phases. As such, the Metro Express Ltd would be developing a Strategic Railway Master Plan. The Strategic Railway Master Plan would provide a high level alignment of the light rail island wide, linking the major rural zones and future major real estate developments. It would also include multimodal infrastructural requirements along the right rail transit alignment together with the phase implementation plan.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that we do not have the substantive Minister but still I will ask the question. Will the hon. Minister inform the House – if he has the information – whether UNESCO is agreeable or not regarding the *tracé*, itinerary proposed by the Government as it impacts directly in the buffer zone and hence, can result in Aapravasi Ghat losing its status as a world heritage site.

**Mr Hurreeram:** This does not pertain to the main question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** It pertains!

**Mr Speaker:** The reply is for the Minister.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Okay, I leave it to him.

**Mr Speaker:** I will give you another supplementary if you have one.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Yes, I have. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister inform the House – if he can – whether any contract for the extension of the Metro line to the North was signed and if yes, is there any penalty fee which is being paid?

**Mr Hurreeram:** Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I just said, there is a Strategy Railway Master Plan that is in preparation and that will determine the future development of the railway implementation, deployment. Yes.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET 2023 – MAURITIAN DELEGATES’ LIST**

**(No. B/715) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Arabian Travel Market 2023 held in Dubai from 01 to 04 May 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, information as to the list of the Mauritian delegates who participated therein, indicating the cost incurred therefor.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall arrange to have the list of Mauritian delegates placed in the library of the National Assembly. As regards to costs incurred, I am advised that a total amount of Rs10.5 m. approximately was disbursed by the MTPA for participation in the Arabian Travel Market 2023.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Je n’ai pas bien entendu le montant pour les quatre jours.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** R 10, 5 million à peu près.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** D’accord. Merci.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Est-ce que...

**Mr Speaker:** Do you have a question?

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Oui, j’ai une question. Ce n’était pas ma question, c’était juste pour éclaircir. Est-ce que l’honorable ministre peut nous communiquer la liste des groupes hôteliers qui ont participé à cet *Arabian Travel Market* et si quelque assistance leur a été fournie par la MTPA ?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a list of various participants. Now, which are hotel groups and which are not, I cannot say for sure. I know that the list includes –

1. Maritime Resorts and Spa;
2. Lux Collectives;
3. Sun Life Hotel;
4. Beachcomber Resorts and Hotels;
5. Shanti Maurice Resorts and Spa;
6. Sofitel Mauritius Imperial Resort and Spa;
7. Le Jadis Beach Resort and Wellness, and
8. Marriott, Sea Resorts Hotels Ltd.

I think those are the hotels, there are other participants within the tourism sector but the complete list will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can the Minister inform the House who led the Mauritian delegation?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** What I understand is that there were 38 participants; three on behalf of the MTPA and 35 from the private sector. I am not informed whether, there was a designated personality to lead the delegation as such unless the hon. gentleman has anything more precise in mind?

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **NSLD – PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS – CONSULTANCY SERVICES’ CLAIMS**

**(No. B/716) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the Project Management Consultants in Construction recruited by the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the latter has received claims for –

- (a) consultancy services, and
- (b) loss of profits therefrom, if any, and, if so, give details thereof.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the NSLD has indeed received claims in respect of consultancy services to the tune of approximately Rs337 m.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the NSLD that, as at 06 June 2023, five claims amounting to a total of approximately Rs104 m. have been received.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** So, in total about Rs440 m. of claims have been received from Consultants who have not produced anything concrete so far.

Can I ask the hon. Minister how much has been disbursed to these consultants so far?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I take, Mr Speaker, Sir, strong objection to the remark that the consultants have not produced anything concrete. I refer to the PQ put by the hon. gentleman himself on 25 April, and this is what I stated –

“(...) those - consultants, PMCCs as they were called - PMCCs did what they were paid for. So, they did the topographical surveys, the geotechnical investigations, they oversaw the feasibility studies, they sought the preliminary clearances from authorities, preliminary master plans of sites, assessment of extent of offsite works. Now, all that information produced by the PMCCs is being used by the NSLD. All that information is being placed at the disposal of the Contractors . I understand there is no compensation but there is a prorated assessment of works undertaken.”

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** I put my question again which was: how much has been paid to these consultants? Because you have not given a figure so far and because the future developments will be on a design and build, meaning the contractors in question will have to recruit consultant anyhow. That is why I say they have served no purpose paying so much money. So, my question again is: how much has been paid to them so far?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a parliamentary question. The hon. gentleman has his opinion and I respect his opinion. We are not here to debate opinions. I have been asked a question and the hon. gentleman puts it to me that this work was unnecessary. I beg to differ and I have explained why.

Now, as regards payments in respect of Rs337 m., I understand, have been effected. This is for work undertaken and assessed. Which work? I have provided details of the nature of the work. That work is directly relevant irrespective of the change in approach.

Now, the new contractors have a contract with a contractual value. What they do, how they spend their money is for them to decide, but all the information that is available has been provided. For instance, geotechnical investigation in respect of the very same site

does not need to be undertaken anew. That stands to reason. This is just one example. The topographical survey is there for use by the contractor. So, the money has not been lost. It has been paid in respect of work undertaken, and which is still relevant, and is being used.

As regards the component for loss of profits, there have been no payments so far. This is still being assessed as to the actual basis of the claims, and as to the legal propriety of payment of any such loss of profit.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ittoo!

#### **METHADONE – DISPENSING PROTOCOL**

**(No. B/717) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to methadone, he will state the –

- (a) protocol for the dispensing thereof, and
- (b) reasons for the diversion thereof, if any.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for addressing this Parliamentary Question to me.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Methadone is a chronic treatment for the chronic disease of addiction. It is an opioid agonist substitution treatment, which is part of the harm reduction strategy for drug users who inject heroin and is used for this purpose in many countries.

As the UNODC points out in its 2022 report entitled ‘Establishing and delivering evidence-base, high-quality opioid agonist therapy services,’ this treatment is necessary to reduce overdose and prevent communicable diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C. It improves health and physical well-being, reduces delinquency and improves social ties. It also allows a synergy with the paramedical staff in order to facilitate and improve the quality of medical care.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the HIV epidemic, which began in 1987 in Mauritius, grew slowly in its early years. With the emergence, then the rapid increase in the number of injecting drug users, the HIV epidemic’s growth accelerated in 3-4 years with a peak in HIV occurrence in 2005, that is, 921 cases identified during that year, a huge proportion of which was caused by intravenous drug use. The prevalence of HIV among People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs) was then around 90%. Based upon recommendations of the UNODC, Harm Reduction Strategies were set up in Mauritius during the year 2006 including, but not limited to Methadone.

Currently, around 7,800 beneficiaries are on the Methadone Substitution Therapy Programme. Methadone dispensing is carried out daily at 48 sites across Mauritius including 4 sites in Prison settings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to offer a comprehensive package of services to methadone beneficiaries, 5 Day Care Centres for methadone have been set up in different health regions across the island.

The services offered by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, are methadone induction, methadone dispensing, follow up clinics, psycho-social support, counselling, distribution of condoms and educational materials. The 5 centres are found at Sainte Croix, Cassis, Mahebourg, and the remaining 2 at Frangipane and Orchidée Drug Treatment & Rehabilitation Centre at Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre, Beau Bassin.

The previous written and revised Methadone protocol dated back to 2018. It perfectly explained the method of dispensing Methadone, which is still in use today, and which will be gradually replaced by the new protocol.

Mr Speaker, Sir, methadone dispensing is performed by a Pharmacy Technician and a Nursing Officer as per Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) procedure. The Pharmacy Technician hands over the prescribed methadone container to the Nursing Officer who ascertains the identity of the beneficiary and hands over the sealed methadone container to the beneficiary. The latter has to ingest his methadone dose in front of the Nursing Officer and return back the container.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the new protocols which have been officially launched by my Ministry on 21 March 2023, have been worked out by a technical working group comprising officers of my Ministry and representatives of NGOs involved in the implementation of harm reduction strategies under the guidance of Dr. David Mété, *Chef de Service d'Addictologie, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de la Réunion*.

This protocol is bringing changes to both the methods of induction which is currently being done on an outpatient basis for most patients, thereby reducing and soon eliminating the waiting lists.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite all efforts made by the Ministry to enhance service delivery, it is true to say that yearly around 40 cases of methadone diversion are officially reported to the Harm Reduction Unit by the Police.

With regard to part (b) of the question, there can be several reasons as to why methadone diversion may happen. The reasons contributing to methadone diversion are mainly due to the number of patients at certain dispensing sites that can grow above 600.

Often a crowd of beneficiaries can turn up at a particular time and create a complicated situation for dispensing and in such circumstances, certain beneficiaries seize the opportunity to take their methadone and may sneak away with the dose which can be diverted without injecting the dose in front of the team.

**Mr Ittoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that there has been reports of alleged methadone traffic, sometimes alleging involvement of officers from his Ministry and whether the Ministry has initiated an internal enquiry?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am very much aware of one officer of the Ministry involved in traffic of methadone and the enquiry is being conducted by ADSU and that said Ministry. I believe he is also having a court case and the Ministry has already interdicted him for the time being.

**Mr Ittoo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the Ministry envisaging the introduction of any other drug substitution for drug addicts?

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, yes. The Ministry is envisaging to introduce a drug called Suboxone and this drug is being used for addiction in other countries. So, there would be a pilot study this year till the time we have the full comprehensive substitution, that is, a dispensing protocol of Suboxone.

**Mr Speaker:** The Table has been advised that PQs B/719, B/733, B/735, B/737, and B/738 have been withdrawn.

Next question!

#### CALEBASSES – INCINERATOR CONSTRUCTION

**(No. B/718) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of an incinerator at Calebasses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Pamplemousses, information as to the date the contract was awarded, indicating the –

- (a) name of the contractor thereof;
- (b) total project value thereof, and

- (c) expected date of completion and/or coming into operation thereof as per the contract.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the District Council of Pamplemousses that the construction of an incinerator at Calebasses consists of two distinct contracts, namely, the construction of an incinerator building and the supply, installation, and commissioning of an LPG-fired human incinerator. The total value of the project is to the tune of Rs13.7 m.

Regarding the construction of the building, the contract was awarded to Prakash Foolchand Contractor Ltd. on 28 October 2019 and the works were completed on 11 November 2020.

As regards the supply, installation and commissioning of the LPG-fired human incinerator and the gas network installation, the contract was awarded to Rey & Lenferna Ltd on 07 October 2021 and the delivery was expected within 6 months, that is, on 07 April 2022.

However, in view of the delay being encountered in the delivery of the incinerator equipment, the District Council of Pamplemousses has been holding several meetings with the supplier and on 29 May 2023, the latter has informed that the shipment of the equipment is expected by 19 June 2023 and could be reaching Mauritius in the first week of July 2023.

**Mr Woochit:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that lateness for operating this incinerator is causing much inconvenience to the inhabitants residing in the vicinity? These bereaved families have to go to Bois Marchand Cemetery, Triolet or Piton cremation ground. What action is being taken by your Ministry to remedy this situation as soon as possible?

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the last year we have installed about, I think, 13 incinerators. There was some lateness as well because we all know what happened during COVID-19 time and how the whole of India was under lockdown. We know there has been a lot of delay but in the last year, about 13 incinerators were installed across the island. So, we are doing what needs to be done. I appreciate in this case there has been some delay, but according to the contractor Rey & Lenferna Ltd, the incinerator will be reached in Mauritius in the first week of July, hopefully by next month, and is going to take about either 3 to 4 weeks to be installed and commissioned. So, I would hope that within two months' time, this would be ready.

**Mr Woochit:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House if there are any penalties attached to the contract that will be imposed on the contractor at fault?

**Dr. Husnoo:** Yes. I mean, this needs to be sorted out because if it was something that it is beyond his responsibility, we can't penalise him but anyway, we have to have a look at the clause and we will see what needs to be done. We will have a look at it.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

### **CAP MALHEUREUX RELAY SHELTER - MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT**

**(No. B/719) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Cap Malheureux Relay Shelter, also known as L'Oiseau du Paradis, she will state, if any monitoring and evaluation report has been submitted by the National Children Council to her Ministry in respect thereof during the last six months and, if so, give the details thereof and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **NSLD LTD. – BOARD MEMBERS**

**(No. B/720) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names and terms of appointment of the –

- (a) Chairperson and board members thereof;
- (b) Chief Executive Officer, and
- (c) Chief Operating Officer appointed thereat since the date of incorporation thereof to date, indicating in each case the monthly remuneration drawn.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the requested information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Uteem:** It seems that each time I ask a question, we don't get the information. I asked about the Consultant also, I have not received the information. Can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether, he can at least tell the House if the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Operating Officer, subject matter of this PQ, have any experience in social housing construction projects?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, again I take objection to what is being stated. The subject matter of the question is not only the Chairperson and the Chief Operating Officer. I was requested to provide information as to names and terms of appointment of the Chairperson and all the board members plus the Chief Executive Officer plus the Chief Operating Officer, indicating in each case the monthly remuneration drawn. That is why, we require some time naturally to compile all the information and make it available to the honourable gentleman.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**Mr Uteem:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is about the qualifications. My question has not been answered. My supplementary question was that: at least, can you inform the House if the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer, mentioned in my question, have any experience in social housing projects because they are CEO and the COO...

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Yes. I cannot at this point in time provide that information as to prior experience that the CEO has been in place now for quite a while and I am sure that he has acquired valuable experience, as has the COO.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### **STC – BUDGET 2022-2023 – BASIC COMMODITIES SUPPLY**

**(No. B/721) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the allocation of Rs 500 million as provided in Budget 2022-2023 for the supply of basic commodities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the amount spent as at to date on rice, oil and pulses, giving a breakdown thereof.

**The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the provision of Rs500 m. as announced during the Budget Speech 2022-2023 to the State Trading Corporation was, to enable the latter to supply essential products such as milk, edible oil and pulses at subsidised rate to the public, to make these products more affordable.

I am informed that rice was not part of the products to be subsidised through this Rs500 m. envelope. Ration rice is already subsidised through the contributions collected under the price structure of Mogas and Gas Oil while Basmati rice is a luxury product and consequently, not subsidised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the State Trading Corporation has not applied for any subsidy on pulses as it has been able to procure and sell pulses on the market at the same or lower than the prices applied by private traders.

With regard to the amount spent of the Rs500 m. envelope, I am informed that the STC has claimed a total of Rs62.6 m. for the provision of subsidy on edible oil and milk powder, of which Rs59.2 m. has been used to subsidise the retail price of edible oil and Rs3.4 m. has been used to subsidise the retail price of milk powder.

**Mr Juman:** Merci, M. le président. M. le ministre, on vient d'entendre dans le budget que la population n'arrive pas à joindre les deux bouts.

**Mr Speaker:** No, you are making a speech.

**Mr Juman:** Attends!

**Mr Speaker:** Each time, I am telling you.

**Mr Juman:** C'est pour cela...

**Mr Speaker:** You have no question? Next question!

**Mr Juman:** I have one.

**Mr Speaker:** No, you have no question!

## **LAND INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS & LAND OWNERSHIP - MEASURES**

**(No. B/722) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Land Infrastructure Assets and land ownership vested into his Ministry, he will state the measures envisaged to address the shortcomings highlighted in the Report of Director of Audit for the Financial year 2021-22 in relation thereto.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning land vested in my Ministry, in the report of the Director of Audit for the Financial year 2021-2022, there is approximately 800,000 square meters of both State-owned and private-owned lands were allocated to my Ministry for the purpose of operating our existing 150 health facilities and facilitating the development of approximately 60 new construction projects.

To address the concerns raised by the National Audit Office, my Ministry initiated procedures to reconcile the land inventory we have at the Ministry level with the individual inventories maintained at each hospital. Additionally, the assistance of the

Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning has been sought to reconcile the lists. Once the exercise is completed and a comprehensive understanding of the situation is obtained and taking into account the upcoming new health infrastructure projects, my Ministry will determine the appropriate course of action.

Furthermore, it is important to note that we have currently started the process of registering all the assets under the purview of my Ministry on the Government Asset Register.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through our proactive ...

**Mr Speaker:** Private conversation should be abroad, not here; outside the Chamber.

**Dr. Boolell:** Abroad.

**Mr Speaker:** Abroad and outside, private conversation. Not inside, respect!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, through our approach and concerted efforts with all related stakeholders, we have been actively addressing the concerns related to land allocation and diligently working towards optimal asset management with my Ministry. We remain steadfast in our commitment to upholding the highest standards of governance and ensuring that land and assets under our control are utilised for the benefit of the people.

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have only one supplementary question. Can the hon. Minister table the list of assets once it is ready? Thank you.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** You replied?

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Yes.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** I will table the list.

**Mr Speaker:** So, next question!

#### **LE MORNE HERITAGE TRUST FUND BOARD – COMPOSITION**

**(No. B/723) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Board, he will state –

- (a) the current composition thereof, indicating in each case –
  - (i) the date of appointment of the Chairperson and members thereof;
  - (ii) the fees and allowances payable thereto, and

- (iii) other benefits drawn, and
- (b) if a review of the composition thereof is envisaged and if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ELECTRICITY METERS – REPORTED CASES - ALLEGED TAMPERING**

**(No. B/724) Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity meters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the –

- (a) number of reported cases of alleged tampering thereof since 2019 to date, and
- (b) measures being envisaged to avert the recurrence thereof.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that it's Revenue Protection's section detects tampering and fraudulent abstraction cases through various ways and methods such as routine verification of consumer meters and metering installations, analysis of consumption data base and profiles, information escalated by the field service teams, anonymous complaints and systematic follow ups of previous tampering occurrences.

Further, the Central Electricity Board has also established a Fraud Squad comprising two engineers, two principal technical officers, seven technical officers and seven technicians for a continuous monitoring of these illegal acts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, tampering of electricity meter and illegal abstraction of electricity through unauthorised connections does not only constitute an offence according to Section 41 of the Electricity Act 2005 but is also a hazard which can lead to electrocutions and severe burns. Therefore, the penalty has been increased and on conviction, a person is liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that over the last five years, that is, from the first of January 2019 to 31 May 2023, 1,488 cases of alleged tampering of electricity meters and illegal abstractions of electricity have been reported.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am further informed that the Central Electricity Board has embarked on the installation of smart meters on a large scale. These meters have enabled the timely notification of alarms including, cases of suspicious

abstraction of electricity. Some 80,000 such meters have already been installed and the project is on-going and is expected to be completed in five years.

Further, citizens can report cases of alleged theft anonymously through CEB Contact Centre; *MoKouran* App or by email. I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Armance:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Regarding the alleged cases of tampering of meters, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there have been reported cases where, instead of tampering, it was defective meter that were causing excessive use of electricity? Is he aware of same and has this been reported to the Ministry?

**Mr Lesjongard:** No, there must be, Mr Speaker, Sir, meters which have excessive metering and in that case I think there is a normal procedure at the level of the Central Electricity Board where a consumer can make a complaint and the CEB will do the needful to check whether the billing is being carried out in an excessive manner?

**Mr Armance:** Now, regarding the 80,000 smart meters that have been installed already, all over the island, has there been any reported alleged case of tampering despite the use of the smart meter? Are you ensuring that the smart meter can prevent tampering?

**Mr Lesjongard:** Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information with me but I believe that it will be more difficult for somebody to tamper the smart meter.

**Mr Speaker:** Time over!

## MOTION

### SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

**Mr Toussaint seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

## PUBLIC BILL

### *Second Reading*

### THE APPROPRIATION (2023-2024) BILL

(No. IX of 2023)

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill (No. IX of 2023).*

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Ms Jutton!

(4.12 p.m.)

**Ms T. Jutton (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle):** Merci. M. le président, c'est avec un profond sentiment de fierté et de privilège que je prends la parole cet après-midi pour apporter ma contribution aux débats sur le Budget 2023-24, présenté par le Ministre des Finances, le Dr. l'honorable Renganaden Padayachy, vendredi dernier.

Pour moi, le ministre des Finances, le Dr. Padayachy a réussi, avec brio, ce que l'autre côté de la Chambre, souhaitait tellement ou priait presque qu'il échoue. Après avoir bravé deux crises économiques successivement, qui ont même mis à terre de grandes puissances mondiales et après nous avoir re-fashioner au “new normal”, aujourd’hui le ministre des Finances vient à l'avant avec audace, courage et détermination pour redonner confiance à la nation mauricienne.

Cela démontre la vision claire et nette du Premier ministre: sa volonté de redonner au peuple ce qu'il mérite et sa philosophie d'un *caring* et *compassionate Government*.

Savoir oser, savoir gérer et savoir construire et oui, M. le président, je dis bien construire et non pas détruire comme sache le faire si bien l'Opposition car dois-je rappeler à la Chambre comment l'ancien régime avait géré la crise financière de 2008/2009 ou encore le sham Stimulus Package ou comment entre 2005-2009, ils avaient arraché le pain de la bouche des écoliers. Ils avaient décidé de supprimer les subventions sur le riz, la farine et même les frais d'examens du SC et du HSC.

Ou comment entre 2005 à 2009, ils avaient arraché le pain de la bouche des écoliers. Ils avaient décidé de supprimer les subventions sur le riz, la farine et même les frais d'examen du SC et du HSC.

Je dois aussi peut-être rappelé à la Chambre comment nos jeunes ont été dupés avec certaines universités marron. Je comprends, M le président, pourquoi de l'autre côté de la Chambre, ils souffrent tous d'un malaise profond et presque palpable, parce que ce budget est finalement comme une claque magistrale pour eux !

They fail to understand how our Prime Minister has been able to maintain the minimum wage, increase pension and abolish tax for so many people, while they had even introduced the National Residential Property Tax, even when everything was fine. *Et l'honorable leader de l'opposition parle de mea culpa? C'est peut-être le cas pour eux!*

*Après la présentation du budget, l'ambiance dans le pays a changé, mais de l'autre côté de la Chambre et même dans certains segments de la presse, l'ambiance n'a guère changé, pour ne pas changer.*

I have been gathering the feedback of people and I can confirm that there is a huge feel-good factor across the country. Over this weekend, I met with my constituents and allow me to quote some of the words of happiness they exclaimed –

“*Pena pli top ki sa!*”

“*Avek Pravind, nu san traka.*”

On a lighter side, Mr Speaker, Sir, a few hours after hon. Dr. Padayachy presented his Budget, I received a call from one of our constituents in No. 11 asking if a *rapprochement* between the MSM and the MMM was underway. I was flabbergasted by how he had come to such a conclusion and I was informed that while watching the commentary *à chaud* of hon. Paul Bérenger on the Budget via Facebook, the latter acknowledged that the Budget was a good one, but not good enough as the Government could have done much better. But maybe the best will be for the next year. Well, this speaks for itself!

*Mr Speaker, Sir, l'honorable Uteem disait hier que le peuple souffre. Eh bien, oui, je suis d'accord avec lui. Le peuple souffre quand leurs enfants sont en difficulté. Mais je me demande ce que lui et ses colistiers de l'autre côté de la Chambre font pour alléger cette souffrance?*

The social measures detailed in this Budget reveal the underlying heart of the Prime Minister to care for his people, especially the most vulnerable ones.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will dwell on only 3 of these measures here. We all know how staggeringly painful it can be for parents to see their kids suffering, especially in the face of what can be fatal diseases and even where overseas treatment may be required and the turmoil of that family having to strive to find the means, to be able to afford such treatment. There have even been some sad cases, where some families, while trying to make the necessary savings, lost their kins. Mr Speaker, Sir, no words of comfort can make justice to the loss suffered by these families.

Today, to give families hope, faith and reassurance, the Prime Minister is coming up with such bold measures that will allow no sick child to be defeated by sickness, no parent to be defeated by circumstances. Allow me to quote the words of Mr Reaz Chuttoo as published in the newspaper over the weekend *ena mezir kapav fer larm koule*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer here to those measures under paragraphs 410 to 421 *où le gouvernement va prendre en charge les frais médicaux des enfants à l'étranger et ceux des enfants souffrant de cancer. Le leader de l'opposition a le culot de dire que* the Government is caring for the rich while daring to take from the poor?

This caring and compassionate Government knows how painful it can be for parents to see their child suffering. Even if these parents go to work, they will be stressed and worried about the sick child. Hence, another bold measure proposed by this Budget is the possibility for a parent to take up to 10 days of sick leaves to take care of their sick child.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an employee who has experienced a pregnancy loss will also now be entitled to a stand-alone leave of 5 days. Again, it is because this caring and compassionate Government understands the mental and emotional pain that a parent has to go through.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some weeks back in an event at the Human Service Trust, I was deeply touched when the honorable Prime Minister asked the youth to take care of their parents and not just leave them in homes when the latter get old or sick. To circumvent the usual *adein* of ‘I don’t have time’ or ‘I don’t get leave from work,’ today this Budget comes with such a measure that the working class can use the bank of sick leaves to take care of their parents. The caring heart of the Prime Minister is again reflected in this new measure which, I read –

“An individual who has been amputated or lost his or her arm, leg or hand shall benefit from the Basic Invalidity Pension of Rs 11,000”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I call empathy. This is what i call caring. This is what I call daring to care. *Pour apporter ces mesures touchant ceux qui souffrent, M. le président, pa klas ki bizin, me leker !*

*Pour changer le statu quo et apporter des bold reforms, pa klas ki bizin, me de l'audace, courage, détermination, et dur labeur: qui découlent du DNA même de l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.*

*Et là, M. le président, je vais dire à l'honorable Ms Anquetil qui a lancé hier que le Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, n'est pas à la hauteur de l'ancien Premier ministre, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. Eh bien, oui ! L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth n'est pas à la hauteur de Dr. Navin Ramgoolam en ce qui concerne les 'Macarena parties,' les coffres forts, ou encore, lancer des injures envers la classe féminine 'dan mikro' !*

**An hon. Member:** *Twa to pa fer sa twa!*

**Ms Jutton:** *Et quand le leader de l'opposition parle d'incompétence dramatique, je lui dis de se référer au discours de l'honorable Ms Anquetil, qui a été tellement théâtrale hier, mais qui a quand même raté le bût de son débat quand son allocution était complètement irrelevant !*

Having said this, Mr Speaker, Sir,..

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir!

**Ms Jutton:** It will be sheer bad faith not to reckon...

**Mr Speaker:** You have a point of order. Okay.

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Yesterday, during my speech I was talking about social housing, and you stopped me.

**Mr Speaker:** No! No!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Today, this is totally irrelevant...

**Mr Speaker:** No!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** In connection with the Budget Speech.

**Mr Speaker:** Now, this is...

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** How do you allow this?

**Mr Speaker:** Now, this....

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Order! Let me reply to the hon. Member.

**Mr Osman Mohamed:** This is *deux poids deux mesures*!

**An hon. Member:** Oh!

**Mr Speaker:** You withdraw this comment!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain!

**Mr Speaker:** No explanation!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** *Non, non, non, non!*

**Mr Speaker:** You withdraw or you withdraw from the Chamber!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** *Non!*

**An hon. Member:** *Met deor!*

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** How is it...

**Mr Speaker:** You withdraw from the Chamber!

**An hon. Member:** *Deor!*

**Mr Speaker:** If you refuse to withdraw, you withdraw from the Chamber!

**Mr Osman Mahomed:** How is it that...

**Mr Speaker:** I will not listen to you, I have already ruled! You withdraw from the Chamber!

**An hon. Member:** *Ale deor! Deor! Ale! Ale!*

**An hon. Member:** *Preferab to ale ek sa kalite...*

**An hon. Member:** *Gard to dignite!*

**An hon. Member:** *Kan koz lor social housing...*

**An hon. Member:** *Deor! Ale!*

**Mr Speaker:** I will name you if you continue!

You have been warned! You continue!

**Ms Jutton:** It will be sheer bad faith not to reckon with the fact that this Budget, which is in direct continuity to the previous ones, is geared towards giving a strong fillip for further economic growth, despite the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, through a multi-pronged objective, with a view to, amongst others:

- contain the multi-hydra monster which is inflation;
- increase the purchasing power of consumers;
- protect the population from any external economic downturn;
- improve the quality of life of every single citizen;
- pursue a totally inclusive socio-economic development, and

- ensure a stronger and more resilient economy that would allow us to steer through the doldrums caused by the pandemic, and now by the never-ending Russia-Ukraine war.

From the plethora of social measures and *mesures de relance*, our nation was infused with hope, Mr Speaker, Sir and the results speak for themselves, where even the IMF and Statistics Mauritius show that the GDP growth forecasts for 2022 have been exceeded.

Alors que le leader de l'opposition se dit être clairement déçu par ce budget, les autres, parmi des économistes et les représentants du secteur privé, les syndicalistes trouvent que le budget est –

- «Un budget socialiste», Anthony Leung Shing de *PricewaterhouseCoopers* ;
- « Nous accueillons favorablement ce budget. En somme, c'est un très bon budget. » *MCCI* ;
- « Le budget a un fort axe social. » *Business Mauritius* ;
- « Le budget est favorable pour les travailleurs et les plus démunis de la société mauricienne. » *Mauritius Trade Union Congress*,
- « On prend note des mesures pour le secteur *global business*. » *Mauritius Banking Association*.

Et j'en passe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition even stated yesterday that this budget is akin to those of District Councils. I consider this to be the ultimate insult that a parliamentarian can hurl at the multitude of citizens living in villages that fall under the jurisdiction of several District Councils. As if the District Councils, the villages they administer, and their budgets are so demeaning that they deserve the scornful remarks of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituencies Nos. 11 and 12, I spend long hours almost daily, meeting, listening, and addressing the problems of villagers, irrespective of their political affiliations. We are in constant touch with, and attentive to the problems of villagers, who constitute the bulk of the population. It is this proximity that allows us as a caring and compassionate government to address and cater for their needs, aspirations, and expectations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I invite those who have chosen to confine themselves in the comfort of their ivory towers to come down to the ground reality of our citizens living in villages. They would then realise why it is extremely important that resources be allocated

to District Councils, that resources for constructions of drains and other basic infrastructures be included in the national budget. I refer here, for instance, to the Rs235 m. for the acquisition of modern tipper lorries for various councils. As PPS, I have myself chaired so many CSU task force meetings where we had so many requests, Mr Speaker, Sir, and these tools are *sine qua non*. Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer to Rs115 m. for cleaning and embellishment of public and other sites, as well as the Rs90 m. allocated for the cleaning, desilting, rehabilitation and upgrading of drains, bridges and rivers by Local Authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we, as a Government, are not in the business of introducing eye-catching and hollow measures simply to please the gallery. For instance, if these first hand measures had not been carried out like desilting, dredging along rivers in my own constituency, Bambou Virieux, Vieux Grand Port or Rivière des Créoles, we could only dread what would be state of these villages today.

As a proactive and responsive Government, we have ensured that old-age pension be increased by Rs1,000 so that the Basic Retirement Pension be eventually pegged at Rs11,000. Every household with a senior couple will now earn a guaranteed minimum of Rs22,000 monthly while the minimum revenue guaranteed is at Rs15,000. Likewise, the pensions of widows, orphans and disabled persons are all being increased by Rs1,000. I fail to understand how those who refused to increase pension in 2014 are today saying it is not even enough.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is literally addressing the bread-and-butter issues of our citizens by earmarking a 9% subsidy on our *pain maison quotidien* with a bid not to make consumers bear the burden of increasing costs of production.

And to my mind today, one of the ground-breaking measures of this budget lies in the grant of Rs20,000 – *et non pas Rs20 comme l'avait dit l'honorable Ramful* – to every citizen who reaches the symbolic age of 18. This is a bespoke homage that this Government is paying to our budding adult community. It is way to tell our young people out there that we, as a Government, have total trust and absolute faith in their potential as future nation-builders and leaders of tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the commitment of the Prime Minister and of this Government in empowerment of our youths and especially our women is clearly reflected in paragraphs 54 to 66 of the Budget Speech. And as hon. Gobin had mentioned, while only 43% of women form part of the active labour force, these set of innovative measures come to ensure greater representation of women in the world of work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, speaking about inclusion, this budget also ensures, in line with the SDGs adopted, that the *Prime à L'Emploi Scheme* be extended to persons with disabilities and that companies be provided with an increased tax deduction of 300%.

I have been repeatedly saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, both in this august Chamber and elsewhere, that this Government, under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, is above everything else, a caring and compassionate Government that places the citizen at the centre of every development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since Independence, Mauritius had known its first ever economic miracle spanning between 1985 and 1995. This was under an MSM Government led by the much-regretted Sir Anerood Jugnauth. That decade was known as the Golden Phase of the Mauritian economy. And as we speak today, as the result of the ground-breaking measures being introduced through this budget by this present Government led by Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, chroniclers and historians down the line will undoubtedly dub this present period of our socio-economic life not as the golden but as the platinum years.

This is because through this Budget, now, apart from just being caring, we are daring to tread along an unbeaten and revolutionary socialist path that would bring lasting comfort to the quality of life of our countrymen and a smile of relief on their face.

I move to a few budgetary measures for my constituency. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that my constituency has been acutely affected by inadequate water supply. I have myself been actively pursuing several discussions with the CWA to bring about remedial solutions to ease the situation. And, today, I can assure our people that several such measures have been devised.

From the implementation of service reservoirs at Cluny and Riche en Eau to the changing of old *tuyaux defaillants* and the construction of a new service reservoirs at Nouvelle France and Ferney, all these measures are welcomed with great relief by my constituents. The new service reservoir at Ferney and laying of new pipes along the coastal region is being done and the installation of a bulky water tanker at Anse Jonchée is also going to provide to the inhabitants of the whole south east coast much relief.

Speaking of Anse Jonchée, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the moment I am speaking to you, there are major ongoing works there. Every time there has been heavy rainfall, the Anse Jonchée Bridge has been flooded and the whole coastal road becomes inaccessible to commute. Two new bridges are today being constructed and the coastal roads will be

elevated at critical regions to prevent seawater surges onto land thereby causing ineffective water accumulation coming down from mountains.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the budget speech of last year, I had elaborated lengthily on the dire need of the construction of new drains and had given details on the major flood-prone areas such as Nouvelle France, Balisson, St Hubert, St Hilaire, Bambous Virieux, Rivière des Créoles, Anse Jonchée, Providence, Grand Sable, Rose Belle, Gros Billot, Gebert. And today I will not dwell into technical details but I will just quickly mention that for the projects mentioned in this Budget Speech for the south east region, consultancy services have been completed and the proposed designs for a holistic solution for flooding for the whole region are ready and the Road Development Authority has already earmarked and is working on some projects consisting of upgrading of culverts and bridges along the Flacq-Mahebourg Road from Bois des Amourettes to Grand Sable and at Vieux Grand Port. As these existing culverts and bridges along the main access road are reconstructed to accommodate peak flows, the inhabitants residing in these areas will be protected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every single week I hold monitoring committees with all key institutions such as the Road Development Authority, National Development Unit, District Council, Ministry of Environment, Land Drainage Authority to ensure that the works get implemented as soon as possible. The collaboration of all institutions and stakeholders is crucial, including that of the population because land owners are to be identified and negotiation for right of entry to proceed with the proposed works is very important.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, I will not have time to go through each project but I just wish to place on record that over the last over the last three years, despite the difficult prevailing economic circumstances, in Constituency 11, not less than 295 projects have been undertaken as at now.

Coming to amenities, Mr Speaker, Sir, this budget mentions the new mini soccer pitches at Rose Belle, Nouvelle France, Bananes, and we also have upgrading works at the Rose Belle football ground as well as ongoing works at the Bois des Amourettes football ground, Bananes and Cluny. The budget also provides for landslide rehabilitation works at Rivière des Créoles and remedial works at Grand Sable while also making provision for the construction and upgrading of Petit Sable hall and the construction of a new multipurpose hall at Rivière des Créoles.

*Hier, l'honorable Uteem disait avec dédain que les membres du gouvernement jubilat at hearing names of regions in their Constituency. Can I tell him why not?*

Because I believe that when we have been elected, we hereby represent each region of our Constituency and we work hard so that every single region of our Constituency can shine.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last year in my Constituency, along 3.3 km of coastline had been rehabilitated from Pointe aux Feuilles to Grand Sable, Providence to Grand Port and Petit Sable to Bambous Virieux. Today, there are works going on at Bois des Amourettes and from Bambous Virieux to Anse Jonchée. Provision is also being made for rehabilitation works at Deux Frères, and as I said because of the lack of time to dive into the other measures, for instance in health care, I am sure that my distinguished colleagues will be covering. I would just like to quickly mention that the budget caters for ongoing works for the new Renal Transplant Unit at the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and the construction of an Area Health Hospital at New Grove.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the other side of the House they had even dared to say that there is a lack of innovative measures. Let me just mention a few more of what I deem to be innovative. For instance, the bold taxation measures and here I just quote some words from the budget analysis of PriceWaterhouseCoopers –

“We will now move to a progressive tax system to make it more equitable and fair for taxpayers. This represents a major reform for our long-standing flat rate system.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Government, we are daring to redistribute the national wealth in such a manner that no citizen of this country, more especially the underprivileged ones living in the remotest villages and those within the so-called poverty pockets will ever go to bed empty stomach because they will have a guaranteed decent and minimum salary and minimum revenue guaranteed.

Et je dis là, M. le président, au MMM qui se vante d'être défenseur des droits des travailleurs, car au sein de l'ancien régime, certains employés gagnaient seulement R 1500. *Sa ki ti bon ?* Sous ce régime comme l'honorable Padayachy vient nous rassurer d'un revenu minimum garanti de R 15 000, ils ne sont pas contents, M. le président. Quand le MMM, l'honorable Paul Bérenger régnait entre 2000 et 2003, seulement Rs145 était allouée aux pêcheurs comme *Bad Weather Allowance*. Aujourd'hui cette somme est de R 650.

Mr Speaker, Sir, other innovative measures also include the reform of our migration policy to simplify the recruitment process for businesses and the positioning of Mauritius as a carbon neutral destination. *Le leader de l'opposition vient dire qu'il y a un manque de sérieux.* Let us be serious.

Pour conclure, au cœur de ce budget se trouve mise en œuvre des grands principes du socialisme. Ce gouvernement reconnaît que la force de notre nation se mesure non pas à la richesse de quelques-uns, mais au bien-être de tous les composants de la nation.

Notre gouvernement fait preuve d'un engagement inébranlable envers la justice sociale en donnant la priorité aux politiques qui répondent aux besoins des personnes les plus vulnérables de notre société. Comme je l'ai souligné plus tôt, ce budget place les citoyens au premier plan, en veillant à ce que l'accès à des services essentiels tels que les soins de santé, l'éducation et le logement ne soient pas un privilège mais un droit pour chaque citoyen, en prévoyant des financements de l'éducation du pré-primaire aux universités, permettant à notre jeunesse d'acquérir les connaissances et les compétences dont elle a besoin pour réussir.

Aussi, l'engagement indéfectible envers la création d'une société plus juste et équitable transparaît dans tous les aspects de ce budget. Alors que nous rassemblons pour avancer, travaillons tous ensemble pour faire de notre nation un exemple de compassion, d'équité et de progrès dans cette partie du monde.

Merci, M. le président.

(4.39 p.m.)

**Mr S. Mohamed (First Member of Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):**  
 Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, from the very outset, listened with a lot of interest to the previous orator who has not, just like her colleagues on the other side of the House, thought that it would be proper to point the finger at the Members of the Opposition and to teach us our jobs. Then, there is something that I keep on learning at all ages, Mr Speaker, Sir; it is the ability of people to multitask, such as herself. She has shown us that she has the ability to photoshop photographs and use photoshopped photographs. It takes technique.

**Ms Jutton:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I ask for a point of order.

**Dr. Boolell:** Which point of order?

**Mr Speaker:** Yes?

**Ms Jutton:** I wonder if this is relevant to the Budget Speech and what is...

*(Interruptions)*

Also, because this is speaking on the personal life of a hon. Member, and also, without even verifying whether such things are true or false, he is making statements in this august House.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** So, hon. Member, you were not here. The whole thing started not with you, not with somebody else, but with a lady who mentioned a few sentences and this is what she is rebutting. I am helping you to understand the whole context.

**An hon. Member:** *Ha ha ha!*

**Mr Speaker:** She has been rebutting something which has been said. So, continue with your main speech.

**Mr Mohamed:** My main speech is that nowadays, Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to be at the service of the population, not only do we have to have a Minister of Finance who can write fine speeches for the Budget debate, but we also have to have people who are experts at Photoshop! That shows that this is in the interest of the people to place yourself where you are not, in order to have the ability to do well. At least, you have the perception that you exist.

In an event, to come to the speech which I have already embarked upon, I heard the hon. Minister Lesjongard yesterday saying that he believes it is a socialist budget. He is obviously entitled to his views. However, am I not also entitled to my views? I have heard each and every member on the other side applaud the Minister of Finance. The least I expect them to do is to do exactly that because I do not see any single one of them having the courage to say that he is wrong! That is the point! I do not see a single one of them who can depart from what is the set agreed stance to be taken by Government and to think about nothing else but posterity and how he would go down in history as someone who has managed to stand for what he believes or as he had to simply be a sheep following *le berger* or simply...

**Mr Speaker:** No, I will stop you.

**Mr Mohamed:** ...someone who is blowing into a flute.

**Mr Speaker:** I will stop you! I will stop you!

**Mr Mohamed:** Why?

**Mr Speaker:** You have this very bad habit of comparing hon. Members in this House to animals. Remove that!

(*Interruptions*)

Remove that!

**An hon. Member:** Shame! Shame!

**Mr Speaker:** Withdraw that question of sheep or whatever!

**An hon. Member:** *L'agneau et le berger, M. le président !*

**Mr Mohamed:** *L'agneau et le berger* is...

**Mr Speaker:** Remove it! This is Parliament!

**Mr Mohamed:** I remove it! I remove!

**Mr Speaker:** And my ruling is final!

**Mr Mohamed:** Fair enough, I remove it!

**Mr Speaker:** There is no debate on that!

**Mr Mohamed:** I am not debating. I am removing it, Mr Speaker, Sir!

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you very much!

**Mr Mohamed:** I remove it even more for you. For God's sake!

**Mr Speaker:** You are a gentleman. Thank you very much. You know what you should do.

**Mr Mohamed:** But I have said it and you know what I have said.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr Mohamed:** And I made nothing wrong, but in your mind you think there is something wrong. But I removed it!

**Mr Speaker:** No, it is wrong and wrong!

**Mr Mohamed:** Yes, obviously, in your mind. I haven't got the ability to understand your mind and I don't want to! But I am removing it.

**Mr Speaker:** No, you have to understand. This is...

**Mr Mohamed:** I cannot understand!

**Mr Speaker:** But you have removed it?

**Mr Mohamed:** I removed it because I respect the Chair, but...

**Mr Speaker:** That's it! Continue with your speech now! No more comments!

**Mr Mohamed:** I am, I am...The Chair, not the mind!

Now, as I am saying, Mr Speaker Sir, the total revenue that the Minister of Finance has reminded us of is Rs179 billion whereas you have an expenditure of Rs200 billion. You see, it is not my habit to be an expert or try to say that I am an expert at matters

concerning the economy, but it has happened that I have had to go and pull out an old book of mine, and the title being ‘Modern Economics,’ Dewett. I do recall when I looked at that book; I was so fond of it in those days when I was in secondary school studying that book and what inflation is. So, I had to decipher what the hon. Minister was not saying, what he was hiding, and what he did not want other people to say. Can you imagine? It is not a coincidence that not a single time has this Budget mentioned the word ‘inflation.’ It has been said by other Members, and I say it again, it has never used the word ‘inflation.’

But that book on Modern Economics, Dewett is on a special paper printed in India, and those were the books we obtained at the time when I was in secondary school studying Economics. I have not got the ability of the hon. Minister of Finance and I have not got the art that he has to be able to hide the obvious. But there is one thing that he has made me understand is that when he says it is a ‘socialist budget,’ I was obliged to go into my old economics book and look at what exactly was the truth. There is more reason for me to believe Modern Economics, Dewett than to believe the hon. Minister because Dewett has no interest of his own to serve, as far as this Budget is concerned.

So, Dewett says that whatever he says is not true because he refuses and refrains with intent not to use the word ‘inflation.’ He knowingly refuses to use the word ‘productivity.’ Nowhere in the Budget! I have never understood how such words are avoided in a Budget Speech.

Then, I wanted to know how ‘socialist’ really is this Budget. The individual income tax falls from 16.3 billion in 2022-2023 to 15.5 billion. Those figures underlie the falsehood in that Budget. From 16.3 billion, individual income tax falls to 15.5 billion. But the VAT that is received from 49.4 billion in 2022-2023 to 61.5 billion estimated in 2023-2024. So, when one looks at the gross public sector debt, which is currently estimated at 485 billion, which will increase in June 2024 to 516 billion, and 548.934 billion in June 2025, the percentage of foreign denominated debt increasing from 23.7% to 25.5% to 26.1%, and you take that into account as well, is that the tax profile of this country is as follows –

- 30%...

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, un point...

**Mr Mohamed:** I didn’t interrupt him!

**Mr Speaker:** Is it...

**Mr Mohamed:** I never interrupted him!

**An hon. Member:** It is a point of order.

**Mr Mohamed:** I know it is not a point of order. I am not giving way. I am not giving way. It is not a point of order.

**Dr. Padayachy:** J'ai le droit.

**Mr Speaker:** I am asking you, is it a point of order?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Yes.

**Mr Mohamed:** No, still not. I am not giving way. I am not giving way.

**Dr. Padayachy:** Il a dit...

**Mr Speaker:** No, is it a point of order?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Oui.

**Mr Mohamed:** But state so. What is the point of order?

**Dr. Padayachy:** Il a dit que pas une seule fois...

**Mr Speaker:** You are going too far!

**Dr. Padayachy:** ...que pas une seule fois...

**Mr Assirvaden:** ...à la fin.

**Mr Speaker:** You are going too far you also! Please!

**Dr. Padayachy:** Non, je peux répondre?

**Mr Speaker:** One minute! Can you withdraw from the Chamber?

**Mr Assirvaden:** Why?

**Mr Speaker:** I don't have to give you any reason. I ask you to withdraw!

**Mr Assirvaden:** Mais le ministre des Finances...

**Mr Speaker:** I ask you to withdraw!

**Mr Assirvaden:** For what?

**Mr Speaker:** I ask you to withdraw!

**Mr Assirvaden:** Mais, c'est dépendant de votre humeur?

**An hon. Member:** *Ki li inn fer?*

**Mr Speaker:** If you don't withdraw, I will name you!

**Mr Mohamed:** *Fer li plezir. Fer li plezir.*

**Mr Speaker:** There should be discipline in the Chamber!

**Mr Mohamed:** What's the point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir? What's the point of order?

**Mr Speaker:** I will come to it. First, he withdraws.

**Mr Mohamed:** No, he has to come to it, not you.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, I will come to it. I will give my ruling!

**Mr Mohamed:** But he hasn't said what it is yet.

**Dr. Padayachy:** M. le président, l'honorable membre vient de dire que je n'ai pas parlé de l'inflation du tout dans le budget.

**Mr Mohamed:** The word!

**Dr. Padayachy:** Que je n'ai pas parlé de la hausse des prix. Je l'ai parlé en français. L'inflation, c'est la hausse des prix. Vous regardez le point 515, j'en parle. Je n'ai pas besoin de dire le mot 'inflation.' La définition de l'inflation, c'est la hausse des prix. Si vous ne comprenez pas ce que c'est la hausse des prix ; l'inflation, c'est la hausse des prix ! Je l'ai dit!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** On both sides...

**Mr Mohamed:** Is that a point of order?

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** On both sides of the House, order!

**Dr. Padayachy:** *Mo inn dir li!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. Padayachy:** *To enn manter!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**An hon. Member:** *Taux d'inflation li pann dir!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Uteem:** *Taux d'inflation li pann dir!*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Uteem!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Dr. Padayachy!

**An hon. Member:** *Ou ridicule!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. Padayachy:** *Kisann-la ki ridicule ?*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. Padayachy:** *To ridicule twa!*

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Both sides of the House, order! Now, you continue with your speech!

**Mr Mohamed:** Could he please withdraw the word ‘*menteur*’? He called me ‘*menteur*.’ Could he withdraw it, Mr Speaker, Sir?

**Dr. Padayachy:** I will remove.

**Mr Speaker:** Withdraw that word!

**Dr. Padayachy:** Yes, I will remove.

**Mr Mohamed:** Good!

Now, I see that whoever and whatever I was aiming at is having its effect. Therefore, to come to it, I say it again, at no time did the Minister use the word ‘inflation’ in the Budget.

Now, I read the Budget and he pronounced his Budget Speech for Hansard in English. And in English - maybe he did not understand what he was saying - he did not use the word ‘inflation.’ Now, if he said something equivalent in French, so be it. I will go home tonight and read it while drinking my cup of coffee. But in the meantime, I stick to what his speech was. Now, to come back to it, and maybe for next time, if he does have a next budget - which I don’t think so - he would think about using the word instead of something that may resemble it. What a weak defence!

Now, what I do say however, since I was interrupted, the tax profile is basically 30% taxes on income and profits and 67% taxes on goods and services. Today, how is the deficit being financed? How is Government expenditure being financed? Most of the money comes from VAT, fact. Since I hear the hon. Minister of Finance saying that this is a progressive budget, I would like him therefore to rewrite the rules of economics and tell

us, since the majority of the Budget is being financed through VAT, how is this progressive? How would he reconcile this with the fact that he has gifted friends of Government, the rich of this country, with a gift of reducing their tax imposition? Why is this not underlined by the Minister? He does not want us to realise that. He has given a gift to the richest of this country by reducing the tax imposition.

I like to listen to the hon. Minister without interrupting him. He is entitled to his views. So am I. I do not have the monopoly of knowledge and he also does not. Just like he can believe he knows a few things, I do not know as much as he does, at least I am humble enough to say so. So, I refer therefore to documents that I have looked at. He has decided to reduce taxes for the rich. That is a fact!

I read a document from the London School of Economics dated 16 December 2020 and it says here, I quote –

“Our research shows that the economic case for keeping taxes on the rich low is weak.”

So, what is the economic case of this hon. Minister of Finance, of this Government to bring down taxes for the rich? If he is to tell us that the reason why he brings down taxes for the rich is because this is going to kick-start the economy, I say he is wrong. Why? Another document from the London School of Economics dated 24 January 2023 which is a research document says, I quote –

“Tax cuts for the wealthy only benefit the rich.”

Who are those rich people that this Government has been in a hidden manner trying to protect and help? *Les riches que ce gouvernement a essayé d'aider clairement en baissant le taux d'imposition pour les riches, pourquoi? Est-ce qu'il y a une raison économique derrière cela? Tous en se vantant d'avoir baissé le taux d'imposition en créant 11 paliers.* It is 11 different ways of hiding the truth. The truth is that you remove taxes from the rich. They were so good to criticise the former government when we had put it to 15%. They had said we were wrong but at least we had the courage to say we are doing it openly for everyone flat whereas they criticise us and today and in a surreptitious manner, in a hidden manner, far from being transparent, bring down the tax *pour les riches*.

And in another document, and he shall be more comfortable with this particular document, it is the abolition of France’s Wealth Tax still has no proven effect on the economy and it is written by Audrey Tonnelier and it is published on 24 October 2022. That is the three documents that I table. He knows more than I do in economics, that is

why as the little person who knows nothing much, I refer to the authors here who say that *la stratégie économique du ministre des Finances est une stratégie qui cache la vérité, la vérité qu'il a choisie en connaissance de cause de baisser la taxe pour les plus riches de ce pays. Ça c'est une vérité!* And the author says those who benefit the most from it are the rich themselves, not the poor. So, what is the point of trying to supposedly show your generosity to the poor while at the same time, being sweet in your eyes to your beloved rich? What is the point? Come up honest with it; say for a fact that you wanted to protect the rich. I do not know why. I do not want to know why but at least be honest about it. You have protected the rich by bringing taxes down for them. Fact!

Now you call this a welfare budget? You call this a welfare budget? Look at the VAT! Who pays VAT, Mr Speaker, Sir? Every person in this country, rich or poor, we pay VAT, every person. Someone who is a fisherman, someone who is a grass cutter, someone who is a sugarcane planter, someone who is a sugarcane cutter, every person – a carpenter, a welder, a Minister of Finance, a lawyer, a speaker. We all pay VAT. The same VAT, but not all of us have the same income. Therefore, *le taux de TVA* that is imposed on someone who is a carpenter, *un petit artisan*, a little lady who is working in the fields, what VAT she is paying with a salary of the minimum *garanti de R 15,000*, obviously is not the same weight wise as the VAT paid by one of the listed companies and their CEOs getting three to five million rupees a month, that's not the same. So, don't tell me when the most of your budget is being financed by VAT, over 60%, that you are a progressive system. On the contrary, most of the deficit of this budget of this Government, most of the debts of this Government are being paid by a regressive system of taxation that is called the VAT and that is being honest.

Now what annoys me even more in this budget? I will say what it is. Mr Speaker, Sir, when you listen to this Government and when I hear the speech of the hon. Prime Minister immediately after the budget. What does he say? I quote what he said in a press conference within the precincts of the National Assembly on the day of the Budget Speech being read. The hon. Prime Minister said the following –

*«Le saler minimum mo fer rapel ti ogmante a 12,075 et bane benefisier ti p gagnn enn CSG Allowance of mil roupi, 13,075. Dan sa bidze la nou p fer enn zefor siplemanter pu kapav ogmante le pouvwar d'achat nu p donn enn soutien finansie de 2,000 roupi par mois sous CSG Income Allowance a tou bane travayer ki tous ziska 25,000 roupi. »*

And the Prime Minister goes on to say –

« *Donc le saler minimum zordi p ogmante p vinn 15,000 roupi.* »

This is what the Prime Minister says. The hon. Prime Minister sitting next to the good Minister of Finance of the Republic barely a few centimeters away who after the budget had been presented saying that he is also after all, let us not forget that the hon. Minister of Finance said thanks to Pravind Kumar Jugnauth that we managed to bring that budget; without him, we couldn't. The Prime Minister says that the *saler minimum zordi p ogmante p vinn 15,000 roupi*.

So, the question is: how do you test someone credibility? Was the Prime Minister speaking the truth outside this House when he said that the minimum salary is now Rs15,000, *le salaire minimum*? The answer that the hon. Minister of Finance gave at his breakfast meeting the next day, was no. The Prime Minister is not correct because the minimum wage is not increasing. Which is which? Either the Prime Minister could not understand what the hon. Minister of Finance was saying or the Minister of Finance could not understand what the Prime Minister wanted. Somewhere there is a problem in communication between the two. You cannot have what you call a “*un revenu minimum garanti*” and the Prime Minister calls it “*salaire minimum*”. Somewhere, some place, someone is wrong. They cannot both be right. But then, *le dindon de la farce c'est qui?* It's the people, because when they left this, listening to the hon. Minister of Finance and when they heard the Prime Minister for a few hours at night, the people of this country thought they would indeed benefit from an increase in National Minimum Wage and it would reach Rs15,000 monthly. This is what they exactly understood after listening to the Prime Minister.

The next morning the dream they had, was blown to pieces by the hon. Minister of Finance. But then I already knew that night itself that the Prime Minister was wrong. Hon. Kushal Lobine will remember. I already knew there was a reason why ‘National Minimum Wage’ was not used as an expression in the budget, it is not and that is why I have written to you, Mr Speaker, Sir, giving advance notice and also informed the Minister of Labour that I would at appropriate moment in the Finance Bill that is going to be coming, move for an amendment to the law. What would be that amendment? It is unfair for someone to get Rs15,000, Rs20,000, Rs25,000 monthly, part of it being from *CSG* but at the time of his retirement, it is not the figure that he gets at the end of the month that is accounted in the calculation of remuneration. It is the lower figure before *le revenu minimale garanti*.

Look at the Workers’ Rights Act! The Workers’ Rights Act clearly makes reference to severance allowance at section 70 and at section 87, at the interpretation

section, the Workers' Rights Act qualifies what exactly is taken into account at the time of calculating severance if ever he loses his job for unjustified dismissal or there is redundancy. Or in one month's time, in August, the gift that the hon. Minister gives of Rs2,000, he has to retire but he does not get on the PRGF, the figure which is the highest that he will get as the maximum revenue, he will get the lesser. Is this not unfair? Let us not forget that when I will move for that amendment, the only objective of mine is - *dans l'éventualité qu'un travailleur perde son emploi après les R 2,000, que la compensation soit calculée sur le chiffre qu'il va obtenir qui inclut les R 2,000 et si jamais il doit prendre sa retraite dans quelques temps, quelques semaines ou quelques mois après que la gratuity on retirement, la pension de la retraite, qui est dans le PRGF, soit calculée en se basant sur la rémunération qui inclut cette allocation qui émane de la CSG.*

The worker will be better off whereas the hon. Minister of Finance, if we go according to what he says, and we follow the Annexes, then it is not sufficient. Then the worker will be discriminated against. I am not asking the Minister to do something different. He is already doing it at page 45 of the Annex at B.15. – 'Interim Allowance to Bus Industry Employees'. You will recall that the employees were getting Rs1,000 and the Annexes – the Interim allowance of Rs1,000 payable to Bus Industry employees will be integrated in their basic salaries as from 01 January 2023, backdated. So, therefore if it can be done for Bus Industry employees, it should clearly be done, in my view, for all workers of this country because it is the same principle that I am looking for.

Another issue I would like, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill of 2022. Last year, Mr Speaker, Sir, you were in the Chair and I recall that there was one piece of legislation that was amended and it was the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act which was amended last year and when I read this document which is Hansard, I see therein that Dr. Padayachy, hon. Minister of Finance, makes reference to that particular Hansard and he says –

“Mr Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in Clause 67 –

“(d) in clause 67 –

(i) in paragraph (a), by inserting, after subparagraph (i), the following new subparagraph, the existing subparagraphs (ii) and (iii) being renumbered as subparagraphs (iii) and (iv) –

And he adds that he brings in that motion for amendment –

“(ii) by deleting the definition of “retirement benefit” and replacing it by the following definition.”

And what he replaces it by? I read –

“retirement benefit” means the social benefit of a monthly amount –

- (a) of 1,000 rupees, payable for the period starting on 1 July 2022 and ending on 30 June 2023;
- (b) exceeding 1,000 rupees up to the amount specified in the Second Schedule, payable as from 1 July 2023.”

And I read what you, Mr Speaker, Sir, said –

*“Amendment agreed to.*

*Clause 67, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.”*

The Second Schedule, Dr. Padayachy here in Hansard, hon. Minister of Finance moves to add a new Schedule and in that Schedule he adds –

“RETIREMENT BENEFIT 4,500 (Rs)”

I went to the Library earlier on and asked for an actualised, updated copy of the legislation today for the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act of 2021 as it stands in the definition section that is referred to as ‘Retirement Benefit’ and the Second Schedule as at 01 July 2023, the Government cannot offer less than Rs1,000 in addition.

The Government seems to be oblivious of that. As at *01 juillet 2023, ce gouvernement n'a pas le droit de donner moins que R 1,000 comme* retirement benefit *parce que*, I read –

« exceeding 1,000 rupees up to the amount specified in the Second Schedule”.

Qui est de R 4,500. La loi comme elle est aujourd’hui – il est tout à fait légitime, M. le président, et cela, je m’adresse directement au ministre des Finances à travers vous – il est tout à fait légitime pour que le citoyen s’attende à ce qu’il touche R 4,500 à partir, en plus sur la pension de retraite. Il a tout à fait le droit légitime de s’attendre qu’il va avoir R 4,500 à partir du 01 juillet 2023 parce que la loi le dit. Je ne le dis pas moi ; je ne fais que lire ce qui est dans la loi, ce qui a été voté par cette Assemblée l’année dernière.

Quelle est la valeur d’une loi si le gouvernement l’ignore ? Quelle est la valeur d’une loi si le discours du ministre des Finances ne fait même pas référence à cette

obligation, ne fait même pas provision pour cette obligation, ne donne même pas une explication ? Pourquoi alors ?

Cela n'est pas respecté. Comment se fait-il que le discours du budget ne fait même pas référence à une obligation légale du gouvernement qui est dans cette loi, qui à force de loi est de devoir donner R 4,500 par mois à chaque personne qui a atteint l'âge de la retraite ? R 4,500 en plus, c'est une obligation ! Alors, M. le président, la décision de ce gouvernement de tourner leur dos à cette loi, pire, de cracher au visage des pensionnaires, de ne pas leur donner ce qui est écrit dans cette loi et de venir simplement dans l'Annex à la page 21 proposer un amendement qui est exactement ce qui avait dans cette loi en d'autres mots 4,500 à partir maintenant 2024. Mais pourquoi alors avoir proposé ces amendements l'honorable ministre des Finances en 2022 et pourquoi alors, vous êtes mis debout pour proposer une motion d'amendement l'année dernière au Finance Bill pour dire 4,500 01 juillet 2023, pourquoi ?

Pourquoi alors ne pas respecter la parole donnée ? Est-ce que la parole donnée n'est plus parole sacrée ? Ah mais non, c'est un budget socialiste, socialiste pour les riches. Socialiste pour les riches, amis de ce régime, n'est-ce pas ? Et je connais beaucoup de ces amis qui eux n'ont pas besoin de ces pensions. Ils n'ont pas besoin d'augmentation. Alors, on vient nous dire simplement qu'on va donner R 20,000 à des jeunes. Pourquoi ? 55 ans de l'anniversaire de l'indépendance ? Pour une minute, je croyais que c'était à l'occasion pour l'honneur de mon anniversaire; bientôt j'aurai 55. Ah non, ce n'était pas ça. Au fait, c'était simplement pour nous embobiner, pour nous faire croire que 55 est plus important que 50. Comment se fait-il alors que ce gouvernement était au pouvoir quand on a eu 50 ans d'indépendance et pourquoi alors, ces jeunes n'ont rien eu ?

50 ans n'était pas important ? 55 est important parce que bizarrement les élections, c'est pour bientôt et alors, ceux qui vont s'enregistrer bientôt, ces nouveaux électeurs, 15,000 à peu près, ben alors c'est une façon de se servir de l'argent qui n'est pas la nôtre, de leur donner, être généreux sans aucune structure et nous dire mais au moins la majorité d'entre eux vont voter pour nous mais moi je dis à ces jeunes, prenez l'argent. Vous le méritez fort bien ; au moins pour vos pensées, pour écouter la démagogie de ce gouvernement et les mensonges économiques de ce gouvernement. Prenez cet argent ! Gardez cet argent et le moment voulu, votez contre ce gouvernement ! C'est ça qu'il faut faire.

Budget socialiste ! Après avoir écouté ce que j'ai à dire, peut-être, il doit y avoir une conférence de presse demain. Allez expliquer à ces ainés de notre population tous ceux qui

sont là vis-à-vis de moi, qui aiment dire : ‘on est là, on les a aidés, on a fait ceci.’ C’est comme ci, ils ont pris leur argent personnel pour leur donner. Nom de Dieu !

Et cette loi que vous avez tous votée de l’autre côté de la Chambre, et nous, c’est la force de loi, pourquoi on ne donne pas 4,500, allez donner une explication !

Nom de Dieu ! Vous avez tous voté cette loi et sa force de loi de l’autre côté de la Chambre ! Pourquoi on ne donne pas 4,500 ? Allez donner une explication ! Parce qu’on ne le dit pas à la population. Ça, on le cache !

Maintenant, vous voulez vous dire que vous êtes quoi ? Vous êtes quoi ? Socialistes! *Socialists for the rich! Socialists for the rich!*

*(Interruptions)*

I have 10 minutes left? I have 10? So, I have other names to hammer in. I have 10 minutes.

**Mr Speaker:** You have only 5 minutes left.

**Mr Mohamed:** *Non.*

**Mr Armance:** You have 5 minutes additional.

**Mr Mohamed:** Good. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Say it again?

**Mr Armance:** Hon. Nagalingum is not here, so, he has 5 minutes.

**Mr Speaker:** This has been cleared with the Whip?

**Ms Ramyad:** No. It is now that I am hearing that.

**Mr Mohamed:** That is fine. I can see that I am causing damage!

**Mr Speaker:** You cannot replace the Speaker, like any time you just say ‘okay, give him 5 minutes.’

No, do not do that! Clear with the Chief Government Whip.

**Mr Mohamed:** But we do not need to clear! It is the time of the Opposition that is used by the Opposition!

**Mr Speaker:** If it is okay, there is no problem. But do not embarrass me and do not embarrass the Whip.

**Mr Armance:** It is okay.

**Mr Mohamed:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr Speaker:** It is not in the Chamber that arrangements like this...

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir...

**Mr Speaker:** You are not doing your work both of you!

**Mr Armance:** We are!

**Mr Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I continue? It is the Government that is embarrassed and that was never the intention of my hon. friend to embarrass you. If he has, I apologise on his behalf.

**Mr Speaker:** But he does not know the way to work.

**Mr Mohamed:** If he has, we apologise on his behalf, but let me continue embarrassing Government now.

You are talking about knowing exactly what you are doing. You know just a small mistake - look at that one - I looked at page 82 of the Annex and I was so happy also. You know I thought I would join the bandwagon and say 'oh, wait a minute, let me *tap latab* also and say well, there is the name of a school in my constituency there. I heard it.' When I look here and I go 'but why is it classified under Constituency No. 2? Have they changed the borders? Oh no!' It is just because the officers of the Ministry of Education do not even know where the school is. And they have put it in Constituency No. 2 when it is in Constituency No. 3, and quite a distance away!

Abdool Rahman Abdool Government School - a project that started back when I was Minister. Tender documents had been made for renovation of the school. 2023, it is not even over! *Allez expliquer ça à votre collègue, le vice-Premier ministre, Dr. Husnoo ! Allez expliquer ça à Salim Abbas Mamode, qui choisit de ne pas être présent ! Allez expliquer ça aux électeurs de la Circonscription No. 3 ! Comment se fait-il qu'en 2014, un projet de rénovation d'une école est lancé par le gouvernement précédent ; on est en 2023, au nom de Dieu, et on vient parler de rénovation qui n'a même pas été complétée ?* Oh my God! That is efficiency! That is why you do not use the word. That is productivity! That is why you do not use the word in the Budget because you do not know what it means, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Then, what do they do? The sports infrastructure in my constituency - Plaine Verte, Camp Yoloff, Roche Bois, under renovation years after years after years. Still not finished! Plaine Verte even had a case of a victim of electrocution due to the existing electrical system which is faulty and had to undergo surgery and was sent to casualty at City Clinic. Obviously, *pas au frais du gouvernement, pas au frais de Sa Majesté comme*

*on peut le dire, mais, bien sûr, ce sont les citoyens de l'endroit qui l'ont aidé. Il y avait négligence de la part du gouvernement, un manque de maintenance, électrocution. Et partout, vous allez tap lestoma, ou al tap latab pou dir 'chez nous, il y a ça, chez nous, il y a ça.'* Come and see! We are having a game of balls. Very good!

Roche Bois - very poor pitch state with defective electrical system. They expect people in Roche Bois to play without a goal post there. There is a goal post missing. And they were ready for municipal elections by the way. They were ready for municipal elections!

Military Road - no lighting! Synthetic pitch, bad state, bad condition! Urgent need of renovation for years. Damaged public. Cité Martial, Plateau - millions spent by this Government for a beautiful pitch; a project I had started back in 2014. They left it on hold. Hon. Abbas Mamode came to me and said when he was in the Opposition recently, until he turned his coat and showed him loyal to... God knows his definition of loyalty what it means. He said to me: '*Shakeel, nu ti pe simpleman fer seki to fin komanse.*' But they can't even complete it? Instead of a football pitch, now it is being broken down again because it has to be looked at again, because it has become a swimming pool, because there is no drain. Closed, and in January 2023, closed because of drainage problem!

Mamade Elahee Stadium - no water in toilet! That is a modern government ready for municipal elections! Then, Jean LeBrun Football Pitch - very bad condition. Training and matches, problematic! Stade Kaya - worse than ever. Basketball Pitch at Camp Yoloff, *même pas praticable*. Petanque pitch at Camp Yoloff and Roche Bois in a poor state. Petanque pitch at Plaine Verte garden - no proper water supply. The construction of a water fountain with no drainage system, can you imagine? They put a water fountain with no drainage! They want proliferation of mosquitoes, but that is a modern Government, they care! They care!

Centre Roche Bois - leakage. The new Dr. Idrice Goomany - millions - leakage. You talk about 'green,' protecting environment and at the same time you destroy a children's garden at *Rue Magon* and you put up another building there? What? Because of the ego of certain people! But you are ready to care for people. The gardens are totally abandoned.

To come back to our good friend, the hon. Minister of Finance, who has thought it fit to turn his back to the old people of this country by going against legislation that he himself voted, that every single Member of this House voted.

**Mr Speaker:** This point you have already canvassed.

**Mr Mohamed:** Yes, but this the conclusion. I am hearing the drums rolling now and it is coming forward with a conclusion. I will enjoy that. Hold on! Hold on!

And the title of his Budget is what? The measure of a society is found in how they treat their weakest and most helpless citizens - Jimmy Carter. But maybe he should rewrite it! The measure of the society run by Dr. Padayachy is how we ignore the law and say we do not care about you because you are the weakest, and we will give it to you only when we know about the votes we are going to get in return. Only then - this is how he treats the weak - by buying votes!

Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** Three minutes left.

**Mr Mohamed:** I have got credit?

**Mr Speaker:** Three minutes left.

**Mr Mohamed:** Should I go on?

**Mr Speaker:** Now, we listen to hon. Nazurally, Deputy Speaker!

(5.21 p.m.)

**Mr Z. Nazurally (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE):** Merci, M. le président. Je tiens à vous remercier pour cette opportunité que vous me donnez pour m'exprimer. I know many probably await that I rebut the previous speaker. How can I do that? He has been here for 4 mandates, I think. He has a secure pension as well. Whilst it is my first, I am only the first one of my family; I only hope to argue in the interest of the country rather than to criticise. He has a flair for speech; I only have a flair to strive for a job well done because I believe *dans le travail bien fait*.

M. le président, la tâche s'annonce difficile pour moi. C'est très dur. One day, each and every single word that I utter in this Parliament will be used to judge me. I have to consider the opinion of my colleagues from the majority, the opinion of the Opposition, and understand the state of mind and the feeling of my fellow countrymen.

I would argue based on facts and figures rather than thin air. I will argue to bring my honest contribution to this debate. I will argue to help in building this country and in building this nation. This is what I intend to do. I hope that today my voice translates the feelings of my fellow countrymen and this debate becomes the voice of the people; the people of Mauritius, Agalega, Rodrigues, Chagos and all other outer islands.

I hope you listen to it, enjoy it, digest it and act upon it, should there be substance in it. First of all, I want to say the good things about my country.

I am in love with most of what I see in the country. I must put it on record how much I love the people of my country. I must put it on record that my country has done more for me than I have done for my country. I am a Mauritian; I was born and raised here. My family, my mom and dad who are probably watching, they stay and live here. They were born and raised in this country. I live in a community, the community forms part of a bigger segment, of the bigger gem called *Île Maurice*. *L'île Maurice nous appartient ; L'île Maurice appartient à 1,266,000 habitants*. Everything that I am today is because of Mauritius. Everything that we are today is because of Mauritius.

In all honesty, we have reached a decent level of progress as to infrastructures and services in this country. We have to *mettre les points sur le i. Ce qui a été fait, a été fait*. We have, as a nation, given our sweat and blood to progress from where we used to be from coolies, slaves and merchants. Until today, the new generations are nowadays schooled for at least nine years. We have degree holders in almost every house; at least in our surrounding, we have degree holders. We have doctors, engineers, accountants, teachers, lawyers, in every community nowadays. We have overcome so much as a nation.

We have, as a nation, fully established welfare state and I am happy to say that this budget maintains the welfare state. There are more than just criticisms that come out from this budget unlike what the Opposition is trying to portray. Medicine is still free; schooling is free; transport is free; there are pensions; there are benefits; there are incentives; there are grants given under this budget. *Le pays a beaucoup développé de ce que j'ai vu de mon enfance jusqu'à maintenant, de ce que j'ai vu des photos anciennes*.

Allow me Mr Speaker, Sir, to share part of the journey of my life. Some 30 years back, I used to take the bus from Mont Ida to go to college, MGI. I used to take the route from Alma towards Moka and there used to be heavy traffic jam. I am happy to say, this Government have done a first, a relief after 30 years that I have taken this road. This road today has new additions. Changes have been brought and in fact, a new road is about to be inaugurated. The suffering that I have endured as a child until today will be alleviated by this very Government, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Throughout these three years, I have also seen so much that have been invested in public infrastructures. Many come and say, many argue that money has been blown up in the air. But as I said, I'll argue with evidence, based on facts and figures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been massive investments in public infrastructure. Some even went on to say: '*pre pou vinn Manhattan*'. But over and above it, it is not about Manhattan that I want to talk, I want to talk about my constituency. *Permettez-moi détailler quelques travaux qu'on a effectués dans ma circonscription faites en collaboration avec mes deux colistiers, avec le PPS, le Conseil de district de Flacq et de Moka.*

As I said, I am not just going to talk in the air. Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission allow me to make reference to a list that I have compiled as to the projects that have been undertaken in my constituency by the District Council. There is a total of 69 projects. 34 have been completed and there are 30 more in progress. There are five more upcoming projects. We are talking about 69 projects undertaken in some 42 months. *Alors ça fait un peu plus d'un projet par mois.* I beg leave to table same.

Now, allow me to talk about more projects as to drain works that have been carried out. There is a total of 39 projects, 7 have been completed, and 32 are left. And these projects, Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg leave to table same as well. There are four more amenities coming; there are 17 roads that have been completed by the NDU, and four road projects that are ongoing. That makes 63 projects plus 69.

Over and above it, I have a list from the District Council of Flacq where there are 14 projects as to roads that have been carried out. We are talking of almost 150 different projects undertaken by this Government in my constituency over the past three years. I am tabling all the documents. You can see that work has been done from Mont Ida to Trou d'Eau Douce, from Grande Rivière Sud Est to Bramsthan. Each and every locality of my constituency has seen an improvement. It is, in fact, the budget that is providing the fund for all these 150 or more projects. These projects have bettered the quality of life of the inhabitants of my constituency.

Nevertheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, *il faut que je le dise, il y en a des problèmes d'inondations dans quelques endroits de ma circonscription à Médine, Pont Lardier, Bel-Air, Clémencia, Bramsthan.* We are not perfect; this is how it is. This world is not perfect but I am happy to see that the budget has allocated funds for major drain works in those villages. I hope the job will be completed soon and the fund allocated shall be used wisely, swiftly to, in fact, enhance the quality of life.

I also have to say, early on, our colleague, hon. Ms Jutton, talked about *problem de l'eau.* I must state it, because I am here to state the facts and the truth, I recognise along with my two colleagues that there are problems in the constituency as to water in Olivia, Bel Air, Trou d'Eau Douce, Bramsthan but I have spoken to CWA for over a long period

of time. We are constantly monitoring the situation. They have told me that for the short terms we have boreholes and new pipes that are going to be laid. Over the long run, there is a new reservoir that is upcoming. So, all these funds have to be allocated under the budget so that we can materialise these projects.

Allow me also to bring to the attention of the Minister of Land Transport that sometimes it happens that the senior citizens suffer from the whims and caprices of bus owners who fail to stop. So, I would request for a closer monitoring. I do not want to just debate today, I want to add constructive proposals on how to make the lives of every citizen better and better. I also do not forget the plight of inhabitants of Clémencia, Olivia and Route 16 who often suffer from inadequate or irregular bus service. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, you would see we have a big, huge panoply of work that is being done.

*Now, I propose to move on to another topic.* À l'île Maurice, on parle prédominant le créole, l'anglais, le français, hindi, urdu, telugu, marathi, mandarin, etc. On a hérité d'un pays travaillé par nos ancêtres, légué à nous par nos grands-parents, ancêtres qui avaient osé à cette époque de croire au bonheur qu'ils vivront sur cette île paradisiaque. Un long chemin a été parcouru pour qu'on y arrive jusqu'ici. Voyons, nous avions commencé avec des maisons en pailles. Puis on a procédé avec des maisons en tôle et maintenant, on a des maisons en béton. Je peux faire étalage du fait que maintenant on crée des œuvres d'art en béton. Nous avons beaucoup progressé. Tout le monde l'ont bâti ce pays : les noirs, les blancs, les asiatiques, toutes les communautés l'ont bâti. Toutes les communautés ont mis la main à la pâte. *We are making a step further. We should strive together as a nation to move even further.*

Allow me at this stage to commend the Education Bill that has been voted. The creole language has been given a new lifeline by this Government. Creole language is a common denominator for one and all, whether Government or Opposition. This Government has dared to care for a common purpose, I would say.

Mais la question, M. le président, y reste, qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire ? Qu'est-ce qu'on veut faire du futur ? La réponse est simple : qu'on améliore ce qu'on a, en son temps, selon nos moyens financiers, d'après nos attributs comme un peuple.

We have legitimate ambitions. We want equal opportunity for one and all, respect for one and all, a platform to grow for every individual of this country. There is so much good in this Budget. I could enumerate about the measures all day long. The question is how these measures contained in the Budget can take us to the next level. To sum it up, I would

say we require; we need a transparent, efficient and effective use of funds that have been allocated under this budget.

My good friend, hon. Mohamed, earlier argued about the revenue that we have under this budget. At page 481 – appendix A, from what I manage to understand is we have revenue of Rs179.160 billion. We have an expenditure of Rs200.178 billion. There is a shortage. As a country, we need to work together to decrease the budget deficit. It is going to take the Opposition and Government together, the whole nation together so that we cross these hurdles. As a country, there are so many avenues that we need to open up. Whether we like it or not, we need to buckle up as a country. *Peut-être kouman nou dir en Kreol, ser sintir.*

*Développement et progrès durable ne conjuguent pas avec vivre au largesse.* We cannot allow a single cent of our contribution to be wasted. I will talk about facts, figures and the truth, the whole truth without fear and favour. I will talk about *mon vécu*. Prior to this, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance. Who would have believed that a Budget would even be possible when all that seem to be publicised, read, shared over the internet, over the media are spicy and juicy news? Here we go, the figures, the balance, the account, the explanatory notes all appear to be here under the Budget Estimate.

So, maybe a word or two are missing but the majority, if not to say everything is present here. We need to look at the budget with an open mind so as to be able to address the issue that our country really faces today. It is not partisan politics that is going to determine our future. So, Minister of Finance, well done to you! Well done to the Government! I have obtained many good feedbacks when I tried to seek the opinion of people. The worst of feedback was “*Budget la okay*” and I think nobody would deny ‘*budget la okay*’ at least.

Having an okay Budget under these circumstances is a good achievement. It has always been – majority applauds, minority criticises. Continue to dare, continue to care. Caring brings peace and love. Peace and love bring justice. Justice will give hope; hope that one day we will achieve our dream when every Mauritian can live their dreams regardless of race, religion and creed and only the most deserving are rewarded.

Allow me now to argue over the facts and figures that I have been talking. I am not far from setting on a personalised blame game. It is rather a self-reflection of my state of mind that appears to also reflect the youth of my generation who are intrinsically linked with the younger and older generation. Majority of the country today can feed themselves but I do

not exclude the minority. I hope to see all the needy avail themselves to the various social benefits that have been awarded under the Budget.

The majority of the country appears to have a house but I do not forget those living in rent, the youths entangled in years, decades of loan. I look forward to the construction of 8,000 houses being done promptly and I also plead to the hon. Minister of Finance to look at the rate of interest for first time home buyers. The majority of the country is safe, they feel safe but I do not deny the plea of the few who feel justice is not seen to be done. I am proposing to talk about a few items of the budget that are interlinked. Accounts for some 10% of the Budget employ at least a 10% of the Civil Servants. It pertains to issues that have been the talk of the town.

Chacun devrait assumer sa part de responsabilité. L'humain, l'humanisme, l'humanité devrait être au centre de nos préoccupations. L'apportionnement des responsabilités doit être fait en humilité pour atteindre l'építomé du bonheur pour le bien-être commun de la patrie. Je ne critique pas, je propose.

I propose to talk about the –

1. Police;
2. The Independent Police Commission;
3. The Human Right Commission;
4. The DPP's Office;
5. The Judiciary;
6. The Prison Services;
7. Rehabilitation Services.

I table a copy of the page where they are contained and the amount that they consume of the Budget.

- By the Police: Rs11.8 billion;
- Independent Police Complaint Commission (IPCC): Rs15 m.;
- Human Right Commission: Rs35 m.;
- The DPP: Rs190 m.;
- The Judiciary: Rs746 m.;
- Prison Service: Rs995 m.;
- Rehabilitation: Rs105 m.

These items eat up a large chunk of our money. At page 84 of the Budget Estimates, we are hoping to decrease the crime rate from 3.8 per thousand population to 3.26 for the present financial year. As a practising lawyer, I have known many people within those sectors and department, made many acquaintances and friends. I have seen them at work, hardworking, they are family members, they are brothers, they are sisters, they are grandparents. They work honestly, staking their lives, putting their hours, sweat and blood to make this country safe and sound. I have seen professionals; I have seen experts who know their field, those who are very competent in their jobs. It is only a few that transgress the rule and sometimes become a battalion that knowingly or recklessly misuse their power or shirk from their responsibilities.

Pour calmer les ardeurs, M. le président, qui sont installés dans notre jolie patrie, j'aurai aimé voir les *body cams* pendant les opérations policières. Un budget de Rs14 m. est alloué à la police, *Law and Order*, pour remettre en place le *common purpose* du pays. Le *common purpose* du pays doit être de vivre bien, ensemble dans une atmosphère saine et sauve. Il faut que les délais qu'on traite les affaires soient réduits, que les enquêtes soient bouclées dans un délai raisonnable, que les poursuites soient faites *within a reasonable time*, que les jugements soient rendus dans les plus bref délais.

Je salue la proposition d'embaucher six nouveaux juges et 14 nouveaux magistrats. Mais on a besoin d'embaucher plus de juges et de magistrats pour pouvoir soulager le système judiciaire et policier. On aura besoin de plus staff qui collabore avec la magistrature et plus de *court rooms* pour qu'on puisse entendre les affaires effectivement, *expeditiously*.

Officers should be attached to their department within their field of expertise and they should weave a family bond with the public who ultimately employs them, for one should never forget, we are accountable to the hand that feeds us.

*Il faut que le bureau du DPP ait plus de staff pour procéder plus rapidement avec les décisions de poursuivre ou de ne pas poursuivre des affaires. On a besoin d'un système de travail plus efficace.* Who knows better how it feels when one has to wait since 25 June 2020 for the determination of a case? Who knows how it feel? Who knows how it feels waiting for almost three years?

We know it on this side. At least in my Party, we know it quite well, how it feels to be waiting for 3 years for a determination. *Il faut qu'on investisse plus d'argent dans la réhabilitation des prisonniers, des délinquants.* *Il m'a paru dans le Budget Estimates qu'il y en a 3,700 qui sont des récidives* who have been going to prison more than 2 times.

We need to find a way for them. We need to alleviate their sufferings, take them out of the path they have engaged into. It is important that all these institutions optimise their budget so that we have a good budget, good facilities, good services and good countrymen. All these have to be put in a bubble where each and every one feels safe.

My attention has also been drawn by certain employees. I plead to you Minister of Finance if you can maybe enlighten or give more description/more details as to how this works. If somebody started 10 years back with a salary of Rs7,500 and is a mere cleaner; after 10 years today, his salary is Rs15,000 with 10 years of experience, what happens to him? Is he not in a worse situation than a new comer where today his income would amount to at least Rs15,000? We need to look at it so that no one in our country feels that they have less consideration. I am sure sooner or later, we will have to establish an Error and Omission Commission to consider readjustment of salary so as those with experience do not get penalised.

I care for the working class hero of my country. Allow me to tell you, achieving your potential is the quest of the ordinary. Conquering the impossible is your destiny. This goes to all the working class hero of my country. Please feel empathy while you deliver. Empathy means sharing and caring. The more we care, the more we grow as a human being. Empathy is what I call *dil ki Dawlat* - the wealth of heart. Have trust in your talent and technology. Hold love for the country and fear the wrath of God. Deliver to the best of our capability regardless of your origin. The destiny of the country lies your hands.

On ne peut plus tolérer un État où les journaux puissent faire des scandales comme des *front pages* tous les jours. La loi doit être appliquée dans un cadre idéal où ce qui représente les institutions se sentent connecter avec une idéologie. L'idéologie que j'appellerai le *common purpose as a nation. Justice must be seen to be done.*

In creole, *si to kile zordi pou enn bout, kone to valer pou res enn bout, zame to pou gagn to par e to merit.* This message also goes out to hon. Members of the Opposition. I know you often say you work under difficult circumstances, but adapting to the state of affairs is your duty. You need to adjust and give a constructive version of yourself, of what you stand for. This Parliament that runs with public funds is for us to give our best despite adversity, regardless of how the opponent or the next one acts. I hope to see everyone bringing a spirit, life, energy and vision to the debate. Rise up for a common purpose and let us paint our country Red, Blue, Yellow and Green. It is going to take time; it is going to take time to shine even brighter.

Moi, j'y crois dans cette jeunesse mauricienne. Moi, je crois en ce peuple mauricien, éduqué à l'école, instruit au web, instruit dans les temples, les mosquées, les pagodes et les églises. Je crois qu'un jour, on se lèvera tous d'une voix commune, sans discrimination, unies, soudés pour le bien commun du pays, que le mérite primera au-delà de toute considération.

I am almost done, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I cannot help myself – even the previous orator talked about it – to talk about the Rs20,000. Call it bumper price; whatever you want to call it. Give it any name that you want. I know for a fact, with Rs20,000, an 18-year old can procure sufficient drugs to blow himself and his friend up. With Rs20,000, an 18-year old can blow his brains up, can get a cardiac arrest with drugs. But what has to be said is, with Rs20,000, an 18-year old, who would usually be doing SC or HSC, could pay for 40 months of tuition and pave his way to good results at School Certificate or Higher School Certificate. What is not said - with Rs20,000, a young friend of mine spends Rs5,000 per month to pay 2 months' rent to open a hair salon; with Rs5,000 he spent on table and chairs; Rs5,000 for the tools, for his trade. With Rs20,000, a young man could open up a little aluminium workshop. With Rs20,000, so much could be done. With Rs20,000, that is going to be allocated to – if I rightly grasped – 88,000 Mauritians. In this year, it would amount to Rs160,000,000 used to gather the youth of this country who can change the destiny of this country.

I have a dream and I struggle day in and day out for my dream. I want us, all Mauritians, to live our dream. It is not about what we have, but what we do with what we have. With your permission, I want to conclude with all the colours my country. Allow me to quote a Bhojpuri proverb –

*“Zindagi do din ki hain yahan,*

*Kuch nahin leke jana,*

*Na hathi, na ghora,*

*Paidal hi jana.”*

Life here is only for two days. We are not taking anything when we go away. We are not going by horse or on an elephant back; we are going barefoot. Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I suspend the Sitting for 30 minutes.

*At 5.51 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 6.42 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Please be seated! Hon. Ms J. Bérenger!

(06.42 p.m.)

**Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal):** C'est le quatrième exercice budgétaire auquel j'assiste. Hier, j'ai été intriguée par les mots de l'honorable Maneesh Gobin qui disait qu'un budget, ça ne se lit pas, mais ça s'étudie. Donc, j'ai étudié attentivement le Budget 2023-2024, mais avec comme filtre les 3 budgets précédents, et un petit rappel s'impose.

En 2020, le titre, c'était '*Our New Normal: The Economy of Life*' avec ses trois axes –

1. '*Rolling out the 'Plan de Relance de l'investissement et de l'économie ;*
2. '*Engaging in Major Structural Reforms ;*
3. '*Securing Sustainable and Inclusive Development.'*

En 2021, c'était '*Better Together*' avec encore une fois ses trois axes: '*Recovery, Revival and Resilience.*'

Le Budget 2022-2023 porte le titre ronflant '*With the People, for the People*' avec les mots-phares '*It is all about people, and people above all. Because solidarity is efficiency.*' Et nous avons encore eu droit à un triple titre –

1. '*Strengthening our Economic Growth and Resilience to Future Shocks;*
2. '*Accelerating our Transition to a Sustainable and Inclusive Development Model, and*
3. '*Investing in Our People.*'

En 2023, '*To Dare & To Care*' avec ses trois piliers –

1. '*Strengthening the Foundations of our Economy;*
2. '*Continuing the Transformation of Mauritius into a Sustainable Economy, and*
3. '*Building the Future We Deserve.*'

Ce rappel est pour comprendre la stratégie de ce gouvernement. Des mots qui en jettent de belles paroles, mais qui ne se déploient pas en action.

En relisant tous ses titres, j'ai une image qui m'est automatiquement venue en tête, celle de l'encre du calamar projetée à la face du pêcheur pour l'empêcher de voir. Mis à part le fait qu'une fois de plus, l'exercice du budget cette année ne règle pas les problèmes de fond et est rempli d'incohérences mais il est surtout dangereux.

Budget après budget, ce gouvernement investit dans le contenant mais pas dans le contenu, dans les infrastructures mais pas dans l'humain. On aménage et réaménage les routes, on nettoie, on rénove les écoles mais rien pour la formation des professeurs, rien pour améliorer le bien-être, pour permettre un soutien psychologique de qualité pour les enfants, pour les parents. Quelques crèches qui re-ouvrent mais rien pour accompagner nos enfants sortant des *shelters* à l'âge de 18 ans comme l'a confirmé d'ailleurs un peu plus tôt la ministre. Ces jeunes sont littéralement jetés à la rue quand ils atteignent la majorité et sont en proie à tous les fléaux de notre société. Je persiste – tout dans la forme mais rien dans le fond. C'est l'encre de calamar envoyée pour aveugler les milliers de Mauriciens.

C'est un budget dangereux aussi parce que bien que le gouvernement ait récolté plus de 150 milliards en termes de revenus, des miettes sont distribuées aux plus vulnérables en maintenant leur situation de vulnérabilité et de l'autre côté on aide d'avantage en réalité les plus fortunés. Ce budget n'apporte pas de solutions concrètes pour arrêter le cercle de la pauvreté. Ce budget ne prend pas de mesures pour booster la productivité. Ce budget n'offre rien pour arrêter la fuite des cerveaux pour stopper l'inflation, pour arrêter la dépréciation de la roupie. Non seulement les solutions ne sont pas apportées pour régler les problèmes de fond mais en plus, certaines mesures budgétaires viennent aggraver des problèmes sociétaux.

Je développerais donc ces incohérences et inquiétudes à travers trois volets, ne seraient-ce que pour être synchrone à la pensée ternaire de l'honorable ministre des Finances –

1. de l'environnement;
2. des énergies renouvelables, et enfin
3. l'ouverture du pays aux étrangers.

L'annonce de démolir le bâtiment Emmanuel Anquetil pour le remplacer par une mini forêt endémique est pour le moins risible. Non seulement la démolition n'était pas recommandée selon une étude entreprise par le gouvernement lui-même, mais en plus planter quelques arbres alors que de l'autre côté ce même ministre permet à travers *l' Economic Development Board* le déboisement pour divers projets immobiliers. En effet,

c'est risible. Et là bien sûr j'ai en tête la *Smart City* de Roches Noires qui est dans l'actualité mais pas que ça. Pour Legend Hill également, il avait permis le déboisement de neuf arpents et une montagne était défigurée. Bien d'autres projets ont vu la diversité des écosystèmes être sacrifiée.

Le ministre nous annonce donc la destruction d'un bâtiment contenant de l'amiante sans nous dire comment ce sera fait ? Est-ce que le bâtiment sera décontaminé ? Combien coûtera la démolition ? Où iront les débris de construction ? Tout ça juste pour annoncer la mise en terre de quelques plantes alors que de l'autre côté, on coupe des arbres à droite, à gauche et que lui-même permet le déboisement sur 650 arpents que lui-même est en train de détruire l'intégrité et la fonctionnalité de tout un écosystème à Roches Noires. Quelle incohérence !

Ce qui est aussi incroyable à mon sens c'est que *l'Economic Development Board* a tellement de pouvoir aujourd'hui que le ministère de l'Environnement et celui de l'Agro-industrie n'ont même pas leur mot à dire. *L'Economic Development Board* piétine littéralement la stratégie du ministère de l'Agro-industrie qui dans une stratégie faite en 2017 et qui est supposée être implémentée avant 2026 qui s'appelle *Protected Area Network Expansion Strategy* nous dit que cette zone où le gouvernement veut développer la *smart city*, est supposée être une zone protégée. Cette zone où le gouvernement permet le développement de cette *smart city* est une *Expansion Zone* dans cette stratégie. Donc la biodiversité devrait être protégée mais pas que, il piétine aussi le *Masterplan* de l'Environnement 2020-2023 dans lequel un *Strategic Environment Assessment* est supposé être fait dans une telle zone environnementalement sensible mais non, *l'Economic Development Board* et le ministère des Finances n'en ont que faire et n'en font qu'à leur tête pourvu que les devises rentrent dans la caisse de l'État.

Cette mini forêt, elle fera au mieux quoi ? Un demi-arpent ? A Roches Noires, c'est 650 arpents qui sont concernés et tout un écosystème qui nous fournit des services inégalables. Est-ce que le ministre pourrait peut-être nous déposer un bilan du budget déforestation et reforestation chaque année en tenant compte des services fournis par ces écosystèmes ? C'est bien dommage d'ailleurs que le ministre s'entête à ne pas vouloir utiliser le système proposé par les Nations unies pour calculer en termes économiques les services que nous rendent la nature. Si le gouvernement utilisait le système *of Environmental Economic Accounting*, cela aurait permis d'intégrer la nature et le sociétal dans toutes les décisions du gouvernement et peut-être qu'il prendrait alors conscience de ses actes et qu'il arrêterait les incohérences et le *greenwashing*.

Et en parlant de *greenwashing*, encore une fois dans ce budget est annoncé en grande pompe à la section 214, un investissement de 1.6 milliards dans la *National Environment and Climate Change Fund* pour différents projets qui soi-disant concerteront les problèmes liés au changement climatique, sauf que lorsqu'on regarde les détails, un tiers de ce budget 523 millions donc, est alloué au projet de nettoyage et d'embellissement. Si ça ce n'est pas prendre les gens pour les imbéciles, si ça ne s'appelle pas du *greenwashing*.

Pareil pour le recyclage plastique, des mesures pour en recycler et pour encourager le recyclage du plastique à partir la section de 224, mais c'est encore une fois un trompe-l'œil quand on sait que le plastique ne peut être recyclé plus que trois fois. Aussi pour rappel, le 21 février 2021, le ministre de l'Environnement, l'honorable Ramano avait annoncé en conférence de presse que la commercialisation, l'importation et la production des bouteilles PET de moins d'un litre, dont 130 millions sont produites localement, seraient interdites. Qu'est-ce qu'il en est ? On l'a plus entendu depuis.

Pareillement, je regrette qu'il n'y ait rien concernant la gestion des déchets mise à part le recyclage du plastique comme je viens de mentionner. C'est alors que le *Waste Management and Recovery Act* vient d'être voté avec toutes les promesses qu'il emmenait avec lui et alors que l'on sait très bien que Mare Chicose est saturé et que le contrat du gestionnaire du site est expiré depuis 2018. La valeur totale du contrat attribué à cet entrepreneur est passée de la somme initiale de 1.6 milliards à 2.6 milliards, soit une hausse de 65,3 % à cause des contrats d'urgence et de toutes les extensions, c'est le Directeur de l'audit qui le dit.

Mais au-delà de ça, recyclage, réhabilitation des côtes, lutte contre l'érosion, investissement dans les drains, plantation d'arbres ici et là, à chaque budget, ce sont les mêmes choses qui sont annoncées pour faire rêver et tenter d'impressionner mais il n'y a aucun bilan et l'environnement continue d'être dégradé. Il n'y a rien concernant les nombreux changements qui devraient être apportés à la *Environment Protection Act* qui dans la pratique aujourd'hui, non seulement est une loi qui n'est pas implémentée mais en plus ne protège pas notre environnement et ces écosystèmes comme elle le devrait.

Chaque année, le ministre de l'Environnement vient parler de protéger les zones sensibles mais n'emmène aucun changement dans la loi et continue de donner des permis *EIA* qui ne prennent pas en compte la protection des écosystèmes et permet les développements sur les zones sensibles. Il n'y a aucune vision, aucune approche holistique. Les ministères travaillent en silo. D'ailleurs, le *Inter-Ministerial Council on*

*Climate Change* prévu par le *Climate Change Act*, donc depuis 2020, est supposé être présidé par le ministre de l'Environnement et ne s'est rencontré qu'une seule fois. Donc, forcément chacun fait comme il veut.

Le ministère des Infrastructures publiques continue de déboiser à La Vigie, à Chamarel, à Plaines Champagne, sans permis *EIA*, sans coordination pour l'aménagement du territoire, sans plan de gestion régionale des eaux pluviales. On ne cessera pas de le répéter. Tous les projets devraient prendre en considération leurs impacts sur l'environnement et les effets du changement climatique. Tous les projets devraient être durables et une entreprise qui ne devient pas durable dans ses activités aujourd'hui, ne sera pas rentable demain et c'est pareil pour un pays. Le MSM érige fièrement comme slogan celui du développement mais les projets implémentés ne sont pas durable. Si l'on ne fait pas aujourd'hui de notre île une île durable, si on ne protège pas la nature, il n'y aura pas de possibilité de développer quoi que ce soit à l'avenir. C'est dommage de toujours devoir le répéter encore quatre ans plus tard.

Maurice peut pourtant et doit devenir un modèle dans l'adaptation face aux impacts du changement climatique, un modèle de développement durable, un pionnier dans l'économie décarbonée mais encore une fois, c'est une question de volonté.

Il semble évident que cette vision est à l'opposé de ce que ce gouvernement semble prôner.

*To dare and to care* - jusqu'ici le verbe *to dare* veut seulement dire – oser, continuer à faire et dire tout son contraire. Je disais dans mon ancien discours que ce gouvernement est à la fois pyromane et pompier. Nous voyons ce défilé sous nos yeux depuis le budget de 2020 à travers les actions prises par ce gouvernement des incohérences qui sont devenues aujourd'hui limpides. Vous ne pouvez plus mener la population en bateau, ils ont vu clair dans votre jeu. Même si la population voit de plus en plus le jeu médiocre du gouvernement, cela n'empêche pas de continuer à agir en toute opacité ; la transparence semble être un mot banni du vocabulaire. Hier en entendant le ministre Joe Lesjongard expliquer le programme gouvernemental pour la transition énergétique et surtout en l'entendant parler avec fougue de la croissance de l'énergie solaire, on se demande si le ministre n'a pas des intérêts dans l'énergie solaire.

Le gouvernement MSM a annoncé à la COP 26, j'en arrive donc à mon deuxième point ; l'ambitieux objectif d'atteindre les 60% de production d'électricité à partir d'énergies renouvelables d'ici 2030 ; mention est faite à la Section 92 du discours du budget. L'autre endroit que le discours du budget fait mention de la production

d'électricité à partir de 60 % d'énergies renouvelables est à la Section 185. On nous dit que durant la dernière année fiscale, 1,400 projets représentant 136 MW d'énergie renouvelable ont été approuvés. Quels sont ces projets ? Où sont-ils arrivés ? Sur combien de temps seront-ils implémentés ?

Aucune indication. Pourquoi ne pas emmener plus de transparence ? Ce n'est pourtant pas compliqué. Il suffit par exemple, de la mettre sur le site web du CEB, de permettre au public de connaître l'avancée de ces projets mais pourquoi le gouvernement ne veut pas le faire. Qu'est-ce qu'il a à cacher ?

Il y a deux ans aussi le budget annonçait investissement dans 10 Gas Insulated Switch Gear, indispensable pour faire entrer les énergies renouvelables sur le réseau électrique. Encore une fois où en sommes-nous ? En tout cas, jusqu'à l'an dernier, l'investissement n'avait toujours pas été fait. Pas d'indication non plus quant au *Biomass Framework* ; deux phrases dans le discours du budget et pas d'éclaircissement non plus dans le discours des ministres de l'Energie et de l'Agro-Industrie. Toujours pas de détail donc sur le contenu du rapport ; quand il sortira ou sur ce qu'il contiendra. *Niet*.

Pourtant pour atteindre l'objectif de 60 % des parts de l'énergie renouvelable dans le mix d'électricité, le gouvernement se repose principalement sur la biomasse et le solaire et de nombreuses questions restent en suspens. Selon les chiffres de la CEB en 2022, nous n'étions encore qu'à 17,3 % pour la part d'énergies renouvelables dans le mix d'électricité. En 2021, nous étions à 21 %. Donc, en un an, la part des énergies renouvelables a diminué de 3% et le ministre a dit que ce serait à cause de la diminution de production d'électricité à partir de bagasse et c'est là où se pose le problème.

Un peu plus de la moitié de ce pourcentage de production de l'électricité à partir d'énergies renouvelables est produite avec de la bagasse. Pour rappel, la bagasse appartient à la biomasse; la biomasse est l'ensemble des matières organiques pouvant devenir des sources d'énergie. Le *Biomass Framework* avait été annoncé pour la première fois dans la Section 13B. *Renewable Sugar Cane Industry Based Biomass Framework* de la *Sugar Industry Efficiency (Amendment) Act* de 2016, 7 ans donc pour ce *National Biomass Framework* et pas plus tard que le 29 mai dernier, la Chambre d'agriculture disait encore être dans l'attente du rapport. Semble-t-il déjà adopter dans l'attente des mesures d'implémentation ainsi que de la rémunération des biomasses; 7 ans plus tard et toujours dans l'attente.

Les trois IPPs produisant l'énergie à partir de bagasse, représentent pourtant environ 200 MW d'électricité sur le réseau. Donc il serait urgent que le gouvernement finalise ce

*framework* et le publie. Ce qui interpelle cela dit, c'est que le ministre, le gouvernement, n'aient jamais jugé bon de questionner la durabilité de la biomasse. Et s'il vous plaît, M. le ministre de l'Energie qui n'est pas là, ne parlez plus des oiseaux de mauvais augure alors que nous ne faisons que tirer la sonnette d'alarme sur notre situation énergétique. C'est un manque de respect total. Plusieurs études ont montré que différentes formes de biomasse produisent en réalité des émissions carbones supérieures aux énergies fossiles.

Une étude de 2021 par exemple, *Natural Resources Defence Council* au États-Unis mesure l'impact de l'utilisation de pastille de bois pour alimenter les centrales électriques et ils ont trouvé que les émissions carbones générées durant le cycle de vie des pastilles de bois étaient bien supérieur à la moyenne des émissions carbones générées pour la production de l'électricité en Amérique. Pour l'instant le bois est très peu utilisé à Maurice pour la biomasse mais le budget prévoit quand même de rémunérer le *woody biomass* au même prix que la bagasse et le ministre a parlé même hier dans son discours d'importation de copeaux de bois. Donc l'intention est là et l'inquiétude est pertinente mais l'inquiétude est encore plus grande en ce qui concerne la canne à sucre. Une étude de 2019 de *Soil and More Impacts in Mauritius* a établi que la production de canne à sucre équivaut à 0,36 kilos de dioxyde de carbone pour chaque kilo de sucre produit et délivré.

Heureusement ils ont aussi trouvé que la combustion de bagasse avait un impact positif supérieur à l'impact négatif sur le climat de la production de sucre avec l'équivalent de 0,17 kilos de dioxyde de carbone émis par kilo de sucre produit et délivré.

Pour rappel, 75% de nos terres cultivables sont sous culture de canne et la production de sucre décline chaque année davantage ; elle ne représente d'ailleurs plus que 6 % du PIB. L'utilisation de la bagasse comme énergie de production est donc durable pour l'instant mais la canne ne peut pas être cultivée simplement pour être brûlée sinon ce ne serait plus le cas et sinon ce serait un non-sens total. La bagasse doit donc rester une ressource renouvelable dérivée de la production de sucre et non pas cultivée exclusivement pour être utilisée comme biocarburant indépendamment de la production de sucre. Cela signifierait donc que la bagasse comme biocarburant n'est pas une solution pour l'énergie redevable à Maurice sur le long terme puisque la production de sucre est en net déclin ; à moins que le ministère vienne nous dire comment il compte rehausser la production de sucre.

Et puis il y a cette nécessité qui a été mentionnée dans son discours hier, de préserver la superficie de 40,000 hectares, soit 3,2 millions de tonnes de canne à sucre qui

sonnaient comme une menace à peine voilée surtout quand on entend qu'on introduira ; je cite le ministre –

« Des variétés de canne à fibre plus élevées »

Le Renewable Energy Roadmap 2030 affirme que le ministère a reçu des offres pour la technologie à partir de biomasse qui impliquerait la combustion de toute une série de flore locale incluant des déchets organiques, l'eucalyptus, Arundo donax, *fatak* autrement dit, et même des copeaux de bois et eux, seront importés comme disait le ministre hier dans son discours.

Le ministère entend produire 100 MW d'énergie renouvelable à partir de biomasse d'ici 2030 et comme je disais tout à l'heure, le discours du budget fait mention du *woody biomass* et hier, le ministre parler des copeaux de bois importés mais aucune mention n'est faite du potentiel d'émission de carbone dans ce projet ni de sa durabilité. Il est urgent pour le pays de booster la production d'énergie renouvelable pour réduire notre dépendance aux énergies fossiles mais aussi pour potentiellement pouvoir diminuer le coût du prix de l'énergie qui pèse sur les consommateurs mais il est impératif de prendre en considération l'empreinte carbone dans tout le processus.

Quant à l'énergie solaire, elle produisait 94,7 MW en 2020 selon les chiffres du CEB et ce chiffre est supposé atteindre 371 MW en 2030 mais encore une fois, c'est dans l'implémentation des projets qu'il y a un problème. Est-ce que par exemple, installation de 2 MW de panneaux photovoltaïques à Tamarind Falls annoncée l'an dernier a été concrétisée ? Aujourd'hui ce budget vient annoncer l'installation de 32 MW à Tamarind Falls. Il faudrait savoir déjà où en sont les 2 MW ? Pourquoi les 32 MW ne sont pas prévus dans le plan initial dans le fameux *Energy Roadmap* ? Tout ce que nous savons, c'est qu'il y a que 25 MW de panneaux photovoltaïques qui ont été installés à mars 2023.

C'est noté à la page 233 des *Estimates*, mais on est encore bien loin des 371 mégawatts attendus d'ici 6 ans.

Donc, les résultats des projets ne sont clairement pas à la hauteur des engagements. Comment seront financés tous ces projets ? Est-ce que ce seront les organisations internationales, les gouvernements ? Le budget ne le précise pas et je ne vois rien non plus dans les estimations. Comment seront financés aussi tous les projets d'Eco Villages de la CEB mentionné à la section b(a)(11) de l'annexe ? Puisque nous le savons, les réserves du CEB sont à sec. Pour rappel, ces fonds ont littéralement été dilapidés. Le CEB avait des réserves de R 7,8 milliards en juin 2020, et fin 2022, le CEB a annoncé un déficit de 5 milliards.

Donc, comment parvenir à la transition énergétique avec cette mauvaise gouvernance ? Et comment aussi arriver à parvenir à la transition énergétique quand on voit le peu d'importance qui est donnée à la *Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency* (MARENA) ?

On apprend dans l'annexe, même pas dans le discours du budget du ministre, la fusion entre la MARENA et l'*Energy Efficiency Management Office* à la section B(6). Hier, le ministre a parlé d'une révision de l'*Energy Efficiency Act* de 2011 et de la MARENA Act de 2015 pour « une meilleure efficience en terme de gestion et de ressource humaine. »

On verra bien ce que cela donnera, mais il y a des signes avant-coureurs qui ne trompent pas. En effet, le CEO actuel de la MARENA ne semble pas être passé par un processus de sélection. On ne connaît d'ailleurs même pas ses qualifications dans le secteur de l'énergie. Donc, voilà comment est géré l'organisme qui est supposé de chapeauter la transition énergétique. Entre temps, tristement, la part d'énergie renouvelable dans le mix d'électricité a diminué. Oui, diminué puis qu'en 2013, la part d'énergie renouvelable dans le mix d'électricité était de 23.4%, et en 2002, il était de 17.4% selon les chiffres de la CEB, comme je l'ai dit.

Donc, en neuf ans, nous avons reculé, et le ministre nous dit hier qu'on va arriver à une part d'énergie renouvelable de 37.7% excluant la biomasse en 2025. Je l'ai réécouter trois fois. Donc, dans deux ans, on est supposé arriver à une part d'énergie renouvelable dans le mix de l'électricité de 37.7% excluant la biomasse. Donc, concrètement, j'aimerais bien savoir où est-ce qu'il trouvera les 20.5% supplémentaires en deux ans. Nous voudrions que ce soit possible. Nous sommes 100% en faveur des énergies renouvelables, mais au vu des chiffres, au vu des résultats, ce n'est clairement pas réaliste. Il faut être sérieux deux minutes.

Ce gouvernement se contente de venir de l'avant à chaque fois avec des annonces les unes les plus ambitieuses que les autres, mais l'implémentation ne suit pas malheureusement. Étant donné qu'il faut être réaliste, comme je viens de le dire, je regrette qu'il n'y ait pas un mot sur le *liquid natural gas* dans ce budget. Pourtant, dans les *Estimates*, à la page 285, dans ce qui établit la direction stratégique du ministère, il est prévu “*transition towards a cleaner source of energy and electricity production with the setting up of energy power plants*,” mais rien. Pas un mot dans le discours du ministre de l'Énergie ni dans celui du ministre des Finances.

Avec les résultats obtenus, malheureusement, comme je l'ai dit, nous n'atteindrons certainement pas l'objectif fixé. Le *liquid natural gas* devrait donc être une solution de transition pour éviter la catastrophe et soulager les consommateurs puis qu'il est évident que c'est avec une souveraineté énergétique que l'on pourra donner les moyens à notre économie de se régénérer étant donné que nous dépendons aujourd'hui majoritairement des importations en énergie.

En diminuant le prix de l'énergie dans le coût de production, il sera possible d'augmenter les salaires et le niveau de vie des mauriciens. Le gouvernement parle d'industries vertes depuis 2021, mais ce n'est qu'en augmentant notre capacité énergétique que l'on pourra augmenter le potentiel industriel et se donner les moyens de développer les secteurs de pointe et les industries vertes justement.

En parlant d'industries vertes, comme je viens de le dire, le budget de 2021 annonçait la création d'un nouveau pôle de croissance autour des industries vertes. Qu'est-ce qui a été fait ? Rien ! Est-ce qu'on a créé des emplois pour ça ? Non ! Est-ce que des formations ont été proposées pour ça ? Non plus ! Aucun nouveau pôle de croissance n'est proposé dans ce budget. Aucun nouveau pilier pour notre économie. C'est encore le secteur de l'immobilier qui va s'accroître et ce gouvernement continuera de vendre notre pays aux étrangers.

28% des biens ont été acquis par des étrangers cette année. Selon une étude de *market trends*, ce qui m'emmène à mon dernier point, *To Dare and To Care*, qu'est-ce que le gouvernement appelle protéger et surtout qui il intente protéger ?

Avec la flambée des prix, les jeunes professionnels peinent à avoir une vie décente et à acheter un bien. Pas étonnant qu'ils ne se sentent plus à leur place, et malheureusement, le gouvernement ne fait rien pour qu'ils le soient. Ce n'est certainement pas l'allocation de R 20,000 qui les retiendra. Soyons clair dessus.

C'est le plus grand signe d'échec de ce gouvernement, qu'autant de jeunes n'aient qu'une chose en tête, c'est de pouvoir immigrer, d'avoir un diplôme, pour ne pas revenir. C'est un fait, 75% des jeunes qui partent à l'extérieur ne reviennent pas. Je n'invente rien et combien de parents s'endettent pour pouvoir payer des études à leurs enfants à l'étranger en leur disant de ne pas revenir dans l'espoir qu'ils puissent avoir un avenir là-bas.

L'immigration, la fuite en avant de la jeunesse mauricienne est la preuve incontestable du mal qui ronge ce pays. Est-ce que cela inquiète le gouvernement ? Est-ce qu'ils cherchent une solution ? Est-ce qu'ils créent des emplois ? Est-ce qu'ils imposent

des salaires décents ? Est-ce qu'ils valorisent notre main-d'œuvre ? Pas du tout ! Au contraire, puisqu'ils continuent de permettre aux étrangers d'occuper des emplois qui sont supposés être occupés par les Mauriciens.

Nous n'avons rien contre la main-d'œuvre étrangère en soi, mais ce que fait ce gouvernement, c'est mettre en place un système qui dévalorise la main-d'œuvre locale et la fait fuir. Je dois partager mon inquiétude, non seulement face à l'absence de création d'emplois, comme je viens de le dire, mais surtout face à l'extrême libéralisation du marché du travail.

Dans l'annexe du budget, on note à la section B(1) toute une série de mesures pour faciliter l'accès à l'emploi pour les étrangers. Je vais en mentionner juste quelques-unes. Les critères sont revus pour l'*Occupational Permit*. L'exigence d'investissement initial pour les investisseurs et les travailleurs indépendants seront exemptés au moment de la délivrance des permis.

Au bout de 4 semaines, sans réponses du ministère du Travail, l'application pour un permit de travail sera considérée comme étant approuvée. Le ratio des travailleurs mauriciens par rapport aux travailleurs étrangers sera aboli pour certains secteurs. Le ministère du Travail mettra en place un nouveau cadre pour l'emploi des travailleurs domestiques étrangers. Les *Carers* étrangers pourront désormais rester pour une durée illimitée. Tout parti de gauche qui se respecte devrait insurger contre cela puisque cela signifie que notre système économique sera amené à la longue à fonctionner uniquement dans l'intérêt de ceux qui ont la capitale.

Je le redis, je n'ai rien contre l'emploi des travailleurs étrangers, mais on s'expose à un danger. C'est un fait. Beaucoup d'entrepreneurs m'ont partagé la difficulté de recruter de la main-d'œuvre mauricienne. À ce propos, j'ai lu une interview d'une entrepreneure dans un hebdomadaire la semaine dernière - d'une entrepreneure, oui, dans un hebdomadaire. L'article parlait justement de cette difficulté d'attraction et de rétention de la main d'œuvre mauricienne. J'aimerais cité qu'elle dit suite à une question sur la main-d'œuvre étrangère et l'exode de la main-d'œuvre mauricienne. Vous me dirais, M. le ministre, si cette entrepreneure, elle aussi, elle est une Marine Le Pen, comme vous venez de le dire. Je cite –

« La valorisation des produits locaux devrait s'accompagner de la valorisation de la main-d'œuvre locale et des compétences mauriciennes, et à toutes les postes. Aujourd'hui, nos meilleurs éléments quittent le pays et vont contribuer à la croissance des

entreprises et des économies étrangères. Je ne suis pas sûre que nous saisissions bien l'ampleur de ce phénomène de ses répercussions sur notre économie sur le long terme. »

Nous entendons bien l'alarme que sonne cette entrepreneure et ce budget n'offre rien à ces entreprises qui essaient de préserver l'emploi des Mauriciens.

Il faut aussi se questionner sur les motivations des familles qui choisissent de quitter le pays. Ce qui ressort de mes conversations avec le milieu ouvrier surtout, c'est le manque de perspective, le manque d'optimisme en l'avenir. Les Mauriciens n'ont plus confiance en l'avenir. Que fait ce gouvernement pour restaurer la confiance ? Nada ! Que fait le gouvernement pour obliger les employeurs à assurer un salaire décent, je dis bien décent, non pas un revenu minimum garanti aux employés ? Rien ! Et le ministre Gobin parle de budget socialiste.

Continuons dans ce que ce gouvernement appelle ‘justice sociale’. Donc, M. le ministre, vous me confirmerez, un étranger peut délocaliser son entreprise, venir s’installer à Maurice, bénéficier d’un taux d’imposition faible, utiliser nos ressources, employer des travailleurs étrangers pour un salaire minable et ainsi maximiser ses profits. Budget socialiste, vous dites ? Et qu'est-ce que le pays y gagne dedans ? Et vous avez le toupet de venir nous traiter d’antipatriotes, nous ?

*(Interruptions)*

Ah bon ? Venez m’expliquer qu'est-ce que le pays gagne dans un scénario comme ça ? Venez m’expliquer qu'est-ce que le pays gagne dedans ?

**An hon. Member:** *Enn timama!*

**Ms J. Bérenger:** *Nek dir oui, oui, oui !*

**An hon. Member:** *Enn timama!*

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Tout le monde devrait s’insurger contre cette grave dérive vers un modèle encore plus libéral qu'il ne l'était déjà. Et je suis choquée en entendant le ministre Obeegadoo dire que ce gouvernement est en train de faire ce que le MMM a voulu faire depuis des années. Cela ne fait que confirmer son éloignement des valeurs militantes puisque grâce à son soutien, grâce à sa complicité, ce gouvernement est en train de faire notre pays reculer en dilapidant nos terres auprès des étrangers, en libéralisant le marché du travail à l’extrême, en donnant aux étrangers les opportunités d’emploi qui devraient revenir aux Mauriciens. Mais quelle honte !

Oui, comme je l'ai mentionné, l'acquisition des biens aussi se libéralise davantage. On peut voir que les étrangers pourront acheter autre part que dans les *smart cities* et *PDS* etc. Ils pourront bénéficier dans ce que le ministre appelle les *sustainable city schemes* section A.11. et section 157 du discours du budget. J'espère d'ailleurs que le ministre viendra nous donner plus de détails dans son *summing up* sur ce *scheme*. Tout y est encore une fois pour faciliter l'acquisition de propriétés par les étrangers y compris les riches retraités qui viendront se reposer ou suivre des traitements médicaux. Pour les retraités, c'est la section B.17. (b) de l'annexe. Et là comme par hasard, le *blue-eyed boy* du MSM a investi à Réduit dans les résidences de luxe pour seniors. Quel drôle de coïncidence !

Donc, après avoir fait écraser les maisons de fortune de plusieurs familles, les mettant à la rue et dans le froid en plein confinement, voilà que le même ministre arrache la terre qui a été allouée au centre culturel pour la donner au *blue-eyed boy* du jour. Oui, parce que même si le ministre Obeegadoo a usé de tous les subterfuges possibles pour ne pas répondre à la question du Leader de l'opposition, il est connu de tous que ce monsieur bénéficie d'un traitement de faveur auprès du gouvernement et qu'il vise ces terres pour son nouveau projet de retraite.

Ce gouvernement nous ramène à des périodes sombres. Emmanuel Anquetil, dont le nom a été donné au bâtiment que ce gouvernement veut détruire, avait lutté pour l'émancipation des travailleurs. C'est d'ailleurs quelque part aujourd'hui tout un symbole que le bâtiment qui porte son nom soit mis à terre par ce gouvernement.

Aujourd'hui, à travers les mesures annoncées dans ce budget, ce gouvernement veut nous faire retourner un modèle d'avant l'indépendance. La jeunesse ne doit pas se laisser aveugler par quelques billets mais nous l'invitons à se mobiliser parce que ce gouvernement les prive de leurs opportunités d'emploi et les expose à des salaires bas. C'est sa façon de *care* pour notre jeunesse apparemment.

Ce gouvernement réadapte et remet d'actualité un modèle économique injuste et que nos tribuns ont combattu. Un modèle injuste basé sur la main-d'œuvre bon marché et l'exploitation des plus vulnérables. Au final, le titre 'Oser et Protéger' ne peut susciter que de la colère. Ce n'est certainement pas les plus vulnérables que ce budget est en train de protéger. Il donne quelques miettes aux plus vulnérables mais en réalité, la roupie continuera de déprécier et le coût de la vie continuera d'augmenter au vu du montant de 61.5 milliards que ce gouvernement prévoit de récolter à travers la TVA et au vu de l'inflation anticipée de 9 %.

Que ce soit à travers la taxe dite progressive mais qui en réalité ne l'est pas puisque celui qui a un salaire cinq fois supérieur à un autre ne paye pas cinq fois plus de taxes et que les hauts revenus ont vu la taxe qui leur a été imposée descendre à un taux de 20 % ou que ce soit à travers l'abolition du *Solidarity Levy* qui taxait les revenus de plus de 3 millions ou que ce soit à travers la libéralisation du marché de l'emploi, ce sont les nantis, les déjà bien lotis que ce gouvernement est en train de protéger et d'aider. Les fortunés paieront moins de taxes alors que la classe moyenne et la classe inférieure porteront tout le fardeau de l'inflation. Ce socialisme à la Padayachy n'est pas un socialisme du tout. Logiquement, malheureusement, l'exode du talent ne fera que continuer alors que les ressources humaines ou plutôt les richesses humaines de notre pays sont notre plus grand atout.

Je finirai donc en citant cette expression latine :

« *Verba volant, scripta manent* ».

Les paroles s'envolent, les écrits restent. Les belles paroles de ce budget et des budgets précédents peuvent s'envoler mais les écrits restent et resteront pour que notre postérité ait l'occasion de voir ce qu'il ne faut absolument pas faire.

Merci pour votre attention.

**Mr Speaker:** Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(7.20 p.m.)

**Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At the very outset allow me to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Renganaden Padayachy for presenting his fourth budget. In 2020/2021 the title of the budget was: 'Our New Normal'; 2021/2022: 'Better Together'; 2022/2023: 'With the People and for the People'; 2023/2024: 'To Dare and to Care' – *Oser et Protéger*. This budget hopes to build on the foundation laid in the previous budgets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the massive slowdown globally caused by COVID-19 pandemic and a war which is still ongoing, our economy is therefore on the right track despite some doomsayers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to go back in time and remind the House once again that the people have been at the heart of this Government. Their well-being, their safety have been the priority of this Government, of this Prime Minister. The House and the country

will remember and should remember that during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is this Government which ensured that no one goes to bed hungry, from providing food packs to being the pensions to our elderly during the lockdown period.

In its continuous commitment to ensure food security and nutritional security, the Government has maintained or increased subsidies on rice, gas, bread amongst others and this should be our record, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister Maneesh Gobin mentioned it that MSM has been since 40 years prioritising its people. It is in our DNA, be it in 1982 when hon. Paul Bérenger wanted to remove subsidies *in toto* – you remember that, *petite piqûre de rappel*. And let me remind the House that for the past years we have continuously been walking the talk with the measures or policies being people-centric as we, on this side, have always believed in addressing the global challenges as one voice in unity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 02 March 2022, the Parliament welcomed the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the National Youth Parliament. The National Youth Parliament is a unique educational programme which brings together young persons to discuss issues of national and international importance. Among them, there were some youngsters, just to name a few of them: Alyssa, Ruddy Bhujun, Akash Seetaram, Yovesh Gunnoo, Vaishali, Ziaad Hossen, Ramnawak and Nikhil as well who were present here.

These youngsters, Mr Speaker, Sir, they aspire to walk into our shoes. They see us as their inspirations, whether it is Members on the opposite side or Members on the Government side. Those youngsters, together, with the youth who are going for their General Papers, who are at the college, who are following the debates right now, are attentively listening to what is being said in the House, and I must admit that since yesterday, we have been witnessing all types, all forms of debates and especially after the advent of being online, being on camera.

The hon. Member mentioned it that we need to have some ability to quote him – “that ability to photoshop” but I guess, for Members on the opposite side, the ability to act in front of a camera – I do not know whether the Labour Party offers a training for that, like how to act, and I must say that among the forms of debates that we have been listening to, there was one with *l'hystérie* and I was wondering whether the Minister Maneesh Gobin could bring forward something when we talk about *sansitiv*, you know, some people need to have that. I think this should be introduced as a medicine. I do not know whether the hon. Dr. Jagutpal can consider that because instead of debating about ideas, those people were debating about the person and they were violent as well.

I was quite shocked and trust me, it is my very first time that we are here in this Parliament, it is our fourth budget speech that we are participating in and a debate and a budget speech are all about ideas, it is all about discussing. It is all about bringing our humble contribution towards what has been proposed by the Minister of Finance. So, there were Members of the opposite side, hon. Uteem, who said it: yes, we were “*tap latab*” or Members of the Labour Party also were saying that we were “*tap latab*”. So, I was wondering whether they did better than us. So, I went to check. In 2006, the Appropriation (2006-2007) Bill where the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Rama Sithanen, measure item 215 –

“This year, the tariff cuts will concern some sixty percent of tariff lines. We are bringing down the top tariff rates [...] These will concern mainly school bags...”

And listen to this. What were they “*taping latab on*”? They were “*tap latab*” on –

“...cosmetics and make-up; soap and shampoo...”

So, that was the priority in 2006. We were eating cosmetics, okay! No, I understand because some people need to invest in ‘gel’ because when they come here, *le beau gosse*, he needs to look good on the TV, he needs to be the actor. So, you need to remove it! So, that is why the priority at that point in time was “cosmetics and make-up” as some say it so well!

Okay, so the next year now. In 2011, that was the Labour and PMSD Government, okay? Measure item 379, so the then Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, I quote, he says –

“I am also abolishing the 15 percent duty on perfumes, cosmetics, shavers, hair removing appliances, hair clips, shampoo and other preparations for hair.”

No! Seriously? *En 2011*, who were eating that? And you have the *toupe* to say *popilasion pa pe arriv zwen le de bout? Seve pena lor latet pe tir* tax on hair things? Come on!

(*Interruptions*)

**An hon. Member:** *Pa bizin tir ....*

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** No! Come on! And then, they come to give us lessons.

(*Interruptions*)

During the debates also, as I said, because the youngsters are following us and they need to know, they need to understand because just like them, we are here as young Members.

We are millennials sitting here. I will come to that point later on, I will explain why it is important for us to set the record straight.

The second one, we have an amnesic memory on the other side. Some Members on the opposite side *ont des propos sélectifs*. I saw a post on my Instagram which I appreciated because I am very active on social media as well. So, at the end of the day, some Members of the Parliament are like – ‘*ariv seki ariv, bizin zis desan gouvernman la*’. That is their aim and that is their mission.

So, on the 2 June, the hon. Member who spoke right before me, hon. Joanna Bérenger, published on Instagram –

“*Ankor enn fwa, mo not avek regre ki lor tou bann plato kot pou diskit bann mezir ki pou anons bann bidze, pena fam ki reprezante. Sof pou Radio One, bravo a zot, pourtan bann fam otan konserne ki bann zom. Mwena dan mo latet plizir fam zournalist ki bien konpetan.*”

Okay, not a single word today in her speech about women *et pourtant* ...

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Hey li....

(*Interruptions*)

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** *Et pourtant! Et pourtant* she was defending that on social media. *Pourquoi?* Because *la jeunesse se trouve* on social media, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, you need to look like *prétendance*, ‘*moi* I am fighting pour *la jeunesse*’, ‘*moi* I am fighting pour *la femme*’, mais for Hansard...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Quiet there!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** ...in the Parliament not a single word for those women who are not invited on the *plateau*.

**An hon. Member:** Ah!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Ah! *Et zot ena toupe vinn donn nou leson ! Mais quelle honte*, Mr Speaker, Sir!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** *Gouvernman pa konserne la ?*

**Mr Speaker:** Order there!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** The second post now...

**Mr Speaker:** You do not have the right to reply!

(*Interruptions*)

**Ms J. Bérenger:** *Gouvernman pa...*

**Mr Speaker:** You do not! Please withdraw from the Chamber!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** The second point...

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Withdraw from the Chamber!

**An. hon Member:** *Non laisse li koze !*

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Let me move on! Let me move on! The second point, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the same day, a few hours later, she posted another one –

“*Kiete sa? Eski li pe insinie...*”

She posted a picture of Ramesh Basant Roi who, on Défi Media said –

“L’économie mauricienne est dans un état de ménopause.”

And, I quote what she wrote –

“*Kiete sa? Eski li pe insinie ki enn fam menopoz li pa bon ou bien li nepli servi nanye ?*”

I was really respecting those comments because I think together we can fight for the cause of women but not a single word in this august Assembly. Why? Why are you only talking to us for the budgetary measures but you do not *tire la sonnette d’alarme* as you do? What are you doing outside *juste pour la galerie, pour* the youth who are following you on social media should be done same here, in this august Assembly! Why did you not raise the voice when hon. Anquetil was going too far in her arguments towards the hon. Minister of Gender? This should be inside and outside the Parliament as well!

**Ms Anquetil:** Combien des fois tu as critiqué Kalpana ?

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Mr Speaker, Sir!

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** *Tap latab* for cosmetics!

**Mr Toussaint:** *Li pan deranz twa kan to ti koze!*

(*Interruptions*)

**Ms Anquetil:** Elle m'a dérangé !

**Mr Speaker:** I have already ordered hon. Ms Bérenger out.

**Ms J. Bérenger:** I am leaving!

**Mr Speaker:** I am ordering you out if you continue!

**An hon. Member:** But there will be no quorum then!

(*Interruptions*)

**An hon. Member:** *To tifer walk out mem!*

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** My time is running. Can I continue, Mr Speaker, Sir? Because I have only like 30 minutes to sum up what I have to say.

**Mr Speaker:** Go ahead!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** *Bien sûr*, because we learn here, we come here. At one point in time, I could feel that I was in a lecture room when each and every time hon. Shakeel Mohamed comes in this august Assembly and he is like ‘why should we compare what we did before?’ ‘Why should we do that?’ ‘No, you need to change it. We need to change the rhetoric and everything.’ And he gives us lessons and you know what? He accuses us! At one point in time, I am sure that my backbencher friends say ‘are we doing something wrong if we are congratulating the Minister of Finance for presenting the Budget?’ I think it is quite normal.

So, what I did, I went to check what he did because he has that principle. You wear the gel, you come as a *beau gosse*, as an actor and you just do the acting *pour bien sûr, la caméra* but, *au fond* there is nothing. And he is not here. He chooses not to be present here. *Bien sûr, par la courtoisie*, I think that it is very important that an hon. Member, being a seasoned politician, he should have been here listening to all the debates as well. But we can count how many times he is present. If he is around, please ask him to come in because I have a message for him.

*Alors*, let me just tell you. *En 2009*, in the Appropriation Bill, I was wondering whether he did the same thing.

He says *nou kass disik*. He says that we are always saying good things about our Prime Minister; we are always saying good things about the Minister of Finance. I do not know whether we should have been applauding his former Prime Minister? I do not know. When I went to read his speech, let me just quote three of them which are very interesting

- for Hansard, I think, it is important, and for those who are following us right now, it is very important. He says in the Appropriation Bill 2009, and I quote –

“In the light of all these backdrops, when I was here to listen to the Budget Speech of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, I was very, very pleased.”

“I was very, very pleased,” let me just take this British accent.

“Not surprised, but pleased – to hear that it had nothing to do with an electoral Budget. When I listened to him, there was one saying which came to my mind, and it is the following: “When something is not broken, why change it?” In other words, the Budget of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister was nothing, but a continuity of what had started in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 and, then, it culminates to this year.”

He further goes on to say, and I quote –

“But us, in Mauritius, through the subtle, intelligent and sometimes even bold initiatives of this Government, through the leadership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, and excellent work of our Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Empowerment, we have had not to suffer as much.”

*Bizarre!* I do not know whether he wrote it. He knew what he was reading at that point in time because he is asking us not to congratulate our Minister of Finance and not to congratulate our Prime Minister.

The next year, in 2010, – I said maybe that is one where he did that – it is the same rhetoric. You know what? He uses the same dialogue that he used today, that he has the right to criticise. So, he says, and I quote –

“It is to criticise. I do not ascribe to this philosophy. The rule of the game [which he needs to understand as he has been giving us lessons] is not for the Opposition to start just by criticising because what they have done, Mr Speaker, Sir, is nothing less, but criticising.”

What has he been doing today? He has been yelling and screaming. He has been criticising. From the start till the end of his speech, he has been criticising. Again, do not do what I say. Just look at me; listen to me and follow what I am saying, but do not do what I am doing. He goes further and says that –

“What I believe a responsible Opposition should do is to recognise that in 2005 hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam became Prime Minister. And why did he become

Prime Minister? It is because the people of this country voted for him to be the leader of the alliance to lead us forward.”

But there were the ones who came forward with a Motion of No Confidence in this Government, saying that we have *élections truquées*, etc. while he was the one. He further goes on to, *bien sûr, flattez* hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam as well.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, *on ne refait pas l'histoire*, we have in front of us an alliance *espoir ou désespoir*. Let me just quote something, *en 1983*, in their *bilan and programme électoral*, that was for the MMM Party. Today, we are sitting here, we see they are all together with just one movement: to pull this Government down. This is their main aim and main objective. This is the only objective that they have right now. In their *bilan and programme du MMM*...

**Mr Speaker:** Let me interrupt you there. I am naming hon. Ms Bérenger! Continue!

**Ms J. Bérenger:** Je suis en train de partir !

**Mr Speaker:** Continue!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** In their *bilan and programme du MMM* dated 1983, *Unité, Vérité* - this is what the youngsters listening to us should understand that what you see is not always what is true. You know what they wrote? *À la page 2, thème l'Héritage*, and I quote –

*« Quand les ministres de Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam vident finalement les lieux le 14 juin 1982, après 23 ans de pouvoir sans interruption, que laissent-ils derrière eux ? Ils lèguent au MMM une économie anémie par deux dévaluations successives »*

Further down, it says –

*« Nous avons hérité de la pire situation économique imaginable. En 1976, quand le MMM frôle le pouvoir, l'île Maurice sort à peine du boom sucrier. »*

Today, they are sitting together as one *alliance*. They are planning to be in the government and they will present the budget together. In 1983, *ti pe dire ‘une économie anémie.’* *On ne refait pas l'histoire*, *M. le président*. Listening to some of them, just to get power, they have accepted *pou bwar lizol*.

*Alors, oser*, dare, Mr Speaker, Sir, for too long we have been ignoring the role of the youngsters in our country. But this regime has dared to trust the youth. For too long,

we have associated *la jeunesse de ce pays avec la dérive*. Yesterday, I was appalled to learn that hon. Uteem, during an interview, mentioned that *R 5,000 pour la jeunesse pour fin mas*. No, hon. Uteem, that was shocking and sad. *Et vous avez le toupet, et quelle honte* to come here and give us lessons!

**Mr Uteem:** *Pas mwa ki'nn dir sa!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Uteem:** *...kin dir sa!*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! You don't have the right to do that! Order! Quiet! Quiet! Quiet! Continue!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Sad to see that the MMM does not respect the youth of this country. Mr Speaker, Sir, the narrative should change and it is changing under the leadership and the vision of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, budgets are not just an accounting exercise. *Un budget national s'avère être un outil par lequel le gouvernement met sa politique en action concrète. Le budget national est une planification pour l'avenir.*

The economic agenda for achieving our vision has been to facilitate numerous opportunities for our citizens, prioritising our youth so they can fulfil their ambitions and aspirations. *La jeunesse doit être considérée comme un atout. Il faut tout l'offrir, l'encadrement nécessaire durant cette phase critique de sa vie et de la faire comprendre qu'elle a la possibilité de prendre des bonnes décisions.*

Engaging the youth to build his or her future, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is where these Rs20,000 comes as a saviour to the family and to the youngster, who wants to help himself in setting up business, in buying a laptop, in paying for the courses, for a training or anything and helping their families as well. *La jeunesse est au cœur même du budget.* This shows that the engagement and the trust, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the Prime Minister towards the youth of this country.

My hon. colleague Ittoo delivered a beautiful speech, highlighting the brain drain and the *exode*. But today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about the Millennials and the Gen Z. What the Millennials underwent prior to 2014? *Ras dipin* from *labous zanfan*; when you are still studying, you have to take a loan and be indebted and you have to pay that loan again; National Residential Property Tax - pay for your property if you owned one at that period of time. But what will the Gen Z - this is the new generation - have as

facility right now? Free university, free transport, no municipal tax, Rs20,000 for the independence allowance - start a business, invest in a start-up, save or help your parents.

On page 65, in Budget 2022-2023, the home ownership, Mr Speaker, Sir, mentions that there is going to be more job for our people, enabling easy access to property. In Item 385, for many Mauritians owning a home is a life goal, the Government will continue to help to make it a reality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to take a moment to reflect as a strong, stable government that we have providing for the past few years, together with our partners of the alliance to pave the way for our youth.

I will now turn to the issue of price of petroleum products and special effort undertaken by the Government in this Budget to bring about a reduction in the price of Mogas, that is, *l'essence*. As we are all aware, the Price Equalisation Account for petroleum products, both diesel and Mogas, has been in deficit for over 18 months now because of the constant increase in prices on the international market, whereas the increases in price in Mauritius, when they have been implemented, have been capped at a maximum of 10% only as per the existing regulations.

In line with the general philosophy of this budget, the Minister of Finance has taken the initiative to transfer funds, that is, Rs275 m. to STC and subsequently, amended the regulations under the Consumer Protection Act to allow the STC to credit the PSA in order to absorb the existing deficit in the Price Stabilisation Account of Mogas. Mr Speaker, Sir, *il faut rendre à Caesar ce qui appartient à Caesar*. The decrease in price of Mogas would not have been possible without a deliberate policy decision by the Minister. And I have just explained above that he has gone extra miles putting the people first.

Mr Speaker, Sir, although I am a young Member of the Parliament, I still remember how on several occasions in the past when faced with some kind of difficult global economic environment, the Minister of Finance previously had recourse to such voluntary as triple shocks and global paradigms change to exhort people to *ser ceinture, manz manioc, patat*. Today we stand together. We can be proud to congratulate our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for having presented a socialist budget guided by a philosophy of support to the purchasing power of people, especially those most vulnerable to consequence of difficult global economic environment.

Let us go and have a look at some of the specifics in the budget because there are some real gems out there. This national led Government, one of the very first things that we did, is we have been standing behind each and every woman of Mauritius, empowering

the women economically. One laudable action and much awaited measure especially asked by the Gender Links on page 8 item 61 is –

“to promote gender equality at all levels, listed companies shall have a minimum of 25 percent of women on their boards.”

We have dared, Mr Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately, we live in a country where we imperatively have to set the quota system to get women a seat at the table, something which this Government has always recognised by giving the women its due.

Entrepreneurship is vital for a country’s economic development. This Government has taken a number of measures for start-ups and they have borne results. This budget also makes it easier for our smaller businesses, from small to medium size enterprise, item 53 page 6. The Government will continue to support our local entrepreneurs as they grow –

“(a) The maximum grant provided under the SME Support Scheme will be increased from Rs 200,000 to Rs 250,000;”

The DBM, I note, with appreciation has a great role to do in supporting the woman entrepreneur.

Let’s talk about the plight of the less well-off Mauritian children, what is happening to them and the support they are getting. It is right that the Government should support the most vulnerable in our community and never ever has any other Government come forward with such bold measures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I proudly rise as a representative of my Constituency No. 4 Port Louis North and Long Mountain, keeping my Constituency as backdrop, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall further elaborate the budgetary measures as announced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the priority of this Government, the priority of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has been the welfare of its people for an inclusive society, reason why the *Prime à L’emploi* scheme will be extended to persons with disabilities. The Budget 2023-2024 is clearly setting the vision of our Prime Minister to build a Mauritius *moderne, juste et équitable* for our future generations.

This Government will continue to provide its unflinching support to students with Special Education Needs. There is also the provision for Grant in Aid in SEN Schools which have been increased by 23% to Rs191 m.

Hence, the household earning Rs10,500 monthly benefits from support under SRM, under item 432, the Minister of Finance is increasing the threshold for eligibility

under the Social Register of Mauritius. We welcome, in my constituency, the Crèche Allowance for SRM beneficiaries which would be increased from Rs2,000 to Rs3,000. The monthly incontinence allowance of Rs1,800 will be extended to patients suffering from cancer of prostate, cancer of bladder and Alzheimer's and stroke as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will here like to set on record my deepest appreciation and gratitude towards the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Minister of Finance and especially, the Minister of Health and Wellness, hon. Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal for what he has been doing for the children who have to go abroad for the operations. He himself personally has met some children out there and I know that he has been helping people and I am sure that the association *Enn rev enn sourir* would appreciate the measure that has been brought to this House. A priority for this Government is to build a more productive and competitive economy that supports job and higher incomes as well.

Coming to my constituency, being mindful of my time as well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Finance. I have always been saying it repeatedly that my constituency has been the victim of climate change, from Creve Coeur to Congomah to Les Mariannes, it's a mountainous region. Vallée des Prêtres also has been subject to landslide or to flooding as well. So, consideration has been given in this budget for those areas and I am very grateful to the Minister of Finance for the projects that have been set up in my constituency.

Now, as we always say the Prime Minister is very much for sports, we want a healthy nation and we welcome, of course, the construction of 40 new mini soccer pitches among which we have for my constituency as well. We have the upgrading of 34 football grounds, one in Long Mountain, 40 new mini soccer pitches in St Croix and La Cure as well.

The rehabilitation of the NHDC Housing Estates and here I would rightly say that those people, those NHDC, there are two NHDC complexes that really need renovation and I would appeal to the Minister of Finance to consider both of them. There is NHDC of Vallée des Prêtres and NHDC of La Cure as well, which badly need refurbishment, renovation, painting works to give it back again its honour. Thank you, hon. Minister of Finance.

I will now like to conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Rapidly!

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** Rapidly! Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2023/2024 paints a picture of positivity and success for Mauritius and our economy. It lays a solid framework for future; an inclusive society for everyone. We, as a nation have emerged from COVID-19 more united. The Prime Minister has made its people its strength. One million tourists – we made it happen. It happened, we made it. The success of the industrial policy and strategic plan implementation has happened. Why? Because we trust our people, we trust our youth and we know that our people and our youth are actually our strength and as a Government together with our partners, we are striving for our population.

This is the spirit of Mauritians, together as one people and as one nation, we shall overcome all obstacles. If I have only one word to say about this budget, it's 'empathy'. I said it at the beginning. Budget is not only about balance sheet, money and economy and everything but it's about empathy, it's about putting your people first and supporting your people. I thank you for your kind attention. I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I will suspend the sitting for some minutes.

*At 7.52 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 8.08 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mr Speaker:** Please remain seated and be seated!

Hon. Members, I named the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger under Standing Order 49(1) for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

#### **MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)**

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal, Ms Joanna. Bérenger, I beg, under Standing Order 17(3) to take the time of the House for urgent business.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.**

*The motion was, on question put, agreed to.*

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move, under Standing Order 29(1), to present a motion without notice.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.**

*The motion was, on question put, agreed to.*

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, I beg to move that the hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next three Sittings.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.**

*The motion was, on question put, agreed to.*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

(8.10 p.m.)

**Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):**  
Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I have listened to many orators on the other side of the House and rightly so and with tradition, they have defended and supported the measures as has been mentioned by the hon. Minister of Finance in his budget.

However, the previous speaker before me seemed to have taken a very keen interest in beauty products and hair gels of MPs and these have seemed to have been her level of comparison of previous budget measures. I was in fact expecting her famous chorus – *bel bel kado* that the Minister of Finance has proposed but bear in mind, nothing shocks me more from somebody who qualified her own leader as ‘Pinocchio’ to have it removed quicker than light once she had been given a ticket for the Electoral Campaign in 2019.

**Mrs Luchmun Roy:** You can do better than that.

**Mr Speaker:** No reply!

**Dr. Aumeer:** Mr Speaker Sir, ...

**Mr Speaker:** Nobody interrupts a Member!

**Dr. Aumeer:** Mr Speaker Sir, thank you. It has come to the time of the year when there are a lot of hypes and expectations and anticipations; sometimes with disillusionment to what the budget has in store for most of the population and the business community. This year is no exception because budget periods are like Christmas times except that in the British eyes, it is synonymous to mistletoe and wine and here, our budget goodies are like wrap with more inflation and more uncontrolled depreciation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, looking at the three last budgets and the current one from a global approach, it seems to me that there are two countries in one country; one for the rich who can benefit from the current set of policies, particularly the new fiscal plan and the

weakening of the currency and another one country where people are struggling to make ends meet. The majority of the people and the population find themselves in the poor buckets and the gap between the rich and the poor keeps increasing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the rich bucket also includes all those who participate in illicit economies, have high concentration of land ownership and control in various sectors of the economy and those who have direct access to foreign exchange and it makes a killing on the exchange rates.

M. le président, je me demande comment le grand argentier va financer son chapelet de projets sociaux, les projets de rénovation dans tous les villages et villes et quartiers de Maurice, cités avec une certaine appétence au détriment de vraies explications sur les vraies fondamentaux macroéconomiques comme le taux de l'inflation et le sort de la Roupie n'est aussi aucune indication comment augmenter la productivité, maillon important pour une économie saine.

M. le président, nous avons assisté à une série de mesures que le gouvernement mettra en place avec des incitations financières, budgétaires spécifique pour cibler des groupes spécifiques de la population allant des jeunes de 18 ans aux retraités. M. le président, ce n'est pas à coup de feu d'artifices ou d'annonces publiques tonitruantes que ce budget va insuffler la confiance aux acteurs puissants de cette économie toujours fragile.

Je n'ai aucune doute que les effets de beaucoup de ces mesures seraient de courte durée.

M. le président, le ministre des Finances a opté pour une approche économique plaçant en premier ligne ceux se trouvant au bas de l'échelle sociale avec une approche strictement allocation financière à tout niveau, et très regrettablement sans accompagnement de développement, de formation et d'accès à des institutions techniques. La gestion des déchets, l'agriculture, le numérique, le secteur manufacturier ont été complètement minimisés et auraient dû avoir plus de considération.

M. le président, les secteurs traditionnels que ce soit le tourisme ou l'industrie manufacturière auraient dû dans ce budget avoir des moyens beaucoup plus fort, de se reformer, de se diversifier en termes de produit de marché. Il est aussi regrettable que le budget ne propose aucune structure pour attirer les investisseurs directs étrangers notamment dans les secteurs émergeants tels que l'économie bleue ou la biotechnologie.

M. le président, parents très pauvres sont complètement mis à côté dans ce budget et le service civil. Il n'y a aucune mesure pour éliminer les coulis d'engoulement, d'étranglement et les retards dans la fonction publique, mais surtout rien pour améliorer le fonctionnement suite au rapport critique et acerbe du rapport de l'audit.

M. le président, je m'adresse maintenant concernant le problème de main d'œuvre. La pénurie de main d'œuvre dans le secteur privé est très problématique. Que ce soit dans le tourisme, que ce soit dans le secteur manufacturier, mais on voit quand même les jeunes qui partent travailler sur les croisières. Il y a quelque part un *mismatch*, un problème. Aujourd'hui, tous les secteurs économiques et la solution réside malheureusement dans le recours à la main d'œuvre étrangère. C'est un sujet très sensible auquel le gouvernement aurait dû s'adresser dans ce budget et ainsi porter espoir à tous ces entreprises qui se démènent pour avoir une main d'œuvre qualifiée. Il est clair que le Gouvernement a relégué ce problème et d'autres priorités économiques au second plan.

M. le président, les personnes âgées représentent environ 18% de la population. C'est un bon basin électoral dans lequel le gouvernement compte puiser en vue de prochaines échéances. On se demande jusqu'où ce budget ira et les réserves des fonds spéciaux seront exploités comme un instrument politique sachant que la promesse de R 13,500 comme pension universelle reste un appât très important pour les prochains mois.

M. le président, l'allocation supplémentaire que ce soit pour les retraités, les personnes à faible revenu, c'est-à-dire le revenu minimum garanti de R 15,000 mensuellement. L'allocation des ménages ne sera pas suffisante à long terme par mois pour avoir une vie décente suite à un taux d'inflation très élevé et la dépréciation de la roupie qui continue. Il est d'une notoriété publique que la majorité de nos importations des denrées alimentaires se font en dollar ou en euro. Il ne faut pas beaucoup de réflexion pour comprendre qu'une roupie faible ne pourra pas se mesurer à cette taux d'échange et le plus dur sera que la vie des Mauriciens, des consommateurs sera rendu encore plus difficile dans les jours à venir ou dans les mois à venir. Les cadis continueront à se désemplir.

M. le président, bien que je ne suis pas un expert en finance, je comprends la mathématique des chiffres. Une dette publique brute de R 516 milliards qui a augmenté de près de R 278 milliards depuis 2014, l'année où le MSM a pris le pouvoir est de R 198 milliards depuis 2019 depuis que ce gouvernement est dirigé par cet actuel Premier ministre. Une dette astronomique ! R 80 milliards donnés au MIC sans aucune transparence, couplé à une subvention de R 60 milliards donnés au gouvernement par la Banque de Maurice. Pire, le FMI qui ordonne dans son dernier bulletin de 2021 et met

pression sur la Banque de Maurice pour qu'elle retire ces R 60 milliards de son bilan et qui a eu une conséquence l'imprimante des billets. On a imprimé des billets pour permettre l'amortissement.

M. le président, un total de R 140 milliards de la Banque de Maurice, comme je viens de le mentionner, à ceux qui frotte le bon côté du gouvernement et en retour, cette population doit souffrir en conséquence une fois encore de la dépréciation et de l'inflation.

M. le président, un mot sur la dépréciation, il a été rappelé que pendant le gouvernement dirigé par le Parti travailliste de 2005 à 2014, qui a également dû faire face à une récession économique mondiale en raison de l'effondrement des grandes banques internationales. Les banques à Maurice ont connu une dépréciation de la roupie de seulement 12%, et ce gouvernement du MSM, depuis son arrivée au pouvoir, 42% de dépréciation d'un règne de 9 ans. C'est formidable !

M. le président, sur l'inflation, on a eu des grandes discussions entre mon ami, Shakeel Mohamed et le ministre des Finances sur la définition de l'inflation. Pour moi, c'est simple. Le pouvoir d'achat a complètement diminué pour les Mauriciens. Revenons sur ce qu'était le taux d'inflation au 31 décembre 2014, un taux d'à peine 3% sur une période d'une année. Aujourd'hui, tous les experts financier s'accordent à dire que le taux d'inflation s'avoisinera dans les 10%, même si le grand argentier nous dit que ce sera inférieure.

M. le président, il ne faut pas oublier la somme amassée grâce aux contributions de la CSG depuis 2020. L'augmentation de la collecte d'impôt passe de R 107 milliards en 2021 à R 161 milliards en 2022/2023. Les fonds spéciaux avec R 34 milliards, le décaissement de la caisse de la CEB de Rs 33.6 milliards transférés à la *Consolidated Fund* avec pour une conséquence globale, une augmentation des tarifs d'électricité, car la CEB ne pourra plus payer le diesel à un prix préférentiel. Maintenant, la CEB a un déficit de R 5 milliards.

M. le président, cette largesse, à laquelle nous assistons, est en fait de l'argent pris aux consommateurs par le biais de divers prélèvements et taxes au cours des deux dernières années et qui le rend maintenant au peuple, mais beaucoup moins. Les preuves sont quand on regarde les chiffres alloués à l'allocation sociale et l'augmentation sociale - Rs 11 milliards pour ce budget. En bref, on prend *bef pu donn disef* et comme avait dit le ministre de l'Utilité publiques, ce n'est même pas la coque. L'impôt progressif sur le revenu ou les économies de haute gamme seront plafonnés à 20% sans *solidarity tax*, même pas sur les *dividends*, ce que j'appellerais quelque part un revirement de Robin

Hood et de Robin des Bois. Le coffre de guerre de ce gouvernement, j'en suis sûr, est très, très sain, si vient le temps des élections.

M. le président, ce budget se résume à une illusion d'argent avec un manque total de viabilité, de responsabilité financière. Le prix du Mogas a baissé par R 5, qui fait une approximatif de 7%. Tandis que le prix du *brunt* a baissé par 42%. Ici le *Price Stabilisation Committee*, mois après mois, même s'il y a eu des grèves par un membre de la société civile, on n'a même pas bougé pour baisser le prix. Ce n'est que par miracle, vendredi dernier, que le prix du Mogas baisse et ça aussi, après que ces dettes soient épongées par un simple écrit au qui dit que les dettes de la STC seront épongées par le gouvernement. Comparant le prix actuel du *brunt*, le prix au litre du pétrole aurait dû être R 59 selon les experts en la matière. Il faut se demander quel aurait été le prix du Mogas si on avait continué avec Mangalore et on n'avait pas trop osé comme je dirais et annulé le contrat qu'il y en avait.

M. le président, un mot sur l'*Independence Scheme*. Il n'y a aucun doute que toute allocation supplémentaire est une aubaine pour toute personne éligible à ce régime particulier, mais il ne faut pas se laisser berner que ce court spécifiquement ciblé de la population, c'est-à-dire ceux qui ont eu leur dix-huitième anniversaire en 2023, pourraient également être étiquetés comme les nouveaux votants pour les prochaines élections.

Et ils ne doivent pas être attirés que leurs besoins financiers soient subitement devenus une priorité absolue du gouvernement. Pourquoi maintenant ? Pourquoi pas à la 50<sup>e</sup> anniversaire ? En fait, leurs votes sont la principale priorité pour les prochaines élections générales. Heureusement, la plupart d'entre eux se rendent compte du stratège. Le plus grand cadeau que ce gouvernement ne pourra jamais égaler R 20 000, R 40 000, R 60 000, R 80 000, c'est ce que le Parti Travailliste a donné aux jeunes. Il leur a donné le droit de vote universel à l'âge de 18 ans par le père de la nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, leader du Parti Travailliste. Et il est intéressant de noter que ce droit a maintenant été nié pas plus tard que deux semaines de cela en renvoyant les élections des villes et des villages. Il aurait été plus sage au moins de leur donner ce cadeau déguisé en tranches pour une dépense plus judicieuse.

M. le président, j'aborderais maintenant la troisième partie de mon discours spécifiquement sur le service de santé. Le dernier rapport de l'audit dans sa section spéciale a clairement indiqué les diverses lacunes qui sont maintenant de notoriété publique au ministère de la Santé pendant la pandémie en ce qui concerne l'approvisionnement de médicaments. Il ne faut pas oublier la saga Pack & Blister et

Molnupiravir où des millions de roupies de fonds publics ont été gaspillés. Récemment, une décision d'un magistrat a démontré comment même lorsque l'ICAC enquête sur des allégations de corruption et de fraude, tout s'effondre et le ou les vrais coupables s'en tirent. Nous savons tous que certains reçoivent même un coup de pied non pas vers le haut mais à côté et est tout doucement poussé vers la sortie et la retraite avec une poignée de main dorée et juteuse tandis que le peuple souffre, souffre et souffre toujours.

M. le président, en tant que professionnel de santé, je salue deux mesures en particulier : l'aide financière complète pour les coûts complètes des soins contre le cancer à l'étranger ou à Maurice pour les enfants et ceux qui ont besoin d'une expertise médicale jusqu'à 17, et aussi, la disponibilité d'une surveillance continue de la glycémie et d'une pompe d'insuline pour les personnes les plus à risque de diabète de type 1. Puis-je aussi suggérer qu'il y aurait encore été plus humain d'aider financièrement, une finance complète à tout patient quel que soit son âge qui a besoin de soins super spécialisés, cancer ou autre dans des institutions étrangères ou locales afin d'éviter toute sorte de contribution financière et de collecte par leurs proches, amis ou même parfois par des personnes qui s'en servent de subterfuges. Un tel système ne sera réalisable qu'avec la mise en place d'un conseil médical central au siège du ministère de la Santé et de la Sécurité sociale et pas seulement sur la décision du conseil régionale des hôpitaux.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le traitement du cancer sur les enfants et ceux qui ont besoin d'un traitement spécialisé comme préconisé dans le budget, il est très important que la sélection des patients fasse preuve d'une transparence totale de la liste des patients, de la désignation d'un centre d'excellence, les hôpitaux locaux et privés où le ministère orientera ces patients de sorte que le seul objectif est l'expertise médicale qui guide les décisions. M. le président, divers hôpitaux privés se multiplient dans le pays et je demande humblement à l'honorable ministre de la Santé de veiller à ce que seuls les meilleurs ayant fait leurs preuves dans le traitement des maladies au cancer et traitements associés soient sélectionnés pour être référé et dissiper ainsi la crainte de favoritisme envers les *blue-eyed boys* qui arpencent les couloirs du gouvernement.

M. le président, outre l'aide financière à ces patients, le budget aurait dû prévoir des dispositions des soins préalables sous spécialisés, qu'on soit autonome en oncologie à Maurice. Entre autres, pour la formation d'oncologue, je parle ici d'une nécessité absolue de former des oncologues dans le domaine de l'hématologie, la pédiatrie, la radiologie et chirurgie oncologique. La disponibilité de nouveaux traitements contre le cancer tel que le traitement par cellules souches, l'immunothérapie et agent de ciblage vasculaire sera un atout important pour que le traitement des cancers soit au niveau international.

M. le président, il est très important que le nouvel hôpital du cancer soit équipé d'une technologie de pointe telle que l'accélérateur linéaire de 4D. Auparavant et ce matin, le ministre de la Santé répondait à une question de moi-même, a parlé de 3D. 3D c'est bien mais on est déjà arrivé au 4D et on a toujours le temps pour rectifier le tir. Et aussi de l'utilisation de la télé santé, de l'intelligence artificielle ainsi que l'utilisation de la chirurgie robotique.

En parlant de l'intelligence artificielle, dans le budget, on parle de l'utilisation d'intelligence artificielle pour l'électrocardiographie. Ce test par l'intelligence artificielle n'est jusqu'à maintenant pas recommandé par aucune instance réputée internationale de cardiologie sauf selon mes informations, cette mesure a été présentée par un conseiller au ministère de la Santé et étrangement, l'île Maurice sera le premier à le faire en le proposant dans tous les hôpitaux régionaux de l'île. Je demande au ministre de la Santé de veiller à ce que l'efficacité et la sécurité des patients qui vont dépendre de ce test soient veillées au grain et surtout que ce test est toujours au stade embryonnaire et je recommande prudence et prudence.

M. le président, le budget n'aborde pas la question de formation et de la main-d'œuvre en particulier, la formation de sub-spécialité dans le domaine de la médecine en général. La médecine progresse et les traitements s'inventent tous les jours. Les oiseaux rares n'existent pas seulement à l'étranger car nous avons de brillants médecins à Maurice et nous devons responsabiliser et donner confiance à nos médecins, nos spécialistes internes et avec une bonne formation dans les institutions réputées à l'étranger, nous atteindrons alors le *brand* du *medical hub*. M. le président, le *medical hub* est une approche très claire qu'il faut que le ministère de la Santé prenne en considération car c'est aussi du tourisme médical.

M. le président, le budget de l'année dernière, dans son aperçu stratégique, ministère de la Santé et du bien-être a mentionné : améliorer la qualité des services centrés sur les patients où R 80 millions ont été alloués au *e-health* pour 2022 et à ce jour aucune numérisation d'un dossier patient jusqu'à présent. Et on nous dit maintenant que la même chose commencera à partir de juillet 2023 à l'hôpital Nehru avec R 184 millions étant l'estimation pour les années 2023/2024. J'espère que ce ne sont pas seulement des annonces et que la réalité se fera dans les mois à venir.

M. le président, le *e-Health* en globalité, le succès et la mise en œuvre en matière de santé dépendront essentiellement d'installation de l'internet à haut débit, très élevé, et je me demande si nos hôpitaux régionaux ont été modernisés pour cela. La technologie

sans papiers peut avoir des failles et le ministère de la Santé malheureusement est un exemple classique de cet échec suite à l'incapacité de s'assurer une formation adéquat, une excellente connectivité. J'ai à l'esprit le système de gestion qu'on appelle le *Electronic Inventory Management Scheme* qui a été mis en service depuis quelques années. Un système qui pouvait permettre le contrôle en temps réel des stocks de médicaments, de consommables d'une valeur de plusieurs milliards de roupies. Et selon le rapport de l'audit, les objectifs visant à obtenir un solde de stock en temps réel n'ont pu être fait en raison de plusieurs failles. Un système d'information non sécurisé, informations inexactes, formations inadéquates et plus important encore, manque de planification, exigence des utilisateurs à la phase de conception.

M. le président, le rapport de l'audit est très critique. Le ministère de la Santé n'a pas veillé à ce que la connectivité d'internet, les ordinateurs, la main-d'œuvre nécessaire soient disponible avant de se lancer dans le *Electronic Inventory Management Scheme*, un système e-health. Cela sent l'amateurisme à son meilleur car s'il avait été correctement mis en place, nous n'aurions pas assisté, et je répète, nous n'aurions pas eu à assister à la destruction et au gaspillage de plus de 14 millions de médicaments principalement en raison d'achats excessives, d'une sous-utilisation, d'une mauvaise planification et de l'achat de grandes quantités de médicaments à courte durée de vie.

M. le président, ce sont là de dures leçons dont le ministère de la Santé doit prendre en considération en vue de l'enregistrement en ligne des patients dans les hôpitaux régionaux qui impliquent des centaines de millions d'argent du public, des contribuables. Je suis très conscient de la confidentialité des données médicales de chacun et j'espère que les pirates politiques ne s'introduiront pas dans ce domaine.

M. le président, le budget actuel ne fait aucune mention de la hausse des prix des médicaments dans nos pharmacies de détail à travers l'île et des mesures qui peuvent aider ceux qui ont le plus besoin à s'en prévaloir. Les prix excessivement élevés des médicaments pour la majorité des mauriciens qui ont principalement des maladies non-transmissible – l'hypertension, le diabète, la maladie cardiaque est un problème très grave et malgré l'introduction de marge régressive et avec la menace des pharmacies de détail de considérer leur position dans la vente au détail, le grand public, en particulier les retraités souffrent toujours pour acheter leurs médicaments ; en particulier, quand il y a une pénurie aiguë dans les pharmacies des hôpitaux.

Augmenter les pensions de vieillesse de R 1000 ou R 2000 pour les plus de 65 ans n'est rien car il s'agit pour ces personnes d'acheter leurs médicaments puisqu'au moins un

tiers de leur pension est épargnée avec l'achat de ces produits. Un incitatif approprié comme le régime d'assurance médicale proposé par le gouvernement Travailleur sous le leadership de Navin Ramgoolam de l'époque, contribuera grandement à aider ceux qui ont travaillé dur pour faire de ce pays ce qu'il est aujourd'hui. Ne les embêtez pas avec un peu d'argent mais aidez-les dans leur qualité de vie avec dignité.

M. le président, le nombre d'accidents sur nos routes est effrayant et la majorité des fatalités est liée au traumatisme crânien. N'aurait-il pas été important d'avoir une unité neurochirurgicale dans chaque hôpital, équipée avec des logistiques médicaux du dernier cri car la prise en charge de ces patients en temps minime est synonyme de meilleure chance de survie. J'espère que cette suggestion sera considérée.

M. le président, enfin pour conclure, chaque semaine, chaque mois, j'aide plusieurs mamans à mettre au monde leur bébé. Moment accompagné de joie, d'enthousiasme mais je suis très concerné pour ces petits bouts de chou qui doivent pourtant chacun, une dette nationale de R 425 000. Est-ce l'héritage dont ce gouvernement est si fier ? Je laisse au peuple de juger.

Merci. J'ai terminé.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I will suspend the Sitting for one hour.

*At 8.37 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 9.56 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much. Please be seated! Hon. Minister Dr. Jagutpal, please!

(9.57 p.m.)

**The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for granting me the opportunity to further contribute to this excellent Budget statement - again excellent Budget statement - delivered by my colleague, my *colistier*, the hon. Minister of Finance on last Friday. We must all acknowledge, the population acknowledges, and I commend to this House the Appropriation 2023-2024 Bill No. IX of 2023.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and with the judicious economic management ensured by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Renganaden

Padayachy, the macro-economic indicators have well exceeded pre-pandemic levels in 2022.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will start by refuting hon. Dr. Aumeer for the general statements he made. I will start by commenting on what he said on the Ministry of Health, the National Audit Report and what was mentioned about *medicaments*, Pack & Blister and expiry of drugs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will just remind him that last year during the debates, again that was the talk of the town, I can still remember what hon. Dr. Gungapersad, sitting next to him said on the National Audit Report, especially on medication: '*ti met lisien pou gardien sosis*'. So far, I remember this. What does that mean? If you go and see the reply I gave to them in Hansard, the National Audit Report on drugs, on medication, does not date back for last year or for Pack & Blister or for two years of the pandemic. It dates back years and years. That is why we are coming with the Central Medical Procurement Bill that will be debated, I believe, in the coming sessions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will not go back and remind hon. Dr. Aumeer about the National Audit Report when his Party was in power. That would have reminded him that there was no pandemic and how equipment for millions of rupees were wasted.

Second point that he raised was about the Medical Board to be set up centrally for those patients suffering from cancer. It is not a central board that will decide since patients will be attending regional hospitals. Those doctors who are responsible for the treatment of these patients will decide on that regional board. Getting one central board with somebody who does not know anything about the patient, it would be very, very difficult. I believe he is going to share his opinion with me.

Now, about the 3D and 4D Linear Accelerators, this was decided at a point in time. So many years, more than 25-30 years, we have been using the 2D Linear Accelerator, as I replied in a PQ which was put by Dr. Aumeer and hon. Paul Bérenger. Obviously, this is one step further of getting this 3D machine and going for the 4D. It is not the equipment that will treat the patient; it is how you do your screening, how you use this equipment, how you maintain it, and how to give the treatment required.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come to the AI of the Cardiology that has been stated in the Budget Speech of hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy. He should be beyond what is happening between cardiologists. Information that was shared to him was shared to me as well. Like he said, '*selon mes informations*', that came to me obviously. We should not be entertaining what this cardiologist said to that cardiologist. We should be

above them. Why? Because our job is to see what is best for the people. And what is best for the people? I will tell you.

Patients suffering from cardiac diseases, what do we offer them in Mauritius? We offer them an ECG Test; we offer them stress test; we offer them angiography or angioplasty and cardiac surgeries. If we introduce something that is easy, accessible and affordable, is it not good for the population? Would you not prefer to say that you have done an ECG and the next step that will be proposed to you is an angiography? An angiography is an invasive test and if the arteries are punctured, you are done. Is it not good if for the population that we introduce something that is accessible, that we can do at the Medi-Clinic; that we can do in the hospital; that we can do anywhere? Is it not a good thing that we introduce something or do we consider what this cardiologist is saying about the other cardiologist? We should not do this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Now, I will come to the e-Health. Recently, there was a PQ by hon. Nando Bodha on e-Health and I have given a long reply. He should have referred to Hansard before putting this question. So far, last year, there was a budget of Rs600,000 m. Do you think an e-Health for the population, where more than 73% of the population depends on the public health sector for test, for access to the health centres, where you got to do everything, is a project that we are going to start like that?

Obviously, we are going to take our time and with our time what I stated earlier in my reply to hon. Nando Bodha that the e-Health project has already started, if you will read my reply, he will come to know that there is e-health already implemented, even for COVID-19 tests, it is implemented and that project will take shape. It's a stepwise project and now, it's in the step of evaluation and then the award will be done. Obviously, you won't spend the money. The money will be there but you have to respect the procedures.

Going further on the Neurosurgical Unit, that he said we have to get a Neurosurgical Unit in each hospital, again this is not planning. You can't have a Neurosurgical Ward or Unit in all hospitals when in Mauritius, the public sector has hardly five Neurosurgeons. That would be real wastage of funds because having it everywhere in a country where travelling from east to west is hardly 30 km and from North to South and then you got to make five regional Neurosurgical Units, it's really bad planning.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so I will come a little bit more on a general note on the critics from the Opposition in two different aspects. So, firstly, they have that equation for the budget and that equation is *la depreciation de la roupie*, that is equal to inflation or as my colleague said it, rise in price and so on and that is where the Government is making

the compensation, whatever you call it, providing compensation in the budget and that formula is what they have been mostly majority of the Opposition Members keep on saying.

But let me remind them, something that they were hiding. So first, I am also not an economist, but in that formula, they missed out. What about the Foreign Direct Investment totaling Rs27.7 billion in 2022? These are also funds that has come to our *la caisse* and that was 50% higher than in 2021. We should account for this also. What about the manufacturing sector? When we listened to hon. Bholah, he gave us details. What has been the performance of the manufacturing sector in terms of the revenue coming to Mauritius, in terms of export, be it jewelry, be it all small and medium enterprises, whatever be their contribution to this budget? Nothing being said, none of them has come up but they come to say reform. What reform will you do when a sector is doing so well?

I will again come up with tourism. Why is no one saying that this *premier trimestre de 2023, R 22 milliards de recettes financières*? No one pointed that out. Is it that finance coming to the country? I will move on while saying what about the contribution of the ICT Sector? We listened very well to the Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency Bill at the time when hon. Balgobin did his lecture and there were so many companies in the offshore, at Ebène doing all, you know, what is providing services for ICT. Is that also not revenue? No one mentioned that but they mentioned that we should have come up with *réforme* and whatever and more importantly what is there? It is the stability, political stability, social stability of the country and that's where you will get all these Foreign Direct Investment. No one will come to tell you that. Yes, this country has a real political and social stability. I will go a little bit further on this point. You know one week back, some of us have been to Ebène where the American Embassy is coming up with a new infrastructure and investing more than Rs3 billion in this country. Do you think the United States of America will come to this country and invest in that sum of money when we heard all the Opposition Members saying that you know, this country, whatever be on this country, inflation, productivity is poor, there's so many what they have kept on saying that the finance is wrong, the budget is only for the rich; *budget dangereux, budget aggravé, le pyromane, pompier* and all that. Mr Speaker, Sir, that's where the US Government will invest Rs3 billion. And, now, for people to understand, it is as simple as that and we will keep on hearing the Opposition Members telling us that.

I will come up last Saturday, there was an event, a concert at Caudan, and thanks to the Metro that all these young people, it's not only the Rs20,000, so many young people attended that concert because of the Metro. And what we found there? There were young

people attended the concert and we are saying that the economy is very poor, it's so bad that people are not attending any concert, another one is coming this week. Please, I will invite all Members to go and attend and you will see how Mauritius is faring well with the economy.

We will move a few weeks back, when we celebrated Eid. Have you been to the market? Have you been to any market and see how is the shopping spree? Yet the finance is doing very bad. Please go to *Lafwar* Quatre Bornes, *Lafwar* Curepipe and then you will know what is happening in the market. Where we are going, we are not wearing any helmet or whatever is being said. When we go there, we are really talking to people and see what's been there in any *Lafwar*.

Now, another point probably it's very good for ordinary people as we call it or laymen that if you want to travel, you want to go abroad, we will come to know whether this budget is for the rich, tomorrow phone your *agence de voyage* and you ask them: I want to go to China, India or whatever, whether it is easy to get a ticket now? What do you think? It's only the rich people who are travelling in this country.

So, these are the simple terms just to define how the economy is doing and now unfortunately our hon. Member Juman is not here. He kept on repeatedly saying on *bijouterie* and *quincaillerie* but well, *bijouterie* and *quincaillerie*, *grande surface*, *pouvoir d'achat* lumped in one and with our Rs1,000 note which at one time equivalent to Rs20, at other time equivalent to Rs500, well it's good that we just visit these *grandes surfaces* and the *quincaillerie* and *bijouterie*. Talk to those jewelers and the *quincaillerie* whoever is the owner and then you will come to know how is the *pouvoir d'achat*. Whether really goods are being stacked over there. Please, during the weekend, go and visit and then you will come to know what is happening in that area.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, and one more thing that is good if you observe that in the early morning you've been to a *grande surface*, just look at the *étagère*, it's empty and it's being refilled. So it means people don't go there only for visiting, people are really filling up their caddies. So, these are the mere facts, it's not, you know coming here to give big lectures but these are mere facts, reality and this is what we have seen for the economy, for the last three years.

Unfortunately, I do not time to go and read what everyone has been saying but the core is this – no one has mentioned this anyway.

Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know the bubble will burst or that the popularity is at its lowest yet we know on 01 May what happened. We know how lowest

we were and how lowest the popularity was on 01 of May – although the budget speech was not yet mentioned at that time, but we came to know of our popularity on 01 of May.

Now, I will come to my second comment because for this one, many have voiced out their mind-set. So, being in that profession for quite some time, let me do the psychological analysis of the Opposition, in my way. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not an individual analysis but rest assured, you are all safe and sound but let's work out the collective analysis.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, two years back, they were in what we call the 'Denial Phase'. They did not accept anything. They did not accept the election results, they did not accept anything. Anyway, we came to know what happened after all that and not accepting is what we call 'denial' in psychology. A little of progress but what progress did they make? With this denial which is still there, now came one more thing – they got an option which is an anger option.

If you describe anger, that also has different stages. One is annoyed as some hon. Members said we are annoyed. Another one is frustrated but that frustration, you won't see it on their faces. They will have what we call a reaction formation. You are frustrated; yet you will keep on smiling and saying – *ha, hou* and with frustration, you become hostile. When you are angry and you cannot control it, you become hostile. We have seen it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I really fear that next year, after the fifth budget – the last stage of anger is *la rage* and we hope that in Parliament, if they start behaving in *la rage*, we will all have to wear helmets; not outside Parliament but inside Parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now I will go a little bit deeper into analysis. You know I got some time sitting over here for nearly twelve hours now and I am trying to understand why it is so? Anyway, in my humble opinion, all that came because of the difficulty to concretise that alliance; the difficulty to decide about the Prime Minister – who will be the Prime Minister. The difficulty to decide who will be No.2, No.3, No.4, No.5 – it's a lot of issues and I understand that perfectly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

You know you have to understand people and understanding means; I am free to offer free psychological support and consultation at tea break and lunch time and in fact this political issue, this political crisis and you know when you will hear successive Members tomorrow, till Friday, Monday and Tuesday and what will happen? They will, as hon. Maneesh Gobin referred to, welfare economics or kitsch economics and they will come and say nothing is good in this budget and we have to be like them, smile at them

and we have to say – okay we got you, we understand you perfectly. So, anyway that is not an issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now come to my Ministry and about that, I will be a little fast and please give me some time. I will complete it because there are so many achievements of my Ministry and if ever I won't be able to read it, obviously you will have it on the Facebook. You can get it on my Facebook.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has been ranked among the 20 fastest growing economies in the world for the year 2022 by IMF and there was somebody who referred to 2021 IMF report. Growth rate 8.7%, GDP Rs570 m., total investment reached Rs113 billion, 20% increase compared to 2021, better outcome.

Unemployment rate has declined from 9.9 to 7.7 in 2022. Again, from Statistics Mauritius and this is what the Leader of the Opposition did not agree to. He has his own statistics. Anyway, when the statistics suit them, then you refer to the Statistics Mauritius and when it does not suit them, they don't refer. Anyway, we have been used to these and now these figures prove that the strategies and economic policies are on track for the Government. Pandemic was well managed by the public health and we brought the necessary condition to return to normal life.

Three important pillars of the economy –

- (a) strengthening the economy;
- (b) sustaining the economy, and
- (c) building future

are at the core of this budget. It is a proactive, visionary budget with progressive fiscal policy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget clearly demonstrates that Government carefully considered economic circumstances while prioritising the health and wellness of our population. In light of economic realities, this budget focuses fundamentally on affordability and accessibility as far as health and wellness of the population is concerned.

Now, in spite of rising costs, the Government through this Budget and the three preceding ones, has been sustaining its investments to shore up public health systems. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, our philosophy is to continuously enhance standard of living in each and every Mauritian.

In this vein, the financial envelope of Rs15.7 billion allocated to my Ministry testifies Government's firm intention to provide free universal access to quality health care. So the spending on health has increased by nearly 75% from –

- (a) in 2014 - Rs9.2 billion to;
- (b) 2013 - Rs15.7 billion.

Expenditure as a percentage of GDP has improved from 2.5% in 2014 to 3% in 2023. Now, per capita Government expenditure on health was Rs7,292 in 2014, now it is Rs12,438. These are tangible results; this is what we call productivity. I will keep on giving the figures to show productivity.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, projects, construction of first phase of new state-of-the-art regional hospital at Constance started in September 2020 and now in this budget, funds to the tune of Rs950 m. have been earmarked so that we can complete it by February next year. Furthermore, Rs375 m. are allocated to the ongoing construction of the New Eye Hospital and the Renal Transplant Unit at Nehru Hospital.

So all these are some of the measures; measures which are very important include –

- (a) Rs20m. for increased screening for cancer risk assessment and early dissection;
- (b) Rs160 m. to start a new Papillomavirus Vaccination Campaign for boys and girls which is more efficient against different strain of HPV causing different types of cancer and diseases. It is not only giving treatment to patients but also how to prevent our young generation to get cancer and again, not only giving Rs20,000 but doing a lot more than this to the young generation;
- (c) Rs220 m. is earmarked for high tech equipment at New Cancer Hospital that is the equipment is already on the evaluation stage and also important is the continuous glucose monitor for some 1000 Type-1 diabetes patients.

What is Type-1 and Type-2? Type-1 is those who have no insulin in their blood to control their sugar and Type-2 is those patients who have insulin, but resistant insulin, that cannot control the glucose.

Now, it is good to point out about the digitalisation project. I have already given details. I will invite PQs on e-Health so that I can give more details. Now, another thing that is important, it's very good to point out the quality and accessible patient centres services. What is going to happen more

is a mandatory feedback mechanism that will be introduced in the hospital on care being delivered to patients. It's important to get feedback and then we can improve.

- (i) Partnership with the National Health Service of the United Kingdom, under the Government-to-Government initiative, to carry out quality assurance and audit of clinical and overall healthcare services in hospitals;
- (ii) a 'Carnet de Santé' for our elderly persons above 60 years;
- (iii) Children in the Republic diagnosed with cancer will benefit from financial assistance. That has already been canvassed by my colleague;
- (iv) The Introduction of a new stand-alone leave of 5 days for workers who have experienced a pregnancy loss. Very important measure, because after a pregnancy loss, there is a lot of psychological issues and with that, it is not going to solve all the issues, but it's very important that we give these five days leave for those women who lost their baby;
- (v) Removal of VAT and custom duty on glass-ceramic blocks for dental use;

Medical grade silicon, instrument and appliances used in medical surgical, dental will be zero rated for VAT purposed.

- (iv) Monthly incontinence allowance of Rs1,800 to be extended to patients suffering from cancer of prostate, cancer of bladder, Alzheimer's and stroke.

So these are all benefits for the whole population, and this Budget is not a budget made for the rich.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there were also some legislatives and institutional frameworks to underpin and those are –

- (i) the amendments in Consumer Protection, to provide that no tobacco products are to be displayed for sale, except in the duty-free shops.
- (ii) Ayurvedic and other Traditional Medicines Act will be amended to cater for specialists in traditional medicines;
- (iii) The Medical Council Act will be amended to empower the Medical Council to establish Clinical Guidelines intended to optimise patient-care and provide for the terms of office of the Disciplinary Tribunal;
- (iv) The Pharmacy Act will also be amended to facilitate the development of the local pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government, under the hon. Prime Ministership of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has been working relentlessly to recover impact of COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot forget this. Government has implemented various measures to support businesses and individuals during this period.

This will be, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, remembered for ages. Yet, editorials were not written, but nevertheless, they will never give these facts, but still they do proclaim themselves as true patriots.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, *la gestion de la COVID-19 est une fierté pour la nation mauricienne*. The Leader of the Opposition - I do not know - yesterday, he came up with the report of John Hopkins University on lockdown. What he was saying is that we should not have put lockdown during that time. Would you imagine what would have been the impact without a lockdown? When you know how this virus is contagious and fatal. I do not know where he is, but I am sorry to say that someone referring to what it was in the UK and compare it to Mauritius with an elderly population, high percentage of diabetes, what would have been the impact? Anyway, he takes his responsibility. He also mentioned that *nous avons eu beaucoup plus de décès à cause du Covid-19*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2019, *nous avons eu 10,911 décès, 2020 - 10,768 ; 2021 - 12,990 et en 2022 - 12,581 décès*. Excess mortality in Mauritius, including COVID-19, as a percentage of total registered deaths is estimated at around 11% in 2021. Now, *selon le rapport de l'OMS, il y a eu dans le monde, une hausse en moyenne de 20% dans le nombre de cas de décès pendant la période de la Covid-19*. It is not only in Mauritius. Again, keep on doing politics on death of people. Anyway, that is the state of mind of some people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *notre Premier ministre a fait preuve de courage quand il fallait prendre des décisions en faveur de la santé et de la sécurité de chacun de nos citoyens*. Factual. *Il a montré de la compassion pour que ce gouvernement aide les plus vulnérables*. What is the reaction? That we have taken money from the Bank of Mauritius and we flouted with that money. This is the fact because *le Premier ministre a montré de la compassion*. *Il a veillé à limiter au maximum les pertes d'emplois*. This is again a fact, not flouting BOM money. *Face à une crise économique sans précédent, le Premier ministre a su préserver les acquis mauriciens*. We all agree on this point. We should not debate on it. *C'est cela la réalité*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In year 2020, while we were at the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, Government came up with the Health Sector Strategic Plan. Where are we with

that? More than 50% of the 603 activities regrouped in 26 strategic goals have already been completed while over 40% were in progress and 10 % were planned for the forthcoming years. So, there is a clear Health Sector Strategic Plan. With the help of dedicated health personnel, from nursing to medical and non-medical staff, I want to congratulate them. In a period of unprecedented turmoil, this Government has achieved more than one could have expected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, various action plans and policies are being implemented in my Ministry –

- National Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol (2020-2024) - 45 % implemented;
- National Action Plan for Tobacco Control (2022-2026) - 20 % achieved;
- National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) (2022-2025) - 30% achieved;
- National Action Plan for Oral Health (2022-2027) - 50% achieved;
- National Action Plan on Integrated Care for Older People (2022-2026) - 8 % achieved;

This is called productivity.

- National Breastfeeding Action Plan (2022-2027) - 15 % achieved;
- National Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Sexually Transmitted Infection (2023-2027) - 10 % achieved, and
- National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy - 18 % achieved.

Let me highlight some of the achievements of the public health sector where 73% of the population relies entirely –

- 8.8 million contacts, contacts for a year, 3.2 million attendances at Accident and Emergency Department, and
- 1.8 million were recorded in our Primary Health Care Service.

Contacts mean consultations with doctors, psychologists, nutritionists, physiotherapists, patients coming for dressings, blood tests, family planning and screening and all that.

- 166,000 admissions were registered;
- 49,000 surgeries were performed,
- 228,000 patients attended our Dental Health Services in 2022.

And the expenses if we based on our Health Estimates, it cost the government Rs 700 for each consultations.

A service to be provided 24/7, be it cyclone or bad weather, to make provision from doorstep, transport, catering, medication, hi-end services. Yet, the Opposition will only criticise. They will not see what is the volume of work that is being done.

In 2019, 807 cardiac surgeries; in 2022: 974. Open-heart surgeries in the private cost in Mauritius Rs600,000 and if we would have operated all these patients, it would have cost us Rs568 m.

Angiography and Angioplasty – in 2019: 4,700 and in 2022: 5,700. Isn't this called improvement, tangible, measurable, achievable? Yes. Angiography in private clinics cost Rs35,000 and placing one stent, costs Rs200,000 and these are free in the public sector. That would have cost us more than Rs200 m.

Now, with the introduction of Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI), if ever you have come to the hospital with cardiac issue, you are immediately... and that was introduced last year thanks to the Minister of Finance. And since last year, we have done 320 Primary PCI in the Government Health Institutions saving that all these lives.

Spinal surgeries – last year we did 30 Scoliosis surgeries, that is, a problem of the spine. If you would have done this in a private clinic, that would have cost Rs2.5 m. So, these 30 patients benefited it from the hospital.

15,000 chemotherapy sessions – do you know how much it costs? It can cost from Rs15,000 to Rs70,000 in private clinics and if we would have done these 15,000 chemotherapy sessions in the private, it would have cost us from Rs225 m. to Rs1 billion.

So, this Government has made the health of the population a priority unlike others because we will keep on hearing them saying about a lot of issues on this budget but those who introduced Property Taxes and taxes on interest and *qui ont même mis fin à la distribution de pains dans les écoles*. This Government, you know, this is what is really called achievement.

Endoscopy is an important task that has been done in 2022 – 10,500 sessions have been done compared to 7,000 in 2019. In the private sector, it costs Rs15,000 and this would have cost Rs157 m. in the private sector.

Cataract, as you know very well, is a common disease of the elderly. 7,800 cataract surgeries have been done last year compared to 7,200 in 2019. They will not see that, they will keep on coming with Pack & Blister, Molnupiravir, so, the same refrain. You know I am quite a good singer but that refrain is ...

That refrain, no one wants to hear it anyway.

3,700 caesarean sections were performed and now we introduced the epidural anaesthesia for pregnant women. And every week, around 50 epidural anaesthesia are being done on women in labour. Hon. Dr. Aumeer knows it very well how it is beneficial to do epidural anaesthesia for pregnant women in labour.

So, Budget 2022 announced the introduction of 24 by 7 services by specialists in Gynaecology for women; Paediatrics for children and Anaesthesia. The implementation has proved to provide better and efficient services for maternal health. Obstetric Units in the hospitals are equipped with brand new echography machines, CTG machines, cardiac monitors, doppler sets, foetal doppler sets to provide optimal care to women.

A fertility clinic has been set up. Never before has a government given that much consideration for the health of women and children of our republic. This is a stark contrast between the consideration given to women under this Government and the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and that of the Opposition when they were in power. Much is being done for the health of women but also for new-borns.

Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will probably start my conclusion.

Today, there are 44 neonatal ventilators in Mauritius plus one in Rodrigues Island. The forecast of the HSSP was to have at least 40 ventilators by 2024. We already have 44 now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is called, as the Metro says it, the future is on time – I am just repeating. If I keep on saying what we have been doing for the dialysis patients, you will be amazed of how much work is being done for dialysis patients.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is so easy, *c'est très facile de faire le procès du service public et de critiquer. Mais il faut aussi reconnaître le travail acharné du personnel soignant. Il faut être honnête. Soyons honnête ! Certains politiciens exploitent les problèmes quotidiens qui peuvent surgir dans pratiquement tous les systèmes de santé en ce qui concerne le manque de médicaments, – it is obvious, I accept it – les heures d'attente, les quelques membres du personnel qui ne sont pas dévoués à leur travail. Ils projettent ainsi une image entièrement négative et mettent ainsi en péril la confiance des mauriciens dans la santé publique.*

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I want to say is that services where you have to attend daily to nearly 20,000 – because I said the figure earlier, it is 8.8 million –obviously there will be maybe 10 or at times 50 complaints, I agree, I totally accept it. But if you

compare that figure and you divide it, it hardly makes 0.002 or 0.005. I accept that there are complaints, whatever be it medications shortage, I accept it but there are issues that are beyond our control and we have to accept it. We have to keep on improving and not come and do politics on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have foreign teams coming to Mauritius – it is a long list, you can look at it on my Facebook – and we have introduced so many new surgeries. It is the first time that we have done what we call the cochlear implants in Mauritius. It costs a huge sum of money outside. And as you know we have got so many collaborations with so many doctors who come to Mauritius to do surgeries in here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will not be able to give all this. I will probably ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have at least another five minutes from what I am informed by the Chief Whip. At least five minutes!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, there is the visit of Professor Martin to do 15 complex spinal surgeries. Dr. Bhaskar to do 6 orthopaedic surgeries. Dr. Ramalingum to perform surgeries on patients suffering from ENT problems. Prof. D'Cruz a world-famous professor, who operated on Cleanne Papillon, the miracle baby, performed 27 complex surgeries in Mauritius. Dr. Douglas West Consultant Surgeon from Bristol performed complex thoracic surgeries. Prof. Leveziel, Dr. Shetty, Dr. Khan...

**An hon. Member:** Dr. Boolell!

**Dr. Jagutpal:** ... all these doctors did lot eye surgeries. And we have the privilege to welcome Prof. Balaji who did a lot of maxillofacial surgeries in Mauritius.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not only these doctors but we even have collaboration with our diaspora. And those doctors, they are in close contact with the Ministry to do a lot of work.

So, just to give you, a set of action plans the Ministry has already come up with –

- National Action Plan on HIV and AIDS;
- National Action Plan on Public Health Security which is very important because we do not want to face what we faced with COVID-19. So, public security is important.
- National Action Plan on NCDs, diabetes and hypertension;
- National Action Plan on Nutrition is coming soon;

- National Action Plan on Adolescent Health – again, a very important plan that we keep at heart and that will come during this fiscal year.

This is what the Ministry is doing.

I will also have some time to talk about the auditing of health facilities. There is Dr. Hung, a Public Health Specialist from France and he is doing the clinical auditing of our service.

Our Mauritian diaspora, as I have stated earlier, has come up. Dr. Arvind Bundhoo, American of Mauritian origin, Neonatologist, is reviewing our neonatology department. Prof. Reetoo Banarsee, a British citizen of Mauritian origin from Cambridge University will carry out clinical audit of Cardiac Services in public health.

Dr. Nirmal Tulwa, a laureate in Mauritius, British citizen of Mauritian origin has carried out complicated surgeries in Orthopaedic Paediatric Surgeries and will continue to collaborate. So, there are all these professors, Mauritian nationals coming back home, doing surgeries whom I want to thank for their collaboration and for the health of the Mauritian population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will...

**Mr Ameer Meea:** *Dr. Ramgoolam mem.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jagutpal:** I will conclude that... So, bear with me, I am just looking for the conclusion. It is not long.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so...

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have a couple of more minutes.

**Dr. Jagutpal:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so...

*(Interruptions)*

The vision of this Government is to bring health services at the door step of the population. Just to give us what we have achieved, the Republic of Mauritius has already achieved some of the health related SDGs targets set for 2030. For example, in 2022 –

- the Under 5 Mortality Rate was 16.5% for 1,000 live births compared to the global target 25;
- Neonatal Mortality Rate per 1,000 live births was 8.9% compared to the global target 12, already achieved;

- Maternal Mortality Ratio was 41 per 100,000 live births compared to the global 70, already good figures.

So, in terms of universal health coverage, Mauritius is one of the highest performers in Africa according to the WHO. In the realm of health and wellness, the words of Shakespeare ring true as he famously wrote in Hamlet –

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking [again mind] makes it so."

So, our thoughts and perceptions greatly influence our well-being. By cultivating a positive and optimistic mindset, we can transform our outlook on life and enhance our overall health.

Le budget 2023-2024 traduit la vision de notre Premier ministre et de son gouvernement pour une île Maurice moderne, juste et équitable pour notre nation et les générations futures.

I would like to thank all the staff working in the public and private health sectors – they contribute a lot – for their *dévouement*, sacrifice, hard work for the health of the population.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much. I will give you the floor Hon. Hurdoyal.

(10.47 p.m.)

**The Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (Mr T. Hurdoyal):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I know that all of them are waiting for when I will finish my intervention but before I start my intervention, I must express my great disappointment regarding the absence of so many Members of the Opposition side...

*(Interruptions)*

**An hon. Member:** *Pe manz ti puri!*

**Mr Hurdoyal:** ... in the National Assembly at this time...

*(Interruptions)*

**An hon. Member:** *Pena stamina!*

**Mr Hurdoyal:** The fact that there are a few Opposition Members present in this House raises doubts about how much importance they attach to this debate. However those hon. Members who are present, I thank them heartily.

Let me come to my intervention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Tonight, as I intervene in this august Assembly on the Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill, in my capacity as the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, I feel a profound sense of pride and responsibility to be a part of a Government who has at heart the interest and the welfare of the most vulnerable groups of our society which include the elderly, children, the youth and the workers.

The presentation of the National Budget annually, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a momentous occasion in the life a nation as it establishes the vision, defines the strategies and proposes measures for achieving economic prosperity for all, while ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth. Late Sir Anerood Jugnauth rightly stated –

“The economy has to be at the service of the population. Our focus has to be centered on the people of Mauritius”

At the very outset, I wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for his abled leadership and for guiding the Government to strive for the betterment and welfare of one and all and in particular the *ti dimoun*. All the budgets crafted under his leadership, or even during the time he was Minister of Finance, special consideration has always been given to the most vulnerable groups of society and he has always demonstrated that he has the best interest of our citizens at heart.

In the same breath, I would like to congratulate my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, for presenting a budget that meets the aspiration of all segments of the population, provide the means for re-dynamizing the economic sectors and promoting a more inclusive society.

M. le président, cela me rappelle de mon enfance où tous les membres de la famille se réunissaient avec impatience en attendant la présentation du budget national. Ce, pour prendre connaissance des différentes mesures qui seraient annoncées par le ministre des Finances pour améliorer les conditions de la vie de la population en général et notamment les mesures qui leur seraient bénéfiques ainsi qu'à leurs familles.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the day of budget presentation was, is and will always be a day of special significance for every citizen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is widely recognised that the Mauritian Economy is showing clear signs of recovery and is back on the growth path. Businesses that weathered the storm are back to business and are experiencing renewed growth and consumer confidence. All the sectors of our economy, be it tourism sector, financial services and

manufacturing sector are doing well and are gradually achieving pre-COVID pandemic level. New job opportunities are emerging for our youth, giving way to a sense of stability and a renewed sense of purpose and confidence in our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true. We have stumbled in the face of the disruptive forces of COVID-19 pandemic, but we did not falter. Despite the havoc caused by this deadly pandemic, we have bounced back admirably thanks to the strategies and measures taken by this Government to rebuild the economy in the aftermath of the pandemic. Indeed, Mauritius has shown to the world our determination to rise above those challenges. This reminds me of a quote from Mahatma Gandhi –

“If I have a belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it, even if I may not have it at the beginning”

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has successfully reversed the GDP of the negative 15% in 2020 to a positive growth of 8.7% last year. This is really a feat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when bigger nations like UK, Germany and France have registered slower economic growths of 4%, 1.8% and 2.6% respectively.

Last year, a global growth of 3.4% was recorded and emerging economies and Sub Saharan countries recorded growth of 4% and 3.9% respectively.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we still have to face new challenges and uncertainties emanating from the Ukraine-Russia war. All the economic actors should devise the right strategies to overcome the challenges and keep the economy on the growth trajectory.

This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, epitomizes the vision of our hon. Prime Minister, a true leader of our time, and this reminds me of what he said during the summing-up of the Appropriation Bill 2017-2018 in his capacity as then Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. I quote –

“Almost five decades of independence, of perseverance and hard work have taught us that progress can only be achieved if we make fundamental choices when we have to.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once again, this Government has taken a decisive step towards embracing a socialist approach, with measures that will pave the way for a brighter future for all our citizens.

The Budget places significant emphasis on affordable living for our citizens, as we strive to build an inclusive and fair society where every citizen can lead a life of dignity

and fulfilment. For the first time in our history, a Government is taking the responsibility of a citizen from the time of his birth to post retirement.

En effet, M. le président, dès sa naissance, l'État s'engage à prendre en charge sa santé, lui confère une allocation financière appréciable et faciliter son épanouissement dans une crèche.

Par la suite, l'État prend entièrement en charge son éducation dès le pré-primaire jusqu'à la fin de ses études universitaires, aussi bien que des formations pour accéder au marché du travail, tout en assurant aussi un salaire minimum décent tout au long de sa carrière.

Une fois à la retraite, une allocation vieillesse décente est garantie ainsi que d'autres allocations sociales.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a general, almost national acknowledgement that this Government has, in the Budget 2023-2024, *fait la part belle au social* except the Members of the Opposition who are claiming that not enough has been done. They persist in painting a dark picture everywhere.

**Mr Toussaint:** *Zot ena zis lapintir nwar !*

**Mr Huroyal:** *Kouma to pe dir!*

For them, I have this saying from John Kennedy, Former President of the United States of America, and I quote –

“We are not here to curse the darkness but to light the candle that can guide us to a safe and sane future”

*(Interruptions)*

*Tu le sais toi. One and only one!*

This Government will go down in history as the one who introduced the Minimum Wage and this measure has uplifted more than 85,000 citizens from the shackle of poverty.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Members of the Opposition are also advocating that the purchasing power of the Mauritians are eroding, and the Government has not proposed any measures to restore the purchasing power of our citizens. This is not true, Deputy Speaker, Sir.

This Government has spent Rs3 billion to support the citizens against increasing prices which is due to fluctuations and uncertainties in the global market as our country is a net importer of food, which are subject to imported inflation.

Despite the adverse effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine on the price of gas, Government is maintaining the price of a 12 kg cylinder of cooking gas at Rs240 instead of the market price of Rs595 as well as maintaining our subsidies on basic commodities, rice and flour.

Additionally, Government is providing financial assistance to our citizens in various ways, aimed at helping them to cope with the impact of price increases.

Contrary to the claims made by hon. Bodha - unfortunately, he is not present at this time, I hope he is watching us live - in his recent Press conference where he stated that we are "*Enn gouvernma ki pa kapav desann lor terrain*". I wish to inform the hon. Member that this Government remains deeply connected to the grassroots. A message to the hon. Members of the opposition side: *Nou tou letan kapav desann lor terin parski nou enn gouvernman ki travay dan lintere popilasian*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as usual, I had the opportunity to spend time in my constituency during the weekend and I have been in more than 10 villages - *ou kone, mwa mo kontan bouze partou* - to attend various events. It was very clear that the Budget had received widespread appreciation from our citizens. They do not share the same opinion of Members of the Opposition who, due to lack of arguments, qualifies this Budget as "*Bidze labous dou*"; "*Budget confetti ou Père Noël*".

The measures proposed in the 2023/2024 Budget have instilled a resounding "feel good" factor, reinforcing the notion that this Government can still actively engage and address the needs of the people at the ground level.

We are a Government with the people for the people and by the people. The population at large knows that it is this Government that works day and night in the best interest of our nation. *Nous sommes des bâtisseurs, M. le président*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must also refer to the World Happiness Report 2023 which ranked Mauritius as the happiest country in Africa and the 59th happiest country in the world out of 149 countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will now highlight the salient features of the Budget, which will pave the way to a stronger, more resilient and robust economy based on deeply encroached values that have always characterised every action of this Government, namely sharing, caring, compassion, equity, justice and fairness. A lot of measures have been taken by this Government and initiated but I will not elaborate all of them as the list is very long.

The dignity of our workers has no price. They represent our real asset and will remain forever our pride. I listened carefully to hon. Shakeel Mohamed. During his intervention, he, as always very dramatic, tries to impress the viewers, everyone, saying that this Government has not done anything till now. From what I have listened, I just want to ask him a question. When he was Minister of Labour, what did he do for the employees of the private sector? What he did in his Ministry?

**An hon. Member:** Not even...

**Mr Hurdoyal:** I am just wondering whether he has been able to do things which really today we shall be proud of, but unfortunately, I can't remember nor do I have any clues on it.

As a responsible Government, we are firmly committed to ensuring a decent income for our population. We firmly believe that every individual deserves a fair wage that acknowledges their efforts.

In this context, this Government has taken a bold step to provide a guaranteed monthly minimum revenue of Rs15,000 and this measure will directly benefit 85,000 employees both for private and public sector. This measure has sparked a wave of enthusiasm and a sense of optimism and hope among the workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as we move forward, we are undertaking a comprehensive tax reform initiative aimed at reducing the tax burden for the middle class.

Accordingly, employees earning up to Rs390,000 annually will be exempted of tax. This demonstrates our commitment to improving further the quality of life of the middle-income earners and restore their purchasing power. Through this transformative tax reform, we demonstrate our willingness to promote a fair and just society where economic prosperity is shared by all and ensuring that taxation aligns with the principles of equity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in our unwavering commitment to prioritize the welfare and development of our children, we have introduced a new initiative that will further strengthen child support. To provide crucial assistance to families, we will be introducing the CSG Child Allowance, providing a monthly stipend of Rs2,000 for approximately 48,000 children aged up to 3 years.

This measure, coupled with the earlier announcement of free Pre-Primary Education, aims to encourage Mauritian families to have more children by easing their financial burden and also address the issue of the ageing population. These holistic

measures bear testimony to our commitment to empowering every child, ensuring they have access to proper education.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in recognition of the valuable contributions and well-being of our elderly citizens and the most vulnerable groups, our Government is taking significant measures to further support them, by increasing all basic pensions, we are alleviating the financial burdens of all the vulnerable groups of our society. We are ensuring a more dignified livelihood for our elderly, widows, individuals with disabilities, and orphans.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me here to express my gratitude to the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for the consideration given to my Constituency No. 10 in this budget.

From 2020 onwards, numerous development projects such as market fair, mediclinic, sports infrastructures and drainage infrastructures among others have been initiated and are now approaching their completion. Some have already been completed and some will be inaugurated soon while some projects will start soon.

As the former Chairperson of the Flacq District Council, I can confidently affirm that never before have Local Authorities been allocated such a substantial budget. It is truly commendable to witness the unprecedented support given to Local Authorities that will no doubt have a transformative impact on the lives of the residents we serve. The disparity between rural and urban areas will soon be things of the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am delighted also over the years that the entire District of Flacq relied on a single Fire Station located in Flacq to cater for all the surrounding villages. However, the Government took a significant step last year by announcing the construction of a new Fire Station at Montagne Blanche, which is presently in progress and in this budget, I am pleased to note that a satellite fire station this time will be constructed at Bel Air Rivière Sèche.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come up to my Ministry. My Ministry ensures that each and every organisation in the different Ministries and Departments are properly staffed with the right person being posted in the right place at the right time to do the right job.

As the Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the thousands of public officers for their dedication and selfless efforts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will have the opportunity to celebrate these unsung heroes on 22 June 2023 when we are going to commemorate the UN Public Service Day 2023. Along the same lines, the Public Officers' Welfare Council, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry caters for the welfare of public officers and their families, and organises a series of sports, educational, recreational and leisure activities for the benefit of public officers all throughout the year.

I wish to thank my colleague the hon. Dr Padayachy for increasing the grant of the Public Officer's Council from Rs5 m. to Rs6.5 m. to cater for, *inter alia*, part of the costs of operation of the Fitness Centre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now refer to what hon. Osman Mahomed stated during his intervention in this National Assembly yesterday.

**An. hon. Member:** *Li dan haldi!*

**Mr Hurdoyal:** Unfortunately, he is not here but I hope he is watching us live at this time.

*(Interruptions)*

So, I would like to thank the hon. Member for his interest yesterday during his intervention in the public service and showing so much care towards the public officers. I don't know what he has against me. However, I also note with great concern that he is not well acquainted with the measures that have been taken in this budget in the favour of the public officers.

Without embarking in any sort of controversy, I just want to remind the hon. Member that I am not disappointed at all. On the contrary, I had a number of consultations with the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. I will recommend the hon. Member to take note of the following measures that will benefit the public service and the public officers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has enumerated at least a dozen of measures that will directly benefit public officers by increasing capacity to provide public services, improving their total disposable income and providing them with better means to deliver.

These measures range from recruitment of an additional 1,400 staff in the public health sector, recruitment of 1,000 Police Constables and promotion of 833 Police Constables to the rank of Police Corporals, enlistment of 200 Trainee Educators for

Primary Schools, 200 Educators for Secondary Schools, 14 Educators for SEN students and 50 School Clerks.

The infrastructure of the Judiciary will be improved through rolling out of the e-Judiciary system, recruitment of 6 new Judges and 14 Magistrates.

Overall, 8,220 vacancies have been funded in this Budget for the Public Service, out of which 4,596 at entry level and 3,624 at promotional level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the progressive income tax measures will directly, please note, will directly benefit at least 26,188 public officers drawing less than Rs30,000 monthly and who will now be exempted from paying direct taxes.

Presently, there are 46,250 public officers benefitting from the CSG Income Allowance of Rs1,000 monthly.

As from 01 July 2023, *écoutez encore la*, 22,700 officers drawing less than Rs25,000 monthly will benefit from a monthly allowance of Rs2,000.

23,550 officers drawing more than Rs25,000, will continue to benefit from a monthly allowance of Rs1,000.

Regarding the “Revenue Minimum Garantie” of Rs15,000 monthly as from 01 July 2023, more than 4,000 public officers at the lowest rungs of the hierarchy of the public sector will benefit from an improvement in their monthly income.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the measures enunciated under the improvement of Work-Life Balance pertaining to 5 days’ leave for loss of pregnancy, utilisation of the totality of Sick Leave entitlement to cater for children with healthcare issues and up to 10 days to take care of parents and grandparents with health-related issues will also be made applicable to the Public Service.

*Pan fer mem nanye?*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to also refer to what the hon. Osman Mahomed stated during his intervention in the Appropriation Bill 2022-2023 last year where he quoted what Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, stated about the Public Service of Singapore. Allow me to quote Peter Drucker, widely regarded as the Father of Management Thinking, I quote –

“Effective Leadership is not about making speeches or being liked. Leadership is defined by results not attributes”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since I assumed the responsibility of this Ministry, I had a vision for this Ministry; to turn your vision into reality, you need to have the characteristics of an effective leader.

Here, whatever I am today, if today I am sitting in this Parliament is because of the way I do things, my uniqueness. You need to have courage, patience and vision. I was not born with a golden spoon in my mouth; this I can tell you. Sometimes when I listen to some hon. Members telling that – yes - even if I can recall hon. Osman Mahomed once said that - he was working in Singapore and at that time Dr. Navin Ramgoolam called him to be as candidate, if I am not mistaken it is like this but I want to add – you know your degree is just a piece of paper. Real education is seen in your behaviour.

With each day passing, I am filled with a sense of pride and satisfaction as I witness the realisation of those visions and all of them will become reality by the end of next financial year. I know what I am saying. We are forging a brighter future for our citizens and establishing a more efficient and responsive public sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now briefly highlight the main achievements of my Ministry. The Human Resource Management of my Ministry ensures, amongst others, that the Public Service is manned with adequate human resources, both in quantity and quality with a view to implementing Government policies, strategies, projects and programmes effectively.

In this context, in order to ensure that funds allocated for the filling of vacancies are used to the optimal level, my Ministry closely monitors the exercise of filling of vacancies across the Public Service. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to announce to the House that it is the very first time that my Ministry has exceeded – listen carefully to what I am telling you – the set target of filling more than 70% of vacancies, which was the key performance indicator for this financial year.

Today, as I am intervening, 80% of these vacancies will be filled which represents a marked improvement as compared to Financial Year 2021-2022 where only 69% of vacancies were filled.

Last financial year, we have also extended the age limit for entry in the Public Service from 40 to 45 years for all grades, except for the Workmen Group which has remained at 48 years and I still remember my friend, hon. Dr. Jagutpal, telling me to see to it and from 40 to 50 years for grades requiring a post graduate degree together with years of post-qualification experience as core qualification with a view to attracting qualified and experienced candidates in the Service; really in those sectors where we have scarcity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all recruitment and promotion in the Service are based on the relevant provisions in schemes of service. However, the prescriptions of those documents entail lengthy and tedious procedures.

In this context, last year, under the Sandbox Framework, my Ministry developed an online scheme of service platform on a pilot basis in five Ministries. These Ministries can now upload their schemes of service and have those schemes processed and prescribed in a transparent and timely manner.

Consultations and interactions between different stakeholders are being carried out concurrently on the online electronic platform. This system will also promote greater transparency and synergy among all stakeholders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry also has a key role to play in the effective implementation of the recommendations of the PRB Reports. The PRB Report 2021 has made a total of 911 recommendations pertaining to Ministries and Departments. I am pleased to inform that to the house that 90% of those recommendations have already been successfully implemented.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we are to have modern, responsive and efficient public sector, we cannot rely on traditional skills. It is essential for the Public Service to keep pace and to be attuned to the prevailing fast changing environment requiring public officers to assimilate new skills and attitudes throughout their career while bringing about the right orientation.

To have a high performing organisation, the Public Sector organisations must align and integrate training of employees with their transformation plans, changes in their operations and processes and digitalising initiatives. They must have in place a formal, systematic and rigorous evaluation of learning and development.

Training and Development have always ranked high on Government agenda. It is critical for a modern and vibrant Public Service and an essential element for the overall human resource development in the Public Sector. The philosophy of my Ministry is to make training a pre-requisite for all officers joining the service. It is the objective of my Ministry to ensure that as prescribed in the successive PRB reports, all civil servants benefit from 40 to 60 hours of meaningful work-related training opportunities annually to keep them abreast of new knowledge, techniques, technologies and upgrade their skills.

During this financial year, my Ministry, through the Civil Service College, the Occupational Safety and Health Division and bilateral support of donor countries has

provided training of a total of around 17,500 public officers. This has exceeded the set-out target of 12,000 that was announced in last year's budget estimates.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to further enhance our training capacity, my Ministry is currently setting up a state-of-the-art infrastructure to accommodate the Civil Service College, Mauritius with a modern facility equipped with cutting-edge technologies, comprising an Academic Block and an Auditorium. These infrastructures will enable the College to offer all public officers with meaningful work-related training opportunities in a more conducive environment and to establish linkages with overseas training institutions.

I am pleased to inform the House that construction works of the Academic Block has reached a progress of 49% and that of the Auditorium to a progress of 28%. It is expected that by end of August 2023, more than 70% of the project would be completed and that the scheduled completion date of end of this year would be achieved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are living in a digital age and the public sector is bound to transform with new technologies to keep up the pace. The Public Sector Transformation Bureau in my ministry is encouraging projects to transform the way of doing business.

In this context, Last year I informed the house that my Ministry embarked on the e-HR project. The e-HR project aims at digitalising the core functionalities of Human Resource Management at the level of Ministries and Departments mainly leave management system, prescription of Scheme of Service, performance management, employee management and self-service.

As at date, the leave management system has been rolled out in 78 public organisations. Public officers of these organisations can now apply for their leaves online and obtain approval thereof through SMS and email. Moreover, the officers can check their leave balances online.

As at date, 32,415 employees, representing 57% of public officers are using the System for application of their leaves. The remaining components of the e-HR project are expected to be completed by August 2023.

The e-HR platform has been designed to interface with other government IT systems relating to public officers, such as the e-payslip developed by the CISD, the passage benefit and car loan system, which is currently being developed by the

Accountant General, and the Scheme of Service system currently being developed under the Sandbox Framework.

I am also pleased to announce that an Electronic Document Management System which incorporates best practices in digitally enabled processes is being implemented on a pilot basis at my Ministry. The project is fully funded by the United Nations Development Programme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government firmly believes that the accelerated adoption of innovative technologies and digitally enabled processes in the public sector, as well as in other sectors, will have ripple and catalytic effects on the socio-economic development of our country.

As announced, the two key laudable initiatives namely, the e-Health and e-Judiciary systems will pave the way for a more resilient, responsive and citizen-centric institutions by providing uninterrupted, timely and quality services to citizens, businesses and other stakeholders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, "To Dare and To Care," the philosophy of this Budget encapsulates the essence of our vision for a progressive and compassionate nation. This Government is demonstrating its empathy, compassion, and commitment to uplifting the lives of all our citizens to ensure that no one is left behind on the path to progress.

*M. le président, il s'agit d'un budget socialiste qui correspond sans le moindre doute aux attentes de tous les segments de la population, mais surtout ceux qui sont les plus vulnérables.*

As rightly pointed out by renowned French author, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, I quote –

*“As for your future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.”*

This is what this Government has done in this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Precise 40 minutes. Hon. Mrs Sandra Mayotte, please!

**Mrs Mayotte:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debates for Wednesday, 07 June 2023.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, No! Only debates! No problem. Seconded?

**Mr Toussaint seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday, 07 June 2023 at 11.30 a.m.

**Mr Toussaint seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hold on. We have an Adjournment matter.

*(Interruptions)*

Don't make noise, please! Let us hear it.

## **MATTERS RAISED**

(11.27 p.m.)

### **EID-UL-ADHA – LIVE CATTLE IMPORT**

**Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):** M. le président, ma requête s'adresse au vice-Premier ministre, le Dr. Anwar Husnoo, qui s'occupe du dossier de *live cattle* par rapport à la fête Eid-ul-Adha qui est prévue le 29 juin 2023.

Dans une déclaration exclusive au journal Star, le Dr. Anwar Husnoo a déclaré que la MMA s'est engagé à importer un millier de têtes de bétails en provenance de l'Afrique du Sud et qu'une équipe d'officier de la MMA, comprenant vétérinaires s'est rendu en Afrique du Sud pour assister à l'embarquement des bétails à destination de Maurice. C'est-à-dire plus d'un mois avant la fête de l'Eid-ul-Adha. La déclaration a été faite le 14 mai dans le journal Star. Il a aussi déclaré que « *si ena letemp, MMA pu importer plis ki mille zanimo ek nu pu kapav donn enn bon prix a ban konsomater.* »

L'honorable Dr. Anwar Husnoo a aussi confirmé que le gouvernement a alloué une somme importante à la MMA...

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no, no!

Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** ...pour l'importation de bétails.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Yes?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The request?

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Okay, I will go to the request.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have listened to at least 5 to 6 lines.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Okay. I won't be long.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Everybody is here.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I won't be long. Just less than one minute.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no, no!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** So, ma requette...

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, just one line for the request.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** No, no, I will make my request now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes, please.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** So, ma requête ce soir, je demande au vice-Premier ministre de clarifier la situation et de confirmer si la MMA importera des *live cattles* comme mentionné dans l'hebdomadaire, et aussi d'éclairer la Chambre et tous ceux concernés qu'en est-il du prix par kilo ? Quand est ce que le prix va être finalisé car ce n'est pas possible que chaque année c'est toujours à la dernière minute qu'on communique le prix.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no, no, no! This is not a PQ.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** Vous comprendrez que ceux qui vont célébrer la fête sont en attente.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not a PQ. I have not even heard your request. Would your request be: will the 1,000 cattle be coming? This is how we make a request. Please!

**Mr Ameer Meea:** I do not know why you interrupted me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am almost done. My request is: is the Mauritius Meat Authority importing the cattle and when the price will be fixed as soon as possible?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Voilà! Etaler tous ce qui est dans le journal n'est pas important.

**Mr Ameer Meea:** No, it is in the papers. You have to read it again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The request is straight.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo):** Yes, I know, but I mean is this an Adjournment matter?

The way you are putting it?

**Mr Ameer Meea:** No...

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no, no! Hon. VPM!

**Dr. Husnoo:** No, I mean, look!

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is why I have stopped him.

**Dr. Husnoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no government before has tried to bring cattle for Eid-ul-Adha.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Ameer Meea:** No...

**Dr. Husnoo:** No! Please, you have talked. Can you listen, please?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no! Hon. VPM!

**Dr. Husnoo:** You have talked. Listen now!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. VPM!

(*Interruptions*)

**Dr. Husnoo:** Okay! Yes, I am just telling you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Reply to me! Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea, please!

**Dr. Husnoo:** Nobody did it before!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Listen to me.

**Dr. Husnoo:** We know what was the problem. We know how a lot of members of the Muslim community were being fleeced before Eid-ul-Adha by some companies.

That is why this Government put money, I repeat it, they have put money on the table and tried to import. But there was a lot of problem. I know what I have said in the paper because we were working hard to bring. I have talked to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister agreed. We know *sa cinema ki ena tou les ane la*, how the price was being inflated. That is why the Government put the money to try to help.

Unfortunately, it did not materialise. But that does not mean we are going to stop this. I plead maybe guilty because I did not manage to bring the cattle before Eid this year, but the work is going to go on. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much, hon. Vice-Prime Minister. You have well enlightened...

**Dr. Husnoo:** As far as the price is concerned, it has not been fixed yet. We had a meeting a couple of days ago. It is going to be fixed. The Minister of Commerce is not in Mauritius. He will be coming on Monday. We will fix it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** He is counting on you for a good price. Thank you. Have a safe trip back home.

*At 11.32 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday, 07 June 2023 at 11.30 a.m.*

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### ANGUS ROAD, VACOAS – IMMOVEABLE PROPERTIES’ ACQUISITION – ICAC INVESTIGATION

**(No. B/675) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiries initiated into the acquisition of properties at Angus Road, in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Commission against Corruption, information as to where matters stand.

**Reply:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/862 of the Sitting of Tuesday 03 August 2021 wherein I indicated that the Independent Commission Against Corruption was investigating into an allegation in regard to the acquisition of immoveable properties at Angus Road.

I am advised that, in view of the provisions of section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, no information relating to any investigation can be divulged, and the exception for the disclosure of information provided for under section 81(4) of the same Act would not apply to Parliamentary Questions.

### DPP’S STAND – FILING OF PROVISIONAL CHARGES

**(No. B/676) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent stand taken by the Director of Public Prosecutions for the lodging of provisional charges, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to actions envisaged by the latter in relation thereto, if any.

**Reply:** The Commissioner of Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions are both vested with constitutional powers in the exercise of their duties under Sections 71 and 72 of the Constitution and they are not subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority. While the Police have the right to investigate and lodge provisional charges, the Director of Public Prosecutions is entitled to move for the striking out of a provisional charge in Court.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 23 May 2023, in the context of the case of Mr J.V. who was provisionally charged with the offence of “Perverting the course of justice” in breach of Section 298 A of the Criminal Code before Port Louis Court Division III, the representative from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions made a statement wherein it was, *inter alia*, stated and I quote –

“DPP strongly recommends the Commissioner of Police not to resort instantly to the lodging of provisional charges invariably in all cases, but rather to seek prior legal advice from the DPP, who is constitutionally mandated to decide in all criminal proceedings.”

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that provisional charge has been part of our criminal procedure law since more than a century now. Although no reference to provisional charge is made in our domestic legislation, it has survived as a settled practice and is unique to the Mauritian context and has been the subject matter of judgments by the Supreme Court.

The purpose of lodging provisional charges is to arrest and detain a person under judicial supervision and control. This is in conformity with Section 5 of our Constitution, “the right to liberty,” which requires the Police to bring a detainee, suspected of crime, before a magistrate within the least possible delay. At this stage, the detainee does not plead to a provisional charge and no trial takes place.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that the main objectives of a provisional charge are –

- (a) to inform the magistrate of the reason of the arrest;
- (b) to bring the arrest and detention of the suspects under judicial supervision and control in order to protect their rights and prevent any abuse;
- (c) to enable the Court to decide whether they shall be released on bail or not and, if not, for how long they should be detained, and
- (d) to enable the Court to impose conditions for their release on bail in order to ensure their appearance before Court as and when required.

Where a person has been provisionally charged –

- (a) he may be prevented from tampering with witnesses or evidence or otherwise obstructing the course of justice, and
- (b) the Police may obtain authorisation from the Court to cause him to be examined by Police Medical Officer or to take samples from him for DNA analysis, where this will assist the Police to obtain proof of the commission of an offence.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police exercises its powers of arrest and detention daily in conformity with existing legislation and established procedures. These include adherence to Section 9(1)(c) of the Police Act, which provides that the duties of the Police Force shall be to take all lawful measures for apprehending persons who have committed or who are reasonably suspected of having committed offences. In addition, Section 27 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1852, *inter alia*, provides that Police Officers arresting suspects without warrant shall, as soon as possible, take such suspects before a magistrate.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the decision for arrest and lodging of provisional charges is within his sole prerogative and that the need for any legal advice from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions prior to any arrest or provisional charge is not mandatory. The Police have thus no obligation to seek legal advice from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions invariably in all cases prior to the lodging of provisional charges against suspects. It is only upon the completion of an investigation that the Commissioner of Police refers cases to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice for prosecution. The powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions are set out in Section 72 of the Constitution and the Director of Public Prosecutions may, under Section 72(3) do the following, and I quote –

“72(3) The Director of Public Prosecutions shall have power in any case in which he considers it desirable so to do to-

- (a) institute and undertake criminal proceedings before any Court of law (not being a Court established by a disciplinary law);
- (b) take over and continue any such criminal proceedings that may have been instituted by any other person or authority, and
- (c) discontinue at any stage before judgment is delivered any such criminal proceedings instituted or undertaken by himself or any other person or authority.”

The interaction between the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Commissioner of Police is one between the holders of two important constitutional posts and each one of them needs to respect the constitutional independence of the other.

#### **COMMISSIONER OF POLICE – RODRIGUES – OFFICIAL MISSION**

**(No. B/677) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the recent official mission undertaken by the Commissioner of Police to Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) purpose therefor, and
- (b) outcome thereof.

**Reply:** The Mauritius Police Force is organised into Divisions, Branches and Units. For the purpose of policing, Mauritius is divided into eight Police Divisions, including a Rodrigues Division.

The Police Divisions are headed by Divisional Commanders, who are answerable to the Commissioner of Police, for the efficient and effective running of the Divisions under their charge. The Commissioner of Police has thus a direct line of command and control over the Police Divisions.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that in this capacity, he regularly carries out visits in all Divisions, including Rodrigues, with a view to *inter alia* addressing administrative, operational and human resource issues, if any, as well as promptly addressing any emerging policing challenges and most importantly, ensuring that the strategic plan of the Mauritius Police Force is being properly implemented.

In this context, the Commissioner of Police has informed that he proceeded on an Inspection tour/visit to the Rodrigues Division from Tuesday 02 to Thursday 04 May 2023. He was accompanied by a team from different sections of the Mauritius Police Force, such as Police Headquarters, National Coast Guard, Traffic Branch, Communication Branch and the Force Crime Intelligence Unit.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that the outcome of his visit to the Rodrigues Division pertained to the following –

- (i) Implementation of Police Strategic Plan 2022-2025;
- (ii) Meetings with Police Officers posted to Rodrigues Division for an improved service delivery;
- (iii) Annual Medical Examination of all Police Officers in Rodrigues;
- (iv) Meetings with the Rodrigues Community Policing Representatives and Officers in Charge of other organisations/Departments at a special Divisional Community Policing Forum regarding safety and security issues and remedies;
- (v) Survey for the Installation of CCTV cameras in all Police Stations and NCG Post and the setting up of a new Police Communication Network in Rodrigues;
- (vi) Maritime Safety and Security in the Region;
- (vii) Meeting with the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues to discuss issues pertaining to drug trafficking, posting of Police Officers and capacity building, amongst others;
- (viii) Inspection at Petit Gabriel Police Station,
- (ix) Laying of Wreath at the Memorial of Late PCs Speville and Phillip at Pointe du Diable who lost their lives at sea during a search and rescue operation at Pointe du Diable.

**(No. B/678) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the alleged sabotage of the racing track of the Champ de Mars on the eve of the Maiden Cup Day last year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **WOMEN SEXUAL ASSAULTS – PROSECUTIONS & CONVICTIONS**

**(No. B/679) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to sexual assaults on women, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the past five years, indicating the number thereof –

- (a) prosecuted, and
- (b) in which convictions have been secured.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **MV WAKASHIO – REPORT OF THE COURT OF INVESTIGATION – RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION**

**(No. B/680) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Report of the Court of Investigation set up to look into the grounding of the MV Wakashio, he will –

- (a) state –
  - (i) the findings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to examine the recommendations contained therein, and
  - (ii) where matters stand as to the implementation of the recommendations contained therein, and

(b) table copy thereof and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ROYAL ROAD, PONT BLANC – FATAL ACCIDENT – 30 APRIL 2023**

**(No. B/681) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the fatal road accident which occurred along Royal Road in Pont Blanc on 30 April 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ICAC - DIRECTOR GENERAL – OVERSEAS MISSIONS – COSTS & PURPOSE**

**(No. B/682) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the official overseas missions undertaken by the Director General of the Independent Commission against Corruption, since March 2022 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission information as to the number thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) purpose thereof, and
- (b) amount of *per diem* disbursed therefor.

**Reply:** Section 59 of the Prevention of Corruption Act provides for a Parliamentary Committee to monitor the operations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Moreover, according to Section 61(2)(c) of the Act, the Parliamentary Committee may require the Director General or any officer to furnish any accounting or other records relating directly or indirectly to all financial transactions of the Commission and to answer any question in relation to such financial transactions.

The Prevention of Corruption Act also provides for the Members of the Opposition to form part of the Parliamentary Committee. As such, the Members on the other side of the House have the possibility to request and obtain information on the operations of the ICAC through the Parliamentary Committee.

As a matter of fact, I have been informed that a list of official missions undertaken by the Director General has already been prepared by the Commission and will be submitted to the Parliamentary Committee as requested by it.

**CONTAINER PORT PERFORMANCE INDEX 2022 –  
EFFICIENCY & PERFORMANCE – ACTIONS ENVISAGED**

**(No. B/683) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the container port of Port Louis, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the ranking thereof in the Container Port Performance Index 2022 published by the World Bank Group and, if so, indicate the actions envisaged to improve the efficiency and performance thereof.

*(Vide Reply to PNQ)*

**VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES – NEW POLICE STATION – CONSTRUCTION  
DETAILS**

**(No. B/684) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a new Police Station at Vallée des Prêtres, in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if any topographic study has been carried out thereat and if so, table a copy thereof;
- (b) the cost of the project, indicating the name of the successful bidder thereof, and
- (c) expected start and completion dates thereof.

**Reply:** The Commissioner of Police has informed that on Tuesday 04 February 2020, a plot of state land of an extent of 500m<sup>2</sup> at Marjolin Road, Cité La Cure, Vallée des Prêtres was vested in the Police Department for the construction of a Police Station.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that in May 2017, the National Development Unit, had enlisted the services of Mega Design Ltd as Consultant for the project ‘Reconstruction of Marjolin Bridge and Construction of drain at Marjolin Royal Road’, to mitigate the risk of flooding. The scope of the consultancy services comprised, amongst others, topographical and hydrological surveys.

Following submission of the Design Report and the Scope of Works by the Consultant in August 2017, a Works Order was issued by the National Development Unit on Tuesday 16 October 2018 to Square Deal Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd for the implementation of the works. Specific works relating to the surveys started in October 2018 and were completed in June 2020.

The Commissioner of Police has further informed that based on the results of the survey, on Friday 30 September 2022, a tender exercise through Open National Bidding was initiated for the construction of a Police Station, a one-storey building, with a total floor area of 258m<sup>2</sup> at Vallée des Prêtres. On the closing date of Tuesday 01 November 2022, ten bids were received.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has additionally informed that on Tuesday 20 December 2022, an award was made to Union Allied Ltd for the amount of Rs10,775,500 (VAT inclusive) plus a contingency sum of Rs350,000. Prior to the construction, Union Allied Ltd carried out a geotechnical survey of the land and proposed a new design for an additional sum of Rs1,145,400, and this was approved. The total cost of the project is therefore Rs12,270,900.

In regard to part (c) of the question, the Commissioner of Police has informed that construction works for the Vallée des Prêtres Police Station started on Thursday 16 February 2023 and are expected to be completed by the end of September 2023.

#### **DIRECTOR OF AUDIT – APPOINTMENT & ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**(No. B/685) Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Director of Audit, he will state the mode of appointment and eligibility criteria considered for the appointment thereof, indicating if same were reviewed for the appointment of the former and incumbent to the post thereof and, if so, the reasons therefor.

**Reply:** The mode of appointment of the Director of Audit is governed by Section 110 of the Constitution, by Regulation 19 of the Public Service Commission Regulations 1967, as subsequently amended, and by the provisions of the Scheme of Service for the post.

Section 110 of the Constitution provides as follows, and I quote –

“There shall be a Director of Audit, whose office shall be a public office and who shall be appointed by the Public Service Commission, acting after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.”

Since the post of Director of Audit is a public office and appointment thereto is made by the Public Service Commission, Regulation 19 of the PSC Regulations is also applicable. As a matter of fact, Regulation 19 (1) provides as follows, and I quote –

“(a) Where a vacancy occurs, or it is known that a vacancy will occur in any public office in any Ministry or department or general service, the responsible officer shall, if he desires that the vacancy be filled immediately and after ascertaining that the details of the vacancy have been verified and that there is no establishment or financial or other objection to the vacancy being filled, report the fact to the Secretary as soon as possible.

(b) The report shall include a recommendation as to the manner in which the vacancy should be filled and whether or not the vacancy should be advertised, and a copy of the report of the vacancy shall be forwarded to the supervising officer of the Ministry responsible for the civil service.”

The prevailing prescribed Scheme of Service for the post of Director of Audit provides, under its part entitled “Qualifications”, that the post shall be filled, and I quote –

“By appointment of a person who -

(a) is an Associate of the Association of Certified Accountants or holds an alternative qualification acceptable to the Public Service Commission. Possession of a degree will be an advantage, and

(b) has had wide and lengthy experience of public affairs in a very senior official capacity preferably in the Public Service of Mauritius.”

The Scheme of Service also specifies the other qualities, the knowledge, the skills and the abilities required for appointment to the post of Director of Audit.

It must be emphasised that there has been no change in the mode of appointment of the post of Director of Audit as laid down in the Section 110 of the Constitution and Regulation 19 of the PSC Regulations. Moreover, the Scheme of Service for the post dates back to 1984 and the qualifications requirements have not been changed since then.

It must also be emphasised that the same procedure was followed for the appointment of the present incumbent as well as for the appointment of his predecessor. In fact, according to available records, since 1984, appointment to the post of Director of Audit has been made by the PSC by direct appointment of a person with the required profile as laid down in the Scheme of Service.

#### **SIR GAËTAN TUG – CASUALTY AT SEA – ENQUIRY**

**(No. B/686) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the alleged case of Involuntary Homicide by Negligence against the Deputy Port Master following the casualty at sea of the Sir Gaëtan tug, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the enquiry initiated thereinto.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **PLAINE CORAIL AIRPORT – NEW RUNWAY CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/687) Mr J. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the construction of a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport in Rodrigues, he will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** In reply to Parliamentary Question B/318 at our Sitting on 19 April 2022, the House was informed that negotiations were ongoing with *Agence Française de Développement* with a view to contracting a sovereign loan of Euro85 m. to finance the construction of the runway and related airport facilities. The loan was to be accompanied by a grant of Euro15.6 m. from the European Union. A ‘Declaration of Intent’ was signed between the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs on 20 February 2020. Construction works were expected to start in April 2023 and completed in July 2025.

However, in August 2022, *Agence Française de Développement* informed Government that it would no longer finance the new runway project at Plaine Corail, Rodrigues.

The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development had on 14 September 2022 made a request to the World Bank to finance this project through a loan facility of Euro96 m. (Rs4.32 billion).

Following an Identification Mission carried out from 26 to 28 September 2022, World Bank confirmed its interest, in principle, in co-financing the project with the European Union. A second mission was conducted from 20 to 31 March 2023. It is expected that the World Bank loan approval is now scheduled for end of September/early October 2023 based on the final cost estimate of the detailed design, expected in August 2023. The loan will be accompanied by a grant of Euro15.6 m. from the European Union.

Since the project is considered as high risk in terms of Environmental and Social aspects by the World Bank, one of the requirements for the consideration of the financing of the project is that the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Report done in 2019 by Setec be updated.

I am informed that the critical milestones have now been reviewed in the light of an updated project plan submitted by the consultant, GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd., on 15 March 2023. The proposed dates may be subject to further changes –

July 2023	Submission of Draft Detailed Design Report
August 2023	Submission of Final Detailed Design Report
October 2023	Final Tender Documents submitted
October 2023	Floating of Tenders for works (provided funds secured)
Early 2024	Start of Construction works
Early 2027	Completion of Construction works

The estimated cost of this project was initially Rs4 billion (excluding VAT), in accordance with the preliminary design report of 2018. The consultant has now submitted the updated cost estimates for the project on 07 April 2023 amounting to Rs6,586,551,285 (excluding VAT). The detailed cost estimates have been transmitted to the World Bank.

**MAURITIUS POLICE FORCE – HIRED POLICE OFFICERS –2020 TO  
JUNE 2023**

**(No. B/688) Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as the number of Police Officers recruited since 2020 to date.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since 2020 to date, a total number of 870 candidates comprising 678 males and 192 females have been recruited for the posts of Police Constable and Woman Police Constable in the Mauritius Police Force.

**AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LTD & AIRPORT TERMINAL  
OPERATIONS LTD – MERGER**

**(No. B/689) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether following the merger of Airports of Mauritius Ltd., and Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if a Chief Executive Officer of the new entity has been appointed and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) name thereof, and
- (b) terms and conditions of contract of employment thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

**FORMER CONSTITUENCY CLERK - ALLEGED FICTITIOUS  
EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. B/690) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiry initiated into the statement made by Mrs S. K. against Mr Y.S., for the alleged fictitious employment of the former as Constituency Clerk of the latter, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand, indicating when Mr Y.S. was last interviewed by the Police.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **ANSE LA RAIE – STATE LANDS – LAND USE RE-PLANNING EXERCISE**

**(No. B/702) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to State lands in the region of Anse La Raie, he will state if –

- (a) same are being the subject of a Land Use re-planning exercise and, if so, provide –
  - (i) the exact location and extent of land involved;
  - (ii) details of changes involved, and
- (b) any new application has been received therefor and, if so, give details thereof.

*(Reply not available)*

#### **CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - APPLICANT FISHERS - GENERAL COURSE 2023 & STIPEND**

**(No. B/725) Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping whether, in regard to applicant fishers residing in Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof who followed the General Course for Fishers since January 2023 to date, and
- (b) quantum of stipend paid thereto during the course.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **MAURITIAN MARKET - IMPORTATION OF FISH - PRICE CONTROL MECHANISM**

**(No. B/726) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the importation of fish for the Mauritian market, he will state –

- (a) the quantity thereof in metric tons for each of the years 2020 to 2022 and January 2023 to date, indicating the costs thereof, and
- (b) if his Ministry proposes to impose a price control mechanism thereon and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **BUDGET SPEECH 2019-20 – DISCIPLINE MASTERS’ RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/727) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the recruitment of 34 Discipline Masters as announced in the 2019-2020 Budget Speech, she will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** Following announcement made for the recruitment of Discipline Masters, the matter was referred to the Public Service Commission (PSC) on 17 September 2019 after having sought necessary clearances.

The PSC raised a number of points regarding the profile of the incumbent for consideration by the Ministry and a meeting was held in June 2020 to discuss these points.

However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, procedures relating to the Scheme of Service of Discipline Master were delayed.

On 30 November 2021, an amended draft Scheme of Service was submitted to the Ministry of Public Service Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR) with certain recommendations made by the PSC taken on board.

During a meeting held on 27 December 2021 at the MPSAIR, my Ministry was apprised that the PRB had informed that the matter should be referred to the Standing Committee on Creation of Grades in line with the provision at paragraph 6.16 of the PRB Report 2021.

In March 2022, the MPSAIR referred the Scheme of Service to my Ministry after consultations with the Standing Committee. Discussions regarding the qualification requirements for the post of Discipline Master and the salary structure led to a review of the qualifications requirement for the post.

The PRB subsequently requested for justifications as regards the requirements for Discipline Master to follow a work-related two-year Diploma course in Counselling. Necessary information is being conveyed to the PRB.

**RÉDUIT, MOKA – LEASE OF STATE LAND – APPLICATIONS****RECEIVED**

**(No. B/728) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the lease of State land in the region of Réduit, Moka, he will state, for each of the years 2015 to 2022 and for the period January 2023 to date, the number of applications received therefor, indicating in each case the –

- (a) name of the applicant therefor;
- (b) extent of land;
- (c) intended use thereof, and
- (d) outcome thereof.

*(Reply not available)*

**NATIONAL GENDER POLICY 2022-2030 – RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(No. B/729) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the National Gender Policy 2022-2030, she will state the recommendations contained therein and the implementation plan thereof.

*(Vide Reply to PQ B/697)*

**RUISSEAU ROSE, LONG MOUNTAIN - FOOTBALL PITCH**

**(No. B/730) Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management whether, in regard to the construction of a football pitch in Ruisseau Rose, Long Mountain, he will state where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

**BAIE DU TOMBEAU – FORD ALBERT HERITAGE SITE – RENOVATION**

**(No. B/731) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to the proposed renovation works at Ford Albert heritage site, Baie du Tombeau, he will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** In regard to Fort Albert, which is located in Baie du Tombeau, I am informed by the National Heritage Fund that the Fort was designated as a National Heritage since 1985.

The main Fort has been vested in my Ministry while the remaining land surrounding the Fort belongs to two private owners namely one Mr J.P. and one Mr E.G.

I am informed that cleaning works are undertaken by the National Heritage Fund on a regular basis thereat.

With regard to the proposed renovation works at the Fort Albert, I am informed that a survey of the site will be undertaken shortly by the Project Coordinator of my Ministry with a view to preparing the scope of works and estimated costs for the project.

#### **MAURITIUS FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. - FILM SHOOTING - WHALES**

**(No. B/732) Ms J. Berénger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage whether, in regard to film shooting with whales in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Film Development Corporation Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the number of authorization granted therefor for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 to date, indicating the –
  - (i) names of the companies/ organizations, and
  - (ii) actions taken to ensure the compliance of the conditions attached thereto, and
- (b) if any non-compliance of the conditions thereof has been reported and, if so, the actions taken in relation thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **MRS Y. B. R. – ACCUSATIONS - FORMAL COMPLAINT**

**(No. B/733) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mrs Y. B. R., President of the Air Mauritius Cabin Crew Association, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of any formal complaint from the said Association regarding accusations levelled by Air Mauritius Ltd., against her and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ABBATOIR ROAD, ROCHE BOIS – LORRY STAND – RELOCATION**

**(No. B/734) Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the lorry owners formerly based at Quay D roundabout, temporarily relocated to Abbatoir Road in Roche Bois, pending the construction of the viaduct thereat, he will state when they will be relocated back to their initial base of operation.

**Reply:** During the construction of the new flyover at the Quay D roundabout, the lorry stand located between Quay D and ABC Motors roundabouts had to be relocated to Abbatoir Road in Roche Bois.

The land which was previously used as parking facilities for lorries was required for the implementation of the works. The plot of land has therefore been used for the construction of ramps and part of the flyover, of an approximate length of 75 metres, crossing the Motorway M2.

Another part of the land has also been used, for safety reasons, for the implementation of a new slip lane along Motorway M2 and a signalized junction near ABC Motors building. The remaining plot of land is landlocked and cannot be used other than for embellishment.

The lorry owners have, therefore, been relocated to an alternative tarred area of approximately 4900 metre square along Abbatoir Road, located about some 250 metres away from the previous parking area since August 2022. This relocation has been carried out in consultation with the City Council of Port Louis and the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning. A new toilet block and shelter have also been constructed at the existing tarred area along Abbatoir Road as requested by the lorry owners.

I am further advised that only one lorry (namely, 5550 ZT 00) is licensed to operate from the previous lorry stand. The other lorries (about 25) are licensed to operate from their residential address (peripherals of Port Louis).

Necessary procedures are being initiated to proclaim this lorry stand.

### **SUICIDES - YEARLY BASIS – SINCE 2014**

**(No. B/735) Mrs K. Foo Kune Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to suicides, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof on a yearly basis since 2014 to date, indicating the number of –

- (i) men and women, age-wise;
- (ii) children, and
- (iii) attempts;
- (b) the risk factors thereof, and
- (c) if he proposes to set up a national suicide prevention strategy in relation thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **OVERSEAS TREATMENT SCHEME – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – THRESHOLD'S REVIEW**

**(No. B/736) Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the Overseas Treatment Scheme, he will state the eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom, indicating if consideration will be given for a review of the threshold thereof.

**Reply:** According to my Ministry's existing policy, the eligibility criteria to benefit from financial assistance under the Overseas Treatment Scheme are as follows –

- (a) Treatment should not be available in our hospitals.

A medical board comprising of a Regional Health Director and two Consultant Specialist doctors (or more) in the respective field/s is then set up by my Ministry.

The medical board assesses the clinical condition of the patient and submits a report, highlighting the urgency of the treatment and any other medical requirements which the patient would require for travel.

- (b) The monthly household income should not exceed Rs100,000 (based on a report from the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity)

The criteria in respect of the household income of Rs50,000 was approved in 2001 at the inception of the Overseas Treatment Scheme. Since that year, there has been a number of changes in the inflation rates and increase in the costs of living. Therefore, a number of complicated cases not operable in Mauritius could not benefit from such assistance as their household income exceeded the ceiling of Rs50,000.

Based on the above economic reasoning, the Budget Speech 2021/2022 made provision for the revision of the income eligibility criteria for households from Rs50,000

to Rs100,000. Consideration of a review of the threshold will be given in light of the evolving economic situation.

### **PUBLIC HOSPITALS –TREATMENT - CARDIO-VASCULAR DISEASES**

**(No. B/737) Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state the number of –

- (a) patients presently being treated for Cardio-vascular diseases, and
- (b) heart surgeries carried out thereat over the past five years.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **MIDWIVES - PUBLIC HOSPITALS**

**(No. B/738) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to midwives in public hospitals, he will state the –

- (a) current number thereof, indicating the posting thereof department-wise, and
- (b) duties assigned thereto at –
  - (i) pre-pregnancy, and
  - (ii) during and post pregnancy stages.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **ROAD ACCIDENTS – STATISTICS – PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

**(No. B/739) Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to road accidents, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof since 2019 to date, indicating the –
  - (i) number of fatal ones, and
  - (ii) reasons therefor in each case, and
- (b) the preventive measures taken by his Ministry in relation thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

**PETIT MARIN PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL – PROPOSED RENOVATION  
WORKS**

**(No. B/740) Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the proposed renovation works to be carried out at the Petit Marin Pre-Primary School, Baie du Tombeau, she will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** Le Petit Marin Pre-Primary School is attached to the Louis Serge Coutet Government School at Baie du Tombeau.

I am informed that the Headmistress of Louis Serge Coutet Government School had, on 26 April 2023, made a request for renovation of the toilet block. Following a site visit carried out on 12 May 2023 by officers of my Ministry, in addition to the renovation of the toilet block, other maintenance works such as waterproofing, painting and burglarproofing, have been identified.

I am further informed that works in connection with the renovation of the toilet block will be completed by the end of July 2023 while the other maintenance works are expected to be completed by the end of October 2023.

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 – NSLD – CONSTRUCTION OF 8000 HOUSING  
UNITS – LOCATION**

**(No. B/741) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning, Minister of Tourism whether, in regard to the initial project for the construction of 12000 housing units, now revised to 8000 by the New Social Living Development Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of units earmarked therefor in Constituency No. 6, Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, giving details as to the location thereof.

*(Reply not available)*