



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2025

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 21 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 24 June 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

- A.** **Prime Minister's Office**
 Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
 Ministry of Finance
 Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Gambling Regulatory (Amendment) Bill
(No. XV of 2025). (In Original)

- B.** **Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection**

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods) (Maximum Mark-Up)
 (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 55 of 2025)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods)
 (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 56 of 2025)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

TURKEY MISSION – POWER SHIP PROJECT – DELEGATION COMPOSITION & COST

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to his recent mission in Türkiye, he will –

- (a) state the purposes thereof, indicating if he has had discussions with the Turkish authorities for the leasing of a power ship to Mauritius and, if so, give details of the Power Ship Project, and
- (b) give details of the total cost thereof, indicating the composition of the accompanying delegation.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madame la présidente, suite au récent changement de gouvernement en novembre 2024, mon ministère a fait le point sur la situation du secteur énergétique et s'est depuis activement efforcé de trouver des solutions pour répondre à la demande énergétique croissante du pays et éviter toute interruption de l'approvisionnement en électricité. Il a été convenu au niveau gouvernemental de solliciter l'aide de pays amis et partenaires internationaux stratégiques pour faire face à cette situation critique et urgente. Dans ce contexte, le soutien des autorités turques, chinoises, françaises (par l'intermédiaire de l'AFD) et indiennes a été sollicité.

Je souhaite informer la Chambre qu'une délégation indienne de haut niveau est actuellement à Maurice pour aider mon ministère et le CEB à relever les défis du secteur de l'énergie. Cette délégation de trois personnes rencontre actuellement le CEB, la MARENA, l'EEMO et d'autres parties prenantes concernées.

Concernant la partie (a) de la question, j'ai effectué une mission officielle en Turquie du 21 au 23 avril 2025 afin d'explorer les possibilités de collaboration dans le domaine de l'énergie. J'étais accompagné du président du CEB.

Au cours de la visite, j'ai rencontré le ministre de l'Énergie et des ressources naturelles de Turquie, où j'ai eu l'occasion de donner un aperçu du secteur énergétique de l'île Maurice et des défis énergétiques critiques auxquels nous sommes confrontés en termes de demande

d'électricité, suite à une augmentation substantielle de la demande de pointe. Il convient de noter que la Turquie a connu une transformation significative dans son secteur énergétique grâce à une importante production hydroélectrique, à la déréglementation de son marché de l'électricité et à d'ambitieux projets d'énergie renouvelable. J'ai sollicité l'aide de mon homologue pour relever les défis immédiats auxquels notre secteur énergétique est confronté et trouver des solutions plus durables.

Le ministre turc a indiqué que la Turquie – son pays – possédait une expertise significative dans la technologie des barges électriques, qui avait été déployée avec succès dans d'autres pays, car elles offrent des solutions flexibles pour la production d'électricité immédiate.

J'ai également rencontré le vice-ministre des Transports et des infrastructures publiques, qui m'a assuré de son soutien sur cet enjeu national. Il a mis en avant des solutions de remplacement énergétique, telles que l'éolien, le *solar*, pour soutenir les secteurs non électriques.

Les discussions avec les autorités turques ont porté, entre autres, sur les moyens et les solutions pour faire face à une situation énergétique immédiate ainsi qu'à celle à moyen et long terme.

Madame la présidente, je tiens à souligner que la CEB a lancé, en 2022, une demande d'informations auprès des développements potentiels pour la fourniture d'électricité via des services de barge. En 2022, 18 propositions ont été reçues de candidats potentiels originaires d'Allemagne, des Émirats arabes unis, de Hong Kong, de Corée, de Chypre, de Finlande, de Malaisie, de la Turquie, des États-Unis et du Japon.

Comme je l'ai indiqué précédemment, Madame la présidente, depuis ma prise de fonction en novembre 2024, j'ai été informé des défis majeurs auxquels le CEB est confronté quotidiennement, compte tenu du vieillissement de ses unités de production, de l'absence d'augmentation significative de ses capacités, de l'augmentation de la demande d'électricité et des retards importants dans les projets d'énergie renouvelable prévus. À cela s'ajoute la situation financière du CEB catastrophique qui accuse une découverte d'environ R 7 milliards.

Durant l'été 2024-2025, le CEB a dû faire face à une augmentation sans précédent de la demande, équivalente à 567,9 MW – du jamais vu – soit une augmentation de 42 MW par rapport aux années précédentes. Les prévisions du CEB pour 2025 étaient de 544 MW. Vous réalisez ? 544 MW ! Et nous avons déjà eu 567 MW, presque 568 MW. Afin d'éviter toute pénurie d'électricité, le CEB a déclenché son protocole d'urgence pour demander aux hôtels de passer à leurs générateurs de secours. La demande aurait atteint, ce jour-là, environ 600 MW. On aurait été en délestage complet, le *load power shedding*. Ce qui aurait très probablement entraîné des délestages dans tout le pays. On estime que les hôtels ont allégé la charge du système d'environ 40 à 45 MW en se déconnectant de nos réseaux.

Entre le 22 et le 25 avril 2025, le CEB a connu un revers majeur : une importante pénurie de capacité, les unités de CTSav, IPP, CTSav 1 (37 MW), CTDS IPP (30 MW), Fort George G8 (15 MW), et Nicolay G2 (20 MW) étaient toutes hors du réseau simultanément en raison de coupures de courant forcées. De plus, une capacité d'environ 65 MW était indisponible pour cause de maintenance programmée. Face à ce déficit important de la capacité de production, équivalent à 167 MW, le CEB a dû gérer la demande d'électricité pendant la pointe du soir grâce à des hôtels partenaires et à leurs générateurs de secours.

Madame la présidente, en outre, le CEB m'a informé qu'il y a eu une demande totale de fourniture d'électricité d'environ 87 MW de la part des développeurs et des promoteurs d'une centaine de projets qui est en attente, car le CEB n'a pas la capacité suffisante pour répondre à une telle demande d'ici janvier de cette année-ci.

Afin d'améliorer la situation à court terme, le gouvernement a approuvé que le CEB utilise, en urgence, une barge électrique pour alimenter temporairement le pays en électricité jusqu'à la mise en service d'une nouvelle capacité de production. Compte tenu de la demande croissante d'électricité, qui pourrait atteindre plus de 600 MW au cours de l'été prochain donc en septembre-octobre de cette année-ci, la capacité de la barge électrique devrait être comprise entre 90 et 110 MW. Elle fonctionnera dans la zone portuaire. Le CEB a lancé, le 18 juin 2025 – il y a quelques jours – un appel d'offres international pour l'achat d'énergie électrique à partir de la barge électrique, par le biais d'un appel d'offres public ouvert, dont la date de clôture est le 15 août 2025. Mon ministère a contacté le ministère des Affaires étrangères, de l'intégration régionale et du commerce international pour transmettre le communiqué de presse à nos missions diplomatiques à travers le monde, afin d'en assurer une diffusion maximale.

Mon ministère et le CEB ont obtenu l'appui – il faut bien le dire – de la Facilité africaine de soutien juridique (ALSF) pour la fourniture d'une assistance technique, entre autres, pour un examen indépendant du document de demande de propositions (RFP) relatif à l'exercice ci-dessus, la préparation d'un modèle de contrat d'achat d'électricité (PPA) à signer avec le soumissionnaire retenu ainsi qu'un soutien pendant le processus d'appel d'offres et d'évaluation.

Afin d'accélérer le processus d'autorisation du projet de barge électrique, des réunions de haut niveau ont été organisées avec les ministères concernés. D'autres travaux d'infrastructure concernant les installations d'interconnexion sont en cours.

Madame la présidente, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, je suis informé que le coût total de la mission s'élevait à R 695 millions.

Madam Speaker: Millions ?

Mr Assirvaden: R 695 000!

(Interruptions)

J'ai voulu vérifier si le leader de l'opposition m'écoutait !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition, your first supplementary question!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Le ministre de tutelle est malchanceux. Il parle de délestage de puissance. De 2019 à 2025, il n'y a pas eu un seul jour de délestage de puissance, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I am putting my question.

Madam Speaker: No, that was not a question!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has been invited by the Turkish Government to carry out this mission? And whether, apart from members of the Turkish authorities, he also met representatives of companies manufacturing power barges? If yes, can he provide the names of those companies?

Madam Speaker: Monsieur le ministre !

Mr Assirvaden: Non, je n'ai pas été invité par les autorités turques. Mais on a pris des contacts avant de partir. J'ai rencontré que les autorités turques, les deux ministres responsables du dossier énergétique en Turquie.

Madame la présidente, il faut bien le dire que je l'ai jugé utile et nécessaire d'effectuer cette mission officielle en Turquie dans un contexte où notre pays explore activement des solutions alternatives pour renforcer sa sécurité énergétique. D'abord, nous ne maîtrisons pas cette technologie. À travers le *request of information*, lancé en 2022, sous le mandat de l'ancien ministre, nous avons appris que la Turquie, entre autres, s'est perfectionnée dans ce domaine et dispose de ce fait de l'expérience requise.

Il faut le rappeler que la Turquie figure aujourd'hui comme référence mondiale en matière de *power ship*. Ses unités flottantes de production d'électricité offrent une flexibilité opérationnelle précieuse dans des situations d'approvisionnements critiques.

Durant mon séjour, je l'ai dit un peu plus tôt et c'est bien de le resouigner, j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer le ministre turc de l'Énergie ainsi que le ministre du Transport, avec lesquels j'ai eu des échanges approfondis sur le savoir-faire technologique turc, les capacités de production, les cadres réglementaires et les conditions de déploiement de ses infrastructures maritimes.

Madame la présidente, avant de demander au pays et au Conseil des ministres de s'engager dans un tel projet, qui, je le rappelle, n'a jamais encore été réalisé à Maurice, il était de mon devoir et indispensable de discuter, de partager, d'écouter, et d'apprendre de l'expérience d'un pays et d'un gouvernement qui maîtrisent pleinement cette technologie. C'était mon devoir de le faire avant de demander au pays de s'engager avec une barge pour quatre ans, cinq ans avec une technologie que nous ne maîtrisons pas.

Donc, la mission en Turquie était une mission pour apprendre, pour savoir, pour pouvoir ici pousser le dossier et voir si nous allons pouvoir d'ici janvier de l'année prochaine,

au plus tard janvier ou décembre de cette année-ci... nous sommes condamnés à augmenter plus de 100 MW sur notre réseau sinon nous allons subir les délestages partiels ou complets sur le réseau du CEB.

Et comme je l'ai dit, je crois que le leader de l'opposition est un peu impatient – vous aurez le temps de poser toutes les questions que vous voulez. Mais, c'est important parce que nous avons 87 MW de demandes concernant des promoteurs, des projets dans le pays qui attendent à ce qu'ils soient connectés sur notre réseau. Il était de notre devoir de s'assurer à ce que ce que nous faisons va dans la bonne direction pour le pays.

Madam Speaker : Merci, M. le ministre.

Allez-y, deuxième question !

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, second question. There is a big difference between a RFI and a RFP, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister should know that.

Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether an Environment Impact Assessment has been done prior to the launching of the Request for Proposal for the leasing of a power ship in Mauritius?

Mr Assirvaden : Monsieur le ministre, vous savez très bien...

(Interruptions)

Monsieur le leader de l'opposition...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker : Non, non !

M. le ministre, c'est à moi que vous parlez ! Ne lui parlez pas !

Mr Assirvaden : Je peux le regarder ?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker : Si vous voulez ! Regardez-moi !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden : Madame la présidente, ...

Mr Lesjongard : Je ne suis pas beau ...

Mr Assirvaden : Madame la présidente, c'est connu et je l'ai précisé à plusieurs reprises que ce projet ou d'autres projets vont se faire selon les normes de l'environnement. Nous n'allons rien faire, absolument rien faire pour mettre en danger notre environnement. Il est clair que *the International Convention for Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Regulations imposes a 0.5% sulphur content in fuel oil for all ships effective* à partir de 1^{er} janvier 2020. C'est la clause 2.2 of the Regulations qui est relevant to the power barge comme stimulée. Je lis cela pour l'attention de ceux qui nous écoutent –

“2.2 All non-Mauritius ships coming to Port Louis, shall upon entering the territorial sea of Mauritius, use fuel oil with a sulphur content of no more than 0.50% m/m (...) This includes vessels engaged in offshore bunkering operations.”

In the RFP, potential bidders will be required to comply with all environmental norms prevailing.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Third question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, if there is no EIA report or EIA license, Madam Speaker, there is no project.

Now, I believe the hon. Minister is aware that CEB Power Plants, operating in the region of Port Louis, have reached the maximum acceptable emission in terms of air pollution and the following three power plants using heavy fuel oil, that is, Fort George, St Louis, and Fort Victoria, have also reached their acceptable limits in terms of emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide as per a feasibility study undertaken...

Madam Speaker: Put question!

Mr Lesjongard: I will put the question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, but...

Mr Lesjongard: ... in 2011 and 2012 from Mott Macdonald – I am tabling the report. Therefore, can he give assurance to the House and the population that the addition of such a

barge operating with HFO will not have an adverse impact on the quality of air in the region of Port Louis?

Madam Speaker: That's the question!

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, on me fait savoir que *the successful promotor will have to go through a strategic EIA; this will be done.*

Madam Speaker: In due course?

Mr Assirvaden: In due course, of course!

Madame la présidente, j'ai écouté la question du leader de l'opposition mais encore une fois... J'ai l'impression qu'on change de rôles. Madame la présidente, il faut bien le dire...

Mr Jhummun: *Nanie li pann fer!*

Mr Assirvaden: Qui est responsable de l'état de nos machines aujourd'hui ?

Hon. Members : *Limem !*

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente,...

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, je ne m'adresserai pas au leader de l'opposition mais permettez-moi de le regarder dans les yeux de temps en temps.

(Interruptions)

Au cours des dix dernières années... Oublions les dix dernières années ! Au cours des cinq dernières années, je le dis avec tout le sérieux possible, aucun projet énergétique majeur n'a été ajouté aux réseaux...

An hon. Member : Quel honte !

Mr Assirvaden: ...à l'exception des projets de St Louis, mise en service en 2017. Depuis rien ! Pendant que la demande augmentait en flèche ; pendant que moi ici dans l'opposition, je posais des questions au ministre d'alors...

Mr Lesjongard: Reply to my question!

Mr Assirvaden: Je posais des questions. Pendant que la demande montait en flèche, pendant que les observateurs s'inquiétaient de la situation énergétique, aucun effort, aucun renforcement de notre capacité de production n'a vu le jour. Il ne s'agit ni plus ni moins d'une faillite énergétique, ...

(Interruptions)

... une faillite énergétique de qui ?

Mr Jhummun: *Demagog!*

Mr Assirvaden: De l'ancien ministre de l'Énergie, assis ici !

Hon. Members : Shame !

Mr Assirvaden: Qui se présente, qui aujourd'hui ose me demander après six mois comme ministre de l'Énergie, ose me demander...

Ms Anquetil: Incroyable !

Mr Assirvaden: ... qu'est-ce qui va se passer avec les centrales que nous avons à Port Louis alors qu'il sait très bien que ces centrales ont une durée de vie, ont déjà eu plus de 30 ans ; les centrales, *les* IPP – plus de 35 ans ; les centrales de St Louis ont plus de 37 ans. Des machines qui tombent en panne tous les jours ! Et il me demande aujourd'hui...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member : *La honte !*

Hon. Members: Shame !

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Bizin bril li dan turbine!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Il ose me demander que ces machines...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *To pou fer mwa per la?*

(Interruptions)

Eta ale do...

Mr Assirvaden: Il ose me demander. Vraiment ça me rend frileux d'entendre ce genre de questions alors qu'il a dormi pendant des années...

An hon. Member : *Li ankor pe dormi!*

Mr Assirvaden: ... sur les caprices et les soucis du CEB. Aujourd'hui, il vient parler que ces machines vont émettre des émissions qui n'est pas permissible...

Ms Anquetil: Quel culot !

Mr Assirvaden: ... dans l'île Maurice alors qu'il y a sept mois de cela, vous étiez responsables de ces machines.

Hon. Members : Shame !

Mr Lesjongard: In regard to what...

Madam Speaker: Please, ask a question because each time you have made a statement before the question! Ask a question!

Mr Lesjongard: You are telling me that, Madam Speaker? Okay, I will do that!

The hon. Minister made reference to all engines operating at the level of the CEB. Is he aware, for example, that for the engines at Fort George, there is a report from the manufacturer that these engines can run for ten years more? Is he aware of that?

Mr Jhummun: Since when that report?

Mr Lesjongard: And I am tabling the report, Madam Speaker. This is the second report that I am tabling.

Mr Assirvaden: Encore une fois, Madame la présidente, l'ancien ministre avait parlé de beaux parleurs...

Mr Lesjongard: Reply to my question!

Mr Assirvaden: Je vais répondre à votre question.

The Deputy Prime Minister: ... *met twa dan turbine!*

Mr Assirvaden: Je vais répondre à vos questions.

L'ancien ministre sait très bien que ces machines, qu'il est en train de dire pour citer des rapports d'experts, peuvent...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Pas d'experts, des fabricants !

Mr Assirvaden: ... qu'elles peuvent rouler encore dix ans. J'ai dit dans ma réponse initiale : nous avons eu plus de 167 MW hors du réseau, M. le leader de l'opposition...

Mr Lesjongard: I am talking about the engines!

Mr Assirvaden: Ces machines que vous parlez qui peuvent tenir encore 10 ans, ce sont des vieilles machines qui tombent en panne chaque jour. CTDS tombe en panne, Nicolay tombe en panne, Fort Victoria est tombé en panne, CT-Sav1 est tombé en panne.

(Interruptions)

Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait ? Et aujourd'hui, ...

An hon. Member: *Sharam !*

Mr Mohamed: *Duval mem inn en panne.*

Mr Assirvaden : Et aujourd'hui, vous avez l'audace pour ne pas ...

Mr Mohamed: *Tonn koste ar li tonn en panne.*

Mr Assirvaden : Vous avez l'audace – pour n'est pas utilisé d'autres mots – vous avez l'audace de me dire que ces vieilles machines vont pouvoir rouler dix ans encore !

Mr Lesjongard: This is what the report says, not me.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, alors moi, je vais me fier à un rapport qui dit que ces machines vont pouvoir rouler dix ans alors que quotidiennement, elles sont en panne.

An hon. Member : Exactement !

Mr Assirvaden : Je ne suis pas disposé à vous suivre dans votre irresponsabilité.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Exactement !

Mr Assirvaden: C'était leur irresponsabilité pendant cinq ans.

Mr Bhagwan: *Zon kit karya!*

Mr Assirvaden : Et, je me suis étonné ce matin quand j'ai vu la *PNQ* adressée à mon ministère, pour me dire qu'un ministre qui a été là pendant cinq ans, qui m'a laissé sur un

volcan, aujourd'hui, ose me questionner après six mois ! Si le ridicule et la honte pouvaient tuer !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Fourth question!

Mr Lesjongard: Another question, Madam Speaker, to the hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to why the efficiency of the power ship has not been mentioned in the RFP, knowing very well that gas emissions and cost of electricity production are directly related to the efficiency of the plant?

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden : Madame la présidente, le leader de l'opposition essaie de de jouer sur les mots concernant les émissions, concernant ce qui n'a pas été mis dans le *RFP*. Je dois préciser que nous avons eu bien sûr l'aide de ALSF. C'est une banque africaine qui a déjà négocié des tels projets au niveau international. Mais je ne sais pas si le leader de l'opposition a lu le *RFP*.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I read.

Mr Assirvaden : Je ne sais pas s'il l'a lu en l'envers ou à l'endroit, mais je dois préciser que le RFP mentioned 'efficiency' and the proposal will be evaluated on efficiency.

Est-ce que j'ai répondu à votre question ? Et il me dit qu'il a lu. S'il l'a lu, il doit bien voir que the RFP mentions efficiency.

Mr Mohamed: Remove your blinkers!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, in the RFP, the leasing period will be for five years. Can the hon. Minister inform the House why the duration of the lease will be for five years, knowing very well and, he has said that, renewable energy projects including the REHF will come online in the first quarter of 2026, as stated in the RFP document under paragraph 3?

Mr Assirvaden : Madame la présidente, une précision. Dans le RFP, c'est précisé cinq ans, mais il y a aussi un *exit clause for four years*. Il fallait dire ça aussi !

An hon Member: *Li pa lir tou li !*

Mr Assirvaden : Pourquoi omettre ces quatre ans ? Il faut dire, M. le leader de l'opposition parle des projets d'énergies renouvelables. Mais est-ce que vous réalisez, Madame la présidente... C'est important, permettez-moi de le dire, pour la population qui

nous écoute. L'état actuel de notre réseau énergétique national, il serait irresponsable de taire les lacunes structurelles, héritées d'une gestion antérieure marquée par l'inaction de l'énergie renouvelable, les effets d'annonce, une déconnection flagrante entre les ambitions affichées et les actions concrètes de l'ancien ministre.

Vous savez, les discours publiquement engageant – vous vous rappelez, les 60 % d'énergie renouvelable en 2030 ?

(Interruptions)

Cela, Madame la présidente, c'était convenu que ce soit sur notre réseau, les 60 %. Vous savez à combien on est aujourd'hui ?

Ms Anquetil : Raconte !

Mr Assirvaden : À 17,6 % !

An hon. Member: Y compris bagasse !

Mr Assirvaden : Y compris bagasse !

Nous avons reculé de 23-24 % en 2014, quand nous avons quitté le pouvoir en 2014, pour arriver à 17,6 % en 2025 !

Ms Anquetil : Incroyable !

Mr Assirvaden : Le leader de l'opposition, loin de progresser, cette vérité, Madame la présidente, est indéfendable. Derrière, bien sûr, les discours séduisants, il y a eu malheureusement, un vide...

Mr Lesjongard: I have a next question, Madam Speaker.

Mr Assirvaden: Ecoutez !

... un vide et opérationnel.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Fer dimal sa!*

Madam Speaker: I have got one more minute!

Mr Assirvaden : Une incapacité manifeste à transformer des paroles en actes ; de belles paroles.

Madam Speaker: There is only one minute left!

Mr Assirvaden: Ce n'est pas une transition énergétique qui a été engagée.

Mr Lesjongard: This is waste of...

Mr Assirvaden: C'est une fausse campagne de communication permanente. Ce sont des rêves qu'ils ont vendus pendant cinq ans.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Allez*, one minute! One minute!

Mr Lesjongard: One question!

Madam Speaker: One minute to be shared between you!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister inform the House why CEB did not consider the possibility of using BESS because we have to meet peak demand, knowing well that we will have in the future to store energy produced from renewable sources and, on top of that, we know quite well that the power ship will produce dirty energy?

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, ...

Madam Speaker: Yes, round up!

Mr Assirvaden: Oui ! Oui ! *Dirty energy*, mais ce projet *dirty energy*, l'*EIA* verra ce qu'il faudra faire, mais pourtant en 2022, vous, ministre, vous lancez un RFI ...

(Interruptions)

C'est *dirty* – si vous dites que c'est *dirty*, Madame la présidente...

Mr Lesjongard: LNG is dirty?

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, si le leader de l'opposition ...

Madam Speaker: How are we going to ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ki LNG? Pa koz LNG* ...

Madam Speaker: How are we ...

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, ...

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear ...

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, ...

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear anybody!

(Interruptions)

Let the Minister talk!

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, ...

Madam Speaker: Minister, last 30 seconds!

Mr Assirvaden: Non, je suis obligé de répondre ; je suis obligé. Vous savez, le leader de l'opposition parle de *dirty*. Pensons une seconde qu'il a raison, mais qui en tant que ministre, en 2022, a été cherché un RFI de barge ?

Moi ? Non !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Tonn rode !*

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, le leader de l'opposition, parle de BESS, les batteries *for the peak*, mais est-ce qu'il est au courant, qu'au mois de février, mars de cette année ci, les batteries que vous aviez installées, monsieur le ministre, n'ont donné que des 10 % de la capacité installée ? Et aujourd'hui, vous parlez de batteries ?

Ms Anquetil: Incroyable !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Dignite nay ba?*

Ms Anquetil: Bravo, Patrick! Bravo! *Ar nou non!*

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Time is up! Time is up!

Yes, now we will proceed with PQs.

I have learnt that the hon. Minister of Financial Services will be replying to PQ B/572.

So, your second question, hon. Babajee!

PUBLIC BEACHES – REPORTED ASSAULT CASES (JAN-JUNE 2025)

(No. B/573) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to public beaches, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of assault having occurred thereat since January 2025 to date, indicating –

- (a) the Police Stations where same were reported;
- (b) the number thereof having occurred during weekends and public holidays, respectively, and
- (c) where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto, including the number of arrests effected in connection therewith, if any.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2025 to 19 June of this year, 14 cases of assault at 11 different public beaches have been reported at ten different police stations. I am tabling the details thereof.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed that among the 14 cases reported, four occurred during weekends at Flic-en-Flac, Tombeau Bay, St Felix, and Baie du Cap Public Beaches, and two cases during public holidays at Mont Choisy, and Tombeau Bay, respectively.

In two cases, nine suspects were arrested and provisionally charged for the offence of Assault with Premeditation. Inquiries in all the 14 cases are ongoing.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Babajee: Will the hon. Prime Minister consider getting some officers from the SMF and SSU at public beaches on weekends due to the number of assaults being occurred and the short number of Policemen?

The Prime Minister: Yes. In fact, this is being done during night time, especially. Both the Police presence, together with the SMF, SSU and local Police conduct road blocks, vehicle check points, and targeted alcohol and drug operations along the coastal roads.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, one more!

Mr Babajee: Will the hon. Prime Minister consider having traffic management officers on the Flic-en-Flac Road, especially, as we have four to five hotels; having delays during the weekend, with a huge number of traffic coming from Flic-en-Flac to Palma, in direction to the airport.

The Prime Minister: That is a different question. It does not pertain to the question. But, yes, this is also being done.

Madam Speaker: Alright! So, now, hon. Babajee, your PQ to hon. Ministers!

CONTRACT CAR LICENCES – CRITERIA, PROCESS & BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/574) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to Public Service Vehicle (Contract Car) Licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the number thereof issued over the past ten years, indicating –

- (a) the number thereof issued for operation in hotels and tour operators;
- (b) the procedure followed therefor, and
- (c) if all the beneficiaries thereof –
 - (i) satisfied all the eligibility criteria, and
 - (ii) produced all the required documents.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the NLTA that out of the existing fleet of 11,153 contract car licences to date, 7,781 representing 70%, have been granted during the last 10 years.

Prior to 2014, we only had 3,372 contract car licences which in itself reflects the strict and cautious approach to the issue of such licences.

From information gathered from the NLTA, there is no indication that a survey was conducted as regards to the demand and real need for such services on the market.

As regard to part (b) of the question, I am made to understand by the NLTA that it does not have any record of the licences issued as to who has recommended the contract car applications. Hence, no information is currently readily available as to the number of contract car licences issued for operations in hotels and tour operators. Extracting this information from over 11,000 files may be time consuming at this stage.

However, I wish to reassure the House that I have vehemently condemned this situation. I have already instructed the NLTA to henceforth ensure proper recordkeeping whilst favouring the adoption of digitalisation prospects thereto so as to enable information on the recommendations of such applications to be obtained at one click.

Coming to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am tabling information relating to the procedures, in the interest of time.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, the NLTA has confirmed that all beneficiaries did satisfy all the eligibility criteria and that they produced all the required documents when they were assessed by the then licensing board. I am also informed that as from 26 July 2024, the criteria for submission of application for contract cars was significantly eased in spite of the fact that the NLTA was already receiving a large number of applications monthly.

In that context, the supporting documents were acceptable even from greenhouses, as compared to hotels and tour operators previously. New applications did not require the submission of documents on parking facilities. No bank statement was required to prove financial capacity. No enquiry was carried out by the NLTA inspectorate to assess the need for the applied licences.

I am made to understand that Certificates of Character had to be produced only at the implementation stage when the application has already been approved. This crucial document was previously required prior to the application being considered by the licensing board!

Moreover, during the same period these applications were decided upon by the then Officer-in-Charge of the NLTA, although the licensing board was still operational. The NLTA Act clearly stipulates that this is the power of the licensing board to determine application for contract car licences.

Without any authority, this power was exercised by the then Officer-in-Charge. Accordingly, 138 car licences were granted during that said period.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. A. Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you. May I ask the hon. Minister, with regard to the lack of availability of cars having the required licence as tour operators on the market, is the hon. Minister proposing to re-open applications for the supply of these licences? As the hon. Minister may know, insurances and tour operators are complaining that they are not finding

cars to rent that are duly licensed. As you may know also, there is a growing black market for cars that are being rented and which do not afford the limitation of liability, etc.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Thank you. Applications were received until about three weeks ago. There was a deadline. I am given to understand that there are about 1,500 applications which the licensing board will starting hearing very soon.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Next question, hon. Babajee!

CEB – EMPLOYEES RECRUITED (2015-2025)

(No. B/575) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of employees recruited thereat over the past ten years.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je suis informé par la *Central Electricity Board* que de janvier 2015 à ce jour, 1,153 employés ont été recrutés au sein de l'institution dans divers grades techniques et administratifs.

Parmi ceux-ci, 131 anciens employés du *CEB (Green Energy) Co. Ltd* et *CEB (Facilities) Co. Ltd* ont été intégrés respectivement en 2021 et 2023.

Sur l'ensemble de ces recrutements, 427 ont été effectués à la suite d'un appel à candidature dans la presse. Toutefois, il est noté que 595 recrutements ont eu lieu sans aucune forme de transparence, dans une opacité totale. À ce jour, l'effectif de la *CEB* est passé de 1,884 en 2015 à 2,312 en 2025, ce qui traduit une augmentation substantielle du personnel au cours des dix dernières années.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Babajee: Will the hon. Minister inform the House, Madam Speaker, if there will be an enquiry on the transparency of the recruitment? The recruitment, as you just said, has not been done in transparency.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, laissez-moi préciser qu'au-delà de cette hausse de l'effectif, il est impératif de souligner que ces dix dernières années, sous les mandats

successifs des anciens ministres, des pratiques de recrutement pour le moins douteuses ont été observées.

C'est bien que les honorables membres ainsi que vous, Madame la présidente, prenez connaissance de cela. Le plus préoccupant, c'est que des recrutements ont été effectués pour des postes de techniciens qui demandent obligatoirement que vous ayez un NTC3. C'est un brevet technique obligatoire pour travailler à la CEB. Donc, malheureusement, des recrutements ont été effectués pour des postes de techniciens sans que les candidats disposent du NTC3, ce qui est pourtant une qualification essentielle pour exercer cette fonction.

Il est important de rappeler que le secteur de l'électricité est un domaine hautement technique où la sécurité des employés est en jeu. Une erreur, une seule négligence peut avoir des conséquences dramatiques.

Madame la présidente, pour répondre à la question de l'honorable membre, cela témoigne d'un grave dysfonctionnement dans le processus de recrutement et des gestions de ressources humaines au sein du CEB. Une telle approche où la compétence est exigée après coûts est non seulement contraire aux pratiques élémentaires de bonne gestion mais aussi dangereuse.

L'actuel *Board* du CEB a pris la décision depuis quelques temps d'offrir une dernière opportunité aux 23 techniciens recrutés sept ans de cela qui sont concernés, afin qu'ils puissent régulariser leur situation en obtenant un NTC3, ce qui est particulièrement grave, Madame la présidente, que sous la responsabilité de l'ancien ministre – suivez mon regard – certains recrutements ont été faits avant même que les candidats n'aient acquis cette certification de base, NTC3. Ce n'est qu'après le recrutement qu'il leur a été demandé d'aller suivre une formation requise pour obtenir ce NTC3.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Mr Babajee, your first question!

HERITAGE CITY PROJECT – INDIA & SAUDI ARABI FUNDING – BIDS & PAYMENT

(No. B/572) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Heritage City Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) amount of money received from India and Saudi Arabia therefor, if any, and

- (b) number of bids received for consultancy services therefor, indicating the name of the successful bidder, further indicating
 - (i) if it was the lowest bidder, and
 - (ii) the amount of money paid thereto and the mode of payment thereof.

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Ms J. Jeetun):

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/572 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that no external grant was received either from India or Saudi Arabia for the implementation of the Heritage City Project. I wish to inform the House that from information available at the level of my Ministry on 09 October 2015, the previous government decided that the then Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance would be responsible for the development of the Heritage City Project on a plot of land of 336 arpents situated opposite Ebene Cyber City on the left of Bagatelle dam.

On 18 December 2015, the then government approved the setting up of the Heritage City Co. Ltd, a wholly state-owned company for the implementation of the Heritage City with a timeframe of three years as from 2016.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed that a High-Powered Committee met on 23 February 2016 under the chairmanship of the then Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service and comprising the then Financial Secretary and Solicitor General to consider a due diligence report on the procurement of professional services of Stree, that is, the name of a consultancy company, for an amount not exceeding USD 4.34 million.

As per the report of the High-Powered Committee, the Heritage City Project was to be implemented under a Government-to-Government arrangement between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of United Arabs Emirates.

However, as per the file records at my Ministry, there is no documentary evidence of any proper Government to Government agreed in this regard. We found a letter that has been signed by the chairman of PCFC Real Estate Development FZE and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reform which talks about putting in place and it is already proposing to appoint Stree. So, this agreement is to

appoint Stree consulting represented by Mr Ameer Shaheed to assist the Government of Mauritius in respect of master planning, design, preparation and evaluation of bids. We could not find, Madam Speaker, any proper Government to Government agreement between the two countries.

Remember the dates the meeting of the High-Powered Committee happened on 23 February 2016. Following the decision of the High-Powered Committee, the then government approved on 02 March, so a few days later, the procurement of professional services of Stree Consulting with the Heritage City Co. Ltd for an amount not exceeding Rs4.34 million for master planning and engineering design and government officers' schematic designs.

An agreement, a contract, was signed between Heritage City Co. Ltd and Stree Contracting on 17 April 2016. On 16 March 2016, an amount of Rs55 million was transferred from the Accountant General to the State Bank of Mauritius in favour of Heritage City Co. Ltd for implementation of the project. From records available at my Ministry, the total funds disbursed to Stree Consulting Ltd through direct debit of SBM account of Heritage City Co. Ltd was USD 1,102,795 equivalent to Rs 39,716,981, detailed as follows –

- 15 April: an amount of USD 234,795 equivalent to Rs8,382,181 and
- on 01 June 2016, an amount of USD 868,000 equivalent to Rs31,344,800.

These funds represented 20% of the mobilisation and the information gathering fees including additional revision of the concept master plan for Heritage City and travel air fare.

So, in fact Madam Speaker, Rs39.7 million spent without any RFP, without any proper procurement procedure and nothing done, it was just mobilisation fee. So, nothing came out of it. I was doing some simple calculation: Rs 39.7 million down the drain. Week after week, we throw a lot of millions of scandals but when you relate that, for example, our colleague was just talking about electricity, that would pay for 80,000 vulnerable households on social register if we pay Rs 500 for electricity bill.

Rs39.7 million, 40 million nearly, would pay 2000 underprivileged families with water tanks and pumps so they could get uninterrupted water supply as water 24/7 was but a faraway dream. So, it was a lot of money wasted by the Ministry of Good Governance but no good governance, no procedure.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, Members of the House may be informed that the Heritage City Co. Ltd has already been wound up since 29 April 2020 and, that is, marked as defunct as the records of the Registrar of Companies and it is to be noted that the remaining amount on the bank balance of Heritage City to the tune of Rs123,214 was returned to the Accountant General on 28 January 2020. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Yes!

Mr Babajee: Hon. Minister, will you be able to inform the House who was responsible for that Ministry and whether there would be a proper enquiry carried out in regards to those?

Dr. Ms Jeetun: That was Minister Roshi Bhadain.

Madam Speaker: Former Minister.

Mr Babajee: Will there be any proper enquiry being carried out with regard to this?

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Yes, an enquiry will be carried out and I must add that it is a disgrace that people like that are today down protesting on the street when they have squandered money like this.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: All right, so, we have finished with questions.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Gambling Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. XV of 2025) was read a first time.

*Second Reading***THE APPROPRIATION (2025-2026) BILL****(No. XIV of 2025)**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2025-2026) Bill (No. XIV of 2025).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Alright. Hon. Junior Minister, Mr Damry!

(12.27 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Finance (Mr D. Damry): Madam Speaker, fellow citizens, I stand before you today engulfed in a turmoil of emotions just like you. Experts believe that Mauritians will not and could not get paid pensions in the near future.

As a patriot in a patriotic government, we cannot allow this to happen. On the one hand, I have my mother's brother who turned 59 a couple weeks ago. I know an elderly lady who has been working for 40 years. She is more than family and she turns 60 in December. They are both deeply affected. On the other hand, I am the Junior Minister of Finance and day in and day out, I see the precarious state of the public finances. As a caring and responsible Government, we have and we will always be sensitive to the public's deeply rooted sentiments. The mind, the rationale says yes to the reforms, yet the inner self has a sense of unpreparedness.

Madam Speaker, this battlefield of emotions has triggered deep reflections in me and compelled me in finding meaning in the noise. There is a reason why we do things. The 'why' is innate, it is existential in our DNA, in our core, in our soul. The 'why' directs how we do what we do. The speakers of this House have very diligently canvassed the 'how' and the 'what' of this budget and in the time allocated to me, I will try to focus on the 'why' of our budget. The 'why' is protect generations. The 'how' is bridge to the future and budget responsibility. The 'what', pension reforms and structural reforms.

But before I proceed with our 'why', I would like, Madam Speaker, to pause for a minute. Let us think. Let us try to decipher the 'why' of the previous Government and their budget ideologies so that we get a proper understanding of our budget. First, the State of the Economy document prepared by the civil servants under the supervision of the Financial Secretary shattered the money illusion into brutal reality. There was a lot of variances in the

debt, the budget deficits, in the accounting of GBC reserves into primary surplus, into mixing gross international reserves with net international reserves.

Let us go back to the ‘why’ of the MSM. Were the generous handouts of the MSM driven by social concern or were they politically calculated to consolidate power? Was there a deliberate method behind the populist measures? A hidden agenda to sedate public opinion, to create dependence, to manipulate the masses? Mauritians are not naïve. We know there is no such thing as a free lunch. A household that spends beyond its means goes into debt, so does a nation. Rs180 billion printed, distributed, vanished. Rs520,000 of debt per head. At the stroke of a pen, the MSM eliminated the NPF and defrauded the acquired rights of the workers. They taxed the workers through the CSG tax and left a deficit of Rs9.8 billion. The MSM risked the very existence of pensions, whose sustainability was already questioned by the IMF and World Bank in 2015 and 2021, and a working committee of the Ministry of Social Security in 2018. They did not care about our people. They could care less about a downgrade from Baa1 to Baa2 to Baa3 during their mandate as they did not care about Mauritius being put into a grey list.

So, Madam Speaker and friends, think deeper. Which organisation hands out money and instils fear to build a network of control and dependency? Can we think? I would not like to use the word because it is not strong enough. The word is mafia. Did the MSM dare to run Mauritius on mafia-style control? Did the MSM try to shape our paradise island into the Jugnauth-owned enterprise? If you think this is the ‘why’ of the MSM, do not ever let those political bandits basking under the sun on the beaches of Maradiva, get their hands on public money again.

Now, Madam Speaker, let me focus on our ‘why’. As we reimagine our future, we must ask; are we crafting a vision for the challenges ahead or are we just keeping a broken system alive? Former French Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin in his piece *‘Le pouvoir de dire non’*, wrote that we are not facing a temporary crisis but *une bascule d’époque*, a tipping point in history. He warns that our planet’s finite resources cannot support infinite economic growth. This budget does not just accommodate the transition, it accelerates it with decarbonised transport and energy, investment in a circular economy, real focus on food and water security. This budget funds education, reforms health, supports local food sovereignty, rewards care and commitment. This budget invests in teachers, caregivers, creatives and citizens. This budget says no to unsustainable consumption. This budget says yes to economic justice so that all Mauritians, especially our youth feel included. As de Villepin writes –

« *La vie devient marchandise, vidée de son mystère.* »

As Villepin writes –

« *La vie devient marchandise, vidée de son mystère.* »

Life becomes a commodity, stripped of its mystery.

Let us not allow our policies to become the same. We must give our children reasons to stay and our elders' reasons to trust. Let this Parliament restore that presence. Let us lift our country morally as well as materially.

Madam Speaker, let me now get to the how. This Government is doing just that by building a bridge to the future through a Multiannual Financial Framework, with three components –

- (1) a three-year macroeconomic financial consolidation plan;
- (2) a social compassion pact, and
- (3) a productive growth roadmap.

Madam Speaker, let me begin with the three-year fiscal consolidation plan that has five enablers –

- (1) Reduce debt from 90% to 80%.
- (2) Reform tax architecture for taxation equity.

I would like to ask a question to the House. Do you know, over the past ten years, what has been the effective taxation rates of some industry sectors, such as hotels, tourism, banking insurance? You may be shocked! It begins at 5% because they introduced so many taxation allowances in the economy. That was their effective taxation rate. On the other hand, the common public was paying income tax, VAT, CSG tax, devaluation tax, inflation tax. It is this equity that we have tried to bring through Fair Share Contributions.

- (3) We need to find efficiencies of at least Rs5 billion over the next three years in public bodies.

- (4) This budget has made a provision of 15 billion to manage ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) Risks.

On the social front, we have provision for adequate funding of the institutions for fighting drugs. This is a welcomed change for families that suffered for far too long, with the previous government turning a blind eye to their misery.

This budget has taken major steps towards good governance.

- (5) This budget has made provision to manage macro financial risks due to internal and external shocks.

As we all know, we live in an unpredictable world with country wars, tariff wars and trade wars. We need to securitise our supply chains and expand to new markets. This budget allocates funding to institutions to make Mauritius a safe and competitive haven.

Madam Speaker, we chose not to increase VAT rates because our fiscal consolidation plan is rooted in social justice. We will return to a lighter tax policy in 2-3 years.

Madam Speaker, allow me to delve into the second pillar of our Multiannual Financial Framework – social compassion. With the provisioning of Rs428 billion over three years on education, health, housing and social security, our workers' centric values of the Labour Party, MMM, ReA and *Nouveaux Démocrates* ensure that the financial sustainability and equity of our welfare state for the next generations are protected. As such, pension reforms are necessary to ensure multi-generational pension sustainability. A commission of experts is called upon to propose a financially viable and ring fenced NPF 2.0.

Madam Speaker, the budget has made provision for a number of social pacts. But in the interest of time, I will move to the third pillar of the Multiannual Financial Framework – growth, based on six multiplies –

- (1) Structural economic reforms. For example, ease of doing business, external competitiveness and labour market reforms.
- (2) Port, airport, digital, financial and diplomatic connectivity as force multipliers.

- (3) The resilience of existing contributing sectors. For example, construction, financial services and tourism.
- (4) The recovery of stagnating sectors. For example, local production.
- (5) Innovative Mauritius for new economic pillars such as digital, AI, green and blue industrialisation and Agri-resilience.
- (6) The Future Fund as an investment catalyst.

Madam Speaker, we are bringing all these opportunities to Mauritius so that our children stay in Mauritius and do not emigrate outside. We are confident that the Multiannual Financial Framework will yield the macro financial results in the next 2-3 years.

Let us return to the why, as I prepare to conclude. Allow me to share a vision. Picture a less young version of me walking along the Péreybère Beach in 2050. I see multi generations of Mauritians with smiles on their faces: children, the youth, women, parents, and grandparents. I look at them, I smile and perhaps, think, if only they knew how the 2025-2026 Budget was a watershed moment. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister-led Government, in which I was Junior Minister of Finance, brought reforms of the century: the pension reforms and the structural economic reforms. The two leaders tried to mend a broken social system. They dared to challenge the status quo. Think of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. They all have one thing in common: people/generations enjoy the benefits of their decisions for decades, for centuries.

On a personal note, both their direction and guidance are forging my character, courage and conviction. Working with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister is a lifelong journey of learning. Like all the members of this Government, I am deeply touched and inspired by a statement of the Prime Minister in a recent interview: ‘I don’t want anybody else to carry this burden. I accept my fate of going through tough times again to build a bridge for the next generation.’ That is leadership! Hon. Prime Minister, hon. Deputy Prime Minister and members of the Government, thank you for your support.

Madam Speaker, this is very important. I always finish with a call to action. So, Madam Speaker, in conclusion, allow me to make a call for national wisdom. In the words of Shri

Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, who captures the spirit of responsibility and renewal so beautifully –

“The country has such a government today which is devoting every moment of the time and every [rupee] of the people's money for the balanced development of the country; for *Sarvajan Hitaya: Sarvajan Sukhaya*.”

A Sanskrit phrase meaning, for the welfare of all, for the happiness of all.

“The pride of my government and my countrymen is connected to one thing, that our every decision, our every direction is linked to just one yardstick, that is, ‘Nation First’. And ‘Nation First’, is going to produce far-reaching and positive results.”

Madam Speaker, we have made a tryst with destiny as one people, as one nation, in peace, justice and liberty. We are building the bridge to the future. Let us now make a pledge to build an innovative Mauritius.

With this, I commend the Bill the House. Long live our motherland! Thank you.

Madam Speaker: It seems to me that it would be wise to suspend now. So, I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 12.46 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.24 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Attorney General!

The Attorney General (Mr G. Glover, SC): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as we draw to the end of this long session of speeches on the budget, it befalls me as the only non-elected Member of the House to make my voice heard. Do not expect me to lambast the previous government for their clear failings or dissect the inaccuracies and I am being very polite, the inaccuracies of the accusations laid at the door of this government. However, it is my duty to ensure that some misplaced criticisms are explained away. The first one regards the inexact interpretation of the allowances paid to Junior Ministers. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per paragraph 48 of the Annex to the Budget 2025-2026, it is provided that and I quote –

“The National Assembly Allowances Act will be amended to cater for the payment of allowances to Junior Ministers. The amendments will be deemed to be effective as from 22th November 2024.”

Everyone including the two, there's no one here, but including the two or maybe now three Members of the Opposition know perfectly well what the law provides in terms of allowances for every Member of this House. Section 2(4) of the National Assembly Allowances Act makes provisions for allowances to be payable to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, Parliamentary Private Secretaries, the Leader of the Opposition, including Members of the Opposition as well as for Junior Ministers.

However, the only omission, with regards to Junior Ministers, is the amount of allowances payable to them. Therefore, since Junior Ministers have replaced Parliamentary Private Secretaries, they have been earning the same allowances as the PPS would have and not a single cent more. Amendments will be brought to only cure an anomaly in the National Assembly Allowances Act, nothing more, nothing less. And those who have been wallowing in a deliberate misinterpretation of the Annex to the Budget on this question, are not true patriots. Every Member of this House has a sacred duty to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. To continue to make statements that create misconceptions and put doubts in the heads of many, is just an irresponsible behaviour.

Now, of course, in light of what we have heard of the past regime, maybe we would not be that surprised of the callous attitude of those sitting on the other side of the House. Call it naïve but I thought when I accepted to sit here that we would all to the best of our ability and competence, properly ensure that the population is not misguided. I was obviously wrong. Let us therefore move on. In the hope that the nonsense will stop sooner than later.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second point I will make here today concerns the pensions of retiring Members – those persons who are no longer Members of the Assembly. We have heard for calls from outside the House, for those who are benefiting from a pension to forego their pension and this, in a bid to convince the people that they too are taking or not, just like all those who will be affected by the reform of the old age pension.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it should be noted that the pensions of ex-members of this Assembly are governed by the National Assembly (Retiring Allowances) Act of 1976. An ex-member will be eligible to pension if he has served as a Member for at least two terms. However, when an ex-member is elected again as a Member of the Assembly, he shall seize

to be paid that pension but will in lieu be paid his allowance as a Member of the Assembly and in case his allowance as a Member is less than the pension he was earning, that Member will be paid the difference between the pension and his allowance.

So, today the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister do not obtain that pension. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition also does not receive his pension as former parliamentarians because at this moment in time, they earn more in their respective capacities than they would be earning as simple ex-parliamentarians.

Moreover, I will fail in my duty if I don't remind Members of the Assembly, especially one particular Member who is absent this afternoon, that one does not need to serve a whole term of five years to be eligible for that pension. If, for example one has served as a speaker, albeit not being elected Member of the Assembly and that only for some months, that person is eligible for that pension, albeit proportionately.

Members of the other side of this House know all this and have kept quiet, again, allowing the people to think that this was a big deal, it is not. And then why have we not heard those ex-parliamentarians who are not sitting in the House today, come out and say publicly that they are for this measure? The question why remains unanswered. This constant manner of hiding things, allowing the people to live in a state of incomprehension is a crying shame and should be stopped. As I said, we have a sacred duty in this House and it befalls me, the only non-elected Member to have to say so.

The third point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, relates to the economy in general. I confess I am no expert in the matter, but I do have some neurons that permit me to gage who might be telling the truth and who might not be. To do so, it is appropriate, is it not, to rely on independent views and opinions, to look, listen and learn from those in the loop who have been publicly saying what is the state of the economy and what are the obvious reforms that are needed. Let me say this – Moody's is not, as its name might erroneously convey, a person acting on his own whims and caprices. It acts on hard undisputed facts. So, does the World Bank and so does any other financial institution for that matter. It's simple: if your earnings, whoever you are, do not permit it, you will not be granted banking facilities.

Similarly, what this government has been harping on, is what that we have reached the red line. Going over the red line would mean absolute chaos. Those who are today calling this Government unpatriotic and will then have to deal with rising prices and complete havoc. It seems some are under the impression in Mauritius that there is a God who is looking

especially after us, Mauritians, ready to save us from the excesses and failings of the previous regime and that nothing bad can happen to us as a nation. *Tou pou korek!* To those I say: wake up! This is not reality; this is an illusion which we have been made to believe in. The quicker you realise that, the better for all of us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to the place of my Office in this budget. I will begin with the figure Rs350 million. Yes, only millions; I am not talking of billions here. That is the allocation made to the Attorney General's Office. Out of 47 budgetary heads, we ranked 35th in terms of size, a relatively modest share and yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our role is anything but minor. My Office is the constitutionally compass of the Executive. It is the principal legal advisor to the Government of Mauritius; it drafts legislation, represents the public interest in litigation and underpins the entire legal and institutional architecture of the State. Its work touches every branch of Government and every citizen who looks to the law for protection, resolution or redress. This work may not cost a lot to the taxpayer, but it is absolutely essential, which reminds us that the capacity of institution does not depend on budgets alone, it depends on the clarity of the mission they are given and the hard work of its members to meet their objectives.

This budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, calls on all of us to do better without much more in terms of means. For the whole Government, this implies making smart choices and doing away with wastage.

For the justice sector, this means putting the citizen at the centre of our reform. At the Attorney General's Office, we are not merely updating legal texts; we are working to ensure the justice is fair, comprehensible and accessible to all and not just in principle, but also in practice.

The Government Programme 2025-2029 sets out a bold institutional agenda over the next four years. We are tasked at my Office to translate that vision into law and much of our work is already in progress. Let me set the picture clearly: since December of last year, 17 Bills have already been introduced in this Assembly. Some major pieces of legislation such as the Bail (Amendment) Act, the Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act which form part of a wider renewal of constitutional and democratic safeguards have already been passed by this Assembly.

Two further Bills are now ready for debate in the Assembly. The Revenue Appeal Tribunal Bill will replace the Assessment Review Committee with a permanent independent

tribunal enhancing transparency, efficiency and fairness in tax matters. The Legal Aid and Legal Assistant Bill will overhaul the 1973 framework, expanding eligibility, simplifying procedures and opening up of access to justice to those who need it most. Other reforms are also in progress and six of the Bills are in the phase of finalisation and will be introduced in the days coming such as the Civil Appeal Bill, the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill, with the objective to clarify appellant routes, reduce procedural complexities and ensure that litigants understand the path that lies ahead of them, whether they are victims, defendants or parties in a civil dispute.

Last, but not least, the Courts Act will be amended with a view to simplifying and streamlining the procedure for an application for judicial review. The Mauritius Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is also expected shortly, as part of the broad effort, to align citizenship law with evolving legal and democratic realities. This will include doing away with the arbitrary powers introduced by the former government including what has been termed ‘Hoffman law’.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all this legislative work is not abstract; it touches real people – people seeking bail, people navigating tax disputes, people trying to appeal or defend themselves, people challenging quasi-judicial decisions affecting their rights. It may be legislation not for the headlines of newspapers but for the real change in people’s lives. So, one step at a time, as I often say. It reflects our view that laws must be made, not only to govern, but above all, to serve.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, was right in his budget speech to describe the judiciary as an essential pillar of our democracy. The courts are not only there to resolve disputes; they are sentinels of our Constitution – protecting rights, ensuring accountability and keeping part within lawful bounds.

In that spirit, this budget, makes a deliberate and targeted investment in the working tools of justice.

First, to improve how cases are handled and judgments are delivered, a dedicated judiciary e-system will be introduced, first for the Chambers matters and then at the registry of the Supreme Court. This is a long-awaited development that will help reduce delay and improve access to information across the system.

Second, Rodrigues will see the introduction of a Judicial Court recording and video conferencing system, ensuring that remoteness is no longer a barrier to judicial effectiveness or procedural fairness.

Indeed, the physical environment of justice is not being neglected. This budget makes provision for the renovation of the old Supreme Court building, the rehabilitation of the timber roof at the Flacq District Court and a new system enabling online payment of court fees and fines which will simplify daily interactions between citizens and the judicial system.

These are only the first steps. By the end of its mandate, this government will need to have invested in the rehabilitation of other District Courts, their infrastructures have been left in a state of decay. For too long, the general public has been left to see falling standards in our system being mirrored in the leaky roofs, crammed corridors, cracked benches of our court rooms and the infamous failings of the air conditioning systems.

Third, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the foundations of institutional justice are being reinforced. A National Crime Agency will be created to bolster investigative capabilities across complex, cross-border and organised criminal offenses. And, critically, a new prosecution service will be established under the leadership of the Director of Public Prosecutions, without prejudice to his prerogatives. This will follow the structure of The Crown Prosecution Service in the UK but tailored to our own local needs and reinforce the independence of prosecutorial functions.

At the same time, a Constitutional Review Commission is expected to commence its work in the coming weeks. Its mission will be central to the accomplishments of this government. Its success or failure will determine the long-term credibility of our institutional reforms. It will allow for a principle and inclusive review of our Constitution, with a view to strengthen checks and balances and reinforcing public trust, from electoral reform to a new generation of rights, drafted by Mauritians for Mauritians, and passed by a Parliament with a clear mandate to do so. It will usher in a new chapter of our progress as an independent nation.

These constitutional reforms, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will be accompanied by other novelties which will change how citizens interact with government. A freedom of information law will allow greater transparency and accountability in public administration. A framework for the Public Interest Litigation will also be developed aligning matters of broad societal concerns to be brought before the courts with fewer procedural barriers.

At the same time, the office of the DPP will be supported as the apex prosecutorial authority. Bodies such as the Public Service Commission, will see adjustments to their statutes to ensure efficiency and freedom from political interference.

The guiding philosophy therefore, is restoring public trust, restoring constitutional balance and restoring the citizens at the centre of the legal system. This is the spirit in which change is being pursued, not for partisan game, not to be popular, but to rebuild methodically and durably the legal order on which our democracy depends.

All these reforms, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, legislative, institutional, procedural, infrastructural, indeed point towards a nation built upon the rule of law, with a justice system that is both efficient and fair. My office will continue to play its role in that process, quietly, but with determination and we will support to work with Parliament with well-drafted legislation. We will advise government independently and in good faith. And, we will work with the judiciary to ensure that the architecture of justice, in all its components, improves.

That, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is why I support this budget. It is not an exercise in spending to please. It is an exercise in restoring sense and the restoration of public confidence, in our courts, in the prosecutions, in our court procedure and in the inherent fairness of our democracy. And, this is perhaps, the most vital project of all.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you!

Hon. Minister Subron.

(2.43 p.m.)

The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget is being debated in a particular moment. We are at crossroads at global and planetary level. We are living in defining times and moment for humanity, the planet and the people of Mauritius. We might even say, we are living in existential times.

This budget is being debated while the world may be at the eve of World War III, with nuclear exchange back on the agenda, after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s. This is the first real existential crisis facing humanity since this time.

This budget is also being debated in times of ecological crisis when almost all that is called the ecological boundaries, have been crossed. Climate boundaries, being one of the critical boundaries, have also been crossed.

All the worst scenarios are now on the table. We are living in Anthropocene epoch, a new geological time when the very existence of human society and civilisation is a stake. This is the second existential crisis we are into, as a society part of planet earth, in crisis.

The third global crisis is the crisis of resource and wealth grabbing. Ten men possess the equivalent of 50% of wealth of the humanity. This is not an existential one but a social, political time-bomb upon which many societies are sitting.

To conclude on this introduction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as everyone knows, war even if it does not result in nuclear exchanges, together with the eruption of ecological disasters every day on the planet, generates in parallel other serious crisis; be it economic, social and political.

It is worth mentioning that almost all human societies, including Mauritius are now fully embedded within global capitalism. This is not an ideological position, but an objective fact upon which we act in policy making.

This Government has a triple objective and agenda –

1. Bringing democratic, electoral and constitutional reforms, as highlighted by my colleague, the hon. Attorney-General;
2. Integrating rights of nature within the Constitution and judicial framework, and
3. In parallel, establishing socioeconomic model within a new economic and social order in rupture with the prevailing model.

This is an ambitious agenda.

To ensure transformation and progressive social and economic reforms, I would add ecological order as a new social contract is of utmost necessity. Consensus building is critical. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, in *the Alliance du Changement*, have won a formidable landslide electoral victory, but we have not yet succeeded in building a new social contract, social dialogue with inclusiveness and participatory democracy. This budget and the measures contained in it will be our litmus test in defining whether we will be able to forge this new social contract and new social consensus.

This budget, mainly its proposal to raise the age of eligibility of old age pension from 60 to 65 years, has raised genuine and healthy concerns by Mauritians. We respect the genuine concerns and protests it generated last Saturday. The structures we have set up, that is, the two ministerial committees and other potential spaces should aim at understanding the

genuine and healthy concern of many citizens – workers, women, the poor people, the youth and the small-scale producers and operators.

But at the same time, we have to strongly oppose some opportunists, the previous MSM regime, and some economic squatters who are sliding on this genuine social concern to promote their own political and economic greed agenda. They are the ones responsible of the socioeconomic and indebtedness crisis upon which this Government has had to act in this budget.

I also regret the *maladie infantile*, I must say, *obsession infantile*, of a tiny few trade unionists – I need not to mention them here – against me and *Rezistans ek Alternativ* over the recent weeks. As if their first objective was to discredit me and *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, not to change the pension reform! Be it as it may, in the times of multiple crisis at global and local level, successful governance means co-evolving in dialectics with social contradictions and social protests. This is and will be the challenge of this Government. I must say that there are already significant acts in this direction by our Government.

Besides promptly responding with the setting up of two interministerial committees, this Government, and in particular, the hon. Prime Minister, promptly reacted to ensure that the social protests scheduled by the trade union movement not be interdicted by the sabotaging act of an MSM nominee who wanted to deny the access of Champs de Mars to the unions.

This was almost a social blaspheme as the Champ de Mars, besides being the historical horseracing track of so many generations of Mauritians and of my colleagues, is also the cradle of the working-class struggle in Mauritius. The Labour Party was born in 1936 there, and the first Labour Day was celebrated in 1938 there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me briefly give an outline. I will not repeat what my colleagues and hon. Members of the majority have said, and which I fully agree with. This budget, on one hand, proposes new framework to optimise and sustain our commons, that is, land – mainly, agricultural land and ocean.

This budget proposes a pathway for energy security as well as a massive transition to renewable energy with some elements of people's-led production with Agri solar farms. This budget proposes to make innovation and knowledge a pillar of the future Mauritius. This budget proposes a shift from focus on estate property and rancher capitalism to a more production-based investment.

On the other hand, this budget proposes a rupture in fiscal and tax regime prevailing for more than 20 to 25 years to introduce new tax on the rich, including on dividends and segments of capitalist class to ensure a fair share contribution. Even if this fiscal regime is for three years, this shift should be commended and cannot be denied by socialists and the union movement. In parallel, this budget is proposing a substantial pension reform to raise the year of eligibility of BRP from 60 to 65 years.

The above significant policy measures have been justified on the basis of the State of the Economy Report, the level of indebtedness of our country and the long-term sustainability of the pension system in Mauritius.

Let me recap the history and evolution of the pension system in Mauritius. First, we had the slavery and indentured labourers when pensions did not exist. People were only needed for their courage and labour force. The first pension, as I mentioned when replying to the PNQ of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, came in 1956 with the birth of old-age pension.

From the social unrest of 1937 and 1943, it was the product of the struggle of the Labour Party, and the first generation of working-class struggle and trade unions. The second moment is the post-independence era, 1976 and 1978, where the National Pension Scheme, a public contributory system, despite fear and opposition from the sugar oligarchy, the rich and the middle class at the time, was enacted by this Parliament.

The National Pension Scheme provided a widespread coverage of a contributory benefit as well as non-contributory benefit. This was part of the emerging post-independence welfare state. The very welfare state that some people supposedly intend to defend now. The pension system, the NPS, was supposed to be enhanced as there were a lot of impediments due to the objection of the rich class lobby at the time. Maybe some people can get access – I will not read it because of time constraint – to the Hansards when the National Pension Scheme was enacted in 1976. There is a lot of knowledge in understanding the whole pension system in Mauritius.

The next historical moment was in 2008, when a reform of the retirement age, old pension benefits and the age of entitlement was proposed. The unions and the people of Mauritius raised concerns at the time. They protested. Finally, a social pact was concluded. The age of retirement was raised to 65, but old-age pension's eligibility was maintained at 60 years as well as the right of any employee to retire on optional basis at the age of 60 and be

entitled to retirement benefit under the previous labour law. They were also entitled to reduce pension under the National Pension Scheme at 60 years.

Then came 2020. 2020, while the people were bleeding under COVID-19, a series of crime was committed by the then government and Dr. Padayachy, the ex-Finance Minister of the previous government.

First, they abolished the National Pension Scheme. It was not in their manifesto; anybody can go and read. All of the MSM people who were on the street should have brought their manifesto and shown to the people what was written and not written in their manifesto in 2019. So, they abolished the National Pension Scheme *comme un trait de plume*.

In parallel, they created the MIC for big corporates and their cronies. They subsidised of all the corporates and gave more than Rs21 billion of the public funds to the corporates. These are the figures that I obtained as a trade unionist when I was not in the *Alliance du Changement*. Alongside, the insatiable greed took over and with all the tenders and contracts dilapidating public money while the people were bleeding.

While they dismantled the National Pension Scheme, many employees were receiving some Rs5000 of pension per month. So, they decided to stop it for the next two, three, four, five generations. This was a crime. I have figures where categories of employees were receiving even a higher pension at the time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they dismantled the National Pension Scheme and set up the famous CSG. They are based on erroneous assessment. They said that National Pension Fund was not sustainable. This was far from reality. The reality, like I said last time, is that the National Pension Fund, now after the abolition of contributions in five years has been paying contribution of around Rs200 billion to all employees who were part of the National Pension Scheme.

So, the contribution was abolished and the Rs20 billion is coming from benefits derived from investment of the National Pension Fund. So, imagine what the size of the National Pension Fund would have been, had they not dismantled the National Pension Scheme in 2022. As I said, and my officers have now testified, that they said that they wanted the National Pension Fund to pay the Rs4500 that they promised in the election 2019 and they tried to force officers in my office to pay Rs4000 from the National Pension Scheme and officers in my office said that this is not possible because the National Pension Scheme has contributing members and what need to be paid has to be paid to contributing members and

not to non-members of the Fund and this is where Dr. Padayachy got angry and he decided to eliminate the National Pension Scheme. As I said, this was a treason at the time.

In fact, I think we need to reflect what happened in this bleeding moment. Not only did they dismantle the National Pension Scheme but they created the CSG supposedly to pay the Rs4500 that they promised in the election of 2019. But, in reality, the Basic Retirement Pension is a tax-based pension, it is not a contributory based pension. It is a tax based, that is, you pay the pension from tax collected and this is independent on the number of young people or workers you have at any particular moment in time because it is tax-based. You can have less people working but you have lots of wealth created. So, it is a tax based. In fact, what in reality happened, was that all the people of Mauritius were contributing to pay for the BRP by price increases, we were not only be bleeding by COVID-19, we were also bleeding by massive price increase between 2020 and 2024. This is how the BRP was paid. CSG was not the only contributor to pay part of the BRP. They also used taxpayers' money, indirect tax, to pay the BRP, the increase in the number of beneficiaries of the BRP. This is how the volcano, the crisis has been generated.

The present moment we are in, in the present moment and in this budget, this Government, our government has proposed a major pension reform. The core, not the only the major part of it, is the eligibility to benefit the Basic Retirement Pension, long ago called Old Age Pension. Let me give some figures, it is my duty to give some figures.

As at June 2025, we have 272,033 beneficiaries of pensions. The amount paid as at June 2025 is Rs55,323,000,000 for Financial Year 2024-2025. Second, I must add – this is being mentioned for the first time – that on top of the Basic Retirement Pension, there were Rs1000 for all beneficiaries from 65 to 74 years old. This Rs1000 is being maintained in the context of the reform.

In addition, for all beneficiaries between 75 and above, there was a Rs2500 CSG retirement benefit. This too is being maintained and all the entitlement Rs1000 and all the entitlement of Rs2500 for our senior citizens, 800 and more, are being maintained and this must be very clear to the Mauritians.

Secondly, we need to understand that in 2019-2020, there was roughly, the budget spent was Rs20 billion and in 2024, the budget spent was more than Rs51 billion. This means that there was an increase of more than 150% not to say 175% and this has to be taken on board.

Let me add, as mentioned in the budget, all Basic Invalid Pension (BIP) beneficiaries will be paid pensions up to 65 years. According to figures I have, this will benefit some 5856 persons with disability entitled to BIP. Also, all beneficiaries of Basic Widows Pensions, they are a totalling of 6929 people, they will be benefiting the Basic Widows Pensions. I must also stress that as at date, nearly 40% of beneficiaries of BRP are in employment.

In fact, our figures gave 39.66% in the first year, 61 years. In the second year, it is 31.64%. In the third year, that is 63, it would be 28.57% and then 22% reaching 15% of the beneficiaries are working. Most of the beneficiaries are from private sector and the rest of them are from public sector. The reason given for this pension reform, apart from the state of public debt is known. I will not repeat it; it is life expectancy and population growth projection in the coming 50 to 100 years.

I must also stress, seeing some of these people on the street last Saturday, mainly Dr. Padayachy, the Leader of the Opposition, Pravind Jugnauth, that some of these people when they were in Government, they themselves recommended the raising of eligibility for basic retirement pension from 60 to 65. This was part of a technical committee paper that they produced where there were ten recommendations. Among the recommendations, the number 10 recommendation, I read it –

“10. To increase BRP eligibility age to 65 years.”

This is theirs. They should have brought it to Champ de Mars with them and distribute it to my fellow comrades of the trade unions. There are 10 recommendations, all of them aimed at jeopardising the pension, the BRP or the eligibility of the BRP. This is their document, it is a document dated from a committee which met in 2016-2017, up to 17 March 2017. So, the people need to know the real culprit. Now, we are the government of the people, for the people. We have heard the public concerns and the genuine protests. This is why as I mentioned, two interministerial committees have been set up. The two ministerial committees – I must stress, from the Cabinet decision – are to look into possible support to those persons aged between 60 and 65 years employed in sectors in difficult work conditions, and eventual means tested eligible housewives and mothers. This committee will be presided by the Prime Minister. The other one is under my chair and will look into possible support to persons in state of health-related inability to work.

I am pleased to inform the House that the second committee will be called on this Wednesday to discuss and look into the possible support for people with health disabilities. There is a possibility that the two committees merge to look into both terms of reference as decided by the Cabinet but also to take onboard other concerns, other considerations raised by the people in Mauritius. I must also mention that in the budget, there is a small but important amendment to pension benefits. All people going abroad for medical purpose will be able to stay 12 months instead of six months abroad and their basic pension will be maintained. This is very important. In the budget, it is also mentioned that the medical board – the famous medical board that so many Mauritians complain about – will be transferred in hospital and further develop within the reform that the committee number 2 intends to propose to include disability benefits reform and the reform for people aged 60 to 65 who cannot work for health reasons.

Let me add a few words as Minister of Social Integration in Mauritius. As you know, I have two portfolios; Minister of Social Security and Minister of Social Integration. And let me say at the very outset that the present House needs a snapshot of poverty situation in Mauritius and based on the latest figures from Statistics Mauritius and the Poverty Analysis of 2023 published in 2025, on the basis of the 2023 relative poverty line of 12,378 for a one-adult member household and 20,200 for a household comprising two adults and two children, there were an estimated 29,800 households for 101,900 persons in relative poverty in Mauritius, representing 8.4% of the total population.

I think it is important for Members of this House to note that the report of poverty stated a very important fact, a very important analysis. It says that Government transfers, basic pensions and other security benefits like social aid, free health services, education and public transport play a key role in bringing down poverty. Without these transfers, the poverty rate would have been 36.4% instead of 7.3%, the actual poverty rate. Consequently, and this is very important for the nation to know, the number of poor households would have increased from 29,800 to 148,500. So, this is why what we are discussing now – that is, the reform of the pension and the reform of the tax regime – is of prime importance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me highlight some of the social benefits mentioned in the budget. The Government, conscious of its role in providing support to the most vulnerable ones, to this effect, an array of schemes is being provided for the Financial Year 2025-2026 to eligible households of the SRM –

- Rs500 million under the subsistence allowance providing support on a monthly basis to 7,300 households;
- Rs65 million under the Child Allowance Scheme to encourage 6,000 children monthly to attend school;
- Rs11.2 million under the School Premium Scheme to reward around 480 students who succeeded in grade 9, SC, HSC and tertiary education;
- Rs3 million under the Free Examination Scheme to support students to take a second attempt at SC and HSC;
- Rs500,000 to around 50 students under the Waiving of Administration Fees Scheme to follow full-time course at MITD and other recognised tertiary institutions;
- Rs800 million under School Material Scheme to provide school materials, including bag, uniform, shoes, copybooks and stationaries to 12,400 student beneficiaries;
- Rs300,000 under the Crèche Scheme in respect of children aged between 3 months to 3 years as an incentive for their admission in a registered child daycare centre, thereby allowing their mothers to take up employment or following a training course.

Let me say that the NEF is high on the debate agenda. Let me remind the House that the total grant allocated to the National Empowerment Foundation has been increased to Rs267 million amounting to an approximate 5% increase. The fund dedicated to the National Social Inclusion Foundation has also been increased to Rs1.3 billion. As of today, some 530 NGOs and non-profit organisations are registered with the NEF.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me conclude now by saying a few political words. My Party and myself have been the target of harsh protests these recent months, especially during the recent week. We do understand their views for we are one of the symbols of the working people and social justice in this country. In a sense, being the target is commensurate to the values and programmes we defend.

Let me reassure the people that we have decided to be part of the *Alliance du Changement* for the following reasons –

- (1) To get rid of the MSM and its ‘mafiosization’ practices during its reign. We have succeeded 50% of our mission in the last general elections.
- (2) I would say the other quarter of our addition to the alliance is to bring fundamental democratic, electoral, ecological reforms within our Constitution, which will be a legacy for our children for the next 50 years.
- (3) The last quarter, the 25% remaining, is to govern and apply the best policies, especially the socio-economic ones in favour of citizens, workers, pensioners and the youth. Our aim in deciding such policies is the immediate and long-term interests of the social class.

As stated, *Rezistans ek Alternativ* promote, to the best way that we can, inclusiveness and participatory democracy in defining the socio-economic policies.

During the last weeks of social turmoil, I have met and have had conversation – many people do not know – with almost all the leaders of the trade union movement and many in the civil society movement in Constituency No. 4, and in various regions of the country. Despite all, let me say it loudly, none of them want *Rezistans ek Alternativ* to quit this alliance. We are here and we will stay in this alliance to meet our objectives!

Many of us have witnessed attempts to explode this alliance. They have all failed. Now that some of us are not on the streets, we will defend to the best that we can our point of views, our values and the people’s interests within the Government as long as we can. The butterflies are flying alongside the people as well as alongside the key of the Labour Party, the heart of the MMM and the freedom tree of the ND.

May peace, justice and liberty prevail in this critical time we are living. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Hon. Minister R. Duval!

Mr R. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for the adjournment of the debate.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 3.19 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 3.00 p.m.