



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 02 AUGUST 2024

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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Mohammad Zahid Nazurally
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Ashley Ittoo
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Adviser	Dowlutta, Mr Ram Ranjit, CSK
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 24 of 2024

Sitting of Friday 02 August 2024

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 4.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make.

The digital landscape of organisations (including parliaments and legislative bodies worldwide) has drastically changed and more so as we enter a new age driven by new technologies and Artificial Intelligence.

As we face the future, the digital transformation of the National Assembly is a vital step towards ensuring its efficiency and transparency.

The objective of the Digital Transformation Strategy is to propel our legislative body into a new era.

This strategy will uphold the principles of our democracy by providing an unprecedented level of clarity and accessibility to all citizens of Mauritius.

Our vision is to create a modern legislative body that leverages the latest digital technologies to enhance its operations and public engagement.

By achieving these objectives, we will not only streamline our processes, but also strengthen the bond between the Government and the citizens that it serves.

The main Components of this Strategy are as follows –

1. **AI Chatbots**

Chatbots Platforms will be used to assist citizens navigating our services for general enquiries. This will ensure a better understanding of the Standing Orders, rules, and other provisions relating to parliamentary procedures.

2. **Tools and Applications**

The strategy will comprise interactive tools and applications for all citizens to foster greater interaction with Parliament. These tools will enable citizens to

better engage with their representatives and stay informed about parliamentary activities.

3. **Live Transcription/Captioning**

Our live streaming of parliamentary proceedings will be accompanied by live and in-house captioning in both English and French. This will promote accessibility and inclusion by allowing more citizens to follow and understand our legislative process.

4. **Speech translation**

English and French translation will be made available on our existing Parliament TV Channel Video-On-Demand (VOD) Internet streaming platform.

5. **Hansard Production**

Generative AI will also be introduced within the existing Hansard cycle for instant transcription of the House proceedings. This will significantly reduce the time and effort required to produce accurate records of our debates and discussions.

6. **Open Data Initiatives**

Legislative data and documents will be published in open formats to facilitate public access and research in order to encourage civic engagement and academic research.

7. **Workflow Automation**

Workflow automation with Generative AI will be integrated within the legislative processes such as bill drafting, amendment tracking and committee workflows in order to streamline these processes.

However, the documents will still be manually reviewed to ensure complete accuracy.

8. **Timeline**

The timeline and roadmap for this digital transformation are ambitious yet achievable.

The strategy is to achieve quick wins within the coming months, the Chatbots, the development of interactive tools and applications, the live transcription and the open data initiatives.

By next year, the implementation of the live captioning of proceedings is expected to be completed.

Over the next three years, the digitalisation of our archives will be completed and routine processes will be automated.

The digital transformation of the National Assembly is a bold step towards a more efficient, transparent and inclusive legislative body.

The support of all stakeholders, including members of the Assembly, staff, and citizens will be required to engage this initiative.

I have consulted the Leader of the House and the Deputy Speaker who support this initiative.

Hon. Members, together, we can transform the Assembly into a ground-breaking parliamentary institution that not only meets the demands of our time, but also sets a standard for others to follow.

I thank you for your attention.

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**

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for the year ended 30 June 2023.
- (b) The Financial Statements and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Rodrigues Subsidy Account for the year ended 30 June 2023.
- (c) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Outer Islands Development Corporation for the year ended 30 June 2021.

B. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Insurance Industry Compensation Fund for the 18 months ended 30 June 2023.

C. Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage

The Annual Reports and Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Art Gallery for the following years/period:

- (i) 01 January to 31 December, 2014, and 01 January to 30 December, 2015; and
- (ii) 01 January 2016 to 30 June 2017; and 01 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**MR S. K. – DEATH – INQUIRIES**

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in regard to the inquiries initiated into the death of Mr S. K. in October 2020, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if –

- (a) any suspects have been –
 - (i) arrested and, if so, when, and
 - (ii) interrogated under warning and, if so, when;
- (b) any enquiry with regard to the way in which the autopsy was performed has been completed, and
- (c) the Police has retrieved any safe city images in relation to the deceased's last trip to La Louise and how he reached Telfair.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, given that the Opposition is once again raising this matter in this august Assembly, let me refer the hon. Leader of Opposition to the replies I made to the Private Notice Questions on 18 October 2022 and on 14 May 2024 as well as Parliamentary Question B/412 of 09 May 2023, wherein I informed the House of the Police inquiry initiated into the death of late Mr S. K. and also the institution of a Judicial Enquiry which was followed by a further Police investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I had stated on 18 October 2020, one Mrs P.R.M, no calling, at about 17.30 hours, whilst proceeding to her place through a sugarcane track, noticed that part of the standing sugarcane field was burnt and she further noticed a dead body. She immediately alerted Police Officers who were in a police van patrolling in the vicinity.

The case was attended by Police Officers of Moka Police Station and at around 18.00 hours, an inert body was discovered thereat. The body was in a supine position and appeared to

be burnt together with a part of the sugarcane field. The locus was cordoned off. The Scene of Crime Officers and Forensic Scientific Officers as well as other Police agencies attended the scene of crime. The body was removed for autopsy. On 19 October 2020, the said body was identified to be that of one Mr S. K., aged 52 years, Job Contractor, residing along Royal Road, Montagne Ory. The cause of death was certified to be due to "Pulmonary Oedema".

During the examination of the locus, one burnt mobile phone was also secured, which was in turn referred for examination at the Police IT Unit and Forensic Science Laboratory. According to the Forensic Science Laboratory, a partial DNA profile extracted from the mobile phone could not be identified nor could it be referred to a foreign laboratory for further examination.

Subsequently, Mr J. M. M., Watchman, was interrogated by the Police and he stated that the sugarcane field, where the dead body was found on 18 October 2020, is the property of Mont Desert Alma Sugar Estate. He further stated that on 17 October 2020 at about 09.30 hours, he had noticed that fire broke out in the said standing sugarcane field. However, he did not call on the locus as the said fire had doused and the extent of damage was not consequent. He later informed his superior officer about the incident but did not report the matter to the Police, as according to their policy, they report cases where the damage of sugarcane field is in excess to one acre.

As I have already stated, on 14 January 2021, the Police have also issued a communiqué offering a reward of Rs400,000 to any person who could provide information to the Police on the case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the course of the investigation, the wife of the deceased, stated that her husband was a job contractor but was not working for the past month as he had undergone a surgery at Candos hospital and he bore stitches at his abdomen. He was facing financial difficulty and was unable to repay several debts he had contracted over the recent months. At times, he used to accompany his friend, one Mr S. C., on a site of work at Calodyne.

Mrs S. K. had stated that on 16 October 2020 at about 06.00 hours in the morning, the said Mr S. C. picked him up in his car. On that day, he was wearing a shirt colour red, a pair of

jeans colour black and a pair of sports shoes colour black make NIKE. He also took his backpack of colour black and brown which contained his personal papers, bandages and medicines, as well as two cellular phones. Since then, he never came back. On 18 October 2020 at about 22.00 hours, she was informed by the Police about the discovery of the corpse of her husband.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, a Judicial Enquiry into the death of Mr S. K. was held before the District Court of Moka. The Judicial Enquiry started on 04 December 2020 and was completed on 21 November 2021. The District Magistrate forwarded her findings to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Subsequently on 26 January 2022, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions had advised the Police to carry out an in-depth investigation with utmost diligence and professionalism on the death of the late S. K. covering the following issues –

- (i) Employment of the deceased wife as Constituency Clerk;
- (ii) Alleged malpractices during the last General Elections with reference to ‘Kistnen Papers’;
- (iii) Alleged blackmailing by deceased to hon. Y. S. regarding the award of contracts by STC and other Parastatal Bodies during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, and
- (iv) The way autopsy was performed over deceased by the Police Medical Officer.

Following the advice of the DPP, the Police initiated further investigation into the case.

As regards the issue of employment of the deceased’s wife as Constituency Clerk, I am informed that enquiry has been completed by the Central CID and statements from 10 persons had been recorded. On 26 June 2023, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions had advised that hon. Y. S. be prosecuted for the offence of ‘Forgery in a private writing’. On 21 July 2023, the case was lodged before the Intermediate Court.

On 30 May 2024, the Magistrate of the Intermediate Court has pronounced her judgement dismissing the case, and I will quote some extracts in relation to Mrs S. K. who was Witness 3 in this case, as follows, I quote –

“I have had the benefit of seeing and observing W3 throughout her testimony, as well as assessing her demeanour in court. The testimony of W3 is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions on matters of substance as explained in my analysis above. I find that the unexplained shortcomings in W3’s testimony...”

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker!

The Prime Minister: “... when taken as a ...”

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, I have asked a specific question to the Prime Minister and instead, there is an onslaught on the character of the widow.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

The Prime Minister: It is not a point of order.

Dr. Boolell: But you have to reply to this question.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Toussaint: *Ekoute!*

Mr Speaker: He has started to answer. Let the Prime Minister continue!

The Prime Minister: Where was I, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Mohamed: Nowhere!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: No, this is not a point of order! What is it that you want?

Mr Mohamed: You are nowhere!

Dr. Boolell: I want a reply to the question!

The Prime Minister: You are nowhere?

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister, please. Let’s continue.

Please, no interruption!

The Prime Minister: But he is interrupting me! He is making silly comments!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes. Hon. Mohamed, please!

The Prime Minister: He should allow ...

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président ...

The Prime Minister: ... to answer peacefully.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, *on a point of order!* M. le président, puisque le Premier ministre ne répond pas directement à la question du Leader de l'opposition, est-ce que le Premier ministre peut déclarer ses intérêts directs dans cette affaire ?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *La honte!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! No! No! No!

(Interruptions)

Order!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr Speaker: This is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramano: *Ki cinema to fer?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: This is not a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Order! You will allow the Prime Minister to continue!

An hon. Member: *La honte!*

Mr Assirvaden: A-t-il déclaré ses intérêts ?

An hon. Member: *Ki interet?*

Mr Speaker: You will allow him to continue!

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

Mr Speaker: It is not a point of order, please.

The Prime Minister: *Lampoul brile!* Let me start again from where I was.

On 30 May 2024, the magistrate of the Intermediate Court has pronounced her judgement dismissing the case, and I will quote some extracts in relation to Mrs S. K. who was Witness 3 in this case, as follows, and I quote what the magistrate said –

“I have had the benefit of seeing and observing W3 throughout her testimony, as well as assessing her demeanour in court.”

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: “The testimony of W3...”

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have ruled already!

(Interruptions)

I have ruled already!

The Prime Minister: “...is riddled with inconsistencies...”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, wait! Hon. Members, wait! Listen!

Mr Mohamed: I have a new point of order!

Mr Speaker: I have ruled already. If your point of order relates to his answer, the Prime Minister has his answer. I cannot direct him as to what answer to give. He is free to give his answer!

Mr Mohamed: However irrelevant?

Mr Speaker: And you will have questions at the end.

Mr Mohamed: However irrelevant?

Mr Speaker: But you may not keep interrupting!

Mr Mohamed: But he can continue being irrelevant?

Hon. Members: Ahh!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Continue!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Point of order! *Enn avoka sa!* Point of order!

Mr Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ayo enn laryaz !*

An hon. Member: *koz lor la mort Kistnen...*

Mr Mohamed:... *kom avocat!*

The Prime Minister: *Enn laryaz sa!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

The Prime Minister: *Inn bien dir, bann cholo!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: *Tonn deza paret lakour twa? komie fois tonn...*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: *...labas meme twa ?*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Yes, Sir?

Mr Speaker: I would ask you to withdraw what you have just said.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Exactement!

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw what I just said!

Mr Speaker: And apologise!

Mr Mohamed: Apologise to whom?

Mr Ameer Meea: *Ki apologise? Pena dans Standing Order sa!*

Mrs Luchmun Roy: Apologise! Imputing motives! Apologise!

Mr Mohamed: To whom?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You had...

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw! I do not apologise!

Mr Speaker: We continue.

Mr Bhagwan: *To pe gagn labitid Phokeer!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr Mohamed: He has never practised as a lawyer!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! If you continue to disrupt, I will be forced!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Al bwar lizol! Al bwar lizol!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not force me!

Mr Mohamed: Oh yes! Oh yes!

Mr Speaker: Okay? Hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Al bwar lizol! Al bwar lizol!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed! I am warning you!

An hon. Member: *Al bwar lizol!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! Let it be clear! I am warning you!

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr Speaker: Do not force my hand!

An hon. Member: *Bhagwan al bwar lizol!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! You have just resumed service! Let...

An hon. Member: *Al bwar lizol Bhagwan!*

Mr Speaker: ...the proceedings continue.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Mo pe koz ar li la!*

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan! Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan! You will respect the order in this Assembly!

Mr Bhagwan: Ask your father ...

Mr Speaker: You will respect the order in this Assembly! Okay?

(Interruptions)

You will respect it!

Mr Bhagwan: Ask your father to respect me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am warning you, hon. Bhagwan! I am warning you!

Mr Bhagwan: Ask your father to respect me!

Mr Speaker: I am warning you! Do not obstruct proceedings in this House!

Mr Bhagwan: He has been threatening me!

Mr Speaker: You have been warned!

Mrs Luchmun Roy: You are threatening the Chair.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Ask your father!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do you want to go out, hon. Bhagwan?

Mr Bhagwan: Ask your father!

Mr Speaker: Would you like to go out, hon. Bhagwan?

Mr Bhagwan: Ask your father!

Mr Speaker: Would you like to go out? I am giving you a last chance! You are obstructing the proceedings in this House!

Mr Bhagwan: No! Ask your father! How...

Mr Speaker: It is a Private...

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet!

It is a Private Notice Question of serious importance and you are going to obstruct proceedings like this?

Mr Bhagwan: Of course!

An hon. Member: *So manier mem sa!*

Mr Speaker: If you want to go out, you continue!

Mr Bhagwan: Of course, why not?

Mr Speaker: If you want to go out, you continue! We will resume!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ki to pe dresse?*

Mr Assirvaden: *To pe gaga! To pa pe kone ki to pou dir!*

The Prime Minister: *Ki pou gaga ek twa?*

Mr Assirvaden: *To pe gaga!*

The Prime Minister: *Enn lanpoul brile! Enn lanpoul brile!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, order! I have just stated...

Mr Lesjongard: *Get to lanpoul brile!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard, I am talking!

I have just stated that if you want to lose time, you can continue like this. It is a PNQ of national importance. If you do not stop obstructing the answer and the proceedings, I will have to take action! I have already warned and I ruled!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I have your guidance, please?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: We will at a later stage! Hon. Prime Minister, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: I apologise!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: So, I was quoting what the...

Mr X. L. Duval: I apologise!

The Prime Minister: I was quoting...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: I apologise!

Mr Speaker: Please, Prime Minister! Please, continue!

The Prime Minister: So, I was quoting what the learned magistrate had stated, and I quote

–

“I have had the benefit of seeing and observing W3 throughout her testimony, as well as assessing her demeanour in court. The testimony of W3 is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions on matters of substance as explained in my analysis above. I find that the unexplained shortcomings in W3’s testimony, when taken as a whole and considered in their entirety, affect the credibility of W3.

Also, I cannot lose sight of the fact that W3 has lied in an affidavit which was the basis of a case before a Court of law... W3 did not strike me as a witness of truth.”

Furthermore, the learned Magistrate stated the following, and I quote –

“When all the matters considered above regarding the weight to be attached to the testimony of W3 are taken as a whole and considered in their entirety, the cumulative effect of the same sheds serious doubt on the veracity of such testimony, and the possibility of W3 having a purpose of her own to serve in alleging that she was not employed as Constituency Clerk by the Accused, cannot be excluded.”

Dr. Boolell: She was not!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of Opposition! Please!

An hon. Member: Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of Opposition! You will have ample time! You are wasting your own time!

Dr. Boolell: He is wasting the time!

Mr Speaker: You are wasting the time now! Please!

The Prime Minister: Maybe he has not heard properly what the learned Magistrate said!

Mr Assirvaden: *Pou lir affidavit la!*

The Prime Minister: Hon. Dr. Boolell, listen carefully –

“(…) the possibility of W3 having a purpose of her own to serve in alleging that she was not employed as Constituency Clerk by the Accused, cannot be excluded.

In view of the nature of the prosecution evidence which is tainted with inconsistencies and material contradictions, I find that a serious doubt has been raised as regards the charge levelled against the Accused.”

The learned Magistrate also stated that, and I quote –

“(…) The Prosecution having failed to establish beyond reasonable doubt that the said Declaration Form has been forged as averred, the charge of making use of a forged document under Count 2 cannot stand, because « *lorsque la pièce falsifiée n’offre pas les éléments d’un faux criminel, l’usage de cette pièce ne peut constituer le crime d’usage de faux.* »”

The learned Magistrate therefore dismissed the information on both Counts 1 and 2.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as for the alleged malpractices during the last General Elections with reference to ‘Kistnen Papers’, an enquiry was instituted at the Central CID, following a correspondence from the Electoral Commissioner. The said correspondence, *inter alia*, enclosed a letter dated 09 January 2021 from Resistans ek Alternativ party.

The letter referred to alleged breaches of some provisions of the Representation of the People Act, more specifically with regard to expenses incurred by some candidates and election agents during the National Assembly Elections of 2019. The case is still under investigation and so far, 11 statements from 9 persons have been recorded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the alleged blackmailing of Mr Y. S. by the deceased regarding the award of contracts by STC and other Parastatal Bodies during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the case which had been referred to the then ICAC for investigation, has now been taken over by the Financial Crimes Commission. Investigation into the matter is ongoing.

As regards the way autopsy was performed over deceased by the Police Medical Officer, I am informed that the enquiry has been completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the course of the initial investigation, 98 persons were interrogated by the CCID and their respective statements recorded. So far, there has been no arrest and the enquiry is ongoing.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, 5 persons were interrogated under warning and several statements were recorded from them between 20 July 2021 and 10 June 2022.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, as I have already stated, the enquiry has been completed. To that effect, further statements were recorded from the Police Medical Officer who had maintained the findings and conclusion contained in his autopsy report. On 12 July 2022, a request was forwarded by Police to IHP Group (*Institut d'Histo Pathologie*) from France to examine samples specimen of lungs tissues in order to have a second opinion. On 14 October 2022, the said institute corroborated the report of the Police Medical Officer.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am further informed that during the investigation, the Police had retrieved all available footages from Safe City Cameras by way of which the deceased could be found alighting a motor bus at Rose Hill Bus Stand at about 12.00 hours on 16 October 2020. Police had also applied for Judge's Order with a view to access data in relation to the phone of the deceased.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the following actions were initiated by Police after advice tendered by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions following findings of Judicial Enquiry –

- (i) The different units of the CCID have held case conferencing to discuss issues with respect to the cases under reference;
- (ii) Correspondences have been sent to the then ICAC on issues relating to contracts allotted in the 2020 confinement period. The matter has now been taken over by the FCC;

- (iii) There has been exchange of correspondence to the Forensic Science Laboratory on further examination of cellular phone in an overseas lab;
- (iv) Services of the Attorney General's Office were enlisted and a request for Mutual Legal Assistance was made with the US authorities for information from Facebook on possible exchange of messages. However, the US authorities has informed that such information is not available, and
- (v) Several persons were interviewed anew with respect to their email addresses for further investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reiterate that I, as Prime Minister, I am as concerned as the close ones of late Mr S. K. to see a speedy completion of the Police enquiry in this matter and keen to see that the perpetrator or perpetrators of this heinous crime are brought to justice and made to pay for their acts. Let me also restate in unequivocal terms that I will see to it that the rule of law prevails and that any individual or group of persons who directly or indirectly have conspired to tarnish the image and reputation of innocent people or institutions through this case will have to assume their responsibilities and bear consequences of their action. Nonetheless, Police enquiry will pursue and action will be taken without fear or favour.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: I hope I will be given ample time to put forward my questions.

Mr Speaker: Yes, you will be given additional time.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, this is the biggest cover-up in relation to the reply...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ki* cover-up? These are statements!

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the question?

In a reply to the then Leader of the Opposition, hon. Xavier Duval, on 18 October 2022, the Prime Minister stated that they were eager to see a speedy completion of the Police enquiry

in this matter. Can the Prime Minister inform the House what steps, if any, have been taken, to bring a speedy completion of a Police enquiry?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have always maintained the same position, namely that Police are enquiring into the matter. And I am not the enquiring officer; I am not the institution to enquire. So, I will depend and I will rely on any progress that the Police are making. So, the enquiry is not yet completed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to video footages. All video footages belonging to the Safe City architecture are stored on a Cloud system. Video footages with regard to Kistnen murder are still there. Will the Prime Minister give a firm undertaking to this House that these footages will be retrieved?

The Prime Minister: What footages is the hon. Leader of the Opposition talking about? He knows that they are in Cloud. I think his head is in a cloud!

Dr. Boolell: No, you are in a cloud!

The Prime Minister: Because...

Dr. Boolell: It can be retrieved!

The Prime Minister: ...if he knows, he has...

Dr. Boolell: It can be retrieved!

The Prime Minister: He can...

Ms Anquetil: *C'est incroyable! Incroyable!*

Mr Speaker: Please be fair in the process!

The Prime Minister: He can always go to the Police and tell the Police that he has evidence that there are footages and they are in a Cloud.

As far as I have answered, this is what I have been informed by the Police. They have secured whatever footages from the Safe City Cameras and, of course, they must have been looking at all those footages and whatever evidence they have, they will proceed on that.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: Let me now come to specimen that was sent to the Institute of Nantes. Now, as the Prime Minister stated in the PNQ asked by my colleague, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, the sample of lungs was sent to the Pathology Institute of Nantes. Can he table the second opinion from the said institute if he has that information?

The Prime Minister: Well, certainly not, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the enquiry is not completed. How can I table documents from an enquiry which is ongoing?

Dr. Boolell: Now, notwithstanding the specimen of lungs sent to the Pathology Institute of Nantes, will the Prime Minister state whether any other specimen, including soft tissue from the neck of the deceased was sent for investigation to confirm that it was death by strangulation?

The Prime Minister: I cannot say what kind of specimen has been sent to the...

Dr. Boolell: This is cover-up!

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

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of Opposition has to withdraw...

Dr. Boolell: What?

The Prime Minister: ... that this is a cover-up.

Mr Speaker: Yes. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please, let the exercise continue!

Dr. Boolell: I will go to the next question.

Mr Speaker: No, kindly...

An hon. Member: Withdraw and apologise!

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Dr. Boolell: You want me to withdraw? I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Boolell: Now, has the Prime...

The Prime Minister: I was answering!

Dr. Boolell: Sorry?

The Prime Minister: I was answering!

Mr Speaker: You are going to give an answer?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only gather information from the Police and, of course, I have been told that they wanted to seek a second opinion with regard to the autopsy report that has been drawn by the Police Medical Officer. I was told that specimens have been sent to the IHP Group of France and they have confirmed the findings of the autopsy report of the Police Medical Officer.

Now, I cannot say what specimen or what tissue has been sent to them. Of course, I can try to find this information, and if I am advised – I say, if I am advised – to give further information on that, of course, I will, but, as I say, this is a matter which is ongoing, an enquiry is ongoing, and I do not think it would be proper for me to give particular details, especially about autopsy report.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: Has the Prime Minister been apprised by the Commissioner of Police of two correspondences from Mr Shibchurn, dated 25 October 2021 and early November 2021, sent by registered post, addressed to the Commissioner of Police and then Officer-in-Charge of the CCID, Mr Heman Jangi, in relation to the murder case of Kistnen?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is relying on supposedly allegations or evidence of one Mr Shibchurn – he mentioned his name, that is why I can mention his name.

First of all, let us see who this person, Mr Shibchurn, is. I have been informed by the Commissioner of Police that he has previously been involved in numerous criminal cases such as criminal intimidation, threatening verbally, assault with premeditation, breach of computer misuse, dealing and possession of drugs, possession of fire arm with intent to endanger life, damaging motor vehicles, and sequestration.

This, if I can call him ‘gentleman’ has just sworn an affidavit, drawn by an Attorney-at-law who is an active member of the Labour Party...

(Interruptions)

And he is talking about Mr Shibchurn having written to the Police! Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition know that the Police had interrogated Mr Shibchurn in the past and he has said that he does not know anything; he is not involved in this and he does not know anything about the Kistnen murder? This is what he has stated!

Further, let us...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: Let us see, Mr Speaker, Sir, this same gentleman; I have also gone through this affidavit that he has sworn and I must say it is a tissue of lies. Tissue of lies! At paragraph 30, this is what he said under oath in his affidavit –

“In or about early January 2022, I met with Manan Fakoo to discuss some religious and social activities. He thereafter requested me to accompany him to Vacoas in a meeting that

he had with Mr Basdeo Seetaram also called Basoo Seetaram, the blue-eyed boy of the inner circle of the MSM.”

He said “in or about early January 2022, he met Manan Fakoo”. Manan Fakoo passed away on 22 of January 2021!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! *Menter!*

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, order! I can't hear! Hon. Members, the Prime Minister is talking!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gobin, order, please!

The Prime Minister: *Monsieur Shibchurn doit avoir rencontré le fantôme de Monsieur Manan Fakoo!* This is the kind of people on which the Leader of the Opposition is relying to put questions!

Dr. Boolell: You are...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

The Prime Minister: You pass on? You give up?

(Interruptions)

You give up! *Fini abat!*

An hon. Member: Shame!

An hon. Member: Fail!

Mr Speaker: Last question! Please, there is not much time left!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister the following question: since he says that he is interested in finding the truth, could he try to find out and tell us whether he can obtain the information from the Commissioner of Police, if he does not have it or if he has it, why is it and how is it that the Police Force whom we are supposed to trust, cannot in any way explain how is it that Safe City Cameras present less than 300 metres away from the scene where the dead body of Mr Kistnen was recovered, how is it that during the preliminary enquiry, the very Safe City Cameras that his services are responsible for, the services of the Prime Minister, has purely and simply been removed and images from that particular camera have simply disappeared? Is that a coincidence that comforts him?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, you are now making a statement!

Mr Mohamed: That's a question! Is that a coincidence?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware about what footages the Police has in their possession when they had retrieved any footage from any camera which they probably think would be relevant to this case. How do I know that? I am not in possession of them.

But let me say one thing, especially to hon. Mohamed. I must say it is a very unfortunate case that up till now, when there is suspicion that a murder has been committed, the Police are still enquiring and they have not been able to at least identify a suspect. I say it again that this is very, very unfortunate.

But this is not the first time that this is happening. The way the Opposition talks about this case is as if it is only under this Government that this is happening for the first time. There have been cases in the past. If I may mention a few of them; one that will certainly ring a bell in the

minds of some of the Members of the Opposition, especially of the Labour Party, is the murder of Rajeshwar Indur.

Now, it is good to know what has happened in the case of Mr Rajeshwar Indur. If I can retrieve my...

Mr Mohamed: Videos?

The Prime Minister: ... information.

Anyway, I have it in mind. What had happened? Mr Rajeshwar Indur was given a letter of reservation of a prime land at Balaclava at the time when the Labour Party was in government. I don't want to make any allegation. Thereafter, he was...

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order. This has nothing to do with the question!

The Prime Minister: *Eta ress trankil do ta!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ale do!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

An hon. Member: *Gagn dimal la!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please! But confine, please!

An hon. Member: *Pe rakont zistwar la do!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, if you can finish your answer.

The Prime Minister: Sorry?

Mr Speaker: Please finish your answer.

The Prime Minister: Yes! I was saying, thereafter...

Mr Speaker: I am giving you additional time.

Mr Mohamed: Yes! Yes!

Mr Speaker: I hope you realise it!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you.

The Prime Minister: Thereafter, he was poisoned, he was killed, he was murdered. The Police had conducted an enquiry and there was a judicial enquiry. The finding of the Magistrate revealed that he had not committed suicide and that there was a clear case of foul play. The Labour Party has been in government for...

Mr Quirin: ... *bizin zistifie ceki inn...*

The Prime Minister: ... for how many years now? From 2005 to...

Mr Quirin: ... *pe bizin kompare !*

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Quirin, please! Let us hear the reply!

The Prime Minister: *Kitsoz pe grate ek twa, non?*

Mr Quirin: ... *twa !*

The Prime Minister: So, from 2005 to 2014, the Police of the Labour Party was not even able to at least come to a conclusion. This is not the first case; there has been the case of Ms Nadine Carol Dantier also. There are other cases also: the case of Mrs Vanessa Pouronne, Mrs Alima Awazil. I can cite a number of cases.

Again, let me say it is not because there are cases which have not been elucidated in the past that there is justification not to elucidate cases where there has been a suspicion of murder.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, your last question!

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much. My last question for you today, hon. Prime Minister. Now, his inner circle has been accused of orchestrating the murder of Mr Kistnen...

Mr Speaker: No!

Dr. Boolell: There is now testimony...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! No! No! This is most improper!

You are now imputing...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell, I am talking! You are casting aspersions; very serious aspersions! Please rephrase your question!

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister has opened the door by referring to the affidavit. He has referred and quoted from the affidavit! He has made it a live issue.

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Ki* open the door?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell! This is your last question!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I am referring because the Prime Minister...

Mr Mohamed: The Prime Minister has quoted...

Dr. Boolell: ... referred to the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I cannot hear! I cannot hear!

Dr. Boolell: The Prime Minister referred to the affidavit, sworn affidavit, and I will refer to a specific paragraph of this affidavit. He is the one who started. What it says –

“The said Basdeo Seetaram has also told Manan Fakoo to be more patient regarding payment of his dues as Mr Sawmynaden...”

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Fantôme! Fantôme! Fantôme!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: “...had to assemble...”

(Interruptions)

... from several stakeholders...

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: “... and the rest would be paid by Mrs Kobita Jugnauth (born Ramdane), the wife of hon. Prime Minister...”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: “...from the black money kept in shady...”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: "...and fictitious trading names ..."

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Table it!

Mr Speaker: Right! Table it and put your question!

Mrs Koonjoo Shah: *Dimoun in mort zot p fer politik!*

Dr. Boolell: This is the question.

Mr Speaker: You have already quoted! Put the question!

Dr. Boolell: Now that the names have been mentioned...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: *Ey Ganoo vey to...*

Dr. Boolell: I would like to know whether...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

An. hon. Member: Time is over.

Mr Mohamed: Why is he giving orders?

Mr Speaker: No! He is answering and you are asking for additional time! Look at the time!

Dr. Boolell: And I...

Mr Mohamed: I apologise.

Mr Speaker: I am going to stop if you continue on your side.

Dr. Boolell: Now that the names have been mentioned, will they be cases for investigation? Will they be investigated or will they be interrogated?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Let me tell you. Let me tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that there are two persons whose names have been cited in this affidavit, who have already made a declaration to the Police and have asked the Police to inquire.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let him answer! Hon. Dr. Boolell! Let him answer now!

The Prime Minister: And again, you are referring to an affidavit. How can we take this affidavit seriously when somebody is saying that he has met Mr Fakoo when Mr Fakoo had already passed away? What is this?

(Interruptions)

Nonsense!

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Time is over!

Mr Assirvaden: 25 millions! 25 millions!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: 25 millions!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden! Behave yourself!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell! Hon. Assirvaden! Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden! Why do you disobey my authority? Do you want to go out?

Mr Assirvaden: 25 millions!

Mr Speaker: But why do you disobey my authority? Don't argue with me! Do yourself a favour, don't argue with me! Time is over! You had ample time, you should be grateful! Now, let the business continue or you are going to go out!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Abbas Mamode!

(Interruptions)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTION

ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN MAURITIUS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue (Ms J. Tour):

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

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(4.53 p.m.)

Mr Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):
Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, first and foremost let me take this opportunity to congratulate you as the newly appointed Speaker.

Mr Mohamed: *Ta, fek la to ti p fek kritik li.*

Mr Abbas Mamode: As much....

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Lesjongard: *Dimoun mort koze...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Abbas Mamode: As much as it is an honour for you to be sitting in this Chair, Mr Speaker, Sir, presiding over this August Assembly, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for taking this strategic and wise decision of appointing you as the Speaker of the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, through the years, you have proved that you are the worthy grandson of late Sir Gaëtan Duval. This Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has proved over years that he has been the one betting the pace for the development of this country.

It is the MSM Government, under the Prime Ministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth that appointed a lady, Mrs Maya Hanoomanjee as a Speaker of this Assembly and followed by this Prime Minister hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth who appointed for the first time, a lady hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo as Vice-Prime Minister. Today again, Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth will go down in history for appointing the youngest Speaker in your person as Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Second young.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Mr Speaker, Sir, during your first electoral campaign in 2014, you were plying as a young and dynamic politician because you were working in a homogenous and honest team and the then Sir Anerood Jugnauth who already spotted your potential at this time. It cannot be a coincidence, Mr Speaker, Sir, that for my maiden speech in 2015, I had the privilege to address to you and in fact, I addressed to two Speakers namely you who was presiding and then the Speaker, Mrs Maya Hanoomanjee took over and for Private Members' Motion, I also had the privilege to start my speech in front of the then Speaker, Mr Sooroojdev Phokeer and now I am addressing this Assembly *sous votre présidence*.

Before I come to the Private Members' Motion, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me take this opportunity to wish a speedy and prompt recovery to my very dear friend, Mr Sooroojdev Phokeer.

M. le président, on a vu comment l'opposition, même à votre arrivée, ils n'ont pas de respect. M. le président, *pendan ki ban Membre loppozision fer cinema dan parlman*, les jeunes

députés de ce côté de la Chambre comme l'honorable Ms J. Tour, présente ici, pense à l'avenir de notre république. C'est pourquoi cette *Private Members' Motion*.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, fossil fuel, the traditional backbone of the transport sector, are finite resources. As global concern over resource depletion rise transitioning to electric vehicles which can be powered by diverse and renewable energy sources become a strategic imperative for Mauritius.

The corner stone of the Government's approach to promoting electric vehicles lies in making them affordable for the average Mauritian citizen. The abolition of excise duties for EVs with engine power below 180 kW is a testament to this commitment, Mr Speaker, Sir. Beyond the initial cost saving, electric vehicles boost significantly lower maintenance cost compared to their traditional combustion engine counterparts. Electric vehicles are inherently more energy-efficient than their fossil fuel powered counter parts. The conversion of electrical energy to mechanical power in EVs is more direct and efficient resulting in better energy utilisation. This translates into cost saving for consumers who benefit from lower energy consumption per kilometre travelled.

Seamless access to charging facilities is pivotal for the success of the government's electric mobility initiative. Members of Parliament should recognise that the widespread adoption of electric vehicles relies on the ease with which individuals can charge their cars. The establishment of public charging stations in urban centres enhances accessibility for residents while strategically placing charging infrastructures along highways facilitate inter-city travel.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, ensuring compatibility and inter-operability among a charging network is crucial in providing a hassle free experience for EV users regardless of the charging station operator. Encouraging the use of electric vehicles in public fleet is more than an eco-friendly gesture; it is a pragmatic step towards achieving a holistic transition in the transport sector. Electric buses with their reduced carbon footprint and operational efficiency are not just a putative concept. They are a present solution to the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation.

The NTC's – thank you, hon. Alan Ganoo – initiative aligns seamlessly with global efforts to create smarter and more sustainable urban mobility solutions. As we transit towards an electric

bus fleet, the positive impact on community health and overall quality of life cannot be overstated. Traditional buses emit pollutants that have direct consequences on the respiratory health and overall well-being. Electric buses with *zéro* pipe emission ensure that our streets are not just conducting a transit, but are contributors to a healthier living environment.

This shift is an investment in the well-being of every Mauritian, making our cities more healthy and perhaps more vibrant. The pursuit of a sustainable and environmentally conscious future, Mauritius has set its sight on becoming a regional leader in sustainable transportation. At the core of this vision lies the 10 Year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap. Unveiled in January 2020, this roadmap not only reflects a deep understanding of the global challenges caused by traditional transportation system, but also aligns Mauritius with international best practices in fostering a shift towards electric mobility.

One of the primary pillars, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the roadmap is the emphasis on charging infrastructure – an aspect widely recognise as critical in the successful integration of electric vehicles. Global leaders in sustainable transportation such as Norway and the Netherlands have demonstrated the pivotal role of a well-developed charging network in encouraging mass EV adoption. By incorporating this best practice, Mauritius is laying the groundwork for seamless EV use ensuring citizens can confidently transition to electric vehicles without concerns about charging accessibility.

The roadmap strategically focuses on battery-electric vehicles, aligning Mauritius with countries like China and Germany that have prioritised BEVs in their sustainable transportation initiatives. Learning from the experiences of these global pioneers ensures that Mauritius adopts a vehicle fleet that not only meets environmental standards, but also aligns with the preferences and needs of the citizens. This approach, Mr Speaker, Sir, is crucial in creating a sustainable transportation system that resonates with the local context while adhering to international benchmark. International success stories in the electric mobility sector highlight the importance of a phase and targeted approach to this incentive.

Mr Speaker, Sir, by aligning incentives with specific target groups such as taxis, corporate entities and government agencies, Mauritius is following the footstep of countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. This target strategy ensures that incentives are maximised where

they can have the most significant impact, contributing to the responsible and sustainable growth of the electric vehicle market.

The roadmap, Mr Speaker, Sir, recognises the power of community building and knowledge sharing in driving the success of sustainable transportation. Countries like Sweden and Singapore have excelled, Mr Speaker, Sir, in creating a platform for collaboration among government, industry and academia. By fostering a community of practice, Mauritius aims to tap into global expertise, leveraging shared knowledge and experiences to refine its approach continually.

The global shift towards clean power for EVs is a trend that Mauritius is keenly embracing. Countries like Iceland and Costa Rica have demonstrated the potential of clean energy sources for EV charging. Through a stimulation programme focusing on clean power, Mauritius seeks not only to reduce emissions, but also to create economic opportunities tied to renewable energy. This approach, Mr Speaker, Sir, positions Mauritius at the forefront of a global movement towards sustainable and clean energy adoption in the transportation sector.

Mauritius Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap is not just a localised strategy, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a strategic framework designed to position the country as a leader in sustainable transportation in the region. By aligning with global best practices, Mauritius is not merely adopting a set of guidelines. It is actively participating in a global movement towards a greener and more sustainable future. The 10-Year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap for Mauritius is more than a document. It is a commitment, Mr Speaker, Sir, to international best practices that have proven successful in leading the transition to sustainable transportation.

As Mauritius charts its course towards this future, it does so not in isolation, Mr Speaker, Sir, but as an active participant in the global community, striving for a cleaner, greener and more sustainable world. In the pursuit of a sustainable and healthier future, Mauritius stands at a crossroad where the adoption of electric vehicles emerge not only as an environmental imperative but as a catalyst for profound social and health benefits. As the Government continues its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles, it is crucial to recognise the comprehensive advantages that extend beyond economic and environmental considerations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, urban life often resonates with the constant hum of combustion engine vehicles contributing to elevated noise levels and a less than ideal living environment. Electric vehicles characterised by their whisper, quiet operation, present a transformative solution to this long-standing issue. As Mauritius aims for a more sustainable and serene urban landscape, the transition to electric vehicles becomes a key contributor to noise reduction. Quieter streets promote a more peaceful coexistence and enhances the overall wellbeing of residents, fostering a sense of tranquility in urban spaces.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the societal benefit of embracing electric vehicles extend to broader public health dividends. A reduction in air pollution directly correlates with a decrease in respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease and other health issues associated with poor air quality. A healthier population is a more productive one, Mr Speaker, Sir. And as electric vehicles gain prominence, urban planning...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, I am sorry to interrupt. We will break for 30 minutes and then you can resume your speech.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

At 5.15 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.02 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated!

Hon. Abbas Mamode, resume your debate!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Quelle agréable surprise, M. le président, un *Private Members' Motion* devant trois différents présidents ! Ce n'est pas donné à tout le monde ! Et en plus, la jeunesse ! Mais toujours sans l'opposition !

An hon. Member: Under protest!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Ils sont là *under protest* !

The Deputy Speaker: No, everybody is happily here! Everybody is happily here, I think!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: We are all happily here in our own way!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The abolition of excise duties and strategic reduction in taxes has already planted the seeds of economic advantages. Continued government efforts to promote electric vehicles will not only sustain these benefits, but also catalyse the growth of a thriving electric mobility market in Mauritius. By endorsing this resolution, Members of Parliament are contributing to the economic prosperity of the nation.

Fostering a landscape where businesses and individuals alike reap the rewards of sustainable and cost effective transportation. Charging infrastructure is a backbone of the electric vehicle ecosystem. The Government's commitment to establishing a robust charging network reflects a dedication to building the path to progress. Members of Parliament, especially this side of the House, by supporting this resolution, are advocating for continued investment in charging infrastructure. This is not merely a step in technological advancement, but a cornerstone in ensuring seamless access to charging facility, a fundamental prerequisite for widespread electric vehicle adoption.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the commitment of the National Transport Corporation to acquire electric buses signifies a pioneering effort in transforming public transportation. A resolution in favour of ongoing government efforts amplifies this commitment, emphasising the role of sustainable public transportation system. Members of Parliament through their support are not only reducing emissions, but are also setting a precedent for future focus and pragmatic solution to public transit, enhancing the quality of life for all Mauritians.

The 10 Year Electric Vehicle Integration Roadmap aligns Mauritius with international best practices. By endorsing this resolution, Members of Parliament are elevating Mauritius to a regional beckon of sustainability. The strategic framework proposed in the roadmap positions the nation as a leader in sustainable transportation, showcasing an ability to adapt and innovate in alignment with global standards.

Beyond the tangible advantages, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the adoption of electric vehicles promises intangible yet invaluable benefits to society. Members of Parliament, through this resolution, are nurturing the well-being of citizens. By endorsing electric vehicle adoption, they are contributing to a quieter, healthier and more vibrant society, a legacy that extends far beyond the Parliamentary Chamber.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the resolution urging the Government of Mauritius to persist in its efforts to encourage the use of electric vehicles is a pledge to a cleaner, more sustainable future. As Members of Parliament contemplate their decision, they hold in their hands the power to position Mauritius as a regional leader in embracing electric mobility.

This resolution, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not merely a legislative act; it is a commitment to a legacy of responsible stewardship, echoing throughout the corridor of time as a testament to Mauritius' dedication to a brighter and more sustainable future.

The Opposition may talk as much as they want, but it is this Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who will go down in history as a Prime Minister who has never let his population down. Besides being a *bâtitseur infrastructurel de ce pays*, he will be remembered as a Prime Minister who has dealt with a pandemic, a lockdown and a world war in Ukraine and Israel.

It is this Prime Minister who is *le vrai rassembleur* and who leads this country with the perfect *slogan* 'Unity in Diversity'. Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Nuckcheddy, are you ready?

(6.09 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For me, it is a great pleasure to have you and only you on the Chair while I am intervening on this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It is a pleasure for me too!

Mr Nuckcheddy: I know that.

The Deputy Speaker: It is a shared pleasure!

Mr Nuckcheddy: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to first of all thank hon. Ms Joanne Tour for proposing such a topic to be debated in this august Assembly which is of great interest and we saw that those hon. Members who intervened on this topic from both sides of the House, have carried out lots of research.

Today, as I am taking my turn to bring my contribution to this Motion, on this very same day, the SVICC is hosting the *Salon de L'automobile 2024*, where electric cars are exposed and proposed to Mauritians. The Automotive Industry itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has become one of the most important worldwide, not only at the economic level but also in terms of research and development.

Increasingly, there are more technological elements that are being introduced on vehicles for the improvement of both passengers and pedestrians' safety. However, this has led to a dramatic increase in air pollution levels in the urban environments. In addition, according to a Report by the European Union, the transport sector is responsible for nearly 28% of the total CO₂ emissions. Therefore, the authorities of most developed countries are encouraging the use of electric vehicles to avoid the concentration of air pollutant CO₂ as well as other greenhouse gases. Most specifically, they promote sustainable and efficient mobility through different initiatives mainly through tax incentives, purchase aids or other special measures such as free public parking, the pre-use of motorways, that is, they don't have to pay tolls.

It is believed that electric vehicles offer the following advantages over traditional vehicles. I say it is believed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as later on, I will elaborate on certain points and issues concerning the electric cars. So, neither this drawback nor the other facets that I am going to raise later on, they are not my own stand point but I am only putting it here as a matter of points to ponder. So, the advantages are that this type of vehicle neither emits tail pipe pollutant CO₂ nor nitrogen dioxide. The number of electric vehicle engine element is smaller which leads to a much cheaper maintenance. The engines are simpler and more compact, they do not need a cooling circuit and neither is necessary for incorporating gear shaft, clutch or elements that reduce the engine noise.

Having fewer and more simple components make this type of vehicle have fewer breakdowns. Travelling in electric vehicles is more comfortable due to the absence of vibrations or engine noise. We are, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking of smart city and with smart cities, electric cars will have a very important role in smart cities being smart along with shared mobility. It is at this opportune time, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have this Private Motion in this Assembly. This Private Members' Motion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about this Assembly resolving on the Government's effort to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Mauritius. The automotive landscape is undergoing an electrifying transformation with electric vehicles accelerating towards mainstream adoption. However, a crucial challenge remains. While electric vehicles hold the key to a more sustainable future, the high cost associated with battery technology have cast a shadow over profitability for most original equipment manufacturers and gigafactories.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, technology, ideologies, theories, and demography keep changing. When I was in the primary school, we were taught that, for example: Black River was the least populated district of Mauritius but about three decades after when my son was in primary school, he was taught that Savanne was the least populated district. When I was at the secondary school, we were told that the advantage of electricity was that it does not create pollution but now we are told that the power stations producing electricity are the largest source of carbon pollution. On 17 December 2021, when hon. Osman Mahomed intervened on this Motion, he mentioned something very interesting that in 2019, Tesla made a very impressive presentation of its last model of electric vehicle and the shares of Tesla went up from \$70 in 2019 to 1,200 US Dollars on their stock exchange of New York in November 2021.

Now, I would like to inform the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Tesla's shares went down to 281 US Dollars in July 2023. In December 2023, it was at about \$200. From December 2023 to July 2024, that is last month, there has been some improvements, I should say, as at yesterday, 01 August 2024, the shares of Tesla at Nasdaq were at about 216.86 US Dollars but yet it was lower than the previous day by 6.55%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have with me a book called Power Play: Elon Musk Tesla and the Bet of the Century, written by Mr Tim Higgins who said that the Tesla's story is a very interesting case

study on the thin line between madness and genius. This is a book which was published in 2021. Manan Fakoo had already passed away by that time.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Don't make joke about this, please!

Mr Nuckcheddy: No, it's not a joke, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not appreciate this kind of comments.

Mr Nuckcheddy: I am just reminding some people. You know, in that book at the page 122, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr Tim Higgins who is a reporter of the Wall Street Journal, mentioned that Musk, the billionaire was pleading poverty about four months ago. He ran out of cash and Musk had told the Court in filings that he had been living off personal loans from a friend since October 2009, spending \$200,000 a month. What I want to point out here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we can say that during that time the shares value of Tesla was increasing but in fact, the Founder, Mr Elon Musk was himself undergoing some difficult times as far as finance is concerned.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when you now look at what is happening around us, if you were to find a carbon free solution, we then see that today's solution may be a tomorrow's question and let us see what the electric cars, in fact, are.

In 2022, we had about 26 million of electric cars on our roads. Today, this figure has reached 40 million and this is growing quite fast. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you must all have heard about the 50 million users. In fact, it took us 62 years to reach 50 million conventional cars in the world. The landline telephone took 75 years to reach 50 million users. Electricity, it took 46 years. Radio, 38 years, credit cards 28 years, cellular phones 12 years, internet 4 years, Facebook 2 years and highly popular games such as Angry Birds or Candy Crush are doing this in less than 2 months.

Today, the fastest downloaded application of all time is Pokémon GO, which took only 19 days to be uploaded by 50 million users. These figures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, show a rapid demand in new inventions.

Electric car sales saw another record in 2022 despite supply chain disruptions, macro-economic and geopolitical uncertainty and high commodity and energy prices, the growth in electric car sales took place in the context of globally contracting car markets. When the first crude electric car in the world was developed in 1832, nobody at the time would have thought to ask how many electric cars were there in the world.

When the first modern electric car, the EV1 was sold in 1996 still no one was asking how many electric cars was there in the world because there were not enough to go and count. But today as electric cars are to overtake gasoline powered cars by 2030. Beyond that, the same question is extremely relevant, especially, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now there seems to be a growing concern that given that electric vehicles are not providing what they were supposed to.

There are articles, reviews, talks, research papers, documentaries, etc. which states that the issue of an electric vehicle is not only about CO2 emission, it is not only about the environment, it is not only about our health, it is not only about the safeguard of the planet, but it is an aspect of the economy, world power, geopolitics and much more.

When we talk of geopolitics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mr Kishore Mahbubani has said that “geopolitics is a very cruel game.” Mr Mahbubani, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a Singaporean diplomat and geopolitical consultant who served as Singapore permanent representative to the United Nations between 1984 and 1989 and again between 1998 and 2004 and the President of the United Nation Security Council between 2001 and 2002. So, he knows what he means when he says that geopolitics is a very cruel game.

When you see what is happening on electric cars, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have all the rights as an African country to ask certain questions. Questions like: why are we promoting batteries that use lithium and other elements which are available mostly in European and North American countries?

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is all about money. Money is very powerful. You know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when money talks, no one checks the grammar because it is Mr money who is talking, it is Mr money who has got the command. There is a very famous adage of the Hindi cinema which says “*Sabse bara roopaya, na baap bara na maya.*” That is money has the biggest power even more than your own parents.

While preparing this intervention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I came across several contradictory information on the availability of the raw materials of car batteries in Africa. However, the one which I feel is the most reliable is the one from the research carried out by Nanyang Technological University Centre for African Studies which shows that the minerals are available in ample quantities in South Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia.

The same research also mentions that while these minerals are mined in Africa, the accrual value addition work such as melting, refining, cell assembly and ultimately electric vehicle production takes place outside Africa. Now, what does that mean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It means that Africa thus loses out on higher returns, on job creations that occur from participating in value creation, while the other countries do the value adding processes in their own countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while Africa has 40% of the world's gold and up to 90% of its chromium and platinum yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 387 million people of the African continent do not have access to basic drinking water. This is what Africa has been enduring since a long time. Kenneth Maswabi has put it so beautifully in his poem Poverty and Africa which says –

“Poverty is a blackhole
Centered in the middle of Africa
Spinning out of control
Ravaging the highlands of Ethiopia.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, centuries ago and for a very long time, we had slavery. The Westerns enslaved those poor people of rich countries, be it Africa, be it Latin America or even India. Mr Shashi Tharoor has mentioned in his book ‘An Era of Darkness’ and even in some of his talks, including one at the University of Oxford where he mentioned that at the beginning of British rule in India, the Indian share of the global economy was 23%. When India became independent from British rule in 1947, that share had declined to below 4%. When India got its independence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it had already lost most of its precious resources.

The textile industry was extinct, the Kohinoor was gone. Mr Tharoor even mentioned that the British looted India to such an extent that they even looted the word “loot”. The word “loot” was added to the English vocabulary in the 19th century which comes from the Hindi word “loot” meaning spoil, bitter. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those countries who have enriched themselves by impoverishing others has found new ways to do so. So, we have to be careful.

Let us take the issue of lithium which is a metal used to manufacture batteries for cars. 50% of the world’s lithium is found in Latin America. Lithium is a lightweight metal in a silvery white mineral and is the world’s lightest metal which can be found in rocks, clay and salt water. 50% of lithium is found in what is called the lithium triangle, that is, in three countries: Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. Lithium extraction is particularly for use in rechargeable batteries has gained significant attention due to the increasing demand for electric vehicles, portable electronics and renewable energy storage.

However, the processes involved in lithium extraction are causing serious environmental, social and economic disturbances. Lithium is found in sea water. Lithium’s extraction, especially from salt flats in regions like South America requires significant amount of water. The process of lithium extraction often involves pumping saline ground water to the surface leading to a decrease in water levels in these arid regions. This depletion is having a severe impact on local eco-systems and biodiversity particularly affecting flora and fauna that rely on specific water levels. It requires more than 1000 litres of brine to produce one car battery.

Again, it is a US company, Albemarle which is a major brand extractor in the lithium triangle and it exported more than 890 million dollars in 2021. After the lithium has been extracted from the brine, the residual is left in the open air for months which they call the acid lakes because once you extract the lithium from the sea water, the content of the salt is so high that it is similar to acid. Birds are drinking these water, which is causing harm to them and some species of birds are likely to disappear in the process.

The extraction is also having a degradation to land. The mining and extraction processes can lead to significant land disturbances. Open pit mining and the construction of evaporation ponds are resulting in habitat destruction, soil erosion and destruction of local ecosystem.

This blunder that is being caused there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is irreversible, leading to the loss of biodiversity and indigenous plants and species. Chemicals used in the extraction

process are prone to contaminate soil and ground water. The use of toxic substances such heavy metals and solvent poses a risk to the local environment. In some cases, if proper environmental safeguards are not in place, these contaminants can seep into surrounding areas affecting agriculture and water supplies.

Can you imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what those indigenous people of Chile are facing? Their livelihood depends on the land and water resources. So just to reduce the CO₂ in the developed countries, the lives of millions of these people are put at risk. While lithium is crucial for the development of clean energy technologies, it is essential to recognise and address the various harms associated with its extraction. Sustainable mining practices, improved regulations and responsible resource management are critical for mitigating the environmental, social and economic impacts of lithium extraction.

As the demand for lithium continues to grow, it is vital for stakeholders including governments, industries and local communities to work collaboratively in developing solutions that prioritise both ecological integrity and social equity. I will come back on the extraction of lithium later on; I hope today itself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, earlier I spoke about Africa. Let me come back to Africa because we are an African country. Apart from lithium, another metal that is a popular choice for electric car batteries is the cobalt because it withstands high temperatures and does not corrode easily. These two properties of cobalt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, make it an ideal raw material for the battery. The cobalt goes into the cathode of the batteries. This cobalt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 70% of the world's reserve, is found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mining of cobalt has exploded in this country due to Chinese investment. Chinese investment is not the issue. The issue is that between 50 to 60% of cobalt mining in DRC comes from artisanal mining, where miners go far along into deep shafts, not only without any proper protection but also in dangerous conditions of the shafts that do not have proper support to prevent collapses. And, those hundreds of thousands of artisanal miners, who go deep into the shafts every day, are not sure to return to their families in the evening.

While talking of Africa, how can we ignore the problem and issues of child labour in Africa, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Over the years, human groups have raised the alarm about the

issues of child labour and at unregulated mining sites. UNICEF estimated that in 2014 about 40,000 to 50,000 boys and girls worked in all mines across the Southern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The question which we members of this House and people of this country should ask those authorities that boycotted Bangladeshi products because manufacturers were having recourse to child labour – will they now take actions? Will they call for a boycott for the electric cars or is it because it is Africa, they will keep their mouth shut and eyes close?

These African children, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when are they going to have the *porte-parole*? These African people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the DRC which had about 35 trillion US dollars of resources, today their country does not have enough money to organise elections but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you cannot expect a lot from a country which is today a victim of its resources. The rich have an electric car and say that they are protecting the earth; they are protecting the ozone. In fact, they do not realise that hundreds of thousands of families have been evicted from their homes by force, their houses set on fire and undergoing physical assaults by the military services. This is the fate of Africa, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They are suffering from a resource curse. The concentration of cobalt production in the Democratic Republic of the Congo raises concerns regarding supply chain ethics, including issues related to labour practices and environmental standards.

As the demands for cobalt continues to rise particularly for electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy, storage technologies sourcing practices that ensure ethical and sustainable mining will be increasingly important for the global supply chain. Efforts to diversify cobalt sources and develop recycling technologies for batteries are also gaining traction to mitigate dependence on specific regions which is a good sign.

Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me praise the courage of the Indonesian people who have shown no fear to write a letter directly to Mr Elon Musk to request him to stop the exploitation of nickel in Indonesia because nickel is also one of the raw materials which is used in the manufacturing of those batteries. Indonesians urged him to consider the ethical implications of sourcing nickel and to advocate for sustainable practices in the supply chain. This reflects a broader movement globally where consumers and activists are increasingly calling for transparency and ethical practices in the sourcing of materials used in technology and renewable energy.

It is crucial for companies involved in the electric vehicle market to engage with local communities and ensure that the supply chains are environmentally and socially responsible. The call from Indonesian citizens is part of a larger global conversation about sustainable practices in resource extraction and corporate responsibility. It seems that protest from the citizens of Indonesia has raised some awareness. That's maybe the reason why Tesla's biggest rival, the Chinese company, BYD, is investing \$1.4 billion in a battery facility which will shift from lithium-ion to sodium-ion battery for cars.

Sodium-ion batteries are gaining attention as a potential alternative to lithium-ion batteries especially for applications in electric vehicles and energy storage systems. While they are not yet widely adopted in the automotive industry, several factors contribute to the growing interest and research. Sodium is much more abundant and widely distributed than lithium. It can be extracted from seawater and salt deposits, making it a more sustainable and potentially less costly option in the long run. This abundance can also help to stabilise supply chains and reduce dependency on specific regions for battery materials. Since sodium is more abundant and energy dense materials can be sourced with a lower environmental impact, sodium-ion batteries could present a greener alternative compared to lithium-ion batteries particularly concerning extraction practices.

Well, we have to wait for the test period to see if sodium really represents an advantage over lithium. It is believed that the shift from lithium to sodium could have been a critical factor in allowing BYD which stands for Build Your Dreams. It is believed that the BYD company which is a competitor of Tesla and which has nearly overtaken Tesla as the biggest and largest seller of electric cars, will really meet the dreams of millions of people around the globe.

And the issue today is that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the emissions and damages to the planet caused by electric vehicles remain a serious concern. This is becoming a matter of serious concern as the number of electric cars is increasing exponentially. Before answering the question of how many electric cars are there in the world, let's look at what percentage of cars are electric.

It is estimated that 1 in 250 cars on the road is electric, which equals to a global market share of around 2.2% for electric vehicles. Currently, there are more and more changes in the automotive market focused on the production of zero emission CO₂ emission cars.

Currently, there are more and more changes in the automotive market focused on the production of zero Co2 emission cars. Changes in the automotive industry push the limits of possible solutions in autonomous cars and introductive innovative based on advanced electronics car maintenance and servicing solutions. In particular, their concern is about the introduction of electric drive cars which is related to the demand for light metals, rare metals and graphite. Environmental regulations as well as consumer awareness of the ongoing global climate change are increasing the demand for electric cars as it is considered as a supposing solution to climate change.

Supporters of electric cars are of the opinion that people are willing to adopt electric cars. My friend, hon. Dhunoo, when he intervened on this Motion, mentioned in his speech that even the hon. Members of this House are more and more moving towards it. It started by the Minister, hon. Dr. Jagutpal and now hon. Dhunoo himself has one electric vehicle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the supporters of electric vehicles show that people are going more and more for it. It could have been more, but there is a barrier that stands in the way of widespread electric motorisation which is the price of the car and poor electric charging infrastructures. The use of electric cars is also not synonymous with a complete lack of environmental impact.

On Thursday 28 July 2022, when hon. Collendavelloo intervened on this Motion, he mentioned several interesting things, which the then Chief Whip, hon. Ms Naveena Ramyad, now Minister, also highlighted during her intervention and so did my friend, hon. Dhunoo and my friend next to me, hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy. I think she intervened just after hon. Collendavelloo and she even mentioned that hon. Collendavelloo has made her look at the issue from a different angle. She was a bit *prise de court parce qu'elle avait dit qu'elle doit peut-être revoir sa copie parce ce qu'elle avait préparé était en faveur des voitures électriques*. But at the end, she went in the same line as I am today.

Let me mention one of the points that hon. Collendavelloo mentioned on that day. This was an important subject which is going to probably affect the whole landscape of our country for a long time. He mentioned that his intention was not of dampening the enthusiasm of everyone over electric cars. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Collendavelloo is someone of great experience, who has served this Assembly for several years. As they say, with age comes a lot of

wisdom, it is wisdom which showed us the other facet of electric cars to which I will come later during my intervention.

Mr Isaac Asimov once said that the saddest aspect of life right now is that 'science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.' That was the crux of hon. Collendavelloo's speech, that is, we have got to be realistic on this matter. An electric car is more expensive than an internal combustion vehicle. Moreover, he mentioned that unless you drive a lot, the time required for the capital investment on the electric car, what we call the payback period, could be very long.

When we consider a small island like Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you live, for instance, at Souillac and work at Pointe aux Canonniers and you are not able to practice work from home and you have to move to your office every day, probably then you may have a better chance to have a good return on your investment. Otherwise, it will be difficult or even impossible for a small country like Mauritius.

You then have the operating costs. Just to give you an idea, the battery of the electric car costs about Rs400,000. I have been told that the price has been decreasing steadily over the years thanks to the advancement in technology and increased economies of scale. Another interesting thing is about entrepreneurship. We, as a Government, are promoting our local workers. So, if you have an electric car which has not got an engine, it means that the poor mechanics with small garages will find their job in danger. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, electric cars have their merits and also have some drawbacks. As elected Members, we are representing our mandates and we need to look at the whole picture. We should not be like the blind man who touches the tail of an elephant and goes on shouting that elephant is like a piece of rope.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether to say fortunately or unfortunately, we still have today, people who show reluctance to electric cars. It is also rare to find more than two electric vehicles in a single household. However, it is not uncommon to find two conventional cars in a household.

Now, let me enumerate some of the bad sides of the electric car which experts have mentioned. An assessment shows that charging electric cars does not necessarily reduce the

carbon footprint if the energy does not come from the renewable resources. It was also found that every kilometre travelled by an electric car vehicle produces 35 to 50 times more sulphur dioxide than a conventional vehicle. It was found that the high weight of electric cars causes more wear and tear on the rubber treads of the wheels and consequently more contamination with rubber particles. That is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mentioned earlier that we should look at the bigger picture holistically and not focus on Co2 emissions only.

The extraction and production of materials for the construction of electric cars and the batteries is a source of environmental pollution. The carbon footprint of electric car production is therefore not zero. Despite these reservations so far, no alternative solutions have gained significant market popularity. There are reports of using hydrogen to power vehicles. However, this possibility does not translate into widespread use. Electric motoring is a mega trend. The problems of electric motoring are primarily related to the availability and prices of battery materials that require elements such as lithium, cobalt, magnesium, nickel and graphite. Mining of these elements is conducted in few countries of the world which introduces risks in the supply chain.

Since most of the production and processing of materials for electric car batteries is carried out in China, there is a risk of dependence on this country. There is also a problem with the appropriate number of vehicles charging stations. This year, there was a report published by the Global Electric Vehicle Market Overview which presented the main issues related to the production of electric car batteries. The research problem was down to assessing the risk of supplies and materials necessary for the production of batteries per electric cars. They are the most critical elements in the car in terms of materials and cost.

Materials for the construction of batteries for electric cars are sourced in several countries around the world and most of the components are produced in China. There is a need to analyse the possibilities of supply diversification as well as assess the risks related to the narrow scope of flexibility of supply chains on the other hand and the widespread globalisation on the other. The prices of materials for the construction of batteries affect the prices of electric cars and the purchasing power of consumers.

What are the prospects for implementing the idea of a complete transition to zero emission cars? This will probably depend, firstly, on advances in material solutions for the construction of batteries for electric cars. This is the answer that we, elected Members, of both sides of the House should try to find.

Earlier, I mentioned the elements that we need for the manufacture of batteries. So, let me take some examples of lithium. As I said earlier, I will come back on the extraction. Lithium batteries will not just be a need for the next 10 years. It is something requiring a huge investment by the car sector that will be necessary for the next 30 to 40 years minimum, as mentioned by Mr David Wall from Australia. Lithium, the lightest metal on earth, has numerous applications ranging from lubrication grease and glass fabrication to rechargeable batteries that power many handheld tools, mobile electronics and electric vehicles. The demand for lightweight rechargeable lithium batteries has increased greatly as markets grow for mobile devices, electric vehicles and renewable power storage.

According to the Financial Post, recent studies have shown that the demand for lithium is projected to increase by 73% by 2025, that is, next year, as electric vehicles become more viable and more countries place restriction on gas and diesel powered cars. Although lithium is found in many minerals and some brines, it is typically in low concentration and its source has unique characteristics. This makes extraction expensive and time consuming. Two major challenges that mining companies face in the lithium sector is the cost, first of all, and secondly, the labour that is required for the extraction. And while there are some current operations extracting lithium from brines, with traditional technologies, the market is driving more efficient and economically viable recovery solution so that companies can stake their claim in the lithium raise.

Now, let us see how lithium is extracted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Lithium now plays an essential role in our economic system and is likely to do so in the future. So much so that some have called it the white gold or the new oil. Typical resources of lithium are hard-rock deposits such as petalite or spodumene, sedimentary deposits such as clays or formation brine deposits of saline groundwater. Often found beneath the surface of dried lake beds, brines are underground reservoirs that contain high concentration of salts, including lithium, potassium and sodium.

While hard-rock mines are known for producing higher purity lithium, the associated mining processing costs are typically higher than recovering lithium from brines.

The lithium, the state in which it is required, needs several stages of purification. We are at the threat of climate change; the whole world is at the threat of climate change. So, while we are taking measures to mitigate the effects of climate change, investing huge amount of money and bringing legislation, etc., we are, on the other hand, in a certain way, encouraging those extractions of the brines, which in fact are going to create more and more pollution. We have not realised that the process of purification for lithium mining from brines has been questioned for its intensive water use, protracted duration and exclusive application to continental brines. I did mention earlier that the production of one battery needs at least 1000 litres of water.

The environmental impacts of evaporation and alternate technologies, collectively known as, Direct Lithium Extraction have been carried out by institutions for lithium mining, focusing on requirement for freshwater, chemicals, energy consumption and waste generation, including spent brines.

Direct Lithium Extraction technologies aim to tackle the environmental and techno-economic shortcomings of current practice by avoiding brine evaporation. A selection of Direct Lithium Extraction technologies has achieved some of the targets to a certain extent. I mentioned about the 'Lithium Triangle' in South America, let us now consider Europe.

The largest deposit of lithium in Europe is found in Portugal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Now, Spain, which is Portugal's neighbour, cannot resist to exploit its own deposit of lithium as they can see that lithium mining has an important asset in Portugal's economic activity. Despite that all religions in the world teach human beings to not be greedy and selfish, we see that human beings do exactly the opposite of what they preach.

Let me take that example of Spain, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the medieval town of Cáceres is a UN world heritage gem, where production crews shot the prequel of Game of Thrones. Less than 3 kilometres away, foreign investors want to create one of Europe's largest lithium mines. The proposed project, so close to one of the jewels of Spain's past, has set off ferocious local opposition. It highlights the challenges to the country's plans to use unprecedented European

Union funding for developing a whole industry about lithium and the main input for batteries to power electric vehicles and for large scale energy storage. The other elements like cobalt do have the same effect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I got three minutes left, do you want me to start another section of my speech or you would like me to...

The Deputy Speaker: Try to at least introduce it for two minutes and next time, you can take over.

Mr Nuckcheddy: Next time, you mean in the next session?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes! Go for two more minutes if you can!

Mr Nuckcheddy: This chapter on lithium, let me inform the House what happened in 2020, in California, and this will resume the state of affairs. In 2020, Tesla held an event which is called the Socially Distanced Battery Day; at that time we were facing a pandemic. So, the two Executives, two big US lithium companies, Livent and Albermarle were also invited. Albermarle, I mentioned earlier, is one of the major lithium extractors in Chile. Elon Musk announced that he has just acquired the rights to a 10,000 acres plot in Nevada where he planned to build a lithium refinery. The next day, Albermarle and Livent lost a combined of 1.7 billion dollars in the market value as their share prices plunged. That day brought so many implications and matters of talk that some people even called it 'the battery day'. So, what happened then? Experts and observers of the sector said that Tesla did not have any firm intention of becoming its own supplier. The objective was just to bring the lithium companies to table and force them to continue the production and invest 50 billion dollars over the next 15 years to satisfy the battery demand. No one is bothered about the target of the Paris Climate Accord. It is a case on money, economy, a cold war against China, and for the US to maintain their position of number one economic power.

The Deputy Speaker: When you are ready, you can stop. It is about...

Mr Nuckcheddy: Okay, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I still have one minute left.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, go ahead!

Mr Nuckcheddy: I prefer leaving it for the next session. It might be the next mandate. I am sure I will be here on the Government's side, intervening on this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: And next mandate as well!

Mr Nuckcheddy: I hope you will be in the Chair at that time. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much! It is almost 7 o'clock, by a few seconds.

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 05 August 2024 at 4.00 p.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: We have adjournment matters today!

Hon. Aadir Ameer Meea, always ready. Go on!

MATTER RAISED

(7.00 p.m.)

LIVE CATTLE – IMPORT – MARKET SHORTAGE

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry. It is in relation to the shortage of live cattle in Mauritius, more specifically, bulls, goats and sheep for the local market. As the House is aware, Mauritius relies heavily...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Less noise in moving around, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: As the House is aware, Mauritius relies heavily on imports from South Africa. Since two months, there has not been import by sea, by cattle carrier as is the case normally. The reason being, there has been an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in South Africa. There have been some imports by air, but it is not sufficient to cater for the local demand. As a result of the shortage, the prices have gone up for live, but also for fresh meat.

Therefore, can I appeal to the hon. Minister, if we can diversify our sources of imports and not to rely heavily only on South Africa. If we can also sign trade agreements with several countries so that in the future, we have stable imports for live cattle? Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you!

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to first thank the hon. Member to bring this topic in this House tonight.

In fact, let me reassure the hon. Member, the House and the population that we do not really have a shortage of bulls, cattle or even sheep and goats in Mauritius at the moment. In fact, I had been following up the whole stock level every day on a daily basis to ensure that we have sufficient for the market. So, if I can give to date figure, because I have a daily update on the stock level, we have 289 cattle at the moment in stock and 1,039 sheep and goats.

It is indeed a fact that we have had an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in one of the province in South Africa where we used to source our cattle, but we have made arrangements to source from other provinces where they do not have the foot-and-mouth disease. We have also sought to source cattle from Kenya and Tanzania. Unfortunately, as we are aware, we have some unrest in Kenya. So, we had to send our veterinarian people to go and at least to validate the farm from where we are going to source these cattle. They could not travel for the moment because of the unrest over there. But this is something that is being contemplated to be carried out very soon as soon as things get better in Kenya.

I must also reassure the House that we do have cattle from Rodrigues as well. We are importing from Rodrigues. I can already inform the House that we have a number of importers that have applied for permit to import cattle, be it from South Africa or from Rodrigues. In fact, we are expecting some 600 cattle from South Africa by ship by mid-August. So, that is the status as at now. So, I can reassure the House and the population that we are monitoring the situation so that we do not fall short of any cattle in Mauritius.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. No other adjournment matters!

At this stage, following what hon. Nuckcheddy said about next mandate, allow me to thank all hon. Members for their support while I have been in the Chair. Thank you very much. Have a safe trip!

Next mandate, Mr Nuckcheddy!

At 7.04 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 05 August 2024 at 4.00 p.m.