



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**PARLIAMENTARY****DEBATES****(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****FRIDAY 17 DECEMBER 2021**

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTION

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MOTION

END-OF-YEAR MESSAGE

ADJOURNMENT

THE CABINET

(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	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
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

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr Speaker	Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, GCSK, GOSK
Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammud Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Sanjit Kumar Nuckcheddy
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena
Adviser	Dowlutta, Mr Ram Ranjit
Deputy Clerk	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
Clerk Assistant	Gopall, Mr Navin
Clerk Assistant	Seetul, Ms Darshinee
Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Parliamentary Librarian and Information Officer	Jeewoonarain, Ms Prittydevi
Serjeant-at-Arms	Bundhoo, Mr Anirood

MAURITIUS**Seventh National Assembly**

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 39 of 2021**Sitting of Friday 17 December 2021**

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 3.00 p.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.

A. Prime Minister's Office

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

The Ports (Security) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 302 of 2021)

B. Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

The Annual Report 2019/2020 of the Open University of Mauritius.

C. Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management

The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (Naming of roads within the Township) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 300 of 2021)

D. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 294 of 2021)
- (b) The Economic Development Board (Invest Hotel Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 296 of 2021)
- (c) The Economic Development Board (Property Development Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 297 of 2021)
- (d) The Economic Development Board (Smart City Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 298 of 2021)
- (e) The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (Federal Republic of Germany) (Amendment). (Government Notice No. 301 of 2021)

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

The Social Contribution and Social Benefits (Contributions by Public Sector Employees) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 293 of 2021)

F. Attorney General

Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security

The Witnesses' Attendance Allowances (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 295 of 2021)

G. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Morris Legacy Fund for the year ended 30 June 2021.

H. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

- (a) The National Women's Council (Election of Members of Executive Committee) Regulations 2021. (Government Notice No. 299 of 2021)
- (b) The Annual Reports and Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Women Entrepreneur Council for the periods 01 July 2018 to June 2019 and 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

I. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

- (a) The Annual Reports and Financial Statements of the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) for the years ended 31 December 2010, 2011 and 2012.
- (b) The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) for the years ended 31 December 2013, 2014 and 2015.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION
MILK POWDER – SUBSIDY – RENEWAL, EXTENSION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the subsidy of Rs30 per kilogram on milk powder, applicable over the period 01 August 2021 to 12 January 2022, he will state if –

- (a) same was decided after the commissioning of a market study, and
- (b) consideration will be given for –
 - (i) a renewal of the subsidy and, if so, indicate the period that will be concerned therewith, and
 - (ii) an extension of the subsidy to infant milk powder.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a mixed economy where generally demand and supply regulate markets. As a result, both internal and external factors have historically had an impact on markets and prices. Indicatively, external factors such as the global financial crisis in 2008 led to an inflation rate of 9.7%, an unseen figure for the past 15 years.

Fluctuations in the price level of basic commodities create uncertainty in the economy, rendering decision-making and forward planning by consumers, businesses, and Government difficult. A stable price level is an important condition for promoting a healthy macroeconomic environment conducive to economic growth. As a highly import dependent country, Mauritius is vulnerable to exogenous economic shocks, including, *inter alia*, foreign exchange rates volatility, disruptions in demand and supply, swings in the world output, geopolitics disturbances, global trade imbalances and global crisis.

Milk powder as a product of wide daily consumption is considered as a sensitive one and for that reason it has always, ever since 1989, been controlled by way of Maximum Mark-up or Maximum Recommended Retail Price.

The Maximum Mark-up or Maximum Recommended Retail Price is one of the means to ensure that the product remains accessible to the general public at an affordable price. Since 1989 up to September 2008, the price of milk powder was determined under the Mark-Up System. The mark-up of milk powder was then 14% and a special allowance up to 10% was allowed to cover the local charges and packing costs.

In 2008, the Mark-Up System for milk powder was abolished and the Maximum Recommended Retail Price (MRRP) as well as a Code of Practice were introduced. The recommended margin of milk powder was fixed at a maximum of 35% based on the CIF.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its rapid spread in early 2020, global human mobility was largely affected causing significant disruptions worldwide. By March 2020, when COVID-19 first touched Mauritius, international air travel had come to almost a standstill. Air, ground and sea transportation of goods had also considerably slowed down and many countries worldwide had imposed export restrictions. The result was that the global supply chain and the volume of goods were severely affected on the international market. These restrictions also illuminated the complexity and cross-border interconnectedness of the labour markets, economies, value chains and supply chains, and the dependence of some sectors on cross-border mobility.

Consequently, as from April 2020, Mauritius started to feel the effects of socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on the domestic market. Immediate measures were taken to control the prices of 10 products, *inter alia*, pasta, cereal, pulses, basmati rice and butter, amongst others. As a result of that, the market somewhat stabilised and my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development continued to monitor the situation.

It was around the same time that officials of my Ministry started to realise that although the Maximum Mark-Up Price and the Maximum Recommended Retail Price had served us well up to now, it had some inherent limitations. My Ministry noted that with each consignment of goods reaching Mauritius every three to four weeks, the costing sheets of importers invariably showed a higher importation cost. That resulted in a very uncertain and unstable market, and consumer protection associations and individual consumers were repeatedly making representations to my Ministry. The conclusion reached was that as long as the external factors remained stable, the Maximum Mark-Up Price and the Maximum Recommended Retail Price were effective. On the contrary, when external factors fluctuate drastically, these price control systems did not sufficiently protect consumers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, my Ministry carried out a detailed study on the impact of COVID-19 on retail prices in September 2020. The study aimed at exploring the evolution of prices of basic commodities over COVID-19 period and to analyse the different causes of price fluctuations on selected basic staples on the local market.

A hypothetical basket of basic commodities was designed to assess the evolution of retail prices on a fixed set of consumer goods. The basket of goods was composed of 32 distinct groups of products, including milk powder. The prices of each group of products were collected and compiled...

Mr X. L. Duval: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. The question is specifically on milk and now we are going on a basket of 33 goods. I would like to ask your indulgence to bring the Minister to answer precisely the question that has been asked.

Mr Speaker: I understand your concern. All I can do is to tell the Minister to come nearer to the reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Callichurn: Yes. I understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I am coming to that. It was observed that from February to August 2020, the retail price of milk powder rose by an average of 1.21%.

The study also revealed that the appreciation of foreign exchange rates was most likely to cause an increase in consumer prices. It was observed that following one per cent appreciation in the foreign currencies, about 10.38% of the appreciation was absorbed by the importer while 2.17% was transmitted to the consumer.

One of the reasons advocated at that time was that the importers did not transmit the full impact of the appreciation of the foreign currencies on consumers as the foodstuff sector is a highly competitive business segment and increase in prices may lead to a fall in the market share.

As from January 2021, the domestic market became extremely volatile with sharp increases in the price of many essential commodities. These increases in prices were mainly attributed to escalating costs of imports such as freight and insurance as well as the appreciation of foreign exchange currencies. It was also observed that there had been an overall increase of around 40% in the freight while insurance had increased by around 60%. Since Mauritius is a net food import economy, the cost of freight, therefore, directly influences the price of imported goods and eventually the retail price, and that includes milk powder price.

Since then, the cost of freight has contributed to increase drastically reaching up to 300% in some cases. As a result thereof, many importers could no longer absorb part of the increases in the freight without eroding their margins. Many importers represented that if this situation was to

persist, they would have no alternative than to stop importation and this would have created a shortage of essential products on the local market.

Moreover, Consumer Protection Associations, particularly *Association des consommateurs de l'île Maurice* and the Consumer Advocacy Platform made representations regarding the escalating prices of certain commodities and requested the State intervention to stabilise prices of certain commodities. They considered that most, if not all, markets should be controlled.

In view of the then prevailing situation and considering that the purchasing power of consumer had been negatively impacted and given that, at that time, the traditional price control measures were no longer effective, it was important for the Government to intervene.

Accordingly, in June 2021, Government decided to grant a subsidy of Rs500 m. on several essential products covering 371 brands in order to stabilise the price and lock prices for a period of six months. As such, all the 35 brands of milk powder, which were in retail at that time, were retained in order not to disturb consumption pattern and ensure that every segment of the population has access to subsidised milk powder of his or her choice. The subsidy granted was Rs15 per kg.

The whole subsidy of Rs500 m., including milk powder, is currently being administered by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA). To this end, on 15 July 2021, the MRA issued a communiqué explaining the process for eligible traders to apply for refund of subsidy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that Mauritius Revenue Authority exerts a strict control on the refund of subsidy by closely monitoring the claims from eligible traders for each consignment imported and prior to disbursements of funds. For that purpose, the MRA has developed a dedicated online application system.

However, even with the subsidy of Rs15 per kg, importers of milk powder continued to make representations to the effect that they were still facing increases in importation costs and that the subsidy was insufficient as they were importing at a loss. Some major importers of milk powder also drew the attention to the fact that they will have to stop importation if their representations were not considered positively. A situation of *status quo* would have led to a disruption in supply of milk powder.

In light thereof, a Technical Committee comprising representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (MCCI), the Mauritius Revenue Authority and my Ministry was appointed to look into the representations.

After an analysis of the strict perspective of evolution of CIF and margin, the Technical Committee submitted its report to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development which undertook a deeper analysis on the subject and found that various significant cost components, including increases of 7% in packaging costs, 19% in operating costs such as transportation and distribution as well as 4% margin to retailers, had not been taken into consideration in the Technical Committee Report.

In the light thereof, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development requested the Technical Committee to reconsider the matter. Based on the revised workings, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, on 07 September 2021, gave its financial clearance for an increase in subsidy from Rs15 per kg to Rs30 per kg effective as from 01 August 2021 so as not to disrupt the supply chain of milk powder on the local market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards to part (b) (i) of the question, in the course of a meeting which my Ministry had with the MCCI on 16 November 2021, the latter made representations to the effect that importers were still confronted to rising importation costs and were expecting the subsidy to be extended. In addition, in the course of both the Tripartite Technical Committee, which I personally chaired on 02 December 2021, and the Tripartite Committee which my colleague, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development chaired on 09 December 2021, all the representatives of the Trade Union Confederations unanimously represented that the increase in prices had eroded the purchasing power of consumers and that the subsidy provided by Government should be maintained.

Consequently, the Tripartite Committee decided that in addition to the salary compensation, the subsidy on the seven basic essential commodities be extended up to 30 June 2022 in order to protect the consumers.

It is worth noting that the Price Observatory Committee is already operational and one of its main objectives is to study the price evolution of the most consumed products and provide the public a greater visibility on these products for more informed buying.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to part (b) (ii) of the question, an analysis carried out by officers of my Ministry has revealed that the CIF price of Infant Milk Powder which was at

Rs289.32 per kg in 2019 has reached Rs322.88 per kg in 2020, that is, an increase of 11.60% and Rs351.98 per kg in 2021, that is, an increase of 21.7% over the figure of 2019.

I must add that this analysis relates only to the CIF price. The other cost elements are still being analysed and a decision will be taken in the light of the outcome of that analysis.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the long answer of the Minister, I hope you will give some extra time for questions. I must say at the outset that nobody is against subsidising these products. What we want, though, Mr Speaker, Sir, is for every rupee spent - taxpayers' money - we get a maximum return and effect. I understand that the Technical Working Committee, which sat in mid-August, found no justification for any additional subsidy and even turned down a subsidy of Rs5 and a subsidy of Rs10 per kilo. However, it seems to be that the Ministry of Finance asked you to refer it back to the Technical Working Committee - from your answer. Can we know what is the second report of the Technical Working Committee? Does it exist?

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the first Technical Committee which was chaired by my Ministry, we took into consideration the CIF and insurance which explained the increase, but we did not take into consideration other costs, landed costs, that is, the distribution and packaging. And what came out after that, the Technical Committee referred its recommendations to the Ministry of Finance, and then, we collectively decided that these cost components should be taken into consideration in whatever increase that will be allowed ultimately.

Mr X. L. Duval: What I am saying, I am asking the Minister: the first Committee categorically said no, even to Rs5; it was increased to Rs15. So, where is the report of the second Technical Committee or the report of the Ministry of Finance? I am putting it to the Minister that these two reports do not exist. They do not exist! The second report of the Technical Working Committee, where is it? I will table, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, the first report of the Technical Working Committee.

Mr Callichurn: I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, other cost components were not taken into consideration by the first Technical Committee. Eventually, after the recommendations were made to the Ministry of Finance, they made a deep analysis of all the hidden costs, landed costs, cost of packing, which represented - let me read it again ...

Mr X. L. Duval: Where is the report?

Mr Callichurn: Various cost components included an increase of 7% in packaging costs, 19% in operating costs such as transportation and distribution costs as well as 4% margin to retailers. And let me also - it is apposite here to point out that we have received representations from different importers and distributors, for example, Edendale. Let me read what they mentioned in that letter. Let me ...

(Interruptions)

...Mr Speaker, Sir, please. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait!

Mr Callichurn: Let me explain!

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait!

Mr X. L. Duval: Where is the second report that they looked into, referred to the Ministry of Finance? Where is that second report? I do not want to know about the letter of Edendale; I have it here! I want to know what second report exists so that you doubled the subsidy. Please, Mr Minister, just tell me where it is, what date you received it...

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is ...

Mr X. L. Duval: ...because you did not receive any report!

Mr Callichurn: There is only one report.

(Interruptions)

There is only one report; that report is the workings of the first Technical Committee. There is no question of a second report because whatever recommendations that were made in that first report was forwarded to the Ministry of Finance, which came with some recommendations which the first Committee took into consideration.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will quote from a mail from your APS to the Deputy Financial Secretary, and I will table it. It says –

“Please refer to this Ministry’s email, 18 August - that’s the Technical Report - and to the discussions that the Minister of Finance had with the Minister of Commerce on the above subject.”

It is understood that both Ministers have, in the course of the discussions, agreed to provide an additional subsidy of Rs15 per kilo whereas the Technical Committee had refused Rs5, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will table this.

(*Interruptions*)

Now, that is what I want, Mr Speaker, Sir. Come out with the truth! Do not take us for fools!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: Yes, Minister?

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: *Koumadir bann poulaye!*

An hon. Member: *Ki poulaye? Twa ki poulaye !*

Mr Callichurn: What is your question?

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: Here you go! I am tabling!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Yes, please.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: ...I have a point of order. I want to seek your advice. I heard the hon. Member of the Opposition say '*Poulaye*', addressing the backbenchers on this side as '*Poulaye*'. Can he withdraw this, please? Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, you know when we went to cinema before, you had the first class, second class, and the *poulaye* very high up.

Mr Speaker: No, you are doing very well!

Mr X. L. Duval: There is nothing *péjoratif* about it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please!

An hon. Member: Withdraw! Withdraw!

Mr X. L. Duval: I withdraw it! I withdraw it! Done!

Mr Callichurn: Let me answer. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Technical Committee, yes, they did their work. Edendale Group, Innodis Group, they are the major importers of milk powder in Mauritius. They wrote to me personally...

(*Interruptions*)

Let me read what their ...

Mr Speaker: Please, no conversation! For the benefit of the House, let your question be replied!

Mr Callichurn: Come on, please! Let me read the content of their letter. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not read everything that is written in that letter, but the relevant part. They mentioned in the letter, at the outset-

“It appears that the prices that have been used for the exercise as benchmark, which led to the maximum price of milk powder and resulting Government subsidy may not have taken into account the most recent data.”

At start of May 2021, we have been informed by our supplier that there has been an increase on the prices of milk powder due to world increase and freight. And let me read the conclusion -

“However, the above prices are based on the average of old stocks based on old prices and old exchange rates. We foresee that these prices will go higher upon depletion of the current stock and on arrival of new stock.”

These facts were not presented to the Technical Committee. So, when I got the letter, obviously, we discussed and there was a working done on the different costs, like I explained earlier, and we took all that into consideration.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we were told that the Minister of Finance took a deeper look, and there is not a single piece of paper to show what deep look the Ministry of Finance took. I will come to that letter in a moment, but I will ask the Minister why he did not submit that letter to the technical working group because it does contain a lot of inaccuracies?

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now come to what he just answered. He said, Mr Speaker, Sir - surprisingly for all of us here - inflation is 4%, 5% this year. He has found that local operating costs have increased by 19% whereas the inflation is 4% to 5%. What could possibly have happened to these companies that their local operating costs have increased by 19%? Is it higher salaries for the bosses? What is the problem? Can the hon. Minister tell me, since he has done all his work, what is the 19% increase in local operating costs? Please, I give him the floor.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, the figures have been worked by technicians of the Ministry of Finance.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Callichurn: I am not a technician; I would not know and I hope the hon. Leader of the Opposition would not expect me to know the technicalities of figures, for example, 19%

operating costs. I do not do this. We have a Ministry, it has its own technicians; they provide us with figures.

Mr X.L. Duval: It is your Ministry of Commerce which writes on 09 September to the MCCI -

“Dear Sir, (...) the above decision has been taken on merits.”

This is what you said and I am asking you now to justify the merits, and you quote a letter from a supplier that you have not even checked. This is the merits? This is the deeper look that the Ministry of Finance? I take it, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it was in the course of discussion, the conversation between himself and the Minister of Finance, based on no paper, no study, nothing, that he committed Rs446 m. of taxpayers' money to subsidise milk whereas he did not obtain one cent of reduction in the price by giving Rs446 m. to the importers of milk, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is a scandal in itself.

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, although I am not a technician, I can interpret figures. Mr Speaker, Sir, let us take, for example, the importation cost, the CIF as at 12 July 2021, for a list of milk products. For Anchor Life 400g Low Fat Milk, as at 12 July the CIF price was Rs116 and as at August 2021, the CIF price was Rs122. If we go according to the list, for Natureland 1Kg, CIF price on 12 July: Rs171; new CIF price in August: Rs200; which is an increase of Rs28.85. So, when you add the other costs, it is understandable that there will be an increase in the importation and the other costs.

Mr X. L. Duval: Perhaps the Minister will not agree with what he has done, in fact. He has committed Rs446 m., of our rupees to importers without asking them to reduce 1% of their margins, which is enormous at 35%. And I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the people outside to understand, that a margin of 35% means that I buy a kilo of milk, import it at Rs150 CIF, including insurance, including freight, I make Rs50 profit, and this is what the Minister has done. He has guaranteed the Rs50 profit. Mr Speaker, Sir, it can even be shown technically, and I will show later in the Press Conference, that, in fact, some people are making even more than the 35% thanks to his generous offer of Rs30, Mr Speaker, Sir.

What I am saying to the Minister now, in a question, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not too late; the MRA is there. Very seriously, in the name of public interest, I will ask the hon. Minister to get the MRA - like they do for the Wage Assistance Scheme, whereas if you make a profit you get the money back - to go back into the books of these people and see where excessive profits

have been. I am not saying everywhere; I am not saying for 2 or 3 there was a genuine need for assistance. I am not saying that. But I am saying for 90% of them, there was no genuine need for your Rs30. So, ask the MRA to go back. And the second thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to ensure that with the money that is given, Rs446 m., the price of a kilo of a packet of milk can fall up to Rs60. From Rs20, I have calculated, to Rs60, using the same money that he has given.

Mr Speaker: Now, you are making a statement.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, it is the last one, Mr Speaker, Sir. Christmas is soon.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, I am asking the Minister very kindly and nicely, let us take it on good faith, that his good faith *a été trompé*. Let's do it like that.

Mr Speaker: Okay.

Mr X. L. Duval: Go back, ...

Mr Speaker: Very good question.

Mr X. L. Duval: ... find out, reduce the profits, reduce the price.

Mr Speaker: Minister, reply!

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, as a caring Government, we have done everything that was required to be done in the circumstances to protect the consumers and we will continue to do our utmost best to protect the population. The campaign which started on the price, rising price, was started by the Opposition. I still remember hon. Bodha putting on...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mr Callichurn: ...Facebook the different prices of commodities, bringing a campaign in the country, saying that: ah, as if the Government has increased the prices. There are several factors which have led to the increase of prices of commodities. I have explained.

Coming back to your question, sure, if we are in presence of figures, we are ready to reassess. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, outright, I can tell you we are continuing to receive representations - you can confirm with MCCI; you can confirm with importers of products - that prices will keep on increasing because freight has not stabilised and it is projected that it will continue to increase and the raw materials as well because we are not producer of raw materials, we are not producer of anything. We heavily depend on importation of our food commodities.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the way that it is being done, the blanket Rs30 across the board. And I will quote from this famous letter from Edendale, and this is what the guy says.

Mr Speaker: So, put your question.

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I not quote?

“We respectfully suggest moving from a fixed rupee subsidy per kilo to a variable rupee subsidy.”

And that is the big problem! That one or two people, they do...

Mr Speaker: But put the question! If you have a question, I give you some more time. Put questions!

Mr X. L. Duval: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Not for statements, not for speeches, not for debates, but for the benefit of the House.

Mr X. L. Duval: Will the Minister not agree that if there is a case for one or two, there is not a case for 90% of them? So, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is why, again, I am expecting from the Government that from next week, the price of a packet of milk goes down from Rs20 to Rs60, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I want also the Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, to include the price of baby milk that has gone up for more than Rs100 over the year and it will cost only Rs1 m., Mr Speaker, Sir, to subsidise baby milk.

Mr Speaker: Okay!

Mr X.L. Duval: That cap money which is being wasted, fill it...

Mr Speaker: Okay! No more speech!

(Interruptions)

No more speech!

Mr Callichurn: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will ask the Leader of the Opposition one question: who will bear the responsibility if ever there is a shortage of milk in the coming weeks, if we were to reconsider? In all transparency, if we receive figures, facts that the prices are on the decrease internationally and it should also apply locally, we are ready to consider. But what will happen if we take such measure and there is a shortage of supply and the importers stop importing? Who will bear the responsibility? Let us act responsibly!

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Madam Clerk, pursue!

Madam Clerk: Private Member's Motion!

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Tour!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute! Hon. Ms Tour!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTION

ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN MAURITIUS

Ms J. Tour (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):

« *This Assembly resolves that Government should continue its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius. »*

Nous voulons tous, M. le président, que la République mauricienne que nous léguerons à nos enfants soit un endroit...

(*Interruptions*)

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I raised a point of order!

Mr Speaker: No! Your point of order was referred to Question Time. Now, the item has changed. Is your point of order on the Private Motion?

Dr. Boolell: I am referring to a point of order in the light of the statement made by the Minister.

Mr Speaker: No, it is over!

Dr. Boolell: Why?

Mr Speaker: It is over!

(*Interruptions*)

An hon. Member: *Cinéma!*

Mr Speaker: It is over!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order on both sides of the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Order! Both sides of the House! Do not start provoking the Chair! I know it will be tough today. You have to go home at 7 o'clock. It is a long time to wait, I know. I know the tricks in Parliament now!

(*Interruptions*)

Be careful! Be careful, both sides of the House! There is no point of order.

Hon. Ms Tour, you have your turn!

Ms Tour: Yes.

“This Assembly resolves that Government should continue its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius.”

Nous voulons tous, M. le président, que la République mauricienne que nous léguerons à nos enfants soit un endroit où il fait bon vivre. Nous voulons tous que nos enfants vivent en bonne santé dans un environnement sain, libre de toute pollution. Et, nous savons tous aussi que notre mission pour une République mauricienne meilleure, une République mauricienne écologique doit commencer aujourd’hui.

The future is now, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mais, M. le président, pour réussir dans cet engagement, il ne suffit pas de rester assis derrière son écran ordinateur ou dans son fauteuil de député à critiquer le gouvernement. Il faut nous mettre au travail avec des propositions concrètes, des mesures concrètes, réalistes et réalisables sur des champs d’actions significatifs. Tous les jours, nous prenons la route pour nous rendre au travail.

(*Interruptions*)

Quel que soit le moyen de locomotion utilisé, certains prennent le métro express, le bus, leurs voitures. Certains prennent aussi leurs trottinettes électriques juste pour venir au Parlement, même s’ils ont garé leurs berlines qui carburent au fossile 10 mètres plus loin, et bien sûr, c’est juste pour épater la galerie. C’est pour vous dire que nous sommes tous bien devenus conscients de l’importance des moyens de transport pas seulement pour notre vie économique mais aussi

pour notre bien-être commun et notre écosystème. Si nous voulons protéger notre environnement et améliorer encore plus nos conditions de vie et nos conditions de déplacement, la voiture électrique est incontournable.

La voiture électrique, c'est notre avenir. Faire des économies de carburant, réduire la pollution, améliorer le trafic routier à côté du métro express, voilà quelques-uns des multiples bienfaits que nous apporterons...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *To pe koz ar mwa la?*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Aller do!*

Mr Speaker: Order! Both sides of the House, order! They have the floor, you do not have the floor!

Mr Bhagwan: I am coming back!

Mr Speaker: Okay!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Voler!*

Mr Speaker: Oh! For this, I am naming you!

Mr Bhagwan: The public will name you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am naming you! Please, continue!

Ms Tour: Voilà quelques-uns des multiples bienfaits que nous apporterons au pays avec l'usage des véhicules électriques et pour apporter ce changement, M. le président, le Parlement est un lieu majeur et déterminant. C'est d'ailleurs pour cela que je suis parmi vous, dans cet auguste Assemblée, c'est pour défendre et porter nos rêves d'une meilleure République mauricienne où il fera bon vivre. C'est aussi pour porter les ambitions, le bien-être et les rêves de mes mandants ainsi que de mes concitoyens. C'est l'engagement que j'ai pris en tant que jeune

députée, M. le président, et c'est exactement dans cette optique que je suis venue vous présenter cette motion aujourd'hui pour encourager l'usage des véhicules électriques à Maurice.

C'est un énorme privilège pour moi, une lourde responsabilité et un grand honneur en tant que jeune députée d'avoir été choisie pour présenter cette *Private Member's Motion* pour l'usage des véhicules électriques à Maurice.

M. le président, je ne veux pas que nos concitoyens aient une vision déformée du Parlement car non, le Parlement n'est pas un lieu de disputes où on passe son temps à faire des *walkouts* et à pointer du doigt son adversaire avec un ton menaçant ! Le Parlement est le cœur de la démocratie. Travailler pour une République mauricienne écologique et propre n'est pas une tâche facile certes et ça ne se fera pas du jour au lendemain. Mais cela commence avec des projets concrets et la motion que je suis venue vous présenter aujourd'hui, c'est tout ce qui a de plus concret et de réalisable aussi.

Before I delve into my speech, Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to take the time of the House to very briefly explain what a Private Motion is all about. It is a formal proposal by an elected Member who is not a Minister of the Cabinet of the legislative Assembly requesting the Government to consider action on certain issues. Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an honour for me as a backbencher to present a motion on such an important topic that could lay the foundation for the Government to continue its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius for consideration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our world is changing and not for the better. The effects of human-caused global warming which are happening now will be irreversible on the timescale of our lifetime and it might be too late to save the planet or ourselves. But we owe it to our children, to the children of our children that we do what it takes to give them a chance to have a better planet.

Climate change and the global warming are happening because large amounts of greenhouse gas are released into the atmosphere due to human activities worldwide, including most alarmingly burning fossil fuels for electricity generation, heating and transport. When people talk about climate change and global warming, very often we tend to point fingers at the big corporations or big countries. However, while large oil companies are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions, we, consumers, are very much complicit. We are the ones who

demand the products and energy made from the fossil fuels they provide. In fact, our consumer habits are driving climate change.

A 2015 study found that the production and use of household goods and services was responsible for 60% of global greenhouse gas emission as more people around the world enter the middle class and become affluent, the problem worsens. After basic needs are met, consumers begin buying items for social status. As people try to acquire more status, more expensive status products are needed and consequently, producing all these generates climate changing greenhouse gas emissions.

A study published by the journal '*Nature*' and conducted by Christoph Meinrenken, Associate Research Scientist at the Earth Institute's Research Program on Sustainability Policy and Management, claims that across life cycle of a product, it generates 6.3 times of its own weight of carbon emissions.

Our society of unremorseful consumerism is very energy greedy and inefficient. According to 'Friends of the earth international', the world's largest energy system, the way we produce, distribute and consume energy is unsustainable, unjust and harms communities, workers, the environment and the climate.

Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, energy is a necessary condition for a dignified life. We need energy for fuel and electricity to cook our food, to have habitable homes and workplaces. We must also ensure that everyone has access to basic services like health and education, to communicate and travel, to share and have access to information.

Our use and production of energy have a massive impact on the climate and the converse is also increasingly true. Climate change can alter our energy generation potential and energy needs. For example, changes to water cycle have an impact on hydropower.

For a more relatable example that we are all experiencing firsthand, is that we are having warmer summer temperatures for the past few years, and it is driving an increase in the energy demand for cooling. This spike in energy demand puts additional pressure on our energy production which in turn burns more fossil fuel which then contributes towards more greenhouse gas effect. You can all see the vicious cycle here. Nonetheless, there must be a way to produce and consume energy that is efficient and sustainable.

It is Mr Speaker, sir, one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. We must find a way to balance our energy need and climate change. The current imbalance is the consequence of a growing world population and an increasing appetite for people to power their homes, offices and vehicles.

To take things into perspective, according to researchers, we are expected to add 1 billion more people to the current population by 2030 and with it potentially a soaring demand for energy. It is estimated that the population will be increased to about 8.5 billion by the year 2030 which may result in increasing the energy consumption up to 34% by 2035.

The same researchers, Mr Speaker, Sir, claim that the current energy production is 80% fossil with carbon dioxide being the most harmful waste generated. Carbon dioxide emissions are the largest contributors to human-induced warming, and, therefore, are one of the most critical markers.

According to the relevant agencies, the worldwide carbon dioxide emission from fossil fuels was 38 gigatons in 2020. That is 38 followed by nine zeros tonnes. There is nothing that we can think of, which is as huge in size that we could use to compare to illustrate how massive this amount is.

One of the largest organisations in the field of energy consumption and monitoring is the International Energy Agency (IEA). It publishes yearly comprehensive energy data and future projections. From their reports we can gather some eye-opening facts about the current state of affairs.

Firstly, the current contemporary energy policy of every nation is heavily based on producing energy from fossil fuel that is coal, petroleum and natural gas. Based on this, the IEA expects that worldwide energy consumption in 2040 will have increased more by 25%, the goal that was set in the Paris Agreement to limit climate change, will be very difficult to reach.

Mr Speaker Sir, global efforts so far to mitigate climate change culminated in the Paris Agreement in 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal and legally binding, global climate deal.

The target of the agreement to limit the global average temperature rise to well below 2 °C, while aiming to limit the increase to 1.5 °C, is ambitious and cannot be achieved without a major overhaul of global energy production and consumption.

A few years later, after the Paris accord, and during the COP26, participating nations had both within and outside the negotiations showed promising developments.

Nonetheless, it remains clear that most high-emitting countries are not demonstrating the political commitment to meeting 2030 mitigation targets necessary for keeping 1.5 degrees. But why, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the 1.5 degrees so important?

This is the global climate change goal where leaders agreed to strive for. By limiting the planet's warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100, the hope is to stave off severe climate disruptions that could exacerbate hunger, conflict, and drought worldwide. The 1.5 degrees Celsius target has long been championed by developing nations, where millions of people are among the most vulnerable to climate change. The Earth is already 1.1 degrees Celsius hotter than it was 150 years ago.

Though a half-degree Celsius difference in temperature rise might seem inconsequential, the difference for life on earth could be huge. If we allow the average global temperatures to exceed 1.5 degree Celsius warming by 2100 we could see -

1. The complete die-off of our coral reefs.

Mauritius being an island and protected by our reefs which provides us food and our sandy beaches which contributes to our tourism economy, losing it is indeed a chilling thought.

2. “Once-in-lifetime” storms, cyclones and floods will become more common. We already can see the damages these events can cause around the world. Flash floods will claim lives. Fortunately, this Government is doing significant investment in our drain networks and is devising a Master Plan to ensure the safety of the population. Nonetheless, this comes at a huge cost.
3. Melting ice caps that will lead to elevated sea level and the release of trapped methane into the atmosphere.

These consequences are only the tip of what the scientists are predicting to happen.

Furthermore, based on the data and projections, the IEA presents four scenarios in their World Energy Outlook 2021 report.

In scenario 1, which is the Stated Policies Scenario (STEPS) within which the IEA reviews the effects of the current fossil fuel-based policies, it is noted that global average temperatures will still be rising past the 2.6 °C above pre-industrial levels in 2100.

Scenario 2 is the Announced Pledges Scenario (APS) which assumes that all climate commitments in both Paris and Glasgow will be met in full and on time. But still the average temperature will rise to around 2.1 °C by 2100 and continue to increase.

The Sustainable Development Scenario (SDS) which is the third scenario, it assumes in addition to Announced Pledges Scenario, that there will be a surge in clean energy policies and investment. This scenario projects that advanced economies can reach net zero emissions by 2050, China around 2060, and all other countries which includes our small island nation by 2070 at the latest.

Then the expected temperature will peak at 1.7 °C by 2050 and could decline to 1.5 °C by 2100. It is also expected in this scenario that in 2050, energy supply will be 55% renewable. In the year 2050, half of energy consumption will be electricity generated for nearly 70% by wind and solar PV, about 20% with other renewable sources. The other half of energy consumption will be biomass, gas and oil with carbon capture and storage.

It is vital for us to note from the above scenarios that we have our role to play and our contribution to make in this global effort. *On doit apporter notre pierre à cet édifice, M. le président.* This is why as a responsible Government, we need a profound effort in all sectors to initiate our decarbonisation and contribute to the world effort. Decarbonisation, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the process of reducing carbon intensity, lowering the amount of greenhouse gas emission produced by the burning of fossil fuels. Generally this involves decreasing CO₂ output per unit of electricity generated. Reducing the amount of carbon dioxide occurring as a result of transport and power generation is essential to meet temperature standards set by the Paris Agreement.

The car industry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is one of the sectors that have been the most impacted by the supply chain distribution caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, but this has not stopped it from being under scrutiny for its role in climate change whether due to the projection process or

the car manufactured. I welcome with relish, Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact that Mauritius has not remained insensible to the global move. The Government is, indeed, committed towards the increasing of use of electric vehicles in an endeavour to reach the target as announced by the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, during the World Leaders Summit in November 2021. I hereby quote his statement –

“For small island countries like Mauritius, global warming and rising sea levels represent an existential challenge which will cause tremendous damage and lead to massive displacement of people especially from low-lying islands.

We, therefore, commit to take actions that will contribute towards the following –

- (i) reducing gas submission by 40% by 2030;
- (ii) achieving 60% of green energy in energy mix by 2030;
- (iii) phasing out in electricity generation before 2030;
- (iv) promoting a circular economy involving 70% of waste from landfills by 2030;
- (v) encouraging the use of electric vehicles, and
- (vi) promoting smart agriculture and island-wide tree planting programs.”

Despite many national Governments apparently recognising the urgency of the climate situation at the COP 26 Summit, new estimates from Climate Action Tracker suggest that 2030 pledges made will still result in a global mean temperature increase of 2.4°C by 2100, dangerously higher than the 1.5°C target formalised by the Paris Agreement.

Even in the best case scenario, a temperature of 1.7°C is forecasted. There is, therefore, more than an urgent need to adopt bold policies and the transformational change from use of conventional petrol and diesel vehicles to electric vehicles. Despite the fact that the implementation underground is advancing at a snail’s pace worldwide, Mauritius is taking the lead in the African continent and among Small Island Developing States to adhere to the major new policy development as a driving factor.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the COP 26 Conference in Glasgow, world leaders were discussing climate goals and how to potentially limit global warming to 1.5 to 2°C. The event is seen by many as the last chance to reach the Paris Agreement goal. High-level consultation by some World Leaders casted doubt on whether the Conference can succeed. Asia, with its many rapidly

developing economies, plays a major part in the outcome with China especially having a pivotal role.

Data from the Climate Action Tracker shows that while China is responsible for some of the highest climate gas emissions in Asia and the world, the policies and actions already put in place in the country show the biggest potential of emission reduction until 2030. China has recently slightly updated its Paris Agreement target and additionally pledged to achieve net zero emission by 2060. Ten years ahead of initial schedule, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker, Sir, car buyers in European Union seem to be doing their part to lessen the impact of fossil-fuel-powered automobiles. In the first nine months of 2021, registrations of petrol and diesel cars went down by 9 and 8.5% respectively, when compared to the previous year's timeframe according to data by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

Vehicles with a hybrid electric powertrain, on the other hand, saw a rise in registration of 8.8%, putting their market share of cars registered between January and September 2021 about only 1% behind diesel units.

Overall, the share of cars with alternative powertrains keep rising steadily, making up more of the third of newly-registered automobiles in the EU, in the first three quarters of the year. The shift towards electric cars with chargeable batteries is also not without down sides.

Even though a study conducted by the Universities of Exeter, Cambridge and Nijmegen has shown that the total average carbon emissions of an electric vehicle are still far lower than of one powered by fossil fuels, even with production emissions factored in, there is still the issue of sourcing the minerals for batteries, their longevity and the increased production of e-waste.

The automotive industry in the European Union continues to hit its target values for the reduction of the average CO2 emissions, according to data from the International Council on Clean Transport. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, without phase-in provisions and extra credits for low-emission vehicles and eco-innovation technology, most big manufacturers like Ford-Volvo, BMW and Volkswagen will miss the mark by a considerable margin. Out of the estimated 7 gigatons of CO2 emitted by the transport sector in 2020, passengers' cars contributed to 2.9 gigatons or 40%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the COVID-19 pandemic causing the global auto industry to shrink by 16%, electric vehicle sales actually posted strong growth during this crisis. A new report from the International Energy Agency (IEA) found that the number of electric cars, vans, trucks and buses is expected to grow from 11 million this year to 145 million by 2030. By the end of the decade, the figure could be as high as 230 million if Governments accelerate their effort to reach climate targets.

A record three million electric cars were registered globally last year, 41 per cent higher than in 2019. That trend has continued in 2021 with 2.5% as many registrations recorded as during the same period last year. The growth is being driven by strong sales in Europe and China with 450,000 and 500,000 EVs sold, respectively. The United States has also experienced a doubling of its sales compared to the first quarter of last year.

In 2020, Mr Speaker, Sir, customers spent \$120 billion on electric car purchases and Governments supported them with \$14 billion in subsidies, a 25 per cent increase in 2019. This was driven by strong incentives in Europe that have seen the continent surpass China as the world's largest EV market for the first time.

The figures reported by the International Energy Agency (IEA), are set to have major repercussions for the global oil market with millions of barrels set to be wiped out. There are expected to be two million barrels of petrol and diesel fewer per day by 2030 with the equivalent of 120 million tons of carbon dioxide saved. If Governments raise their goals in line with global climate targets, 3.5 million barrels could be removed by the end of the decade with the carbon savings nearly doubling.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the prophesised electric car revolution over the next decade is anticipated to cause a boom in new car sales and new car owners as costs come down. It is interesting to note that mainly young adults across the world are anticipating their next car to be electric, and cleaner automotive technology is becoming a key selling point for car dealers. New data from Statista Global Consumer Survey shows how fuel efficiency is the top characteristic for prospective car buyers. In a new 2020 update of the Global Consumer Survey, 66 per cent of respondents said fuel efficiency is especially important to them when deciding to buy a new car. That is 12 per cent points higher than those who said they consider a low price to be important, while a similar 64 per cent said safety is their top concern. Other important metrics were

suitability, high quality, good warranty and customer service and driving comfort, all clocking in above 40 per cent for being extremely important for a new car purchase. Car dealerships in Europe and parts of Asia are rapidly increasing their stock of electric cars from companies like Tesla and Volkswagen, with many of them operating on all-battery technology. Battery range may soon be the key metric for car buyers instead of fuel efficiency.

One argument often brought up against the transition to electric cars is the assertion that, all things considered, electric vehicles are not that much cleaner than internal combustion engines. Once you take into account battery production and electricity generation, the emissions savings of electric vehicles are minimal at best, so the popular argument goes. To tackle this argument, the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) published researches, comparing life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of combustion engine and electric passenger cars. Taking into account emissions associated with vehicle and battery manufacture, maintenance, fuel consumption and fuel/electricity production, the study finds that electric cars do in fact cut emissions significantly, even in countries where the transition to renewable energy in the electricity mix is still in the early stages.

As stated earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius intends to achieve 60% of green energy in our energy mix by 2030. Emissions over the lifetime of a mid-sized electric passenger car registered today are already considerably lower than those of a comparable gasoline car. Depending on the current electricity mix and its evolution over the lifetime of the vehicle, emissions savings range from 19-34 per cent in India to 66-69 per cent in Europe. Moreover, as the decarbonisation of energy generation progresses further, the emissions gap between BEVs and cars with combustion engines is expected to widen substantially for cars registered in 2030. Widening the scope to consider other fuel types as well, the report finds that battery electric vehicles and fuel cell electric vehicles, powered by renewable electricity and green hydrogen, respectively, are the only technologies capable of achieving the emissions reduction in global road transport needed to meet the goals set in the Paris Agreement. Hybrids and plug-in hybrids, the report findings, could be used to reduce fuel consumption during the transition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, several incentives have already been undertaken by the Government of Mauritius to promote the use of electric vehicles, be it Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) or Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEV). It should be highlighted that in a recent past, the Government reduced

registration duties on Hybrid Electric Vehicles and Battery Electric Vehicles by 50%. The same incentive of 50% reduction was implemented for vehicle taxation. During that time, statistics showed that the number of Hybrid Vehicles registered were 315 and 388, respectively.

In the year of implementation of the abovementioned incentives, the number of registered vehicles nearly doubled to 686 registered vehicles. In the last 10 years, the number of registered Hybrid Vehicles increased from 315 to 19,516. It should also be noted that the number of Battery Electric Vehicles also escalated from a mere 22 vehicles in 2017 to a total of 510 vehicles as of November 2021.

Nonetheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of fuel-powered vehicles is also on an increase. While still considering statistics for the last 10 years, the NTA registered a total of 384,115 vehicles and as of September 2021, the number rose to 617,182 vehicles. It is also to be noted that there has been an annual increase of more than 2% yearly and with such growing numbers, the need to shift to a more sustainable form of transportation is of paramount importance.

As per the Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap for Mauritius, commissioned by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities providing the incentives, one of the many strategies to integrate electric vehicles in Mauritius, the latter identified six pillars for the acceleration of electric vehicle adoption –

1. Charging infrastructure

Facilitate nationwide open fast charging network, allow freedom to drive anywhere on the island.

2. Suitable Vehicles

Focus on Battery Electric Vehicles and implement a national battery plan to ensure long-term sustainability through second life applications and battery recycling.

3. Incentives

Phased approach and scale Electric vehicle incentives by target groups, that is, taxis, corporate and Government while monitoring the growth.

4. Raising Awareness

Build the electric vehicle community for raising awareness and sharing of expertise amongst stakeholders.

5. Knowledge Sharing

Taking global best practices from international leaders in private and public domain to ensure a reliable and affordable grid.

6. Clean power and Economic opportunities

Clean power for electric vehicles stimulation programme to support energy self-sufficiency, reduction of emissions and economic opportunities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Mauritius transits to a less carbon-intensive economy, it becomes abundantly clear that we need a blue-print for electric mobility. We need a plan that will help mobilise a larger participation in the electric vehicles (EV) space and integrating the EV infrastructure with, on one hand, the transportation system and, on the other hand, the electricity system.

The Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities commissioned a 10-Year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap for Mauritius. The study which was published in January 2020, sets the avenues to accelerate EV adoption and facilitate the transition to sustainable transportation.

The Roadmap recommends six strategies –

1. Facilitate a nationwide open fast charging network to allow freedom to drive anywhere on the island.
2. Focus on Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and implement a National Battery plan to ensure long-term sustainability through second life applications and battery recycling.
3. Start small in a phased approach while monitoring growth to be able to adopt policies in a quickly evolving market.
4. Build the EV Community for raising awareness and sharing of expertise amongst stakeholders.
5. Implementation of smart charging and vehicle-to-grid strategy, taking best practices from international leaders in private and public domain to ensure reliable and affordable grid.

6. Clean power of EVs stimulation programme to support energy self-sufficiency, reduction of emissions and economic opportunities.

As I have mentioned before, Government is already acting on several fronts. It is however crucial, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as we develop the EV infrastructure, we also speed up the energy deployment, both in the electricity grid and the transportation sector. According to the 10-year Roadmap, an EV charging on the 2019 grid mix has a yearly CO2 emission of 4.0 tons compared to 3.8 tons for a conventional vehicle due to the low amount of renewables. In 2025, this will be improved to 3.8 tons for an EV, which is the tipping point where the well-to-wheel emissions of the electric vehicle become lower than for an internal combustion engine (ICE) car.

From this point, Mr Speaker, Sir, CO2 emission of an EV will take a downward trajectory. If charged on solar power, this CO2 reduction is much higher. According to the calculations, the CO2 emissions in 2030 will drop to 3.6 tons for an EV due to the higher share of renewables. Going forward, the emission can be reduced to zero when the charging is done exclusively from solar power. The promotion of combined use of EV and renewable energy generation should therefore be stimulated. The study recommends a fast track for combined solar-PV and EV installation in the CEB's Small Scale Distributed Generation (SSDG) Scheme.

As far as the cost of ownership of an electric vehicle is concerned, there will be a significant drop in the sales price of an EV as a result of falling battery prices. The price drop will be in a range of 30% to 40% during the 2020 to 2030 period. It is observed that 2030 will be the year when the economic feasibility of an average electric passenger car will match that of an equivalent internal combustion engine vehicle under assumptions of NO incentives.

Obviously, with an appropriate incentives structure and with the right enabling environment, this tipping point can come earlier. According to a medium EV growth scenario of the 10-year Roadmap, policymakers should act on the following areas –

1. Manage the impact of EV on the grid in a phased approach, allowing time to prepare the electricity sector, and to be prepared for EV growth by ensuring, for example, safety;
2. Facilitate the EV ecosystem through minimal effort on short-term to prevent large effort on long-term, by, for example, setting standards;

3. Stimulate EV uptake to make a start to allow for long-term benefits of CO2 emissions when the electricity grid mix is cleaner.

Under this medium EV growth scenario, the share of EV in total new car sales will stand at 9% in 2025 and will increase to 15% in 2030.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, charging infrastructure remains one of the main barriers to the consideration of an electric vehicle for personal use. It should be highlighted that, as of date, multiple charging stations are present throughout the island, namely, two public electric vehicles charging stations at Moka and Mapou, six Porsche Destination Charging Stations throughout the island and the Car Connexion Ltd at Fond du Sac.

A study carried out by EV Consult in cooperation with Ecosis Ltd for the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities analysed the projection for the year 2020 to 2023, showing the following numbers –

Roadmap in Numbers			
Number of Charges			
	2020	2025	2030
Fast chargers (public and semi-public)	5	30	80
Public chargers	40	270	800
Semi-public chargers	250	1,700	5,000
Private chargers (home & work)	1,400	9,400	29,000
TOTAL	1,700	12,000	35,000

The EV Consult forecast that we would have a reduction of 14.2% in carbon emission by the year 2030 and would impact the trade balance by increasing the additional imports by 0.15%. However, it should be noted that all charging stations should be fitted with green forms of energy generation such as solar panels or alternative green energy source.

Voilà pour l'urgence des actions à mener, M. le président. De ce côté de la Chambre, nous concevons l'électro-mobilité comme une pièce maîtresse dans la transition énergétique dans laquelle le pays s'est engagé. Le gouvernement prône une politique de mobilité à faible empreinte carbone soit un objectif qui va dans le droit fil de sa politique de réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre par 40 % d'ici 2030.

Je dois, ici, saluer le leadership du Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, dans cet ambitieux mouvement pour répondre aux enjeux écologiques et aux urgences climatiques de notre temps. Ce mouvement préconise notamment un apport accru en énergie verte dans le mix énergétique soit à hauteur de 60 % en 2030. L'élimination à termes de charbon dans la production de l'électricité à une impulsion aux véhicules électriques sur une route.

La Chambre se rappellera de l'engagement pris par le Premier ministre à la COP-26 le mois dernier à Glasgow devant la communauté internationale. Cet engagement traduit la vision d'un développement résilient, propre et durable. Le gouvernement s'est engagé dans la voie d'une décarbonisation soutenue du secteur des transports et de celui de la production de l'électricité sans pour autant compromettre notre capacité de production à brève et moyenne échéance. Nous privilégions, M. le président, une croissance verte, porteuse d'emplois et d'activités économiques nouvelles en conformité aux impératifs du climat. La technologie de l'automobile électrique offre des possibilités considérables en matière de réduction de gaz à effet de serre et constitue un pilier essentiel dans l'avènement d'une économie verte. Le véhicule à zéro émission va révolutionner nos modes de transport terrestre. Maurice n'est certainement pas resté en marge de cette mouvance. Nos automobilistes, j'en suis convaincue, attendent avec optimisme et enthousiasme la possibilité de carburer au vert.

Le gouvernement a introduit plusieurs mesures stratégiques à divers niveaux pour encourager l'achat de véhicules électriques. Sur le plan de la fiscalité, les véhicules électriques ont un taux d'*Excise Duty* inférieur à celui des voitures conventionnelles et hybrides. Les véhicules électriques de puissance 180 kilowatts sont frappés au taux zéro tandis que ceux supérieurs à la puissance 180 kilowatts sont frappés à 15%. La *Road Tax* pour les véhicules électriques est la moitié du montant pour un véhicule conventionnelle à capacité équivalente. La flotte d'autobus, pour sa part, est appelée à se moderniser et surtout passer au vert en abandonnant les moteurs thermiques. Avec les mesures annoncées dans le Budget 2021-2022, les

autobus diesel vont graduellement céder la place aux autobus électriques. Les subventions et les autres facilités accordées par l'État aux opérateurs de transport public seront progressivement supprimées. Les ressources financières de l'État seront redéployées vers les efforts d'électrification de la flotte. Les subventions pour l'achat des autobus électriques passeront de R 1 million à R 1,2 million pour les autobus de neuf mètres et de R 1,2 million à R 1,5 million pour les autobus de plus de neuf mètres. Les opérateurs sont éligibles à des facilités de leasing dans le cadre du *Transformation Fund*.

Selon le discours du budget, la CNT allait se procurer 25 autobus électriques pour démarrer le processus de renouvellement de la flotte. Le ministre des Finances propose tout un régime d'abattements fiscaux pour encourager l'achat de chargeurs rapides pour alimenter les véhicules électriques. Les particuliers peuvent déduire de leurs revenus nets les dépenses encourues pour l'acquisition de chargeurs rapides. Tout montant non-réclamé dans une année fiscale donnée peut être reporté et déduit des revenus nets dans les années suivantes. Les entreprises qui ont investi dans des chargeurs rapides ont, elles, droit à une double déduction fiscale. Certainement, nous souhaitons que les chargeurs soient alimentés à partir de l'énergie propre afin de réduire notre consommation nationale de combustibles fossiles.

Le Budget 2021-2022 a introduit une mesure phare pour que la mobilité zéro émission soit un fait chez nous. Avec cette mesure, les propriétaires de voitures électriques peuvent investir dans une installation photovoltaïque pour alimenter leurs chargeurs. Suivant cette annonce budgétaire, le *CEB* a mis en place le *CEB Solar PV Scheme for Charging of Electric Vehicles* destiné aux particuliers qui sont connectés au réseau à bas voltage du *CEB*. Sous ce régime, l'utilisateur peut réexporter tout surplus de courant produit sur le réseau du *CEB*. Dans la phase initiale de ce plan, le *CEB* a fait provision pour une capacité photovoltaïque cumulée de 10 mégawatts dans son système. Cette démarche répond à plusieurs objectifs de développement durable et inclusif à la fois : augmenter la part des énergies vertes dans le *energy mix* ; stabiliser les émissions nettes de CO₂ dans le transport routier ; et démocratiser la production de l'électricité dans le pays. Le *CEB* compte aussi proposer aux particuliers le *Time of Use Tariff*, ce qui permettra aux propriétaires de voitures électriques de bénéficier de prix de l'électricité moins cher pendant les heures creuses.

Nous prenons aussi note de la recommandation du *Pay Research Bureau* de proposer aux fonctionnaires un prêt au taux bonifié de 1% auprès de l'*Accountant-General* pour financer l'achat de voitures ou de deux-roues motorisés électriques. Le secteur public a la possibilité de jouer un rôle catalyseur dans ce nouveau schéma énergétique et accélérer la transition électrique dans le secteur du transport – d'une part en l'État a les moyens de changer la donne en influençant les décisions d'achat de voitures par les fonctionnaires et, de manière encore plus fondamentale, en transformant le marché de l'automobile par le biais des commandes publiques. Il est nécessaire d'opérer une politique de discrimination positive dans les achats publics de véhicules par le Gouvernement et dans les facilités mises à la disposition des cadres du public.

Dans cette optique, je suis heureuse d'apprendre que le Gouvernement ait mis sur pied un comité interministériel pour étudier l'opportunité de proposer des voitures électriques aux hauts fonctionnaires ainsi qu'aux ministres, et de formuler une proposition au *PRB* pour la mise en pratique. Le comité interministériel qui est présidé par le ministre des Finances, de la Planification et du Développement économique, l'honorable Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, a constitué un *Technical Working Group* pour se pencher sur les modalités techniques et logistiques d'un nouvel écosystème qui accompagnera le développement de l'automobile électrique à Maurice. Les actions prioritaires identifiées sont les suivantes –

1. Proposer un cadre d'encouragement aux entreprises, incluant les PME, pour investir dans des installations de recharge de batteries.
2. Evaluer l'impact de l'adoption des véhicules électriques sur les finances de l'État, en tenant compte des allocations existantes, telles que le *petrol allowances*, payées aux hauts cadres.
3. Proposer des mesures pour décarboniser le réseau électrique et évoluer vers un environnement plus propre.

Le comité technique a pris la mesure de la situation et des contraintes inhérentes à la mise en place du nouvel écosystème pour accompagner l'électrification du parc d'automobile.

Les prix des véhicules électriques par rapport aux engins conventionnels demeure un obstacle majeur, et ce, malgré les facilités fiscales et autres. Il faut se dire que les fonctionnaires, par exemple, bénéficient déjà des facilités hors-taxe pour s'acheter une voiture. L'attrait *duty-*

free sur les voitures électriques n'a de ce fait aucun sens pour cette catégorie d'automobilistes. Le coût très élevé des batteries est un facteur qui pèse encore très lourd dans le prix des véhicules électriques, soit pratiquement le tiers du prix du véhicule. Le nombre restreint de modèles électriques disponibles n'encourage pas une grande adhésion non plus. Il y a très peu de bornes de recharge électrique à Maurice, et la durée du rechargement des batteries est plus longue que celle de faire le plein d'essence. Les propriétaires de voitures électriques ont, certes, la possibilité d'installer des chargeurs à leurs domiciles. Mais il faut se rendre à l'évidence, M. le président, que ce sont des solutions qui ne sont pas toujours à la portée de tous. Les chargeurs coûtent entre R 70,000 à R 1,5 million, dépendant de la capacité, soit la rapidité du rechargement qui est une considération primordiale pour les automobilistes. Les chargeurs rapides sont disponibles mais ils coûtent entre R1 million et R 1,5 million.

Compte tenu de ces défis, le Gouvernement compte venir de l'avant avec des mesures concrètes pour développer les capacités nécessaires dans un secteur qui verra éclore de nouvelles activités économiques, j'en suis sûre. D'abord, il faut mettre en place un réseau fiable de stations de rechargement à travers le pays avec la participation des promoteurs privés, et du *CEB*, qui lui, proposera des facilités de transformateur et de connexion. Les opérations se feront dans le cadre d'un arrangement entre les différentes parties prenantes et d'un cadre de règlementation que les autorités mettront en place. Les stations devront être équipées de panneaux photovoltaïques pour exploiter au maximum de l'énergie solaire. Les parkings dans les centres commerciaux et les espaces de parking payant en ville seront encouragés à proposer des facilités de recharge de batterie aux automobilistes. Le *CEB*, comme je l'ai mentionné auparavant, a déjà mis en place un *schema* pour encourager l'installation des panels solaires pour alimenter les chargeurs à domicile.

Je constate par ailleurs, avec optimisme, les récents développements technologiques concernant les batteries. Il est prévu que dans les cinq prochaines années, les batteries sodium-ion seront nettement moins chères que les batteries lithium existantes. Avec ces avancées, le prix des véhicules électriques devrait baisser de manière notable dans un futur proche.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot look at the future of transportation in our country without considering the challenges it will pose to our existing infrastructure. We need to consider

what innovations we could bring to ensure that we have a holistic approach to the climate change problems caused by greenhouse gases produced by our vehicles.

There is a parallel between the economic state of a country and the state of its roads. It has long been known that more roads and better quality roads are akin and synonymous to a country faring better economically. This is a no-brainer as roads permit the movement of goods and people. Better quality roads ensure more efficient transport which in turn underpins economic development. It has long been the common view that economic growth and the environment were not complementary and a society had to balance the two concepts. In our era with fast advancing technological development, this common view is no longer the norm and the road sector is now called to thrive while also championing a green agenda.

This paradigm shift was started some years back with the consensus that, in the future, the electric car will dominate road transportation. Such a simple concept has paved the way to the adoption of futuristic technologies and green innovation which are being implemented on a pilot basis in many countries. We should dare to be bold, Mr Speaker, Sir, in our approach to practical problems. Adoption of new technologies is very daunting to many. One ground-breaking technology is the electric road.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has since long been known that the major limitation of electric car is the charging of battery which powers the vehicle. An electric car's range is limited to the charge its battery can carry. Also, the ease of use of the electric car is how quickly an empty battery can be recharged. Even with the advancement in battery technologies which is making giant leaps every year, it is foreseen that this will be a limiting factor to the adoption of electric cars for several years to come. In an attempt to address these issues several countries have embarked on the concept of electric roads. Countries such as Sweden, United States of America, South Korea and Germany are already experimenting on Electric Road Systems (ERS). In this system, roads are supplemented with an electrical installation intended for the transmission of electrical energy to vehicles during travel. Such a system is also called a dynamic transfer in motion charging. In such a system, the transfer of power is done wirelessly during the travel. Even if the concept stays the same, several countries are experimenting with different methods to find the most effective and most efficient wireless transfer of energy to the electric vehicles in motion. Without doubt, this is the technology of the future which is set to drastically change our way of life. Even

with the advent of electric vehicles, it is foreseen that replacement of internal combustion engines will take several years or even decades in some countries. This is somewhat true since innovative technologies are expensive and innovative technologies are often greener. However, developing and poorer countries should not despair, as even without expensive new technologies they are also able to change things and transform and make their infrastructure greener. One of the most affordable ways of making a road greener is decreasing traffic congestion. This is simple: less vehicles stuck in traffic means less fuel spent on idling motor vehicles.

In Mauritius, the cost of congestion is staggeringly high. It is estimated at around Rs6 billion every year. This is a big waste in economic output and a big and totally preventable environmental burden on nature. A country such as Mauritius can modernise its road infrastructure, building more grade separated junctions on its main arterial roads and decreasing traffic congestions at peak hours. This could be coupled with decentralisation and flexi-time for work. Here, the Government's RDP programme is a testimony that we are moving in the right direction. All in all, the multipronged approach is warranted in this case, but the main tenant and core should be the modernisation of the road network in a country.

Road construction activities are very intensive on the environment. There is firstly, the materials used which have to be sourced or imported from afar and the energy expended during road building which is in itself a significant burden to the environment. In order, Mr Speaker, Sir, to minimise the footprint of road construction activities on the environment, maintaining and preserving existing roads assets as long as possible is primordial. The deterioration of a road is a slow exponential process where incremental small traffic loads build up to create catastrophic damages. The deterioration process can be slowed to a minimum with adapted and preventive maintenance techniques.

There is the advantage of cost-saving for a country in terms of preserving a road asset for a longer duration and there is also the decreased footprint on the environment. RDA is adopting this approach with road now being managed from an asset management point of view. It is expected that the benefit of such initiative will be immediate in economic and environmental scale. The new strategic road network envisaged for the future generations will definitely explore the above avenues.

Paving the way for greener roads within an optimum integrated transport system! Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of the holistic approach to encouraging EV or carbon free vehicles or transportation solutions, we also need to ensure that we investigate what impact it will have on our energy production and consumption. Our grid would need to be modernised to ensure we are able to cater for the expected growth in demand.

According to Statistics Mauritius, in 2020, total primary energy requirement was about 1,334 kiloton in oil equivalent, comprising 56.0% of petroleum products, 30.7% of coal and only 13.3% of renewables. The share of the different fossil fuels within the total primary energy requirement in 2020 was coal (30.7%), fuel oil (17.7%), diesel oil (13.9%), gasoline (13.8%), dual purpose kerosene (4.4%) and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) (6.2%). Our renewable sources constitute of hydro, wind, landfill gas, photovoltaic, bagasse and fuelwood. We were required to produce 494 megawatt for Mauritius and 8 megawatt for Rodrigues. 76.1% of the power production used non-renewable sources mainly coal and fuel oil. With only 23.9% using renewable sources that is mostly bagasse.

Mauritius economy has greatly evolved from a manufacturing driven economy pioneered by late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to a service, finance and technology oriented economy lead by our current Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, currently our manufacturing sector uses 22.2% of the total energy produced, and on the other hand our energy requirement for our transport sector is more than double that figure and sits at 48.6%. This is almost half of our energy requirement. The figure in itself justifies the why of this motion. The consumption fuel for land transport was 388 kiloton in oil equivalent in 2019 and 328 kiloton in oil equivalent in 2020 which is mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions.

So, I will take 2019 as the basis to run my arguments. However, I would like, Mr Speaker, Sir, to share an interesting story about a simple solution put forward by former US President Barrack Obama. During his presidential campaign, the then Senator Obama proposed that every citizen ensured that their car tyres were correctly inflated. He argued that this would help alleviate the fuel requirement for the country. The math he proposed was that a single tire that is underinflated by 10 PSI costs about 3.3% of the vehicle fuel economy. So, four tires underinflated by the same amount will increase our fuel consumption by 10%.

According to statistics, around 60% to 80% of cars on the road were running tires underinflated by as much as 10%. That is a huge amount and potentially a huge gain by a simple action. The rational President Obama had put forward, was later confirmed by experts as being a great idea was initially mocked by his political opponents who could not see past his political ideology and missed on an opportunity to educate their population and benefit from huge savings.

We often witness the same here, Mr Speaker, Sir, how many times, have Members on the other side of the House deliberately put on their coloured red/blue/purple blinkers and misinterpreted the efforts and vision of our Prime Minister and this Government. How many times have we missed opportunities to unite for the benefit of a greater good and for the progress of our country? It is really unfortunate, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Nevertheless, if we extrapolate the President Obama's idea to us in Mauritius, we can reasonably assume that we have the same proportion. It would mean that we could also actually reduce our fuel imports by 10% by ensuring adequate tyre pressure. Knowing that we do not produce any petrol and use precious foreign currency to import, this could really help our economy to eventually part of the saving we could do on such a concept.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a winnable battle. If we look at the challenge that is fixing climate change and all the dooms and gloom that the data suggest is inevitable, it is easy to lose heart and be discouraged. However, we need to have faith in the collective effort of humanity when faced with such dire consequences.

The following is an extract from a report from National Geographic. In 1974, Mario Molina and Sherwood Rowland, two chemists at the University of California, Irvine, published an article in *Nature* detailing threats to the ozone layer from chloro-fluoro-carbon (CFC) gases. At the time, CFCs were commonly used in aerosol sprays and as coolants in many refrigerators. As they reach the stratosphere, the sun's UV rays break the CFCs down into substances that include chlorine. Their work was validated in 1985, when a team of English scientists found a hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica and that was later linked to CFCs.

The problem was that one atom of chlorine can destroy more than 100,000 ozone molecules, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, eradicating ozone much more quickly than it can be replaced. Recognition of these harmful effects of CFCs and other

ozone-depleting substances led to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in 1987, a landmark agreed to phase out those substances that had been ratified by all 197 UN member countries.

More than 30 years after the Montreal Protocol, NASA scientists documented the first direct proof that Antarctic ozone is recovering because of the CFC phase-down. At the current momentum, scientists predict the planet's ozone layer will be completely healed as far as some regions of the planet are concerned, by 2030. This means that the Ozone is on track to heal completely in our lifetime. This story is the proof that common action towards common goal is possible. We, Mauritians, are known for our resilience and ingenuity this is why we need to lead through our actions, firstly, through our diplomacy channel.

Mauritius is a known staunch advocate of participatory diplomacy and remains committed to expanding its diplomatic relations at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. This Government has always privileged dialogue and partnership when dealing with issues that have far-reaching implications. The Mauritian diplomacy have through their past actions created tremendous goodwill with its traditional partners such as India, China, Europe and fellow African countries. To tackle a major issue like climate change, lone actions will have limited influence. However, if we consolidate efforts, a more significant impact can be made.

Mauritius can use its influence through diplomacy action to further the green way agenda. Mauritius should lead the way for an impactful eco-diplomacy. Eco-diplomacy can be considered as a focal strategy to advance an ecological agenda with specific collective goals. This will allow us to leverage on the united power of the collective to ensure conservation of natural resources, push for sustainable ambitions, curbing the dangers that the climate crisis can cause and assist in environment disasters affecting small States. Mauritius should embrace the environmental stewardship and use it as a mean to develop foreign relationships and shape decisions at a global stage.

Secondly, we have to lead in innovative solutions like carbon capture technology. Let me share with you, Mr Speaker, Sir, an interesting concept I came across when I was doing my research. Journalist Eric Roston and Leslie Kaufman of Bloomberg recently published an article in the Washington post where they argued –

“we must get as good at taking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere as we’ve been good at putting it in”.

If we want to achieve a greater environment positive impact on the planet, efforts should be put towards researching technologies that will allow us to remove the carbon that have been mixed into our atmosphere after decade of uncontrolled polluting activities. Reaching “net-zero” is going to require capturing large amounts of emissions from activities that are hard to decarbonise, like making cement. Holding temperatures down will also require vacuuming the huge amounts of carbon out of the air. The challenge is that current technology is hard and significantly ineffective.

The recent development in environment mitigation technologies, there are two interesting options namely, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and direct air capture (DAC). Carbon capture and storage involves collecting CO₂ emitted by a factory chimney then sending it for use elsewhere or for storage deep underground. The technology dates back to the 1970s, then in the 1990s, as climate became more of a public concern, a Norwegian oil giant began sinking CO₂ in saline reservoirs to reduce its carbon tax. This method of CCS has been discussed to limit the damage caused by fossil fuels without having to abandon them in the short term. The second method, Direct Air Capture (DAC) is one set out in the open air with more natural options. Cleaning up carbon this way is a much harder task. The world’s largest functioning direct air capture plant, which will take 4,000 tons of carbon annually from the air and store it geologically, just came online in Iceland in September. This technology is currently very expensive and not seemed to be cost effective when compared to the carbon tax. Ocean storage of carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a method of carbon sequestration in line with Direct Air Capture. To mitigate global warming, seaweed farming is both possible and plausible. This method was adopted in early ocean algae proposals to mitigate global warming. This is done through commercial kelp farms designed to take up tens of thousands of square kilometres of the open ocean. Through this method, seaweed beds will perform as effective sinks by decreasing the level of dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC) in the ocean.

Mauritius being the custodian of a huge area of ocean, could set up regional research and development labs which will focus on developing cost-effective technologies to do carbon

capture and ocean storage of carbon dioxide on a large scale. It could be our way to contribute technologically in this global battle to restore the planet.

On a concluding note, Mr Speaker, Sir, the motion follows the actual Governmental Programme of 2020-2024 ‘Towards An Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius Forging Ahead Together’ which was presented to the House on 24 January 2020. Although there have been unforeseen circumstances and which continue to prevail in the form of the current global sanitary crisis, we should march ahead together to develop our country in a sustainable way for the betterment of our future generations and leave no stone unturned for the development of our country to be harmonious to Mother Nature as much as we can. As the hon. Prime Minister stated at the recent COP 26 Summit, this Government is committed to take actions to become a climate resilient and low carbon emission country. One among the imminent measure he announced was the effort to encourage the use of electric cars in Mauritius. After all, Mr Speaker, Sir, through the present tenure we shall be laying the foundations of a transformed Mauritius 4.0 in the hope of leaving a cleaner, greener Mauritius – an island “*où il fera bon vivre*” where a sustainable development process would have been instilled for the next decade and beyond.

We are a small island with an area of 2007 sq. km, a population of around 1.3 million people but with a fleet of vehicles of approximately 550,000 units which are mostly conventional vehicles and the transport sector is the main energy consuming sector in Mauritius. While this Government is making considerable effort to improving and encouraging public transport, having recourse to electric vehicles both in the private and public sector over the long term will be highly beneficial to the country in terms of reducing carbon emission.

Let us imagine for a moment by 2030, we are being able to reduce the use of conventional high carbon emission vehicles significantly, we shall be the example to follow in the region in terms of measures taken to encourage the use of EVs and several measures have already been announced under the Government to that end and today the purpose of presenting this motion is to further amplify our effort to converge to the use of electric vehicles.

Creating awareness on EVs – We should acknowledge that when it comes to changing long habits, it is normally a tough phase to accept new things. And in this manner, we have to agree that there is a high level misconception on the use of electric vehicles, about the

maintenance costs and its use itself. Effort should be made to that effect from the youngest age to the elderly from public to private sector. We are still in the initial stage, we have to find the right equilibrium for providing sufficient infrastructure in line with the corresponding number of electric vehicles and this should be financially sustainable and keep an upward growing curve. Free Parking with Charging Infrastructure for EVs should be provided for if we wish to encourage that level. We should rework our free public transport policy to encourage public transport users and also rework measures that public transport should go green by providing incentives to make our buses and other public transport go green. We should also enhance, Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures and incentives from financial perspective to make it less costly for people to prefer EVs than conventional vehicles. For instance, duty free measures should be reviewed to ensure that the focus is more towards EVs.

The motion is beyond politics and people from both sides of the House should look towards the same direction to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius. At the same time, we should be realistic that over the last 50 years, Mauritius has witnessed successful history in terms of industrialisation and construction among other sectors at various points of times. It is not now or since 5 or 10 years back, construction has started on the island like some people shout out. The Ebene Cybercity, for example, was built on agricultural land and at the same time was a well-known international hub employing thousands of young people. But very often, we have been hearing that it is only now that *on est en train de bétonner l'île Maurice*.

As mentioned in the Government Programme, we are well aware of our responsibility of having a sustainable and green development for our future generation. We are trying, Mr Speaker, Sir, to achieve the right equilibrium between continuous development and environment friendly measures. Just for the purpose of highlighting to the House, the country does have a reforestation policy in place and that has been highlighted at the COP26 Summit by the hon. Prime Minister as one amongst the various commitments that we are also undertaking.

To go back to the subject of our effort to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius; indeed, this effort shall be accompanied by measures to lay more emphasis on greener sources of energy as mentioned earlier. This motion should be above politics and the support from the other side of the House will be highly appreciated in overcoming all known barriers to achieve a long term result for the betterment of our island and the population.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius 4.0 will require a complete major paradigm shift from all of us; from our thought, leadership down to our societal, financial and economic processes. Indeed, this brave new world ahead of us is one of networking, co-funding, sustainable development and collaborative initiatives between the actors of change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I humbly hope that the Private Member's Motion I presented to the House will be a useful tool to help mitigate our carbon emission and fulfil our commitment for a greener Mauritius forging ahead together.

I end my speech by moving the Motion standing in my name. Again, I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Ramyad seconded.

Mr Speaker: So, hon. Members, I ...

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please! Please! Please!

(Interruptions)

Good manners, please! Good manners! I suspend the sitting for 45 minutes.

At 5.09 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.17 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. BHAGWAN - NAMING

Hon. Members, as you are aware, earlier today, I named the hon. First Member for Beau-Bassin and Petite-Rivière, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, under Standing Orders 48 and 49 for wilfully obstructing the business of the Assembly.

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 Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, I beg, under Standing Order 17(3), to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) 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 Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) 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. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, I beg to move that the hon. First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next two Sittings, unless apologies are tendered to the House.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise a point of order in the light of the ruling which you gave. Mr Speaker, Sir, since I have not breached any order and, therefore, my point of order in relation to paragraph 15 (27) of Erskine May is in perfect order to treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement by the Minister of Health as a grave contempt and I see no reason why you should frustrate the House on my legitimacy to raise this point of order.

Mr Speaker: I have listened to your point of order. First, I have to be satisfied if there is any point of order and if there is any point of order, I will come back to the House. Thank you very much.

Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(6.20 p.m.)

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In bringing this Private Members' Motion, I was looking forward to the hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, hon. Ms Joanne Tour, to bring forward in her more than one hour long discourse (one and a half hours) all the pertinent points regarding electric vehicles that would rest the case for this Assembly to resolve that Government should continue its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius but I have to say that this has not been the case.

As a matter of fact, during tea break, we were having interesting discussions about the research that maybe she has done and everyone was discussing about what could be an ecological mode of transportation and economical as well. Was it the electric vehicle? Was it the scooter that she referred to in her speech? I think she was referring to hon. Shakeel Mohamed. Or was it a good pair of biodegradable *savatte dodo* at the cost of only Rs77.

(Interruptions)

I think this is a no-brainer. This is the word that she used in her speech. Anyway, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an undeniable fact that at the international level, it is the electric car *qui a le vent en poupe*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order both sides!

Mr Osman Mahomed: On all occasions that I have attended the World Future Energy Summit organised by the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi, either as Member of Parliament or even before becoming Member of Parliament when I was working at the Board of Investment, I have witnessed the change in technology in matters relating to electric vehicles.

The last Summit which I attended just after the 2019 General Elections, before the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, Tesla, which the hon. Ms Tour did refer to in her speech, made a very impressive presentation of its latest model in Abu Dhabi. Since then, the share price of Tesla, today the world's most famous electric car manufacturer, has moved from USD70 at that time to surpass the USD1,200 in November this year, on the stock exchange of New York.

Mr Speaker, Sir, electric cars are very expensive and for a country like Mauritius, which is now in difficult economic situation, making the use of electric cars will have a huge impact on our import bill. As a matter of fact, the Cabinet decision of 27 November 2020, on the 10-year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap for Mauritius, recognised this fact. It thus decided and I quote –

“In order to stimulate the transition towards electric mobility, the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities commissioned a study for a 10-year roadmap which prepares the market conditions for a sustainable integration of electric cars at a pace that strikes the right balance between cost and benefits.”

I think hon. Ms Tour did not look at that aspect at all although it is a Cabinet decision. But still, the hon. Prime Minister, in his address at COP26 Summit on our main concerns that global warming and sea level rise which represent an existential challenge for Mauritius, has enumerated six national mitigation strategies which the hon. Tour has listed and the fifth one is to encourage the use of electric vehicles. So, there is a high-level commitment in order to support our plea for financial support.

Indeed, out of the financial need of Mauritius of USD6.5 billion for period 2021-2030 to take mitigation and adaptation measures, USD2.3 billion, according to what has been stated in Parliament here, will be met by Government and the private sector and the balance of USD4.2 billion, meaning Rs118 billion, if we go by current rate of the US exchange rate; that is, Rs20 billion per year will be needed from international sources and donor agencies respectively.

Now, this is an impossible feat because, even before the COVID-19 era, Mauritius used to obtain only about USD100 m. per year and now, after COVID-19, after that all donor countries are in difficult financial situation, we are expecting to get from them Rs20 billion per year to ensure the existential challenge that Mauritius is facing. This is a real problem. I stand informed that even the Committee chaired by high-level civil servants found this to be very unreasonable.

I had a Parliamentary Question on this last week, addressed to the hon. Prime Minister, as he was the leader of the Mauritian Delegation to COP 26, but it did not come for debate because this question was sent to the Minister of Environment for reply.

Now, coming back to electric car, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are issues with it. And the very first issue I would like to bring forth is that, in Mauritius, driving an electric car is not green *per se*. This is because if you use the electricity that is produced by the CEB and supplied to your house, at your workplace, to charge your car, you would be using electricity that has been produced using coal and diesel or heavy oil. So, even though you will not see any pollution on the road, when you drive an electric car, and when you would think that you are pollution-free, you would be wrong, because your pollution will be emitted at the chimney of the CEB power station. So, even though Mauritius is not a big polluter, with only 0.1% of greenhouse gas emissions, but on a technical level we are not doing service to the World by driving an electric car in Mauritius. The authorities are well aware of this, and to rest my case, let me quote an extract of the debate which took place this year itself on 18 May 2021 during PQ B/408. And I had questioned hon. Alan Ganoo the following additional question - and I quote myself first -

“Picking up from the point raised by my colleague, about CO2 emission and environment protection, is the hon. Minister aware that at this moment in time, electric vehicles, when charged with CEB sources of electricity, are more polluting than conventional cars?

There is a report attesting to that effect from *l'Agence Française de Développement* in 2009.

“So, picking up again from his question of incentives, – because the hon. Ganoo was talking about incentives – can I ask the hon. Minister, whether incentives will also cover facilities like solar photovoltaic installation which will be meaningful in the sense that, at that point in time, there will be no dependency on the grid of the CEB?”

And the hon. Ganoo had replied the following –

“Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking of a new and very complex issue and this is why I think the hon. Minister of Public Utilities was very wise in setting up this Implementation Committee which shall look at all these different and complex issues, including the point raised by the hon. Member, which I am quite aware. Let us leave it to the Implementation Committee to address all these pertinent, complex and interesting issues. Thank you.”

That was the hon. Ganoo, a few months ago.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, how did I come to know that there was such an issue? It goes back to 2009, when I was appointed at the Prime Minister’s Office to Chair the Maurice Ille

Durable Steering Committee by the then hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. And the very first issue - when I took Office - that I looked into, is to ask the *Agence Française de Développement* to look into the transportation sector – the greening of it.

As a matter of fact, I saw this week on TV, in the context of the celebration of the 18th birthday of the *Agence Française de Développement (AFD)*, the colossal amount of investment that the *AFD* has made since it came back to Mauritius in 2006, upon the request and the then Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, and since then, starting with the then Director, Mr Mitchell Goethe and, subsequently, Mrs Laurence B., a lot of work has been done. One must acknowledge that they have been quite instrumental in policy driving, especially the environmental one. I know this for sure because I have had regular working sessions with them, be it here in Mauritius or even at their Headquarters in Paris.

Now, what does the report of the *AFD* says? In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I made it a point to table this report in this august Assembly, during the debate on the Road Traffic Amendment Bill, which took place on 01 September 2016. It is a report titled: '*Etude d'évaluation de l'intérêt des véhicules fonctionnant à l'éthanol et des voitures électriques dans le cadre d'une politique de véhicules propres à Maurice*'. And the Consultant's name is Mr Jean and Mr Jean Yves Dupray, two very high-level civil servants from France who were deployed to Mauritius for this. Now from the report, one can read the following –

“Le gouvernement de l'île Maurice s'est engagé en 2008 dans un programme de développement durable intitulé : « Maurice Ile Durable ». Dans ce contexte il a souhaité faire appel à travers un financement gratuit – I must emphasise on this point – de L'agence Française de Développement à des consultants pour procéder à un examen de la situation des transports terrestres à Maurice, en vue de mettre en place une politique en faveur des véhicules propres. Le cahier des charges de cette étude donné en annexe 1 a été défini par le comité de pilotage du programme Maurice Ile Durable”

The Steering Committee that I was chairing, *il est centré sur trois points*.

The first one –

« (i) l'intérêt d'incorporer de l'éthanol, de mélasse dans l'essence sachant que l'utilisation local de l'éthanol fait aussi partie de la Multi-Annual Adaptation

Strategy for Mauritius Sugarcane Cluster 2006-2015, qui a été adopté par le gouvernement en 2006 ;

- (ii) *l'intérêt d'introduire des véhicules électriques ou hybrides, et*
- (iii) *l'intérêt de mettre en place un système de taxation des véhicules pour favoriser les véhicules propres, sachant qu'une étude plus générale sur la taxation environnementale sera conduite par IMF, FAD, au dernier trimestre de 2010. »*

Here are the gists of the finding, Mr Speaker, Sir. At paragraph 3.7, again, I tabled this in this Assembly –

« En tenant compte des émissions de CO2 fossile réalisées sur le territoire de l'île Maurice, le mix énergétique actuel qui pourrait être utilisé pour la recharge des véhicules électriques se traduirait par des émissions unitaires aux kilomètres parcourus, plus élevé avec un véhicule électrique que les émissions de CO2 d'un véhicule thermique de la même performance. »

They had made a comparison between the Nissan Leaf and the Nissan Tiida which are of the same platform, one being conventional engine and the other one being an electric car.

« De plus, sur la base des investissements énergétiques prévus à l'île Maurice dans un futur proche, cette situation devrait encore durer pendant plusieurs années. En conséquence, il est proposé de ne pas encourager le développement des véhicules électriques auprès des particuliers. Toutefois, comme il n'est pas possible d'interdire toute vente de véhicule électrique, il est proposé de réservé en priorité l'introduction de ces véhicules à des flottes spécifiques à condition de leur demander fermement d'installer des systèmes de types photovoltaïques pour la fabrication de l'électricité verte servant à la recharge de ces véhicules.

À condition de rester très stricte en terme opérationnel, ce type d'opération exemplaire serait doublement efficace sur le plan de la mobilité propre et sur le plan de la fourniture d'énergie électrique verte. Il est de même pour les véhicules hybrides rechargeables qui prélèvent une partie de son énergie sur le réseau électrique national dont l'éventuel développement devrait être encadré comme celui du véhicule tout électrique.

En revanche, le véhicule hybride non-rechargeable constitue une excellente solution technique et environnementale à encourager. »

So, these are the findings of the AFD and I had tabled it in the past.

Now, the CEB has a grid emission factor and it is defined as the weight of carbon dioxide produced in the chimneys there per unit of electricity produced and that unit is called a kilowatt hour; we can see in all our electricity bill. The latest figure that I have is that of 2019, which hon. Ms Tour has used as baseline as well, and it is 790 tons per gigawatt hour which is way above the world average. This is important. That is why electric vehicle is green in other countries and in Mauritius not yet. So, that would mean a kilowatt hour that we consume at home for our lights and all emits 0.79 kilogram of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

And you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the 10-Year Electric Vehicle Integration Road Map for Mauritius, which hon. Ms Tour has referred to and which I referred to in the Cabinet decision earlier, which was published in January 2020, page 7 of that report - and I took the pain to read that report yesterday - states the following: that an electric vehicle on the current 2019 mix - 2019 is the baseline - has a yearly CO2 emission of 4.0 tons as compared to 3.8 tons for a conventional vehicle due to the low amount of renewable energy in Mauritius. So, this report of 2020 concurs with that of the Maurice Ile Durable Steering Committee of 2010. And it is to say that in Mauritius, the emission coming from electric vehicle is more polluting than a conventional car. This is the bottom line still at this point in time.

Now, the report also mentioned that in the correspondence from the AFD, the report that I had tabled in 2016 and I quote –

“Le présent document - meaning the report - constitue le rapport finale s’efforçant de prendre en compte les observations du comité de pilotage - meaning the Steering Committee - en temps utile pour l’inclusion éventuelle dans le budget 2011 de certains éléments de décisions qui auront été validés par le gouvernement mauricien. ”

Now, what does the Budget Speech of 2011 say on this? Let us look at paragraph 284 of the Budget Speech of 2011, and it goes as follows –

“Buildings are among the biggest consumers of energy. This gives the construction industry a significant role in the *Maurice Ile Durable* vision. How energy efficient our

buildings are and to what extent they use renewable energy will be decisive to our *Maurice Ile Durable* vision.”

And do you know who made that compelling sentence, Mr Speaker, Sir? It is none other than the then Minister of Finance and today the hon. Prime Minister of Mauritius. He talked lengthily about the Vehicle Taxation System, which will have to be in line with the *Maurice Ile Durable* vision even in his second reading of the Bill. If time allows later, I will go through it. Now, I noticed that hon. Ms Tour has quoted lengthily President Obama on the international scene when, in fact, she could have quoted her own leader, the Prime Minister.

Next to buildings, the biggest consumer of energy is the transportation sector. I am talking in line with *Maurice Ile Durable* in 2011. We need to change the system of motor vehicle taxation to fully reflect the polluter principle to be based on the CO2 emission standard which is becoming the new practice worldwide. To this end, the IMF will carry out a study...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening?

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... of the present system to recommend appropriate changes to excise duty, road tax and registration duty on motor vehicles. This will complement the work that has already been undertaken by the AFD and will decide on the changes to be made following recommendations of the IMF that would be submitted around March next year.

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have a sore throat.

Mr Speaker: I can understand.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. It is the last day of the year.

So, in reality the work initiated by the then Steering Committee on *Maurice Ile Durable* paved the way for major policy changes insofar as CO2 emission in the transportation sector is concerned.

Now, there were three propositions to be considered in Budget 2011-2012: the ethanol proposition, the proposition for electric vehicle and the revised taxation for cars to be based on the emission of CO2 rather than engine capacity. And the then Minister of Finance, hon. Pravind

Kumar Jugnauth, in line with *Maurice Ile Durable* vision and the work that has been done by the *Maurice Ile Durable* Steering Committee, opted for the one on CO2 emission taxation rebate instead of the electric vehicle and even the ethanol was not taken at that time.

So, that scheme actually worked out as a fee and rebate system similar to the French system of *Bonus-Malus* ecologic, under which a motorcar buyer henceforth paid an additional amount as penalty or fee per gram of CO2 per km emission if the CO2 standard emission of the vehicle is above 158 grams per kilometre. On the other hand, the buyer receives a rebate or a subsidy calculated on the basis of gram of carbon dioxide per kilometre if the CO2 standard emission of his motorcar is below 158 grams per kilometre.

Now, from then onwards and especially from 2013 onwards, Mauritius started moving resolutely in an accelerated manner towards a much greener car fleet and also led to the arrival of new technologies in the transportation sector with the importation of hybrid cars, because the then Government - I think the MSM had already left Government at that time and hon. Xavier Duval became Minister of Finance in 2013 - opted in the budget exercise 2013, half the excise duty on hybrid vehicles from 50% to a flat rate of 25%.

So, this is how, hon. Ms Joanne Tour, we have 9,000 over hybrid vehicles in Mauritius. This is because of the work undertaken under the *Maurice Ile Durable* umbrella, which policies were spearheaded by the then Minister of Finance with whom we had a good working relationship at that time and these made changes in the country. Now, still, of course!

Now, earlier in fact in 2012 - again he was Minister of Finance - with a view to reduce air pollution from the transportation sector, the Government of Mauritius introduced in March 2012 a new grade of low- sulphur diesel. The fuel contains 50 parts per million of sulphur, that is, 50 milligrams of sulphur per kilogram of diesel. This initiative had decreased the amount of harmful emissions from existing vehicles, but also enabled the introduction of a new generation of low polluting cars which could not be imported in Mauritius because of the high level of sulphur in diesel which used to be, mind you, Mr Speaker, Sir, at one point in time 2500 parts per million. So, we progressively reduced that to 500 parts per million and then to 50 parts per million. So, a drastic change in matters relating to pollution on the road!

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, like I said earlier, there is a huge implication in charting across an electric car road map for the rainbow nation. This is the motto that the 10-Year Roadmap used:

“An electric car road map for the rainbow nation”. And the hon. Minister of Environment has in PQ B/1170 of 23 November 2021 stated the following and I quote –

« M. le président, donc, comme j'ai mentionné dans ma réponse, le Interministerial Committee qui est actuellement présidé par le ministre des Finances est en train de voir tous ces aspects des choses, que ce soit l'utilisation de ce type de véhicule, tous les obstacles en ce qui concerne la mise en application des véhicules électriques et aussi tout ce qui concerne les véhicules qui sont acquis par les différents ministères. »

Donc, nous sommes en train de voir tous ces aspects des choses et je pense que très prochainement nous viendrons de l'avant avec un *Comprehensive Document*, M. le président.

Now, being given that such an important responsibility has been entrusted to the hon. Minister of Finance, that is, to chair an Interministerial Committee, one would have expected him to at least intervene on this motion today in support of the hon. Joanne Tour, and to tell the House and the population the progress his Committee has made so far, if any, but he is not. He is not even present here in this House. I know he is very busy, but he is not even present.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the obstacles, there are many, like purchase price, driving range, number of available models and availability of charging stations. The hon. Tour is right on this. Charging station is a main issue. Colossal investment will have to be made in order to ensure that cars have reliable recharges across the island because our island has got uphill and downhill. Being given that it was the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities that commissioned the study for the 10-Year Roadmap, I am informed that the Permanent Secretary of that Ministry is currently chairing the Electric Vehicle Implementation and Monitoring Committee to chart across the recommendation of that report.

I know the hon. Tour has listed what there is in the report but she does not seem to be aware of the progress there. I am, therefore, also even astonished that the hon. Lesjongard, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities who has all the information on the progress made by Committee, because the report came out on 01 January 2020, nearly two years ago. One would want to know how much progress has been achieved by the Committee, especially the four sub-committees that are working to chart across the implementation of the roadmap.

The first sub-committee, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been tasked, I stand informed on this, to look into all aspects regarding regulations that are needed to facilitate the setting-up of the charging network in the Republic of Mauritius and this sub-committee is chaired by the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities itself. Now, there is a second sub-committee on the financial incentive and green loans and that is chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, over and above the Interministerial Committee; there are many committees. A third one that seeks to promote awareness and training and this Committee is chaired by Business Mauritius. And the fourth one, and that is very important, is the National Battery Plan, again chaired under the aegis of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities.

You want to know at this point in time, there is no legislation *per se* governing the battery issue and the issues there are many folds. Firstly, what kind of guarantee will importers of electric vehicles provide to new buyers on the cars and the batteries, being given that the battery is an imported and expensive element? The hon. Joanne Tour is right. She said the battery is about one third the price of the car. And in electric vehicles, what kind of battery take back policy for second life use of recycling will be applicable? This is one of the main issues. Secondly, what kind of battery tracking system for traceability purposes and to enable the identification of owners of discarded batteries will be implemented? Thirdly, how about the development of a National Battery Plan to address the electric vehicle battery packs fates, support a second life battery market and ensure battery recycling? And the fourth one, which is of course important as well, is to be able to undertake the classification of batteries which will be viable for second life application.

So, as I said, it is a pity that we do not have the chance to listen to the hon. Lesjongard and the Minister of Finance as well, hon. Dr. Padayachy on the progress that they have made on their end as these issues are being looked into by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry.

Ils ont laissé cela aux bons soins de l'honorable Tour. Je suis tenté de dire qu'ils ont, soit joué un mauvais tour à l'honorable Tour ou bien la tour de contrôle n'a pas fonctionnée dans ce cas-là ...

Mr Speaker: No, no!

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Okay, I withdraw. I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: We are all human beings...

(*Interruptions*)

No! We are all human beings!

(*Interruptions*)

Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Please! On both sides of the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Both sides of the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Please!

An hon. Member: *C'est honteux!*

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Osman Mahomed: What I mean by that '*la tour de contrôle*', there has been...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Now I am on my feet! I told you that some Members are looking for an opportunity to walk-out or to withdraw or to be expelled.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir, she made a very good speech...

Ms Tour: You made fun of my name!

Mr Osman Mahomed: No, no, no! I did not make fun of your name, '*la tour de contrôle*' means there has been no coordination.

(*Interruptions*)

She has spoken about Reader's Digest; she has spoken about what happened on the international scene except about the technicalities for one and a half hours; except about the technicalities of the Bill...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, do not complicate things.

(*Interruptions*)

Order!

The Deputy Prime Minister: On a point of order, may I? I refer to Standing Order 40(2) which relates to unbecoming words or expressions or to use offensive language. Now, to play on words using the name of a Member of this Parliament can be deeply offensive. So, I would pray that the hon. gentleman shows courtesy by withdrawing the words he used.

Mr Speaker: Yes, it is done. Thank you very much.

Mr Osman Mahomed: She said she will not be...

(*Interruptions*)

She has done a lot of politics in her speech.

Mr Speaker: No!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Speaker, Sir...

An hon. Member: *Ar to nom li pann fer politik!*

Mr Speaker: Oh!

Mr Osman Mahomed: *Non! La to pe fer politik!*

Mr Speaker: Now, do not complicate my life!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The car that we drive, Mr Speaker, Sir, greatly influences our individual greenhouse gas emission. Buying fuel efficient vehicles coupled with smart and eco-driving certainly reduce our carbon footprint and also contribute positively to the environment. Mauritius has a taxation system that was introduced under the *Maurice Ile Durable* vision that brought down pollution emitted by vehicles in terms of carbon dioxide and even sulfur dioxide emission, like I lengthily explained during the course of my speech. I remember during a

workshop on *Maurice Ile Durable*, it was stated that, at that point in time, Mauritius had the second best air quality in the world. I am not too sure how it is today; I will have to look at the IMF report.

Going forward, electric cars charged by sources of renewable energy like solar photovoltaic and wind can be a solution towards bringing further the transportation sector, but, at this point in time, there are huge implications associated with this, as I have lengthily explained in my speech.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will end here. I wish the very best for 2022 to you and to your family, to all hon. Members, including those many who have been named and are at current outside and to their families, and to all our Mauritian countrymen and to the motherland.

Long live Mauritius!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ittoo!

(6.54 p.m.)

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas & Floréal): Merci, M. le président. Je pense à la perspective de l'honorable Osman Mahomed, il nous amène dans les années 1990 où tout le monde croyait qu'on allait rouler des voitures manuelles et que personne n'était intéressé avec les voitures automatiques. Je lui suggérerais d'aller acheter une voiture automatique aujourd'hui, à l'ère que l'on vit.

M. le président, pendant mon exposé je vais répondre à l'honorable Osmad Mahomed pour le mettre un peu dans la réalité d'aujourd'hui. Je comprends qu'il sort du concept d'une île Maurice qui date de 2011. Cela ne me surprend guère, quand on sait qu'il a été à la tête d'un certain nombre - non, on parle d'une centaine de projets, par milliards, qui ne se sont jamais réalisés, et le seul qui aurait pu être réalisé, M. le président, apparemment, j'apprends que c'était un central à charbon à Albion.

(Interruptions)

Donc, l'honorable Osman Mahomed, je lui ai entendu dire que nos voitures électriques ne sont pas aussi *green as per se*. Nous sommes tous d'accord, M. le président, que notre but, aujourd'hui, n'est pas de changer notre flotte d'automobiles et de la mettre en électrique en un jour. À l'instant que je vous parle, M. le président, l'homme le plus riche au monde n'est nul

autre qu'un fabricant de voitures électriques. Pendant plus de vingt ans, les plus riches hommes, femmes, compagnies évoluaient dans le monde informatique et dans le monde de services en ligne. Et à l'ère que nous vivons, quand tout le monde pour d'informatique, de l'intelligence artificielle, c'est M. Elon Musk fabricant de Tesla qui est l'homme le plus riche.

M. le président, en même temps, il y a une autre réalité qu'on ne peut pas rester insensible et indifférent. La majorité des grands fabricants de voitures à combustion interne se sont engagés à arrêter la production de voitures roulant à l'essence ou diesel d'ici 2030 ou certain 2035. Ils fabriqueront uniquement des voitures électriques peut-être même avant la date butoir certains nous disent. Je me demande comment l'honorable Osman Mahomed voyagerait après cette date. Tout cela pour venir vous dire, M. le président, qu'il est temps que nous pensons, que nous parlons sérieusement d'une transition à l'électrique, certes plus verte dans l'environnement automobile mauricien.

M. le président, je voudrai parler d'un pays qui m'est à cœur et que j'ai découvert pendant mes recherches, la Norvège. *Mr Speaker, Sir, the one nation that stands out when it comes to electric vehicle adoption is Norway. It is important that we talk about it because it is by no coincidence that Norway leads the world in electric vehicle penetration.* Petite information, M. le président, on a entendu ces derniers temps du terme 'oil curse' martelé par certains. Eh bien, M. le président, la Norvège est une nation verte, bâtie sur le pétrole. Avec ses immenses réserves de gaz et du pétrole, son énergie mixte aujourd'hui comprend 90% d'énergie verte renouvelable, et la Norvège est un des pays les plus riches d'Europe.

60% of new cars sold are EVs compared to 2% in the US for example. How did they do it and what can we learn from the Norway, Mr Speaker, Sir? In Norway in 2021, there are more electric cars than non-electric. 10 years ago, nobody could have imagined this. But it is not just cars that have gone electric, it is a network of buses, trains, trams, electric bikes, God knows, even *trotinettes*. First, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government policy has been key in this transformation. The speed of the transition correlates closely to its Government policy and incentives for purchases. In Norway, the secret to accelerate the uptake of electric vehicles is to make them cheap enough. *L'honorable Osman Mahomed a mentionné les: 'electric cars are expensive and will have a negative impact on our balance of payment.'*

M. le président, encore une fois le monde a changé, le monde évolue rapidement. Le prix d'une batterie aujourd'hui n'est plus ce qu'il était en 2011 et le prix d'une batterie ne sera plus le même en 2030. En même temps, M. le président, quand l'honorable Osman Mahomed nous dit qu'aujourd'hui nos voitures ne seront plus aussi vertes vu notre mixte de *coals* et de diesels, effectivement, il parle d'une réalité mais en même temps quand il a lu notre '*Transformation Road Map*', on a la vision d'avoir 60% ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, bear with me, I have to interrupt you there. The time is 19.00 hrs.

Mr Ittoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like just, on behalf of all Members on this side, to wish you and all the Members in this House a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope next year is going to be a better year for everyone and we hope to see you well, in good health next year. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

ANNOUNCEMENT

POINT OF ORDER - HON. DR. BOOLELL

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have studied a point of order raised by hon. Dr. Boolell earlier. My conclusion is the following: the issue does not fall under the purview of Standing Order 41; it is more a matter that can be raised under 40(5) by way of a substantive motion.

However, hon. Members, I would remind the House that the issue raised by hon. Dr. Boolell concerning the Minister of Health, occurred on a previous Sitting, whereas Standing Orders provide that they have to be raised at the same Sitting or immediately after. So, I hope hon. Dr. Boolell will understand. Thank you very much for your attention.

END-OF-YEAR MESSAGE

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as year 2021 draws to an end, I wish, with your permission, and in-keeping with the long-standing tradition in the House, to say a few words before moving for adjournment, as this is the last Sitting for this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, in the course of this year, the world has continued to suffer the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic with dramatic consequences on lives and livelihood and Mauritius has not been spared.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to all our fellow countrymen and especially to those who mourn the loss of their loved ones.

I also wish to express my deep gratitude to all our frontliners who have continued their fight with an unwavering spirit of sacrifice, patriotism and duty, at the risk of their own lives, to protect the population and save lives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mauritius, the National Assembly has continued to meet and discharge its constitutional functions in safe conditions and Government has continued to subject itself to parliamentary scrutiny through Parliamentary Questions, including Private Notice Questions. All these have been made possible, thanks to the measures put in place by your Office.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, we have had 39 Sittings and the Assembly has passed 21 Bills, including two which had been introduced in 2020. Government has replied to 848 Parliamentary Questions requiring oral answers and 50 requiring written answers. In addition, Government has replied to 24 Private Notice Questions from the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Moreover, Government replied to numerous queries during the Committee of Supply of the Appropriation Bill and two Supplementary Appropriation Bills.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the receipt of 17 Private Members' Motions and the ensuing balloting thereof, today's Sitting has been dedicated for transacting private members' business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we also wish to place on record our deep appreciation and thanks to you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for having called a special Sitting in order to allow the House to pay tribute to the memory of late Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC, PC, former President and former Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for presiding over the deliberations of the House as well as the hon. Deputy Speaker whenever he was called upon to take the Chair. I also wish to thank the Deputy Chairperson of Committees who assisted in chairing the Committee of Supply on the Appropriation Bill 2021/2022. I also thank hon. Members for their participation in the debates.

My thanks also go to the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, the two Clerk Assistants, all the officers of the National Assembly, including the officers of the Library, the Parliamentary ICT and Broadcasting Unit, the Hansard Unit, the Office Care Attendants, the Serjeant-at-Arms, officers of the Attorney General's Office and all civil servants for their contribution in the discharge of parliamentary duties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to present the Season's Greetings to His Excellency, the President of the Republic and Mrs Roopun, as well as to His Excellency, the Vice-President and Mrs Boissézon, and their families.

I convey to you, Mr Speaker, Sir, and to your family, our best wishes for a Merry Christmas 2021 and a Happy New Year 2022. I extend my best wishes to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and his family.

Let me also extend my best wishes to all the hon. Members and their families.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to express my best wishes to the Clerk of the National Assembly, the officers of the Assembly and all the civil servants. I convey my good wishes for the festive seasons to the population and I sincerely wish that 2022 be a better year in which we shall steer our course out of the pandemic and regain, to some extent, our normal way of life.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Applause)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we had requested for Parliament not to go into recess so that we may sit continuously, except for the public holidays. This is in order for us to have more time to consider the COVID-19 pandemic which, as you know, has dominated Question Time in the House, and in particular, Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the very clear danger represented by the Omicron Variant. It is, therefore, with regret that we note that Parliament will only resume next year.

The Members of the Opposition have all through the year continuously brought the Government to account and every Tuesday has been filled by dozens of questions on every topic of interest. Every Bill which has been brought to the House has been hotly debated by the Opposition and we have sought to fulfil our responsibilities vis-à-vis the nation at every opportunity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, like the Prime Minister, I have a special thought to all the personnel of our Health Services in whatever position they hold in these services.

My thoughts and prayers also go to all the families affected by COVID-19 either through sickness or by death. I have personally stated that I would donate my 13th month bonus to the health personnel and, Mr Speaker, Sir, this will be done by me to the personnel of the ENT Hospital working on 24 December.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I now kindly request you, on behalf of the Opposition, and in my personal name, to present the Season's Greetings to the President of the Republic and Mrs Roopun, to the hon. Prime Minister and Mrs Jugnauth, the Vice-President of the Republic and Mrs Boissézon, and their families, to the Deputy Prime Minister and Mrs Obeegadoo, to all Ministers and to you, Mr Speaker, and to the Deputy Speaker, as well as to the Clerk and all staff of the National Assembly who have assisted Members all through the year and to their families. And, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also a special thought for the civil servants.

Therefore, to finish, may I wish everyone, the country at large, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2022.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the Season's Greetings expressed by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, to His Excellency, the President and Mrs Roopun, to His Excellency, the Vice-President and Mrs Boissézon, and their families.

In my own name and on behalf of the Clerk and officers of the National Assembly, I thank the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition for their kind words and good wishes.

I am pleased to extend my best wishes for a Merry Christmas 2021 and a Happy New Year 2022 to the hon. Prime Minister and to Mrs Jugnauth, and members of their family; to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and all hon. Members and their families.

I associate myself to the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition to thank the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the two Clerk Assistants, all the officers of the National Assembly, including the officers of the Parliamentary ICT and Broadcasting Unit, the Hansard Unit, the Library, the Office Care Attendants, the Sergeant-at-Arms and his officers, officers of

the Solicitor General's Office, and all civil servants who have assisted in the work of the Assembly, and I convey to them and their families my Season's Greetings.

I thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 29 March 2022 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Any Adjournment Matter? None! So, happy hour to everybody! I suspend the Sitting!

At 7.11 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 29 March 2022 at 11.30 a.m.