



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 17 JUNE 2025

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam,
GCSK, FRCP

Prime Minister,

Minister of Defence, Home Affairs
and External Communications,

Minister of Finance,

Minister for Rodrigues and Outer
Islands

Hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, GCSK

Deputy Prime Minister

Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack
Mohamed

Minister of Housing and Lands

Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan

Minister of Environment, Solid Waste
Management and Climate Change

Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK

Minister of Agro-Industry, Food
Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries

Hon. Govindranath Gunness

Minister of National Infrastructure

Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK

Minister of Health and Wellness

Hon. Christian Harold Richard Duval

Minister of Tourism

Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron

Minister of Social Integration, Social
Security and National Solidarity

Hon. Gavin Patrick Cyril Glover, SC

Attorney-General

Dr. the Hon. Mrs Jyoti Jeetun

Minister of Financial Services and
Economic Planning

Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden

Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
Dr. the Hon. Kaviraj Sharma Sukon	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research
Hon. Sayed Muhammad Aadil Ameer Meea	Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives
Dr. the Hon. Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM	Minister of Education and Human Resource
Dr. the Hon. Avinash Ramtohl	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv Wochit, OSK	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Mahendra Gondeea, OSK	Minister of Arts and Culture

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Vedasingam Vasudevachariar Baloomoody
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Mohamed Ehsan Juman
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena, CSK
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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 16 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 17 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – MRS B. S. LOTUN, CSK – APPOINTMENT

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

Hon. Members, I am pleased to inform the House that Mrs Bibi Safeena Lotun, CSK has been appointed Clerk of the National Assembly, on contract, with effect from Friday, 06 June 2025.

Mrs Lotun served as Clerk of this National Assembly as from 03 March 2014. After 22 years of committed and valuable service to the National Assembly, Mrs Lotun chose, for personal reasons, to conclude her career on 01 May 2023, earlier than expected, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and professionalism.

She was recently appointed as my Adviser on 30 January 2025, and has helped me immensely at the beginning of my speakership. I am sure that I will be able to count on her again in her new post as Clerk.

On behalf of all hon. Members and the staff of the National Assembly, and in my own name, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mrs Lotun on her appointment as Clerk of the National Assembly, and I wish her every success in her new responsibilities.

I thank you.

OBITUARY

MR SEEWONARAINHOJAH RAMLUGON

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we have learnt with sadness of the demise of Mr Seewoonarainhojah Ramlugon, commonly known as Krishna Ramlugon, former Member of Parliament, on Monday 28 May of this year at the age of 88.

Born on 20 December 1936 in New Grove, Mr Ramlugon completed his primary schooling at Rose Belle Government School. He then attended the Mauritius College at Curepipe for his secondary education.

Mr Ramlugon started his professional career as an English teacher, and he adhered to the PMSD in 1966. He then contested the 1967 General Elections for the Legislative Assembly under the banner of the Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate for Constituency No. 17 Curepipe and Midlands and was returned as third elected member for the said constituency.

In 1969, he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of External Affairs, Tourism and Emigration, a post which he held until 1973.

He was the first Chief of Protocol of the Government of Mauritius responsible in overseeing diplomatic, State and official visits. He was appointed as Public Relations Officer at Air Mauritius Ltd later on.

Mr Ramlugon was elected Municipal Councillor for the Town of Curepipe in the year 1968. In 1983, he was appointed as a member of the Board of Commissioners for the Municipality of Curepipe, a position he held until 1985.

Mr Ramlugon was also a social worker and former member of the Swastika Association and was involved with the fund raising as well as the erection of the Swastika temple at Pasteur Street, Curepipe.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes; the hon. Deputy Prime Minister also associates himself. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I associate myself with the tribute paid by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Ramlugon Seewoonarainhojah, also known as Krishna Ramlugon.

Madam Speaker, may I kindly request you to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey our deep condolences to the bereaved family.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of late Mr Seewoonarainhojah Ramlugon, former Member of Parliament, by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

- (a) The Annual Report of the Accountant-General and Report of the Director of Audit on the Annual Statements of the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.
- (b) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 48 of 2025)
- (c) The Registration Duty (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 49 of 2025)
- (d) The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Segregation and Collection of Waste) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) No. 1 of 2025)

B. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

The Environment Protection (Control of Single Use Plastic Products) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 53 of 2025)

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

- (a) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute for the year ended 30 June 2024.
- (b) The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority for the year ended 30 June 2024.

D. Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning

- (a) The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2025. (Government Notice No. 51 of 2025)
- (b) The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2024 (Revocation) Rules 2025. (Government Notice No. 52 of 2025)
- (c) The Financial Services (Framework for the Imposition of Administrative Penalties) (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2025. (Government Notice No. 54 of 2025)

E. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

The Consumer Protection (Use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas in Small Cylinders) (Amendment) Regulations Ltd. (Government Notice No. 50 of 2025)

F. Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Research

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Quality Assurance Authority for the year ended 30 June 2023.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**MOKA POLICE STATION – IT EQUIPMENT & OPERATING SYSTEM –
UDGRADES**

(No. B/529) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) 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 IT equipment and operating system being used at the Moka Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the date of the last upgrade thereof, indicating the scheduled timeframe of the next upgrade thereof, if any.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/529, B/530, and B/538 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that all Police Stations, including that of Moka, Saint Pierre, and Quartier Militaire are equipped with essential IT equipment such as Personal Computers for the use of the Crime Occurrence Tracking System (COTS) and Terminals for the access to the Criminal Attribute Database (CADB), footages of Safe City and CCTV systems.

With regard to Personal Computers, they are replaced and upgraded as and when required. An average of 200 new PC units are procured each year to support and replace hardware across the Police Service.

The Crime Occurrence Tracking System (COTS), which is a digital platform connecting all Police Stations to the main server at the Police Headquarters, is used for the management and tracking of complaints and declarations, from initial reporting to final case disposal. It has been operational since 2011.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that while the system has been enhanced, it has never been upgraded. The Police have initiated action to replace the COTS entirely with a modern, high-performance case management system, and it is expected that this system will be

compatible with the latest technologies, offer faster processing, user-friendliness, and higher storage capacity.

The Central Informatics Bureau is working closely with the Police on this project and has advised that the services of a special consultant be retained. This process is underway.

As regards the access to the Criminal Attribute Database (CADB) in the Police Stations, I am informed that it has not been upgraded since its implementation in 1999. An amount of Rs43 million has been provided in the Budget for this financial year for a fully integrated, modernised system, which will include a new version of the CADB that can handle criminal records and identity verification using biometric data. The tenders will be launched by the end of August of this year and is expected to be operational within the next two years.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the IT infrastructure for CCTV and the Safe City Systems, both are on a lease agreement with Brinks Ltd and Mauritius Telecoms, respectively, which caters for maintenance and software and hardware upgrade as well. The technological upgrade for the CCTV cameras is presently being undertaken by Brinks Ltd. As for the Safe City camera systems, according to the lease agreement, a technology refresh is due in December 2025.

Madam Speaker, this is the legacy left by the previous Government: outdated systems, under-equipped stations, and a Police Force left behind in the digital age. We are now moving from a decade of neglect to an era of progress and reform.

As clearly stated in the Government Programme 2025-2029, digital transformation of Mauritius will be one of the major reforms to be undertaken.

In this respect, as announced in the Budget Speech, we are coming shortly with a Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act which will be aligned with international standards. A Cybersecurity Operation Centre will be set up based on the UK model.

Madam Speaker, Government will continue to invest in a Police Force that is digitally enabled, secure, and ready for the future. This is the kind of bold, forward-looking reform that the Police Force has long needed and my Government has pledged to deliver.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

**ST PIERRE POLICE STATION – IT INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATING SYSTEM
– REFORMS & UPGRADES**

(No. B/530) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) 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 IT equipment and operating system being used at the St Pierre Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the date of the last upgrade thereof, indicating the scheduled timeframe of the next upgrade thereof, if any.

(Vide reply to PQ B/529)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, we have been advised that PQ B/531 has been withdrawn. So, I will now call on the hon. Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or, Mr Beejan!

MOODY'S CREDIT RATINGS & ASSESSMENTS – MAURITIUS – 2014-2025

(No. B/531) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Moody's credit ratings and assessments for Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reasons for the changes thereof over the period 2014 to 2025.

(Withdrawn)

**GRAND GAUBE POLICE STATION – POLICE OFFICERS, VEHICLE FLEET &
CONTRAVENTIONS BOOKED**

(No. B/532) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Grand Gaube Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers posted thereat, indicating –

- (a) their respective ranks, and
- (b) the number of –
 - (i) vehicles at the disposal thereof, and
 - (ii) contraventions booked since January 2024 to date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Grand Gaube Police Station covers an area of 11 square kilometres with some 20,000 inhabitants. The surrounding areas of Sans Souci, Anse La Raie, Petit Paquet, St. Francois, Calodyne, Petit Camp, Melville, and Camp La Serpe, amongst others, fall under the jurisdiction of Grand Gaube Police Station.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that 51 Police Officers in the following ranks are posted at Grand Gaube Police Station –

- 1 Chief Inspector;
- 2 Inspectors;
- 1 Sub-Inspector;
- 15 Police Sergeants;
- 2 Women Police Sergeants;
- 20 Police Constables, and
- 10 Women Police Constables.

Furthermore, the Grand Gaube Police Station is supported in the exercise of its functions by other Units/Branches of the Police, such as, the Goodlands Central Investigation Division, the Northern Division Supporting Unit, the Field Intelligence Unit, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit based at Poudre d’Or, the Emergency Response Service, the National Coast Guard at Grand Gaube, the *Police de L’Environnement* of Trou aux Biches, and the Traffic Police.

In regard to part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed that two police vans are allotted to Grand Gaube Police Station.

As regards part (b)(ii) of the question, 454 contraventions had been established in the year 2024, and 332 during the period from January 2025 to 11 June 2025. All the contraventions were related to road traffic offences, except one established in 2024 was for the offence of noise pollution causing nuisance.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Allow me to mention that many repeated concerns...

Madam Speaker: No, no! Question; not statements!

Mr Beejan: Yes. So, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether additional measures will be planned to address issues of law and order in the region of Grand Gaube? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: In fact, the Commissioner of Police is looking at all police stations across the island to see what can be done.

I should have added that he also carried out a special crackdown operation because of the noise pollution caused by motorcycles with inefficient silencers and drivers operating motor vehicles under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, and music from bungalows, guest houses and on the public beaches.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

CÔTE D'OR, 27 AUGUST 2024 – INCIDENT INQUIRY

(No. B/533) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) 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 incident which occurred during a protest at Côte d'Or on 27 August 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, indicating if –

- (a) the police officers present thereat had recourse to the use of force against the demonstrators, and
- (b) private bouncers intervened therein.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 27 August 2024 at 16 00 hrs, the then Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage had organised a ceremony at Côte d'Or for the handing over of lease agreements of plots of State land to the Hindi Speaking Union, the Urdu Speaking Union, and the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust.

It should be recalled that the ceremony was taking place at a time of high tension in the wake of the unilateral decision of the then government to retrieve the land that was originally leased to the Mauritius Tamil Cultural Centre Trust located at Réduit Triangle. This was done with the deliberate purpose of transferring the said land in favour of a company belonging to the Nundun Gopee Group to enable it to expand its business at Réduit Triangle for the setting up of a luxury retirement village. This was interpreted as a supreme insult by the Tamil community.

On 27 August at around 15 50 hours, seven persons, in total conformity with the legislation pertaining to public gathering, were demonstrating at some distance from that location where the ceremony was taking place.

Police arrested four of the seven demonstrators for the offence of 'Rogue and Vagabond'. Three of the demonstrators, namely Mr M.G., Mr D.K. and Mr D.G. were brutally pulled from where they were standing and were brought to the Moka Central CID Office.

One Mr H.N. was dragged by force and brutalised by Police in civil clothes. He was hurt when he was thrust to the ground. He was, thereafter, pushed violently into a police vehicle, with the Police taking no consideration at all of his protest to the effect that he had already been hurt. Mr H.N. got a malaise and had to be conveyed to Wellkin Fortis Clinic as a result of this.

Madam Speaker, the enquiry into the case of 'Rogue and Vagabond' is ongoing.

On 29 August 2024, Mr R.S. was provisionally charged with the offence of 'Assault against agent of civil authority' before Moka District Court. He was allowed bail after furnishing a surety of Rs8,000 and a recognizance of Rs30,000.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Police Officers had recourse to the use of force against the demonstrators as according to them, the demonstrators were resisting their arrest. This was not the case; you can see it in the video.

Even though the matter was videotaped and went viral on social media, the brutal acts committed by the Police were not enquired into by the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as per records, no private bouncers were present during the protest at Côte d'Or on 27 August 2024.

Madam Speaker: Yes, happy? Alright!

The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – FCC SUB-OFFICE – CORRUPTION CASES

(No. B/534) **Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fight against corruption in Rodrigues over the past three years, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Crimes Commission, information as to the number of cases currently under investigation thereat, indicating the number of public officials, service providers and contractors who have been or are facing investigation, particularly, in relation to the award of Government projects and/or resources.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that in September 2007, the then Independent Commission Against Corruption opened a sub-office in Rodrigues for a more efficient implementation of its mandate in relation to education, prevention, and investigation.

I am also informed, Madam Speaker, that at present, 27 cases are being investigated by the Financial Crimes Commission sub-office in Rodrigues and the number of officials who have been facing or who are facing investigations in Rodrigues is 29.

As regards service providers and contractors who have been or who are facing investigations, nine service providers are currently undergoing investigations in connection with the award of contract of government projects.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. François!

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, from the 29 officials, there is any high-profile person involved, not to say serving politician for conflict of interest, bribery, influence on decision of procurement, allocation of State lands, fraud by abusing his/her position, for a direct or indirect interest for himself/herself or any close relatives?

The Prime Minister: I am not able to say that, Madam Speaker, because the investigation is ongoing.

Madam Speaker: Of course!

Mr François: A second one, Madam Speaker. Following a letter from the Rodrigues Public Service Union, Platform Syndikal Rodrig addressed to the hon. Prime Minister, I am in copy, may I also ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is agreeable to use his good office to request the Commission, in line with the principle of good governance, to liaise with unions and the Regional Assembly for the setting up of anti-financial crime practices in Rodrigues to eliminate financial crimes?

The Prime Minister: I cannot really give instructions to the FCC, but I can pass on the message.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

PUBLIC SERVICE – SALARIES & BENEFITS – FOREIGN CURRENCY POLICY

(No. B/535) **Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the practice of paying salaries and benefits to incumbents of positions in the public service in foreign currency, he will state if consideration will be given for same to be discontinued and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that no officer in the public service based in Mauritius is being paid salary/benefits in foreign currency, except for foreign nationals whose services have been enlisted in view of their technical expertise and in line with the terms of their contracts.

However, Ambassadors and officers of the diplomatic cadre, who are posted in Mauritius Missions abroad are paid salary in foreign currency in accordance with the recommendations of the PRB. They are also paid their foreign service and other allowances in foreign currency.

Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/410 for the Sitting of 06 May of this year in relation to the salary and fringe benefits drawn by Mr Beekarry, former Director-General of the Financial Crimes Commission. I wish to reiterate that when Mr Beekarry assumed duty as Director-General of the now defunct ICAC, he was drawing a salary of Rs375,000 monthly, however 50% payable in Mauritian Rupees and 50% in US Dollars. When his appointment was renewed for a further period of five years in 2021, his monthly salary was revised to Rs420,000, payable again 50% in Mauritian Rupees and 50% in US Dollars.

However, following the establishment of the Financial Crimes Commission in March 2023, Mr Beekarry was drawing a monthly salary of Rs525,000 as Director-General of the Commission, that is, an increase of Rs105,000.

Madam Speaker: You are alright with that? Yes!

The hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, Mr Seeburn!

MAUBANK LTD – GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT & RETURNS (2015-2024)

(No. B/536) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to MauBank Ltd., he will state the amount of public funds invested therein by Government over the period 2015 to November 2024, indicating the Return on the said Investments by Government in relation thereto, if any.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that Government has injected funds in the form of equity into MauBank Ltd through the MauBank Holdings Ltd, where Government is the sole shareholder. MauBank Ltd is a subsidiary owned by Maubank Holdings Ltd.

I am informed, Madam Speaker, that over the period September 2015 to November 2024, Government has injected funds amounting to Rs3.69 billion as follows –

- (a) Rs1.5 billion on 17 September 2015 for the acquisition of shares in Ex-Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank Ltd and Ex National Commercial Bank Ltd;
- (b) Rs300 million on 29 October 2015 to enable Maubank Ltd to meet its regulatory capital requirements;

- (c) Rs1.3 billion on 13 January 2016 to enable Maubank Ltd to meet its regulatory capital requirements,
- (d) Rs500 million on 01 April 2024 for the growth and expansion of the bank.

Government, I must say, Madam Speaker has not yet received any return on investment from MauBank Holdings Ltd since its incorporation in September 2015.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

**RRA – 2025-2026 BUDGET ESTIMATES – ESTABLISHED PROJECTS &
PROGRAMMES – BUDGET QUANTUM**

(No. B/537) **Mr J. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the 2025-2026 Budget Estimates, he will state if the –

- (a) projects and programmes established and approved by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) for Rodrigues Island for formal appropriation through the National Assembly are included in the Public Sector Investment Programme 2025-2026 to 2029-2030, Capital Development Programme of Central Government and, if not, why not, indicating the implications thereof, and
- (b) budgetary quantum initially agreed upon between the Ministry and the RRA was modified by the latter and, if so, indicate the implications thereof and measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, concerning part (a) of the question, I have been informed that the projects and programmes relating to Rodrigues Island have been included in the total amount of the Public Sector Investment Programme 2025-2026 to 2029-2030.

In this regard, for Financial Year 2025-2026, a total provision of Rs785 million has been made in the Performance-Based Budget Estimates 2025-2026 under the “Programme 0205: Rodrigues and Outer Islands” as capital grant to Rodrigues Regional Assembly for appropriation by the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that in its budget for Financial Year 2025-2026, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) made a provision of Rs990 million for the implementation of capital projects. However, taking into account the implementation capacity as well as the state of preparedness of the projects, government has provided Rs785 million.

In fact, for the current financial year, that is, 2024-2025, a total sum of Rs1.285 billion was voted by the National Assembly as capital grant to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. However, as at date, the latter has only spent Rs479 million, that is, 37% of the allocated budget.

As regards part (b) of the question, following discussions at technical level, a total sum of Rs5.605 billion was initially agreed between the Ministry of Finance and the RRA for Financial Year 2025-2026 as follows –

- (i) Rs4.82 billion for recurrent expenditure, and
- (ii) Rs785 million for capital expenditure.

However, on 10 April 2025, the RRA presented a budget of Rs6.086 billion in the Regional Assembly, of which Rs 5.096 billion was for recurrent expenditure and Rs990 million for capital expenditure.

On 18 April of this year, government considered the proposals and has agreed to increase the provision for recurrent expenditure by Rs180 million to Rs5 billion while the sum for capital expenditure has been maintained at Rs785 million.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly has already been informed of the budget allocation agreed by government for Financial Year 2025-2026 and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will amend its budget accordingly.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that, in addition to the Rs785 million provided as capital grant for Financial Year 2025-2026, an amount of around Rs1.6 billion has also been included in the Budget for various other projects. These include Rs1 billion for the construction of the new runway at Plaine Corail and Rs340 million for water-related projects as well as Rs60 million for drain projects in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: I am sure you can come back on all this during the debate.

I will proceed with the next question therefore. We don't have much time left!

I think we have done B/538 already. So, the hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

QUARTIER MILITAIRE POLICE STATION – IT EQUIPMENT & OPERATING SYSTEM – UPGRADING

(No. B/538) Mr P. Venkatasami (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) 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 IT equipment and operating system being used at the Quartier Militaire Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the date of the last upgrade thereof, indicating the scheduled timeframe of the next upgrade thereof, if any.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/529)

N. G & CO. LTD & SUBSIDIARIES – CONTRACTS AWARDED (2015-2024)

(No. B/539) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to N. G & Co. Ltd., and its subsidiaries, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of contracts awarded thereto by Ministries and/or Parastatal bodies over the period 2015 to 2024, indicating in each case the –

- (a) contract value thereof, and
- (b) procurement method used therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for asking this question.

In fact, N.G & Co. Ltd. is owned by Nundun Gopee and Vinash Gopee, who were very, very close to the previous Prime Minister.

On the basis of information gathered, N.G & Co. Ltd was awarded the following contracts –

- (i) A contract awarded by the NHDC Ltd on 29 April 2015 for the construction of 73 Low-Cost Housing Units and Associated Infrastructural Works, and 13 Serviced Plots at Petit Bel Air. The initial amount of the contract was estimated at Rs88 million. However, a final payment of Rs110 million was made to N.G & Co. Ltd to cater for variation works estimated at Rs22 million.

I wish to inform the House that N.G & Co. Ltd. had subcontracted the entire work to Pybig Construction Ltd for an amount of Rs76 million. Hence, N.G & Co. Ltd.

pocketed the difference, that is, an amount of Rs34 million for a project it acted only as a middleman.

This is clearly in violation of the condition of the contract.

- (ii) Another contract awarded by the NHDC Ltd on 29 September 2016 for the construction of 50 Housing Units and Associated Infrastructural Works at Souillac for a sum of Rs82 million;
- (iii) On 29 December 2017, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, after an international bidding exercise, awarded the contract for the construction of the New ENT Hospital at Vacoas to a joint venture led by Ramacivil India Construction PVT Ltd and N.G & Co. Ltd. for a sum of Rs926.2 million;
- (iv) N.G & Co. Ltd. was awarded, on 22 May 2023, through direct procurement, a contract for the design and construction of 800 housing units for a total amount of Rs2.2 billion by the National Social Living Development Ltd. However, on 03 July 2023, NSLD terminated the contract due to failure by the latter to comply with the terms of the Letter of Acceptance and the Conditions of Contract. I am informed that N.G and Co. Ltd, in fact, wanted to subcontract the work again to other companies as it did for previous projects.

In addition, Madam Speaker, I must point out that N.G & Co. Ltd. has benefited from various other “*largesses*”. These include –

- (i) A sum of Rs 550 million from the MIC for the construction of the Luxury Retirement Village, known as Royal Green. It is worth pointing out that the MIC was supposed to support “systemically large, important and viable corporations or companies incorporated in Mauritius which are financially distressed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic”;
- (ii) A 3-acre plot of land in Ebene through Landscape, following which, it contracted a loan of Rs600 million from the SBM for a building project on a plot of land retrieved from Mauritius Post Ltd which was the lessee;
- (iii) At its 7 Exchange Square Building in Ebene, SBM, the very bank that lent money to N.G & Co Ltd., acquired several floors and 50 attached parking slots for Rs283.5 million;
- (iv) For the same building, 7 Exchange Square, the EDB signed a lease agreement, on 09 August 2019 for 5,000 square metres of office space and 130 parking slots.

On 30 May 2024, the EDB signed a second lease agreement for an additional office space of 170 square metres at the ground-floor of the same building and also for 2 additional parking slots. EDB currently pays Rs4,068,000 per month for this rented space. So far, the EDB has paid a total rental amount of Rs104.9 million from December 2022 to date, and a syndicate fees of Rs7.2 million;

- (v) FSC pays Rs5,174,460 per month to N.G & Co. Ltd for the rental of five floors and 135 parking slots at 7 Exchange Square;
- (vi) a contract between Mauritius Telecom and Royal Green for the provision of medical services by the Royal Green Hospital to employees of MT for an estimated amount of Rs13,038,749 for over three years;
- (vii) Financial Support from Industrial Finance Corporation Ltd to the tune of Rs64 million to Royal Green Healthcare Ltd;
- (viii) Mauritius Ports Authority granted a lease of 25 years over a plot of 1-hectare of land in the port area to NG Marine Services Ltd, which is part of the N.G Group of Companies, and
- (ix) N.G & Co. Ltd. also benefitted from a lease of State land for its luxury villa project, Asmara at Riviere Noire, from which it pocketed hundreds of millions of rupees from the sale of the villas.

Madam Speaker, the House may also wish to know that on 15 April 2024, a decision was taken by the then government to relocate the office of the Financial Crimes Commission on the flimsy excuse of infrastructural defects in the building. This was but a ploy to lease the land to N.G & Co Ltd. which had already benefitted from the land retrieved forcibly from the Tamil Cultural Centre. This formed part of the strategy of N.G & Co Ltd to expand its domain over the entire Réduit Triangle with the blessings of the former government.

Madam Speaker, let me also add a few words about the land scam initiated by the management of Landscape Ltd in 2019 – a few months before the General Elections.

This related to a decision of the Board to allocate 550 acres of prime land in a strategically located area at the heart of Côte d'Or City Project under the Landscape Development Scheme. This project was estimated at more than Rs25 billion. Despite the fact that following an Expression of Interest exercise, 32 developers were deemed eligible to receive plots, the Board, under the leverage of the Cabinet and the then Prime Minister personally, decided to allocate the land to only two companies, out of which, 250 acres were to be given to N.G & Co. Ltd.

Madam Speaker, Mr Gerard Sanspeur, the then Chairperson of Landscape vehemently opposed the decision, raising serious concerns about the lack of transparency, fairness and procedural irregularities. He stood firm despite thinly veiled threats for resisting a recommendation of the Cabinet. He insisted that the matter be referred to the State Law Office. Following the advice of the State Law Office, the Board had to rescind the decision, thus aborting what was going to be another scam. Probably, the scam of the century!

Shortly after, Mr Sanspeur resigned as Chairperson of the Board and as Principal Adviser to the then Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, the House will recall that just before the general elections last year, a strategic plot of land in the area of Anse La Raie beach was allocated to Luxury Suites Ltd, another entity owned by N.G & Co. Ltd. In view of the major public outcry that followed, he had no choice but to abandon the project.

Madam Speaker, if we compute the total figures, N.G & Co. Ltd. has so far benefited around Rs2 billion from various projects, around Rs205 million for rental of office space to government entities, and around Rs1.25 billion as direct financial support from SBM Ltd, the MIC, and the Industrial Finance Corporation Ltd.

It should be pointed out, Madam Speaker, that Mr Vinash Gopee chaired several bodies, including –

- 1) The Tourism Authority;
- 2) The Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd ;
- 3) The Drains Infrastructure Construction Ltd., amongst others.

Madam Speaker, all the information I have given to the House show clearly that the MSM government has systematically, since 2015, weaved a cobweb of corruption, malfeasance, nepotism and cronyism to bleed the country of important resources for their personal advantage.

This is but one example of how they fleeced the economy, and left the country in the mess that we find ourselves in today.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, I am sorry. Time is up! I am sorry, time is up!

(Interruptions)

Time is up, hon. Member! So, ...

(Interruptions)

Next time!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/540, which was coming just after, has been withdrawn. So, we now move to questions addressed to hon. Ministers.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, hon. Jhummun, but I have to respect – time is up. We will come back! You are still young!

Mr Jhummun: I just wanted to know whether a full inquiry will be undertaken.

Madam Speaker: You do not have the floor!

We now move to questions addressed to hon. Ministers.

The hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatres Bornes!

COVID-19 PANDEMIC– STC BUILDING – DISINFECTION

(No. B/542) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the disinfection of the STC building at Ebene following the COVID-19 pandemic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the –

- (a) name of the contractor therefor and
- (b) cost thereof.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I am informed that following the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Trading Corporation sought the services of its then service provider, namely Mauriclean Ltd to disinfect its premises in view of resumption of work and other economic activities in May 2020. However, the latter was not operational during this period.

I am further informed that the STC then launched a tender for the decontamination of its Head Office at Ebène, its two warehouses in Mer Rouge and Roche Bois, and for its fleet of vehicles to seven potential bidders. Of these seven companies, six submitted their quotations which were as follows –

- (i) Services 2000 Ltd. for Rs68,000;

- (ii) Alpha Pest Management for Rs99,215;
- (iii) Neeteeselect Ltd for Rs91,000 during normal hours and Rs121,000 for odd hours;
- (iv) Pajelo Cleaning Services Ltd for Rs176,525;
- (v) Final Cleaning Ltd for Rs565,539, and
- (vi) Aqua Science and Technology Ltd for Rs61,399.11

Based on the evaluation exercise carried out by the STC, the contract was awarded to Neeteeselect Ltd, which was found by the STC to be lowest substantially responsive bidder for the price of Rs121,000.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that in June 2020, the STC carried out a second decontamination exercise in one of its warehouses and its vehicles. The STC availed itself of the services of Neeteeselect directly on the same terms and conditions as the first contract for a total value of Rs85,000.

I am further informed by the STC that based on the certification of a Health and Safety Officer of the STC that the decontamination exercise was successfully carried out in his presence. The total cost of Rs206,000 for the disinfection carried out by Neeteeselect Ltd. at the STC post-COVID was paid to the contractor.

Madam Speaker: Supplementary!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he is aware that the manual workers of the STC are claiming that they did the cleaning and they were promised to get paid? Unfortunately, they did not get any remuneration for the cleaning they did at the STC's Head Office building at Ebène, STC warehouse at Mer Rouge and STC warehouse at Roche Bois. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I have also heard the same version. However, the management of the STC is insisting that the disinfection was carried out by the employees of Neeteeselect.

On the other hand, the manual workers at the STC are claiming that they did the job without any remuneration which was promised by the then management of the STC. The STC however, confirmed that the maintenance section and a few handy workers actually carried out the following –

- (i) internal and external cleanings at the STC head office;

(ii) internal and external cleanings at shed A and Roche Bois warehouses.

Madam Speaker, I will request the board of STC to do an investigation and the matter will be referred to the FCC if need be.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you. Hon. Juman.

Mr Juman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I know from the hon. Minister the date of incorporation of the company, nature of business and also the date the contract was awarded?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I have the information from the registrar of companies. The date incorporated was 21st April 2020. The name of the company – Neeteeselect Ltd. The category is domestic. The status is live under winding up process and the contract was awarded on the next month which was in May 2020.

Ms Anquetil: Shame!

Madam Speaker: After incorporation you mean? Next month after incorporation?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes.

Ms Anquetil : Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Can the Minister inform the House who is the General Manager and their shareholders of the Neeteeselect Ltd? Thank you.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, as per the Registrar of Companies Mrs Keshwaree Poonyth is the GM and the sole shareholder is Ms Neeta Nuckchhed.

Madam Speaker: Yes, a last one.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would the Minister inform the House if the contractor is specialised or accredited in bio-hazard or pandemic related sanitation? Thank you.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I do not think so as per the Registrar of Companies, it is written domestic and nature private. I am also informed from the STC that no due diligence was carried out. I am informed that the National Audit office even raised concerns that the STC did not do so.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been informed that PQ B/543 has been withdrawn.

MOTORWAY M4 PROJECT, PHASE 2 – PONT BLANC TO BEL AIR – PROJECT DETAILS

(No. B/543) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of Phase 2 of the Motorway M4 Project, particularly the segment connecting

Pont Blanc to Bel Air, he will state the projected timeline therefor and scope of works thereof, indicating if consideration will be given for the communities living in the South-East particularly concerned therewith to be consulted prior thereto.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: So, we move to the hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka! Hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo.

FORT GEORGE – THERMAL POWER STATION IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/544) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of a new Thermal Power Station with the Combined Cycle Gas Turbine at Fort George, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Assirvaden : Madame la présidente, j'ai été informé que la Central Electricity Board étudie un projet d'installation de deux turbines à gaz de 40 MW chacune possiblement à Fort George à proximité de la centrale électrique existante.

Le projet comprendrait la conception, la fourniture, l'installation et les essais et la mise en service de deux turbines à gaz en configuration à cycle ouvert. Ces turbines pourront être ultérieurement converties en turbine à gaz à cycle combiné offrant un rendement accru.

Madame la présidente, cette proposition a été évoquée suite aux défis auxquels la CEB a dû faire face au cours des mois d'été de 2024/2025 en raison d'une augmentation significative de la demande d'électricité et des pannes fréquentes des moteurs, des producteurs d'électricité indépendant et de la CEB en raison de l'entretien et de réparation. Les éventuelles turbines à gaz proposées seraient utilisées par le CEB pour répondre à la demande de pointe du soir et servir de secours d'urgence pour les projets d'énergies renouvelables.

Madame la présidente, mon ministère et le CEB travaillent actuellement sur des mesures à court, moyen et long terme pour assurer surtout la sécurité énergétique et la transition énergétique verte. Le CEB se concentre actuellement chez la mise en œuvre des mesures urgentes pour répondre à la demande électricité pour la prochaine saison estivale. Parallèlement, les travaux sont menés sur le lancement de nouveaux programmes et projets visant à dynamiser les secteurs des énergies renouvelables tout en développant des projets durables à long terme pour assurer une grande résilience du secteur énergétique.

Madam Speaker: Merci. Yes. Dr. Ms Thannoo.

Dr. Ms Thannoo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can we have an indication of the time framework for implementation of the project, please?

Mr Assirvaden : Je voudrais préciser que ce genre de projet prenne deux à trois ans pour se matérialiser. Nous sommes au stade de réflexion en ce qui concerne le court terme, le moyen terme et le long terme. Dans le court terme, ce sera la sécurité énergétique du pays. Dans le moyen terme, des projets tels que deux ans - deux ans et demi et dans le très long terme, quatre ans, cinq ans pour la vision énergie du pays.

Madam Speaker: Yes alright. So, now we move to the Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes.

HILLCREST AVENUE, QUATRE-BORNES – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT & ROAD SAFETY UNIT – GREENING & EMBELLISHMENT

(No. B/545) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Hillcrest Avenue, in Quatre-Bornes, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of views and/or recommendations from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit in relation to the greening and embellishment thereof and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, taken in relation thereto.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, according to information available, works related to the cleaning and embellishment of Hillcrest Avenue, Sodnac and classified roads were implemented in the year 2022 at a cost of around Rs3 million. Consultations were then held by the Ministry, with relevant authorities namely the then Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, the RDA, the Energy Services Division, the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, including the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit.

Madam Speaker, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit had submitted some recommendations for the project namely, with regard to proper visibility at each junction, height of trees and bushes as well as flowerpots so that they do not constitute a road safety hazard. All these recommendations were taken on board by the then Ministry.

Madam Speaker, I received many representations from inhabitants of the region and also the MPs of the region with regard to road safety and the removal of the flowerpots. My ministry, therefore, intends to convene a stakeholders' meeting to reassess the project. My colleague of the Constituency No. 18 will be consulted accordingly.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I am sorry. Are you alright? Yes, one question.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie Madame la présidente – R 3 millions ! R 3 millions dépensées pour des pots de fleurs qui nuisent à la visibilité et mettent en danger les usagers de L’Avenue Hillcrest. C’est inacceptable!

Will the Minister inform the House whether, he intends to meet with all the relevant stakeholders to reassess the situation and take the appropriate corrective measures in the interest of the public safety? Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, I have said so. I myself am not satisfied, but we are maintaining what has been done. I cannot say it is a mess, but it is creating a lot of problems for all those who reside and use the Hillcrest Avenue, which is a classified road. My colleague, hon. Guinness has also received complaints. So, we will be looking into the project and we will see what can be done to remedy the situation and do something better.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, we have been advised that PQ B/546 and PQ B/561 have been withdrawn.

So, now I move to the hon. First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue.

BAIE DU TOMBEAU – WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

(No. B/546) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the land situated around the Wastewater Treatment Plant at Baie du Tombeau, he will state the reasons why his Ministry is pursuing the compulsory acquisition thereof for the proposed relocation of the Waste Water Treatment Plant of Roche Bois thereat in the absence of any such project having been presented to the Ministry of Environment.

(Withdrawn)

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – AUTISTIC CHILDREN – DEDICATED CLASSROOMS PROVISION

(No. B/547) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the primary schools, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision thereat of dedicated classrooms with special facilities to accommodate children suffering from autism.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that children with disabilities including 69 children with autism are already being accommodated in SEN integrated units set up in 12 primary schools. These 12 SEN integrated units are headed by trained educators to cater for learners with autism and have dedicated classrooms with the following facilities –

1. Therapy services;
2. Hot meals;
3. Use of tablets;
4. Free transport facilities by bus is provided to the learners and arefund system for bus fare for accompanying parents is provided by the Ministry Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, and
5. Support of each assistance and carers.

Activities such as music day, sports day, educational outings are also organised for these learners.

Moreover, there are also around 30 learners with autism who are accommodated in the inclusive setup in the mainstream primary schools. These learners are also provided with the support of Teacher Assistants and Carers and benefit from all extra-curricular activities at the level of the schools. In addition, all learners with autism in both SEN Integrated Units and in the mainstream primary schools attend therapy services at the seven Special Education Needs Resource Development Centres and the three Special Education Needs Resource Development Units as scheduled by the Allied Professionals. Transport facilities are provided to them accordingly.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that in Budget 2025-2026, my Ministry has been allocated funds to a tune of Rs8 m. for the upgrading of existing seven Special Education Needs Resource Development Centres and the setting up of five additional Special Education Needs Resource Development Units and SEN Integrated Units in primary schools. All necessary facilities will be extended to these units. My Ministry will start the necessary procedures for the setting up and upgrading of the new units.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are you happy, Ms Savabaddy? Yes!

Hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, Mr Seeburn!

SMALL SUGAR CANE PLANTERS – REGISTRATION & PRODUCTION

(No. B/548) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the small sugar cane planters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number thereof registered in 2014, indicating the total amount of crops harvested and sugar produced in the same year, and
- (b) whether there has been any increase in the number thereof in 2024, indicating the total amount of crops harvested and sugar produced as at November 2024.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. Madam Speaker, I wish to apprise the House that according to the MCIA Act, a small planter is defined as –

“(...) a planter cultivating cane over an extent of less than 10 hectares;”

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Sugar Insurance Fund Board that in 2014, there were 14,807 small sugarcane planters registered and they harvested 863,113 tons of sugarcane, which produced 65,759 tons of sugar.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there were 8,037 small planters registered in 2024 and they harvested 396,405 tons of sugarcane, which produced 30,273 tons of sugar. It is evident from the abovementioned figures that 6,770 small sugarcane planters have abandoned their fields. A decrease of 46% which has resulted in a decrease of 54% in the sugarcane harvested and sugar produced.

Madam Speaker, the production of sugar has drastically fallen during these ten years, not only due to natural calamities and loss of market share, but also to the fall in the price of sugar that has driven many small planters to abandon their lands. The rise in the cost of mechanisation, the decrease in local labour force in the sugar industry and the increase in transfer of prime agricultural land in favour of infrastructure has largely contributed to the fall in sugar production.

There was a clear lack of commitment from the then authorities also to restructure the sugarcane industry. The Government has made it a priority to revamp the sugarcane industry, to drive small planters as well as the corporate sector to move again, in a more structured manner in the plantation of sugarcane and to make the sugar industry attractive again.

As announced in the Budget 2025-2026, the total revenue per ton of sugar will be increased to Rs35,000 so as to encourage small planters towards replantation. Funding under the Cane Replantation Scheme and Cane Replantation Revolving Fund have been enhanced in the budget to stimulate further production. These measures are expected to attract around 20,000 arpents under cultivation.

The targeted five-year objective for sugarcane production has been set at 300,000 tons. Small sugarcane planters are important for the strategic initiative. Therefore, the Ministry will ensure that they get full access to support and schemes be made available. These measures will address and will tackle the cost of cane production issue and boost profitability to alleviate the difficulties presently being faced by small sugarcane planters.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

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

CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE POSTS – APPOINTMENTS, VACANCIES & LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

(No. B/549) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the posts of Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive respectively in the local authorities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain –

- (a) the lists of appointees since December 2014 to date, and
- (b) information as to the –
 - (i) number of existing vacancies in each position in each local authority, and
 - (ii) outcome of the cases lodged at the Supreme Court/Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal regarding the appointment of two Temporary Chief Executives and of two Temporary Deputy Chief Executives.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) that since December 2014 to date, 10 Chief Executives and 11 Deputy Chief Executives have been appointed. The list of the Chief Executives and Deputy Chief Executives who have been appointed is being tabled.

As to part (b) (i) of the question, there are two vacancies in the grade of Chief Executive, namely at the Municipal Council of Curepipe and the District Council of Savanne. There are four vacancies in the grade of Deputy Chief Executive, namely at the Municipal

Council of Quatre Bornes, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, the District Council of Moka and the District Council of Black River.

Madam Speaker, arrangement has been made for the assignment of duties at the level of Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive on the basis of administrative convenience, pending recruitment in the respective grades by the Local Government Service Commission. The vacancies in the above grades have already been reported to the Local Government Service Commission on 11 December 2023, on 13 May 2025 and on 10 June 2025.

Madam Speaker, I shall now answer to part (b) (ii) of the question for the post of Chief Executive. Following the appointment of Mr R.K. Nursing and Mr D. Reechaye to the post of Chief Executive in a temporary capacity, Mrs T. Narsinghen lodged an application for leave to apply for a judicial review against that decision and decision-making process of the Local Government Service Commission. She lodged that case before the Supreme Court in view of the fact that the Local Government Service Commission did not issue a notification for appointment, as the recruitment exercise was made through both limited and open competition.

As such, Mrs Narsinghen could not appeal to the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. She sought redress from the Supreme Court by way of judicial review. However, the Supreme Court refused to grant leave to apply for judicial review and set aside the application on 10 October 2023. The Supreme Court was of the view that Mrs Narsinghen circumvented her right of appeal before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and resorted directly to judicial review, which is a discretionary remedy of last resort. Following the judgment of the Supreme Court, Mrs Narsinghen then made an appeal before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. The case was fixed for argument before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal on 10 May 2024.

Mr Nursing and Mr Reechaye objected to the appeal of Mrs Narsinghen on account that her application was time barred. The Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal ruled, and I quote –

“The date of the aforesaid Supreme Court judgment should be considered as at date of appellant was duly notified and that the 21 days should start running as from the date of judgement was delivered. The judgement was delivered on 10 October 2023 and the appeal was lodged on 27 October 2023, that is, within the statutory delay.”

In view thereof, the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal decided to set aside the ground of objection of Mr Nursing and Mr Reechaye and decided to hear the appeal. A ruling was

delivered on 10 May 2024 that the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal has the jurisdiction to hear the appeal. Following the decision of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal, both temporary Chief Executives applied for a judicial review against this ruling of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. Both cases are before the Supreme Court.

Although the Local Government Service Commission lodged an application for a judicial review, on the advice of the State Law Office, against the ruling of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal, on 21 April 2025, it withdrew its application on a point of merit.

Madam Speaker, for the post of Deputy Chief Executive, during the first selection exercise on 07 September 2021, the Local Government Service Commission appointed Mrs Oozeer as Deputy Chief Executive. Mr Bassawon Assistant Chief Executive, lodged an appeal on 04 October 2021 at the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal against the decision of the Commission to appoint Mrs Oozeer to the post of Deputy Chief Executive in a temporary capacity at the District Council of Rivière du Rempart, with effect from 15 September 2021.

In its determination dated on 10 March 2023, the Tribunal had quashed the decision of the Commission in appointing the correspondent to the post of Deputy Chief Executive and remitted back the matter to this Office in accordance with section 8 (4) (b) of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal Act 2008.

In a letter dated 13 March 2023, Mrs Oozeer informed that she would not apply for a judicial review regarding the decision of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal.

In the meantime, another vacancy occurred in the grade. The post of Deputy Chief Executive was readvertised on 23 March 2023 and the closing date was 05 April 2023. The Commission had, on 04 May 2023, appointed Mrs Oozeer and Mrs Dyal as Deputy Chief Executive in a temporary capacity at the District Council of Grand Port and District Council of Rivière du Rempart, respectively, as from the date of their assumption of duty.

The appointees assumed duty on 05 May 2023. Mr Bassawon lodged an appeal to the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal on 13 May 2023 against the decision of the Commission to appoint Mrs Oozeer and Mrs Dyal to the post of Deputy Chief Executive in a temporary capacity in the District Council of Grand Port and Rivière du Rempart, respectively, with effect from 05 May 2023.

The matter was heard before the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal on 12 September 2023. In its determination No. D/18 of 2023, dated 24 October 2023, the Tribunal quashed the decision of the Local Government Service Commission.

On 09 November 2023, the Local Government Service Commission made an application for judicial review against this decision of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. Mrs Oozeer and Mrs Dyal also applied for a judicial review regarding the determination of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal. The matter was fixed for argument on 19 July 2024 before the Supreme Court on the motion for a stay of the decision of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal.

In a ruling on 13 June 2025, the Supreme Court quashed the decision of the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal and ruled that Mrs Oozeer and Mrs Dyal should be maintained in their post of Deputy Chief Executive.

Following the decision of the Supreme Court, the Local Government Service Commission has advised that the procedures are being initiated to maintain Mrs Oozeer and Mrs Dyal in their post of Deputy Chief Executive in a temporary capacity.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Mr Caserne! Alright. The hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

ILLEGAL MORCELLEMENTS – VICTIMS OF PROMOTERS – WATER CONNECTION – CWA APPLICATIONS

(No. B/550) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to illegal morcellements, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the favourable consideration of applications for water connection submitted by the victims of promoters thereof.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, j'ai été informé par la Central Water Authority que, conformément à sa politique établie, la CWA n'est pas en mesure de traiter des demandes de raccordement à l'eau dans des cas de morcellements illégaux, en particulier en l'absence d'infrastructures hydrauliques adéquates.

Madame la présidente, les morcellements illégaux sont des parcelles de terrains subdivisées et vendues par des promoteurs sans scrupules en violation de la loi sur le morcellement et du règlement sur l'urbanisme et l'aménagement et sans les permis et autorisations nécessaires. Les victimes, malheureusement, de ces promoteurs sont induites en erreur et l'acheteur croyant que le développement est conforme aux règles. Dans certains cas, on m'informe que même des faux permis de morcellement ont été délivrés.

Le ministère du Logement et de l'aménagement du territoire m'informe que des mesures ont été prises pour remédier à la situation qui a touché, malheureusement, environ 300 propriétaires fonciers en mars dernier. Les formalités nécessaires sont effectuées par l'Unité des morcellements du ministère du Logement. Cette mesure facilitera la mise en place d'infrastructures et de services publics adéquats tels que l'approvisionnement en eau pour ces lotissements.

Madame la présidente, une fois le développement régularisé, la CWA peut envisager de traiter les demandes de raccordements en eau, sous réserve que les infrastructures d'eau requises soient mises en place.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Pamplémousses and Triolet!

IMPORT OF VEGETABLES – YEARLY STATISTICS

(No. B/551) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to fresh vegetables, he will state the import volumes thereof over the past two years, indicating the forecast thereof for the current year compared to the local production thereof.

Dr. Boolell: I thank the hon. Member for this question.

Madam Speaker, from information obtained from Statistics Mauritius, the importation of vegetables over the past few years has increased from 25,000 tonnes to 25,280 tonnes in 2023, to 34,644 tonnes in 2024, representing an increase by 37% within a single year. However, the rising trend can be attributed to adverse climate conditions that the country has had to face such as cyclone Belal in 2024.

The larger shares of these imports comprise potatoes, onions, garlics, which are strategic crops. The biggest suppliers of imported produce are from Egypt, India,

Netherlands, and China. Imported vegetables serve niche markets such as the hospitality sector and also to palliate to shortages which occur when cultivations are affected by adverse climatic conditions, namely cyclones, flash floods and droughts. Additionally, potatoes and onions are imported as they cannot be cultivated year-round due to our agro-climatic condition.

For the year 2025, Madam Speaker, despite a low start due to the prolonged dry spell, the forecasted local production of vegetables is estimated at 179,210 tonnes. This will be sufficient to meet local demand, except for strategic crops like potatoes and onions, for which the Agricultural Marketing Board is expecting to import some 13,000 tonnes each to cater for on-season shortages.

Madam Speaker, to make Mauritius food secure nation, the measures enunciated in the Budget for consolidation of the agricultural sector speak for themselves and action is being accordingly. There is a whole set of incentives that I will circulate to the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much, Minister. Yes, Mr Rookny!

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, can the Minister, taking into consideration the current detailed prices of carrots and tomatoes which are, presently, standing at approximately Rs200 per kilo and Rs320 per kilo, respectively, advise whether his Ministry will consider the liberalisation of the importation of vegetables, with a view to better match supply with demand and thereby help bring down the price of vegetables on the local market?

Dr. Boolell: I am for liberalisation, subject that there is regularity and predictability but you know as well as I do that some growers – I would not say that they are unscrupulous – are involved in price fixing. I, together with my colleagues, MPs from the Constituency No. 18, make it a point to go to the market on Saturday, to the Market Fair in Quatre Bornes; and as and when I have available time, I also go to the Central Market in Port Louis.

I am not saying that the prices are as high as the figures you have cited and given but, certainly, if ever, there are unscrupulous growers taking advantage on fleecing consumers, the matter can also be referred to the Minister responsible for consumer.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. I think it is now Dr. Ms Thannoo, Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka.

CLEANER'S POST – AMENDMENT IN LEGISLATION – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/552) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the post of cleaner in cleaning companies, he will state if consideration will be given for amendments to be brought to the existing legislation with a view to substituting the present minimum eligibility criteria of a PSAC qualification by a practice-oriented health and safety course delivered in Kreol Morisyen.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Cleaning Enterprises Employees (Remuneration) Regulation 2019, made under section 93 of the Employment Relation Act of 2008, do not contain any provision prescribing minimum qualification for the post of cleaners. Presently, each cleaning company is free to set its own minimum qualification when recruiting cleaners.

I am also informed that during the last comprehensive review of the cleaning sector conducted in 2011-2012 by the National Remuneration Board, no representations were received from stakeholders pertaining to a minimum qualification requirement for cleaners.

As regards the public sector, the qualification requirement for employees engaged in cleaning activities are as follows –

- General Workers should be literate;
- Handy Workers should hold a certificate of primary education, now Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC), and
- Office Auxiliaries should possess the Cambridge School Certificate or equivalent.

Should a representation be made for the provision of a minimum requirement for cleaners in a cleaning enterprise, Employees Remuneration Regulation 2019's consideration will be given thereto.

Madam Speaker: That's fine?

The next one is the First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRES – QUANTITY & ELECTION PROCEDURES

(No. B/553) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Community and Social Welfare Centres respectively, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof, and
- (b) procedures established for the election of Chairpersons and Members of the Committees thereof.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Madam Speaker, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund (SILWF) is responsible for community centres. Social welfare centres fall under the purview of the Social Welfare Division of my Ministry.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will provide my reply in connection with community centres. I am informed that there is a total number of 138 community centres across the island.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Act does not provide for committees to manage the community centres. However, in a spirit of good governance, Community Development Associations (CDA) are established in community centres and are aligned with the provision of Section 4 of the Government Social Welfare Centres Act of 1961, which regulates the establishment of social welfare committees.

Madam Speaker, accordingly, Community Development Associations are established and comprised –

- 1. a Community Development Officer who serves as ex-officio member, and
- 2. members who are appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund.

The Minister also appoints a Chairperson among the association.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Ms Savabaddy: Merci, Madame la présidente. L'honorable ministre peut-elle expliquer à la Chambre comment se font les appels à candidature à ce sujet ? Est-ce que les

membres de l'Assemblée nationale sont consultés à cet effet et quelle autorité supervise ces élections ? Merci.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Madam Speaker, *il n'y a pas d'élection* as such.

Ms Savabaddy: Nomination?

Ms Navarre-Marie: No. Consultations are carried out with community leaders of the region falling in the vicinity of the centre.

Madam Speaker: PQ B/554 has been withdrawn.

BASIC RETIREMENT PENSION – FUNDS DISBURSED (2024-2025)

(No. B/554) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Basic Retirement Pension, he will, state the quantum of funds disbursed to beneficiaries thereof since July 2024 to date.

(Withdrawn)

Madam Speaker: Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, Mr Ramdass!

SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRES – VACANCIES

(No. B/555) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Social Welfare Centres, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, in each case, information as to the number of existing vacancies, giving details thereof and indicating when same will be filled.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Thank you. Madam Speaker, social welfare centres fall under the purview of the Social Welfare Division of my Ministry.

As regards the existing vacancies at the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, information is being compiled and a copy will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly. Once the Finance Bill 2025 is adopted by the National Assembly and subject to the availability of funds, necessary arrangements will be made by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund to consider filling any existing vacancies.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

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

PUBLIC HOSPITALS – MEDICAL FILES LOSS – PREVENTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/556) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the public hospitals, he will state the number of reported cases of loss of patients' medical files, since November 2024 to date, giving a breakdown thereof per hospital, indicating –

- (a) in such cases –
 - (i) how patients are treated and handled, and
 - (ii) the actions taken, if any, against officers responsible therefor, and
- (b) the measures being envisaged to curb the recurrence thereof pending the coming into operation of the proposed e-Health system.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that as at date, for a population of 1.2 million people in Mauritius, there are about 7,400,000 casualty cards and some 2,897,000 patient files in the Health Records Department. The documents are spread across 109 community health centres, 18 area health centres, 12 mediclinics, 2 community hospitals, 5 regional hospitals, 2 district hospitals and 6 specialised hospitals.

Among the 7,400,000 casualty cards, around 1,078,000 are active. For 2,897,000 patient files, some 1,712,000 are active. Some 80,300 active patients' files are handled at the level of hospitals every day. The proper recording of the casualty cards and patient files is carried out by 197 officers of the Health Records Cadre.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that from November 2024 till date, 19 patient files are found missing, of which, two have been reported lost to the Police. In the meantime, four of them have been recovered while the search is still ongoing for the remaining ones.

On the other hand, 24 casualty cards and 349 patient files were unavailable when required as they were in use in other departments within the hospitals. These medical records are ultimately recovered by the Health Records Department.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I wish to inform the House that all patients whose original files are presently unavailable are provided with appropriate

care and treatment on the same day within the least possible delay by resorting to available reports, prescriptions and temporary files until such times that the main file is found.

Despite the used number of medical records and movement of files within various departments and hospitals and other medical facilities, officers are doing their best to ensure that these files are properly tracked and kept, and the percentage of human error is almost zero.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (a)(ii) of the question, the attention of responsible officers is always drawn to be more cautious while manipulating patient medical records. Senior Health Record Officers are required to ensure that their officers are familiar with and strictly adhere to medical record procedures with a view to ensuring that medical records do not go missing.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, health records' staff are required to report all cases of missing patient files immediately to the Supervisors. These are recorded in register of missing patient file. All hospitals have dedicated experienced officers who deal with missing files until they are available. If ever after thorough search a file is not available, those officers are required to report all cases of missing files to the Police and to inform the headquarters accordingly.

Madam Speaker, I am glad to inform the House that Phase 1 of the e-Health Project will soon be launched at the new hospital at Flacq. In the first phase of the roll-out of the project, a Patient Administration System (PAS) would be implemented as well as a patient portal. The project will subsequently be extended to other regional district and specialised hospitals and primary health care centres, including mediclinics.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of e-Health Project will further consolidate 'one patient, one record concept' and will ensure availability of medical patient data in real time. This technological advancement is expected to eliminate challenges associated with lost or misplaced medical files, offering instant access to crucial patient data with a simple click.

The adoption of e-Health system brings a multitude of transformational change as to how healthcare will be delivered and managed. One of the most immediate and impactful advantages is the elimination of issues related to lost or misplace medical files. With the e-Health system, all medical information will be recorded digitally in a centralised and secure database. This will ensure instant and reliable access to crucial patient data for authorised

healthcare providers, regardless of the location or time of the day. This immediate accessibility is vital in emergencies during consultations or when a patient moves between different health care centres.

Madam Speaker, what the previous government has not been able to do in ten years' time is being accomplished by this Government in eight months. This is what we call real change!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Ms Savabaddy: Merci, Madame la présidente. On parle ici du cœur, du mal dans les institutions de santé publique. En attendant le *e-Health*, le ministre a-t-il envisagé une formation du personnel pour éviter ce genre de désagréments ? Merci.

Madam Speaker: Training.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I have repeatedly explained that they are undergoing training regularly. And I am repeatedly drawing their attention but being given that there is a lack of medical officers, I have been mentioning since the very beginning – 1500 nurses are missing; we don't have record officers. One record officer is dealing with about 50-60 files on average per day. That becomes extremely impossible and that is the reason why, instead of warning them, threatening them, I am trying to encourage them. I am trying to get them all together because within months, we are going to move from one system to a modern system.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! Yes. Dr. Aumeer, the expert.

Dr. Aumeer: As part of the question to curb the recurrence of pending, loss files or missing files, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider having a dedicated desk at all out-patients departments in regional hospital on a temporary basis to assist relatives and patients who retrieve notes until and so forth the e-Health System become fully available? Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: You have already taken words from my mouth. In fact, in my budget speech, this is the proposition that I am going to make.

Madam Speaker: Fantastic! You will all get a chance to have a bite at this issue, which is very important.

I have got five minutes left. You insist on another question? Yes, alright!

Ms Savabaddy: Madame la présidente, le ministre peut-il s'assurer que le personnel médical ait une approche humaine et ne refuse pas des soins aux patients mêmes si on ne retrouve pas son dossier ? Merci.

Madam Speaker: He mentioned that.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, all of us are human beings. At times, when they get overloaded, this happens to all of us. So, at times, it does happen and in such a case, we can't do otherwise because we are human beings.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister!

I have got four minutes left. So, I will try a last question.

That would be for the Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue.

ROUNABOUTS – MAINTENANCE & EMBELLISHMENT – AWARDED CONTRACT

(No. B/557) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the roundabouts on motorways and classified roads, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, the lists thereof –

- (a) presently embellished and maintained by private companies, indicating in each case, the –
 - (i) name of the company, and
 - (ii) contract period, and
- (b) not embellished and maintained by private companies.

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the maintenance and embellishment of roundabouts located along motorways and classified roads are undertaken either by private companies, government entities or local authorities.

Roundabout sponsorship is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis for an initial period of three years with renewal possibilities subject to the satisfaction of the RDA.

Presently, there is a total of 158 roundabouts located on motorways and classified roads. Details regarding sponsorship are as follows –

- (i) Out of the 40 roundabouts situated along motorways, 34 are being embellished and maintained through a sponsorship by private companies, and
- (ii) Out of 118 roundabouts located on classified roads, 61 are sponsored by private companies.

With regard to part (a) (i) and (a) (ii) of the question, with your permission Madam Speaker, I am tabling the information as requested by the hon. Member, in respect of the list of roundabouts sponsored by private companies.

I am also tabling information as requested in part (b) of the question regarding the remaining roundabouts not embellished and maintained by private companies, namely 6 on motorways and 57 on classified roads.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! Yes, maybe I will have a last one.

The hon. Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, Mr Beejan!

BAMBOUS STREET, VALE – PIPE-LAYING WORKS – PROJECT COMPLETION

(No. B/558) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the pipe-laying works undertaken at Bambous Street, in Vale, in 2024, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the expected completion date of the resurfacing works of the roads damaged in the course thereof.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, la Central Water Authority m'a informé qu'environ 1.7 km de tuyaux en amiante-ciment ont été remplacés dans la région de Lower Vale, le long de Bambous Road, Agowan Street, Fareed Lane et Seetanah Road. Cependant, les travaux de réfection de la route n'ont pas été réalisés.

Madame la présidente, comme je l'ai expliqué en réponse aux questions précédentes, PQ B/152, B/219 et B/308, la raison du retard de la remise en état de la route dans le cadre de ce projet était due à des irrégularités de procédure dans la gestion du projet. La situation a maintenant été réglée et les autorisations nécessaires ont été obtenues pour procéder aux travaux en cours dans le cadre de ce projet.

Je tiens à souligner, Madame la présidente, que plusieurs kilomètres des routes dans différentes régions de l'île sont en mauvaises état et nécessitent une réfection suite aux travaux de pose des tuyaux effectués par la CWA.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Kokin tuyo sa!*

Mr Assirvaden: En plus d'avoir volé des tuyaux, bien sûr.

Mon ministère examinera les travaux de remise en priorité. Des fonds ont été prévus à cet effet dans ce budget, donc la réfection des travaux sera faite.

Madam Speaker: Yes, just one question. You have one minute! For answer, as well.

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister confirm to this House whether the inaction by the former government contributed to an excessive amount to repair similar road problems around the island so that the whole population can understand this?

Mr Assirvaden: Oui, l'honorable membre a parfaitement raison, Madame la présidente. Si on recommence à parler du R 700 millions du projet Pipe-Replacement Programme, avec d'autres projets à R 1 milliard qui a dépassé largement le R 1.2 milliards, ceci dit nos routes n'ont pas pu être réasphaltées justement à cause les fonds ont été dilapidés par l'ancien gouvernement.

An hon. Member: *Kokin !*

Mr Assirvaden: Enfin, voler pour ne pas dire *kokin* et cela sera fait dans les semaines à venir.

Madam Speaker: Okay, I have one supplementary.

Mr Beehook: Madame la présidente, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut considérer la possibilité d'avoir un seul contracteur pour la pose des tuyaux et le réasphaltage parce que souvent, il y a un grand décalage entre le remplacement des tuyaux et le réasphaltage puisqu'il y a deux contracteurs qui sont concernés et que ça prend beaucoup de temps et cela cause beaucoup d'inconvénients aux automobilistes ?

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, j'apprécie la question de l'honorable membre. Nous sommes en train de revoir tous ces départements de *procurement* mais bien sûr, il faudra respecter the *Procurement Act*.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, everybody. I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour. We will be back at two-thirty.

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

On resuming at 2.30 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

TYPE 1 DIABETES – INSULIN PUMPS & CONTINUOUS GLUCOSE MONITOR

(No. B/559) Mr J. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Type 1 diabetes, he will state the reported number of patients thereof living in Agaléga, Rodrigues, and mainland Mauritius, respectively, indicating where matters stand as to the proposed distribution thereto of Insulin Pumps and Continuous Glucose Monitor, further indicating –

- (a) the number thereof distributed as at date, and
- (b) if there is a current shortage thereof and, if so, when same will be available.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Type 1 diabetes mellitus is insulin dependent diabetes where the patients are administered insulin. At present, 1,114 patients living with Type 1 diabetes are following treatment in our public institution in the Republic of Mauritius, with none in Agaléga, 32 in Rodrigues, and 1,082 in Mauritius.

I am further informed that insulin pump is a device containing insulin which is attached to the body of the patient on a 24-hour basis and tracks the glucose level in real time. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposal to introduce Insulin Pumps and Continuous Glucose Monitoring Systems was made by the former government in 2023 without proper consultation with the technical staff of my Ministry.

When our Government took over, we had this measure examined by a group of technical experts and it was subsequently based on the technical advice that the introduction of insulin pumps was found not feasible in the local context due to –

- (a) Lack of personnel to support insulin pump use and continuous glucose monitoring who will monitor the use by children who are Type 1 diabetics in schools;
- (b) Lack of support to cater for emergencies arising from faulty insulin pump;
- (c) High cost involved as the insulin pump has several costs associated to it. Moreover, an insulin pump has to be replaced on average after four years of use, and
- (d) Insulin pumps provide a modest reduction in HbA1c blood test, conducted for evaluating blood sugar level for the last three months.

Moreover, Professor D. Owens, the imminent diabetologist from the United Kingdom, has also not recommended the use of those insulin pumps. As such, the insulin pump and

continuous glucose monitoring were found to be impracticable in the public health services. Thus, they are not recommended at this point in time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that at present, my Ministry is already ensuring all services for the required treatment of Type 1 diabetes patients as per international standard, including dedicated specialised Type 1 diabetes clinic in each health region with a multi-disciplinary team of anthropologists, paediatricians, diabetes specialised nurses and dieticians. The services offered include –

- (i) Access to insulin supply, and
- (ii) Pin prick blood glucose monitoring devices.

Diabetic children aged 0 to 16 years old are managed by paediatricians. All Type 1 diabetic patients, including children have regular foot care and dental check-up and are provided glucose meters and glucose strips free of charge. Adults are referred to retinal screening unit once yearly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has set up seven retinal screening unit all over the island for early detection of retinopathy diabetes and eleven-foot care units for prevention of amputations. This Government is prioritising the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes which remains a major public health challenge in Mauritius.

Following a policy decision in 1987 under the Labour Party, a dedicated prevention unit was created within the Ministry under the first national NCD survey. This unit now forms part of the NCD Health Promotion Research Unit and is actively engaged in a wide range of screening and prevention activities across the island. These include the screening in the community and at workplace as well as screening of students of secondary school for Grade 7, Grade 9 and Grade 12 aged between 13 and 17 for the early detection of NCDs, including diabetes.

Students with diabetes are referred to paediatricians in regional hospitals and those with prediabetes are referred to nearest mediclinic, area health centre and community health centre for further investigation and treatment. This Government has taken the bold measures, as enunciated in the very first budget presented by the hon. Prime Minister, who discouraged the high consumption of sugar by the population by increasing excise duty on sugar content and sugar sweetened products from 6 cents to 12 cents per gram as from 06 June 2025 and the

increase in excise duty will be extended to chocolates and ice cream as from 01 October 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Mr François: Just one supplementary. Not being a medical technician, from what the hon. Minister said, are there any alternatives for those requiring daily testing at home?

Mr Bachoo: I think that is a bit difficult for the time being because of lack of paediatricians.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: I heard the hon. Minister's answer. With review to the technical report by Professor Owen, who is an eminent endocrinologist and diabetologist, did the team also said that continuous glucose monitoring should not be part of national policy for juvenile diabetes Type 1?

Mr Bachoo: No, he did not say that. It was in reference to the new system that was proposed by the previous government. He did not speak about it.

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

MELVILLE, GRAND GAUBE – BUS SERVICE IRREGULARITY

(No. B/560) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to Melville, Grand Gaube, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the implementation of corrective measures to ensure that public buses plying thereat adhere to the scheduled timings to relieve the public, especially, residents and students facing hardships as a result thereof.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NLTA that the village of Melville, Grand Gaube is served by six buses owned by individual bus operators. These buses, which ply along route 178 Melville, Madame Azor via Goodlands, are registered with the Bus Owner's Corporative Society North. I am further informed that repeated complaints regarding the unsatisfactory level of service resulting from non-observance of established time table were received at the level of the NLTA.

Furthermore, with the extension of Route 178 to Bois d'Oiseaux, Poudre d'Or since 13 July 2024, the service has faced significant delays resulting in increased inconvenience to

residents of Melville and Madame Azor. As I apprised to the House on 17 December 2024, a day on which the hon. Member had first questioned me on the same locality, with a view to mitigating the low level of public bus transport service along Route 178, while addressing the complaints received thereto, two temporary RSLs were granted to operators thereat. These buses start plying since February 2023 and December 2024.

While this remedial measure initially led to some improvements and fewer complaints, I am made to understand that the service reliability has once again declined. The main reason being due to aging fleet. According to the NLTA, several buses, particularly those over 14 years of age, are prone to frequent breakdowns, resulting therefore in poor level of service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to enlighten the House that out of six buses plying along Route 178, two are above 14 years, that is, 15 and 17 while the other one has reached 12 years, implying that 50% of the current operational fleet thereat is prone to frequent breakdowns. Furthermore, in light of recent checks undertaken by the NLTA inspectorate, it has been observed that only five buses are in active operation along Route 178 as one bus is off-road since September 2024 and has still not been replaced.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in light of this situation, the NLTA has had several meetings with the operators of the corporative society to discuss about the various complaints regarding non-compliance with the established timetable. The operators were cautioned by the regulator, that is, the NLTA and they were warned that failure to maintain service levels may result in disciplinary measures. The operator whose bus is not operating since September 2024 has reassured the NLTA that arrangements are ongoing for the replacement of this bus in the next three months.

Furthermore, the other operators were encouraged to consider the timely renewal of their buses while availing support from the Bus Modernisation Scheme, which is being voted in this budget. Concurrently, enforcement has been stepped up, and fixed penalty notices are being issued to drivers for timetable breaches.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish however to highlight to the House that the NLTA reported that redeployment of buses from other routes to Route 178, which were being contemplated, remains challenging, and is, in fact, not advisable since the route thereat cannot accommodate larger buses because the roads are small. The specificity of the road is suitable for only 30-to-40-seater buses.

Consequently, the NLTA is exploring the possibility of licensing one additional bus on Route 178 with the aim of reinforcing operation, improving frequency and easing the difficulties faced by residents and students at Melville and Grand Gaube.

As a last note, I will follow with the NLTA to ensure that a sustainable solution at the earliest be found. I am confident that with the introduction of a fleet management system, things will improve going forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary!

Mr Beejan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House if surprise visits at regular intervals by officers of the NLTA can be carried out to ensure that they adhere to the scheduled time for the buses?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Since about two weeks now, there is a new management at the NLTA. I had meetings with them with a view to taking onboard the propositions made by the hon. Member.

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

BASIC RETIREMENT PENSION – FUNDS BUDGETED (2014-2024)

(No. B/561) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Elderly Population, he will state the number thereof being paid Basic Retirement Pension and other allowance by age group, indicating the –

- (a) total amount of funds budgeted therefor for each of the financial years since 2014 to 2024, and
- (b) projections of changes therein in the next ten years.

(Withdrawn)

CUREPIPE TOWN HALL – RENOVATION WORKS – COSTS

(No. B/562) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the renovation works carried out at the Town Hall of Curepipe in 2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to the initial estimated costs thereof and of consultancy services therefor and the final costs thereof on completion.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that in 2015, it undertook 15 renovation works as follows –

- (i) Renovation for the fencing of the basketball/volleyball pitch and lighting at Atlee;
- (ii) Lighting at Les Casernes Football Ground;
- (iii) Upgrading of fencing works at the football ground at Sir Winston Churchill Stadium;
- (iv) Levelling and turfing of l'Oiseau Football Ground;
- (v) Levelling and turfing of the Casernes Football Ground Development Project 2024;
- (vi) Maintenance of building at the cemetery;
- (vii) Construction of temporary metal structure for fairs at Le Forum Market Fair;
- (viii) Extension of existing metal structure for temporary fair at Le Forum Market Fair;
- (ix) Fencing of the volleyball pitch at L'Oiseau;
- (x) Lighting works at volleyball pitch at L'Oiseau, phase 1;
- (xi) Lighting works at L'Oiseau, phase 2;
- (xii) Turfing of the existing football ground at Laperouse, Street Curepipe;
- (xiii) Lighting works at Les Caserne Football Ground;
- (xiv) Extension of existing metal structure for Forum fair, and
- (xv) Construction of spiral metal staircase at Curepipe Market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that no consultancy services were retained for these projects. I am tabling the details with cost estimate and final contract value as requested in the first question.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, the question was about the Town hall of Curepipe.

Mr Woochit: However, I am informed that in March 2014, the Municipal Council of Curepipe took a decision to restore and repair the Town Hall of Curepipe and in October 2015, it proceeded with a request for proposal to appoint a consultant for the restoration and repairs of the Town Hall.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Town Hall of Curepipe was closed since 2013. In March 2014, the Council took a decision to restore and renovate the Town Hall based on a collaboration between the Municipal Council of Curepipe and the SPLIT LTD, consultant of

SOS patrimoine. The latter has estimated the cost for restoration and repairs of the town hall at Rs38 million.

It is worth noting that the material constituting the Town Hall of Curepipe are mainly made of wood. Hence, in the extremely humid climate of Curepipe, this material is bound to be affected and prone to decay.

More than a year and a half had elapsed, and by then, the Town Hall had fallen into more despair.

The approval of the then project and plan committee was obtained in September 2014. The Municipal Council of Curepipe then proceeded with a request for proposal in October 2015 to appoint a consultant still on the same estimate of Rs38 million and with the closing date on 09 November 2015.

The Bid Evaluation Committee recommended that the contract for consultancy be awarded to Desai & Associates Ltd for an amount of Rs1,840,000 exclusive of VAT.

The contract was awarded and the consultancy contract agreement was signed on 08 July 2016. Desai & Associates Ltd was selected on the basis of having achieved the highest combined technical and financial scores. The consultancy service was for a duration of 30 months.

However, the total costs of the repairs and refurbishment were assessed by the consultant Desai & Associates Ltd in 2016 at Rs134million that is, Rs134,987,000 inclusive of VAT that is, before proceeding with the invitation of bids for renovation works.

The increase in cost estimate was due to inclusion of the items such as replacement of majority of internal timber claddings, strengthening works to timber floor structure, refurbishment of kitchen, *luminaires* and other accessories including revised estimate for replacement of roof structure given that there was further deterioration in the structure. A comparative exercise was effected by the Council regarding the updated cost.

The Council had highlighted that that the Town Hall is experiencing a continuous deterioration with time and had sought the approval of the project plan committee regarding the increase in the cost of the project scheme as per the investment project process manual. Any project which cost estimate is exceeded, the approved cost estimate by 15% at project designed phase, had to obtain the clearance of the aforesaid mentioned committee. By then,

the project involved in the renovation of the Town Hall of Curepipe instead of just restoration and repairs.

On 08 February 2017, the project plan committee had requested the Ministry to ask the Municipal Council to seek a second opinion on the estimate cost proposed by the consultant and to try to revise same downwards. The Municipal Council of Curepipe requested that kempas could be used as an alternative material for the roof swingle instead of teak swingle which would cause a significant decrease of around Rs16million. The use of alternate materials at the basement level was also recommended following which the cost was revised to Rs117,380,000 exclusive of VAT.

On 06 April 2018, the Municipal Council of Curepipe informed that the cost estimate had been revised from Rs117,380,000 (exclusive of VAT) to Rs126,198,000 (exclusive of VAT), that is, Rs145,127,700 (VAT inclusive).

The then head of the Public Infrastructure Department of the Council informed on 09 April 2018 that the increase in cost is due to further deterioration of the public infrastructure resulting from heavy rainfall during the period of 2017-2018.

On 17 April 2018, the then Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands conveyed its approval for increase in project value for the renovation of the Town Hall building of Curepipe from Rs117,380,000 (exclusive of VAT) to Rs126,198,000 (exclusive of VAT), that is, Rs145,127,700 (VAT inclusive).

Consequently, the consultant submitted the 06 August 2018, a revised consultancy fees Rs6, 615, 000, excluding VAT based on the new estimate costs and increase in the scope of works.

A bid evaluation committee was set up at the level of the Council to assess the revised consultancy fee. That committee recommended that an amount of Rs6,033,000 be paid to the consultant. The approval of the then Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands were sought following which, the advice for the Procurement Policy Office was requested following which, a meeting was held at the level of Procurement Policy Office on 10 January 2019 where it was noted that is the Municipal Council of Curepipe had interpreted section 46(4) of the Public Procurement Act 2006 to justify the increase in consultancy fees with no limit when it should have referred the section 46(3) of the Public Procurement Act 2006 which caps the amount. The Council was thus requested to reassess the revised fees.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new bid evaluation committee was set up.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, sorry you are going too long. Let us be simple, that to the initial costs and your consultancy fees and the final cost.

Mr Woochit: Yeah, the final, it is coming to a final.

The Deputy Speaker: Just please inform us about these three items.

Mr Woochit: Yeah, the consultant was not agreeable to these revised fees and went for arbitration given that the Municipal Council of Curepipe could not go against the provision of the Public Procurement Act 2006 and the Public Procurement Regulations 2008. Following the arbitration, an award of Rs13 million was made to Desai & Associates including consultation fees, arbitration costs, legal fees and interests.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hon. Second Member for Rodrigues.

13TH CJSOI GAMES – PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES – YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

(No. B/563) Mr J. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the 13th CJSOI GAMES to be held in Seychelles from 28 July to 10 August 2025, he will state –

(a) the number of –

- (i) sports disciplines that feature therein;
- (ii) participating countries, and
- (iii) participants for the Mauritian delegation, including from Rodrigues, indicating the facilities being provided to the pre-selected and/or selected athletes and coaches in preparation thereof, and

(b) if youth development initiatives such as entrepreneurship and cultural exchange will be encouraged in the course thereof and, if so, give details of same.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *le 13^{eme} édition des Jeux de la Commission de la Jeunesse et des Sports de l'Océan Indien* will be held on the 2nd to 10th August 2025 in Seychelles. Since its inception, our country has always participated in the CJSOI Games.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that this year's edition will feature eleven sport disciplines and a *concours culturel*. The sport disciplines are –

- athletics;
- para-athletics;

- badminton;
- basketball;
- beach soccer;
- boxing;
- football;
- judo;
- swimming;
- volleyball;
- weightlifting, and
- yachting.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that the seven member countries have confirmed their participation, namely –

- Comoros;
- Djibouti;
- Madagascar;
- Mauritius;
- Mayotte;
- Reunion Island, and
- Seychelles.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning part (a)(iii) of the question, I am informed that 165 participants, including 27 from Rodrigues, will represent the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to ensure an optimal preparation for the games, my Ministry is providing the following facilities and support –

- (i) Access to the high-performance centre at Côte d’Or National Sport Complex for physical preparation;
- (ii) Participation in local and regional competitions;
- (iii) A light meal after training sessions;
- (iv) Sport facilities;
- (v) Intensive training;
- (vi) Camps tailored to each sport;
- (vii) Provision of specific equipment, and

- (viii) Medical and paramedical facilities such as massage, vitamins and supplements, blood tests and dental care.

A *comité de suivi* chaired by the Director of Sports of my Ministry has been set up to ensure the effective implementation of these measures. Accordingly, officers of my Ministry conduct regular site visits and hold regular meetings with the National Sports Federation. These allow for close monitoring and timely feedback on the ongoing preparation.

Further, I am informed by the Commission for Youth and Sports in Rodrigues that athletes are provided with transport facilities for training purposes in Rodrigues. The Commission also met the travel costs for the athletes who came to Mauritius to participate in qualifying rounds in the case of athletics, boxing and volleyball.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (b) of the question, as I have already indicated, the CJSOI games also feature –

- a *concours culturel* which includes an *assemblée des jeunes* where our youth, one boy and one girl, will intervene on this year's theme which is *Les enjeux climatiques et l'écoresponsabilité des jeunes*;
- an exchanged cultural dance and theatre where there are Mauritian boys and girls who will present a dance item specific to our country;
- a *salon des jeunes entrepreneurs* where two Mauritians, one male and one female, will have an opportunity to showcase their entrepreneurship talent;
- e-sports where one boy and one girl will get to compete in a videogame against participants from other countries, and
- a *forum de la jeunesse* where all young people from the seven countries of the CJSOI and who are partaking in the *concours culturel* can participate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am confident that with these facilities and support, our athletes will surely make our country proud and bring a maximum of medals.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Do you have a supplementary?

Mr François: Yes, please. I think I have just missed some of the numbers. May I ask the hon. Minister whether, there will be parity in the national delegation for coaches, *encadreurs* and the youth participants from Rodrigues for the initiative of *concours culturel*, *salon des jeunes* as you mentioned for this game?

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House and my hon. colleague from Rodrigues in particular, that I have ensured that our youth from Rodrigues are adequately represented in the games.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, six young Rodriguans are participating in the *concours culturel* in parity with their counterparts from mainland Mauritius. This arrangement also applies to the *encadreur*s. In the last edition of the CJSOI games in 2022 in Mauritius, two young from Rodrigues had participated therein.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the Commission for Youth and Sports in Rodrigues was entrusted with the responsibility of selecting the Rodriguan participants in respect of the *concours culturel*.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka!

VETERINARY SERVICES – EFFICIENCY & CORRECTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/564) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the veterinary support provided to local breeders and farmers by the Livestock and Veterinary Division of his Ministry, including its ambulatory veterinary unit, he will state if consideration will be given for the carrying out of an assessment thereof and taking of corrective measures, if required, to ensure the efficacy and efficiency thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to assessment of the Division of Veterinary Services, formally known as Livestock and Veterinary Division, I wish to inform the House that an assessment was conducted by the World Organisation for Animal Health from 29 April to 10 May 2024, and a final report is still awaited. However, a draft report has been submitted to my Ministry.

Some of the key recommendations made by the World Organisation for Animal Health are as follows –

- (i) Develop dedicated livestock animal health policy and strategy which includes veterinary public health adopting one health approach;
- (ii) Develop formal guidelines for accurate documentation of inspection functions and to strengthen capacity to allow Division of the Veterinary Services to perform its core function more effectively and in line with the World Organisation for Animal Health Standards;

- (iii) Develop a Code of Ethics and rules of practice and prepare work ethics guidelines to ensure the quality of veterinary service provision and review and revise all legislation covering the veterinary domain to comply with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Terrestrial Animal Health Code.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a debriefing session was held at the level of my Ministry to discuss the key recommendations of the World Organisation for Animal Health and an action plan is being formulated by the Division of Veterinary Services to guide implementation.

I am informed that over the past ten years, livestock breeders have consistently raised concern about quality of service and have been calling for improved veterinary support from the Division of Veterinary Services. In the light of concerns raised by livestock breeders, my Ministry is taking the following measures to enhance the efficacy and efficiency of vet services –

- (a) Increasing the number of mobile veterinary clinics from one to three;
- (b) Recruitment of veterinary officers, and
- (c) Improve drug supply.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry remains fully committed to strengthening veterinary service delivery through concrete and targeted action. The measures which have been mentioned aim at addressing the concern of breeders and ensure a more responsive, efficient and effective veterinary service nationwide.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Third Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East!

FLACQ HOSPITAL – SPECIALTY SERVICES – OPERATIONALISATION

(No. B/565) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the newly announced implementation of Specialty Services in Ophthalmology, Cardiology and Neurosurgery, he will state if same will be implemented at the Flacq Hospital and, if so, indicate the expected date of coming into operation thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to the newly announced implementation of Speciality Services in Ophthalmology, Cardiology and Neurosurgery, I wish to inform the House that several measures are being taken by my Ministry to strengthen the healthcare services at the new Flacq Hospital. Ophthalmology and Cardiology services are being enhanced and made more accessible to the population in the eastern region. Insofar as

neurosurgery is concerned, a new neurosurgery outpatient department has been operational in the new Flacq Hospital.

Since January 2025, an Ophthalmology Unit has been set up at the new Flacq Hospital. Cataract surgeries are being conducted on a daily basis and ophthalmology outpatient consultation is held every Monday at the hospital. In addition, retinal screening is also conducted at Lady Sushil Ramgoolam Mediclinic, which falls under the purview of the new Flacq Hospital. This decentralisation of ophthalmology services has improved access to eye care and also significantly reduced waiting time for surgical procedures.

It is to be noted that ophthalmology services are already being offered at Moka Eye Hospital and Souillac Hospital, contributing to a broader and more efficient regional network. The establishment of Ophthalmology Unit at the Flacq Hospital has further bolstered these services and deliver much needed care to residents of the eastern and northern regions.

In line with our commitment to continually enhance specialised care, my Ministry is presently working on the establishment of a state-of-the-art Coronary Angiography Unit at the new Flacq Hospital. Once operational, this unit will allow for the performance of diagnostic angiography and interventional procedures such as angioplasty, thus providing critical life-saving services locally and reducing the need for patient transfers to other major hospitals.

As far as Neurosurgery is concerned, my Ministry is actively engaged in the setting up of a specialised Neuroscience Chroma and Rehabilitation Centre by early 2026. This initiative forms part of the broader strategy to decentralise tertiary care and to improve access to advanced neurosurgical services in the region. The unit will be equipped to handle neurosurgical cases and will include a dedicated Neuro Out-Patient Department for consultations, follow-up and non-invasive assessments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the implementation of these speciality services, coupled with a comprehensive ENT Unit, at the new Flacq Hospital, reflects this Government's unwavering commitment to equitable, decentralised and high-quality healthcare delivery, which has the objective of providing timely and accessible care for all our citizens.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes!

**METRO EXPRESS LTD – TICKET VENDING MACHINES – ROBBERY CASES –
CORRECTIVE SECURITY MEASURES**

(No. B/566) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the recent cases of robbery at the Ticket Vending Machines located at the Trianon and Belle Rose Light Rail Stations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Metro Express Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) circumstances thereof and quantum of money robbed in each case;
- (b) security measures in place at the time, and
- (c) corrective security measures being taken thereat.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by Metro Express Ltd. that, since I took office in November last, a total of five incidents have been reported at various metro stations, including those of Trianon and Belle Rose, in the constituency of the hon. Member.

The total loss suffered by MEL amounts to Rs5.2 million, that is, Rs102,170 as stolen money and Rs5.1 million, I am informed, as damages to assets. I am tabling the reports from MEL with regard to these incidents.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, in so far as security measures are concerned, I am informed that security services are provided to all Metro Express Ltd. premises, including the light rail corridor station and ticket vending machines - which is part of your question - and this is done in toto by a company called Edmond Security Services Ltd, in short, ESSL.

The contract for this company has been renewed on several occasions since - I am further informed - the beginning of the project. On 29 May 2024, the contract was awarded for two years for an annual amount Rs23,339,940.

As per the contract, security deployment for night duty operations for ensuring security comprises the following –

- two security guards posted at Richelieu Depot gatepost;
- one security guard assigned to the CCTV Monitoring Room located at Richelieu Depot;

- four patrol vehicles, each with two security guards, deployed to cover designated stretches of the main line network, and
- two security guards conducting foot patrolling along vulnerable sections of the corridor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that following the incidents, MEL took a series of immediate actions as follows –

- (i) Cash collection by MEL at all stations daily so as to limit the overnight amount of cash in the ticket vending machines.
- (ii) On 19 May, an ambush operation was organised by MEL, supported by the Police, which led to the arrest of one of the two perpetrators.
- (iii) A meeting was held on 23 May 2025 with the Divisional Commander of the Western Division of the Police and MEL, which confirmed that actions were underway to locate and apprehend the second suspect involved in the 19 May 2025 incident, who still remains at large so far.
- (iv) CCTV footages for all incidents have been handed over to CID, SOCO and FIU to facilitate ongoing investigations.
- (v) In parallel, MEL reinforced its internal surveillance with response to protocol through its Operational Control Centre.
- (vi) The Police has been requested to reinforce security along the metro corridor.

As a last note, I am further informed that in a special board meeting held last week, the Board took cognizance of the whole matter. I am further informed that the termination of the contract will be on the agenda of the forthcoming board meeting which is scheduled on 21 June 2025. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, M. le président.* Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether the company involved is the same one that was at the centre of the *Moustass* Leaks scandal prior to the last general election? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my attention has been drawn to these two videos, allegedly, mentioning that company in particular, and one, again allegedly, during the very sensitive period which is the tender process.

The Deputy Speaker: Another one?

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the light of the above, will the hon. Minister consider referring the matter to the FCC? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is in the remit of the Board of Metro Express Ltd. I can certainly convey this, specially, the more so there is a board meeting forthcoming, that this be taken on the agenda as well. Thank you.

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

STC – SUPPLY OF WHITE OIL – CONTRACT DETAILS

(No. B/567) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the supply of white oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the name of the present supplier thereof, indicating the –

- (a) contract period, and
- (b) contract amount thereof.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the State Trading Corporation had launched an Open International Bid for the current supply of white oil, on the Government e-Procurement Portal on 16 April 2024, namely Mogas, Gas oil, Jet A-1 and Marine Gas Oil.

Seven bids have been received and further to an evaluation exercise by the STC, the contract for the supply of white oil was awarded to Sahara Energy Resources Ltd., the substantially lowest, technically responsive bidder with respect to the premium which comprises the supplies margin, freight costs, insurance and other ancillary costs at loading and unloading ports, including port charges, deviation, bunkers, tank cleaning and preparation and security team fees if necessary and contamination risks.

The total price paid by the STC for each consignment is the premium plus the reference flat price for the product which varies daily.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with respect to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the duration of the contract is for the period 01 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

With respect to part (b) of the question, the annual contract for the premium was estimated at USD 57.17 million, equivalent to Rs2.66 billion, and the total contract amount was estimated at USD 598.91 million, equivalent to Rs27.87 billion, which comprise the reference flat price plus the premium.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the STC has launched a new tender exercise recently?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 11 April 2025, the STC launched an Open International Bidding exercise for the supply of white oil for the period of 01 August 2025 to 31 July 2026. At the opening of bids on 16 May 2025, 14 bids were received. I understand that the new contract is costing around Rs1 billion less than the present contract.

The Deputy Speaker: Last one!

Mr Beejan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the premium price and the total contract amount of the new contract starting from 01 August 2025 till 31 July 2026 and also of the situation of the Price Stabilisation Account? Thank you.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Concerning the Price Stabilisation Account, I am informed that as at 17 June 2025, the PSA, which is normally used to stabilise the retail prices of Mogas and Gasoil, currently has a deficit of Rs2.8 billion for Gasoil while there is a slightly positive balance of Rs400 m. for Mogas. We must also understand that there was a time where the deficit was around Rs5.2 billion when the previous government was in power.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

SICOM – GROUP PENSIONS DEPARTMENT – RECRUITMENT & FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

(No. B/568) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the Group Pensions Department of the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd., she will, for the benefit of the House, for the year 2024, obtain information as to the –

- (a) number of officers recruited thereat, grade-wise, and

(b) annual revenue and expenditure thereof.

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Insurance Company Ltd. (SICOM) that with regard to part (a) of the question, four officers at clerical level were recruited in the year 2024 to replace three officers who had retired and one who had resigned.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the SICOM administers three-pool pension funds under different legislations –

1. The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds set up under the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act and relevant regulations;
2. The SICOM Pool Private Pension Fund set up under the Private Pension Schemes Act, and
3. The Public Sector Defined Contribution Pension Fund (Public DC) set up under the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act and the Pensions Act.

The revenue of the three pension funds amounted to Rs8.6 billion for the year 30 June 2024 and the expenditure amounted to Rs5.2 billion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes!

DUTY-FREE FACILITY – RELIGIOUS BODIES – APPLICATION & OVERSIGHT

(No. B/569) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the provision of duty-free facilities to priests, religious federations and religious associations for the purchase of motor vehicles, he will state, since 01 October 2024 to date, the –

(a) number of –

- (i) applications received for the issue of Duty-Free Certificates, and
- (ii) beneficiaries thereof, and

(b) composition of the committee responsible for assessing such applications.

Mr Gondeea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the provision of duty-free facilities for the purchase of motor vehicles by priests, religious federations and religious associations, I wish to inform the House that this measure was announced in the Budget

Speech 2024-2025 by the previous government. The measure was intended to provide duty-free facilities for the purchase of motor cars every seven years to those eligible.

The eligibility criteria are as follows –

1. a priest registered with or employed by a religious federation receiving a government subsidy;
2. a priest registered with or employed by a religious association;
3. a priest registered with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, or
4. a religious federation employing priest and receiving a government subsidy.

This measure is supported by amendments to the Excise Act via the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2024 and the Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2024 with effect from 01 October 2024.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while my Ministry was designated to implement this measure in collaboration with the Mauritius Revenue Authority, it is crucial to place this decision in its proper political and economic context.

The timing of this measure raises serious questions. It was promulgated on 01 October 2024, just three days before the issue of the writ of election on 04 October 2024, and barely five weeks before the general elections on 10 November 2024. It is evident that this scheme was rushed through at the eleventh-hour by the outgoing government in a clear attempt to secure political favour and votes from specific segments of the population. This last-minute measure was introduced without any proper consultation, impact assessment and consideration of its fiscal implications at a time when the economic fundamentals were already under strain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that as at date, 38 applications have been received, out of which, only 31 applicants have submitted all the required documentations.

With regard to part (a)(ii), no beneficiary has yet been granted the facility. This is mainly due to delays by applicants in submitting the complete set of required documents. In fact, seven applicants have still not done so. Moreover, by the time most documents were received, we were on the eve of the Budget 2025-2026.

In light of the major reforms introduced in the Budget Speech 2025-2026, particularly with regard to vehicle taxation, traffic congestion and our foreign currency reserve, my

Ministry has been advised by the Ministry of Finance to seek a policy decision before any further action is taken.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a technical committee has been constituted at the level of my Ministry to evaluate all applications and make recommendations for approval or non-approval. The committee is chaired by the Director of Culture and includes representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Local Government, the Registry of Association and the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

I am further informed that only one meeting has been held so far on 23 January 2025 during which it was found that the majority of applications were incomplete and lack key documents.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government remains firmly committed to promoting religious and socio-cultural harmony, but we will do so with fiscal discipline, equity and transparency. We believe public funds must be managed responsibly and fairly. The previous government's approach of introducing last minute electoral incentive without due process is not in keeping with good governance. As such, the scheme is currently under consideration and a final decision will be taken shortly. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have one supplementary?

Ms Anquetil: Two supplementary, please, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

The Deputy Speaker: Let us proceed one by one.

Ms Anquetil: Yes, one by one. A delay of seven months is considerable, especially when it concerns priests, religious federations and associations. Would the hon. Minister inform the House the reason behind such a delay? Thank you.

Mr Gondeea: I think I just explained the delay. It was because of the documents which have not been given to the Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Last one!

Ms Anquetil: Last one. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Would the hon. Minister inform the House when the duty-free licences be expected to be issued? Thank you.

Mr Gondeea: Again, I already replied. I said that it is under consideration and a final decision will be taken shortly.

The Deputy Speaker: One question from you!

Mr Beehook: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was following the reply of the Minister. Is it an established practice to have religious workers registered at the level of the Ministry of Arts and Culture?

Mr Gondeea: I do not think so.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay! Can we proceed with the next question?

The hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

SICOM – GROUP PENSIONS (TECHNICAL) MANAGER – QUALIFICATIONS & RECRUITMENT PROCESS

(No. B/570) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the current Manager - Group Pensions (Technical) of the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd., she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) academic and professional qualifications thereof, indicating the number of promotions and responsibility allowances granted thereto over the period 2014 to 2024, and
- (b) recruitment process followed for the recruitment thereof, including the advertisement date for the position and requirements thereof.

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Insurance Company Ltd., with regard to part (a) of the question, that the incumbent holds a School Certificate, a Higher School Certificate and is a Fellow Member of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries of the UK.

I am also informed by the SICOM that the officer was a Senior Actuarial Analyst since March 2008. In February 2018, the officer was promoted as Deputy Manager of Risk Department. In February 2020, the incumbent was laterally transferred to the Group Pensions Department. Then, in March 2021, with the impending retirement of the Senior Executive Officer Group Pensions, the Group Pensions Department was restructured and the incumbent

was called upon to shoulder additional responsibilities. The incumbent was granted a monthly responsibility allowance with the normal conditions of service.

I am also informed by the SICOM that following the retirement of the Senior Executive Officer Group Pensions in August 2021, the officer was appointed to the position of Manager Group Pensions on 21 September 2021.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that in light of the foregoing, the post Manager Group Pensions Technical was not advertised internally or externally.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as mentioned earlier, I was informed that a restructuring had been undertaken in the department but given that there seems to be more questions than answers, I am going to ask the board to undertake an independent investigation regarding this restructuring on the promotion of this officer.

Thank you.

Mr Rookny: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister if it is a normal practice in the Financial Services regulated company and the more so, in a state-owned company, if it is a normal practice for promotions to be given without advertisement, internally or externally?

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in normal circumstances, there should have been a process. As I said, I've got more questions than answers and so, I will ask the board to undertake an independent review and investigation of the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue. Our last question for today.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES - FINANCIAL CONTROLLER - VACANCIES & RECRUITMENT EXERCISE

(No. B/571) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the posts of Financial Controller in the local authorities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain the –

- (a) lists of appointees since December 2014 to date, and
- (b) number of existing vacancies in each local authority.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard to part (a) of the question, seven appointments have been made in the grade of Financial Controller since December 2014 to date. I am tabling the list.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Woochit: As to part (b) of the question, there is only one permanent funded vacancy in the grade of Financial Controller or at the Municipal Town Council of Beau-Bassin/Rose-Hill following the retirement of Mr James Daniel Lam Hing on 11 October 2024.

I am informed that the vacancy for the post of Financial Controller has been advertised on 15 May 2025, among serving qualified officers, Principal Accountant in the service, with closing date set at 28 May 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, we have exhausted all the questions.

Next item. Hon. Prime Minister!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

BUDGET SPEECH 2025-2026 – PENSION REFORMS

(3.28 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am making a Statement to the House.

In the Budget Speech, we have announced a major reform to the Basic Retirement Pension. It is abundantly clear that the old age pension system in Mauritius has become fiscally unsustainable and financially unbearable by the reckless policies of the previous government.

2. In our country, the present working generation shoulders the responsibility of funding the BRP expenses for the elderly generation. When present workers retire, it will be their turn to benefit from pensions and the future working generation will fund it.

3. When the number of workers is much higher than the number of older retirees, the system is relatively sustainable. But when the number of workers shrinks and the number of old age pensioners soars, the system becomes financially unsustainable and financially unbearable.

4. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is extremely rare for a country to provide old age pension to –

- (i) all persons who are 60 years old;
- (ii) those who have not contributed for their old age pension, as the BRP is a non-contributory pension, and
- (iii) everybody who attains the age of 60 irrespective of his income and assets.

5. Mauritius, it seems, is the only case where we do this.

6. Even in rich and advanced countries, the old age pension is paid much later than 60 years (often at 65 years). In France, just now, they are proposing to increase the age to 67 years. In Germany, they are proposing to increase it to 70 years. It is sometimes contributory and is mostly means tested.

7. Precisely to ensure its fiscal sustainability and its fairness and equity across generations.

8. As a result of these three combined features in our old age pension, the BRP has become fiscally unsustainable and, as I said, financially unbearable.

9. The following facts and figures demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt the fiscal unsustainability of the BRP.

10. First, the share of BRP in GDP has increased from 1.9 percent in 2010 to 3 percent in 2015-2016 to 6.1 percent in 2020-2021. And it currently stands at 7.8 percent of GDP.

11. Without reform, its share of GDP will continue to rise.

12. Second, the proportion of BRP in government recurrent expenditure has escalated from 9.6 percent in 2010 to 14.2 percent in 2015-2016. It then rose to 20.1 percent in 2020-2021, and has reached 24.5 percent in 2024-2025.

13. Again, without reform, it will continue to absorb a higher share of the recurrent expenditure.
14. Third, BRP as a percentage of government recurrent revenue has surged from 9.7 percent in 2010 to 15.2 percent in 2015-2016. It reached 21.4 percent in 2020-2021, and rose to a further 30.6 percent by 2024-2025.
15. Again, without reform, its share of recurrent revenue will inexorably increase.
16. Fourth, in absolute terms, the BRP has increased from Rs5.97 billion in 2010 to Rs13.1 billion in 2015-2016, then to Rs27.9 billion in 2020-2021, and further to Rs55.4 billion in 2024-2025. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 14 years, between 2010 and 2024-2025, spending on pension has ballooned by staggering 828%. In only four years, between 2021-2024/25, it has almost doubled, from Rs27.9 billion to Rs55.4 billion. Likely, it will reach Rs100 billion in 2035. Now, how can anybody say this is sustainable?
17. Without reform, the expenditure on BRP will sharply rise.
18. Fifth, the population aged 60 and over has grown substantially from 186,400 in 2015 to 250,600 in 2024.
19. It will continue to grow as the population ages and will reach around 315,000 in 2038. Equally, the ratio of older persons will rise considerably with the ageing population from around 20% today to 30% in 2051.
20. Without reform, our pension system will run out of money if the current demographic trajectory persists.
21. Sixth, the fertility rate has dropped sharply over the years. From 5.9 in 1960 to 2.8 in 1980 to 1.57 in 2010, and 1.34 in 2024.
22. It is now well below the replacement rate of 2.1. This indicates a declining population and this trend will accelerate in the future.
23. Without reform, there will be far fewer workers to support far more pensioners.
24. Seventh, the number of workers will continue to decline while the dependency ratio will rise, thus decreasing the ratio of working individuals to pensioners. The ratio of workers to pensioners has declined from 3.9% in 2015 to 2.7% now, and is expected to further fall to 2% in 2025.

25. Without reform, the smaller working population will have to bear a growing burden of contributions to finance the pensions of the many more retired.
26. Eighth, life expectancy at 60 years has increased for both men and women.
27. Life expectancy of men at 60 has risen from 13.4 in 1962 to almost 17.92 in 2022. For women, it has gone up from 16.3 years in 1962 to 21.75 in 2022. It means that Government has to fund non-contributory pension for a much longer period for both men and women.
28. Without reform, it will be very challenging to fund pension for more people with higher number of pension years.
29. Ninth, to give the House a sense of the financial burden, BRP payments in the last fiscal year exceeded the total Government spending on education, health, and housing combined.
30. Without reform, expenditure on pension will crowd out critical investment in education, health and housing.
31. Tenth, to finance this increasingly rising expenditure, Government has had to borrow massively, thus raising the public sector debt to an alarming level of 90 per cent of GDP.
32. Without reform, debt will continue to rise as a share of GDP.
33. Eleventh, debt servicing has risen sharply and is the second most important expenditure after pension today. It amounted to a staggering Rs21.8 billion in fiscal year 2024-2025.
34. Without reform, the country will spend a rising share of its expenditure on debt servicing, thus crowding out key priorities.
35. As early as 2015, the IMF, in an expert report, projected that by 2050, expenditure on BRP would be at an unsustainable level of 8 percent of GDP. Because of the irresponsible decisions taken by the previous government, believe it or not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are already at 7.8% now, that is, around 25 years ahead of what the IMF had projected!
36. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no politician likes to make unpopular decisions. However, unchecked and unreformed, rising expenditures on BRP will significantly penalise our children and grandchildren.
37. This is about intergenerational fairness and equity.
38. We have no choice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, than to act responsibly.

39. I fully understand that pension reform can be an unpopular choice for today's voters, presenting a dilemma for politicians sensitive to public opinion and also those engaged in reckless populism and unbridled demagoguery.

40. For all the reasons mentioned above, pension reforms are vital to rebalancing the burdens across present and future generations in a fair and equitable manner. This may entail short-term costs, but for long-term sustainability.

41. It is why it is imperative that the general public is aware of pension reform and the challenges to be faced in the future.

42. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is an utter confusion in the mind of many people between a contributory and a non-contributory pension. A contributory pension plan requires the beneficiary to pay into the plan from his salary (like occupation pensions). In a non-contributory pension plan, the beneficiary does not contribute anything at all for the benefit he receives.

43. The BRP is a non-contributory pension. There is no contribution from beneficiaries. It is funded from the Consolidated Fund.

44. As such, all increases in the BRP can only be financed through higher debt or higher taxes.

45. Under a contributory pension system, an employee can choose to retire earlier than the prescribed retirement age and benefit from a reduced pension.

46. This, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does not apply to the BRP which is, as I said, non-contributory. Eligibility to BRP is typically not based on employment history or prior contributions, but rather on factors such as age and residency. In other countries, it also depends on income and asset of beneficiaries.

47. Let me also clear another confusion about the retirement age.

48. The budget has not changed the retirement age. We have not changed it!

49. The retirement age was at 65, and it remains at 65.

50. Flexibility for early retirement for those in specific sectors has not changed for contributory pension.

51. We are only aligning the entitlement to BRP with the retirement age in order, again, to ensure fiscal sustainability.

52. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the dire financial predicament we have inherited demands immediate and decisive fiscal consolidation. Without prompt corrective measures, we risk to follow the trajectory of countries such as Sri Lanka or Greece, nations that delayed essential reforms and ultimately faced severe financial crises, forcing them to accept tough, externally imposed bailout conditions.

53. The previous government's legacy bears troubling similarities to those examples. Their pattern of unchecked and reckless spending has placed our public finances in dire straits. As a result, our national debt is projected to rise to Rs642 billion by the end of June 2025, equivalent to 90 percent of GDP, highlighting the urgent need to restore fiscal discipline and rebuild economic resilience.

54. There is a very high risk of the country being downgraded if there is no fiscal consolidation. I wish to remind the House that a downgrade to a 'junk status' would have very, very serious implications on the cost of borrowings, our financial services sector, the value of the rupee, investments, FDI, and the economy as a whole. No one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, would invest in a country which has the status of 'junk.'

55. We simply cannot afford a downgrade from 'investment status' to 'junk status.'

56. As a responsible Government, we could not ignore the risks posed by our unsustainable pension system - not only to public finances, but also to the well-being of our elderly population.

57. We have no choice than to reform our shockingly unsustainable pension system. Unreformed, there would be no financial resources to pay for future pensions, even for those above 65 years.

58. There is hardly any country that has the rare combination of providing old age pension to all those above 60 without any contribution and without a means test.

59. In fact, several developed countries have embraced two of the following three measures:

- (a) extension of the retirement age to 65 and beyond, I just mentioned France and Germany;
- (b) introduction of a contributory element in the system with exemptions for low-income earners, and

- (c) adoption of a means-tested systems for old-age pensions so as to allocate public resources more efficiently and equitably and target support to those who are in need.

60. In these systems, eligibility for a pension or the amount received is based on household income and/or assets. Countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea and Chile use means-tests as an eligibility criterion for old age pension.

61. Mr Deputy Speaker, in the light of the devastating legacy left by the previous administration, we had no choice but to confront the urgent need for pension reform head on. However, we remain deeply mindful of the challenges the most vulnerable may face under the proposed changes and we are committed to addressing their concerns with compassion and empathy.

62. As a democratic Government, we have heard these concerns. As a compassionate Government that is committed to stand by the most vulnerable at all times, we have decided to establish two Inter-Ministerial Committees to examine the matters related to the Basic Retirement Pension.

63. The first Committee will explore potential income support for individuals aged between 60 and 65 who will become ineligible as a result of the reform and whose main or sole source of income is the BRP. This will cover a range of beneficiaries such as housewives, retirees and workers with low occupation pension, who all rely mainly or solely on the BRP.

64. This Committee will be chaired by myself and comprise the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, the Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives, the Junior Minister of Finance and Junior Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

65. The second Committee will examine potential support for individuals who are unable to work due to health-related disabilities. This Committee will be chaired by the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and comprise the Minister of Housing and Lands, the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and

Fisheries, the Minister of National Infrastructure, Minister of Health and Wellness and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

66. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the escalating financial burden on future generations from an ageing society is a challenge faced by most countries.

67. If the current demographic trajectory of Mauritius persists, then our pension system will simply run out of money. Let me be very candid, the BRP system is the time bomb. It is a time bomb that is fast ticking away. However, it is unfortunate that many do not seem to really care or worry as they will no longer be around when the bomb will explode. Worse, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a highly respected professional actuary has stated that this time bomb has already exploded; that we now face the urgent and up healed task of containing the damage.

68. Consequently, pension reform is absolutely critical.

69. It aims at enhancing financial sustainability.

70. At the heart of this reform is the imperative to establish parity between what each generation pays and receives, thereby promoting fairness in intergenerational burden-sharing.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read a first time –

(a) *The Revenue Tribunal Bill (No. XIII of 2025)*

(b) *The Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill (No. XII Of 2025)*

The Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker will take the Chair.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please, be seated. Yes, hon. Prime Minister.

POINT OF PERSONAL EXPLANATION

BUDGET SPEECH 2025-2026 – PARAGRAPH 272

(3.49 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make the following statement by way of personal explanation under Standing Order 28.

With a view to dispelling any doubt about the interpretation of paragraph 272 of the Budget Speech 2025-2026 relating to Fair Share Contribution of 15%, I would like to inform the House that it relates to a high-income earner, earning annual net income exceeding Rs12 million, inclusive of dividend income received during the year from domestic companies, who will be required to pay a Fair Share Contribution at the rate of 15% of his chargeable income in excess of Rs12 million.

Consequently, paragraphs 275 and 276 as they appear in the printed version of the Budget Speech should be disregarded.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2025-2026) BILL

(NO. XIV OF 2025)

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

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(3.50 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard): *Merci, Madame la présidente.* I think we should be able to agree on two things – one, that this budget is a *budget de rupture à la FMI* and that this *budget de rupture à la FMI est le contraire* of the electoral platform on which the Labour Party was elected. When I am saying that, I am not making a value judgement. I will explain why I believe that it is a statement of fact: I said *budget de rupture à la FMI*.

Now bear in mind, Madam Speaker, that those are not my words. I have merely quoted hon. Paul Bérenger as Leader of Opposition during his intervention on the Budget 2006-2007, and this statement, Madam Speaker, summarises also the 2025/2026 budget, that is, the

abolition of the pension for those between 60 years and 65 years, the review of subsidies and the abolition of various social and educational allocations – *un budget à la FMI*.

Madame la présidente, nous débutons aujourd’hui les débats sur l’*Appropriation (2025-2026) Bill*, le premier budget proposé par L’alliance du Changement, et c’est un budget qui trahit la confiance de la population qui a cru en vos promesses pendant la campagne électorale.

Dans chaque budget, il y a du bon, il y a du moins bon et parfois, il y a du *pa bon ditou*. Malheureusement et tristement pour ce peuple, ce budget a très peu de bonnes mesures et beaucoup de *pa bon ditou*, Madame la présidente.

Pour qualifier ce budget 2025-2026, je me suis permis, au tout début de mon intervention, d’emprunter les mots utilisés par un des membres les plus influents de l’actuel gouvernement, le 22 juin 2006 – presque 19 ans de cela – « Le Budget de rupture à la FMI. »

L’histoire se répète, Madame la présidente ! En 2005, le gouvernement travailliste d’alors avait affirmé vouloir changer la vie des gens en 100 jours. Malheureusement, la vie de chaque Mauricien était devenue amère après ces 100 jours ! À cette époque, il y régnait la même situation : une rupture totale entre la population et le gouvernement. C’est le même sentiment avec ce budget de rupture où l’on étouffe toute une population avec ce budget austère.

Le constat, Madame la présidente, c’est – je le répète parce que c’est important – la rupture. Et rupture, il y a eu. Elle est réelle, mais elle est entre le gouvernement et toute une population, incluant aussi les habitants de Rodrigues et d’Agaléga. Une grande majorité de la population sera au fond des abîmes avec la mise en place des mesures antisociales annoncées dans le présent budget. Madame la présidente, c’est le démantèlement de l’État providence ! Ce sera un drame humain pour des milliers de familles mauriciennes. Trois ans de souffrance pour le peuple et attendre peut-être à la veille des élections de 2029 pour récolter des miettes.

Madame la présidente, quand on sait ce que l’Alliance du Changement avait promis à la population et ce qui a été annoncé dans le budget, et sans aucun doute, je l’ai dit quand je suis intervenu juste après la présentation du budget, c’est la plus grande trahison électorale de notre histoire. Madame la présidente, par exemple, en Corée du Sud, l’article 250 de la loi électorale condamne les fausses promesses faites pendant une campagne électorale. Peut-être qu’il est temps de légiférer sur les promesses électorales !

An hon. Member: *Delo 24/7!*

Mr Lesjongard: La *Constitutional Commission* qui sera mise sur pied à Maurice...

An hon. Member: *Delo 24/7, trahison!*

Mr Lesjongard: ...pourrait peut-être se pencher sur une telle législation.

Madame la présidente, je suis tenté de poser cette question : sommes-nous devenus, avec ce gouvernement, les cobayes des institutions internationales ? Laissez-moi remonter le temps. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, en tant que Premier ministre, n'a jamais cédé face à des institutions même pendant les périodes les plus difficiles de notre pays, c'est-à-dire les années 80.

Madame la présidente, il y a eu du changement depuis la prise de pouvoir de ce gouvernement. Je ne mets pas en doute la capacité du *Junior Minister*, l'honorable Damry, mais de mémoire, c'est la première fois qu'un *Junior Minister* préside les consultations avec les *stakeholders* pour la préparation du budget.

(Interruptions)

Je comprends que l'honorable membre est considéré par beaucoup au sein de l'Alliance du Changement – je ne dirai pas comme *the preferred one* – mais comme *the next one*, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Mais de là de lui donner de tels pouvoirs et de telles responsabilités seulement sept mois après les élections, cela doit nous interpeller, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Au sein de la majorité, on fait de l'honorable membre, maintenant, le bouc émissaire de l'impopularité de ce gouvernement !

(Interruptions)

Mais nous savons tous que c'est le Premier ministre et le Cabinet ministériel qui sont responsables de l'abolition de la pension pour les 60 à 65 ans et de toutes ces taxes imposées sur la population.

Madame la présidente, ce qui nous interpelle aujourd'hui, c'est le manque de cohésion et définitivement l'amateurisme dans la préparation du budget. C'est le résultat de la mauvaise cohabitation entre les rouges, les mauves et les papillons, Madame la présidente.

An hon. Member: *Profet maler! Profet maler komanse!*

Mr Lesjongard: Depuis sa prise de pouvoir, l'*establishment* politique longtemps dans l'opposition s'adapte difficilement avec l'administration publique. Par exemple, le *musical chair* presque hebdomadaire des fonctionnaires, le recrutement des officiers retraités sur contrat en sont les preuves. Un chapelet de promesses électorales, et après la victoire, ce gouvernement vient nous parler de l'état de l'économie comme prétexte pour ne pas tenir leurs promesses.

Il y a eu depuis novembre 2024, ce que je qualifierai, Madame la présidente, d'un *management of public opinion* très précis, avec comme leitmotiv *la kaiss vid*. Un rapport sur l'état de l'économie très douteux !

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *642 milliards !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Un rapport sur l'état de l'économie...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Tiroir vid!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: I need your protection, Madam Speaker, to be able to speak!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Ahh! Ha, ha, ha!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Ms Savabaddy: ... *devan...*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Savabaddy!

(Interruptions)

Ms Savabaddy: Yes?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am on my feet!

Hon. Members, I would rather that the Leader of the Opposition, also given the fact that there are just two of them, be allowed to make his speech. It is his right. Do not interrupt him too much!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Ha, ha, ha!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, I cannot...

(Interruptions)

Even you are laughing!

(Interruptions)

No, I do not...

(Interruptions)

I cannot stop you from laughing or reacting subtly, but be subtle. Be subtle! Let him speak!

Mr Jhummun: Speak sense!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: He will speak for quite...

(Interruptions)

He has the right to speak for quite some time!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: Sense!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhummun, I am speaking and I am on my feet! He has the right to speak for quite some time. Let him speak! You will get the chance to reply!

Please, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: *Thank you, Madam Speaker.* Un rapport sur l'état de l'économie très douteux et non signé, mais préparé par des consultants, à en croire le *Junior Minister*. *La kaiss vid*, mais en même temps, plusieurs des ministres ont voyagé au frais de l'État. Apparemment, 33 voyages en huit mois ! Achat de voitures neuves par les ministres, incluant le Premier ministre !

Is this a budget that will go down in history? Well, yes! But if it does, Madam Speaker, it will be for all the wrong reasons, and in particular, it might go down in history as the budget that started the dismantling of the Welfare State in our country, and...

(Interruptions)

...and the disappearance of the safety net for the working class and the more vulnerable of our society, Madam Speaker. There is no doubt that this Government won on the back of promises and pledges to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis and restore people's purchasing power. But instead, this Government, in its first budget, has stripped our social security system to the bones. It provides neither security nor enough support to those who received it.

Unsurprisingly, Madam Speaker, this budget will play into the sense that politicians will say anything to win votes.

Mr Jhummun: *Delo 24/7!*

Mr Lesjongard: Mais, Madame la présidente, aujourd'hui grâce à l'internet, les paroles ne s'envolent plus !

An hon. Member: *Internet bloke !*

Mr Lesjongard: Les belles paroles, les fausses promesses et les engagements pris pendant la campagne électorale sont toujours présents dans la mémoire de la population.

Qui ne se souvient pas de ces fameuses expressions : '*Lesans pou bese par plis ki R 20.*' '*Kouma mo vinn minis Lenerzi, mo pou bes pri kouran.*' *Weetabix monte hogan ba ! Dudh monte hogan ba! Lanti monte hogan ba ! Paissa ke mol naiba! Aaj ka bolba beti.*

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de faire quelques commentaires sur les mesures annoncées pour différents secteurs. En premier, l'économie...

Madam Speaker: I suppose you think that everybody would have understood you.

Mr Lesjongard: Of course, Madam Speaker.

Ms Anquetil: Je n'ai pas compris !

Mr Lesjongard: Of course! If they voted for this Government, everybody has understood what was said at that time.

Mr A. Duval: It is a very popular saying!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Mr Jhummun: *So seve inn' grene lakoz sa !*

Mr Lesjongard: Ma première...

(Interruptions)

No, Madam Speaker, the Standing Order is clear. He has to withdraw what he said.

Madam Speaker: Yes, you have to withdraw. That is a personal attack! You have to withdraw nicely. Nicely!

Mr Jhummun: I did not mention any name.

Madam Speaker: No, you did! You did! Come on, be nice!

Mr Jhummun: Okay, I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Voilà!

Mr A. Duval: He should apologise!

Mr Lesjongard: Then, you are a gentleman!

Ma première interrogation concerne l'utilisation des revenus pour la location de Diego Garcia pour éponger une partie de la dette publique. Est-ce raisonnable d'inclure cette somme s'il y a aucune garantie de recevoir ces fonds cette année ? Je constate aussi qu'il n'y a rien dans ce budget pour le développement des Chagos ni même une étude pour le développement potentiel des Chagos.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the anonymous 'State of the Economy' document. C'est indéniable, aujourd'hui, qu'avec ce document, il y a eu une tentative de la part du gouvernement de créer un chaos économique et social dans le pays juste après les élections. Ce document non-signé a entravé la confiance des investisseurs et a réussi à établir une psychose au sein de la population. Un document qui est anonyme et biaisé !

Le *Junior Minister*, l'honorable Damry, lors d'une émission à la radio, a affirmé que des consultants ont travaillé sur ce rapport, mais il ne donne pas le nom de ces consultants. Et c'est la première fois, si je ne me trompe pas, Madame la présidente, que des consultants produisent un rapport pour le gouvernement, déposé au Parlement, et ils ne déclinent pas leur identité. Maintenant, c'est le privé qui va vérifier et déterminer le travail des hauts cadres du gouvernement.

Je le redis, l'objectif de ce document était d'instaurer la peur parmi la population en prélude du Budget, en faisant croire que les finances de l'État sont faibles, que les dettes publiques sont insoutenables...

An hon. Member: Ce qui n'est pas faux !

Mr Lesjongard: ...et que le gouvernement ne peut plus continuer à soutenir les différentes couches de la population avec l'aide financière sociale introduite par l'ancien gouvernement. En effet, ce n'était qu'un stratagème politique pour justifier la politique économique de *ser sintir*. Les membres du gouvernement, les députés se sont appuyés sur « les épaules » de Moody's, ils parlent de chaos économique et même de *junk status*.

Après la présentation de ce budget, le gouvernement est K.O. face à la colère du peuple. La note émise par Moody's jeudi dernier vient jeter le doute sur les mesures annoncées par ce gouvernement. Ils veulent plaire en imposant des taxes exorbitantes, en réduisant les allocations sociales, mais ces mêmes instances vous disent que vos mesures vont appauvrir la population.

It is a fact, Madam Speaker, that some key economic indicators, as published by this Government itself, show that our economy was resilient and robust in 2024.

(Interruptions)

For example, the gross official international reserves of the country stood at USD 8.5 billion as at end of December 2024 against USD 7.3 billion a year earlier. The employment rate, Madam Speaker, dropped to 6% in 2024. Total investment in the country has increased by 8.3% and Mauritius attracted Rs33 billion in FDI in 2024, and tourism arrivals have been surpassed, pre-COVID figures, in 2024, to reach 1.38 million.

In addition, Madam Speaker, another report, the IMF, in its Article IV Report in 2024, has lauded Mauritius for its income inequality reduction philosophy. The IMF has commended Mauritius for fostering inclusive growth by protecting households impacted by the rising cost of living since 2022, broadening social benefits to the most vulnerable and fostering entrepreneurship.

Madam Speaker, the World Bank Country Outlook on Mauritius, published in 2025, stated that our economy has proven resilient to other global economic shocks, including those stemming from the war in Ukraine which have affected revenues from tourism arrivals.

Madam Speaker, with regard now to public debt, in November 2024, when this Government took over from us, total public sector debt was at Rs546 billion. This public sector debt has spiked to Rs642 billion – an increase of Rs96 billion in the last seven months! The Government has contracted loans for Rs96 billion during the first seven months, Madam Speaker. Is this what we call fiscal discipline and fiscal responsibility?

Now, with regard to GDP projections, we were all taken aback to witness the downsizing of the drop in the last six months of the Financial Year 2024-2025, that is, from January 2025 to June 2025, under this new Government. It is evidently clear, Madam Speaker, that the Government has been dormant in the first seven months of its mandate or purposely, let me put it this way, doing so to retard the growth process by hindering strategic institutional functions like the EDB, the FSC and the NSLD, to name a few.

Je vais maintenant aborder l'une des mesures les plus controversables de ce quart de siècle dans ce budget – la pension de vieillesse gouvernementale pour ceux âgés de 60 à 65 ans. Madame la présidente, deux comités seront mis sur pied pour revoir la pension, cela a été dit. Une annonce qui intervient seulement onze jours après le premier budget de ce gouvernement. C'est ça le changement ! Annoncer des mesures et ensuite mettre des comités ministériels pour revoir si la mesure peut être applicable ou pas. À travers les deux comités

mis sur pied, l'intention du gouvernement est claire, et le Premier ministre l'a annoncé plus tôt, c'est le ciblage. Alors, on va déshabiller Michael maintenant pour habiller Jackson !

Mr Etwareea : On va déshabiller Joe !

Mr Lesjongard : Dix jours de cela, le Premier ministre, lors d'une interview, trouvait le ciblage comme une injustice. Hier, le cabinet ministériel, sous la présidence du Premier ministre, a décidé de mettre en place deux comités pour travailler sur le ciblage. Effectivement, lors d'une interview à la MBC, le Premier ministre avait dit qu'il trouvait le ciblage injuste. Tout comme la grande majorité de la population, Madame la présidente, je suis contre le ciblage.

Avec ces propositions, vous essayez d'apaiser la colère, mais ce n'est pas le cas. La politique de diviser la population sur ce sujet ne marchera pas cette fois-ci. Maintenant, il y a des questions qu'on doit se poser. Doit-on passer par un test médical pour être éligible à la pension quand on sait comment fonctionnent ces *board* médicaux à la Sécurité sociale ? Et je m'adresse aux membres de cette auguste Assemblée *pou get figir pou gagn pension* ?

An hon. Member : Dix ans...

Mr Lesjongard : *Agent de tel parti politik, lerla ou pou gagn pension!* La suppression de la pension de vieillesse gouvernementale pour ceux âgés de 60 à 65 ans est une des mesures des plus injustes envers nos travailleurs et les femmes au foyer. L'histoire retiendra, Madame la présidente, que c'est un gouvernement qui comprend trois partis politiques qui ont pris naissance dans la lutte des travailleurs de notre pays qui se disent socialistes : le PTr, le MMM et Rezistans ek Alternativ qui ont pris cette décision.

Dans ma toute première déclaration à la presse, après le budget, j'ai déploré l'absence de consultation avant l'introduction de cette mesure. Le gouvernement a agi unilatéralement pour détériorer la vie de toute la société civile de notre pays. Je ne suis pas le seul à l'avoir évoqué. Tous les syndicats ont reproché au gouvernement l'absence de consultation. Hier, le ministre de la Sécurité sociale a publiquement critiqué le Premier ministre sur une radio pour manque de consultation. Rezistans ek Alternativ, qui fait partie du gouvernement, a émis un communiqué pour dire la même chose, c'est-à-dire le manque de consultation.

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de faire quelques observations pertinentes sur les déclarations faites et le contenu de ce communiqué en date du 14 juin. Est-ce que les membres de Rezistans ek Alternativ ne savent pas si ce parti a un ministre au sein de ce

gouvernement et qu'il a droit à la parole au sein du Conseil des ministres ? Mais comme disait, Madame la présidente, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, ancien ministre français –

« Un ministre, ça ferme sa gueule. Si ça veut l'ouvrir, ça démissionne. »

Je pose cette fameuse expression, Madame la présidente, à l'appréciation de la population.

Autre remarque sur ce même communiqué, est-ce normal que le président du conseil d'administration du musée de l'esclavage soit cosignataire de ce communiqué politique ? Je pense qu'il faut répondre à ces questions. Ce gouvernement est entouré des conseillers de grandes expériences, mais malgré cela, ce gouvernement a commis une des plus grandes gaffes politiques depuis notre indépendance avec la mesure sur la pension des 60 à 65 ans.

Madame la présidente, au paragraphe 240 du discours du budget, je cite –

“In order to address this burning issue, we are setting up a Commission of Experts to make recommendations to reform the various pillars of our pension system, including revamping the National Pension Fund to replace the CSG. I will personally chair a Steering Committee to assess and act on the recommendations of the Commission.”

Ensuite, au paragraphe 248, je cite –

“The age eligibility for BRP is being increased to 65 years. Out of compassion, we are phasing that increase over a period of 5 years.”

Donc, pareil encore, ils annulent la pension pour les 60 à 65 ans. Ils abolissent la CSG et ensuite, ils mettent en place des comités pour réformer le système de pension.

Madame la présidente, excusez-moi, c'est mettre la charrue devant les bœufs. Un processus, encore une fois, qui démontre un amateurisme flagrant en matière de gestion. Pas de consultation ni aucune étude sur l'effet de cette mesure sur la population.

Madame la présidente, je vois dans ce budget une répétition du budget de 2006, sauf que cette fois-ci, l'implémentation est différente. Et là, permettez-moi de remercier et de saluer le courage des syndicalistes qui à l'époque – là, je parle de 2006 – s'étaient unanimement soulevés contre cette mesure. Le gouvernement de 2005 à 2010 avait dû faire marche arrière. J'espère, Madame la présidente, que ce sera une fois de plus le cas et que le gouvernement va rétablir la pension pour tous. Pour moi, il ne peut y avoir de compromis sur ce sujet.

La révision de l'âge de la retraite est déjà une réalité, il est vrai, dans certains pays de l'hémisphère nord. Mais, écoutez-moi bien, ces pays sont très développés premièrement et ont une qualité de vie reconnue mondialement. Ces pays ont une espérance de vie plus élevée que chez nous.

Dans la plupart des secteurs d'activité à Maurice, la semaine de travail est de 45 heures alors qu'en Europe, elle est de 40 heures ou de moins de 40 heures par semaine. Malheureusement, il n'y a rien dans ce budget qui démontre que le gouvernement compte revoir à la baisse les heures du travail avec l'implémentation de cette mesure. Au contraire, avec les mesures antisociales dans ce budget, les travailleurs de notre pays auront beaucoup plus à travailler pour pouvoir arrondir leurs fins de mois.

Imaginez les effets de leurs activités sur leur santé ! 20% de notre population est diabétique. 30% de notre population souffrent d'hypertension. Les personnes âgées sont les plus touchées. Notre espérance de vie, M. le Premier ministre, est de 74 ans alors que dans plusieurs pays où il y a eu une vision de l'âge de la retraite, l'espérance de vie dépasse les 80 ans. Donc, le citoyen de notre République aura à travailler plus en termes d'heures de travail et d'années de travail que ceux de l'hémisphère nord. Il aura à cotiser plus puisqu'il devra le faire jusqu'à l'âge de 65 ans pour peut-être profiter de sa pension que pour quelques années. Peut-être certains parmi eux ne toucheront même pas cette pension, Madame la présidente.

I put the question: is it fair? The answer is no, Madam Speaker!

Madame la présidente, ce pays qualifié comme un *overcrowded barracoon*, dans les années 70 par l'écrivain V. S. Naipaul¹, est aujourd'hui un pays classé régulièrement en première position sur le continent dans plusieurs secteurs et cela, grâce au sacrifice de ces mauriciennes et mauriciens qui ont travaillé dur au fil des années.

Je vais maintenant, Madame la présidente, aborder une autre mesure qui va affecter toute la population et qui se trouve au paragraphe 17 (b) de l'annexe du budget –

Mr Jhummun: *Mo ouver li!*

Mr Lesjongard:

“Government will implement reforms of public enterprises to ensure they are financially sustainable, efficient, and accountable, through a coordinated policy approach focused on strengthening governance and oversight, institutionalizing financial discipline, and reforming pricing and subsidy frameworks.”

Et, je m'arrête là, Madame la présidente. Il n'y a aucun problème que le gouvernement compte réformer certains secteurs. Par contre, sous ce même item, les mots qui doivent interpellier la population sont '*reforming pricing and subsidy frameworks*'

Madame la présidente, en 2006, le gouvernement d'alors avait préconisé l'abolition des subsides sur le riz et la farine. Et, dans ce budget, le présent budget, de façon déguisée, on nous annonce la fin des subsides.

An hon. Member : Qu'est-ce que c'est ça ?

Mr Lesjongard: La population doit s'attendre à une augmentation du prix de la farine, du riz ration, du gaz ménagé, du pain et aussi des centaines d'autres produits. C'est aussi l'annonce de la fin des subsides sur la facture d'électricité et de l'eau pour les familles les plus vulnérables.

Madame la présidente, 61 000 familles qui bénéficient du *social tariff* 110 du CEB, et 60 000 familles qui bénéficie de 6 m³ d'eau gratuit, seront directement impactées par cette mesure.

Madame la présidente, c'est un gouvernement anti-subsides, pro patronat tout comme celui de 2005 à 2010. Et pour faire court, c'est un gouvernement sans cœur.

An hon. Member: Démagogie!

Mr Jhummun: *Tonn fer li vinn negatif!*

Madam Speaker: Be careful!

Mr A. Duval: Il faut le laisser causer, Madame.

Madam Speaker: Of course!

Mr A. Duval: But this guy is ...

An hon. Member: C'est le Parlement !

Madam Speaker : *But*, il a le droit de parler !

Il semblerait que vous n'êtes pas en train de bien citer ce qu'il y a dans le document en question.

Mr Jhummun: Exactement !

Mr Lesjongard: Non je suis en train de citer !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: You will reply. You will reply.

Mr A. Duval: There will be 64 people to rebut him, let him speak!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: What are you telling me by sitting down?

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: 64 persons! I can't speak from sitting down?

Madam Speaker: I will not accept that all the time, hon. A. Duval tells me how to do my job and by sitting down all the time!

I want to be quite clear on this. This is not the first time!

An hon. Member: *Malelve! Malelve!*

Madam Speaker: If you are not happy, you must make a ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. DPM, please, I am on my feet!

You must stand up and make a point of order, then I will listen to you, but stop telling me, by sitting down all the time, how to do my job.

An hon. Member: *Li pe apran!*

An hon. Member: Shut up!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I may... Madam Speaker, I was raising your attention...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ey ki pe explike!*

Madam Speaker: if you raise a point of order, you must tell me under which Standing Order!

Mr A. Duval: It is a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr Bhagwan: Apologise! *Malelve!*

Mr A. Duval: The Leader of the Opposition is being interrupted...

Madam Speaker: Under which Standing Order?

(Interruptions)

And, I think that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been in this House for a very long time and he can defend himself.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, you will see under points of order, firstly, Standing Order 40...

Madam Speaker: Let me see!

Mr A. Duval: Yes!

The use of unbecoming expressions, offensive language about Members which is being used repetitively against the Leader of Opposition, that's the first thing.

Madam Speaker: No, please sit down. I will stop you now because that was not at this stage. When there was an offensive language, what did I do, hon. A. Duval?

I asked the Member to withdraw and he did!

Please, all of you, let him get on with his speech. He will be criticising; that's what he is here for and then you will rebut him. Please, take note!

Mr A. Duval: If I may raise a second point of order?

Mr Jhummun: May I raise a point of order?

Madam Speaker: No, I am not allowing anybody to speak at this time!

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je veux faire un point de droit, je suis obligé de le faire !

Madam Speaker: Okay, that's it. Point de droit ! Allez-y !

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je suis responsable du secteur de l'énergie, d'électricité. J'ai pris le Leader de l'opposition en flagrant délit de mentir à l'Assemblée nationale.

Ça n'a jamais été cité dans le budget et le Leader de l'opposition lit le budget à l'envers et il vient dire n'importe quoi...

An hon. Member : menteur !

Mr Assirvaden: Ce n'est pas possible ! Il faudra qu'il se rétracte !

An hon. Member : menteur !

Madam Speaker: Vous avez la possibilité de répondre, Monsieur le ministre !

(Interruptions)

Be very careful, hon. Leader...

Mr Baloomoody: He is misleading the House. He is misleading the nation.

Madam Speaker : Même mon *Deputy* m'empêche de parler !

(Interruptions)

Don't make it so difficult for everybody. You going to stay here until two o'clock in the morning if you want.

Then, let's all be responsible. Let's start by you, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

No, no, I am saying because you are on your feet!

In fact, you are on your feet when I am.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, if you tell me to sit down, I will sit down, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Because I see you very well when you stand on your feet. Lucky me!

So, what I am going to say – make sure that you are giving proper facts.

What the Minister is saying is that when you speak, if he does not reply immediately, it's going on record, it's going in everybody's house and it's going to be in the press tomorrow.

So, you have to be responsible as well! Just make sure that you are giving facts – proper facts, and you cite page and you cite the article or whatever.

Let me say something; I want to say something. All of you have a look at Standing Order 73 (2) about the debate on the Appropriation Bill.

The debate on the Appropriation Bill –

“(...) shall be confined to the general principles of Government policy and administration as indicated by the Bill and the Estimates.”

That's what the debate is about.

So, I can understand that sometimes everybody is making reference to the past government but basically, we are here to debate on the Bill and the estimates. So, please, carry on!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, first of all, I referred to a paragraph in the annex to the Budget Speech and this is my right to do so.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Lesjongard: I read that paragraph and I read it again –

“Government will implement reforms of public enterprises to ensure they are financially sustainable, efficient, and accountable, through a coordinated policy approach focused on strengthening governance and oversight, institutionalizing financial discipline, and reforming pricing and subsidy frameworks.”

From the same paragraph, those institutions are the Mauritius Post Ltd, Metro Express Ltd., National Transport Corporation Ltd., Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd., Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd., Central Water Authority, Waste Water Management Authority, Irrigation Authority, Agricultural Marketing Board, Central Electricity Board, State Investment Corporation, Casinos and State Trading Corporation.

(Interruptions)

So, this is very relevant to what I am saying.

If they want to rebut, they will rebut when they have the floor. They cannot interrupt me every now and then, Madam Speaker. That is why I asked for your protection because I want to read my speech.

(Interruptions)

Pour faire court, je le redis, Madame la présidente, c’est un gouvernement sans cœur ; sans cœur pour les plus vulnérables, sans cœur pour les commerçants ayant des revenus de plus de R 3 millions, mais bon cœur pour ceux ayant des revenus de plus de R 24 millions.

Madame la présidente, nous avons célébré cette année les 50 ans de mai 75, quand des milliers de jeunes de ce pays s’étaient dressés contre un gouvernement abusif pour avoir l’éducation gratuite. J’ai fait partie de cette génération. Et ce 20 mai, j’étais parmi ceux qui étaient sur le pont de la Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest face aux soldats de la SSU.

Certains, cette année-ci, ont manqué cet événement, mais je note que les célébrations étaient timides, car le gouvernement d'alors était travailliste et les manifestants étaient pour la plupart des militants. Nous avons grandement amélioré l'éducation gratuite avec l'éducation tertiaire en 2019 pour finalement rendre l'éducation pré-primaire gratuite en 2024. Ainsi, rendre tout le cycle éducationnel gratuit.

50 ans après mai 75, ce gouvernement vient briser le rêve des milliers de jeunes Mauriciens et Mauriciennes en les obligeant désormais, c'est-à-dire je fais référence au *part timers* à payer la totalité des frais de leurs études tertiaires. Un crime, Madame la présidente ! L'explication du *Junior Minister of Finance* démonte l'arrogance de ce gouvernement. Sur une radio privée où j'y étais moi aussi invité, voilà ce qu'il avait dit pour soutenir cette mesure. Pour lui, ces personnes travaillent déjà. Ils peuvent payer ; alors qu'ils payent ! Quelle arrogance, Madame la présidente !

Il n'y a rien de plus noble qu'une personne qui travaille à plein temps et qui va suivre des cours après les heures. Est-ce qu'il sait que beaucoup de ces *part timers* sont des mères et des pères de famille qui maintenant doivent faire beaucoup plus d'efforts ? Imaginez-vous un instant que ces personnes touchent le salaire minimum, savez-vous combien coûte un semestre ? Non seulement ces jeunes doivent s'endetter pour l'obtention d'un lopin de terre, la construction d'une maison qui va coûter plus cher ou l'achat d'un véhicule qui va coûter plus cher aussi. Maintenant, pour obtenir un diplôme, ils doivent aussi s'endetter, alors que c'était gratuit.

On connaît déjà le résultat. Beaucoup parmi eux vont abandonner. Il y a aussi, Madame la présidente, les autres mesures qui vont grandement affecter nos enfants. L'arrêt du *free Pre Primary Education Scheme*, l'arrêt du *Comprehensive Grant formula*, le retrait des subsides – je trouve cela bête ! – accordé aux *repeaters* de la SC et HSC qui ne seront maintenant que pour les familles tombant sous le SRM. L'abolition de l'allocation de R 20,000 à ceux atteignant l'âge de 18 ans.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement ose parler d'empathie et de compassion dans ce budget ? Où se trouve la compassion de ce budget ? Une à une, vous êtes en train d'enlever les pierres qui constituent la fondation même de l'État providence. Vous aviez promis de soulager ce peuple, et aujourd'hui, vous êtes en train de faire absolument le contraire. Quand on parle du pouvoir d'achat avec ce gouvernement, ils évoquent que la

caisse est vide. Une des plus grandes promesses faites à la population était la baisse du prix du carburant après les élections par au moins R 30 avait dit le Premier ministre.

An hon. Member: R 20!

Mr Lesjongard: R 20 ? Allez, R 20!

Mr A. Duval: 30%!

Mr Lesjongard: Quand j'ai évoqué la baisse du prix du carburant à travers une *PNQ*, le ministre de tutelle avait mis en avant la situation financière de la STC et la situation du *Price Stabilisation Account*.

Mr A. Duval: *Lessence in baisse la !*

Mr Lesjongard: Mais comparativement aux cinq dernières années, le prix du pétrole sur le marché mondial a drastiquement baissé ces derniers mois. Maintenant, vous allez....

(Interruptions)

...vous servir du conflit entre l'Iran et Israël pour augmenter le prix.

Le gouvernement joue aux ignorants en ce qui concerne le déficit de la *Stabilisation Account* de la STC, alors que, je l'ai dit, tous les comptes-rendus et toutes les décisions prises par la STC sont rendus publiques. Et cela depuis plusieurs années ! Que ce soit sur le site de la STC ou dans les journaux.

An hon. Member: *7 miliar defisit CEB!*

Mr Lesjongard: Encore une autre promesse non tenue par ce gouvernement concerne les R 10 milliards promis pour améliorer le pouvoir d'achat de la population. Ce budget ne prévoit que R 2 milliards dans un *Price Stabilisation Fund*. La question, c'est qui va bénéficier directement de ce fonds ? Les consommateurs ? Les importateurs ? Ou les revendeurs ? Va-t-on enrichir les gros importateurs ou certains revendeurs qui font d'énormes marges de profits en leur offrant des *rebates* pour ne pas augmenter le prix. *This is not clear in the budget, Madam Speaker.*

Madam Speaker: Somebody will clarify!

Mr Lesjongard: La population attendait aussi une autre mesure concernant la baisse du prix de l'électricité. Le ministre actuel avait fait une telle promesse avant les élections. Mais ne vous servez pas comme prétexte la situation financière du CEB. C'est vrai qu'il y avait un déficit, mais le CEB commence à engranger des surplus de plus de R 200 millions

mensuellement. Le prix du charbon est passé de 559 dollars en décembre 2022 à 107 dollars en avril 2025. Le coût de production a nettement baissé. Le prix de l'huile lourde utilisée par le CEB a aussi connu une baisse de 30 dollars la tonne métrique. La forte hausse de consommation de novembre 2024 à avril 2025 a fait que le CEB a enregistré de gros revenus. Encore une promesse non tenue par ce gouvernement !

J'aborde le sujet de l'énergie parce que c'est un budget décevant sur cet aspect. Je parle ici d'un *waste to energy project* et d'un fonds d'investissement de R 30 milliards sur trois ans pour des projets d'énergie renouvelable et de biomasse. R 30 milliards d'investissements du privé ou du gouvernement ? Quels sont les projets identifiés qui seront mis en place ? Ce n'est pas mentionné dans le budget. Même au CEB on est étonné de cette annonce, puisqu'il n'y a eu aucune consultation avec les cadres du CEB et aucun nouveau projet d'énergie renouvelable n'a été identifié.

Madame la présidente, c'est l'investissement des projets de l'ancien gouvernement qui est considéré dans le présent budget. Ce sont les projets sous le *Carbon Neutral Industrial Sector Scheme* du CEB, lancé en janvier 2023 et le *renewable hybrid facility* lancé en 2022 qui vont apporter l'investissement de 30 milliards et le ministre de tutelle 'beau parleur' n'a rien apporté de nouveau.

Madam Speaker: *Here you go*, vous aussi vous ajoutez un petit bout.

Mr Lesjongard: Non, mais il est un beau parleur Madame. Je le dis. C'est un compliment.

An hon. Member: Il est beau parleur mais pas menteur.

Mr Lesjongard: Je note une incohérence flagrante dans la stratégie énergétique du gouvernement. Le 08 mai dernier, lors d'une conférence de presse animée par le ministre, il avait affirmé que le gouvernement n'a pas de choix et devra avoir recours à un *powership* – une centrale énergétique sur une barge flottante pour fournir l'électricité au pays pendant les cinq prochaines années.

Le *powership* utilisera l'huile lourde comme matière première et en plus, vous taxez fortement les voitures hybrides et électriques. Par contre, Madame la présidente, le budget prévoit, je cite le paragraphe 290 (2) –

“Clean energy, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation to lower imports of fossil fuels and CO₂ emission while enhancing resilience to unpredictable climatic events and boosting economy growth.”

Which is which, Madam Speaker?

En ce qui concerne la Rivière des Anguilles dam, il n’y a qu’une étape avant...

(Interruptions)

Il n’y a qu’une étape avant de lancer l’appel d’offres. Tout a été fait par l’ancien gouvernement, *le pre-feasibility* du projet et le financement par les pays amis.

Dans trois ans, si le ministre sera toujours là, le ministre actuel aura l’honneur de *coupe riban* et de se vanter d’avoir accompli ce projet tout comme des projets d’énergies renouvelables qui sont actuellement en chantier.

Pour ce qui est du secteur du transport, encore un coup de massue pour les automobilistes. Augmentation drastique de frais de la déclaration et désormais les détenteurs de plaques personnalisées devront s’acquitter des frais annuels. Je me demande si cette mesure est légale premièrement, sans oublier, Madame la présidente, l’explosion des prix des voitures avec les taxes imposées dans ce budget.

Je vais maintenant, Madame la présidente, aborder le secteur de la construction. Cela est important. Ce budget va détruire le secteur de la construction et du *property development* à Maurice.

The construction industry is more than just steel and concrete; it is a pillar of our economy. It sustains thousands of professionals, architects, engineers, notaries and support skilled trade people, electricians, brick layers, plumbers, carpenters. It drives entire industries from material suppliers and logistics firms to furniture maker and real Estate brokers.

C’est connu que quand le secteur de la construction affiche bonne mine, cela a une répercussion positive sur l’ensemble de l’économie.

(Interruptions)

L’ancien gouvernement avait vu juste en investissant massivement dans ce secteur et d’en faire un pôle de croissance. Le pays a connu un développement infrastructurel sans précédent en cinq ans avec une quarantaine de projets routiers majeurs, plus de 600 projets de

drains, environ 4000 logements sociaux, un terminal moderne, le Victoria Urban Terminal et le métro qui relie désormais nos cinq villes.

(Interruptions)

Et tout d'un coup ce secteur est à l'arrêt total avec l'avènement de ce nouveau gouvernement.

Not only is this budget suffocating the foreign driven residential market, it does not support the domestic one. The popular home ownership scheme which refunded up to 5% of the purchase of price for locals has been scrapped. This was a life line particularly for young Mauritians hoping to buy their first home. Its removal, Madam Speaker, will be deeply felt.

Madam Speaker, only 2 major infrastructure projects have been announced and both scheduled for year 3 of a 5-year plan that is, the M4 and the Phase 2 of the Ring Road. The Flagship of 12 thousand social housing units programme is being discontinued, replaced with a meagre 1050 units to be constructed over a period of 58 years. Even the Metro Express extension has been put on hold.

Madam Speaker, let me remind this House that Smart Cities have been a key engine of our national development. They attracted FDI, created thousands of jobs and served as beacons of innovation and sustainable urbanization. Withdrawing this framework overnight without a viable alternative sends the worst possible message to investors that Mauritius is no longer a reliable, stable or predictable place to invest. Projects risk being abandoned and the thousands of Mauritians whose livelihood depends on this sector, risk job losses.

Madame la présidente, deux termes qui sont revenus souvent dans le budget sont l'intelligence artificielle et le digital. Encore une fois, je ne comprends pas comment ce gouvernement peut foncer tête baissée dans cette voie sans les consultations nécessaires et sans suivre la procédure qu'il faut. *We are still learning about AI and it maybe....*

An hon. Member: You are.

Mr Lesjongard: *It may be very dangerous for our society.* L'intelligence artificielle va affecter tout le monde et les effets sont déjà présents. Je vais vous citer George Hinton, le parrain de l'intelligence artificielle et il dit –

« Désormais les perspectives d'avenir de IA sont plutôt plus effrayantes pour les humains. Pour le moment, elles ne sont pas plus intelligentes que nous pour ce que j'en sais, mais je pense qu'elles pourront bientôt l'être »

Il redoute que les gens normaux ne puissent plus distinguer le vrai du faux. Les craintes portent la création massive des vidéos, des photos et d'articles fallacieux sur l'Internet. Ces arguments, Madame la présidente, nous concernent directement. L'utilisation de IA pour la diffusion des fausses informations et l'effet de l'intelligence artificielle sur le monde de l'emploi pourraient être catastrophique dans une décennie.

Je ne suis pas contre l'introduction de IA dans le secteur éducatif et dans le secteur public. Cela pourrait diminuer la lenteur administrative mais rien n'est dit dans ce budget sur la législation et la mise en place d'une autorité pour l'utilisation de l'intelligence artificielle.

An hon. Member: *Inn met blue print lorla.*

Mr Lesjongard: Il est temps de faire une étude de l'impact de l'intelligence artificielle sur les différents secteurs de l'économie afin de protéger l'emploi et nous devons éviter que l'intelligence artificielle affecte notre population négativement. Madame la présidente, avec toutes les mesures antisociales que contienne ce budget et surtout les injustices sociales qu'il va provoquer, je crains que nous ne nous dirigions vers une crise sociale sans précédent. Déjà, la situation du *Law and order* devient problématique dans le pays. Une force policière démotivée et en manque d'effectif. Malheureusement, il ne se passe pas une journée dans notre pays sans qu'on apprenne qu'un nouveau crime a été commis.

(Interruptions)

Presque tous les matins, les réseaux sociaux sont inondés par des cas liés à la détérioration de la situation ; *kout sab*, kidnapping, braquage, des attaques en plein jour...

(Interruptions)

...vol, viol, agression et encore des cadavres !

Mr Jhummun: Kistnen ! Kistnen !

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Et des meurtres.

(Interruptions)

Concernant Rodrigues, Madame la présidente, il y a une mesure que je trouve qui va grandement affecter directement les Rodriguais, mais aussi le secteur touristique à Rodrigues.

J'espère que les représentants de Rodrigues vont faire part de leur désapprobation à l'égard de cette mesure. C'est le prix du billet d'avion sur Rodrigues.

Mr Pentiah: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Voulez-vous...

Madam Speaker: Point of order! Yes!

Mr Pentiah: Madam Speaker, I refer to paragraph 42(1). We are not meant to be abused, listen to lies and go away from the relevancy of the debate. Standing Order 42(1)...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment! Let me find Standing Order 42!

Mr Pentiah: Standing Order 42(1), Madam Speaker, ...

Madam Speaker: One moment! One moment!

Mr Pentiah: Standing Order 42(1) –

“42. (1) Debate upon any motion, Bill or amendment shall be relevant to such motion, Bill or amendment, except in the case of a motion for the adjournment of the Assembly.”

Madam Speaker: I rule that it is perfectly relevant. Please! Please!

Mr Pentiah: Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Be careful, hon. Leader of the Opposition. You are now talking about social problems in general. So, I know what he means. So, be careful, okay?

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, j'étais en train de faire référence à nos amis de Rodrigues concernant la mesure budgétaire sur le prix des billets d'avion sur Rodrigues.

Madame la présidente, on nous parle d'un budget responsable. Le vrai budget responsable, c'était celui de 2020, quand l'économie de ce pays était à genoux, et il fallait assurer les salaires de tous les travailleurs de ce pays, y compris les *self-employed* pendant qu'ils étaient chez eux. Soutenir toutes les entreprises de ce pays pour éviter...

Madam Speaker: Venons-en à ce projet !

Mr Lesjongard: ... un licenciement massif qui allait mettre sur paille plus de 100 000 foyers. Nous avons évité le pire et nous en sommes fiers. Et aujourd'hui, on nous parle de

budget responsable alors que nous ne sommes plus en situation de force majeure. Vous avez trahi ce peuple. Vous avez fait des promesses pour gagner les élections...

Madam Speaker: You are supposed to address me!

Mr Lesjongard: ...mais vous saviez que vous n'allez pas les tenir !

Madam Speaker: *Mo pann trayir personn!*

(Interruptions)

So, address me!

(Interruptions)

Be careful, you are talking to me!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, but I need to address you when I make my speech.

Madam Speaker: Yes! But then, you cannot say 'you are'!

An hon. Member: Say the Government!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: You, meaning the Government, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, it does not mean that!

Mr Lesjongard: I am referring to them, not to you!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am so sorry. I am not going to stop you from talking. I am just saying even including the interruptions, I have allowed you one hour more or less already. Can we have an idea of how long you are going to be again?

Mr Lesjongard: I am almost finishing, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Alright, alright!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, please!

Carry on! You were on Rodrigues, on the promises.

Mr Lesjongard: I am done with Rodrigues!

Madam Speaker: You were on promises.

Mr Lesjongard: I am done with Rodrigues. What I was saying was *vous avez trahi ce peuple. Vous meaning le gouvernement !*

Vous avez fait des promesses pour gagner les élections, mais vous saviez que vous n'alliez pas les tenir. Voilà vos réalisations depuis votre arrivée au pouvoir. Vous avez fait fuir les investisseurs. Vous avez augmenté la dette publique de R 96 milliards. Aujourd'hui, vous démantelez l'État providence et vous avez réduit considérablement le pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens sous prétexte qu'il faut sauver notre économie.

Il y a quelques années, un membre de cette auguste Assemblée, un membre qui est très respecté, avait affirmé aux membres du gouvernement d'alors qu'ils devront porter des gilets *bar ross*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Twa ki bizin barr ross!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Je me pose la question, Madame la présidente, qui va porter ces gilets *bar ross* maintenant ?

(Interruptions)

Cette mince opposition ou cette majorité de 64 membres ?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *To enkor pa pe kapav...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Votre grande victoire de 60-0 est peut-être votre plus grande faiblesse, car tout est permis ici. Mais tout n'est pas permis, comme aime dire l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell '*out there!*'

Le peuple est en colère contre ce gouvernement. C'est fort probablement le dernier mandat pour plusieurs membres de cette Assemblée.

(Interruptions)

Nous avons tous connu des moments de gloire, de défaite et des moments compliqués au sein des gouvernements. Mais, à la fin de ce mandat, nous allons nous rapprocher. Et ce sera à vous, je m'adresse aux jeunes députés...

(Interruptions)

...ce sera à vous de porter ce fardeau d'avoir aboli cette pension. Malheureusement, vous aurez la responsabilité des décisions prises par un *think-tank* privatisé.

Que Dieu protège notre population, Madame la présidente. Merci !

Madam Speaker: Thank you ! Well, that was perfect timing!

We shall break for half an hour.

At 5.00 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.33 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Okay, we have the quorum. Hon. Minister of Labour!

The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madame la présidente, le véritable leadership ne se mesure pas aux applaudissements, mais aux prises de décisions dans les moments difficiles. C'est dans ces choix difficiles que se construit l'avenir d'une nation. Et je salue le Premier ministre et le *Deputy Prime Minister* qui ont eu le courage de prendre des décisions, certes impopulaires, mais nécessaires. Là, où d'autres auraient préféré la facilité, le populisme, ils ont pris leurs responsabilités afin d'assurer un avenir meilleur pour nos enfants.

Il est dommage que l'honorable leader de l'opposition n'ait pas cru nécessaire de s'asseoir et d'écouter la réplique que j'aurai à lui donner. C'est un peu dommage ! Dans une démocratie, on s'attend à ce que le leader de l'opposition, au moins, il écoute à l'intervention de celui qui parle après lui.

Le leader de l'opposition nous accuse, nous, au sein de ce gouvernement, de n'avoir pas tenu toutes nos promesses. Mais, en vérité, on est élu pour une période de 5 ans, Madame la présidente. Donc, on a 5 ans pour implémenter notre programme, nos promesses électorales et aussi notre programme gouvernemental. Et sans doute, on aurait fait plus cette année si on n'avait pas hérité de la situation économique catastrophique que nous a léguée le gouvernement sortant.

Ce que je trouve dommage, Madame la présidente, c'est qu'après toute ces années passées au Parlement et au gouvernement, le leader de l'opposition fait semblant qu'il ne comprend pas c'est quoi un budget, c'est quoi un déficit budgétaire. Pourtant, un budget national n'est pas vraiment différent d'un budget ménager. On reçoit des revenus, on fait des dépenses et quand nos dépenses dépassent nos revenus, la différence s'appelle déficit budgétaire. Prenons l'exemple d'une famille qui touche R 25 000 chaque mois. Forcément, elle ne va pas dépenser plus de R 25 000. Mais allons dire qu'elle a dépensé R 30 000, le déficit budgétaire est de R 5 000. Comment est-ce-que cette famille va faire pour avoir des dépenses de R 30 000 ? Elle aura à emprunter R 5 000. Mais si elle emprunte R 5 000, le mois prochain, elle doit payer les intérêts, et donc, ses dépenses continuent à augmenter. Elle continue à emprunter plus, et là, elle entre dans une spirale et, finalement, elle se retrouve à vivre au crédit. Finalement, elle travaille que pour rembourser ses dettes. Et puis, un jour arrive où la banque lui téléphone et lui dit : 'Je n'ai plus confiance en votre capacité de repayer vos obligations.' La personne voit ses articles saisis, sa maison allée à l'encan. Elle est déclarée en faillite. On la place dans ce qu'on appelle le *Mauritius Credit Information Bureau*, MCIB ; on lui colle l'étiquette de client à risque, mauvais payeur. Elle devient en faillite. Est-ce que c'est ça que l'honorable leader de l'opposition veut pour l'île Maurice ? Qu'on continue à s'endetter continuellement jusqu'à ce qu'on nous colle l'étiquette de mauvais payeur, de *junk status* ?

Pendant ces dix dernières années, Madame la présidente, le gouvernement MSM n'a cessé de dépenser au-delà de ses moyens. Le gouvernement MSM a saigné le pays à blanc, sacrifiant l'avenir national sur l'autel de leurs intérêts électoralistes et leur soif du pouvoir. Et le gouvernement MSM n'a jamais eu le courage de dire la vérité en face. On se souvient, le premier budget du Dr. Padayachy, ministre des Finances, il parlait déjà de *balanced budget* ou budget équilibré parce qu'il aimait s'exprimer dans la langue de Molière. Faux ! Complètement faux ! Faire croire à la population qu'elle dépense un même montant qu'elle reçoit en revenu alors qu'il venait de braquer la Banque centrale et prendre R 60 milliards des réserves publiques. C'était ça le MSM ! La tromperie dans leur ADN ! Et chaque année, ils faisaient la même chose. Ils venaient, dans le budget, sous-estimer les dépenses, surestimer les revenus pour sous-estimer les déficits budgétaires, pour faire croire qu'ils sont un gouvernement raisonnable et qu'ils ne dépensent pas plus que ce qu'ils ont. Et qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? Chaque année, une fois, deux fois, trois fois, il y avait des budgets

supplémentaires, des *Supplementary Appropriation Bills* où le gouvernement ratifiait les dépenses qu'il n'avait pas budgétisées, et l'année dernière, ils en ont fait de même.

Le leader de l'opposition nous parle tout le temps de document, *State of the Economy*, qui est anonyme. Mais, est-ce qu'il remet en question le *Budget Estimates* ? Est-ce qu'il peut remettre en question le document officiel du ministère des Finances qui vient confirmer chaque information qui était publiée dans le *State of Economy* ? Et qu'est-ce que ce document démontre, Madame la présidente ? À la page 11 –

“There is a notable discrepancy between the initial fiscal targets and the revised estimated for FY 2024-2025. Total revenue was lower by Rs 28.3 billion while total expenditure was higher by Rs 14.9 billion.”

Je vous explique cela très clairement. Ils avaient prévu des dépenses là, des revenus ici – la différence : 4.9%. En vérité, les dépenses sont là, les revenus sont là et le déficit budgétaire est de 9.6% ! Ils ont sous-estimé, sous-évalué par 70 milliards !

Mr Jhummun: Better be late than never!

Mr Uteem: Je suis content Monsieur le leader de l'opposition que vous preniez place parce que je viens d'expliquer comment votre gouvernement, dont vous faisiez partie, année après année, a menti au public en faisant croire que vous aviez une politique fiscale responsable, alors que chaque année, vous sous-estimiez les dépenses et vous surestimiez vos revenus.

Donc, le problème, Madame la présidente, c'est que quand on sous-estime les dépenses et qu'on surestime les revenus, on se retrouve avec un manque à gagner, un déficit élargi. Et, comme je l'ai expliqué, quelqu'un qui touche R 25 000 et qui a des dépenses de R 30 000, il lui faut emprunter R 5 000. Maintenant, si cette famille a mal calculé et, au lieu d'avoir des dépenses de R 30 000, elle a R 35 000 et au lieu d'avoir des revenus de R 25 000, elle a R 20 000, c'est R 15 000 qu'elle doit emprunter. Et c'est cela qui explique pourquoi, aujourd'hui, on se retrouve avec une dette publique qui avoisine le 90 %. C'est parce que, eux, le gouvernement précédent, ils ont menti. Ce n'est pas qu'on ait dépensé plus. La seule dépense qu'on a faite dès la prise de pouvoir de ce gouvernement, qui n'était pas budgétée, c'est le quatorzième mois qu'on a payé – seule dépense ! C'était pour les bénéfices des 90% des

travailleurs de ce pays ! Mais les autres, la différence, ça s'explique, parce que le gouvernement précédent a surestimé nos revenus et sous-estimé les dépenses.

La conséquence, Madame la présidente, quand, aujourd'hui, on se retrouve avec 90 % de dettes par rapport au PIB, c'est on ne peut plus emprunter, sinon on va se retrouver sur le MCIB. On aura un *junk status* et ce n'est pas spéculatif. Si on voit ce que Moody's a dit en début de l'année, en janvier, il nous a prévenu, et je cite –

“Delays in fiscal consolidation that lead to a persistently large fiscal deficit, causing debt to stabilise at elevated levels, would likely result in a downgrade.”

Ce n'est pas spéculatif. Moody's nous dit : 'si vous continuez à dépenser comme vous le faites et vous continuez à avoir une dette publique élevée, vous allez être *downgraded*' – pas spéculatif. C'est la position dans laquelle le gouvernement MSM nous a laissé.

Pourtant en 2014, lorsque le premier gouvernement MSM entre au pouvoir, le *credit rating* de Maurice était de Baa1 qui était très respectable pour un pays comme notre île et puis sous le régime du MSM, on a été *downgraded* deux fois Baa2 et puis Baa3 et aujourd'hui on est à la limite, on a la limite de l'*investment grade*. Si on est *downgraded*, si Moody's pense qu'on a l'incapacité de rembourser nos dettes parce que nos dettes sont trop élevées, on devient *junk status*. Et comme l'a très bien expliqué l'honorable Premier ministre tout à l'heure lors du *statement time* : si on est *downgraded*, on n'est plus *investment grade*, on devient *junk status*, on peut dire 'bye-bye' au secteur offshore, 'bye-bye' secteur financier, 'bye-bye' investissements, 'bye-bye' les personnes qui vont venir ici pour investir ; ils ne vont jamais venir s'il pense qu'on a une incapacité de rembourser nos dettes.

Mais pire encore, toutes les banques qui aujourd'hui prêtent aux mauriciens, ces banques-là quand elles vont devoir faire des prêts de l'extérieur, elles devront payer plus cher, à un taux d'intérêt plus fort et qu'est-ce qu'elles vont faire ? Elles vont répercuter cette augmentation du coût sur tous les mauriciens. Donc, il faut très bien comprendre cela, Madame la présidente, si on est *downgraded*, tous les mauriciens qui ont un *housing loan*, qui ont un *bank overdraft*, qui ont un *car loan*, tous les mauriciens auront à payer plus en termes d'intérêt. Comment est-ce qu'on peut rester les bras croisés face à une telle situation ? La solution, Madame la présidente, il n'y en a pas quatre milles, tous les ménagers le savent. Quand vous avez des dépenses qui sont trop élevées par rapport à vos revenus, il n'y a pas dix milles solutions, vous devez réduire vos dépenses et augmenter vos revenus et c'est ce

qu'on est en train de faire dans ce budget. On ne peut pas emprunter plus, donc, on a forcément à trouver des revenus ailleurs et couper nos dépenses.

Maintenant, prenons les revenus. On va commencer par des réformes. On va commencer par investir dans des projets qui vont générer une croissance, qui vont générer développement et on va miser surtout sur l'innovation, recherche et technologie mais aussi pour chaque pôle de développement dans nos secteurs traditionnels, dans le budget on a annoncé plusieurs mesures pour relancer ces divers secteurs.

Le leader de l'opposition, en citant l'annexe tout à l'heure, nous parlait de, c'était à la paragraphe (b) page 24, que le gouvernement va faire des réformes dans des entreprises publiques pour institutionnaliser une discipline financière et cela entraînera *reforming the pricing and subsidy framework*. Donc, lui il a compris cela comme voulant dire qu'on est en train d'éliminer et de réduire les subsides. Non, Madame la présidente, tout le contraire. Contrairement à eux, qui n'ont fait que dilapider les fonds publics, nous on réforme chaque institution. On va s'assurer qu'il n'y a pas de gaspillage et quand on aurait fini avec le *good governance*, forcément on aura une meilleure gestion et à ce moment, ces différents corps paraétatiques vont plus avoir besoin du montant des subsides qu'on est en train de donner de la caisse publique. Ce n'est pas qu'on réduit le subside sur les prix de l'électricité, non, on est en train de faire CEB, CWA, Wastewater Authority, toutes les institutions, on va leur faire devenir plus performantes. On aura des *performance*, des KPIs et ils devront *deliver*. Et quand ils vont *deliver*, forcément c'est le public qui sera bénéficiaire de ces améliorations des services.

Mais, Madame la présidente, malheureusement ces réformes qu'on propose, l'élimination des gaspillages, cela va nous ramener à R 5 milliards d'économie sur les prochaines trois années mais ce ne sera pas suffisant. Il faut encore des revenus. Donc, là aussi on a un choix faire, la facilité aurait été d'augmenter la TVA, 1%, 2%, 3%, c'est la façon la plus facile de récupérer de l'argent. Mais quand on augmente la TVA, c'est toute la population qui paye. Et ceux qui souffrent le plus sont ceux au bas de l'échelle, parce qu'en termes de pourcentage, quand on augmente la TVA et que tous les produits augmentent, ce sont les petits qui sont les plus vulnérables. C'est pourquoi on a choisi, non seulement de ne pas augmenter la TVA mais au contraire, on a pris la décision de réduire la TVA sur certains items, notamment sur les produits en conserve, les tomates en conserve, sur les légumes

frigorifiés, les aliments de base, les produits pour bébé. Donc, c'est pour les produits de consommation qu'on a enlevé la TVA pour justement baisser.

Mais quand on a pris la décision de ne pas toucher à la TVA, forcément il faut chercher de l'argent auprès de *l'income tax*, les impôts. Là aussi, on a fait un choix, qui va payer ? Est-ce que tout le monde paye la même quantité d'impôts ? On augmente pour tout le monde ? On a pris une décision, on a décidé d'imposer plus sur ceux qui ont les moyens de payer. Les individus qui touchent plus de R 12 millions, ils vont payer une taxe additionnelle de 15%. Les sociétés, les compagnies qui gagnent plus de R 24 millions, ils vont payer 5% de plus. Les banques vont payer 2.5% de plus. Donc, ce sont les grosses fortunes qui vont payer le plus sous l'item de l'impôt et là aussi, on ne veut pas avoir l'étiquette de *high tax government*. Le Premier ministre l'a déjà dit, on va revoir toutes ces mesures dans trois ans parce que dans trois ans les reformes qu'on va amener, vont apporter leurs fruits et on pourra revoir la fiscalité et retourner vers une fiscalité légère.

On a aussi décidé qu'il y avait certains projets qui engendraient beaucoup d'argent mais qui n'étaient pas imposable. Je parle là des Smart City. Les Smart City Projects, Madame la présidente, sont exonérés d'impôts pendant huit ans et là on parle des projets immobiliers qui sont vendus dans la plupart des cas à des étrangers qui ont les moyens de payer. Donc, on parle de gros profits. Donc, ces entreprises de Smart City ne payaient pas d'impôts pendant huit ans, ne payaient pas de TVA sur les matériaux de construction, ne payaient pas de *land conversion tax*, ne payaient pas de *registration duty*. Un manque à gagner de plusieurs milliards de roupies. Ça c'était l'ancien régime – *caring for the rich*. *Ar nou non !* Les gens qui sont dans les Smart City Scheme doivent payer la taxe comme n'importe qui. Au contraire, ils ont les moyens de payer plus, on aurait dû les faire payer plus.

Madame la présidente, sous le gouvernement MSM le pouvoir d'achat des mauriciens a considérablement baissé, et là aussi, les plus affectés étaient naturellement ceux au bas de l'échelle. Afin que les gens aient plus d'argent pour leurs dépenses – écoutez bien M. le leader de l'opposition – on a augmenté le seuil d'impôts à R 500,000, donc un salarié qui touche moins de R 38 000 par mois ou un *self-employed* qui touche moins de R 41 500 par mois ne paient pas d'impôts dans Maurice. 81% des salariés ne paieront pas d'impôts. Jamais aucun gouvernement n'a autant fait pour les travailleurs et c'est ça un gouvernement Travailleuse/MMM/Rezistans ek Alternativ avec l'appui des Nouveaux Démocrates.

Madame la présidente, avec les réformes de taxes, 75 000 personnes qui touchent moins d'un million de roupies paieront moins de taxes. Payer moins de taxes veut dire avoir plus d'argent disponible. Donc, au lieu de donner des transferts directs aux personnes, on ne leur prend pas la taxe. Donc, ils auront plus d'argent dans les poches et ils pourront plus dépenser. Donc, quand les gens pensent ou disent qu'on est en train de couper des allocations ici, allocations là-bas. Non, mais réfléchissez ! Vous aurez plus d'argent parce que vous ne paierez plus d'impôts. Vous aurez plus d'argent et vous pouvez décider ce que vous allez faire de cet argent. Si vous voulez dépenser ou vous voulez payer vos dettes, c'est à vous de décider.

Madame présidente, l'augmentation des revenus additionnels que l'État percevra à travers les impôts, les mesures que je viens d'énumérer, le *fair share contribution*, mais aussi sur *excise duty* sur les cigarettes, boissons et voitures, ne sera, malheureusement, pas suffisant pour réduire le déficit budgétaire à un niveau acceptable. On devra réduire les dépenses.

En premier lieu, on va prendre les mesures nécessaires pour réduire les gaspillages de fonds comme je viens de l'expliquer. Plus des contrats juteux aux petits copains et petites copines. Ce matin, encore, on a entendu de l'honorable Premier ministre, comment certaines personnes proches du pouvoir bénéficiaient à coût de millions de roupies, de milliards de roupies de largesse de l'ancien gouvernement.

Mr Bhagwan : *Milyon zot pa kone!*

Mr Uteem : On a entendu comment l'ancien directeur de l'ICAC touchait un salaire indécent, payé en devises s'il vous plaît. Donc, fini ces dépenses inutiles. Fini les dépenses inutiles comme la construction du stade Côte D'Or. Fini les ruptures abusives des contrats qui nous ont valu des milliards de roupies des dommages à la BAI, à Betamax, à Patel Engineering. Plus jamais cela. Cela va nous permettre d'économiser au moins R 5 milliards sur les trois prochaines années.

Malheureusement, Madame la présidente, là aussi ce n'est pas suffisant parce qu'avec une dette de 90 % du PIB et un déficit budgétaire de 9 %, il faut baisser encore les dépenses. Et, ce n'est pas de gaité de cœur, Madame la présidente, qu'on aura à réduire les dépenses publiques et cesser les paiements des certaines allocations. On a dû faire un choix ; un choix difficile.

Qu'aurions-nous dû faire, Madame la présidente ? Aurions-nous dû couper le budget de la Santé alors qu'on a une population vieillissante qui a besoin de soins et des médicaments ?

Il y a un manque de personnel dans nos services hospitalier. Devrions-nous faire comme l'ancien régime et ne pas payer les heures supplémentaires, overtime des médecins et des infirmiers ? Aurions-nous dû revoir l'éducation gratuite, réduire les *grants* alloués aux diverses institutions éducatives ? Aurions-nous dû sacrifier les projets d'utilité publique, la gestion de l'eau alors qu'on demande à la population de faire des sacrifices car le précédent régime n'a pas construit des nouveaux *dams* y compris le fameux Rivière des Anguilles dam ? Je ne parle même pas de la promesse de *dilo 24/7* et le changement des vieux tuyaux.

Devrions-nous sacrifier l'augmentation de notre capacité énergétique alors qu'on vient de traverser une crise sans précédent frôlant le délestage, *load shedding* ? Là aussi, parce que l'ancien régime – et le leader de l'opposition était ministre de l'énergie – durant le règne de Jugnauth, ils n'ont pas construit de nouvelles centrales électriques.

Ou bien, aurions-nous dû cesser le système à toutes à l'égout et prendre le risque d'une catastrophe hygiénique ? Et les drains, dans ma propre circonscription, à Port-Louis, qui ont subi de plein fouet les pluies torrentielles et les *flash flood*. À St-Jean, Coromandel, Fond du Sac, Canal Dayot et les autres régions à haut risque, doit-on construire des drains ou pas ?

Les maisons sociales ? Plus de 40 000 familles sont en attente pour un logement social y compris plusieurs milliers des familles démunies qui sont inscrites sur le registre social. On construit ou on ne construit pas ?

La préservation de l'environnement, le sport, les investissements dans les infrastructures publiques, dans le port, dans nos réseaux routiers. Dites-nous, Madame la présidente, qu'est-ce qu'on aurait dû couper, qu'est-ce qu'on aurait dû sacrifier ? Le budget de la sécurité sociale ? En vérité, on a même augmenté le budget du ministère de la Sécurité sociale par rapport à l'année dernière. Ce n'est pas évident ! Ce n'est pas évident de faire un choix de réduire les dépenses publiques.

Madame la présidente, malheureusement, on a dû faire un choix ; un choix extrêmement difficile. On a dû repousser l'âge de la pension. Le paiement de la pension universelle est la plus grosse dépense du gouvernement et représente, à elle seule, quelque 25 % de dépenses courantes.

Le régime de la pension universelle, *Basic Retirement Pension*, dans sa forme actuelle, est insoutenable. Tout le monde le sait et cela ne date pas d'hier. En 2004, Pravind Jugnauth était alors ministre des Finances. L'honorable leader de l'opposition était dans le *front bench* du gouvernement. En présentant son budget, voilà ce que Pravind Jugnauth a dit, je cite –

“A number of reports have questioned the long-term sustainability of the Basic Retirement Pension, especially as our population is fast-ageing and BRP is fully funded out of government revenue...”

Et d’ajouter –

“Government transfers are simply not sustainable if they are universal and open-ended. This puts a limit on our capacity to do more for the poorer segment of the population. I believe that this is an issue that calls for a bold decision. I am therefore implementing, this year, a targeted approach to basic pension as from October 24, the payment of BRP will be limited to person with monthly income not exceeding Rs20000.”

Pourquoi, monsieur Pravind Jugnauth, alors ministre de Finances, avait-il introduit le ciblage en 2004 ? Parce que le système de la pension était ‘*simply not sustainable*’ ! Ces sont ses propres mots ; c’était en 2004. Maintenant, on est en 2025, et cela devient tout à coup *sustainable* ? Pourquoi est-elle *unsustainable* ?

Premièrement, parce que notre pension universelle est non contributive. C’est-à-dire que les bénéficiaires de la pension ne contribuent pas directement dans un fonds spécial de pension pour payer leurs retraites. La pension est payée d’une *Consolidated Fund*, des deniers publics.

Par contre, les fonctionnaires, les employés des corps paraétatiques contribuent chaque mois une partie de leurs salaires dans le *Civil Service Pension Scheme au Statutory Bodies Pension Fund* et arrivés à l’âge de la retraite, ils obtiennent une pension additionnelle, un *lump sum*, une pension à vie.

De même, les employés du secteur privé qui contribuaient jadis une partie de leurs salaires dans le *National Pension Funds* ou qui aujourd’hui contribuent dans un fonds de pension privée, eux aussi, arrivé à l’âge de 65 ans, ils ont une pension additionnelle parce qu’ils ont contribué pour cette pension. Et là j’aurais dû faire une parenthèse, Madame la présidente. Les députés et ministres – nous aussi nous contribuons. Chaque mois nous contribuons une somme d’argent qui va dans un fonds spécial et lorsqu’on prend notre retraite, après deux mandats, on nous paye à partir de ce fonds. Donc, c’est important de le dire parce que je vu des articles dans la presse qui suggéraient que les ministres et députés, avant, avaient des pensions à vie, comme si c’était quelque chose de gratuit, un *indemnity*. Une pension qui est tombée du ciel. Non, on contribue ! Chaque mois on contribue dans ce fonds de pension.

Donc, ce n'est pas vrai de dire que, nous, les ministres et députés, nous avons une pension additionnelle alors que les autres mauriciennes n'en ont pas. Non. On a une pension contributive. C'est ça la différence ; ce n'est pas à titre gratuit.

La deuxième raison, Madame la présidente, pourquoi notre système de pension est insoutenable ? C'est pour une raison démographique. On a une population vieillissante, *an ageing population*, c'est-à-dire que le pourcentage de personnes qui ont 60 ans ou plus augmente, alors que le pourcentage de la population active, c'est-à-dire ceux qui travaillent, diminue. Pourquoi ? Parce que l'espérance de vie augmente alors que le taux de natalité est en baisse.

Si je me fie aux chiffres qui m'ont été donnés par le ministère de la Sécurité sociale, nous avons environ 279,800 *seniors citizens*, dont 83,750, soit environ 30 % ont entre 60 et 64. Comme il y a plus de personnes qui touchent la pension et moins de personnes qui travaillent, les travailleurs doivent travailler davantage et payer plus de taxes pour payer les pensions. En d'autres mots, Madame la présidente, si rien n'est fait aujourd'hui, nos enfants et nos petits-enfants auront à travailler plus et à payer plus d'impôts pour soutenir chaque retraité.

En 2015, dans son rapport, la FMI faisait déjà allusion à notre population vieillissante et disait, je cite –

“This rapid increase could threaten the overall long-term sustainability of public finances. These amounts would not be financeable with the current tax system.”

On ne peut pas être plus clair ! Tout notre système allait s'écrouler. C'est ce qu'avait prédit la FMI en 2015. Même l'ancien gouvernement, en 2016-2017, décide de mettre sur pied un *high-level committee* présidé par le ministre de la Sécurité sociale d'antan avec des représentants des ministères, de Business Mauritius et des syndicalistes pour revoir la pension. Une des recommandations faites par le comité technique, c'est justement d'amener à terme l'âge de perception des bénéfices de la pension à 65 ans.

Donc, on n'est pas en train d'inventer quelque chose, Madame la présidente. Depuis 2017, les experts dans le *high-powered committee*, instauré sous le gouvernement MSM, avaient déjà fait la recommandation qu'il fallait repousser l'âge de la pension à 65 ans. Mais le gouvernement d'alors refusa de publier le rapport et d'implémenter ses recommandations.

La situation s'empire. *Enter monsieur Padayachy* ! Quand il présente le budget 2020-2021, il fait le même constat. Je cite paragraphe 148 de son budget –

“And our demographic trend with an ageing and decreasing population, as underlined by various international institutions, make our pension system unsustainable for the future.”

Donc, il reconnaît lui aussi, tout comme son leader reconnaît, que *the pension system is unsustainable*. Ça, c’est le langage qu’ils tiennent quand ils sont au gouvernement. Quand ils sont dans l’opposition, c’est complètement différent ! Mais ils reconnaissent que le système de pension est insoutenable. Pour remédier la situation, monsieur Padayachy abolit le *National Pensions Fund* et le remplace par la Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG). Comment décrit-il cette réforme ? –

“We are introducing a contributory participating system, la Contribution Sociale Généralisée.”

Écoutez bien –

“This will ensure an additional guaranteed monthly income to citizens above normal retirement age of 65 years.”

Donc, le but de l’introduction de la CSG était de remplacer le *National Pension Fund* par un system qui va garantir l’augmentation de la pension pour les retraités à partir de l’âge de 65 ans. C’était la seule raison et la seule explication donnée par monsieur Padayachy. J’abolis le *National Pension Fund* et je le remplace par la CSG pour que vous, les retraités, à la retraite, vous ayez une pension additionnelle.

Mais que s’est-il passé après ? Où sont passés les milliards de roupies que les travailleurs ont contribué aux sueurs de leurs fronts ? À une question parlementaire du 24 octobre 2023, monsieur Padayachy fait frissonner la population quand il lâche la bombe suivante –

« M. le président, le montant total déboursé pour le paiement de ces prestations est d’environ R 25 milliards. Il ne reste donc rien par rapport aux contributions de la CSG.
»

Il ne reste rien ! C’est ce qu’on dit *la kaiss vid* ! C’est ça, monsieur le leader de l’opposition, quand on dit qu’il n’y a plus de caisse parce que la caisse est vide ! Et ce n’est pas moi qui le dis ; c’est le propre ministre des Finances d’alors qui dit qu’il y a récolté R 25 milliards des travailleurs ! Cet argent aurait dû être utilisé pour payer les pensions des travailleurs ! Il reste zéro roupie !

Mais pire que ça. En vérité, la situation est bien pire que ça, Madame la présidente. En réponse à une question parlementaire, notre honorable Premier ministre a déposé un document à l'Assemblée nationale. Quand on voit ce document, on trouve que le montant qui a été dépensé est au fait bien au-delà de R 25 milliards.

Il y a un déficit de R 3 milliards l'année dernière et cette année R 7.7 milliards. En total, il y a un déficit de R 10.2 milliards dans le fond de la CSG. Non seulement ils ont tout '*bangolé*,' tout dépensé, mais en plus, on a dû payer R 10.2 milliards pour leurs dépenses. R 10. 2 milliards sortent d'où ? C'est la dette publique, monsieur le leader de l'opposition ! Voilà comment on augmente la dette publique parce qu'on vient dire qu'il y a de l'argent dans la CSG quand en fait, il y a un trou de R 12 milliards, et il faut emprunter davantage !

En vérité, Madame la présidente, la CSG a rendu le système de pension encore plus vulnérable, encore plus insoutenable, et en plus, les travailleurs du secteur privé n'auront plus de revenus additionnels à l'âge de la retraite auprès du NPF. C'est pourquoi, Madame la présidente, l'honorable Premier ministre a annoncé, au paragraphe 240 de son discours, la constitution d'une commission d'experts pour revoir notre système de pension et faire des recommandations pour remplacer cette catastrophe CSG par une version améliorée du *National Pension Fund*. Le Premier ministre présidera lui-même un *steering committee* pour considérer les recommandations de ce comité d'experts.

Madame la présidente, nous avons aussi une pensée spéciale pour les plus vulnérables. Nous les avons écoutés. Nous savons qu'il y a plusieurs personnes arrivées à l'âge de 60 ans qui ne peuvent plus travailler. Nous savons qu'il y a des personnes qui ne peuvent plus travailler pour des raisons physiques. C'est pourquoi le Premier ministre a annoncé un peu plus tôt, cet après-midi, la mise sur pied de deux comités –

- (1) Le premier, dont il présidera lui-même, considérera la possibilité de soutenir financièrement les personnes qui ne peuvent plus travailler au-delà de l'âge de 60 ans, de même que les femmes au foyer et les mères de famille.
- (2) Le deuxième comité sera présidé par mon collègue ministre de l'Intégration sociale et considérera la possibilité d'étendre un soutien financier à ceux qui, pour des raisons médicales, ne peuvent pas ou ne peuvent plus travailler.

Avec ces deux comités, nous espérons apporter un soutien financier aux personnes les plus vulnérables qui ont atteint l'âge de 60 et qui ne travaillent pas ou ne travailleront plus.

Madame la présidente, je n'ai pas parlé sur les mesures budgétaires pour ministère, car j'ai voulu rompre avec la pratique de mon prédécesseur qui profitait du *Finance Bill* pour amender en catimini les prévisions ayant trait aux droits des travailleurs et aux relations industrielles. C'est pourquoi, monsieur le leader de l'opposition, ce budget ne fait aucune mention de semaine de 40 heures.

Nous allons tenir les Assises du travail au cours de cette année, probablement pendant le mois de septembre. Tous les acteurs et les opérateurs du secteur, les syndicaux, le patronat et les forces vives seront invités à se pencher sur les diverses mesures annoncées dans notre programme électoral et reprises dans notre programme gouvernemental. A la lumière de ces délibérations, nous viendrons avec un nouveau projet de loi.

Madame la présidente, je m'excuse, j'ai été un peu long, un peu parfois technique mais il était nécessaire de bien expliquer à la population pourquoi on s'est retrouvé dans l'obligation de repousser l'âge de la pension de manière progressive jusqu'à l'âge de la retraite de 65 ans. Nous n'avons pas d'autres choix. Nous n'avons plus le luxe de pouvoir emprunter davantage. Nous avons choisi de ne pas augmenter la TVA et de maintenir les dépenses essentielles et ce n'est pas de gaieté de cœur que nous le faisons mais c'est par patriotisme.

Nous devons à tout prix nous assurer que Moody's ne nous relègue pas au statut de *junk* et à lire le communiqué de Moody's en date du 10 juin, il semblerait qu'on ait atteint notre objectif. Avec ce budget courageux responsable, nous jetons les bases pour une avenir meilleur. Merci.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, hon. Minister of Agriculture! Minister, please start.

(Interruptions)

(6.15 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Madam Speaker, the joy I am having to speak after my good friend, there is not much left for me to say – but the joy having to address the House on a major Bill, the Budget Speech, does not need to convince anyone of the merits of this Bill. The Prime Minister, Minister of Finance has dared to act and has acted in the best interest of the nation.

This Budget Speech delivered by the Prime Minister is a speech where there is honesty of purpose. It is true that there is a state of psychosis, engineered by those who steadfastly do not want to understand the harsh realities and we do not live in caucus land, Madam Speaker. Who do not like to take populist measures? But the fact remains, pension reform as is, is inevitable and sustainability is the policy of any responsible government.

Pension reform is making headlines every day and the statement which has been circulated made by Prime Minister is crystal clear that BRP is fiscally unsustainable and financially unbearable. It is a timebomb ticking and is crowding out resources which should have been channelled to reconcile social and economic factors. As a responsible government with a clear mandate, we have to serve the better interest of the weak, the vulnerable, the socially and physically deprived and the nation at large. And those who can work, have the opportunities and legitimate right to work till they reach 65 years of age.

A nation, Madam Speaker, does not walk on empty belly, on dreams which shall be shattered. Either we adapt or we perish. Do we want, as has been stated and reinforced by the Prime Minister and hon. Uteem, a sub-investment country grade? A sub-investment country grade status, Madam Speaker, means junk status and in one word – loss of confidence. As the Prime Minister has stated – there is a call not only for the Prime Minister but for the nation to rebuild the bridge to the future. All economists, actuaries, entrepreneurs and many mere mortals are not born with silver spoons. They totally agree with the reform and people are, slowly but surely, beginning to understand the merits of the reform. Only those who were fanatics of reckless populism, will wage a sinister campaign and no decision is taken lightly by a responsible government to serve the interests of a nation and a nation which constantly has to be on the walk and we will walk the talk, Madam Speaker because we have to live up to the expectations of our children. We have to live up to the expectations of the regional community, of the international community and as we say “arise, awake, stop not till the goal is reached”. The country as I see, is walking on a tightrope to rebalance growth with the collection of taxes. No one owes us a living and the days of preference are waning.

Madam Speaker, from the rank and file, be from the backbench or frontbench, we put up a common front and are present in all forum – on radio talk-show – in our constituencies and with the private sector to state emphatically, there is no alternative. Pension reform is *sine qua non*. The Deputy Prime Minister chaired several meetings attended by Ministers, Junior Minister of Finance, the FS and senior officers from relevant bodies examine in-depth what may be contentious issues.

We have a clear mandate to repair our public finances and economy, if not, we will be in financial dire straits. The Prime Minister has pledged and I know he will honour his pledge because he has the support of the government and sooner than later, the nation will rally behind what he has said and it is a pledge that states in around three years' time, everyone will share in the benefits including a return to a lighter tax policy.

Taxation, Madam Speaker, is based on income. Minimum wage is and will remain Rs20,000 monthly and will increase. The most fortunate will support the more vulnerable and it will be a fair contribution from those corporation and individuals over the next three years. Our deep-seated concern is first and foremost our sovereign rating and those who have committed economic crimes should not get away. Moody's credit ratings agency downgraded Mauritius from Ba1 in 2014 to Baa3 in 2024 during the prime ministership of Pravind Jugnauth.

As we say, a notch above the junk status but Pravind Jugnauth should have had the guts to explain why the debt to GDP ratio rose from 55.8 % in 2014 to 90% in 2024. As Prime Minister, he and his Minister of Finance, they withdrew Rs180 billion from the vault of the Bank of Mauritius. Rs80 billion was credited to MIC and its investment were a high-risk in many cases. Maradiva hit the jackpot, hundred billion was transferred to consolidated fund but there has been no judicious use of resources. It is the Molnupiravir and the NG syndrome all the way.

The nation was shocked and stunned in relation to reply given by Prime Minister to PQ B/39 put by hon. Jhummun. Its corruption galore by NNC and cronyism at its peak. They should not get away. And economic crime is a crime and the policy of the MSM was spend, spend and squander taxpayers' money. If there is no money, it was acceptable to them to print money, Madam Speaker. We saw the effects printing of money had on inflation and the purchasing power of household. As economics say: 'inflation is first and foremost a tax on the poor, on a tax on the middle class and then the rest'.

Madam Speaker, the Bank of Mauritius has an obligation to recover the giveaway loan to the cronies. Why did Pravind Jugnauth and his Minister of Finance set aside the findings of the report of the World Bank? Yes, it hit them in the face over mismanagement of the economy. The major reform of pensions should have taken place as far back as 2018. We are today in an unprecedented situation and can the *Alliance Lepep* deny that it promised to reform pensions? The former Prime Minister is now denying it; unless he was planning to

print more money as he did before. When you look at macroeconomic figures which have been quoted and cited lengthily by hon. Uteem, it is equivalent to a burden of Rs500,000. Yes, half a million of debt borne by every Mauritian out there.

And what should we do? Like Oliver Twist, beg for more and more? Of course, asking for loans from elsewhere. There is no alternative but to redress, and if we do not fix it today, we may not have anything to fix tomorrow. The system will be broken. And may I remind you of the old pensioners in Greece, who overnight had to take a 50% reduction on all pension benefits? We cannot take free education, healthcare, free transport and social-related benefits for granted. Our duty is to bequeath a legacy of sustainability to our children and the future generation. The former regime went on a spending spree and guess who are paying for the *largesse* of the big spenders? The taxpayers, Madam Speaker.

We cannot live on borrowed money and borrowed time. The MSM has brought this country to its abyss. The pension funds of CEB, Air Mauritius have been dilapidated by the decadent filthy regime. SIT, Rose Belle Sugar Estate have been vandalised and ripped off. The Competition Commission under the MSM encouraged cartel; the cartel of wholesale and distribution of food and pharmaceutical products fleece consumers. It was a clear case of state capture; running the country for the benefit of a lucky few and their cronies.

There is no free lunch. We are mobilising financial resources to invest in productive sectors in order to create more opportunities for everyone. Investment, investment and sound investment. And we need to reclaim our ranking as the best platform for business in the region and beyond. Export or die reform should be deep-rooted as Government embarks upon reform. Prior to 05 June, the property sector has been subject to grandfathering of its approved project, that is, the same fiscal regime from the time permits were issued. Investors and corporate sectors have to go for creation of shared values. Universal pension or basic retirement pension is not free, as has been stated by the Prime Minister. It is not manna falling from heaven. It is funded by taxpayers' money and sustained by sound investment policies. The Prime Minister is saving the BRP and as I stated, from the abyss.

Another oil shock, Madam Speaker. Another oil price shock due to uncertainty in the Middle East would lead to higher inflation, higher prices in the petrol pumps and in shops, and less likelihood of interest cuts. For a government focused on growth and improving living standards, the economic consequences are profound. This budget addresses the interest of the weak and the vulnerable. We are pro-poor; the welfare state is sacrosanct. As a caring

Government, we have to protect the sacrosanctity of the welfare state. Free transport for students and senior citizens is here to stay. 81% as has been stated, of income earners under our Government, are exempted from taxes but high-income earners and corporates are being called to contribute during this period of distress. This is the most courageous and progressive tax reform this country has undertaken for years. With an ageing population, we need more of our workers who are able to work and to remain in the labour force. Our population has peaked; our domestic workforce is shrinking. We can maintain the status quo and face a bleak future, but we will maintain the dynamism that has seen us emerge from a poor overcrowded barracoon at independence, to one of the richest nations on the African continent. We are committed to a low tax jurisdiction in less than three years.

I am not going to state what the Prime Minister has stated in relation to the two committees that have been set up specifically to decide on income support for deserving housewives and those whose health do not allow them to work. As we say, everything got downgraded. We should not forget that US and France have not been spared. The US has lost a notch over its credit ratings by Moody's. Washington is not able to limit its rising debt level and let me quote here what was said on Bloomberg by Jamie Dimon, a long serving Chief Executive of investment of JPMorgan –

“Hopefully, we [the US] will avoid a recession, but I would not take it off the table at this point. The scale of the increase in tariffs will lead to higher inflation and global growth will fall.”

Mauritius is now not only a Small Island State, but it is now a Big Oceanic Small State (BOSS), and it clearly implies Mauritius will lose its investment grade status that will lead to investors losing confidence in our capacity to repay our debt if we maintain status quo as I have stated earlier. Mauritius would have to borrow at high rates. There will be flight of capital, and the financial services as has been stated, would be a sunset sector. Who will write off our external debt? It has happened to Argentina and Sri Lanka; we call it the worst middle-income trap.

Increasing the basic pension from Rs10,000 to Rs15,000 from 2022 to 2025 has costed around Rs18 billion yearly. The *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* in 2025, is expected to amount to Rs16 billion and we clearly see that there is an upcoming shortfall of Rs2 billion. And it is expected that the contributions to *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* are expected to continue to increase, unless we decide to cut back and we have agreed to cut back. As is,

Madam Speaker, it is a curse. Cumulative savings from *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*, the raising pension age and from other fiscal measures will be used to lower our current budget and debt deficit.

In France, back in 2023, a law was passed to raise the retirement age to 64. Seychelles, Botswana, the UK have all raised the eligibility age of BRP to 65 years. Not to forget that Denmark is keen to raise the age to 70 years, which will be the highest in Europe. I agree, we are not Denmark but Mauritius cannot be the exception to the rule, with an ageing workforce likely to reach 27% of our total population in 2063. The demographic changes are frightening. We used to be an overcrowded barracoon but we no longer are. We need labour and there is not a country in the world which is not reviewing its pension scheme.

Madam Speaker, this demonstrates that this is a responsible budget for our great country which is now a fully-fledged Ocean State. We have to tap into the potential of our EEZ. Today, following the historic Chagos deal with the UK and the US, 2.3 square kilometres of the economic zone is now ocean-based. We need to accelerate the transformation of the opportunities lying in our EEZ. The UN Secretary General was right to say, oceans cannot be the Wild West, and President Macron made it clear that the ocean is not for sale. The Prime Minister has pledged to declare the biggest MPA in the Chagos Archipelago.

As a responsible Government, we need to ensure that we create an enabling environment that allows to ensure food security objectives, create opportunities for our farmers and fishermen but also, contribute to the global cause of saving the planet from the global warming and climate change. One can ask how we will achieve such ambitious goal in these trying times. The answer will come, again, from our natural assets and from our oceans through the carbon and biodiversity credit. Seychelles has started to exploit the extended continental shelf which we share with them. They are fishing sea cucumbers and exporting to China.

Madam Speaker, Saya de Malha remains a big carbon sink, even bigger than the Amazon, and it is within swimming distance to Agalega which has a good runway and a sea port. We need to set up a proper cold storage there to keep the fish before exporting them to Mauritius. Rs25 million have been earmarked as an early harvest.

The historical agreement over the Chagos Archipelago gives us the leverage to set up a future fund to invest in food security, renewable energy, climate change adaptation and mitigation, the blue economy, AI equity funds, and equity funds for our young people to become entrepreneur. The country will rise with the tide to become a high-income State. This strategy will strengthen economic resilience. It will create opportunities for investment for the private sector and further diversify the operation. Most importantly, it will help us to deliver food security and job opportunities for our population. This is a virtuous circle which we have to unleash and we can unleash together.

As a vast Ocean State, with an EEZ of more than 2 million square kilometres, we do not need to conclude bilateral agreement with the UK to fish in our EEZ. More pelagic fish and tuna would be landed indeed, and as the saying goes, it is as good as gold. We will deliver more licences to fishing vessels but, it will be a pre-requisite that the catch will land in our port.

Madam Speaker, be it artisanal or semi-industrial or industrial, they have to be empowered. Our fishermen are being encouraged to regroup and facilities will be extended to those who want to have the catch on the banks. All the fish aggregating devices which are damaged will be replaced. We are making it possible for them to acquire semi-industrial vessels at concessionary rates. Lagoon fishermen are being trained to move off lagoon.

First and foremost, we are focused on empowering the fishermen, those who have reached 65 years old will have the option to retire against a compensation of Rs200,000. Grants and loans are provided to fishers to purchase more robust boats, known as *canot*, for off lagoon fishing to increase the catch. The democratisation process is ongoing, notwithstanding, responsible fisheries activities.

Semi-industrial fishing companies are co-existing with Raphaël Fishing at St. Brandon for mutual benefit, and the National Coast Guard are playing their role fully. In this context, I will appeal to the foretaste and taste of our fellow citizens, we all like to eat fish and if we want to increase our fish consumption, our aquaculture deserves better consideration. Brazil is a huge coastal State and 49% of its fish production is from aquaculture. I ate Tilapia in Brazil; it is tasty and fleshy. Why are we reluctant to eat fish like Red Berry or Tilapia or Barramundi? The critical mass can easily be created to make prices competitive if the demand for supply from aquaculture and, especially from bank fishing is created. Today, be it

bank fishing or be it St. Brandon or Chagos, these areas which are part of our EEZ are teeming with fish and opportunities are knocking.

Madam Speaker, research and experts on inland aquaculture will tell us when fish is transferred to brackish water prior to consumption. The taste is amazing! I want the price of fish to be available and to be affordable by one and all. Don't we export Barramundi to Switzerland? An expression of interest to manage barachois has been called. It is a pledge to inculcate to the younger generation a healthy dietary habit for the old ones to fade away.

Madam Speaker, it is true to say that fish are dying of old age on the banks. So, let us have responsible catch from aquaculture on land, in the lagoons, in the banks and beyond borders of our national jurisdiction. I have been told the High Seas Treaty has been ratified.

The blue economy and port development will be the powerhouse of emerging sectors. The Nagoya Protocol has been domesticated and widened the opportunities for exploitation and exploration of vast resources of biological diversity on land and in the sea beyond our jurisdiction.

The opportunities in the blue economy are as vast as the oceans. Madam Speaker, a scientific officer from Albion Fisheries Research Centre has identified specific coral sponge from which extraction of substance has been identified to treat diabetes.

During our first mandate, there will be a fisheries port and an auction market. A study was conducted in relation to the implementation of fish auction market. It will be done and it will be done diligently. In 2013, we prepared a fully-fledged report on land-based oceanic industry and on the potential of the fisheries sector. The more attractive the port, the bigger the bunkering services and the services of a new dry dock.

The port and bunkering activities, Madam Speaker – we need to tap into opportunities provided by servicing a share of the 35,000 ships that transit through our waters and region every year. It is a boost to our shipping services industry and domestic economic activities through interlinkages. Bunkering, both conventional and through green fuels, provides immense opportunities, and we need to ensure we do not fall behind the curve when it comes to logistics, including green logistics.

As countries push to reduce carbon footprints, including those embedded in maritime trade, green logistics will become an important component, and we need to ensure we stand ready to lead in the region. Needless to say, ensuring our port regains its competitiveness and this is sine qua non for proposed strategy to deliver it. It is unacceptable that we have dropped 369 out of 405 ports in the world, and we need to regain our edge.

Madam Speaker, I have highlighted the relevance and importance of our EEZ, and I have said that there are opportunities knocking, and it is up to us to grasp the opportunities but, we have to do so in line and be responsive to what we call good environmental norms and standards.

This Budget is programme-based, but we have to err on the side of caution, and we cannot take things for granted. I have in mind our export of tuna to the US and if there is an increase of tariff by more than 10%, it may mean that we will lose our market. and we have to ensure that diplomatic relations are at their very best. We have to see to it when it comes to our export of sugar and tuna to US, we have to see to it that the market is there and remains to be captured. Let us hope that things will all go well in the light of changes unfolding on the international scene.

In 2023, our food bill hit a staggering Rs61 billion while agriculture export reached only 34 billion. It is good to remind ourselves and I appeal to one and all: we need to eat what we produce and produce what we eat. We have to see to it that in relation to incentives being given by Government, we have to make the most of it. Whether we like it or not, one of the major constraints, an impediment to the agricultural sector, remains our workforce. There is a shortage of labour, and we have to import labour to widen the circle of opportunities for those in the agricultural sector.

As of now, all the inputs in the agricultural sector have gone up. We are appealing to farmers and we are seeing to it that there is regrouping. Regrouping means reduction in cost in relation to economies of scale. We appeal to one and all to make the most of the facilities being extended to them.

In the sugarcane sector, never before has a ton of sugar been increased by Rs5,000 per ton. It has been done to empower the small planters. We know what the constraints are, I have highlighted them. We are seeing to it that these constraints are being addressed in a very forceful and meaningful manner.

Madam Speaker, agricultural sector remains a sector which has to become green, effective and environmentally friendly. We are putting emphasis on agriculture under shade house – sheltered agriculture. The reason being to impress upon the young to make the most of opportunities which are looting. It is true that the cost of input can be expensive, but we are facilitating their access to these inputs. I don't have to highlight the measures announced in the budget in respect of consolidating the agricultural sector. For example, in the sugarcane industry, to empower small planters, more than Rs344 m. had been earmarked.

So, let us, Madam Speaker, conclude on a positive note and say we have travelled a long way. There are opportunities and there are strengths, but we have also to face an uphill battle. There are threats, but we are not afraid to ward off those threats as long as there is honesty of purpose. The Budget Speech delivered by the hon. Prime Minister is a budget where there is honesty of purpose.

We have travelled a long way and there are miles to go. Our people will understand that nothing is easy and there is no free lunch. We have good citizens totally involved in socio-economic development of our country. We have to rally towards the truth, and justice will prevail.

May God bless our great little country which is becoming a big Oceanic Small State. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Minister Assirvaden, please! Now is your time to talk!

(6.48 p.m.)

The Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr P. Assirvaden): Madame la présidente, je vous remercie de me donner l'occasion de m'adresser à la Chambre à l'occasion de la présentation de ce budget par le Premier ministre.

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de déplorer l'absence du leader de l'opposition, à qui j'avais demandé, très gentiment, au cours de son discours, de rester pour pouvoir écouter ce que j'ai à dire concernant les choses qu'il a reprochées à mon ministère, à ce budget, à la nation et à l'Alliance du Changement. Malheureusement, la population sera témoin que le leader de l'opposition n'est pas là pour écouter ce que nous avons à dire aujourd'hui.

Madam Speaker: Même si vous êtes un beau parleur !

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members : Aaah !

Madam Speaker: Dans beau parleur, il y a ‘parleur,’ mais il y a aussi ‘beau.’

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Hmmm !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Merci, Madame la présidente ! Merci pour le compliment. Cela me touche !

Madame la présidente, j’ai entendu le leader de l’opposition dire que “*I need your protection, Madam Speaker.*” Le peuple n’a pas la courte mémoire. Ce qui est malheureux, malheureusement, Madame la présidente, celui qui était la juste avant vous, n’était pas quelqu’un qui protégeait l’opposition. C’était quelqu’un qui harcelait l’opposition ! C’était quelqu’un qui bombardait l’opposition ! C’était quelqu’un qui nous expulsait séance après séance et qui ne nous protégeait jamais !

An hon. Member : C’est vrai !

Mr Assirvaden: Heureusement que lui, le leader de l’opposition, a de la chance d’avoir quelqu’un pour le protéger !

J’ai remarqué que le leader de l’opposition reproche ou se permet de dire que le *Junior Minister*, M. Damry, a les faveurs du Premier ministre et que le Premier ministre a délégué ses responsabilités au Junior Minister, qui est un élu du peuple. Moi, je dirais que c’est mieux que le Premier ministre délègue ses responsabilités à un Junior Minister à l’encontre de l’ancien Premier ministre qui déléguait ses pouvoirs à *Dounk* ! Je préfère cela !

Ceci dit, Madame la présidente, je répondrai un peu plus tard à ce que le leader de l’opposition voulait dire. Il faut bien le dire : j’étais étonné de la présence de l’ancien Premier ministre à une conférence de presse, il y a quelques jours, pour venir commenter sur le budget, alors qu’il était assis à côté de l’ancien ministre des Finances, M. Padayachy. Comment se fait-il, Madame la présidente ? Celui qui a dirigé le pays une décennie, dix ans, a dérivé notre histoire économique, peut aujourd’hui venir se poser en donneur de leçons ?

Pravind Jugnauth a été le Premier ministre de ce pays avec le MSM pendant plus ou moins dix ans, de 2014 à ce jour. J'étais membre de l'opposition ; je m'étais assis juste à côté, ici. Aujourd'hui, il faut bien le dire, puisque Pravind Jugnauth a commenté le budget ; il a perdu toute légitimité morale pour commenter l'état actuel de nos finances. Comme dirait le leader de l'opposition, – enfin, je ne connais pas trop le langage – *dinite nay ba* ?

An hon. Member: *Nay ba!*

Mr Assirvaden : À l'heure où nous nous efforçons de restaurer la confiance...

Madam Speaker : En général, on dit *pani nay ba* !

Mr Assirvaden: *Pani nay ba! Dinite nay ba*, ça se dit ?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Nay ba!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Sharam nay ba!*

À l'heure où nous nous efforçons de restaurer la confiance avec le budget du Premier ministre, il est essentiel, Madame la présidente, de rappeler les épisodes les plus graves : les mauvaises gestions, les conflits d'intérêts, le favoritisme et l'opacité qui ont manqué le mandat de l'ancien Premier ministre du MSM.

Il faut bien que la population comprenne une chose. L'actuel Premier ministre bâtit son budget sur l'avenir basé sur un bilan laissé par l'ancien gouvernement MSM. Prenons quelques exemples, quelques minutes de cette Assemblée nationale, pour énumérer ce que l'ancien gouvernement MSM a laissé à la population de ce pays pour qu'aujourd'hui, nous sommes obligés de toucher à certains acquis.

Commençons par la Silver Bank. R 3.5 milliards de fonds publics ont été investis par le MSM dans la Silver Bank. Aujourd'hui, sous administration et objet d'une enquête de la Financial Crime Commission ! Dans la Silver Bank, la NIC a investi R 150 millions. L'argent de la population ; ce peuple qui m'écoute. La NIC *General Insurance* a investi R 125 millions ; l'argent du peuple !

La mairie de Curepipe – R 87 millions. The Sugar Insurance Fund Board – R 40 million. MHC, Mauritius Housing Corporation – R 100 millions. La mairie de Port-Louis – R 45 millions.

La caisse n'est pas vide ? Cela n'est pas dilapidé l'argent de la population ? The Mauritius Investment Corporation, MIC, présidée par la Banque de Maurice – juste avant les élections générales, à peine quelques mois avant les élections générales – et étroitement contrôlée politiquement, a accordé un prêt de R 1.65 milliards à Maradiva, proche des Jugnauth ! C'est l'argent de la population ! Aujourd'hui, l'ancien Premier ministre, l'ancien ministre de Finances, le leader de l'opposition viennent nous mettre tout sur le dos alors qu'ils ont dilapidé ce pays et cela, avec des conflits d'intérêts.

Ce n'est pas fini ! Quelques temps de cela, sous le regard complaisant des autorités, l'ex MPCB, c'est une banque – aujourd'hui fusionnée à la MauBank, a accordé des prêts à la hauteur de R 1.5 milliards à l'homme d'affaires, Rakesh Gooljaury *alias* Judas ! Tout cet argent, donné à Judas et, aujourd'hui c'est la population qui souffre ; aujourd'hui la population de ce pays souffre et aujourd'hui, le leader de l'opposition et l'ancien Premier ministre viennent nous dire que c'est nous qui n'avons pas de cœur. Des prêts à haut risque accordés sans garantie dont le remboursement reste douteux, une connivence d'affaires sous silence politique du MSM.

La population a oublié le fameux contrat *ventilators* COVID 19 – Pack & Blister ! R 77.9 millions pour des équipements défectueux, en mars 2020. La population a oublié BO-Digital, R 308 millions pour des masques et des caméras thermiques. Une autre société, R 308 millions de l'argent de la population. Et, aujourd'hui, Pravind Jugnauth vient de dire que nous n'avons pas de cœur, nous reprenons les acquis de la population !

Où est-ce que nous allons trouver de l'argent si tout est dévalisé ?

Le contrat de Molnupiravir, sortant de R 7.90 à R 79 millions ! R 79 millions, dévalisées sous notre nez pendant que la population mauricienne souffrait. On était refermé chez nous ; on ne sortait pas. On ne voyait pas nos voisins ; on ne voyait pas la famille. On n'allait pas dans les funérailles, on n'allait pas dans des mariages. On était assis à l'Assemblée nationale, loin de l'autre. Entre-temps, le MSM, *maja karo* !

J'ai entendu, l'honorable Uteem, avec raison, lire, j'étais au Parlement ce jour-là. Vous savez, la population doit comprendre. Si aujourd'hui nous sommes obligés de faire ce que nous faisons, ce n'est pas de gaité de cœur. Personne n'est content d'être impopulaire.

Personne ne prend le plaisir à faire souffrir les autres mais, l'ancien ministre de Finances avec la complicité de Pravind Jugnauth, a dévalisé ce fonds de CSG. Je relis pour la population qui m'écoute ce soir, Madame la présidente, ce que le ministre vient de dire en anglais. Le ministre dit ceci le 24 octobre 2023, à l'Assemblée nationale en parlant du CSG, ce plan de pension, le montant total déboursé pour le paiement de ces prestations est environ R 25 milliards. Il le dit le 24 octobre 2023.

Donc, rien par rapport aux contributions de la CSG. Tout l'argent récolté est utilisé – la CSG est vide ! Nous sommes au pouvoir depuis novembre 2024, 6 ou 7 mois, la CSG est vide, pas un sou. Et, aujourd'hui, on vient de nous accuser. Et, ce qui est malheureux de le dire, ce n'est pas dans mes habitudes d'attaquer les syndicalistes. Il y a un syndicaliste qui avait applaudi – un, qui avait applaudi quand tout le monde, tous les actuaire, tous les membres de l'opposition pointaient du doigt disant que ce CSG allait finir à la faillite, lui, il disait oui que c'était bon. Et, aujourd'hui, c'est lui l'un des plus bruyants, pour vous dire.

Mais, Madame la présidente, avant de rentrer dans le vif du sujet, permettez-moi de préciser certaines choses, ici à l'Assemblée nationale. Il n'y a pas mal de personnes qui m'ont appelé, dans ma circonscription et ailleurs, quand ils ont écouté le leader de l'opposition. C'est pour cette raison que je me suis permis, Madame la présidente, de soulever un point de droit pour dire que j'ai pris le leader de l'opposition en flagrant délit de mentir. Je tiens à préciser que la catégorie 110A au CEB qui concerne des foyers inscrits au registre social pour payer l'électricité, est une catégorie sociale bien définie – une catégorie sociale très bas. Elle est toujours subventionnée ; elle le reste et elle continuera à l'être. Cela concerne 170 800 abonnés/foyers que le leader de l'opposition a mis en panique.

Il est inacceptable que le leader de l'opposition prenne des libertés aussi flagrantes. Lorsqu'il affirme avec assurance, vous l'avez vu, comme s'il disait la vérité, que dans le budget 2025-2026 présenté par le Premier ministre, prévoit la suppression de subvention sur l'électricité. C'est faux ! C'est faux ! Ce soir, j'ai demandé au responsable du CEB de faire publier un communiqué pour démentir le leader de l'opposition parce que c'est faux.

Il ment comme il respire. J'allais dire l'omelette et *dizef, sa zafer la la !* Quant aux subventions liées à l'eau, là encore, le leader de l'opposition, Madame la présidente, fait preuve d'une malhonnêteté intellectuelle inquiétante. Il cherche à intoxiquer l'opinion publique en prétendant que les aides seraient supprimées. C'est faux ! Honteux !

Le nombre de consommateurs de la CWA bénéficiant d'une exonération des frais d'eau est de 80 630. Vous réalisez, il essaye de mettre dans la tête des gens, 81 000 familles, pour dire que nous allons supprimer les subventions sur l'eau.

Donc, Madame la présidente, pour vous dire que, malheureusement, il n'y a pas que ces quelques chiffres et quelques scandales que j'ai cités. Le leader de l'opposition m'a parlé de la baisse d'électricité. C'est vrai. Pendant la campagne électorale, en pensant que ce que nous avons entendu sur le CEB, on s'est dit qu'il y avait la possibilité de faire baisser mais quand j'ai pris le règne du CEB et du ministère, vous réalisez que le CEB a, aujourd'hui, un déficit de R 4.8 milliards. Milliards !

Le CEB roule sur des *overdrafts* de R 7.5 milliards, vous réalisez. Qui est responsable de ce trou, pour dire des choses ?

An hon Member: Joe!

Mr Assirvaden: C'est son trou, pas à moi ! C'est le trou de l'ancien ministre, c'est un fait. C'est le trou laissé par l'ancien ministre qui était là. Ce n'est pas fini. Quand on vient au CEB – la CWA, vous réalisez dans quelles conditions nous avons dû conjuguer pour faire ce budget ! La CWA, j'ai archi parlé ici. R 700 millions dévalisées sous l'ère de Lesjongard, Prakash Maunthrooa. R 700 millions, vous vous réalisez, sans un contrôle.

Et, le leader de l'opposition à l'audace, malheureusement il n'est pas là. Alors qu'il était ministre, la responsabilité ministérielle était à combien, Monsieur Lesjongard ? L'honorable Lesjongard ! Force est de constater que ce dernier n'exerçait aucun contrôle effectif sur le fonctionnement du directeur général d'alors. Le directeur général d'alors répondait à *Lakwizin* au *Prime Minister's Office*.

Le résultat aujourd'hui est accablant. Une institution, aujourd'hui, au bord de l'asphyxie financière. On est des menteurs ? Loin de la ! Nous parlons des chiffres. C'est un fait que nous avons aujourd'hui des pertes de R 700 millions.

Ce n'est pas fini, Madame la présidente. *Wastewater Management Authority* qui tombe sous ma responsabilité. R 443 millions de déficits. Comment gérer ? Vous quittez un pays rempli d'argent, vous quittez un pays avec une caisse remplie. R 443 millions pour *Wastewater Management Authority* ?

Ce n'est pas fini, l'honorable ministre Uteem vient de le dire, MIC : R 60 milliards dans l'opacité la plus totale. Et l'ancien Premier ministre vient dire : le pire budget ? Le pire

budget du siècle alors qu'il y avait un *holdup* au grand jour par l'ancien gouvernement sur ce MIC.

Vous réalisez ? Posez-vous des questions. Que la population se pose des questions, dans quel état est notre pays aujourd'hui après 10 ans du MSM. Dans quel état est le pays aujourd'hui pour que le Premier ministre, le ministre des Finances est obligé de puiser dans les fonds de pension pour pouvoir faire rouler ce pays et ce n'est pas fini. Avez-vous oublié les R 45 millions à *Pulse Analytics* pour les sondages à la veille des élections générales donnant gagnant au MSM ? C'est l'argent de la population ; l'argent de la MIC.

Vous réalisez, Madame la présidente ? Je suis inquiet parce qu'au fil des pages je ne vois que ça, *State Investment Trust (SIT)*, l'argent des petits planteurs, des planteurs, R 1.6 milliards de déficits. Qui a géré ce fonds ? Qui a géré le SIT pendant des années ? Pas les membres du parti Travailleiste, pas les membres du MMM, non ! Ce sont les gens du MSM. Vous réalisez ? Et le leader de l'opposition représentant du MSM à l'Assemblée nationale vient questionner l'honorable ministre Sik Yuen pour la baisse des produits pétroliers, R 30 milliards à *Mercantile & Maritime Group* dans l'opacité la plus totale. Fermant les yeux encore sur les R 30 milliards avancées par la SIT à des copains et copines pour l'approvisionnement en carburant dans des conditions qui restent opaques.

L'honorable Premier ministre, dans son budget, essaye de faire redémarrer les fonds de pension. L'honorable leader de l'opposition était ministre du CEB il y a quelque temps.

Vous savez les fonds de pension du CEB, des travailleurs du CEB, *the CEB Staff Pension Fund* et du *CEB Manual Workers Pension Fund*, ces deux fonds de pension ont un déficit R 5,7 milliards ! Si rien n'est fait, je l'ai dit en 2023 ou 2024 avant les élections générales, si rien n'est fait, les travailleurs du CEB, ceux qui ont trimé pendant des années pour faire allumer ce pays n'auront plus de pension si rien n'est fait dans ces pensions. Vous voyez ?

An hon. Member: *Nou pou dan marenwar.*

Mr Assirvaden: C'est la même chose qui se passe ici, Madame la présidente. Ce n'est pas fini, les fonds de pension d'Air Mauritius, c'est la même chose : R 5,5 milliards. Ces fonds de pension vont *collapse* dans quelques temps si rien n'est fait. Pour vous dire donc, ces fonds accusent des déficits de R 5.5 milliards, Madame la présidente.

Voilà que nous avertissements pendant des années ont été ignorés par le MSM et aujourd'hui, c'est la population qui paye les pots cassés. En quelques mots, voilà le contexte

dans lequel nous sommes obligés de présenter ce budget. Un contexte où nous avons les mains, les pieds liés à ce que le gouvernement MSM nous a légué. Et aujourd'hui, les bourreaux d'hier veulent se présenter en sauveur : 'Quand je reviendrais Premier ministre, je vais rétablir la pension à 60 ans'. *Eh ! Kan mem ? Al kont to valiz kass* d'abord.

Madame la présidente, face à de telles dérives nous avons été contraints de repenser nos priorités, de revoir nos plans pour le pays par devoir de responsabilité patriotique, ce n'est pas de gaieté de cœur. C'est vrai que c'est difficile de demander à la population de faire des sacrifices, nous sommes obligés de reformer aujourd'hui pas pour nous, pas pour notre génération, comme j'ai dit à quelqu'un ce matin, pour les *ti zenfan* de nos *ti zenfan* demain nous sommes obligés de le faire. Voilà dans quel contexte, en quelques mots, nous sommes obligés de présenter ce budget.

Madame la présidente, l'heure va si vite. Le secteur que j'ai hérité, l'énergie, malheureusement encore une fois je déplore l'absence de l'ancien ministre. Un secteur affaibli par des années d'immobilisme, plombé par l'absence de décision courageuse, c'est le résultat d'une gouvernance déficiente portée par ministre, par l'ancien Premier ministre qui ont négligé les avertissements.

Le 17 mai 2022, j'étais encore dans l'opposition assis juste là en face du *bulldozer*, j'avais demandé une question à l'ancien ministre sur la demande en pointes réelles pour l'électricité. Vous savez ce qu'a été sa réponse ? Il me répondait ce jour-là –

"I can again assure the House that with regard to that reserve capacity margin, the Central Electricity Board is operating above the threshold value, with -5 [percent] for the coming 10 years." – en 2022.

Aujourd'hui, je l'ai dit et je le répète, nos infrastructures énergétiques sont au bord de la rupture. La situation est critique où nous avons en février de cette année atteint un *peak* record de consommation de 567,9 MW maximum. À Fort George plusieurs moteurs du CEB sont tombés en panne depuis le début de l'année mettant en péril notre capacité à répondre à la demande nationale et c'est sûr que plusieurs députés ont eu des calls de leurs mandants pour dire que l'électricité à couper à certaines heures. Ce n'est pas un cas isolé, c'est le symptôme d'un système laissé à l'abandon, d'un pilotage à vue qui nous a conduit aujourd'hui au bord de la pénurie.

L'honorable leader de l'opposition me demandait pourquoi je n'ai pas augmenté l'électricité, moi vous dire, Madame la présidente, avec votre permission quel bilan il a quitté.

Le leader de l'opposition, l'ex ministre des Finances avec la complicité de Pravind Jugnauth a quitté au CEB des moteurs vieux de 37ans ! À Fort George, les cinq moteurs de service sont entre 33 ans et 35 ans, à Nicolay les turbines à gaz sont de 30-35 ans.

À Fort Victoria des moteurs de service de 15 ans à 36 ans, qu'ont-t-ils fait pendant 10 ans lui et l'ancien ministre Collendavelloo ? Qu'ont-t-ils fait lui et l'ancien ministre Collendavelloo pendant 10 ans pour renouveler ces moteurs ? Rien ! Il est important de noter que ces turbines à gaz devraient servir uniquement en cas d'urgence en heures de pointe.

Ce n'est pas le cas aujourd'hui, et ce n'est pas fini. Je ne le dis pas de gaieté de cœur pour contredire l'ancien ministre, les moteurs *Independent Power Producers* (IPP) 25 ans Terra, 27 ans Alteo, CTDS 20 ans, Savanna 20 ans. Il nous faut d'abord penser à la sécurité énergétique. Il nous faut penser, on a pris le gouvernement depuis 6-7 mois à l'agenda, au top de notre agenda c'est d'abord la sécurité énergétique. Madame la présidente, c'est bien que la population le sache, nous avons dû à un certain moment demander aux hôtels de se mettre *on standby* pour pouvoir répondre à la demande mais qu'a fait l'ancien gouvernement ?

Il m'a posé la question, qu'est-ce que j'ai à proposer. Je viendrai dans quelques temps pour dire ce que j'ai à proposer. L'énergie renouvelable, je l'ai dit l'ancien ministre, c'est le seul ministre de l'énergie du monde à être le ministre de zéro mégawatt – dans le monde entier. C'est le seul ministre de l'énergie au monde qui a eu le ministre de zéro mégawatt.

L'ancien Premier ministre a été à la COP26 pour dire que nous allons atteindre les 60 % d'énergies renouvelables en 2030. En 2014 nous perdons le pouvoir. Le Parti travailliste perd le pouvoir en 2014. L'énergie renouvelable est à 23.6 %. L'énergie renouvelable avec le concept Maurice île Durable du Professeur de Rosnay et de mon ami, Osman Mahomed. Aujourd'hui nous sommes moins de 17.6 % ; nous avons régressé sous l'ancien ministre Collendavelloo et sous l'ancien ministre hon. Lesjongard. Vous réalisez, Madame la présidente ? Et pourtant, ce constat est préoccupant. Il ne s'agit pas d'un débat technique, non, loin de là, ni d'un simple chiffre technique, il y va de notre dépendance énergétique et aussi de notre devoir envers les générations futures dans cette lutte contre le changement climatique.

Mais je peux dire aujourd'hui à la Chambre, après six à sept mois au sein du ministère où nous avons eu des réflexions, nous avons travaillé, nous avons eu des sessions de travail sous la direction du Premier ministre, du Deputy Prime Minister, nous allons tout faire pour

maintenir ce chiffre de 60% d'énergie renouvelable dans notre mix énergétique. Nous allons le faire – cela prendra du temps mais nous allons le faire.

Madame la présidente, à partir de maintenant qu'est-ce que nous faisons ? Le budget a fait provision de R30 milliards. J'ai entendu le leader de l'opposition parlait de R30 milliards pour faire quoi ? Et lui qui avait fièrement brandi un *road map* énergétique sous son mandat avec un *Fast Track Committee* présidé par l'ancien ministre, chargé de projets totalisant R59 milliards et il a laissé ce secteur en friche et le cas de Corexsolar est éloquent. Ce que j'avais prévu à dire, je préfère ne pas le dire puisqu'il n'est pas là. Je l'attendrai, tôt ou tard je l'aurais. Pour vous dire ce que nous comptons faire ?

Madame la présidente, je crois qu'il me reste une dizaine de minutes ou moins.

Madam Speaker: Allez-y, je vous arrêterai.

Mr Assirvaden: Notre feuille de route à nous, Madame la présidente.

La MARENA présentera sous peu qui est sous ministère, un nouveau plan stratégie de l'énergie renouvelable – *the Renewable Energy Strategic Plan* conçu à partir d'une vision partagée entre les secteurs concernés. On a travaillé dessus pendant les six derniers mois. Nous nous sommes engagés à garder les 60% d'énergie renouvelables dans notre production énergétique. Cela prendra du temps, c'est sûr, un peu plus de temps que prévu mais nous sommes condamnés à y arriver. Ce budget prévoit la création au sein de la MARENA d'un *Renewable Technology Centre* ainsi qu'un *Renewable Portal Virtual* qui viendront s'ajouter à la mise en place d'un '*one stop shop*'. Ces dispositifs permettront de lever les obstacles au développement de produits d'énergie renouvelable.

Ce budget, il avait dit qu'il ne voyait rien dans le budget. Dommage, il n'est pas là. Le budget prévoit également le recrutement de personnel qualifié et la formation continue du staff de la MARENA pour lui donner les moyens d'accomplir pleinement sa mission.

Madame la présidente, un nouveau système de tarifs préférentiels pour la vente d'électricité sera bientôt introduit. Il sera harmonisé avec les *Time of Use* pour la consommation en commençant bientôt par les gros consommateurs déjà munis de compteurs intelligents. Pour le secteur non-électrique, la MARENA travaillera l'introduction d'un biocarburant et la mobilité verte fondée sur l'énergie renouvelable.

Des campagnes de sensibilisation seront menées à l'échelle nationale y compris Rodrigues. À Rodrigues le projet île verte se poursuivra avec l'extension de la ferme Solar de

Grenade et l'ajout d'un mégawatt de batteries à Pointe Monnier. Nous avons pris la décision, une forte décision de lancer de nouveaux projets réalisables dans un cadre financier et légal renouvelé afin de garantir les initiatives plus *bankable*, comme on dit dans le jargon, cohérentes et pleinement alignées avec notre politique énergétique à long terme.

Dans le *National Biomass Framework*, nous avons accéléré cette transition vers une sortie progressive du charbon. Nous allons accélérer cette transition, notamment à travers l'utilisation de copeaux de bois, des *wooden chips* comme source d'énergie. Les techniciens ont été en Namibie, en Afrique du Sud, au Mozambique pour voir comment cela se fait. Certains producteurs indépendants quelque Terra, Alteo, Omnicane sont déjà bien avancés dans ce domaine, brûlent déjà ces *wooden chips* et nous avons activement encouragé l'ensemble des IPP dans les nouveaux contrats que nous allons signer dans quelques mois dont nous négocions actuellement les termes à s'inscrire dans cette dynamique comme substitue au charbon.

Nous allons aussi de l'avant avec un *Floating PV* avec batterie. Nous avons la ferme intention d'aller de l'avant avec ce projet de panneaux photovoltaïques flottants d'une capacité de 15 MW avec batterie. Ce projet sera lancé à Tamarind Falls, propriété du CEB.

Nous lançons aussi, Madame la présidente, dans quelques semaines, ce qu'on appelle le 'agri solaire'. Le 'agri solaire', c'est un mixte entre l'agriculture et les photovoltaïques. Nous comptons augmenter la capacité de ces projets sortant de 500 kW à 4 MW par projet pour une dizaine de projets de 'agri solaire'. Les photovoltaïques avec batterie, concernant ces projets, nous comptons également augmenter leur capacité dans les semaines à venir ou les mois. En un mois, les appels d'offres vont sortir pour augmenter la capacité de dix projets de 10 MW chacun. Donc, un projet total de 100 MW d'énergie renouvelable ; les appels d'offres vont sortir dans quelque temps.

Nous avons aussi pris la décision, Madame la présidente, de procéder à une modernisation des dispositions de panneaux solaires domestiques. Ceux qui m'écoutent sûrement, ont des panneaux solaires sur leurs maisons. Nous allons permettre à ces personnes, aussi d'acquérir des batteries, pour qu'en terme de pointe, les après-midis, le soir en termes de 6h30 – 7h00, ils n'ont pas besoin d'acheter l'électricité du CEB, ils peuvent se connecter leur batterie pour leur autonomie énergétique.

Nous lançons aussi dans quelques semaines à Plaines des Roches, là où il y a déjà 9 turbines de 9 MW à Plaines des Roches, des appels d'offres pour une ferme éolienne de 15

MW à 20 MW qui va sortir de quelque temps. Donc, Madame la présidente, ceci dit la sécurité énergétique reste notre priorité des priorités. Il nous faut d'ici janvier 2026 – sept mois, huit mois – 100 MW sur nos lignes. Nous sommes obligés d'avoir 100 MW dans nos lignes parce que nous avons de records de 565-566 MW.

C'est pourquoi il faut agir vite. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons eu plusieurs réunions sous le *chairmanship* du Deputy Prime Minister. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons discuté longuement avec le CEB, avec le ministère, avec les techniciens, avec la MARENA, avec IMO pour arriver à un consensus qu'il nous faut inévitablement entre 100 MW et 110 MW d'ici janvier 2026.

C'est dans cette optique que nous avons décidé de lancer un appel à manifestation d'intérêt qui sort d'ici vendredi pour un projet de barge électrique, *the Powership* afin de renforcer notre réseau national. J'ai entendu le leader de l'opposition parler de barge. Il a l'audace de critiquer le projet de barge, quelle ironie, Madame. En 2023, il était ministre, sous son propre mandat, un *request for information* avait été lancé par le CEB pour étudier ce projet. Si l'ancien ministre et l'ancien Premier ministre avait fait ce projet deux ans de cela. S'ils avaient eu le courage de le faire et d'aller jusqu'au bout à l'époque, nous ne serions pas aujourd'hui dans une situation énergétique aussi tendue qu'elle est aujourd'hui.

C'est pour cette raison que nous sommes obligés d'ajouter 100 MW supplémentaires mais notre action ne s'arrête pas là. Nous avons également engagé d'autres réflexions, sur d'autres alternatives, Madame la présidente.

Face aux défis énergétiques, notre stratégie sera sur plusieurs axes, l'efficience énergétique, IMO, la mégawatt et moi je l'appelle, les mégawatts non-utilisés, c'est l'énergie renouvelable qui n'a pas été utilisée dans cette optique justement que mon ministère a déjà introduit des nouvelles régulations concernant, exigeant que seuls les appareils électroménagers enregistrés et conformes aux normes d'efficacité énergétique soient dorénavant autorisés à l'importation.

Il s'agit d'une mesure concrète qui vise à réduire la consommation électrique des ménages et à encourager les cultures de sobriété énergétique. Dans les semaines à venir, d'autres appareils électroménagers seront visés par des normes d'efficacité énergétique.

Voilà, Madame la présidente, en ce qui concerne ce secteur énergétique que l'ancien gouvernement nous a laissé et le cahier de charges que j'ai défini.

En ce qui concerne l'eau, je ne dirai que quelques mots. C'est encore pire. 62% de pertes sur nos réseaux. Plus de R 1.7 milliards volatilisés dans la nature, avec les *pipes replacement programmes*. Pour vous dire, Madame la présidente, l'ancien leader de l'opposition, l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell avait posé des questions sur les R 700 millions. Et tout le monde connaît la réponse de l'ancien ministre.

Depuis que j'ai accédé aux responsabilités de ce ministère, j'ai hérité d'un secteur désorganisé avec des réservoirs à sec dans un contexte de pression accrue sur notre réseau hydrique. Vous vous rappelez décembre 2024, janvier 2025, ce que nous avons subi. Gérer une telle situation sans dispositif adéquat de stockage, c'est comme attendre d'éteindre un incendie sans citerne. Ce constat, Madame la présidente, est dur à faire. Ceci-dit, le rapport sur le réservoir de Cluny est prêt. Le *board* de la CWA étudie ce rapport et les rapporteurs ont recommandé que ce rapport soit soumis à la *Financial Crimes Commission* pour ceux responsable de la CWA et du contracteur.

Donc, Madame la présidente, je vais terminer en vous citant six points marshals du système de loi à Maurice. Nous allons commencer avec le premier, Madame la présidente, avec le remplacement des tuyaux grâce à une enveloppe financière de R 2,6 milliards. Ces travaux seront menés avec rigueur et transparence. Il s'agira de 115 km de tuyaux qui seront changés dans le pays. Dorénavant, Madame la présidente, tous les services réservoirs, la construction des mini réservoirs à travers le pays, seront en acier de technologie australienne. Fini ces réservoirs type Cluny, qui aujourd'hui, à peine 15 mois, a des fissures.

Nous avons commencé depuis décembre de cette année-ci des forages. 65 000 m³ d'eau additionnels ont été intégrés à notre réseau pour renforcer notre réseau pour pouvoir répondre à la demande. Le projet de forage a été optimisé pour permettre à plus de 65 000 – comme je viens de le dire – m³ par jour, de rentrer dans nos réservoirs. Des forages ont été réalisés et mis en service dans des régions comme Fond du Sac, Bois Mangue et d'autres régions seront concernées.

Cinquième, Madame la présidente, nous avons aussi pris la décision des *Containerised Pressure Filter Plants*. Des *containers* pour pomper l'eau, traiter l'eau et la mettre sur notre réseau, qui permettent à récupérer l'eau douce avant qu'elle ne se perde en mer. Beaucoup de personnes nous disent '*be delo pe al dan la mer, pe al dan kanal partou. Personn pa dir nanye*'. Nous avons pris la décision d'emmener ces *Containerised Pressure Filter (CPF) Plants* pour pomper de l'eau sur le réservoir ou sur notre réseau pour pouvoir alimenter l'eau

traitée, bien sûr. Nous avons également mis en place, au sein de la CWA, un département entièrement dédié aux camions citernes afin d'assurer une distribution plus efficace aux populations les plus affectées.

Septième, dessalement. Nous envisageons également de manière sérieuse de voir, avec le Conseil des ministres et les techniciens, le projet d'une station de dessalement. Parallèlement, nous avons déjà commencé à encourager les hôtels, surtout, à investir dans ce type d'infrastructures.

Madame la présidente, dernière petite chose...

An hon. Member: Rivière des Anguilles Dam!

Mr Assirvaden: J'y arrive ! Enfin, ce projet de barrage de Rivière des Anguilles Dam. Le leader de l'opposition aurait pu ne rien dire dessus. Il a choisi de commenter. Que les choses soient claires. Pendant 10 ans, le MSM et ses deux anciens ministres n'ont absolument rien fait sur le projet de Rivière des Anguilles Dam.

(Interruptions)

Absolument rien ! Et ce projet, aujourd'hui, je peux le dire à l'Assemblée nationale, la construction de ce projet va commencer au plus tard février de l'année prochaine. Ce projet va commencer ! Nous allons pouvoir bénéficier du projet de Rivière des Anguilles Dam à partir de 2029. Il l'a bien dit, il le sait ! Enfin, *sa pik li osi koumadir*. Il l'a dit, vous allez couper le ruban vous. Oui, bien sûr *nou pou koup riban* parce que c'est nous qui allons finaliser ce projet. Donc, nous allons le faire.

(Interruptions)

Donc, Madame la présidente, nous sommes obligés de réussir. Je termine sur une note positive, comme poursuit ce que mon ami le ministre, Dr. Boolell, vient de dire. Nous sommes obligés de réussir. Nous sommes condamnés à faire ce pays sortir la tête de l'eau. Pas pour nous, pas pour ceux qui sont là. L'avenir appartient aux petits enfants de nos enfants.

Je suis convaincu qu'avec ce gouvernement, avec le Premier ministre, avec le *Deputy Prime Minister*, avec l'équipe que nous avons, *yes we can*. Nous allons réussir!

Merci, Madame la présidente !

Madam Speaker: I suspend the Sitting for one hour.

At 7.29 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.33 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Minister for Youth and Sports!

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr D. Nagalingum): Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de commencer par une courte histoire. Il était une fois un pays au bord du précipice. Son économie était en ruine, ses institutions affaiblies et son peuple sans espoir. Un groupe de personnes honnêtes, dévouées, qui avaient une vision pour leur pays a alors pris les choses en main pour tirer la nation de ce grand malheur. Ils auraient troussé leurs manches, pris des décisions difficiles et douloureuses pour faire ce travail de réparation. Alors que le pays commençait à se rétablir, ceux qui avaient creusé le trou, les anciens dirigeants responsables de la ruine ont commencé à crier '*zot pe met nou dan trou*'. Quelle ironie, Madame la présidente !

Madam Speaker, let me therefore begin by commending the hon. Prime Minister for his bold stunt and courageous measures in this year's budget. Under his leadership, assisted by his Deputy Prime Minister, his Cabinet and elected Members of this ruling alliance, the healing process has started. The medicine may at time not be pleasant, but it usually heals. At a time of global economy turbulence, local structural deficiencies and rising social expectation threaten our collective stability, the Prime Minister has once again shown the grit of a leader who choses responsibility over popularity and foresight over convenience.

From the very moment he assumed office, the hon. Prime Minister made it clear, he was fully aware of the disastrous economic situation facing the country. But instead of passing the burden to someone else, instead of hiding behind others, he chose to shoulder it himself. He took the difficult path – the path of the bold and the courageous. And yes, sometimes, unpopular measures because that is what leadership demands. This is the hallmark of a true leader. One who leads by example, not from the sidelines. While others look for comfort, he chose responsibility. In time of ease, anyone can claim to lead. But in moment of crisis, only real leaders stand firm. Our Prime Minister is one of the determined spirits today.

Madam Speaker, as I said, the Prime Minister was well aware of the storm ahead. Rather than exposing his colleagues to the political heat of difficult position, he chose to

carry the burden himself. That is not abandonment; that is leadership. It is easy to steal the spotlight during times of celebration. It is entirely something else to absorb criticisms for the sake of your team and your nation.

En comparaison à ce que le pays a assisté durant les dix dernières années douloureuses, alors que toute la population luttait pour échapper à l'emprise de la crise de la Covid-19, luttant pour sa santé, ses moyens de subsistance et sa survie, une poignée de personnes pour leurs appétits voraces, aux dépens de la nation, sous couvert de comité de haut rang, censé protéger et de guider le pays, les décisions étaient prises, non pas en fonction des intérêts du peuple, mais en fonction des intérêts financiers et de leurs propres postes.

Il ne s'agit pas de leadership, mais de pillage. Ce qui s'est passé n'était rien de moins qu'un exemple de la situation d'Ali Baba et de ses quarante voleurs où la souffrance publique est devenue une occasion d'enrichissement personnel. L'histoire ne l'oubliera pas, et le peuple non plus. *Zot finn rampli zot poss lor soufrans lepep.*

Madame la présidente, c'est tout un clan de mafiosi qui a pillé les finances de l'État, qui a envahi nos institutions et *kokin* dans les caisses, sans honte, sans vergogne, sans pitié. Ces gens-là se sont comportés comme des voleurs de grands chemins. Dans certains cas, ils ont même emporté les tiroirs. Des études officielles sont venues prouver l'étendue de la catastrophe qu'ils ont laissée en héritage au peuple mauricien. Aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente, ces mêmes gens-là ont le toupet de sortir leur tête de ce trou d'où le peuple les avait enfouis pour essayer comme des vampires et de se refaire une santé. Qu'ils sachent que l'épée de la justice est toujours suspendue sur leurs têtes.

Madam Speaker, this budget is not a populist one. It is a corrective budget. One that aim first to repair the gap and damage of the past, and only then lay down the foundation for future growth. It is a roadmap for recovery, not a gift basket. The Prime Minister has been clear: the real benefit, the relief and the opportunities will begin to ease in over the next three years. But to reach that point, we must first make the necessary sacrifices today.

This is not a budget of empty promises. It addresses real, structural challenges that have been ignored for too long. Innovation, new incentive and funding for R&D, digitalisation and technology driven sectors to shift us from a consumption-led to a production-led economy. Labour market reforms, target training programmes, reskilling initiatives and work permit policies aim at both empowering local and meeting real sectorial demands. Ageing population, reforms in healthcare, pensions and community support system to ensure dignity.

Care and social cohesion as our demographic shift. These are the bold measures that we have decided to adopt to steer Mauritius' economy direction.

Now, let me come to the issues that are of utmost importance in my portfolio for youth and sports. I have repeatedly stated that I will not go back on my words. When I assumed office, I was faced with an abysmal situation. Wherever I turned, whichever sector I addressed, major issues were waiting. It was not just inefficiency; it was systemic decay. What struck me most were the rampant abuse of government and public assets. The assets meant to serve our youth and local communities were being diverted for private use, often with the complicity of certain public officers. This was not negligence. It was a betrayal of public trust.

Madam Speaker, there has been day light robbery, *pillage de fonds publics*. *Carrément du vol!* MSM is used with a kitchen-cabinet, giving orders. So, in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, there was also a *lakwizinn* from where orders were being issued. Private dinners and even birthday parties were celebrated in Pointe Jérôme. I was told that some people – you know who – treated Pointe Jérôme as their primary resident. I have already ordered a full and independent investigation by the Office of the Public Sector Governance. Let me be clear: the more we dig, the more we are uncovering. This is only the beginning. I will not hesitate to take the necessary and decisive action.

We owe it to the people, especially to the youth, to clear up the system and ensure that public resources serve the public goods, not private interests. We are working hand in hand with residents of different regions of the country, breaking down stigmas and creating a new sense of ownership and hope. With the commitment and determination that define our action, we will confront drug addiction and its proliferation head-on and we will succeed. Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, there is a growing sense of disconnection between the youth of Mauritius and the Ministry of Youth and Sports fuelled by perceptions of outdated programmes, limited engagement and a lack of meaningful opportunities for participation and expression. Many young people feel that their voices are not being heard and that initiatives often fail to reflect their real needs, aspiration and evolving lifestyles. This disconnect has led to apathy, reduced involvement in public youth initiative and a widening gap between policy and reality. Rebuilding trust and relevance required the Ministry to adopt a more inclusive, innovative and a youth-driven approach rooted in dialogue and co-creation.

Madam Speaker, in the field of sports, we note that there is a form of mafia-like control, manifesting through fictitious clubs and questionable federations. These entities are often created solely to access public funding, manipulate elections and secure influence, rather than to genuinely promote sport or support athletes. I also noted that the Ministry suffers from the absence of a clear, coherent and a long-term action plan for both youth development and sports. There is no strategic direction. Initiatives taken are often fragmented, reactive and disconnected from the real challenges faced by young people and athletes.

As regard, infrastructure, both for youth and sports, the landscape is alarming. Many facilities are in a state of neglect, undermaintained as far below international standards. If urgent action is not taken, the country may soon face the embarrassment of having to host its international football matches on foreign soil. The state of abandonment is mind-blowing, reflecting years of poor planning, lack of investment and absence of a maintenance culture. These are only some of the problems which I have highlighted; there are many more.

Madam Speaker, let me elaborate on some of the measures that have been included in this Budget. The establishment of seven sport academies under the aegis of the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd – it is undeniable that progress of sport and access to continental and global elite levels require the creation of centres of excellence in various sport disciplines. It is with this in mind that the Ministry supported a project, approved by the Ministry of Finance within the framework of this fiscal year.

Among the discipline involved is football whose national academy will replace the Liverpool International Academy. We have taken the time necessary to clear, explain and the direction we are taking post Liverpool International Academy. We have held press conference, engaged with stakeholders and brought in world-renowned football expert, Mr François Blaquart, to guide us.

Parents and staff have been reassured. As far as we are concerned, our vision is crystal-clear. For those who refuse to see the daylight, I can only express regret. We are moving ahead with the establishment of seven academies under the MMIL with the ground work for the remaining six, soon to begin. The National Football academy is already operational. It's now a matter of fine tuning. The head coach educator will arrive shortly with the recruitment process already on the way.

We are putting in place a solid transparent structure to ensure that no minister or incoming federation's president can interfere and derail the project. We've witnessed this too many times before, most notably with the CNFF and I am determined not to allow history to repeat itself,

Madam Speaker, in the context of the 2025-2026 fiscal year, an allocation of Rs134 million is planned for the renovation of several sport infrastructures including Stade George V, Anjalay Coopen Stadium and others. The goal is to obtain a FIFA certification for Stade George V and Anjalay Coopen. Additionally, an amount of Rs40 million will be made available to the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd for the maintenance and modernisation of these infrastructures.

An envelope of Rs46 million is planned for athletes' assistance through the allowance to high level athletes, programmes and a trust fund for excellence in sports. For retired athletes, an amount of Rs5 million is planned to cover the monthly pension for each athlete. Assistance to federation amount to Rs60 million while football club has received aid of Rs15.4 million for this fiscal year. An amount of Rs6 million is planned over two fiscal years for a feasibility study on the construction of a rally circuit. This project, dear to many enthusiasts of sports, is beginning to take shape and will soon become a reality. The Ministry is already tackling this task. This project will offer motorsport enthusiasts the opportunity to practice the discipline safely and with all the requirement amenities.

At last, we will put an end to the tragic stories of unfortunate accidents across the country where young people, simply trying to practice their sports with passion and hope, have found themselves injured due to unsafe, inadequate or non-existent facilities.

An amount of Rs50 million is planned to cover the participation of our athletes in various regional, continental and even global games. These games include the CJSOI games, the COSAFA Club as well as preparation for the Francophonie games.

Provisions have been made for the organisation of the National Sport Awards which, unfortunately, did not take place last year due to lack of funds. A new development to note – the introduction of the National School Sport Award which is part of the logic of reviving inter-college competition. An amount of Rs146 million is planned for the Mauritius Sports Council to cover its activities including the maintenance of MUGA.

Madam Speaker, we are laying the foundation of a new sporting era in Mauritius where the key initiatives are as follows –

- A new Mauritius Sport Promotion Division will drive grassroots participation under inclusive banner, *Sport pour tou dimoune*;
- The revival of the *jeux inter-collèges* will foster a sporting culture in school, identify talents and promote physical fitness and health. Preliminaries for the present edition began in April. The Finals will be held from 14 to 18 July at Cote d'Or and other national venues.;
- A residential sports camp will be launched for young athletes including those with disabilities, focusing on performance wellness and social bounding.
- The Combat Art Festival indoor and sport games and kids in action initiative targeting 8 to 13 years old in schools will further broaden participation and awareness.
- A high-performance sport programme is being launched with sights set firmly on the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic games. Major international events will be hosted to position Mauritius as a premier sporting destination.
- Our high-performance centre at Côte d'Or continues to serve 131 elite athletes including 15 para-athletes with cutting edge training, sports, science and recovery services.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to elaborate on some of the non-financial measures that we are busy putting into place. These measures are successfully implemented will have lasting impact on the youth and sport landscape in the country. The new Sports Act is already at the drafting stage and will soon be introduced into the National Assembly. I want to assure the House that we are not merely amending old laws; we are laying the foundation for a modern forward-looking legislative framework that will address long stand structural problems in our sports ecosystem.

One of the most damaging issues we intend to tackle head on is the proliferation of fictitious clubs and federations. This is not just about laws; it is about restoring trust, ensuring fairness and empowering our youth through sports. Mauritius is home not only to those who live on the island but also to a vibrant and talented diaspora scattered across the globe. Many of these individuals whether born abroad to Mauritian parents or having migrated at a young age possess exceptional athletic talent, world class training and invaluable experience from competing in high performance environment.

It is time we formally open the door to these athletes through a clear, transparent and fair naturalisation and eligibility framework to represent our national colours on the international stage.

This is not just a sporting decision, it is a statement of national unity, it is an acknowledgement of being Mauritian. It is not defined solely by geography but by identity, heritage and heart. By integrating diaspora athlete into our national teams, we aim to –

1. strengthen the performance capacity of our teams with proven experienced athletes.
2. Create a powerful link between Mauritius and its global diaspora.
3. Foster knowledge transfer as these athletes can help mentor and raise the level of local talent, and above all
4. showcase to the world a Mauritius that is global, ambitious and proud.

A clear policy and selection criteria will ensure that this process maintains integrity, meritocracy and fairness and that it works in synergy with our local athlete development effect. In embracing our diaspora, we are not replacing we are reinforcing, we are not imposing success, we are reclaiming it. Mauritius belongs to all Mauritians wherever they may be.

The policy is not about privilege, it is about equity, recognition and long-term vision. Mauritius must reward excellence not just on the podium but also in life beyond the gain. Our athletes have carried the flag with honour, it is now our turn as a nation to honour them with opportunity, dignity and a future. Under the renewed vision of the Ministry of Sports, the Mauritius Sports Council and affiliated entities are being repositioned to play more strategic and complementary roles in a nation's sports ecosystem. The MSC will focus on development of coordination of community sports and infrastructure management while the trust for excellence in sports will drive elite athlete develop high performance programme.

The national Côte D'Or complex will operate as a centre of excellence for training, events and sports science. The *Commission Nationale du Sport Féminin* will strengthen effort to promote, empower women in sports and the National Council for Sports in school and universities will spearhead the integration of sport into the education system nurturing talents from an early age and fostering a culture of physical activity and excellence across academic institutions.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, let me highlight some of our recent achievements in the field of sports. These milestones are not just events they are powerful indicators of the fresh mindset now driving our sports community, free from unnecessary constraints and interferences, of our athletes, coaches, federation are built to thrive. They are performing with renewed confidence, pride and purpose and the results speak for themselves. This is the spirit we are nurturing, a dynamic liberated sporting environment where excellence is not only encouraged but made possible. At the WAKO African Continental Kickboxing Championships in South Africa in December 2024, our junior won three golds and two silvers while our seniors dominated with seven golds, four silvers and one bronze.

In February 2025, our national badminton team secured two silver and two bronze medals at ALL African Badminton Championship in Cameroon. Our para-athletes shone brightly on the global stage winning five gold and five silver in Saudia and three gold, eight silver and two bronze in Dubai and the World Para Athletics Grand Prix. These victories reflect not only personal commitment but also national investment in inclusion and excellence. I will also like to highlight the outstanding achievement of two of our athletes who have brought immense pride to Mauritius.

Firstly, Kimberley Le Court Pienaar recently made history as the first Mauritian Cyclist and the first African female rider to win the prestigious UCI Women World Road Race Tour calendar. Secondly, Jérémy Lararaudeuse has emerged as Africa top 110 metres hurdles having broken the national record twice last week in France. Madam Speaker, this budget has made a genuine attempt to lay the foundation of a better future through a bold set of measures aimed at correcting the failing of the past. I must express a serious concern in the wake of some things through controversial reform.

Certain deadwood has attempted to resurface, yes, *ban lera* MSM have tried to creep back into relevance but no matter how loud they shout, how desperately they try, history has already named them for what they are *devaliz partou*. They have plundered this nation so shamelessly that they ought to be embarrassed to even show their face in public. The scale of looting was staggering that I found myself tempted to turn to the hon. Prime Minister or the hon. Attorney General and ask if there are no law that allow us to recover what they have stolen from the people and if such a law does not exist perhaps it is time we consider enacting one. The people deserve justice not promises.

Madam Speaker, I would now like to address myself to the Mauritian population and tell them, listen to this carefully. In November 2024, you made a wise and courageous choice by choosing two true patriots: the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and our team. The current Prime Minister and his Deputy both of whom have already served this country as Prime Minister in their own right. Your decision was not a mistake. You placed trust in them and we assure you that this trust will never be betrayed. They are not acting for popularity or political gain. They are making tough sometimes painful decisions not because it is easy but because it is necessary for the future of our nation. They are responsible leaders, committed to steering this country in the right direction even when the path is steep.

Je vous demande de la patience. Les résultats viendront, les sacrifices consentis aujourd'hui ouvrent la voie à un avenir meilleur. Et à la jeunesse de ce pays, *nou bann zenn*, en tant que ministre, je vous le dis avec conviction : tout ce que nous construisons aujourd'hui est pour vous. Les opportunités, les réformes les investissements, tout cela est pour votre avenir et c'est vous qui allez récolter demain, les fruits de ce que nous semons aujourd'hui. *Nou pe constrir enn repiblik Moris ki pou enn lakaz pou zot tou.*

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Dr. Ms Thannoo.

(09.05 p.m.)

Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Madam Speaker, the past few days have been very eventful. We have been lynched, we have been shamed, we have been attacked constantly in the media. But what we call upon the people is to think, to come together, to discuss, to negotiate, the debate and to constructively contribute to the ongoing task of rebuilding the nation. What we have lived through the past 10 years has been chaos.

One term that has been repeated again and again is the term neoliberalism. Indeed, neoliberalism is chaos. It is a dominant system that Naomi Klein has described as disaster capitalism and disaster capitalism only instils chaos, despair and destruction. Our dear friends, the hon. Uteem and the hon. Assirvaden clearly underlined the chaos that we inherited. I need not go into details but what I want people to remember is what neoliberalism is really. It gives rise to consumers according to Chomsky. It erects shopping malls instead of

building communities. It seeks to impose individualism whereby the self is isolated and disconnected from his or her social environment.

Neoliberalism in effect destroys social ties. It destroys empathy and reduces the self to social powerlessness. Its primary aim is to reduce the government's role in economic planning. It promotes the privatisation of government entities and reduces its expenditure. According to Huffman, neoliberal economics is notorious for lowering taxes in all categories while upholding the discourse of austerity.

Now is this what we are doing? When we heard about the panoply of taxes being imposed on the elites. From the UK model of austerity that has been imposed in recent years. What we retained is the suffering of the people, pain and misery were extensively inflicted when the welfare state was dismantled. The disabled were starved to death in the fifth richest country of the world and this is precisely what we are not doing.

Madam Speaker, we share the pain of our people, we share the anxiety of thousands of workers waiting to retire from exploitative workplaces. We empathise with every employee who suffers from both psychological and physical strain imposed in the workplace. We therefore welcome the setting up of key committees that will work towards the implementation of a strong policy to enable dignified and decent support to be provided to employees who can qualify as people without the ability to work. This is the difference that we make when we discuss, when we debate, when we negotiate. We learn and we progress.

Life matters, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to fight for the 40 hours work week and improved work conditions for all. So that retirement age does not become a matter that is so sensitive on this island particularly because we still bear the legacy of colonialism in our veins. The major outcry against this budget has understandably silenced major tax reforms that are precisely aimed at forging social justice. As noted previously, we have a new policy on the smart cities. This shows that the government has concerted ways in which big capital preys on our territory and barely pays any cent on land conversion or any other tax related to property development under the smart city scheme.

Now, this type of tax that targets the elite is precisely what neoliberalism condemns. Here we are challenging neoliberal economics and focusing on enhancing public revenue. The taxes targeted towards categories of wealth indicates further measures to ensure that the public coffers are filled, because now, as has been underlined before, they are empty.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, the budget contains important measures that will make a strong difference to our lives in our community and build the social ties that neoliberalism seeks to destroy. May I begin with the key measure to digitalise the Social Security services. This measure indicates that the budget has taken into account a severe impediment to the lives of the neediest and the most vulnerable. With thousands of files awaiting processing, the procedures for the neediest to access to his or her pension were severely hindered resulting in distress, distrust and despair. With digitalisation, we can look forward to fairer and just processes based on clarity and transparency.

Similarly, the digitalisation of the health sector is a fundamental requirement for our society to move forward with a social conscience, with empathy, care and consideration. It is inconceivable that the island was once earmarked as a cyber hub. Yet, the health sector has remained notorious with the amount of paperwork being undertaken by trained nurses sitting in offices while the sickly despairs for professional care. The digitalisation of both sectors has announced within his budget reflects this Government's determination to improve the lives of the most fragile members of our community. Thus, neoliberalism that seeks to dismantle the welfare sector is being challenged.

In the past, we need to remember, neoliberalism dictated the dysfunctionality that was built in the public systems through the consistent lack of investment. Now with digitalisation, we are investing in efficient running of both the health and social security sectors. This Government is tackling head-on two major challenges that impact on the lives of many beneficiaries and employees alike. A responsible government indeed seeks to alleviate hassle, pain and the drudgery of thousands.

Madam Speaker, this budget speaks to us ecofeminists who have long denounced the manner in which capitalism exploits women's bodies in the workplace and at home. Care work is work undertaken mostly by women. In the home when you raise their families and look after the elderly. Through care work, women primarily contribute to social reproduction without which society cannot survive. Care work guarantees that as a community we thrive, that we can look forward to future with healthy and functional human beings.

However, across Mauritian history, especially with the advent of the manufacturing sector, women's work in the home has been consistently exploited. In the contemporary context, women are exploited in the workplace and at home while contributing millions to the GDP. The finance sphere is a key example where women often have to sacrifice their careers

for lesser paid roles. With emphasis placed on flexible work arrangements, this budget demonstrates a gender-sensitive approach. Let us not forget how our work-life schedules have been based on the American capitalist model implemented in the 1950s, that entrapped women in the domestic sphere. Women looked after their home while men worked. Now, women work long hours and look after the home, resulting in a crippling mental charge.

Madam Speaker, this budget is gender-aware, gender-sensitive and gender-conscious towards thousands of women working long hours, women who commute hours during heavy traffic on unreliable buses, and women who often have to sacrifice their career for their family lives or vice versa. The hybrid work model, when implemented effectively, will be a game changer. It promises better work-life balance, more job satisfaction and higher engagement in the workplace. Importantly, the hybrid work model also enables work access to women with disabilities, and it promises safety from autocratic management models.

We must also note, Madam Speaker, that research has identified how working from home enables women to be more present in the STEM fields. We know STEM fields are notoriously male dominant. We, therefore, applaud the promotion of a hybrid work model and call for employee-centred policies that will promote work-life balance while keeping surveillance at bay.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the budget has underlined key measures that will be taken to support women's entrepreneurship. We will come with increased support and hope that they will be geared to as many women as possible while ensuring that long-term support is provided. Similarly, with the equity fund, we expect long term empowerment and certainly support when pitfalls or problems arise.

This budget, Madam Speaker, also addresses our key challenges in the future, namely food security and the climate crisis. We hereby make a strong appeal, envisaged by the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries, that we need to invest in long-term sustainability, that can only be achieved through the implementation of agroecology. Uganda's National Agroecology Strategy and India's Zero Budget Natural Farming are models whereby State driven national policies, legislations and programmes can revolutionise our agricultural sector towards proven long-term agroecological sustainability.

Madam Speaker, I also want to underline the importance of the point-based license. Over the past years, we have seen how our roads have become spaces of sheer murder. My dear friend here was just telling me that she had witnessed a horrifying accident during the

weekend, where somebody's brain was actually blown to bits. They had to wait 45 minutes for the ambulance services and the Police services to come. Our road culture is horrifying. It is scary for the elderly to step even on the road in front of their houses. The point-based license is a much needed, much welcomed measure that was formally thrown away like the baby with the bath water by the previous regime. It was so ridiculous.

Now, what we need with this point-based system is certainly a means to counter, not only a terrible driving culture, but the common incidences of chauffeurs, of drivers actually driving under the influence of drugs. We do have, in my constituency, bus drivers actually flying by on the buses, causing a lot of endangerments, not only to the commuters, but to anybody on the road. So, thank you for bringing back the point-based licence.

I will now conclude with two important measures that aim at shaping a safe and eco-centric future for us all. Emphasis made on renewable sources of energy denotes the strong will of this Government to protect the environment. Given the current energy crisis, developing our optimal capacity in solar, wind and wave energy is an imperative. Energy diversification is a must. We have the duty towards effectively equipping the MARENA with all support so that they can actually shift us away from the deadly core use of coal and oil. We also have to be wary about biomass.

We equally welcome the aim to develop the blue economy from a sustainable perspective. We felt reassured when the Prime Minister recently addressed the inclusion of the rights of nature in our Constitution at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice. This is indeed a powerful signal. We thank the hon. Prime Minister and reiterate our feel for our ocean to be protected, particularly against the spectre of blue washing. Saya de Malha, for example, is so fragile. Our friendly ecologist, Shaama Sandooyea, led one of our first protests there, first underwater protest to show how fragile is this ocean, because the Indian Ocean is the fastest warming ocean in the entire world. So, if we do not protect the ocean, our entire lives will be put at stake. So, sustainable fishing has to be carefully implemented.

Madam Speaker, we need to be wary and we need to be careful because the neoliberals are out there. The predators are out there. Our struggle against neoliberalism is ongoing. We will never give up the fight.

Thank you. With these words, I support the Bill. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Mr Caserne!

(9.22 p.m.)

Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in this august Assembly to support the 2025-2026 national budget, fully aware and fully honest that we do so under the weight of an unsustainable economic situation with a public debt of Rs642 billion, representing 90% of the GDP.

Public deficit reaching a record of 9.8%, rising cost of living, depreciating currency and sluggish economy productivity have put immense pressure on the lives of our citizens. The country is under the threat of facing a downgrade in credit ratings from international agencies like Moody's, which would have a significant negative impact on our financial sectors.

Madam Speaker, I firmly believe that this budget is a step in the right direction, not because it solves all our problems overnight, but because it lays a foundation for recovery, resilience and reform. Let us be truthful, our economic model has become strained. Over reliance on imports, low industrial productivity and excessive recurrent spending have combined to create an unsustainable path. This budget, however, begins a structural correction. It does not offer populist comfort. It offers tough necessary choices, such as prioritising development spending over consumption and reigning in non-essential expenditures across the public sector.

The Budget outlines measures to stabilise our macroeconomic fundamentals such as gradual reduction of the fiscal deficit debt, restructuring and revenue expansion through fair and efficient taxation. Not by burdening the poor but by widening the base and ceiling leaks, we are laying the foundation for a sustainable and resilient economy.

Madam Speaker, the planning for investment of Rs128 billion for the next 5 years to fund various infrastructures, ranging from housing to transport, water, wastewater, solid waste and electricity, demonstrates this Government's commitment to create job, improve current infrastructure but also ensure that our citizens are provided with infrastructure facilities which are up to standards. The long overdue construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam, upgrading and rehabilitation of water treatment plants and replacement of waterpipes programme can only improve the water distribution around the island.

Madam Speaker, ports are not merely physical entry and exit ports. They are the lifeblood of our trade economy and gateways to regional integration. For a country like ours, whose growth depends heavily on maritime trade, the efficiency of our ports directly affects our GDP, job creation and investor confidence. The reason why I consider the decision of

massive investment up to Rs5.4 billion in our port infrastructure to expand the cruise jetty, acquisition of tugs and expansion of the Mauritius Container Terminal reflect the vision of this Government to accommodate more vessels and gain in competitive edge. The Cargo Handling Corporation will also be investing in equipment such as crane, tractors and traders so that Mauritius claims back its reputation of being one of the most efficient ports in the region and achieve our target of being a transshipment hub.

With these investments, we will complete the expand container handling capacity at the Mauritius Container Terminal. These are not abstract investments, they translate directly into business for our local transporters and foster movement of goods for our SMEs and exporters.

Madam Speaker, drug addiction is not just a health crisis, it is a security threat, an economic burden and a moral emergency. It destroys lives, tears apart families and erodes the future of our youth. Addiction is a disease not a crime, and this Budget recognises that truth, by prioritizing treatment and reintegration, not only punishment. We cannot afford to sit back. This Budget sends the signals that we are ready to act decisively, compassionately and strategically. Madam Speaker, *nou pa zis promet, nou dir e nou pe fer !* The National Agency for Drug Control, with the aim of combatting drug trafficking, is today a reality. To allow this Agency to perform its duties and meet its objectives, an amount of Rs70 million has been earmarked in this Budget to support the operational set up of the Agency, and it must be outlined.

Madam Speaker, a healthy population is not just a moral imperative, it is the foundation of a strong and productive economy. If we want sustainable growth, we must ensure that our people are healthy, cared for and protected. Our health system is facing challenges and requires deep reform to respond to our population's demand.

First, we are facing a consequent increase in non-communicable diseases, ageing population and increasingly complex health threats. This Budget enlightens the clear intentions of this Government to improve the health services in the public sector by making provisions for the creation of a new healthcare system that will prioritise prevention through healthy lifestyle campaign and robust NCD management; the allocation of additional resources in healthcare that will allow us to shift from a reactive hospital care to preventive and community-based care. More findings on education, early diagnosis, nutrition campaigns and lifestyle support will save us billions in long-term treatment cost.

We need to improve the services in regional hospitals to uplift the services for essential treatment. The digital health must no longer be treated as a luxury but a necessity. This will eliminate paper health records and long queuing, reducing waiting time, improve efficiency and enhance transparency.

I must also lay emphasis on the fact that this Budget provides for the necessary equipment and staffing, with the recruitment of 1,000 student nurses over the next 3 years, 50 trainee midwives, 50 medical health officers and 30 specialists, among others, to cut the waiting time for treatment, which will be beneficial to all patients.

It is also important to stress the fact that there is a need for better data collection and public health surveillance. Without accurate data, we cannot plan or act effectively. With this Budget, we have an opportunity to modernise our healthcare system and adapt it to the exigencies of our citizens.

Madam Speaker, education is the foundation of every successful nation but higher education, universities, research institutions, technical and professional training are where that foundation becomes a launch pad for innovation, leadership and sustainable growth. When we invest in higher education, we are not just building campuses, we are building futures. We are equipping our youth with the skills, knowledge and confidence to meet the challenges of tomorrow, from digital transformation to climate change, from entrepreneurship to public health. By prioritizing higher education, we can reduce brain drain and retain top talents within our borders, drive innovation through research and development, create a skilled workforce that attracts foreign investment and uplift the entire communities through knowledge and opportunity. Let us all support the project to invest in high quality education.

Madam Speaker, we live in a digital age where convenience, transparency and efficiency are not luxuries, they are expectations. Yet, our current social security systems are often plagued by delays and outdated processes that frustrates our citizens. The e-social security system represents a long-term solution all beneficiaries. First, it brings efficiency and accessibility. By digitizing social security services, we remove the barriers of geography, long queues and piles of paperwork. An electronic system ensures transparency and accountability. Every transaction, application and update can be tracked in real time. It minimises errors and builds trust between the Government and the people it serves. In a time when public trust is more valuable than ever, transparency is a powerful tool.

Most importantly, the e-social security system is a foundation for long-term sustainability. Digital records are easier to maintain, audit and analyse. With better data, Government can make smarter policy decisions, allocate resources more effectively and predict future needs more accurately. This is how we create a system that does not just work today but one that lasts for generations. Of course, challenges exist. Data privacy, digital literacy and infrastructure must all be addressed but these are challenges that we can overcome with proper planning, education and investment. The cost of inaction, however, is much higher: inefficiency, inequality and lost opportunities. Implementing an e-social security system is not just about using new technologies, it is about reaffirming our commitment to serve every citizen with dignity, speed and fairness.

Madam Speaker, across our communities, we face growing environmental challenges, polluted air, unsafe water, deforestation, plastic wastes, noise pollution and the effects of climate change. These are not just distant issues. They are happening right here in our neighbourhoods, our rivers, our streets. Environmental nuisances, whether it is overflowing garbage, polluted air or constant industrial noise, are not just unpleasant, they are harmful. They damage our health, reduce our quality of life and rob future generations of the clean, safe world they deserve.

Combatting environmental nuisances or larger climate threats takes collective effort. Industries must adopt cleaner, greener practices, but citizens also have the duty to change current habits by reducing wastes, plant trees, conserve energy and speak up when we see pollution going unchecked and support all means of education and awareness. When people know the impact of their actions, they make better choices. Let's teach sustainability in our schools. Bring green practices into our businesses and encourage community clean-up tribes and recycling initiatives. Every plastic bottle we recycle, every tree we plant, every voice raised for change counts. These small acts build momentum, and momentum leads to lasting impact. This budget goes in that direction. I personally welcome the Deposit Refund Scheme for plastic bottle which aims at reducing the number of plastic bottles being landed into environment, but also encourages a recycle culture.

The environment does not need a few people doing everything perfectly. It needs all of us doing what we can consistently. I am happy that this budget recognises the importance of addressing such issues and has made a provision for an increase in the penalty rates to combat

the environmental nuisances associated with excessive noise and black smoke emissions from motor vehicles that are not correctly maintained.

Madam Speaker, we are living through a global turning point. One where the decisions we make about energy will shape our environment, our economies and our communities for generations to come. Among the smartest, most strategic decision we can make right now is to invest in renewable energy, particularly solar energy and biomass. Climate change is accelerating and our dependence on fossil fuel is a major driver. Renewable energy will help us fight this crisis without sacrificing our lifestyle. The funding of projects in the renewable energy sector for the next three years mainly in solar energy and biomass is a turning point in the transition of shifting from fossil fuel to renewable energy.

Madam Speaker, the world of work is changing faster than ever. Automation, Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation are rewriting the rules of productivity and competition. In this new era, our most valuable asset is not just technology. It is people. To stay competitive, we must invest in their skills. Upskilling our workforce is not a cost. It is the smartest investment we can make for a resilient economy. For every rupee we invest in workforce development, we gain in returns in innovation, productivity and reduced unemployment.

It is time to align our education system with industry needs, expand access to technical training and support lifelong learning. Let us futureproof our economy by empowering our people today. This Government understood these challenges and will uphold its commitment to invest Rs550 m. for the training, reskilling and upskilling of our labour force that will only be beneficial to our country.

Madam Speaker, public enterprises play a crucial role in delivering essential services: transportation, utilities, finance, infrastructure and more. They are meant to operate for public welfare. However, their potential remains underutilised or mismanaged largely due to outdated systems, weak accountability and limited innovation. Reforming public enterprises is not about dismantling them. It is about strengthening them. It is about creating institutions that are transparent, efficient and responsive to the needs of the people.

The goal is to transform these enterprises from bureaucratic machines into engines of sustainable development. Institutional reform begins with governance. We need clear, merit-based appointments to leadership positions, independent boards and robust performance evaluation system and Key Performance Indicators. Decision-making should be aligned with

long-term strategic goals. We must also invest in capacity building. Reform is not just about cutting costs. It is about building systems that include digital transformation, staff training, financial management and data-driven decision making. A modern public enterprise must function like a smart business with the heart of a public servant.

Institutional reform is never easy. It requires political will, cultural change and sustain commitment. We must be bold enough to confront inefficiency, brave enough to correct course and wise enough to build system that outlast anyone administration.

The 2025-2026 Budget makes provision to increase the efficiency of public enterprise in order to make them financially sustainable, efficient and accountable through a coordinated policy approach focus on strengthening governance and oversight.

Madam Speaker, supporting employees through tax exemption is a strategic investment in our workforce. The people who keep our economies moving and our communities thriving, it tells workers: we see your effort, we value your contribution, and we are here to help you succeed.

Moreover, financial support through tax relief can improve employee well-being and workplace moral. When workers feel financially stable, they are healthier, more focused and more loyal to their employers. That's a win for businesses and for society. It is good to remember that in the 2025-2026 Budget, the new tax rates are as follows –

- 0% for all income earners up to Rs500,000;
- 10% for the next Rs500,000 and remaining at 20%.

Compared to the current taxes, tax rates introduced by the former government, where 2% was applicable for every income earner who earns Rs430,000 and an additional 4% was charged for the next Rs40,000. With these new rates, hon. Minister Uteem has outlined it earlier, 81% of employees in our country will not pay any income tax. In line with our engagement towards the population, a promise of abolition of registration duty applicable on sale transfer of pre-owned domestic vehicle is becoming a reality.

Madam Speaker, despite the current status of our economy, I have to mention that this Government guarantees a monthly income of Rs20,000 for all full-time employees under *Revenue Minimum Garantie*.

Before concluding, Madam Speaker, let me say a few words, on Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue. I, again, would like to seize that opportunity to

thank the electors of this constituency for having massively voted for the candidates of *Alliance du Changement* under the 2024 General Elections. Today, we are proudly representing them in this Parliament. A Constituency that faces a lot of challenges, ranging from flood during heavy rain, severely affecting the residents of Vallée des Prêtres, Cité La Cure and Morcellement La-Vallée, among others. While the regions of Batterie-Cassée, Riche Terre and Terre Rouge suffer from an acute water supply issue.

Last but not least, the poor conditions of the streets at Cité La Cure, Batterie-Cassée and Montagne Longue, following the Waterpipes Replacement Programme under the former government, where the state of the roads have not been reinstated. However, it is quite encouraging to see that under the 2025-2026 Budget, there are several projects that have already been earmarked, as detailed in the Public Sector Investment Programme, under the construction and upgrading of drainage infrastructure for Vallée des Prêtres, Morcellement La-Vallée, Morcellement Raffray, Terre Rouge, Cité Roma, Valton and Montagne Longue, which can only be beneficial to the inhabitants of these regions. It makes no doubt that funds will also be available to upgrade the level of road infrastructure in the regions I have mentioned above, including Bois Marchand.

Madam Speaker, before concluding, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports whose Ministry has engaged in a commendable project of bringing sports on the streets, give that energy, that will, *cette envie de refaire du sport* under a project named ‘*Anou Transform Nou Landrwa*’. The first edition took place in my constituency Sunday last at Karo Kalyptus. I must say that it was a real success. The only day of activity has reunited all MPs of the constituency, sportsman, youngsters and the Bishop of Port Louis. Thank you and well done, hon. Minister for this initiative. I know it will be a success in the future.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, we are at a cross road in our national story. We can retreat into blame and hesitation or we can rise with unity, discipline and vision. This budget does not fix everything but it begins to fix what matters most. It is a path from hardship to hope, from breakdown to breakthrough, from abyss to prosperity; let us support it with courage and compassion.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes. Hon. Lobine! Try and keep to the time because it's getting late.

(9.45 p.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the floor. I will take that into consideration. All learned colleagues, learned friends, hon. Members have taken the time of this House to debate and I will not repeat what have been said because it is said and we are all tired, I know.

I would concur very much with what the hon. minister Uteem have been saying. He has given detailed figures and fact as to in what type of a situation we are and what the population need to take into account before taking any decision or before having any other political vultures canvassing and giving false information to them. And this is the temple of democracy where we need to disseminate that crucial factual information to the people of Mauritius because where we are, we have been left with a legacy of financial mismanagement and we are now in an abyss of misrule.

And, I go directly into what all the population is talking about, reform of pensions, Madam Speaker. I am very glad and thankful to the hon. Prime Minister, that he came with this very detailed, clear explanation as to what the reform is all about, why we need to proceed with reform as it is but of course to the hon. Prime Minister that he has listened to the voice of the people of Mauritius, and I will quote at page 13 of his speech so that we can disseminate that to the people of Mauritius. I quote –

“In light of the devastating legacy left by the previous administration, we had no choice but to confront the urgent need for pension reform head on. However, we remain deeply mindful of the challenges the most vulnerable may face under the proposed changes and are committed to addressing their concerns with compassion and empathy.”

This is very important.

The people of Mauritius appreciate this phrase ‘compassion and empathy’ because as a democratic government, as the hon. Prime Minister goes on to say –

“... we have heard these concerns. ...”

So, this is what democracy is all about. There is a proposal, we are debating on an Appropriation Bill. There are proposals, the people of Mauritius have made their voices heard and the government and the Prime Minister have listened to the voices. And, this is the consequence of those very pillar of democracy that we now have those two committees set up

by the hon. Prime Minister that he will preside and one by the hon. Minister for Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

So, this is very commendable and most of those reforms that we are talking about is what the people of Mauritius they want to hear – that is compassion for the housewives, compassion for those in the lower middle class of the job sphere, manual workers, general workers and these are all being addressed in those two committees and I am thankful to the hon. Prime Minister for that.

There are various countries in the world, Madam Speaker, that have been having talks about reforms. Here, in Mauritius, it was long overdue. The hon. Prime Minister was talking about an expert, *un actuaire*, he said –

« *La bombe du système des pensions a déjà explosé* »

This is what the hon. Prime Minister was referring to, Mr Sattar Jackaria. So, the bomb, as hon. Dr. Boolell said, was ticking but for the experts *la bombe du système des pensions a déjà explosé*.

So, we need to disseminate; we need to give to the people of Mauritius materials, factual information of what is happening and this is the backdrop of the Appropriation Bill. This is the State of the Economy. It has been a very comprehensive document that was presented before this august Assembly by the hon. Prime Minister.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition does not understand what those documents are all about. When we are in a temple of democracy, we are tabling the State of the Economy and this is being consolidated through the Estimates of the Budget that we have circulated to all members. Then, it is almost unfair and misleading for politicians to go out and say all sorts of things that does not fall into the context of what the people of Mauritius are expecting – truth, reality about the state of the economy.

And, with your permission, Madam Speaker, let me quote from the State of the Economy, one of the biggest scandals, if I may say, for the past 10 15 20 years. – the setting up of the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd.

People of Mauritius need to know why in 2020, the then government, set up the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd. It was meant to assist companies that needed support to ride out the COVID-9 crisis. And the hon. Prime Minister answered to a question this morning as the *largesse* that was given to Nundun Gopee. He was not affected by COVID.

He was building his empire on public funds. So, this is not a crisis company that has been affected by COVID.

We are giving public money, tax payers' money to cronies of the previous government to do business. They take nothing from their pockets; they take it from the pockets of the people of Mauritius through this infamous Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd.

And what the people of Mauritius need to know is that they have been printing money, Madam Speaker. I quote –

“The printing of money by the Bank of Mauritius to fund the MIC was an irresponsible act which has had deleterious effects on the monetary system.”

This is very serious. These are criminal intents that are now being inquired by the Financial Crimes Commission. And this, the population of Mauritius should know and this is through dissemination of information through the temple of democracy. People are listening, the press will report it that they need to know what has happened. I would urge each and every Mauritian, we need to go through the State of the Economy, all the figures are here.

Madam Speaker, if we look at the debt that has been increasing since 2014, when in 2014 the Labour-led government left, the debt was Rs238 billion – R 238 milliards. We are now talking; everyone is talking about it. Figures are proving it; it is now *R 642 milliards*.

So, we are in a dire situation. That is why I would qualify this budget as a patriotic budget, a budget that is taking all the required precautions not to squander the future of the people, the youth of this country. That is why, this debate on pensions should be dispassionate but we should look at the people who are more vulnerable. What they need is political assistance, the social assistance and we need to communicate and tell them what government is doing through facts and figures, not listening to all political vultures that are causing harm to this country through all sorts of negative and false propaganda. So, from this temple of democracy, we need to transmit it to the people of Mauritius.

Madam speaker, with regard to this budget, we have been talking about Moody's – how in 2014, it was Baa1 and now we are in Baa3 with a negative outlook. People should understand.

Again, hon. Minister Uteem vividly portrayed it with a delicate example as in a family when you take loan what will happen when you don't pay your loans.

So, again, people should understand. We need to again use this platform, temple of democracy, to make the people understand. It is our duty as parliamentarians to go out and explain that to the people of Mauritius. I know when we will talk to the people of Mauritius, they will understand the gravity of the situation, as today portrayed by the hon. Prime Minister in his deliberate speech with regard to the pension reforms.

In this budget also, Madam Speaker, we are talking about creating wealth from abyss to prosperity. We need to create wealth. On that score, again, I would congratulate the Government to at least having taken care of our port sector. Through years in the previous mandate, myself, hon. Uteem and hon. Minister, Dr. Boolell, have been asking the previous government why are they not developing the port masterplan since 2021. Why is it that we have left our port in such a dismay? The international community has been puzzled when they came to know that we were ranked by the World Bank Report, Madam Speaker, as one of the least efficient ports in the region. We were ranked 369th globally.

We were behind the port of Toamasina in Madagascar. We were behind Mayotte. We were behind the port of Reunion. So, this is not something that is very encouraging when we, as parliamentarians, in the previous mandate, were asking the government to go ahead with the port masterplan, because this is a new pillar of the economy.

Unfortunately, they did not do so. I am very pleased that there is an allocation in the budget for Rs4.4 billion towards port infrastructure that will construct the bunker barge jetty, the container terminal extension and the digitalisation of logistics.

These are commendable steps forward to create this pillar of the economy. If I may say so, Madam Speaker, hon. Minister Dr. Boolell talked about an Ocean State and large territorial waters. We have around 22,000 big vessels that pass through our territorial waters every year, Madam Speaker. We have only 1,000 vessels that will stop at Mauritius for bunkering purposes. This is something that is alarming. For example, Panama runs its economy with its port. It attracts big vessels. It has constructed the Panama Canal from which it runs its economy. Even President Trump is a little jealous of the success of Panama with regard to attracting all the big vessels!

If we manage to attract at least 5,000 to 6,000 vessels in the years to come at our port, this will be a major breakthrough to develop this very important economic pillar for our society, Madam Speaker. This is not something new. Way back in our history, we were called and we are still called in our Coat of Arms, the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. So, let us

be the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. With the massive investment being made in the port, I am sure that we shall shine as the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean.

So, again, I thank the Government for placing so much resources to the Cargo Handling Corporation and to the Mauritius Ports Authority.

With regard to the reform of the Judiciary, Madam Speaker, again, when we took Government, it was a question about saving the democracy. We have the Labour Party, the MMM and Rezistans ek Alternativ who were born to fight and to preserve the rights of workers. We, in Nouveaux Démocrates, were born to save our democracy. We joined hands with the MMM, the Labour Party and Rezistans ek Alternativ to save our democracy. To save our democracy, we have the duty now to continue to make our democracy workable.

We need a participative democracy. I am very happy to note that we are moving ahead, at page 53 of the Budget Speech, we are setting up the Constitutional Review Commission. It is very important after 57 years to have a look at our Constitution. It is in our political mandate to have a look at electoral reforms and also at major issues that we need to amend in our Constitution.

Again, Madam Speaker, I welcome the creation of the National Prosecution Service. We know very well what happened to the DPP's Office. Also, I am very thankful now that we have come to an end to a case that was lodged way back in 2015 whereby the DPP's Office was suing the Attorney General's Office and it went on for years. Fortunately, now, this is not the case. It is good for the working of our penal system that we have an independent DPP's Office. The creation of the National Prosecution Service, headed by the DPP and modelled on the UK system, is a very good move ahead for our country.

This goes in the spirit of transparency. With regard to expansion of e-Judiciary, this is also a very commendable effort from Government to invest so that our Judiciary will get modern equipment and will move forward so that cases are not delayed. This will lay the foundation for the Investment Code that we need to bring so that all the foreign investments that will be coming to this country will feel safe and secure that we have the required mechanism and jurisdiction to have a fast and speedy justice, especially with regard to mediation.

Again, mediation was brought by arbitration. Brought by the hon. Prime Minister again! Since 2014, no consideration at all has been given to the promotion of arbitration and mediation in this country. There was so much investment that could have come to Mauritius,

but we do not have the required platform to treat them and give them the facilities to have arbitration and mediation in Mauritius.

We have seen what has happened to Betamax. They had to move to Singapore. And we all know the cost of these arbitrations. Through innovation, Artificial Intelligence and budgetary provisions, we will be moving to a modern jurisdiction in terms of arbitration and mediation.

With regard to the pension, Madam Speaker, I am sure that we, parliamentarians, will be able to participate and give our views in the committees. I am sure several recommendations will be taken into consideration because there are countries that have the dual system. Brazil, for example, has passed on the age to 65 for the males, and 62 for females. They have a scheme of contributory pension. So, those who can contribute, contribute. And those who cannot, the State will chip in. So, there are various possibilities, various schemes that could be devised that go along with the reform of pension that was long overdue.

Madam Speaker, I will not take much time. I will just thank the Government for its very first Appropriation Bill. I fully support the reforms, and I fully support the implementation of the measures taken for various Ministries. I would only refer the House to what has been said in the State of the Economy Report, at page 35: “We have administrative and bureaucratic constraints.” This was with the previous government. We still have administrative and bureaucratic constraints.

We need to look at bureaucracy and inefficiencies in licensing processes that are pervasive. We need to improve the system. I am sure if we remove all the red tapism and bureaucratic issues, I am sure that in the next 2-3 years, this will be a workable Appropriation Bill that would create prosperity for the country and will take us from abyss to prosperity. I thank you for your kind attention.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Pentiah!

Mr Pentiah: Madam Speaker, listening to hon. Lobine, it seems that we were just starting our session for today, but alas!

Madam Speaker, I beg to move for the adjournment of the debates.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Everybody was waiting for you to speak!

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 18 June 2025 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 10.04 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 18 June 2025 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ROSE BELLE CIVIL STATUS OFFICE – PROPOSED RELOCATION

(No. B/540) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Rose Belle Civil Status Office, he will state if consideration will be given for the relocation thereof in a premise of good standard and comprising basic amenities and in the vicinity of the Health Office delivering permits for cremation.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL AGENCY FOR DRUG CONTROL – ESTABLISHMENT

(No. B/541) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) 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 National Agency for Drug Control, he will state the expected date of coming into operation thereof.

Reply: As the hon. Member is aware, the National Agency for Drug Control Act came into force on 15 May 2025. This landmark legislation is the translation of our pledge into action as well as reaffirms the commitment of this Government to effectively address the

problem of drugs. The Act establishes the National Agency for Drug Control as the apex institution responsible for drug use prevention and control efforts in Mauritius.

In accordance with Section 9 of the Act, the Agency will be administered and managed by a Drug Control Board.

As previously announced in the House, Mr Samioullah Lauthan, Senior Advisor on Drug Policy at my Office, will chair the Drug Control Board. Furthermore, Dr. Fayzal Sulliman has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Agency. As I have already mentioned in the House, Dr. Fayzal Sulliman followed a fellowship programme on substance abuse at the Johns Hopkins University, USA and has extensive experience working with the UNODC, Governments and NGOs in the field of substance abuse, both locally and abroad in the African Region.

An amount of Rs70 million has been allocated for the Financial Year 2025-2026 to support the operational setup of the Agency. I am informed that procurement procedures are underway for securing office space and acquiring the necessary furniture and equipment. The Drug Control Board will soon be set up and thereafter the recruitment process of the other staff will be initiated.

I wish to inform the House that while the physical establishment of the Agency is still in progress, substantive work has already begun. A National Drug Control Master Plan (2025-2029), in collaboration with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Mauritius, is being prepared to comprehensively address drug trafficking, substance use, and associated harms. As soon as the Drug Control Board is set up, the Master Plan will be finalised.

This Master Plan is anchored in principles of inclusivity, human rights, and gender responsiveness, with a particular focus on youth and marginalized communities. Its overarching vision is to build a healthier and safer Mauritius through enhanced enforcement and strategic interventions aligned with two national priorities –

- A Comprehensive National Drug Prevention Programme.
- A Holistic National Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme.

The Drug Control Board will oversee the implementation of the Master Plan, once approved. In line with Section 4(c) of the Act, the National Drug Control Commission, under my chairpersonship, will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating its execution.