



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 22 JULY 2025

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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
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Hon. Dhananjay Ramful	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Darmarajen Nagalingum	Minister of Youth and Sports
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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

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Deputy Speaker	Hon. Vedasingam Vasudevachariar Baloomoody
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hon. Mohamed Ehsan Juman
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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 29 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 22 July 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

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

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill (No. XVII of 2025).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MELROSE HIGH SECURITY PRISON – 17 JULY 2025 – NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION – INQUIRY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) 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 incidents which occurred at the Melrose High Security Prison on 17 July 2025, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the –

- (a) Commissioner of Prisons/Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) nature of the incidents, and
 - (ii) number of prisoners and police or prison officers injured therein, and
- (b) National Human Rights Commission, information as to whether the Commission has carried out an inquiry thereinto and, if so –

indicate whether he has received any preliminary report or final report from the above-mentioned.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, respect for human rights, we all know, is the bedrock of any civilised society and I want to make it clear that under no circumstances whatsoever will this Government allow any violation of human rights in our country. We have seen far too many gross abuses in the recent past. My Government will always uphold the sanctity of human rights and dignity of our citizens.

The Mauritius Prison Service plays a crucial role in ensuring the safe custody, rehabilitation, and reintegration of detainees into the society. The Service is committed to uphold the principles of justice, security and human dignity while maintaining discipline and order within the correctional institutions. The Prison Service manages twelve prisons distributed across the country.

Madam Speaker, the current situation in the penal institutions is challenging, with several issues affecting the well-being of the inmates and the effectiveness of the correctional system.

One of the main challenges relates to security and issues, such as violence, gang-related activities and contraband, smuggling which pose really constant threats.

Despite the existing security measures in place in our prisons, prohibited articles are still found in prison premises. They are introduced through different ways and means, including by pelting and even by drones, Madam Speaker. The Prison Officers regularly carry out search operations on detainees, suspected to carry these prohibited articles.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that in order to enhance security of our prisons, he decided to carry out searches in all prisons. Consequently, the Prisons Security Squad and the Correctional Emergency Response Team conducted a search at Beau Bassin Prison on 18 May of this year. During that exercise, 47 cannabis parcels and SIM cards were seized.

On 12, 14 and 16 July 2025, searches were carried out at two residential units and worship places at Melrose Prison. Thirty-three mobile phones, battery charges and power banks were subsequently seized.

On 17 July 2025, one Superintendent of Prisons was mandated to effect special searches at five residential units at Melrose Prison, namely Ebony, Talipot, Pailles-en-Queue, Kestrel and Alamanda. At 08.55 a.m., the Superintendent entered Ebony Unit which houses 124 detainees. Some detainees were collaborating in the search operation whilst ring leaders were preventing them from collaborating with the Prison Officers and held them as hostage at one point. This situation led to a fight among detainees, I am informed.

At 8.57 a.m., the Commissioner of Prisons contacted the Commissioner of Police and informed him that he was anticipating a mutiny and asked for reinforcement to back up the Prison Officers. Very often the mere presence of SMF Officers serves as a deterrent.

Simultaneously, the Commissioner of Prisons asked the Deputy Commissioner to proceed to Melrose to supervise the operation. The Correctional Emergency Response Team of Beau Bassin was also requested to report to Melrose Prison.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that following the request of the Commissioner of Prisons, a specialised team from the Groupe Intervention de la Police Mauricienne (GIPM) comprising one Inspector of Police, three Police Sergeants, seven Police

Constables, together with a Section of the Special Mobile Force (SMF) comprising one Inspector of Police, two Police Sergeants and twelve Police Constables were deployed to provide tactical support to the prisons' Correctional Emergency Response Team.

Throughout the operation, five prison units and their corresponding yard areas underwent comprehensive searches by CERT Prison Officers. They recovered various prohibited articles, including miniature mobile phones, one pen drive and one SIM card. It is to be noted that SMF personnel supported the CERT personnel to bring prisoners to order. Two Federal Streamers were used to keep the prisoners at bay.

I am also informed that seven relatives reported alleged cases of brutality against the incarcerated family members, and have formally requested for police inquiry into the matter.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that minimum force was used during the search. We must not detract from the fact that the vast majority of prison officers have remained steadfastly loyal to the prison services and have continued to show a remarkable degree of professionalism in the discharge of their functions.

After the operation, I am informed, all the detainees were medically assessed by the Prison Health Service Officers at the Medical Unit of the Melrose Prison and necessary treatment were provided to nine of them who were complaining of pain. The medical staff was reinforced by additional Prison Health Service Officers during that period.

I am also informed, Madam Speaker, that one of the detainees was identified with an injury on his neck. He was attended by the prison medical officer who treated him and advised admission to the hospital ward of the Melrose Prison, which he declined.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to remind the House that it was under my Government in 2012 that within the National Human Rights Commission, the following divisions were set up

—

- (i) the Human Rights Division;
- (ii) the Police Complaints Division, and
- (iii) the National Preventive Mechanism Division.

The National Preventive Mechanism Division was in line with the obligations of Mauritius under the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment as a signatory state to the protocol.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission that on Friday 18 July 2025, the National Preventive Mechanism Division (NPMD) of the NHRC received a complaint from the father of a detainee at Melrose Prison, to the effect that his son had been the victim of brutality at the hands of prison officers.

I am further informed that the Commission met on Saturday 19 July 2025 and ordered an immediate inquiry to be undertaken by the National Preventive Mechanism Division.

Madam Speaker, you will also note that Section 7 of the Mauritius Constitution prohibits any act of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment. The National Human Rights Commission is vested with powers under the Protection of Human Rights Act to conduct a full-fledged inquiry where violation of Section 7 has occurred.

This ongoing investigation will examine, *inter alia* –

- 1) The underlying causes of the disturbances inside Melrose Prison;
- 2) The manner in which the disturbances were handled by the prison authorities, and
- 3) The measures that may be taken to avoid such disturbances.

On Monday 21 July of this year, yesterday, the Commission received complaints from family members of detainees which will be taken onboard for the purpose of the inquiry.

Madam, Speaker, I wish to inform the House that no preliminary report has yet been received from the National Human Rights Commission as the inquiry has just started. A final report of its observations and recommendations is awaited and once received will be examined thoroughly and implemented.

I also wish to inform the House, that in line with our policy of transparency and accountability, I intend to make that report public.

Madam Speaker, let me reiterate this government's deep-rooted commitment to promote full adherence to the principles of human rights underpinning the social fabrics of our society.

When it comes to preservation of human dignity and upholding of human rights, we are guided by a philosophy of no compromise and government will see to it that any behaviour contrary to this philosophy will not be tolerated.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

You have a supplementary?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply and I believe we all agree that a mutiny occurred in that high security prison on that day.

And, in light of these developments and in view that there were interventions of different sections of the police force and prison forces on that day, can he give details – but I want to know how many police officers intervened and how many prison officers intervened during that mutiny?

The Prime Minister: I think I did mention but let me say it. Perhaps to give you the exact details – the special teams of the GIPM were comprised of one inspector of police, three police sergeants, seven police constables, together with a section of the SMF comprising of one inspector of police, two police sergeants and 12 police constables, who were deployed there.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Prime Minister, can you inform the House whether, the intervention was also related to drug-trafficking in the prison premises, and if yes, whether, there has been any seizure of drugs, I understand there was seizure of mobile phones, or other unauthorised objects?

The Prime Minister: As I explained, Madam Speaker, the Commissioner of Prisons decided that because there were lots of objects that were, as I said, thrown by pellets or even use of drones, he wanted to carry out searches in all prisons.

First of all, he carried out a search at Beau Bassin Prison, and in that exercise, I explained, 47 cannabis parcels and SIM Cards were seized.

Then, there were searches at Melrose Prison, 23 mobiles phones, battery charges and power banks were subsequently seized.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, he is aware of two separate and contradictory statements that were made by the Commissioner to the media in the aftermath of these incidents? Two contradictory statements.

The Prime Minister: I have seen it in the press but this is being inquired into.

Madam Speaker: Yes, fourth; your friend has also asked.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, whether any inmates who were injured, were transferred to a public hospital, and if yes, whether, they were examined by independent medical professionals?

The Prime Minister: They were examined by the medical doctor there. He treated them and then he advised that they be transferred but that prisoner refused.

Madam Speaker: One prisoner! One prisoner.

Yes, fifth one.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

I believe the hon. Prime Minister is aware that one, Ms Touria Prayag, was reported to have visited that high-security premises and it was stated that she had no permission from the Human Rights Commission. Is the hon. Prime Minister able to confirm that?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I did inquire. She did go there on her own. I think it was in good faith; she is a former journalist. She decided to go there and to see for herself what has happened, and she has briefed the Commission on what she observed.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, I do understand, hon. Prime Minister, that the person was there, she wanted to help but if you refer to the Reform Institution Act of 1988, it is clearly stated who can enter the prison premises from the Human Rights Commission.

The Prime Minister: In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, is right. It is very strict but she went there – I think it was her instinct as a former journalist that she went there and she observed. And, she has been called by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission to explain and she has given a report.

Mr Lesjongard: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, what immediate measures will be put in place by the authorities to prevent such incidents in the future and also, as he stated, to ensure that the fundamental rights of detainees are respected within our correctional system, Madam Speaker?

The Prime Minister: We are taking the measures as I mentioned. In fact, this is not the first time. In 2020 also, there was a mutiny there. So, it is not the first time. The same sort of thing happened, with the SMF and all these...

But we will wait for the report and then we will...

We are taking steps at the moment but we have to wait for the report.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes. Can the hon. Prime Minister now confirm whether, the families of the injured detainees have been fully briefed on the situation of the detainees by the prison authorities?

The Prime Minister: I know they have met the members of the National Human Rights Commission and they must have been briefed. They have made complaints and the National Human Rights Commission is looking into those complaints.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask one last question?

Madam Speaker: You have one last? Yes.

Mr A. Duval: I have two.

Madam Speaker: Okay, then you will do your last.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, my first question – in light of the fact that Ms Prayag went there, and I think it is commendable that she did, is the hon. Prime Minister prepared to review the legislation so as to allow spontaneous visits to ensure that we hear both sides of the story, which we are hearing now, one side from the Commission of Prisons, one side from Madam Prayag? Is he prepared to review that aspect of the law?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether it is wise to review it, Madam Speaker. The National Human Rights Commission has the authority to go there. So, I think that would be better. Otherwise, you will have a lot of people – you can see what chaos has happened.

Madam Speaker: But in this case, if I understand well, because it is one of my favourite subjects – she is a member of the National Human Rights Commission; she is not just a journalist.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My second question is – in light of the fact that there are two sides of the story and the Prime Minister has rightly referred to previous incidents which have led, in fact, to no actions being taken, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the police has already intervened to secure any CCTV evidence and any logbook etc... from the prison so as to contain the evidence?

The Prime Minister: That was one of the first questions I asked. I want to make sure that unlike what happened with the previous government, no one comes to tell me that the cameras were not working or were switched off.

In fact, the Commissioner of Prisons has secured all the cameras, which were working. There are 550 cameras in all, but all the cameras have been secured. The National Human Rights Commission will be able to visualise the films.

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

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My last question was on that subject, but I have another question.

With regard to the inquiry which has started, can the hon. Prime Minister state to the House what safeguards are in place to ensure that these inquiries are done in full transparency and accountability?

The Prime Minister: The National Human Rights Commission is doing the inquiry. I will let them do the inquiry.

The people we have put there are very independent. We will see what happens. The former DPP is the Head of the National Human Rights Commission. So, I expect I will get a proper report.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, everybody.

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/722 will be replied by the hon. Attorney-General. PQ B/724 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Land Transport. PQ B/728 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports. I also understand that PQs B/716 and B/718 have been withdrawn.

Now, questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister!

So, I now call the Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière, hon. Quirin!

CERCLE DE JOACHIM – FOREIGN PLAYERS TRANSFER – INQUIRY STATUS

(No. B/709) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) 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 police inquiry initiated in 2020 into alleged malpractices surrounding the transfer of foreign football players by the Cercle de Joachim, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 24 July 2020, the then Ministry of Labour, Human Resources Development and Training had referred for enquiry, an alleged case of malpractice at the Mauritius Football Association regarding the transfer of four Malagasy players by the *Cercle de Joachim*.

On 31 July 2020, the case was assigned to the Central Criminal Investigation Department. On 09 September 2021, the case file was sent to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice. On 07 April 2022, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions advised that no further action be taken, and the case was filed.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, j'ai bien compris la réponse de l'honorable ministre. Mais vu que...

Madam Speaker : Du Premier ministre ! Du Premier ministre !

Mr Quirin: Pardon ! Du Premier ministre ! Pardon, excusez-moi.

J'ai bien compris sa réponse. Mais le fait que ce cas a été sanctionné par la Fédération internationale de football et que la MFA et le Cercle de Joachim ont eu à payer une amende de

10 000 francs suisses en 2021, est-ce que l'honorable Premier ministre ne pense-t-il pas, vu qu'il y a eu effectivement des *malpractices*, est-ce que ce cas ne devrait pas être référé à nouveau à la police pour une enquête additionnelle/supplémentaire pour faire la lumière vraiment sur ce qui s'est passé ? Puisqu'il y a eu des *malpractices*.

The Prime Minister: I understand what the hon. Member is trying to say, but the DPP had looked at all the evidence or whatever and decided that the case should not go ahead. So, I must rely on that.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Fizet sa!*

Madam Speaker: Okay. The Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, hon. Seeburn!

MAURITIAN RUPEE DEPRECIATION – ECONOMIC IMPACT

(No. B/710) 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 the exchange rate of the US dollar vis à vis the Mauritian rupee, he will state the rate thereof in December 2014 and October 2024, respectively, indicating whether the depreciation of the rupee contributed to the rise in the costs of goods and services locally and, if so, whether instances of mismanagement or negligence in economic or monetary decision-making contributed thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the gross economic mismanagement by the previous government during the past decade has severely undermined our macroeconomic fundamentals, and we all know this. It has led, amongst others, a sharp depreciation of the rupee and an increase in the inflation rate, and therefore, the cost of living.

In fact, in December 2014, the average exchange rate stood at 31.97 rupees against the US dollar. By October 2024, that is, practically ten years later, it had risen to 46.64 rupees per US dollar, reflecting a depreciation of the rupee by 46 per cent.

This significant depreciation of the Mauritian rupee has had far-reaching economic consequences.

On the domestic front, it has intensified inflationary pressures, and therefore, raised the cost of goods and services. Inflation surged to a peak of 11.3 per cent in February 2023. It was

the highest level for three decades. 11.3 per cent! Between December 2014 to October 2024, consumer prices in Mauritius increased by a dramatic 43.3 per cent.

On the external front, the depreciation of the rupee has contributed in the widening of the trade deficit, which stood at a high of Rs180 billion, equivalent to 28.2% of GDP, in 2023. It deteriorated further in 2024, rising from Rs180 billion to Rs207.8 billion, that is, 29.9% of GDP. This reflects the growing imbalances between imports and exports.

Madam Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions in this House, the dire economic situation we face today is a direct consequence of the gross mismanagement of the economy by the previous government. It reflects a striking level of amateurism and incompetence in the handling of the country's economic affairs, exposing a troubling lack of foresight, and, as I said, competence.

Let me highlight a few glaring examples of flawed monetary policies –

- (a) First of all, the Bank of Mauritius decided to print money to finance the budget deficit;
- (b) Secondly, the Bank of Mauritius further resorted to more money printing to finance the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd.

Overall, the Bank of Mauritius injected a total amount of Rs180 billion of liquidity in the banking system. As a result, excess liquidity in the banking system surged dramatically to an unprecedented Rs90 billion in August 2023 alone. This led to a depreciation of the rupee, and, of course, intensified inflationary pressures within the local economy;

- (c) Third, the increase in the policy rate by a cumulative 265 basis points during 2022 was not enough to solidly anchor inflation expectations and prevent the further depreciation of the rupee; and
- (d) Fourth, despite expert recommendations to raise the key rate, the Bank of Mauritius chose not only to ignore the expert recommendation, but it did exactly the opposite. In other words, instead of increasing, it decreased the key rate from 4.5 per cent to 4 per cent in September 2024.

Now, this negative interest rate gap between the rupee and the US dollar caused a sharp depreciation again of the rupee.

Let me now turn to some of the critical policy blunders of the previous regime –

- (a) First, they favoured an economic model based on reckless consumption and imports. Such a model, built on short-term gains rather than structural resilience, was inherently unsustainable and ultimately detrimental to our economic stability.
- (b) Secondly, they created a money illusion by giving away a range of allowances and cash handouts. They opted for populist policies that provided short-term relief, but contributed to increasing inflation.
- (c) Third, they squandered public funds on costly white elephant projects, neglecting critical investments in productive infrastructure, innovation, and the green transition.
- (d) Fourth, with the reckless spending, they increased the budget deficit and brought the public sector debt to 90 per cent of GDP in June 2025.

Madam Speaker, since assuming office, we have implemented a series of measures aimed at steering the economy back onto the path of stability and sustainable growth.

We are shifting the economic model away from one that relies heavily on consumption and imports, towards a more sustainable model powered by investment, exports and innovation.

We have been able to stabilise the trade-weighted exchange rate of the rupee. In fact, the rupee has recently appreciated against the US dollar due to movements in the international markets.

The headline inflation rate has gone down to 2.9 per cent. During the 12 months period, it was 4.5 per cent in June 2024.

And, finally, we are implementing a comprehensive fiscal consolidation plan to bring down the budget deficit and the public sector debt to more sustainable levels.

Madam Speaker: Yes, next question! Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE!
Dr. Saumtally!

**MAURITIAN DIASPORA SCHEME – COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT –
REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT**

(No. B/711) 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 Mauritian diaspora, he will state if, with a view to attracting the engagement of skilled members thereof in the development of the Mauritian economy, consideration will be given for the amendment of section 132 of the Companies Act which requires every company to have at least one Director ordinarily residing in Mauritius under the Self-Employed category of the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme, requiring applicants to register a one-person company.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme has been set up in 2015 to attract members of the Mauritian diaspora back to Mauritius to participate in the economic development of the country.

The Mauritian Diaspora Scheme which is managed by the Economic Development Board, requires an eligible member of the Mauritian diaspora who wishes to return to Mauritius as a self-employed, to invest at least Rs250,000 either in his own name or as a one-person company, in a field of activity which is deemed to be scarce, innovative or strategic.

I am informed by the Economic Development Board that currently 550 members of the Mauritian diaspora are benefitting from this Scheme out of which 170 are self-employed. Out of the 170 self-employed, only 5 are one-person companies.

Under the Mauritian Diaspora Scheme, a self-employed investing through a one-person company needs to become a resident in Mauritius to benefit from the incentives of the Scheme. The one-person company should also be a private company incorporated in Mauritius in which the sole shareholder is the sole director of the company as per the Companies Act.

Furthermore, section 132 of the Companies Act, requires that a company should have at least one director who is ordinarily resident in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, it is not proposed to amend section 132 of the Companies Act at this point to relax the requirement for at least one director to be resident in Mauritius, as this

requirement applies not only to one-person companies but to all types of companies registered in Mauritius.

This is an established international principle which can be compared with other jurisdictions. Enforcing this requirement is vital to strengthen our regulatory framework for companies and also to facilitate administrative procedures.

It ensures that there will be a person, that is a director, who is physically present in Mauritius to represent the company and be answerable to our enforcement authorities in the event of any breach by that company.

Madam Speaker, however, I wish to reassure the hon. Member that as I have announced in the Budget Speech 2025-2026, a new and comprehensive strategy is currently being developed in collaboration with the Economic Development Board to make the Scheme less restrictive.

We will thus facilitate the return of our valuable Mauritian diaspora members to contribute to the development of our country.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, next question, the hon. Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue!

BANK OF MAURITIUS – GOVERNOR & DEPUTY GOVERNORS – REMUNERATION & ALLOWANCES

(No. B/712) Mr A. Duval (Fourth 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 current Governor and Deputy Governors of the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, in each case, obtain information as to the remuneration drawn, including other allowances/benefits received, whether in cash or in kind and as chairperson or member of other Boards or Committees of public institutions.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Bank of Mauritius is an autonomous and independent body governed by the provisions of the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004.

As a matter of fact, section 3(3) of the Bank of Mauritius Act provides that the Bank of Mauritius shall, in the furtherance of its objects, “perform its functions independently”. Section 12(1) of the Act further provides that –

“(1) The general policy of the affairs and business of the Bank, other than the formulation and determination of monetary policy, shall, (...) be entrusted to a Board of Directors.”

In addition, Madam Speaker, section 12(3) of the Act provides that the Board shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority in the exercise of its functions.

But let me inform the House that the remuneration of the Governor and the Deputy Governors are actually disclosed in the financial statements of the Bank of Mauritius, which are publicly available on the website of the Bank.

Mr A. Duval: May I?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: The question I also asked, first of all, I take note that the hon. Prime Minister will not provide these details to the House. However, the Financial Services Commission, for example, where some of them are appointed, at least one of them, he could have disclosed that information.

Let me nonetheless ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is prepared to consult the Bank of Mauritius for a review in the name of keeping foreign currency in Mauritius, the astronomical figures of *per diem* that is paid to the Governor, for example, when he travels, which amounts to USD1400 apparently and USD200 for entertainment allowance, Rs73,000 but paid in dollar. Is that something that he is prepared to review?

The Prime Minister: That is not part of the question, Madam Speaker, and I did say that if you want to get all the information, it is on the financial statement of the Bank of Mauritius on its website.

Madam Speaker: Next question, the hon. First Member for Savanne & Black River, Mr Babajee!

LA PASSE, WEST COAST – DRUGS – ARRESTS & INQUIRIES – SAFE CITY SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM CAMERAS

(No. B/713) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of

Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of arrests effected on the West Coast in connection therewith over the past five years, indicating –
 - (i) if the arrested persons are Mauritian or foreign nationals, and
 - (ii) where matters stand as to the inquiries initiated thereinto, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for the installation of Safe City Surveillance System Cameras on the four entrances of “La Passe”.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to parts (a) and (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, between 2020 and 18 July 2025, 117 drug cases have been detected in the West Coast leading to the arrest of 163 suspects, of whom, 146 are of Mauritian nationals and 17 of foreign citizens.

As for part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed that inquiries are in progress in all these cases.

With regard to part (b) of the question, concerning the possible installation of Safe City Surveillance Cameras at the roads leading to the four entrances of La Passe, I am informed that there are 204 Safe City Cameras installed at key locations, as well as policing by 11 Police Stations and 7 National Coast Guard Posts. Regular foot, mobile, sea and aerial patrols by the NCG personnel as well as by the Dornier aircraft and Police helicopters, also help monitor the coastal regions.

However, the region is monitored by three Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS) stations located at Le Morne, Albion, and Grand Gaube. These operate on a 24-hour basis and provide real-time data on vessel movements. A more advanced CSRS, donated by the Government of Japan, is expected to be operational by October or November of next year, and which will offer significantly enhanced surveillance capacity.

In addition, with a view to enhancing our maritime surveillance, Mauritius continues to collaborate with regional maritime centres namely, the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) in Seychelles.

I also wish to inform the House that, in February 2024, Mauritius signed a bilateral agreement with Reunion Island to strengthen cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking and the use of maritime routes for smuggling.

Given the current surveillance framework in place, Madam Speaker, and the enhancements already underway, the question of installing additional Safe City cameras along the West Coast covering the roads leading to the four main “La Passe” would best be addressed by the outcome of a comprehensive risk and threat assessment which is ongoing. The matter remains under consideration, and further reinforcement measures will be taken as and when deemed operationally necessary.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Grand’ Baie and Poudre D’or, Mr Beejan!

DUBAI EXPO 2020 – DELEGATION – ALLOWANCES & PER DIEM

(No. B/714) Mr N. Beejan (The 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 Dubai Expo 2020, he will state the names of the former Ministers, Parliamentary Private Secretaries and Members of Parliament who attended same, indicating in each case, the total participation cost thereof, giving details as to the –

- (a) duration of stay;
- (b) *per diem* or any other allowance drawn, and
- (c) composition of the delegation.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Dubai Expo 2020 was held from October 2021 to March 2022.

Dubai Expo 2020 was clearly a ‘Travel Folly’ by the former ministers using taxpayers’ money at a time when the Mauritian people were reeling under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; most families were financially in difficulty but also worried about the COVID-19. These people were travelling on taxpayers’ money. I hope you ask me a question next time on this.

Mr A. Duval: I hope to get the answer.

The Prime Minister: You are getting the answer.

I am informed that 11 ministers of the previous government, together with their accompanying delegations, attended the Dubai Expo 2020.

Three former Ministers, I did say 11 ministers but three former ministers, namely, Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, former Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; Mr D. Balgobin, former Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, and Mr S. Bholah, former Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, attended the same Expo twice.

Explain to me why. Why did they have to go twice?

(Interruptions)

The total participation cost of the ministerial delegations amounted to Rs8,252,970.89.

Ms Anquetil: *Profiteur!*

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the list is very long. It will take a lot of time. I think it is better to table the list together with the duration of the stay, the per diem and other allowances drawn.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one question.

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform what criteria were used to select attendees of Dubai Expo because now it is the time for us to expose the former Government as so much of public...

Madam Speaker: Question! Question!

Mr Beejan: ...funds have been used.

Madam Speaker: Wait! Don't make a statement!

Mr Bhagwan: *Swazirer dan la kwizinn sa!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Ask your question...

You finished? Yes!

(Interruptions)

Yes, Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: As I said, there was no criteria. We cannot see any criteria. Why would somebody have to go twice? Three Ministers went twice and they went with delegations. This is why I will table it. There was as I called it, a ‘travel folly’. It was an occasion for them. People were dying with COVID here, they could not give a damn – I was going to say something else – and they just travelled, enjoyed...

Ms Anquetil: *La honte!*

The Prime Minister: ...because *gouvernman dan nou lame, fer seki zot le!*

Ms Anquetil: *La honte!*

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I have a question!

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I have one!

Madam Speaker: Yes? What do you have? A supplementary? Okay!

Mr A. Duval: I am glad that the Prime Minister is prepared...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Do not comment! He should put his question. *Ki comment?*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ...to table...

Madam Speaker: Please! Don't do the same...

Mr A. Duval: It is not a comment!

Madam Speaker: No, give me a question!

An hon. Member: Shut up!

Mr A. Duval: *Ki shut up ta? Li pe dir ou shut up !*

Madam Speaker: Non!

Mr A. Duval: *Alors*, is he...

Madam Speaker: We were doing very well after...

Mr A. Duval: I am... Well, *il ne doit passer des commentaires comme ça. S'il ne veut pas travailler, qu'il aille à la maison !*

(Interruptions)

Qu'il aille à la maison !

(Interruptions)

Combien de temps on va permettre encore comme ça ?

(Interruptions)

Ma question...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member!

Mr A. Duval: La question c'est...

Madam Speaker: You were asking a question. Please, carry on!

Mr A. Duval: La question au Premier ministre, c'est je suis ravi qu'il va donner les détails. J'espère qu'il puisse prendre l'engagement ici de donner des détails systématiquement à toutes les questions qui reportent sur les voyages...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: *Tout depend....*

The Deputy Prime Minister: What is the question, Madam Speaker?

Mr A. Duval:...parce que la dernière fois, je n'ai pas eu...

Madam Speaker: Non ! Non ! Non !

Mr A. Duval: ...les informations !

Madam Speaker: It is not a question!

Mr A. Duval: The question is: is he prepared to do it systematically?

Mr Lesjongard: Whether there is transparency on the....

Mr A. Duval: Transparency that is...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member seems to forget...

Madam Speaker: Try to answer to his question.

The Prime Minister: I have always given all the details except for the Bank of Mauritius which I just... Always, you ask any question you want to ask, I will be giving all the details of the amount of money they spent. It is criminal. These people should be hanged.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire...

(Interruptions)

I do not want to say the word 'shut up' again.

Mr A. Duval: You are getting contaminated.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Give me on second! I will take this time to apologise for last time when I could not bear it anymore and I said 'shut up' which is not a parliamentary word. So, I am now apologising to the House but do not push me too far. Please!

Dr. Ms Thannoo, please!

CYBERCRIME UNIT – REPORTED THREAT CASES – EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY – ACTIONS

(No. B/715) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second 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 Cybercrime Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of reported cases thereat over the period 2014 to 2024, indicating the number of –
 - (i) resolved cases, and
 - (ii) pending cases, since 2014 to date, indicating the reasons therefor and

- (b) measures taken, if any, for improved, efficient and rapid service delivery.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a)(i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the period 2014 to 2024, 3,337 cases have been reported to the Cybercrime Unit and their outcome are as follows –

- (i) 111 cases have been resolved;
- (ii) 147 cases are awaiting advice from the DPP;
- (iii) 14 cases are awaiting trial;
- (iv) 889 cases are still under inquiry as at 18 July of this year, and
- (v) 2,176 cases have been filed.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed that the following measures have been put in place for the improved, efficient and rapid service delivery by the Cybercrime Unit –

- (i) Significant increase in staffing, from 13 in 2014 to 21 in 2025, to handle multiple investigations simultaneously. Regular training of those officers, *inter alia*, on emerging cybercrime trends and digital evidence handling is going on;
- (ii) Strengthened collaboration with local agencies such as the CERT-MU and ICTA, as well as with international law enforcement bodies, to accelerate investigations including direct 24/7 contact channels with platforms like Facebook and TikTok to expedite requests;
- (iii) Action through CERT-MU for the removal of illegal online content and 24/7 cyber patrols by the Police IT Unit to monitor and detect suspicious online activity,
- (iv) The Digital Forensic Lab at the Police IT Unit is now operational on a 24/7 basis to enable prompt analysis of electronic evidence.

Madam Speaker, the House will appreciate that the issue of cybercrime is a complex challenge being faced worldwide. The collaboration of each stakeholder as well as that of the public is required to combat this scourge. The Government is fully committed to continuously enhancing the capacity of our institutions to respond effectively to the ever-evolving cybercrime threats. In that respect, as I mentioned, a specialised unit is currently being set up to focus specifically on cybersecurity-related issues, with technical assistance from external expertise.

These efforts are part of a broader strategy to modernise policing and safeguard our digital environment. As stated in the Government Programme of 2025-2029, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation is also considering amendments to be made to the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act to strengthen provisions on Auditing of Critical Sectors and Child Online Protection due to the evolving nature of the cyber threats landscape.

Madam Speaker: Yes? You are happy?

Okay, so B/718 has been withdrawn.

So, now we have the hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues, Mr Edouard!

IMPORTED VEHICLES – NEW DUTIES & TARIFFS – 01 JULY 2025 – EXEMPTION

(No. B/716) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) 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 new duties and tariffs applicable on imported vehicles with effect from 01 July 2025, he will state if consideration will be given for the exemption thereof in respect of the vehicles shipped prior to the abovementioned cut-off date as evidenced by their respective bills of lading.

(Withdrawn)

CSG INCOME ALLOWANCE – NON-SUBMISSION CSG RETURNS –PAYMENT DEPRIVATION – COMPLAINTS & MEASURES

(No. B/717) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth 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 Social Contribution (CSG) Income Allowance, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the number of complaints received from employees deprived of the payment thereof due to their employers failing to submit their return on CSG since January 2025 to date, indicating the measures taken, if any, against the defaulting employers.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act provides for the payment of the monthly CSG Income Allowance to an eligible employee only if

the employer has submitted the relevant returns and has paid or remitted to the Mauritius Revenue Authority –

- (a) both the employer's and the employee's CSG contributions;
- (b) the contribution to the National Savings Fund;
- (c) the Human Resource Development Council training levy, and
- (d) contributions to the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund.

I am informed by the MRA that for the period from January 2025 to date, 1,634 complaints have been received from employees who were not paid their CSG income allowance because their employers, 1,150 in total, did not comply with the statutory requirements. Out of these complaints, 22 relate to employees in Rodrigues and concern 19 defaulting employers.

I am informed, Madam Speaker, by the MRA that through enforcement actions, out of the 1,634 complaints, 1,456 including the 16 complaints from Rodrigues have already been resolved. The MRA has paid the CSG income allowance to 1,444 of those employees and will effect payment for the remaining by this week.

For the remaining 178 employees including 6 cases that are from Rodrigues, the MRA is taking action to initiate legal proceedings against the 82 employers concerned.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Now I have the hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues, Mr Edouard!

PLACES OF WORSHIP – VANDALISM – REPORTED CASES – CONVICTIONS

(No. B/718) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) 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 acts of vandalism of places of worship, including kalimayes, temples, mosques, churches, and other religious sites, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof over the period January 2015 to October 2024, indicating, in connection therewith, the number of persons –

- (a) arrested, and
- (b) convicted, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS-FRANCE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENTS – WATER SECTOR COOPERATION – LOAN ASSISTANCE QUANTUM

(No. B/719) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth 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 framework agreements signed between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and of France, including from the *Agence Française de Développement*, focusing on strengthening cooperation in the water sector, he will state the quantum of the loan assistance received, giving details of the projects earmarked for implementation thereunder in mainland Mauritius and in Rodrigues, respectively.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with regards to the water sector, the Government of Mauritius has signed the following agreements with the *Agence Française de Développement* since 2019 to date –

- (i) First, a Technical Assistance of Euro 600,000, signed on 05 September 2019, to support the water sector in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Under this assistance, the Rodrigues Water Resources Strategy and priority action plan were developed, amongst others.
- (ii) Second, a Technical Assistance of Euro 1.3 million, signed on 26 February 2024, for a study in Rodrigues, on the depth and volume of freshwater aquifers for the development of new boreholes.
- (iii) Third, a Technical Assistance of Euro 800,000, also signed on 26 February 2024, out of which, Euro 462,640 is for the development of a strategy for rainwater management and flood risk prevention on the island of Rodrigues and the remaining to develop a strategy to improve water absorption capacity of soil in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, on 01 December 2023, the Government of Mauritius also signed a Sector Budget Support Loan Agreement with AFD for reform in the water sector in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The quantum of the loan is Euro 200 million.

This Sector Budget Support Loan is coupled with a grant of Euro 2 million. This grant is being used to finance the elaboration of water policy for Mauritius,

improving water quality in Rodrigues and a Technical Adviser providing support to the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and the Rodrigues Public Utility Corporation.

With respect to the projects earmarked under this loan assistance, I would like to highlight that the loan from AFD is a Sector Budget Support Loan. The financing from a Budget Support Loan is not earmarked for specific projects.

Accordingly, the proceeds of the loan are directly credited to the Consolidated Fund and contribute to the financing of the various projects and programmes in the water sector for both Mauritius and Rodrigues.

As per the Sector Budget Support Loan agreement, disbursements are linked to Key Performance Indicators in the water sector, again, for both Mauritius and Rodrigues. So far, Euro 105 million has been disbursed under the loan agreement.

Madam Speaker, over and above the financing from AFD, there are several projects for the water sector that are being implemented for both Mauritius and Rodrigues. The main ones are as follows –

For Mauritius, Rs3.1 billion which includes –

- (i) Rs1.4 billion for the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam;
- (ii) Rs1.2 billion for pipe replacement projects;
- (iii) Rs100 million for the rehabilitation of La Ferme Dam;
- (iv) Rs50 million for the upgrading of Piton du Milieu Water Treatment Plant;
- (v) Rs73 million for the construction and upgrading of pumping stations at Poudre d'Or and Plaine Lauzun;
- (vi) Rs100 million for containerised filtration plants, drilling of boreholes and maintenance of feeder canals, and
- (vii) Rs50 million for the replacement of Bulk Water Meters.

For Rodrigues –

- (i) Rs216.3 million has been provided in the Budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for FY 2025-2026. These funds are mainly to meet the operating cost of

the Commission responsible for water, Rodrigues Public Utilities Corporation (RPUC), and the Rainwater Harvesting Scheme.

- (ii) Rs540 million for two desalination plants, distribution networks and metering financed from MIC.
- (iii) USD 10 million, which amounts to about Rs457 million, a grant from World Bank and European Union, to support Rodrigues' sustainable development with a particular focus on water and food security.

Madam Speaker, let me reassure the House that we are not leaving Rodrigues behind. Not at all! Over Rs1 billion has been earmarked for the water sector for the next two financial years in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. Prime Minister.

Time is now up! I will give a list of all the PQs that have been withdrawn: B/721, B/725, B/726, B/727, and B/729. Thank you.

Now, I am calling PQs addressed to Ministers.

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

MFRS HEAD OFFICE & FIRE STATIONS – PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION/RELOCATION

(No. B/730) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the proposed construction/relocation of the Fire and Satellite Stations and the Head Offices of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MFRS, in each case, information as to where matters stand, indicating the expected construction start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that several projects have been earmarked for the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) with a view to enhancing our national emergency response capacity.

These include –

- The construction of a new headquarters and fire station at Quatre Bornes.

- The development of new fire stations at Goodlands, Montagne Blanche and Jin Fei.
- The establishment of eight satellite fire stations in various regions across the country.

These projects are being supervised by the Ministry of National Infrastructure, that is, the MNI.

My Ministry is working in close collaboration with the MNI and is monitoring progress through a dedicated Project Steering Committee. Each project is currently at different stage of implementation, which include –

- land allocation;
- architectural and technical planning;
- tender evaluation and award;
- construction and site development.

The execution of these projects also entails multi-agency coordination, involving the Central Procurement Board, other relevant Ministries and local authorities to ensure streamlined process and timely completion.

Given the scope of these infrastructural developments, I am tabling, for the consideration of the hon. Member, a comprehensive status report outlining the following key information for each fire station project start dates, expected completion timeline, and current progress of implementation.

This report is being submitted for reference and provides all pertinent technical and administrative details relevant to the planning and execution of the respective projects.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

May I just inform the House that PQ B/737 will be replied by hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

So, we carry on. Hon. Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or, Mr Beejan!

SICOM CEO – APPOINTMENT DATE, QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE & REMUNERATION PACKAGE

(No. B/731) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the current Chief Executive Officer of the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd., she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the name thereof, indicating –

- (a) her terms and conditions of appointment and the date thereof;
- (b) qualifications and experience held, and
- (c) monthly salary and allowances drawn, indicating if the salary was revised since her appointment and, if so, by how much and why.

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that Mrs Nandita Ramdewar is the Group Chief Executive Officer of the State Insurance Company of Mauritius Ltd (SICOM).

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am advised that Mrs Ramdewar joined SICOM on 04 May 1992 as Manager, Finance on a permanent and pensionable basis. She has since held various positions within the company. She was appointed Group CEO on 05 May 2021. She is also a Director of the SICOM Board since 20 September 2013.

With respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed that Mrs Ramdewar is a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (FCCA) and holds an MBA from the University of Manchester.

With regard to her experience, she worked at De Chazal du Mée & Co. prior to joining SICOM in May 1992. She has occupied the following positions at SICOM prior to being appointed Group CEO –

- Senior Manager on 01 January 2002;
- Group Senior Manager, Corporate on 01 July 2010;
- Chief Finance Officer on 01 July 2013;
- Deputy Group CEO on 15 February 2018, and
- Officer-in-Charge on 02 September 2019.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (c) of the question, I am informed that as at 30 June 2024, her annual remuneration, including salaries, other allowances and performance bonus amounted to Rs11,506,022. In addition, the company contributes pension related benefits amounting to Rs3,206,354, thus making a total remuneration package of Rs14,712,375. This information is as published in the company's financial statement.

I am informed that her current monthly pay package is Rs762,242, which does not include performance bonus, car benefit, passage benefit and pension related benefits.

Following her appointment as Group CEO in May 2021, there were three salary adjustments of 3.5%, respectively, namely two increments and one salary review for the last five years.

Taking into consideration her total remuneration, which includes salaries, allowances, bonus, refund of leave, pension related contribution and other benefits, it is observed that there has been an increase of 37.5% from 2020 to 2024.

I am also advised that salary adjustments are determined by an independent Salary Commissioner according to SICOM's internal policies and these adjustments are considered and approved by the Board.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will ensure that it monitors corporate governance and executive remuneration matters across institutions under its purview in line with public expectation and best practice framework although we must bear in mind that this is a company under the Companies Act which has a Board which is responsible for the governance matters.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! One question, yes!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform whether the increase of the actual remuneration package of the concerned person was approved by the Board, and if yes, when and under what policy framework, as she is only a FCCA compared to the previous CEO who is a qualified actuary?

Dr. Ms Jeetun: Madam Speaker, I can confirm that every salary increase and payment has been approved by the Board. I can confirm that but I understand that there are some concerns, probably, that a public sector organisation executive pay is perceived as being high, especially

for a company of which the assets and the management of that company, 62% of it, comes from government. So, it's a very captive market share, it's not like any other commercial enterprise. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Alright, the hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

DOMICILIARY VISITS – ELDERLY & BEDRIDDEN PERSONS

(No. B/732) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to domiciliary visits to the elderly and bedridden persons, he will state the number of –

- (a) persons concerned therewith in each case;
- (b) doctors involved at the Medical Unit, indicating the frequency of the visits, and
- (c) discontinued visits since January 2025 to date, indicating the reasons therefor.

Mr Subron: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that all elderly persons of 90 years old and above are eligible for domiciliary visits by virtue of age. Secondly, all persons aged 0 to 89 years, who need constant care and attention of another person, including bedridden persons who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, are also eligible to domiciliary visits.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that as at July 2025, 4,836 persons aged 90 years and above are eligible for domiciliary visits, effected by medical practitioners of my Ministry. Secondly, 24,745 persons who are aged 0 to 89 years and also beneficiaries of carer's allowance, are eligible for the domiciliary visits, effected by medical practitioners of my Ministry.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as at date, there are 352 medical practitioners, working on a sessional basis contract at the Medical Unit of my Ministry who carry out monthly domiciliary visits to eligible beneficiaries.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that since January 2025 to date, domiciliary visits have been discontinued for 1,906 persons as a result of death and for 179 persons aged 0 to 89 years, for non-renewal of their carer's allowance.

Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the House, let me also add that compared to December 2024 where there were 29,024 domiciliary visits, in July 2025, there are now 29,581 beneficiaries of domiciliary visits, that is, 557 more beneficiaries.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, l'honorable ministre dans sa réponse a fait état du fait que ce n'est qu'à partir de 90 ans, si j'ai bien compris que les personnes...

Madam Speaker: Il a mentionné ceux de 0 à 89 aussi. Moi, j'ai bien écouté. Il a mentionné ceux de 90 ans et ceux...

Mr Subron: There are two categories!

Madam Speaker: Voilà! Dans la fourchette 0 à 89!

Mr Quirin: Oui, j'ai bien compris.

Madam Speaker: Qui sont *bedridden* et qui en ont besoin.

Mr Quirin: Voilà ! Donc, je porte à l'attention du ministre. Il y a un cas dans notre circonscription, une dame de Chebel, Madame M. G. J. atteinte d'Alzheimer et dont la visite médicale et la *carer's allowance* ont été supprimées sans raison valable. Elle a bénéficié...

Madam Speaker: Non, là c'est difficile pour le ministre de vous répondre sur un cas précis.

Mr Quirin: Non, c'est par rapport à plusieurs cas et plusieurs personnes qui sont dans ce même cas. Mais là, je cite un exemple particulier pour lui dire quelles sont les dispositions qui sont prises ? Je peux comprendre qu'il y a des réformes en cours, qui sont très valables mais dans l'immédiat afin de justement venir en aide à ces personnes, quelles sont les solutions immédiates qui pourraient être prises afin que ces personnes puissent justement continuer à vivre comme il faut sans trop de difficulté, je dirais ?

Mr Subron: I thank the hon. Member. I can inquire on the particular case if you give me the names and the details. As for the measures, as indicated in the last paragraph of my answer, measures have already been taken, this is why we have 557 more beneficiaries of domiciliary visits and we will continue in this trend.

Madam Speaker: Dr. Aumeer, first!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister, whether he can see with the Medical Appeal Board of his Ministry that they make necessary arrangements for those people who are going on the appeal board and who cannot ambulatory make it there and are bedridden due to medical disease or else, are denied having an appeal fairly since, I am not going to continue with a particular case that has been denied only last week? Please look into that.

Mr Subron: I think this is a very important question. Measures have been taken. As it stands now, the appropriate measures are taken for the bedridden above 90. Measures are also being taken for, I have just learned, persons above 80 but we can also extend the measures for all people who can't attend the Medical Board and we will seek resources for it. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: You should do like in court. You can do online, zoom, if they can, at their age, I don't know.

Yes, hon. Edouard!

Mr Edouard: Merci, Madame la présidente, est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire s'il y a un mécanisme de suivi pour s'assurer que ces personnes reçoivent effectivement la visite du médecin ? Parce que parfois même si c'est recommandé, elles ne voient jamais de médecin à domicile. Merci.

Mr Subron: I have already given the list and the visits. But I can assure the hon. Member whenever there is a case reported to me of doctors not attending the visits, measures are taken and we look very strictly on this issue because all these people are our elderly.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Okay, on the elderly.

Now, I have the hon. Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE, Dr. Saumtally!

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 10 – ERNEST FLORENT, OLIVIA & BRAMSTHAN –
FOOTBALL PLAYGROUNDS & COMMUNITY CENTRES – UPGRADING &
MAINTENANCE**

(No. B/733) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the provisions for community infrastructure and village amenities announced in the Budget Speech 2025-2026, he will state if

consideration will be given to prioritise the upgrading and maintaining of football playgrounds and community centres in Ernest Florent, Olivia and Bramsthan, in Constituency No. 10 to keep these spaces safe and usable for families and young people.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I will reply to PQ B/733 and B/742 together as they pertain to the same subject matter.

The purpose of the small community project is to upgrade and maintain infrastructure falling under the jurisdiction of the Local Authorities.

As I mentioned to the House in my reply PQ B/677, on 15 July 2025, the football ground at Ernest Florent has been cleared. Six out of the twelve floodlights are no functionable thereat. The District Council of Flacq has informed that works are being undertaken by in-house labour and are expected to be completed by 07 August 2025. The ground wiring is being replaced by overhead wiring. There are currently no toilet facilities thereat.

I have been advised that the Council is presently carrying out a survey as regard construction of public toilets in 23 regions under its jurisdiction. It is expected that the estimated cost would revolve around Rs46 million for the construction thereof under a design and build model.

As regards Olivia Football Ground, I am informed that it is in a good state except for the lighting system. The floodlights are currently being replaced. This replacement could not be undertaken earlier in view of lack of fund. Toilet facilities are available at the village hall which is adjacent to the football ground. A proposal for the construction of a covered *gradin* including fencing and installation of *profilage* has been submitted for consultation to my Ministry at an estimated cost of Rs10 million.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the Bramsthan Football Ground, the House may wish to note that the Council is currently undertaking the construction of a cloakroom with toilet facilities under the India Grant Assistance to a tune of Rs1.9 million. The project has already started and will be completed by 31 August 2025.

I am also informed that the Council intends to construct covered shelters thereat for an amount of Rs50 million upon the availability of funds. Repair works are currently ongoing for the football ground regarding the lighting system. The works will be completed by this week.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, the hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle.

**SANDALWOOD SPECIES – HARVESTING AND TRADE – CONSERVATION
PROGRAMMES – LEGAL ENFORCEMENT**

(No. B/734) 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 protected sandalwood species, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) how the harvesting and trade thereof, including on private land, are regulated, indicating the number of licences issued therefor over the past five years and the terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) whether –
 - (i) any reforestation, monitoring or conservation programmes are being implemented to ensure sustainable growth thereof, and
 - (ii) a toughening of the legal or enforcement measures to address illegal harvesting and/or export thereof is being considered.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member.

Madam Speaker, since 2021, sandalwood is listed as a protected plant in the Forests and Reserves Act. As such, the Forestry Service and the National Plant Protection Office regulates the exploitation and export of sandalwood. I wish to inform the House that sandalwood tree is among the most expensive woods and commands high prices because of its cosmetic and therapeutic value, mainly for its essential oil. And, there is a huge international demand for sandalwood for this fragrant heartwood, its most valuable part, priced at over 400 USD per kg.

As regards part (a) of the question, I wish to highlight that there are no licences that are issued in regard to the exploitation and trade of any protected plant. However, dealers of sandalwood are required to register with the Forestry Service to be able to conduct any activity

related to exploitation or trade and contraveners are liable to penalties established under the Forests and Reserves Act.

During the past five years, 23 companies have been registered as sandalwood dealers by the Forestry Service. And as at date, only 11 of them are still active.

Madam Speaker, just for the years 2023 and 2024, my Ministry, through the National Plant Protection Office, has issued 75 and 69 phytosanitary certificates for the exportation of 689 tonnes and 117 tonnes of sandalwood, respectively for export to different countries, namely; United Arab Emirates, India and China.

These figures indicate that there is an overexploitation of sandalwood in Mauritius and this overexploitation is causing widespread destruction of sandalwood trees on both state and private properties. To address this issue, regulations were made in October 2024 to prevent the cutting and felling of sandalwood without the authorisation of the Conservator of Forests. Nonetheless, from January 2025 to date, phytosanitary certificates had been issued for the exportation of 98 tonnes of sandalwood.

Madam Speaker, with a view to addressing the issue of theft of sandalwood in state lands and the continuous exploitation of the plant, the legislative framework was further strengthened in May 2025 whereby its cutting, felling, exploitation and export were banned for a period of 10 years to allow the species to regenerate as sandalwood is a relatively slow-grower. Any person caught contravening these regulations will *inter alia* be liable to pay five times the value of the forest-produce in addition to any penalty imposed by Court of law.

Madam Speaker, with regard part (b)(i) of the question, the Forestry Service, for its part, is working on a programme for the reforestation of sandalwood species within the island. Moreover, technical advice is being dispensed to those willing to engage in sandalwood plantation.

As for part (b)(ii), in order to enforce the regulations banning the exploitation and trade of sandalwood, regular patrols within state lands and reserves are being carried out by the Forestry Service. The assistance of the Special Mobile Force and police force is sought as and when required. Interventions are also carried out on private-owned lands within the island to combat the illegal harvesting of sandalwood.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Yes, First Member for Rodrigues, Ms Collet.

BUDGET SPEECH 2025-2026 – JUSTICE SYSTEM DIGITALISATION – PROJECT STATUS

(No. B/735) **Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the digitalisation of the justice system as announced in the Budget Speech 2025-2026, he will state if funds have been specifically allocated for the acquisition and implementation of real-time transcription software or digital court reporting systems and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) timeline envisaged for the deployment thereof;
- (b) expected outcome thereof in terms of improved efficiency of court proceedings and case backlog reduction, and
- (c) training and capacity-building of judicial and court officers for optimum output.

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that a budget of Rs2 million has been allocated for the procurement of transcription software that will enable the real-time transcription of audio-recordings of Court proceedings in English, French and Kreol.

The hon. Member will be pleased to note that an additional sum of Rs2 million has also been allocated for the implementation of a bundle project for Rodrigues which will combine a digital Court recording system with a video-conferencing facility.

As regard the timeline, the deployment of the transcription software is expected to begin in February 2026 and be completed by August 2026. The project for the Rodrigues Court is scheduled to start in January 2026 and is expected to be completed by June 2026.

As regards part (b) of this question, we are indeed implementing these changes to improve the efficiency of the judicial system. At present, obtaining transcripts of proceedings can take several months and their unavailability often leads to the postponement of cases and judgments.

Since the new transcription system will be automated and produce output in real-time, we can reasonably expect significant time-savings.

Regarding the backlog of cases, Madam Speaker, we anticipate that existing recordings will also be fed into the system which will help to expedite matters. However, the issue of backlog is multidimensional and must also be addressed through improved staffing and better organisational solutions for our Courts, areas which this government is fully committed to tackle.

This brings me, Madam Speaker, to part (c) of the question, the practical implementation of these reforms will be crucial as the system must operate efficiently with appropriate hardware, regular maintenance and staff who are properly trained to use it.

In this regard, I am informed by the Master and Registrar, that training programmes will be delivered to all relevant officers in due course to ensure the optimal use of the new systems.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Attorney General. Happy?

Ms Collet: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Fourth Member for Rodrigues, Mr Edouard.

STATE TRADING CORPORATION – ANIMAL FEED IMPORTATION – RODRIGUES BREEDERS

(No. B/736) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to animal feed, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to whether it will consider importing same for distribution to suppliers for the benefit of Rodrigues breeders in view of the chronic shortages thereof in Rodrigues and lack of storage facilities of the local suppliers thereof.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, let me at the outset, emphasise that my Ministry remains fully committed to supporting Rodrigues in its efforts to strengthen food security and improve the sustainability of its livestock sector.

I recently engaged in constructive discussions with Commissioner Mr Louis Ange Perrine, the Commissioner of Agriculture in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, to explore collaborative ways of facilitating this matter.

Madam Speaker, we are aware that Rodrigues did face challenges in the supply of animal feed, particularly during the period December 2024 to January 2025. I am informed that these

difficulties were largely due to a combination of factors, including supply disruption from a key mainland producer, limited storage capacity on the island, gaps in demands, planning for peak periods, and end of year shipping delays.

I am further informed that the situation has now improved. Since March this year, the supply of animal feed has stabilised with even a surplus reported in June 2025. Nevertheless, my Ministry recognises the need for a more structured and resilient supply framework going forward.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that there are presently 142 different types of animal feed available on the Rodrigues market, catering to various animal species.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I will table the list of these 142 types of animal feed.

This diversity, while reflecting other needs of local livestock, presents certain logistical challenges in terms of importation and storage which would require a more coordinated and streamlined approach.

In this context, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, will explore all possibilities. Through this collaborative approach, we aim to promote better planning and strengthen market linkages in a manner that would ultimately benefit Rodrigues breeders and which will ensure both continuity of supply and price stability in the livestock sector in Rodrigues.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, hon. Edouard!

Mr Edouard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister please consider to have a bigger warehouse in Rodrigues?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, we will have to work on it. If funds are available, we will consider.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. François!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, being given that the import of the 142-animal feed fluctuates and it depends on the shelf life and the quantity of live animals also in Rodrigues, will

the hon. Minister be agreeable to ensure that his Ministry and the Ministry of Shipping guarantee enough containers whenever required by local importers to avoid any shortage thereof?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: We will work with the Ministry of Shipping.

Madam Speaker: Very good. Thank you.

Mr François: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Time is moving.

The First Member Port-Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, hon. Juman!

ROCHE BOIS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE – PROJECT STATUS

(No. B/738) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port-Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the construction of the Roche-Bois Community Health Centre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a plot of land of an extent of approximately 2,600 m² at Roche Bois has been vested in my Ministry in June 2018 for the construction of Roche Bois Community Health Centre. The specifications, tender drawings, bills of quantities and cost estimates were prepared by Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation Limited in December 2019.

After the first bidding exercise carried out in July 2019, the contract was awarded to AWL Trading and Contracting Co. Ltd. for the sum Rs39,069,182.50. However, as the latter did not submit a performance security, as laid down in the conditions of contract, within the specified timeframe, the award was cancelled in February 2020.

Subsequently, a second bidding exercise was undertaken in August 2020. The contract was awarded to Ganessen Construction Ltd. in February 2021 for an amount of Rs36,237,936. The contract was signed on 28 May 2021 and the duration of work was 300 calendar days as from handing over the site. However, due to illegal squatters, the site could only be handed over to the contractor on 24 August 2021.

The start and completion dates were set for 07 September 2021 and 04 July 2022, respectively. Since the start, the progress of work of the contractor was very slow and several warnings were issued to him.

As no improvement in the progress was noted, and on the advice of the consultant, the contract was eventually terminated on 22 May 2023 in line with the conditions of the contract.

The performance guarantee of an amount of approximately Rs3.7 million was forfeited. The total percentage of work completed was approximately 8% for which an amount of Rs2,746,415 had been paid to the contractor.

Subsequently, the consultant of the project was requested to assess the remaining works and prepare the cost estimates. The consultant initially submitted a cost estimate of Rs50.5 million. However, some essential components such as boundary wall, gates, lift provisions and contingencies were omitted. My Ministry, therefore, requested the consultant to review the scope of work and the cost estimates.

In March 2024, the consultant submitted an amended scope of works and cost estimates amounting to Rs77 million. However, the Ministry of Finance requested my Ministry to review the requirements with a view to bringing down the cost of the project.

Madam Speaker, the consultant is at present in the process of reviewing the concept design before proceeding with detailed design and drawing. My Ministry has approached the Ministry of National Infrastructure to advise on the way forward.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Hon. Minister, thank you. By when can we expect the works to start? By when can we expect, through the consultant, constructors, etc., the works to start on site?

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, having a long experience in infrastructure works, I personally believe that this has to be scrapped. We have to hand over the entire work to the experts at the Ministry of Infrastructure because they have to look into the issue over again, as the sum they are demanding is too exaggerating.

It is impossible for us to spend that much of money. That is the reason why I personally believe that we have to handover the matter to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

Madam Speaker: So, you cannot give a timeframe?

Mr Bachoo: No.

Mr Juman: May I request the hon. Minister to clear the bushy land there? The site is bushy. Can you clear that?

Madam Speaker: Bushy, bushy!

Mr Bachoo: I will look into the issue. We will try to have the site cleared. But, personally, again, I believe that it is too exaggerated. The consultants are exaggerating. I am clear on that.

Madam Speaker: Okay. I do not know if we can do the next question within three minutes. We can try. Let us try!

Hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River!

CHEMIN GRENIER – NEW MARKET FAIR – SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION

(No. B/739) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the new market fair in the Village of Chemin Grenier, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Savanne District Council, information as to if consideration will be given for the installation of solar panels thereat.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government!

Mr Wochit: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the District Council of Savanne that the project titled ‘Construction of New Market fair at Chemin Grenier’ was initiated in October 2021 with a contract value of Rs125 million, inclusive of VAT.

The project, which includes a double-storey office building, mechanical and electrical works, external site and drainage works, is currently 98% complete. The only remaining work concerns the asphaltting along the storm water drain at the periphery of the site. These works are scheduled to be finalised by September 2025. Upon completion, the Council’s consultant will prepare the final accounts.

As regards the proposal of installing solar Photovoltaic (PV) panel at the new market fair, I am informed that this initiative was put forward by the hon. Member in February 2022 during his tenure as District Councillor. The proposal was referred to the Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) Consultant for a feasibility study. The consultant confirmed that it was technically feasible to install a 5KW system comprising 17 PV panels on the roof at an estimated cost of Rs525,000.

This was supported by a preliminary quote of Rs300,000, exclusive of VAT from KYA Engineers Ltd., subject to further technical input from metrological service.

The Council, during its sitting of 27 July 2022, agreed that the PV panel installation would be considered for implementation upon project completion and subject to availability of savings or contingency funds.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has since consulted the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities regarding possible support scheme for the installation of PV system. Based on advice received, the District Council of Savanne has been recommended to apply under these two key schemes managed by the Central Electricity Board (CEB).

Public Sector Entities (PSE) Scheme, that is, own investment, this scheme allows Public Sector entities to invest in PV system up to 2 MW with CEB purchasing the generated electricity at Rs4.20 per KW. The energy bill of the entity is credited accordingly. The capacity is capped at 150% of the entity's annual energy consumption.

Secondly, CEB Public Building Solar Project, that is, free installation. Under this Scheme, Madam Speaker, CEB installed a free PV system up to 50 KW funded 27% by the Green Climate Fund and 73% by the Minister of Finance refundable over 20 years. The installation cost is recovered via direction from PSE monthly electricity bill. The tender for this Scheme has already been floated with a closing date set for 20 August 2025.

I am further informed that the District Council of Savanne has already submitted four applications under the CEB Public Building Solar Project for PV installation at the Council Head Office and three village halls.

The Council may now consider applying under either of these two schemes for the Chemin Grenier market fair once the construction is completed and the defect liability period expires around September 2025.

Madam Speaker, the inclusion of solar photovoltaic system aligns with national sustainability goals and would contribute to reducing the electricity cost for the Council. The implementation, however, will depend on the availability of funds or successful applications under the aforementioned schemes.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! I suspend the Sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.02 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.31 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated. Parliamentary Questions! The hon. First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart, Dr. Prayag!

NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION – BUS DEPOT – PARKED BUSES – ROADWORTHINESS

(No. B/740) **Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to its bus depot at Rivière du Rempart, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Corporation, information as to the number of buses parked thereat, indicating in each case, the roadworthiness thereof.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the National Transport Corporation that 69 buses of various makes and models are parked at Rivière du Rempart depot out of which 66 buses are operational. The three remaining buses are to be scrapped as two of them registered in 2004 have reached their 21 years road life while one registered in 2007 is beyond economic repair.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the buses from Rivière du Rempart depot operate along 13 routes covering a daily average of 13,100 km. Safety and security of passengers remain a priority of the NTC and an average of 20 buses are grounded daily for repairs and servicing at the same depot.

I wish to also apprise the House that only buses that are roadworthy and have valid certificates of fitness are allowed by the NTC to operate. For the sake of time, Madam Speaker, I am tabling the information relating to the roadworthiness and certificate of fitness of the buses.

Madam Speaker, I have to inform the House that operational and HR issues at Rivière du Rempart have been brought to my attention several times – by my colleague as well. I have requested the NTC to probe into the matter at the earliest now that we have a new general manager, one week into Dr. Harvin Soonarane knows the domain well because he is a mechanical engineer.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! Is that all right? Yes, hon. Fourth Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue!

PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – BOARDS – COMPOSITION

(No. B/741) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research whether, in regard to the public higher education institutions falling under his purview, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to whether the Boards thereof have been constituted and, if so, give the composition thereof in each case.

Dr. Sukon: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for this question. I wish to inform this House that the comprehensive process of constituting the boards of our public higher education institutions has been formally initiated and has progressed to a considerable advanced stage. I am informed that the completion of this critical government framework is imminent and shall be finalised within the immediate term.

Madam Speaker, during this interim period and in order to safeguard the uninterrupted operational efficacy and governance of these institutions of paramount importance to our educational landscape, the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry has graciously undertaken to serve in the capacity of acting Chairperson for the University of Technology Mauritius, Open University of Mauritius while also providing administrative guidance and facilitation to all the other HEIs, to ensure absolute continuity and strategic oversight in the operation of these institutions thereby precluding most major disruptions to the essential functions and progressive development of these establishments.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the last general elections, I have established a calendar of regular management consultations with the heads of our Higher Education Institutions. These systematic managements meetings, which I chair personally, are conducted to ensure optimal coordination among all stakeholders to address expeditiously any operational considerations that may arise and to maintain the most exacting standards of international excellence throughout this transitional phase.

Madam Speaker, I wish most emphatically to assure this House that the formal establishment of these boards remains an absolute priority within my Ministry's agenda and, I undertake to keep this House fully apprised of all substantive development as they unfold.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes!

Mr A. Duval: I have two supplementary questions. Firstly, Madam Speaker, as the Minister is aware, he cannot, neither him nor the Permanent Secretary...

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr A. Duval: It is a question! ... substitute themselves to the Councils, to the statutory legislations which regulate the University of Mauritius, the University Technology of Mauritius, the Open University and l'Université des Mascareignes. Therefore, can the hon. Minister state, with regard to the decisions taken by all these institutions to date since eight-months, whether it is in terms of recruitment and other administrative functions, have these decisions today been overtaken by him or his Permanent Secretary or have they been left on autopilot?

Dr. Sukon: I can assure the hon. Member that there has been no recruitment on permanent basis during this month.

Mr A. Duval: My second question. That is precisely my point, Madam Speaker, in fact there is, for example, at University of Mauritius for the medical department, there is the lack of trained doctors who come to...

Madam Speaker: Question please!

Mr A. Duval: Is the Minister aware that there is a dire need of decisions to be taken by these councils as their statutory ...

Madam Speaker: That's good! That's your question!

Mr A. Duval: ... framework provide and that since eight months, as he has admitted himself, they are paralysed. Is that acceptable to the taxpayer?

Dr. Sukon: Let me tell the hon. Member, for the first time we have doubled the number of students following medical courses at University of Mauritius and the programmes are running well.

The programme depends on a number of professionals working part-time in our hospitals, both public and private. So, I can assure the hon. Member that I am fully aware and the situation is under control.

Madam Speaker: Last!

Mr A. Duval: That is precisely, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: No, do not make statements!

Mr A. Duval: ...because of operational capacity now, because of the number of students that have increased while the operational capacity has been fully stretched out and needs a Council to appoint new personnel.

Dr. Sukon: The hon. Member has taken the example of Medicine where we need both people who are practising. So, we depend a lot on part-time tutors that the universities can recruit under their own regulation because they are not full-time.

So, I can assure the hon. Member that the universities are allowed to take professionals who are practising because they need to teach our students about the practical skills and this is being done.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Next question! Give me time now to find where I am. There is one question which has already been replied, that is, question B/742, that we have already had.

ERNEST FLORENT, OLIVIA & BRAMSTHAN – FOOTBALL PLAYGROUNDS – UPGRADING OF AMENITIES

(No. B/742) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Local Government whether in regard to the football playgrounds in the Villages of Ernest Florent, Olivia and Bramsthan, he will state if consideration will be given to prioritise the building or upgrading of toilet facilities thereat.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/733)

Madam Speaker: So, now we move on to Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka, Dr. Ms Thannoo!

CONSERVATOIRE NATIONAL DE MUSIQUE FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND – PART-TIME MUSIC TEACHERS – REMUNERATION

(No. B/743) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the part-time music teachers currently working at the Conservatoire National de Musique François Mitterrand, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Conservatoire, information as to whether they have been paid their full salary based on their recorded working hours since February 2025 to date and, if not, why not, indicating if measures will be taken to ensure that all part-time employees are duly paid according to contractual regulations.

Mr Gondeea: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Conservatoire National de Musique François Mitterrand, that the part-time music teachers do not receive any salary but are instead remunerated based on the number of hours that they have worked during a month.

As per my information, they have received their remuneration up to June 2025. However, the compensation component based on actual hours worked has not been paid since March 2025.

This delay has been attributed to the payroll software licence not being renewed on time by the *Conservatoire*, leading to its expiry at the end of February 2025. Consequently, all calculations are being done manually, which has significantly slowed down the process.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that I have come to learn of this matter only through the present Parliamentary Question. I do not accept that staff should be penalised due to poor planning by the management of *Conservatoire*. With only 46 part time music teachers and adequate administrative staff in place, such computations could and should have been done using basic tools like Excel Spreadsheets. The delay is therefore unjustified. I have given clear instructions that all outstanding compensations, including arrears must be paid in full by the end of this month.

At the same time, the *Conservatoire* has been directed to initiate procurement exercise for the renewal of its payroll software without further delay. Additionally, I have requested an

internal investigation to determine the reasons behind this situation, where necessary appropriate action will be taken to ensure that similar lapses do not occur in the future.

Madam Speaker, I will not tolerate administrative inefficiency that delays fair and timely payment to employees. We remain committed to uploading transparency, accountability and good governance across all public institutions.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, Dr. Ms Thannoo? Is it alright?

Okay. So, now I have the hon. Third Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, Dr. Saumtally!

LEGAL AID & LEGAL ASSISTANCE ACT 2025 – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA & PROCEDURES

(No. B/744) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the new eligibility criteria and procedures provided for under the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act 2025, he will state if consideration will be given for measures to be taken to facilitate access to legal aid and legal assistance to residents in rural areas, including in Constituency No. 10 such as Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, through local information campaigns or designated officers in courts.

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker, the new eligibility criteria for legal aid and legal assistance as provided for in the Act, passed by this House on 8 July, are in furtherance of this Government's aim to facilitate access to justice in all districts of Mauritius including Rodrigues. They participate towards the fulfilment of the provisions to the secured protection of the law for all the rights enshrined in section 10 of our Constitution. The hon. Member is therefore right to highlight as others have done during the debates on this legislation, the need for a wide dissemination of the relevant information to members of the public.

May I remind the hon. Member that the Act imposes an obligation on the Court to inform a person, in a language that he is conversant with, of the possibility to obtain legal aid and, at the station for a police officer who intends to record the statement of a person under warning, to

inform that person in case the person is not represented by a Counsel, that he may make an application for legal assistance, for legal advice and counselling during the recording of his statement. A resident of Constituency No. 10 will therefore benefit from this when appearing before the District Courts whether at Flacq or elsewhere or before the High Courts in Port Louis. The legal duty being that of the Court, it will be fulfilled by none other than the learned Magistrate presiding over the case or the Judge as the case may be.

However, I do agree that local information campaigns could be useful to reach citizens even before they get inside a Court room or a police station. I will therefore liaise with the Chief Justice, the Master and Registrar and the Government Information Service to look into the possibility of launching a campaign which would include having clear and instructive posters put up in public places such as post offices, community centres, Court buildings as well as publications in the Press and on social media.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Attorney General!

Yes, next question, the hon. Second Member for Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or, Mr Beejan!

LA CUVETTE PUBLIC BEACH – AMENITIES – REINSTATEMENT WORKS

(No. B/745) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to La Cuvette Public Beach, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Beach Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the reinstatement thereof and provision thereof –

- (a) adequate footpaths;
- (b) road markings;
- (c) traffic signs, and
- (d) street lighting.

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to inform the House that the Beach Authority is presently working on a project for the upgrading of La Cuvette Public Beach which is one of the most popular beaches in the North. Pending the implementation of the above,

reinstatement works will be carried out with regard to footpaths, road markings, traffic signs, street lighting and other amenities. Any suggestion from the hon. Member is most welcomed.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether additional parking facilities will be expanded to accommodate increase in number of visitors at La Cuvette, Grand Baie public beach?

Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: This is also being taken into consideration. I think, in the near future, we will conduct a site visit with all the MPs.

Madam Speaker: Okay, great.

The hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart, Dr. Prayag!

**PUBLIC HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS – EXPATRIATES & FOREIGNERS –
INPATIENT & OUTPATIENT SERVICE – OUTSTANDING PAYMENT**

(No. B/746) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the expatriates and foreigners attending public healthcare institutions in Mauritius as inpatients and outpatients, he will give details of the outstanding payment therefrom as at to date.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that up to the year 2000, all foreign patients including tourists, foreign students, foreign workers and other non-citizen visitors or residents seeking treatment or undergoing medical investigations in our public health institutions were required to pay for their treatments.

In March 2001, a policy decision was taken to exempt foreign nationals holding a valid work permit from the payment of inpatient treatment fees in our health institutions. In 2020, the Ministry proposed the waiving off of treatment fees for foreign nationals who are married to Mauritian citizens and hold a valid residence permit. However, this proposal was deferred by the then Government.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that with effect from March 2025, the Ministry's current policy provides for exemption of treatment fees for foreign nationals married

to Mauritian citizens. This exemption applies to treatment received at public hospitals and healthcare facilities, subject to the production of relevant documentary evidence such as marriage certificate and proof of residence. Furthermore, foreigners holding a valid work permit or occupational permit continue to benefit from exemption from treatment fees under the same policy. There have been instances where foreign patients have sought treatment at regional hospitals without the financial means to cover the cost. On humanitarian grounds and in line with the principles of universal access to healthcare, such patients have not been denied treatment. Accordingly, there have been several cases in which medical care has been provided to these individuals, free of charge.

Madam Speaker, with regard to outstanding payments owed by expatriates and foreign nationals for treatment received by public healthcare institutions, I am informed that the total outstanding amount for inpatients currently stands at Rs360,970 for five patients.

Madam Speaker, I further wish to inform the House that hospitals are actively following up with patients to recover outstanding fees. In cases where patients are facing financial difficulties, payment facilities are granted, allowing them to settle their treatment fees in instalments.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, Dr. Aumeer!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. In view of this current Government's interest in making healthcare available to all, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, his Ministry would recommend the use of visual display units in each different hospital, that would depict the services that are provided to expats –

- (i) which services against type of payment;
- (ii) which services would be free such as in emergency cases, and
- (iii) as you rightly said, there are now some who have been exempted and that at least, for any expatriate who goes to our public hospital, they know beforehand what is awaiting them in terms of payment.

Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: Well, I will look into the suggestion made by the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Yes, sounds reasonable. Thank you.

Now we have the hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues, Mr Edouard!

RODRIGUES - UNIVERSITY CAMPUS PROJECT

(No. B/747) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science and Research whether, in regard to the difficulties faced by Rodrigues students attending the University in Mauritius, he will state if consideration will be given for the implementation of the university campus project in Rodrigues, proposed prior to 2014.

Dr. Sukon: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for this question.

I am informed that there are 716 students from Rodrigues who are currently pursuing their academic endeavours across diverse range of courses offered within our public higher education institutions.

It is important to note that since the inception of my Ministry, we have received no formal representation concerning any difficulties experienced by our Rodriguans scholars in their educational pursuits.

I also wish to highlight that students from Rodrigues, who are enrolled in undergraduate programmes, derive full benefit from Free Tertiary Education Scheme. Indeed, it bears emphasis that all students who hold citizenship of the Republic of Mauritius are afforded precisely the same educational facilities and opportunities without distinction.

Furthermore, I am advised that the University of Mauritius maintains a specialised Student Financial Assistance Fund, expressly designed to provide support to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, in our endeavour to enhance accessibility and remove administrative impediments, we have instituted comprehensive digital platforms for course registration, delivery, fee settlement, thereby obviating the necessity for superfluous travel. Most notably, students may now submit their requisite documents directly to the Commission for Vocational Training in Rodrigues for the purposes of University of Mauritius registration.

Concurrently, our higher education institutions maintain a systematic programme of deploying academic and non-academic personnel to Rodrigues to deliver crucial face to face

instruction as well as to conduct assessment and exams, thereby ensuring that programme integrity and academic excellence are uncompromisingly maintained.

Madam Speaker, with respect to physical infrastructure, I am informed that Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd. (PML) presently maintains two operational campuses in Rodrigues, situated at Baie Malgache and Mont Lubin, respectively. Of particular significance, PML has formulated a comprehensive extension project for Rodrigues Baie Malgache Campus, which currently awaits deliberation by the appropriate commission within the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The strategic expansion shall furnish four supplementary teaching facilities, thereby substantially augmenting our capacity to deliver an expanded curriculum and accommodate a greater number of students.

I wish to reaffirm this Government's steadfast and unequivocal commitment to providing inclusive educational opportunities for every citizen of our Republic. This commitment necessarily encompasses our aspiration to establish a consolidated campus facility capable of serving multiple educational institutions, contingent upon the availability of the requisite financial resources.

The academic aspirations and intellectual advancement of the Rodriguan youth constitute matters of supreme importance to this administration. All future policy formulation shall be informed by our abiding principles of national unity and our unwavering dedication to ensuring equitable access to educational excellence for all our citizens.

I should be most grateful if the hon. Member would favour my Ministry with any suggestion and observation that might serve to further enhance the academic experience of our esteemed Rodriguan students within our public higher education system.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, Mr Edouard!

Mr Edouard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Will the hon. Minister consider the difficulties faced by the Rodriguan students in Mauritius in relation to lodging, which is very expensive here? How the Minister can help, please? Thank you.

Dr. Sukon: I would be most willing to meet them and discuss the issue further.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

LOCAL FOOTBALL CLUBS – FOREIGN PLAYERS – RECRUITMENT CONDITIONS

(No. B/748) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the recruitment of foreign football players by local clubs, he will give details of the conditions attached thereto.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the employment of foreign workers under a work permit is governed by the Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act. The Act makes provisions, amongst others, for guidelines which sets out the steps to be taken by the applicant and the documents to be provided when applying for a work permit.

Application for a work permit in respect of foreign workers, including foreign football players, must be submitted via the National e-Licensing System (NELS) of the Economic Development Board. At the time of application, the club should submit –

- a covering letter from the relevant club, specifying the player's accommodation details;
- Domestic Transfer Certificate or an International Transfer Certificate, as the case may be;
- a recent cashflow statement from the applicant for the specified season;
- a No Objection Letter from the Mauritius Football Association, indicating the season during which the player will participate and the name of the receiving club;
- additional supporting documents such as the club's Certificate of Association;
- a passport size photograph of the player;
- a copy of the player's valid passport;
- provisional medical clearance valid for six months;
- a vetted employment contract, and
- a No Objection Letter from the previous employer for inter-club transfer.

Madam Speaker, work permits for foreign players are issued for one season at a time and may be renewed for an additional season subject to the approval of the residence permit by the Prime Minister's Office. Players must be aged between 18 and 60 years.

The general conditions attached to the employment of non-citizens, including foreign players, are as follows –

- A work permit is issued to a particular non-citizen and the work permit is not transferrable.
- The non-citizen is not permitted to seek or accept alternative employment while in Mauritius or to engage in any trade, art or gainful occupation.
- The permit should be kept by the holder and produced to any authorised person on demand or within three days after demand at such police station as may be specified by the authorised person at the time of the demand.
- The permit may be varied or cancelled at any time.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports that the present policy is to allow football clubs to recruit up to three foreign players for the Super League and up to two foreign players for the National First Division League.

Moreover, in order to ensure quality players, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has requested the National Sports Federation to include in their internal rules that local clubs would only be allowed to recruit foreign players who have played at the highest national division of their country of origin for the last two years.

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr Quirin: À son niveau, l'honorable ministre a-t-il reçu des représentations officielles de la *Mauritius Football Association* en vue d'augmenter le quota de joueurs étrangers par club de trois à cinq ? Si oui, quelles sont les raisons qui ont été avancées par la MFA par rapport à cette demande ?

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the request to increase the number of footballers from the MFA. It will be directed to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. My Ministry will stand guided by whatever policy is decided at the level of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Quirin: Une dernière question.

Madam Speaker: Oui, allez-y!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, le ministre peut-il informer la Chambre des mesures mises en place pour s'assurer que les règlements ne soient pas contournés, notamment dans les cas où un joueur professionnel est recruté alors qu'il est initialement entré à Maurice sous le statut de travailleur ?

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member should know that work permit is issued by my Ministry, but residence permit is issued by the Prime Minister's Office. So, very often, when a foreign worker comes to Mauritius on a tourist visa, he is not allowed to then apply for a work permit. The Prime Minister's Office will object to it.

So, in the case that the hon. Member has mentioned, probably, the Prime Minister's Office will object to a work permit being issued to the foreign football player.

Madam Speaker: Okay, next question!

The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES HEALTH SERVICES – MEDICAL HEALTH AUDIT – STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENTS

(No. B/749) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the health services challenges prevailing in Rodrigues, he will state if consideration will be given for the carrying out of a full medical health audit thereat by his Ministry with the collaboration of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly with a view to defining strategic priorities for improved positive health and patient outcomes.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, the Rodrigues Commission for Health operates under the umbrella of Rodrigues Regional Assembly and is the primary governing body for health services in Rodrigues. The Commission for Health collaborates with my Ministry but maintains its distinct co-operational structure within the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. My Ministry provides support and collaborates with the Commission on specific health projects in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that a delegation headed by the Commissioner for Health and others were in Rodrigues in May 2025. Following discussions, it was proposed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the health services in Rodrigues. Subsequently, a team comprising of the Director of Health Services, the Biomedical Engineer and the Senior Healthcare Technologist of my Ministry proceeded to Rodrigues from 09 to 14 June 2025 to carry out an analysis of the major medical equipment in various departments including their medical laboratory at Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Following the evaluation of their medical equipment, including respiratory devices and anaesthesia work stations in Rodrigues, various shortcomings have been identified as follows –

- a) Healthcare technologists have not been recruited to cater for life support and critical equipment; this is a very serious shortcoming;
- b) Preventive maintenance has not been carried out in a systematic manner;
- c) 6 ICU ventilators were lying idle at Mont Lubin Isolation Centre, and
- d) Unused equipment stored in poor environmental conditions that may lead to unnecessary breakdown.

The Report also provides a number of recommendations with a view to implementing good practices in the utilisation of these machines so as to minimise the risk of unnecessary breakdown and causing disruption of essential services.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that pursuant to an invitation by the Commission of Rodrigues for Health, a high-level dialysis capacity assessment mission was conducted by the National Dialysis Coordinator in Rodrigues from 19 to 23 June 2025. To evaluate the current status and future needs of renal care services, this mission provided a strategic platform to assess service delivery and identify areas for improvement at the Rodrigues Dialysis Unit at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Crève-Coeur. Madam Speaker, my Ministry acts promptly whenever a weakness in the health services is reported.

Now, as regard to carrying out a full medical health audit in Rodrigues is concerned, this will require time and expert resources. I, therefore, propose to approach the World Health Organisation and request the services of an expert to carry out the full medical health audit in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding our proposal, I wish to reassure the hon. Member, that my Ministry will continue to provide assistance with the Commission for Health for the reference of patients from Rodrigues to Mauritius for comprehensive treatment and care, capacity building of medical and para-medical staff, sensitisation of the population on various public health issues and non-communicable diseases, evaluation on the accessibility and quality of health services, state-of-the-art equipment, modern infrastructure among others.

Madam Speaker, in this context, a multidisciplinary team will be set up to collaborate with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly so as to achieve improved health equity, better service delivery and enhanced patient outcomes aligned with the principle of universal health coverage and I propose to lead the high-powered level delegation to Rodrigues in the coming month to look into these aspects.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes! Don't comment, questions !

Mr François: I was going to comment.

Madam Speaker: No, then you sit down! I am sorry. I am saying it very nicely. We are not here to comment.

The hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River!

NLTA – PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE LICENCES – BUSES – 2014 TO 2024 – MONETARY ALLOCATIONS

(No. B/750) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Public Service Vehicle Licences for buses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the number thereof allocated annually for each of the years 2014 to 2024, indicating the monetary allocations granted to each new holder thereof in respect of the –

- (a) Student Free Fare Scheme;
- (b) Free Travel Scheme for Persons with Disabilities;
- (c) Free Travel Scheme for Pensioners, and
- (d) any other subsidies applicable, indicating if same are allocated for a definite or indefinite period.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the NLTA that 53 new road service licenses were allocated during the period 2014 to 2024. Same includes four road service licences and 49 temporary road service licences. The three road service licences were allocated to UBS and four to RHT in 2022.

As such, no additional disbursement was made to these two bus companies in respect of their seven road service licences with regard to free travel compensation and other subsidies. Out of the remaining 46 licences allocated to the individual bus operators, a total of 44 RSLs were effectively implemented and, subsequently, these operators have benefited from free travel compensation and other subsidies, namely –

- Diesel subsidies, and
- Other financial support which includes interim allowance.

According to information obtained from the NLTA, Madam Speaker, a total sum of Rs72.5 million was disbursed for all the 44 newly implemented RSLs.

As regard to the last part of the question, I wish to inform the House that the NLTA has already been requested to carry out a holistic survey to determine among others as to whether there is still need to maintain the existing temporary Road Service Licences. Subsequently, a decision will be taken. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Go ahead!

Mr Jugurnauth: Madam Speaker, as mentioned in the previous PQ, the hon. Minister informed the House that an inquiry will be set up according to the 49 RSLs issued, whether the inquiry has been set up, if yes, where matters stand?

Mr Osman Mahomed: There is now a new management at the NLTA and they are looking at it afresh. At that time, there was the previous management which were implied in this sorrow state of affairs. So, in due time, we will come to the House with a conclusion of the findings.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Third Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue!

FINES & FIXED PENALTY NOTICES – ONLINE PAYMENT – OPERATIONALITY

(No. B/751) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the payment of fines and fixed penalty notices, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if consideration will be given for same to be payable online and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Glover: Madam Speaker, the Road Traffic Act was amended in 2019 by Act 24 of 2019 so as to facilitate payment of fixed penalties. Accordingly, a new section 192 (3) of the Road Traffic Act makes provision for a person who has been served with a fixed penalty notice to electronically pay the fine from the date of the offence. However, I wish to inform the House that the amendments brought to the Road Traffic Act in 2019 have not yet been proclaimed and, therefore, are not in force.

I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that the system at the Judiciary is ready to accept online payment for fixed penalty notices through the Supreme Court Portal using e-payment facility such as credit cards, debit cards, MauCAS QR Code and account transfer. Once the 2019 amendments are proclaimed, online payment for fixed penalty notices will therefore be activated.

Madam Speaker, I therefore propose to liaise with the Minister of Land Transport so that the necessary be made to proclaim the relevant provisions of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act No.3 of 2019 and to consider any further amendments to the Road Traffic Act so as to extend online payments by a person who has been served with the photographic enforcement device notice, that is, speed cameras.

Madam Speaker: Yes! Okay, good!

The hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix, Mr Lobine! Your previous question will be given by written reply. Now you have a chance to have a go at it!

Mr Lobine: Thank you!

RAMSAR CONVENTION – NATIONAL WETLANDS POLICY & ACTION PLAN

(No. B/752) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the number and surface area of protected wet lands currently recognized under the Ramsar Convention and any other relevant legislation, he will state –

- (a) where matters stand regarding the implementation of the national wetlands policy and action plan;
- (b) the number of encroachments, illegal constructions and backfilling done on wetlands over the past five years, and
- (c) the measures being taken to prevent further loss and degradation of the wetlands.

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Thank you, very, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to the question put by hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix.

An island-wide survey was carried out in 2009 and around 237 sites were identified and listed as wetlands. Now, the list was reviewed in 2018, using remote sensing technology where some 1,000 areas were listed as potentially being wetlands. Presently, a consultancy is on-going at the level of the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Service to establish the listed sites.

In addition, following the enactment of the Environment Act 2024, coastal fresh water marshlands and upland marshlands which are wetlands, were identified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, which require an Environmental Impact Assessment licence prior to any development thereat.

Madam Speaker, the National Parks and Conservation Service is responsible for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention which includes the management, preservation and protection of wetlands across Mauritius and the preservation of the rich biodiversity located thereat. The National Parks and Conservation Service has also been entrusted with the responsibility, as the enforcement agency, following the enactment of the Environment Act of 2024. Also, a National Ramsar Committee was set up in January 2004 at the level of the Ministry to assist in the implementation of a Ramsar Convention.

The National Ramsar Committee is also responsible for the monitoring and protection of wetlands through conditions attached to Building and Land Use Permits, wherever a wetland is present or is in the vicinity of any development. In fact, since 2006, no development on wetlands under 30 metre buffer zone is allowed.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (b) of the enactment of the Environment Act 2024, I am informed that a total of 36 cases pertaining to encroachment, illegal construction and backfilling done on wetlands have been reported to the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries. And, 54 such cases have been recorded at the level of the National Parks and Conservation Service over the last five years.

Furthermore, I am informed that three stop orders have been issued by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change for stopping such illegal activities and ordering the contraveners to restore the wetland area to its original site.

Madam Speaker, wetlands with a rich biodiversity, form part of the natural capital and each reported case of encroachment, illegal construction and backfilling, is one too many. To further reinforce the protection of wetland, government agreed, in May this year, to the drafting of a Wetland Bill and Wetlands Regulations which will be dedicated for the protection, management, restoration and enforcement measure for the preservation of all wetlands across the Republic of Mauritius. Through the enactment of this legislation, a new impetus will be given; the long-term sustainability of wetlands.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Are you alright? Yes.

The hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes.

MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE ARBITRATION COMMITTEE – CASES – 2019-2024

(No. B/753) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Motor Vehicle Insurance Arbitration Committee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of cases heard and determined thereat over the period 2019 to 2024, indicating the outcome thereof, in each case.

Madam Speaker: Heureusement que le Ministre sait courir...

Mr Osman Mahomed: Sorry Madam Speaker, it was an urgent matter regarding a Cabinet Paper. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I am sure it was urgent.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, the Motor Vehicle Insurance Arbitration Committee (MVIAC) has been established under the Road Traffic Act to determine disputes arising between two insurers or between a policy holder and an insurer regarding their respective liability on the amount of compensation to be paid following a road accident, not involving bodily injuries.

The MVIAC usually sits in four divisions where each division is presided by the Chairperson or a Vice-Chairperson. From 2019 to 2024, a total number of 4,776 cases was lodged at the MVIAC, out of which, 2,819 cases were determined, that is, a ruling was issued or the case was set aside. Furthermore, for 322 cases, the MVIAC is still awaiting clarification for the cases to be determined.

It is to be noted, Madam Speaker, that for the same period, 1635 cases have remained unattended by the previous Chairperson and the three Vice-Chairpersons.

However, I can reassure the House that the MVIAC has been reconstituted since April this year and the new team has been requested to mop up this huge backlog.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.* Would the hon. Minister inform the House whether, the situation involving 1635 cases, has caused hardship to the victims concerned?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Certainly, because this is the last recourse that they can have because the MVIAC is like some sort of a tribunal. So, if the cases are not determined, people will face hardships.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can we know who is the Chairperson of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Arbitration Committee? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: You mean the person between that period in time?

Ms Anquetil: Yes.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It was Mr Didier Dodin.

Madam Speaker: Okay. The hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River, Mr Babajee.

**COTEAU RAFFIN & CASE NOYALE (EUCALYPTUS) – STATE LAND –
RESIDENTIAL SQUATTING – REGULARISATION**

(No. B/754) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the plots of State land at Coteau Raffin and Case Noyale (Eucalyptus), he will state the number of persons/families squatting same, indicating if the regularisation of the situation thereof is being contemplated and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am informed that as at March 2025, there were 52 cases of residential squatting on state land at Coteau Raffin and four cases at Karo Kaliptis, Case Noyale.

In 2015, the then Ministry of Housing and Lands decided to regularise, as far as possible, all pre-July 2015 residential squatters. In regards to Coteau Raffin, the cases of 39 out of 41 pre-July 2015 were regularised *in situ* in 2017 whilst three documents are yet to be submitted by the two remaining families to enable regularisation.

My Ministry has already made a request to the CEB and the CWA for proper provision of electricity and water supply for these 39 families. An amount of Rs47 million has been provided in the Budget Estimates of 2025-2026 of my Ministry for the provision of electricity and water supply to four regions including Coteau Raffin.

I am informed that the CEB and CWA are facing serious challenges to provide the utilities to the families concerned due to lack of proper road access. My Ministry is coordinating with all relevant authorities with a view to facilitating both the CEB and the CWA.

Madam Speaker, in regard to Karo Kaliptis, Case Noyale, I am also informed that following the regularisation, *in situ*, of 39 cases of residential squatting in 2013, there remains 4 cases of residential squatting which need to be addressed. Two cases concern pre-2015 squatters that can only be regularised after existing encroachments issues are sorted out.

In so far, as the post 2015 residential squatters – because it keeps coming pre and post – my Ministry is working on recommendations that I propose to submit to government in due course.

However, Members will appreciate that addressing the issue of squatters on state lands is indeed a complex one due to different types of constraints such as encroachment, sites being found on river reserves, wetlands, nature parks, public beaches, topography of lands, flood-prone areas amongst others. For example, in Coteau Raffin, I am informed that 8 out of the 52 post-July 2015 squatters are found on Comptesse La Marque public beach and most of the remaining 44 cases are found either within 30 metres of the high-water mark or on marshy lands rendering their regularisation *in situ*, impossible.

And, Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying, that is some of the consequences the then Member of Parliament and Minister of that Constituency, going to promise land to everyone in order to have votes in return. And this is what you have as a result of telling people to go and take plots of land, to vote for him and in return, he will get them the lease but not knowing and not even observing, where they are going to take the land. Some of them ended up on the public beaches, some ended up on marshland and less than 30 metres from the high-water mark.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Yes!

Mr Babajee: Will the hon. Minister consider improving the road access to make it a public road as some people are sick and ambulances cannot get access to them?

Mr Mohamed: As I said, we are working with all of the relevant agencies and Ministries in order to find solutions.

Now, obviously, with regard to road access, I will have to speak to the relevant authorities. That would be either the local authority or any other relevant department that would be able to find the solution and the budget in order to build the roads.

So, yes, it is an urgent matter. But the other matter is that there are other people who have registered with the NHDC and who are patiently waiting for houses, as opposed to squatters who come to land and do not register for NHDC houses and expect to have electricity, water, land

given and paid by the State. I know there is an urgency in order to give them houses, but we have to be able to balance things as it should. Resources have to be used efficiently and reasonably, and not simply being obtained by simply asking. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Now, the Third Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne, hon. Caserne!

ABERCROMBIE MARKET FAIR – COURT JUDGMENT

(No. B/755) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Court Judgment in relation to the Abercrombie Market Fair, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal City Council of Port Louis, information as to the outcome thereof.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, the Abercrombie Market Fair Project stands as a textbook case of administrative failure and poor decision making by the previous government. Despite being initiated in the year 2019, the project faced repeated delays and technical dispute between the consultant and the contractor. Matters escalated when the contractor erected a structure without formal approval, and structural deficiency later identified issues that could have been avoided with proper oversight.

Instead of resolving the matter professionally, the former government hastily terminated the contract in May 2023. Based on legal advice from Counsel, Ms Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus, Senior Counsel, Mr Ravin Chetty, and with the endorsement of the then Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Husnoo, the Minister of Energy, hon. Joe Lesjongard, and the Minister of National Infrastructure, Mr Hurreeram, this termination was done without valid cause.

Madam Speaker, as a direct consequence of that decision, the contractor initiated an arbitration proceeding. The award of the arbitration tribunal was delivered on 09 May 2025 and it was in favour of the contractor. The tribunal ordered the Municipal City Council of Port Louis to pay an amount of Rs25,386,061 to the contractor.

However, following the retention of an escrow amount and the detection of tax deduction at source, the Council had to disburse an amount Rs21,257,112.33 to the contractor. After nearly six years, Madam Speaker, only 21% of the works have been completed, and the people of Port Louis are left to bear the cost of this grave misjudgement.

Madam Speaker, in view of the complexity and gravity of the matter, I am tabling the following documents for the benefit of the hon. Member –

- A copy of the arbitration award;
- The name of the arbitrator and parties involved;
- Full timeline and status of that project;
- Details of the procurement and contract termination;
- Legal opinions received from Counsel, Ms Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus, and Senior Counsel, Mr Ravin Chetty;
- Records of the meetings chaired by the then lord mayor and attended by former ministers;
- Financial clearance from the Ministry of Finance, and
- All supporting documents justifying the payment now being made.

Madam Speaker, these documents clearly show how a poorly handed decision by the former administration, taken without proper justification, led to financial loss and stalled the development. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes!

ST JEAN ROAD, QUATRE BORNES - PARKING SPACE

(No. B/756) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the insufficient parking space issue along St Jean Road, in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the short and long-term measures being considered to address the situation.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) that prior to the implementation of the metro project, the public used to park their vehicles in the space fronting commercial complexes on both sides bordering St Jean Road between St Jean Roundabout and Victoria Avenue. Same could accommodate approximately 190 vehicles with no dedicated parking zones.

With the implementation of the Metro Express Project in 2021, the lane configuration along St Jean Road was significantly modified, resulting in substantial decrease in the number of parking to around 40. So, from 190 to 40. I wish to point out that, for proper management of the limited parking space, same had to be converted into paid parking.

Furthermore, to address the lack of parking space along St Jean Road, the TMRSU constructed 70 free public parking spaces on five plots of land along St Jean Road, namely –

- Tulip Road;
- Surath Avenue;
- Colombia Court;
- Glaïeuls Avenue, and
- Opposite the metro station.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes has acquired two plots of land near Surath Avenue and Tulip Road to provide for 35 and 105 parking, respectively, whereby works are nearing completion.

Moreover, with the upcoming proposed Quatre Bornes Urban Terminal Project, additional parking facilities will be provided.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that given the whole stretch of the St Jean Road from Victoria Avenue to its junction with Tulip Road is already built up on both sides, there is no further space to provide for additional parking facilities. Thank you.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Malgré les efforts du ministère, le problème de parking est persistant. Alors, *can the hon. Minister inform the House whether consideration will be given to implementing a smart parking management system in this area en attendant? Thank you.*

Mr Osman Mahomed: The hon. Member is very technology savvy! And so am I! So, I think, we are on the same wave length. I can discuss with my colleagues.

Ms Anquetil: Okay, thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Ms Anquetil: Excuse me, I have a question.

Madam Speaker: Vous avez encore une question ? Yes, of course! I am sorry.

Ms Anquetil: This one is very important.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. One more question for you, hon. Ms Anquetil.

NATIONAL WOMEN’S COUNCIL – EXCISE DUTY CONCESSION FORM – ALLEGED IMPERSONATION

(No. B/757) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to an alleged case of impersonation on an application form for excise duty concession submitted through the National Women’s Council, she will state if the matter has been reported to her Ministry and, if so, provide details thereof.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Madam Speaker, I am informed that an alleged case of impersonation regarding an application form for excise duty concession submitted through the National Women’s Council (NWC) was indeed reported to my Ministry.

Madam Speaker, the application for excise duty concession was submitted to the Customs Department by the NWC in the name of Mrs N.D.G.N., currently employed as Manager since 02 February 2021. The Customs Department issued the excise duty concession certificate on 28 April 2025 as it was not clear whether the manager was eligible for the excise duty concession on a motor vehicle on ground of her years of service.

On 21 June 2025, my Ministry requested the Customs Department to cancel the excise duty concession certificate issued to Mrs N.D.G.N. The certificate was subsequently cancelled by the Customs Department on the same day. As per normal procedure, part (b) of the application form for the excise duty concession should have been filled in and signed by the Head of my Ministry.

However, this part of the form was signed by the HR Officer, Senior Human Resource Officer of the National Women’s Council on 28 April 2025 without the approval of my Ministry. Considering the issue to be a case of impersonation, the matter has been referred to the Police on 30 May 2025, the Central Crime Investigation Department (CCID) and the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC) on 18 June 2025. The case is still under investigation.

Ms Anquetil: Just one question, please!

Madam Speaker : Of course !

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Choquant!

Will the hon. Minister indicate whether, Mrs Jugnauth Naeck, the Manager of the National Women's Council, has been informed of the alleged fraud involving her application form for an excise duty concession? Thank you.

Ms Navarre-Marie: Yes, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Now it is the time for Ms Henriette-Manan! Second time that I am missing you. Go ahead!

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS – MIDWIFE – RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION

(No. B/758) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the post of Midwife, he will state the number of available posts thereof in the public health institutions in mainland Mauritius and in Rodrigues, respectively and the number thereof filled, indicating over the past ten years, the number of Midwives –

- (a) recruited, and
- (b) promoted to the post of Senior Midwife, giving details of the promotion exercises.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that in accordance to the scheme of service for the post of Midwife, same is filled either –

- (a) by appointment of student midwife who are fully registered as midwives with the Nursing Council in accordance with legislations in force in Mauritius, or
- (b) by selection from among candidates who are fully registered as midwife with the Nursing Council in accordance with legislations in force in Mauritius.

In Mauritius, presently there are 157 funded posts of Midwife available in public health institutions. 133 posts of Midwife have already been filled while there are 21 vacant posts.

In addition, 17 trainee midwives who have already passed their final examinations have been recommended for appointment as Midwife to the Public Service Commission on 23 January

2025. Meanwhile, four remaining trainee midwives have passed the final examinations in June 2025 and their appointments are being processed.

Appointment to the grade of Midwife is initiated as and when vacancies occur. In respect of Rodrigues, there are 26 funded posts of Midwife out of which 17 posts have already been filled. These posts are advertised by Rodrigues National Assembly and the recruitment is carried out by them.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that since 2014 to date, a total of 137 candidates has been recruited as trainee Midwife in the public health institutions in Mauritius as follows –

- In 2015 – 5;
- In 2016 – 62;
- In 2017 – 11;
- In 2019 – 28;
- In 2020 – 8;
- In 2021 – 1;
- In 2022 – 22.

A total of 137. 103 have already been appointed as Midwife. Out of the 34 remaining, 24 are being appointed as Midwife while 13 have left the grade of trainee Midwife. As regard to Rodrigues, I am informed that 8 candidates have been recruited as Midwife over the last 10 years.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that 42 of the midwives in Mauritius have been promoted to the grade of Senior Midwife on Shift as follows –

- In 2019 – 20;
- In 2020 – 8;
- In 2022 – 12, and
- In 2024 – 2.

A total of 42. For Rodrigues, I am apprised that none have been promoted to the grade of Senior Midwife and the scheme for the Senior Midwife on Shift has not yet been prescribed. This matter has to be dealt at the level of Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

The House may wish to know that midwives are promoted to the post of Senior Midwife on the basis of experience and merit who reckon at least five years of service in a substantive capacity in the grade of Midwife.

Madam Speaker, I am proposing to review the structure of the grade of midwifery to upgrade skills and competencies for improved service delivery.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister! Yes, okay, next question? Ms Henriette-Manan, are you happy with that?

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

MARE CHICOSE LANDFILL – 2014-2024 MANAGING CONTRACTOR – FIRE OUTBREAKS

(No. B/759) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the Mare Chicose Landfill Waste Site, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) whether the contractor managing and operating same since 2014 to 2024 held a valid fire certificate in respect thereof and, if not, why not, and
- (b) the amount charged by the Solid Waste Management Division for managing the sites over the period 2014-2024, indicating the –
 - (i) additional funds claimed, if any, following each fire outbreak, and
 - (ii) measures put in place to avert and combat future fire outbreaks.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question and according to records available at the Ministry, I wish to inform the House that for the period 2014 à 2024, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service gave its ‘no objection’ to Mare Chicose landfill project subject to a number of conditions. I have been informed that all these conditions have been addressed except for the installation of a permanent pressurised pipeline.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that provision was made for a pressurised firefighting pipeline in the new contract for the vertical expansion of the landfill awarded in June 2024 to the joint-venture Sotravic/Strata. The design for the pipeline, including tape works, at a suitable location along the nearby La Chaux River has been prepared by the landfill Consultant, Cowi/Luxconsult and already approved by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service. The construction of a pipeline is scheduled to start by end of November 2025.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part(b) the of the question, a total amount of Rs2.977 billion was disbursed for various running contracts for the period 2014 to June 2024 to joint-venture Sotravic/Eneotech.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (b)(i) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the period January 2014 to June 2024, no amount has been disbursed to the contractor for firefighting. However, further to a major fire outbreak on November 2024, the contractor joint-venture Sotravic/Strata has submitted a contractual claim amounting to Rs33.31 million out of which an amount of Rs23.18 million has been rejected and the remaining is still being assessed by the Consultant.

I have also been informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service that Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service has submitted a claim from Rs4.7 million as expenditure incurred during the firefighting at the landfill in November 2024.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (b) (ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the landfill has an existing contingency plan aiming to mitigate and to combat fire outbreak at the landfill. Under this plan, the contractor is required to undertake, amongst others, the following –

- (i) deploy standby team with a water tanker on a 24-hour basis to extinguish any fire outbreak;
- (ii) call the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service to combat fire if required;
- (iii) carry compaction of waste and cover with salt to prevent ingress of oxygen in affected areas, and
- (iv) arrange to deploy other resources like excavators and water tankers should the need arise.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

The hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River, Mr Jugurnauth!

RIVIÈRE DES GALETS – BEACH EROSION – CAVADEE PLATFORM

(No. B/760) **Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to beach erosion in the south-west coastal regions, he will state if consideration will be given for the reinstatement of the Cavadee platform at the Rivière des Galets Public Beach and, if so, when and under what conditions.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that in line with the Coastal Rehabilitation Programme, the services of a consultancy firm namely, Luxconsult enlisted by my Ministry on 22 May 2022 for a duration of 50 months to the tune of Rs94.6 million for the design and supervision of coastal protection measures at 16 priority sites.

The 16 priority sites include among others, the Cavadee platform at Rivière des Galets. Based on the degree of erosion and the site's specificity, the Consultant has recommended a coastal protection and rehabilitation work thereat to the tune of Rs20.1 million including of VAT and also, the following works –

- (i) rocks revetment of an approximate length 110 metres along the riverbank.
- (ii) reinstatement of existing concrete steps to allow safe access to the river.
- (iii) construction of wing walls for clearly demarcating the revetment and the steps;
- (iv) upgrading of the existing areas and access to the site, and
- (v) also provision of lighting facilities along the path and within the Cavadee platform area.

Madam Speaker, the project requires an EIA. An Environmental Impact Assessment licence and consultations are currently ongoing with stakeholders for the finalisation of the EIA. Upon completion of the EIA process, the Consultant will be requested to prepare the tender documents and a request for funds will accordingly be made to the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka, Dr. Ms Thannoo!

**PRIMARY & SECONDARY STATE SCHOOLS – COUNSELLING SERVICE –
NEEDY STUDENTS**

(No. B/761) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the primary and secondary State schools, he will state the number of psychologists currently providing services to students thereat, indicating the –

- (a) number of sessions to which the students are –
 - (i) entitled, and
 - (ii) benefitting, and
- (b) additional number of psychologists that will be required to ensure provision of professional level services to all needy students in the immediate future.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, the well-being of all our students remains a top priority for my Ministry. In a world increasingly marked by emotional and psychological challenges, we have an increasing number of students who require support from psychologists. The National Education Counselling Service operating under the purview of my Ministry continues to provide psychological and social support of those students who require such services.

In regard to the Primary and Secondary State Schools, I am informed that there are currently 39 educational psychologists providing services to students across the Republic of Mauritius. Psychological support is extended to students with the formal consent of parents or guardians to ensure that the latter are kept informed and are involved at every stage of the support process.

With regard to paragraphs (a)(i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed that each student requiring psychological support is entitled to as many sessions as deemed necessary, depending on the severity of the case and the outcome of the professional assessment conducted and during the period January to June 2025, a total of 1,616 students were referred for the first time for psychological support services and a total of 9,207 counselling sessions were carried out.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that an additional 42 educational psychologists would be required to ensure the timely and adequate provision of psychological

support to all students in need. However, due to budgetary constraints, provision for their recruitment could not be considered during this present budget.

In the meantime, to address the existing shortage, 22 educational social workers are providing essential support services through home visits, case interventions, parental guidance and community outreach. Between January and June 2025, these officers have attended 1,069 new cases and conducted 2,094 home visits but they also conduct sensitisation sessions for students and parents on issues such as child protection, emotional wellbeing, discipline and resilience.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, good?

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

BUS ROUTES 21, 227 & 82 – REGULAR & RELIABLE TRANSPORT SERVICES

(No. B/762) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to bus routes 21, 227 and 82, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority (NLTA), information as to the –

- (a) remedial measures undertaken or envisaged to ensure regular and reliable public transport services along same, and
- (b) dates and number of surprise checks carried out by officers of the NLTA on each route over the past three months.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the NLTA that the daily operations of buses supplying routes 21, 227 and 82 which operate from Belmont to Port Louis are monitored by ten regulators posted at Belmont Traffic Centre, Trois Bras Checkpoint and Port Louis, the new transportation centre. I am made to understand that the main problems along these routes relate to the aging fleet, entailing frequent breakdowns and missed trips. According to figures provided by the NLTA, at least ten buses are reported non-operational each day due to mechanical failures, especially among vehicles over 17-years old and a persistent shortage of crew, including drivers and conductors.

I wish to inform the House that the Bus Modernisation Scheme was revamped to cater for the purchase of high-floor buses and bus operators are accordingly making necessary arrangements for the renewal of their fleet. That means they made applications for support from Government.

As regards shortage of crew, my Ministry is working closely with the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations to facilitate the recruitment of foreign labour. Madam Speaker, despite the constraints of acute shortage of staff, including at the level of the NLTA Inspectorate, the latter has continued to undertake monitoring and enforcement.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am apprised that 23 surprise checks have been conducted along routes 21, 227 and 82 whereby 29 contraventions have been established. I am tabling the dates on which surprise checks have been conducted. It is to be pointed out that these checks have been further reinforced since mid-June this year with the enlistment of 13 Management Support Officers who are providing assistance to the NLTA Inspectorate, pending the recruitment of Road Transport Inspectors.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Yes, hon. Mr François!

MAURITIUS INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION – AWARD COURSES – JULY/AUGUST 2025 INTAKE – RODRIGUAN STUDENTS

(No. B/763) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) Award courses for the July/August 2025 intake for a Bachelor of Education (Hons) in Technical and Vocational Education and Training - B.Ed. (Hons) and a Diploma Special Education Needs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MIE, information as to whether suitable qualified candidates from Rodrigues will be able to follow same in Rodrigues and, if not, indicate the measures, if any, being taken for the facilitation thereof.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) that the Bachelor of Education in Technical and Vocational Education and Training - B.Ed. (Hons) programme was developed at the request of the Mauritius Institute of Training and

Development (MITD) to strengthen the pedagogical competencies of its instructors, including those based in Rodrigues.

The programme has been accredited by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) on 29 May 2025 and has been advertised on 14 July 2025 in Mauritius and for Rodrigues. The MITD had already informed the concerned instructors about the course on 2 December 2024. I am also informed that the modalities for the implementation of the programme are being worked out and it should be designed in such a way so as to ensure the optimum use of resources and facilitate the efficient and effective delivery of training courses to all interested candidates possessing the required qualifications, including those from Rodrigues. The course will be run in a hybrid mode in Rodrigues with a combination of online and face to face sessions facilitated by resource persons from the MIE.

Madam Speaker, as for the Diploma in Special Education Needs, I am informed by the MIE that the intake for July/August 2025 has not been advertised in Rodrigues as the first cohort from Rodrigues is currently following the certificate course which will only be completed in December of this year. Upon completion of the certificate course, the diploma course will be advertised thereat and those who have been awarded the certificate will be eligible to apply.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Okay, the hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 11 – FOOTBALL PITCHES – LIGHTING PROJECTS – DELAY

(No. B/764) Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football pitches found in the Villages of Rivière des Créoles, Bois des Amourettes, Bambous Virieux and Grand Sable, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to the reasons for the delay in implementing the Lighting Projects thereat, indicating the expected completion date thereof in each case.

Mr Woohit: Madam Speaker, at the outset, I wish to inform the hon. Member and the House that this reply will be relatively lengthy as it pertains to four different football grounds under the jurisdiction of the District Council of Grand Port. The hon. Member has requested

detailed information regarding the history, current status, delays and future plans for lighting installation at the Rivière des Créoles, Bois des Amourettes, Grand Sable and Bambous Virieux football grounds.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that since 2017, funds were allocated annually for the implementation of various capital projects by the District Council of Grand Port, including the upgrading of infrastructure and installation of lighting facilities. However, it is regrettable that the Council, under the previous administration, did not consider the installation of lighting facilities at the Rivière des Créoles football ground as a priority, despite the fact that this ground has existed for over 50 years and covers an area of approximately 5,500 m². I am further informed that lighting facilities have never been provided at the Rivière des Créoles, Grand Sable and Bois des Amourettes football grounds. It is only recently, under the current Government, that the District Council has submitted proposals for lighting works in the budget for the Financial Year 2025-2026.

As regards Rivière des Créoles football ground, I am informed that while bleachers and shelters were constructed in the year 2014 at a cost of Rs377,400 and upgrading and fencing works were undertaken in the same year at Rs89,239, no lighting facilities were ever installed. The current proposal estimates the cost for lighting installation is at Rs4 million.

Regarding Bois des Amourettes football ground, the site has been in existence for more than 40 years. Turfing and fencing works were initiated by the National Development Unit (NDU) in 2022 but remained incomplete. The football ground has not yet been handed over to the Council. The proposed lighting project also estimated at Rs4 million has been listed under the proposed amenities project for Financial Year 2025-2026, subject to availability of funds.

Similarly, the Grand Sable football ground, in existence for over 30 years and covering an area of 6,000 m², remains without lighting to date. In 2015, the Ministry of Local Government allocated Rs138,000 for the removal of damaged fencing but no follow-up project was implemented. Although the NDU had proposed boundary wall upgrading since 2014, actual inclusion in the programme occurred only in the year 2016-2017. Again, the lighting project proposed in the year 2025-2026 budget is estimated at Rs4 million.

Madam Speaker, with respect to the Bambous Virieux football ground which has been in existence for over 40 years, I am informed that the lanterns were previously installed by routing electrical cables through PVC pipes and affixing them directly on the fencing poles.

I am informed that the lanterns were previously installed by routing electrical cables through PVC pipes and affixing them directly on the fencing poles. However, all lighting facilities collapsed during the passage of cyclone Batsirai in 2022, and to date, no remedial action has been undertaken by the District Council of Grand Port.

The size of the plot is approximately 8,900 m² and the cost for new lighting works has similarly been proposed at Rs4 million in the 2025-2026 Budget.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry will formally write to the National Development Unit to request that the implementation of lighting facilities at Rivière des Créoles and Bois des Amourettes be treated as a matter of priority under the proposed amenities projects, subject to budget availability. Additionally, the implementation of lighting works at Bambous Virieux and Grand Sable will be considered under a suitable Vote Item by my Ministry in the forthcoming budget planning.

Madam Speaker, at a meeting held on 15 July 2025, I directed all Chief Executives of the local authorities to ensure that all public infrastructures and assets are regularly inspected and properly maintained. It is their statutory duty to carry out regular inspections and take appropriate actions where deficiencies are found. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Everybody is happy? Good!

I have less than 10 minutes left.

So, now, I am calling the hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart!

PSAC MODULAR EXAMINATIONS – GRADE 5 PUPILS – ELIGIBILITY

(No. B/765) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the recent changes to the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Modular Examinations in Grade 5, he will state if the pupils presently enrolled in Grade 5 are eligible to sit for the PSAC Examinations or will be shifted to the previous elite system.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, as from this year, there will be no modular assessments for pupils of Grade 5.

In line with the annual programme for the PSAC Assessment 2025, students who are in Grade 5 and have completed five years of schooling, inclusive of Grades 1 to 5, and who are attending government-aided or registered primary schools may exceptionally sit for the PSAC assessment in 2025 subject to request made by their parents.

However, those students who are currently in Grade 5 and have benefitted from an accelerated promotion from Grade 1 to Grade 2 in Academic Year 2021/2022 due to the COVID-19 will not be eligible to take part in the PSAC assessment this year as they would not have completed the five years of schooling. They will sit for PSAC assessment in Academic Year 2026.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the last part of the question, related to an elite system, I wish to inform the House that all leading nations have their own models of selection of their very best students from within their schooling system.

I wish to inform the House that we should not vilify elitism as long as it is not at the expense of the well-being of our students. We need to nurture excellence, support highflyers, give them proper academic support, but at the same time, we should never forsake or neglect the wellbeing of those students who have learning difficulties or learning disabilities.

I assure the House that this Government will be fair and equitable to all our students. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

We cannot have another question. Time is up!

There are three questions which have been withdrawn: PQs B/728, B/766 and B/767.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Bhagwan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill (No. XVII of 2025) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE CRIMINAL APPEAL AND CRIMINAL REVIEW BILL (NO. XVII OF 2025)

Order for Second Reading read.

(3.55 p.m.)

The Attorney General (Mr G. P. C. Glover, SC): Madam Speaker, I move that the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill (No. XVII of 2025) be read a second time.

Madam Speaker, this Bill may appear, at first glance, to be rather technical in nature. But it speaks, in fact, to something fundamental: the right to a fair trial and, more specifically, the right to a meaningful appeal.

It reflects this Government's commitment to ensure that our judicial system is further protected and improved. It is our goal to ensure that the delivery of justice in our Courts becomes more coherent, accessible and fair.

Madam Speaker, let me begin by outlining the broad aims of this Bill. At present, process governing appeals in criminal matters is fragmented and inconsistent. Procedures are scattered across the Criminal Appeal Act and its Rules, the Courts Act, and the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act.

This has led to confusion for litigants, unnecessary procedural points being raised and argued, leading to delays in the administration of justice.

This Government's promise to make justice more accessible includes making it easier for laypersons to understand the law. True it is, we abide by the maxim that *«nul n'est censé ignorer la loi.»* This makes sense. We abide by the maxim because you cannot have someone asking to

be exonerated from a legal obligation simply because it is argued that he or she did not know what the law said. It is a basic principle of the rule of law.

But we cannot be blind to the fact that, in this day and age, the combined volume of all applicable Acts of Parliament in a country like Mauritius is simply enormous. Even the most seasoned law practitioner cannot claim to know all of our laws. So, the question arises: how can we be fair to our citizens?

The least we can do, Madam Speaker, is to make it easier for people to get access to the law, that is, *dans le concret* and physically. This is why my Office is launching in the coming weeks a website where all the updated statutes in force in Mauritius will be freely available, without complex sign-in procedures and without uncertainties about past versions and amendments. The Regulations will be uploaded shortly after, given the sheer number of regulations which, we must admit, evolve continuously.

The next step, and which I readily admit is less straightforward, is to make our laws easier to understand. There are times when this will not be possible, because of situations where legal drafting simply needs the technical language that allows precision and finality.

But there are, on the other hand, many instances where we can be clearer. Where procedures are complex simply because of historical weight, rooted in reasons which are no longer relevant. In such situations, we must endeavour to make things simpler and more straightforward.

The Bill before the House, today, Madam Speaker, aims to start this process for criminal law. It does so by consolidating all criminal appeal and review procedures under a single legislative framework. It simplifies the steps required to lodge and prosecute appeals; and it ensures uniformity of treatment, whether the appeal arises from the Supreme Court sitting in original jurisdiction or from subordinate courts.

We are also introducing changes that will substantially improve the fairness of treatment of accused persons. For example, henceforth, there cannot be more than 28 days between the moment a person is found guilty of an offence and the delivery of his sentence by the court. We do not often realise, Madam Speaker, that there are today dozens and dozens of individuals who wait for months, and may I even dare to say, years in prison before learning about their sentence!

With the risk that they could end up spending more time inside than what justice has decided or will decide for them. This is an intolerable situation which must be done away with forthwith.

So, Madam Speaker, this Bill may look to be simply a technical reform, but its effect will be felt. The more so when combined with all the other aspects of judicial reform which we intend to tackle. Which is what we have promised in the Government Programme 2025-2029, that is to reinforce public trust in the justice system.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to guide the House through the main elements of the Bill. Part I deals with preliminary matters. Clause 3 imposes an important new obligation: all courts must now notify a convicted person of their right to appeal immediately after delivering judgement. It seems obvious, but this step is not currently mandatory. And its absence has, at times, led to injustice.

Often when someone is not represented at first instance by a lawyer, by the time –

- 1) that he processes the fact that he has been found guilty, he starts telling people around him about his conviction and why he disagrees with it;
- 2) that he eventually learns that he can appeal and how he is to do that;
- 3) that he travels to Port Louis to try and meet counsel;
- 4) where he will be told that he has got to get a copy of the judgement from the Court in order for counsel to be able to advise him, and
- 5) then for counsel to draw off the grounds of appeal, not after having had to pay a fee to the registry of court to obtain such a judgement, and
- 6) that finally he needs to see an Attorney to actually lodge the notice of appeal, the 21-day limit for appeals has, more often than not, already passed. We simply must make this process easier and we start here by making sure he knows from day one that he can appeal.

Part II of this Bill covers appeals and reviews before the Court of Criminal Appeal. Clauses 4 and 5 establish its composition and jurisdiction. Here, I should point out that the creation of a separate Court of Appeal in terms of composition and location is a reform that we are still working on, as set out in the Government Programme. I stress that this new Bill will work

seamlessly whether in the new system to be proposed or in the current situation where the Court of Criminal Appeal is composed of judges of our Supreme Court, where it also sits.

Another important note here is that clause 5(2) maintains that even acquittals following a jury verdict may be appealed by the DPP but only in limited circumstances: where, for example: the verdict is unreasonable, or a serious irregularity has tainted the trial.

Clause 6 harmonises and clarifies the procedure to appeal. The rule is now simple: whether the appellant challenges conviction, sentence or both, the deadline is 21 days from sentence. This replaces the outdated two-stage system before the Assizes, where an accused party had to appeal against his conviction within ten days of conviction, and then await his sentence to challenge it: a source of confusion for lawyers and absurdity for all. This anachronism has to go too.

Clause 9 introduces a clearer, better-defined route for criminal reviews. The DPP may apply to the Court of Criminal Appeal for a review of an acquittal or dismissal where fresh and compelling evidence has come to life.

A convicted person may similarly request a review, but here it is via the Human Rights Division of the National Human Rights Commission, on the same grounds. That is fresh and compelling evidence. This is a safeguard, not a second bite at the cherry. It is not a political tool, nor an appeal in disguise. But where evidence surfaces that is both new and probative, justice demands a mechanism for correction. Clause 9 provides for it. The role given now exclusively to the Human Rights Division reflects the fact that one cannot expect a convicted person in prison to go and obtain statements from witnesses or other forms of fresh evidence all by himself, he will therefore have the help of the National Human Rights Commission through its Human Rights Division.

Part III mirrors the process of the Court of Criminal Appeal for appeals from subordinate courts to the Supreme Court in its appellate jurisdiction. Clauses 10 to 14 provide for composition, powers, procedures and rules for such appeals. The goal, again, is uniformity. An important addition is the provision for a third judge to be appointed, should the two judges having heard the appeal, have opposing views on the outcome. This will ensure the avoidance of deadlocks which too often these days just result in the decision being delayed until one side wears out.

Part IV addresses interim matters pending appeal: stay of proceedings, restitution of property, bail, custody of exhibits. Of note, however is Clause 19 which rationalises timelines for skeleton arguments: 30 days before hearing for appellants, 15 days for respondents, as opposed to 45 and 30 days respectively now as the law stands. The new timeframe is more realistic than the current regime which is in fact rarely complied with and it will improve preparedness and judicial efficiency.

Part V lays out the determination of appeals and reviews. Clauses 20 to 33 set out the powers of the Appellate Court, including the power to substitute verdicts, order retrials, amend sentences, or correct serious irregularities. Clause 34 deals with outcomes of criminal reviews: the Court of Criminal Appeal may quash an acquittal or conviction and order a retrial if it is satisfied that justice so requires and that a fair retrial is still possible.

Clause 35 mandates credit for time spent in custody pending appeal or review, subject to specific rules. This codifies a principle already recognised in practice and jurisprudence.

Part VI includes miscellaneous provisions. Clause 36 allows for extensions of time on applications made. Clause 37 enables the Chief Justice to grant legal aid even where no formal application is made, a small but important protection for unrepresented litigants. Clause 38 affirms the role of the DPP in representing the State in appeals and reviews.

Clause 39, Madam Speaker, regulates ancillary matters like costs, clause 40 empowers the Chief Justice to make rules for implementation. Clause 41 repeals the Criminal Appeal Act and the Criminal Appeal Rules of 1954, and clause 42 introduces necessary amendments to five statutes, including the Children's Court Act 2020, the Courts Act, and the Protection of Human Rights Act.

Madam Speaker, what this Bill offers is not innovation for innovation's sake. It is a codification of best practice, along with rationalisation; and here I should stress that it is the fruit of careful consultation with the Judiciary. This is the kind of legislative work that can make our system function more smoothly, more fairly, and with greater certainty.

More such work will follow from my Office, driven by the impetus of this Government.

Madam Speaker, before concluding, may I take this opportunity to say this: we have not included in this Bill mandatory time limits for judgements to be handed down by the Courts, but

we are strongly considering this reform as well in the not-too-distant future, in a separate and comprehensive piece of legislation. We have already started consultations on this issue, and we will discuss more, particularly with the Judiciary. We will respect the views of all stakeholders and the constraints faced by them. But the time to make it happen will come, and we will not waver.

Justice, Madam Speaker, cannot be achieved if the path to appeal is so entangled in procedural thicket that only the most sophisticated or well-represented litigants can find their way through. This Bill is part of our duty, as legislators, to prune those thorns and light that path.

This Bill may not enthuse or incite great debate. But it is an important one nonetheless.

I commend the Bill to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, hon. A. Duval!

(4.09 p.m.)

Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would have liked to rise from the Opposition benches to fulfil our constitutional duty of rigorous oversight but that is simply impossible, given the indecent rush in which this Bill has been thrust upon the House.

The Government has invoked Standing Order 65 (Urgent Bills) procedure granting barely 3 days' notice and scheduling First, Second and Third Readings for today, even though, as you know, Standing Order 52 (2) a long-standing norm, not the exception, requires 15 days' notice at least, being given to Members of Parliament, and of course, to civil society at large.

And the statistics are stark, Madam Speaker. Out of the 19 Bills introduced in this session, 17 bear a Prime Ministerial Certificate of Urgency, eight of those including this Bill, have arrived with only three days' notice. Such a haste, Madam Speaker, denies the members of Parliament the time required to properly scrutinise the legislation that will overhaul our entire criminal appellate framework.

Worst, in fact, is the fact that there are only two of us here sitting in the Opposition, and we are now to shoulder that burden. In fact, you will note, two Members of the Opposition, the fewest since our Independence.

(Interruptions)

What is more, Madam Speaker, is that many on government side once condemned precisely this practice. The Deputy Prime Minister, without a portfolio, the hon. Paul Béranger, when he sat...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Is he raising a point of order, Madam Speaker? What is he talking about?

Madam Speaker: Will you sit down? Let him...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Is he raising a point of order? He is not speaking on the Bill at all.

Mr Bhagwan: *Koz lor Bill la ta!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: You have given him the privilege of speaking in the second place; in the place of the Leader of the Opposition, who is not even present! And you give him ground to say anything like that, out of order!

Madam Speaker: No. Alright. Please talk on the Bill. We have got your first objection. Please speak on the Bill.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, can't I now not even lay some ground foundation to the speech?

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Pe koz nirport. Al dormi!*

Mr A. Duval: I was saying the manner this Bill, you like it or not, has been brought to the House under Standing Order 65. I am talking about the manner in which this Bill is being brought. And this was once said...

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order!

Madam Speaker: Yes! Yes!

Mr Mohamed: If the hon. Member wants to take a point of order, he is ...

Mr A. Duval: I am not!

Mr Mohamed: Don't interrupt me!

The Deputy Prime Minister: He does not even know what it is!

Mr Mohamed: Don't interrupt me! Learn from what I'll say. Now, what I am trying to say is...

Ms Anquetil: Bravo!

Mr Mohamed: If he wants to....

Dr. Boolell: *Baba!*

Mr Mohamed: ... come up with a point of order, he is free to do so.

Madam Speaker: And I will give a ruling.

Mr Mohamed: Obviously. But then, again, if he is trying to use the backdoors, since he is used to using backdoors and he takes pleasure from using backdoors, if he wants to do so...

Madam Speaker: Make your point of order!

Mr Mohamed: ... by going to come and to talk about a point of order, instead of going from a main subject of a debate...

The Deputy Prime Minister: And insulting people!

Mr Mohamed: ... that is against Standing Orders. It is very simple. He is not being relevant. Now, the manner in which the Bill has come can be the subject matter of a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition could have seen you this morning; he could have delegated someone to see you. They did not bother to do so.

Now if they haven't bothered to do so, and they are right after the fact, we are not going to be listening here, wasting our time, and not even him talking about the debate!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Mohamed: For God's sake!

Mr A. Duval: ...this is not a point of order.

Madam Speaker: You have to speak about the Bill.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, ...

Ms Anquetil: Sit down!

Madam Speaker: Don't forget that I have been ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ki ou p exciter ...*

Madam Speaker: Don't forget that I have been 15 years in this Assembly. I am used to what you are saying.

Mr A. Duval: But, Madam Speaker, ...

Madam Speaker: But you have to speak about the Bill.

(Interruptions)

You have to speak about the Bill.

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: This very document has been laid on the Table of the Assembly. What does it say?

“Certificate of Urgency in respect of The Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill (No. XVII of 2025)”

This Bill...

(Interruptions)

Ms J. Béranger: *Li pan ecoute Speaker!*

Mr A. Duval: So, Madam Speaker, since when can I not talk about the manner in which a Bill is brought to the House? It is entirely relevant.

(Interruptions)

Entirely relevant!

Mr Mohamed: On a right point of order!

Mr A. Duval: And it was being said...

It is not a point of order! Under which Standing Order?

Mr Mohamed: It is!

Mr A. Duval : Non! Non! Non!

Mr Mohamed: You were bothered ...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Do not try to intimidate me! I will do my speech!

Mr Mohamed: Ayo!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Mohamed: By being irrelevant!

The Deputy Prime Minister: If the Speaker allows you!

Mr A. Duval: She will!

Madam Speaker: You have to speak about the Bill, ...

Mr A. Duval: I am.

Madam Speaker: ... otherwise, I will suspend the Sitting!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, ...

Mr Mohamed: They didn't have time to cut, edit and paste ...

Mr A. Duval: It was once said in the House that First, Second and Third Readings being brought ...

Mr Mohamed: Stop reading!

Mr A. Duval: ... is not acceptable!

Mr Mohamed: Stop reading!

Mr A. Duval: And that is not how good parliamentary work was done.

Madam Speaker: Standing Orders allow Certificates of Urgency...

Mr A. Duval: Yes! I am talking about that precisely.

The Deputy Prime Minister: You should sit down!

Mr A. Duval: I am not raising a Point of order, I am merely explaining how this Bill is being brought into the House!

Mr Mohamed: That's not the debate!

An hon. Member: Talk on the Bill!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: It is! It is about the Bill!

Madam Speaker,

Madam Speaker: Now come on the Bill itself!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, it sounds fishy, to say the least.

Madam Speaker: Now, come on the Bill itself!

Mr A. Duval: In fact, this government ...

(Interruptions)

I have said what I had to say...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ki li pe koze!*

Mr A. Duval: I will say more outside if I am being precluded ...

Madam Speaker: Yes, go outside!

Mr A. Duval: ... from saying it inside!

Madam Speaker: Yes, go outside!

Mr A. Duval: Now, expert voices, Madam Speaker, have likewise been excluded. The Law Reform Commission, the Mauritius Bar Council, the Mauritius Law Society, have not been consulted nor have they had the courtesy of being sent a copy of this legislation, of this Bill.

And that is very important.

And, therefore, there has been no meaningful opportunity for them to offer their expertise and pronounce on the Bill.

By compressing the debate, like I said, it is not the first time – the exception has become the rule – by compressing this debate into a three-day sprint, the government has deprived Parliament of the independent insight needed to grasp serious constitutional and procedural changes which are at stake.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Going on and on like that...

Mr A. Duval: I will call it legislative ambush. The Bill, Madam Speaker, ...

Madam Speaker: Now, come to the Bill.

Mr A. Duval: Yes, it is all about the Bill.

Ms J. Bérenger: *Oune les li fer tousala.*

An hon. Member: Five minutes left!

Mr A. Duval: It is all about the Bill, whether I bring it without consultation, the manner of bringing the Bill is all about the Bill. I am not talking about making political arguments here. I am talking about the respect that we have shown to this House.

Ms Anquetil: *Ayo!*

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Manman!*

Mr A. Duval: One of the cornerstones, and I will say, Madam Speaker, ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Then, it's like the Attorney General!

Mr A. Duval: ... and that proves the point I have to say about the Bill. In fact, I don't have that much to say about the Bill because we have been given so little time.

Madam Speaker: Oh, you have nothing to say!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Three days! One of the cornerstones of our legal system ...

Ms J. Bérenger: *Enn la honte !*

Mr A. Duval: ... and especially ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mr A. Duval, please sit down!

Mr A. Duval: I am talking about the various provisions, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, you are not! You are not. We will have to make a decision here. You have a Bill. As I said, I have been here for 15 years; we have had several Bills like this, which come on one day, next day.

If you cannot talk about the Bill, you have made your point about why you cannot, then we will stop here. Somebody else will speak.

I have read the Bill. I have also got it last minute. I am also a lawyer like you. Now, either you can speak about the substance of the Bill or if you feel that you have not been given time, then you give up.

You've made your point already.

Mr A. Duval: That will be, I think, what many here would have wanted. But I will speak about the Bill.

One of the cornerstones of our legal system, especially of criminal legislation, is the principle, Madam Speaker, of legal certainty, that is, that the need for the legislature to be abundantly clear in the drafting of the law to avoid any ambiguity or confusion in the interpretation of law by the Court.

This Bill, in my opinion, will affect one of the most fundamental rights of the citizens –the right of appeal in its lack of clarity in certain aspects.

Hon. Members: What!

Mr A. Duval: I will explain. I find this even more worrying that important rights and principles which are beneficial to accused parties under the current legislation, are being done away with.

Let me come to the specific provisions, under section 11 (2) (a), the right of appeal shall now lie where one –

“[...]is sentenced to undergo penal servitude or imprisonment with or without payment of a fine, or to pay a fine of 1,000 rupees or more.”

Therefore, as it is presently, when the fine is less than a thousand, you do not have the right of appeal but penal servitude, imprisonment and fines are not the only existing sentences which the

Court can impose. What about suspended sentences and community service orders under the Community Service Order Act? What about conditional and absolute discharge under the Criminal Procedure Act? And this, I believe is for the legislator to clarify.

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Suspend the Sitting!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Are these now also going to fall under Section 11 (2)(a)? It is for – I hope – the Attorney General to explain.

Mr Mohamed: *Ayo baap! Ki pou* explain?

Mr A. Duval: It appears, therefore, Madam Speaker, that those people shall be deprived of the right to appeal. In any case, the object of the Bill was to clarify.

Mr Mohamed: *Kouyon ho gal ba!*

Mr A. Duval: And it has not done so.

Under Section 22, a citizen shall henceforth be deprived of his right of appeal against a judgment where there is a variance between the information and the evidence, unless he has raised the point before the trial court.

But the reality, Madam Speaker, is that in many cases, accused parties are simply not represented by counsel at trial stage, whether it is for lack of financial resources or for whatever reasons. But this is the reality. Of course, those persons cannot be expected to take objections in law in the course of their trial.

So, this section will essentially deprive those persons of the protection against improprieties in their trial. Yet, this protection under the current law exists.

I would like to quote Liew vs the State of Mauritius 2021 Supreme Court case. The accused was not represented at trial and found guilty. The appellant jurisdiction of the Supreme Court quashed the conviction precisely on the ground that there was variance between the information and the evidence, which point – you will no doubt understand – was raised only at appeal stage.

I hope that the Attorney General can clarify whether now it will be the case for those persons who were *Inops consilii* and could not, therefore, raise that point in law.

Section 9 and Section 34, Madam Speaker, put *une épée de Damoclès* on citizens by giving the right to the Director of Public Prosecutions to apply for review of sound appeal judgment and to have a retrial of the case which was properly tried, where there is evidence accordingly that comes to light. This is contrary to the very well settled principle of *autrefois acquis*...

Madam Speaker: Keep an eye on the time!

Mr A. Duval: ...and certainty...

Mr Lobine: Jamais!

Mr A. Duval: ...which guarantee that once a person has been acquitted...

Mr Lobine: Jamais!

Mr A. Duval: ...he should be protected from subsequent prosecution for the same facts.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, it appears that there is no time limit under the Act for the DPP to apply for the said review. This will result in acquitted individuals to suffer lifelong stress and anxiety of having their case reopened precisely because of the lack of certainty.

Of course, there are positives provisions in this Bill. The fact that the court must inform every convicted person of their right to appeal. The fact that now there is a clear set of days between the time the conviction is handed and the sentence must be handed – of 28 days. There is also time spent in custody shall automatically be credited against the final sentence.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude with these remarks.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Chut! Yes!

Mr A. Duval: More meaningful debate, in my opinion, can take place when we do not sideline the very stakeholders whose expertise is indispensable. The Law Reform Commission, the Mauritius Bar Council, the Mauritius Law Society are but a few of those who would have had, had they been given proper notice, something to say about this Bill.

I will quote the Deputy Prime Minister, again, who said at the time –

« Allons tirer une leçon de tout cela [*Saying about the First, Second and Third Reading being brought on the same day.*] à l'avenir, pour les autres projets de loi, selon lesquels il faudrait, dès qu'ils sont prêts, les circuler pour qu'on puisse avoir amplement le temps de les considérer à tête reposée. »

Well, perhaps, Madam Speaker, it is indeed time for some of us to go and *se reposer à la maison!*

Madam Speaker: That was very, very bad! Very, very nasty!

Ms J. Bérenger: Cheap!

Madam Speaker: Very nasty!

Ms J. Bérenger: Cheap!

Madam Speaker: Shall we break so that we can all get...? Or do you want one more speech? One more speech?

Hon. Members: One more! One more!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Pa donn li lokazion pou sove, li al dan so...*

Madam Speaker: Okay, one more speech then! I wanted to break at five. Alright, let us have hon. Seeburn, please!

(4.25 p.m.)

Mr M. Seeburn (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the proposed Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill, which is a reaffirmation of our rule of law.

The Bill comes with a view to bring clarity and certainty in this area of the law so as to simplify the procedures in a deliberate and thoughtful consolidated legislation for appeal and review cases across all levels of our judiciary.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the hon. Member of the Opposition stated that this Bill has been brought in only a few days. This is not correct as there was already an indication in the announcement of our Government Programme 2025-2029 that these legislations are in the pipeline.

Madam Speaker, under the current system, the criminal appeals and criminal review cases are governed by a scattered set of statutes, case law and procedural rules.

The courts are operating under different routes of appeal, under different legislations which has left the people, especially the vulnerable ones who wish to challenge a conviction or sentence often confused. This lack of uniformity risks undermining the very principles upon which our justice system is built, including fairness, accessibility and equal treatment under the law.

This Bill is a transformative step forward of how justice is administered in our country. Madam Speaker, as the hon. Attorney General, at the very outset of his speech for this Bill, said that this will promote fair trial. This Bill unifies the appeal rights of all appeal cases in criminal matters that are made from the final decision of the Supreme Court and from the final decision of the District Court, the Intermediate Court and the Children's Court in a single and coherent legislation.

In doing so, the Bill will strengthen legal certainty and protect the rights of all parties involved in criminal proceedings.

Madam Speaker, the Bill clearly imposes an obligation on any....

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *Ala li ale! Li ale!*

Mr Lobine: *To ti bizin ekoute, to ale!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Seeburn: Madam Speaker, the Bill clearly imposes an obligation on any court...

Madam Speaker: Allow the hon. Member to speak! Allow the hon. Member to speak! Carry on, carry on.

Mr Seeburn: Madam Speaker, the Bill clearly imposes an obligation on any court to immediately notify the convicted person of his right to appeal or the procedure to make an application to review the proceedings of the Supreme Court before the Court of Criminal Appeal.

Part I of the Bill deals with the preliminary matters, including the short title, the interpretation and the notification of the right to appeal.

Part II of the Bill outlines the composition, the jurisdiction and the powers of the Court of Criminal Appeal and further outlines the procedures, the proceedings and the notice required to resist the appeal before the Criminal Court of Appeal.

Section 10 of the Bill provides that an appeal before the Appellate Jurisdiction (Criminal) of the Supreme Court shall be heard by at least two judges and further provides that the Chief Justice may, upon receipt of an application, direct more than two judges to hear the appeal having regard to the magnitude of the case and the importance of the question of law, and the importance of the question of facts involved.

Section 11 of the Bill provides that the Supreme Court shall have unlimited jurisdiction and powers to hear and determine appeal by a person against his conviction or sentence or hear the appeal by the DPP against any dismissal of a charge or conviction or sentence imposed on a person from the final decision of the subordinate court.

Madam Speaker, Section 12 and Section 14 of the Bill deal with the procedure to appeal and the appeal proceedings before the Supreme Court. Section 13 provides that a party upon whom a notice of appeal is served, that party may resist the appeal before the Supreme Court by filing a notice of his intention to resist the appeal within a maximum period of 28 days.

Part IV of the Bill deals with the matters pending before the Court of Criminal Appeal, as provided under Section 15 and Section 16, with the stay of proceedings and the restitution of property pending trial.

Section 17 provides that where a person who has been convicted and sentenced gives notice of appeal to the Court before which he is convicted and has been refused bail pending appeal, may apply to the Appellate jurisdiction of the Court to be admitted to bail pending the determination of his appeal.

Sections 18 and 19 of Bill deal with the custody of exhibits and documents and the filing of skeleton arguments and submissions pending the criminal appeal.

Madam Speaker, sections 22 to 33 under PART V of the Bill deals with the determination of the general powers of the Appellate Court including issues relating miscarriage of justice, defect in information, warrants and summons or omission and mistake, and further issues regarding evidence irregularity and lack of records in proper convictions and acquittal on

account of insanity, and also, deals with the bar to subsequent prosecution and dismissal of a charge and other powers of the Supreme Court.

Section 34 of the Bill provides specific general powers to the Court of Criminal Appeal on review. To call fresh and compelling evidence that is likely to quash the acquittal or conviction or order that person to be retried for the offence with which he was originally charged. The hon. Attorney General rightly said earlier that this is not a political tool but rather a safeguard.

Madam Speaker, section 36 of the Bill provides that where a convicted person has not been notified of his right to appeal, may have good cause to apply for an extension of time to the Court of Criminal Appeal.

Section 37 of the Bill emphasises on access to justice and empowers the Master and Registrar to report to the Chief Justice where legal aid should be granted for the purpose of an appeal or review although no applications were made.

Section 38 of the Bill provides that the DPP shall appear for the State on every appeal to the Appellate Court unless it is a private prosecution and appear before the Court of Criminal Appeal on every application for review. Section 39 of the Bill goes on to say that no cost shall be allowed on either side on hearing any appeal or review by the Court of Criminal Appeal under this Act. Section 40 of the Bill empowers the Chief Justice to make such rules as maybe necessary for the purpose of this Act. Thus, upholding a fundamental principle of the rule of law.

Madam Speaker, the Bill further intends to repeal the Criminal Appeal Act 1954 and revokes the Criminal Appeal Rules as a specified in section 41 of the Bill. The Bill addresses a major void in this area of the law by imposing an obligation on any Court to pass sentence on a convicted person within a maximum period of 28 days and not later.

Madam Speaker, the Bill proposes to amend section 11 of the Children's Court Act, under section 42 where now, an appeal against an order or the final judgement of the magistrate of the Criminal Division of the Children's Court will be made to the Supreme Court in accordance with the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill.

Clause 42 of the Bill also proposes to repeal sections 69 and 70 of the Courts Act and provide simplified provisions under this Bill to deal with criminal appeal cases.

The Bill further proposes under clause 42 to amend section 132 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Act which deals with hearing on sentence where now, after convicting an accused, the Court having regard, gives an opportunity to the accused to adduce evidence in mitigation and after hearing such other matters that is relevant to the facts and circumstances of the offence impose the sentence on the accused within 14 days.

Madam Speaker, the Bill brings further amendments to the criminal jurisdiction of the District and Intermediate Court's Act by repealing the entire provisions under Section 92 to Section 100 of the Act which has been a complex and confusing area of the law. This Bill has now simplified the procedures for a person who has been charged with an offence for the prosecution, for the Court and for the legal professionals. As Jeremy Bentham, a great English philosopher who continuously advocated for simplified legal system, says –

“A law that is not clear is no law at all.”

Madam Speaker, in fact, any person who cannot easily understand their rights to appeal or when the process to seek redress is unnecessarily complex or inconsistent, it is the integrity of our entire justice system that is called into question. As such complexity and inconsistent outcomes cause delays and uncertainty not only for the appellants but also for the victims and the law professionals, it is unacceptable that in matters of such gravity where the liberty and rights of individuals are at stake and that our justice system would tolerate ambiguity in the process.

Madam Speaker, the Bill ensures that once a final decision has been delivered by the Supreme Court, District Court, Intermediate Court or Children's Court, the party will have a clearly defined legally consistent pathway for appeal or review which will ensure confidence and fairness against arbitrary outcomes. The Bill further reinforces the Constitutional rights of individuals of section 10 of our Constitution which guarantees a fair trial. The Bill supports the independence of the Judiciary by offering a clear and predictable framework for criminal appeal cases and further protects the most vulnerable ones.

Madam Speaker, the Bill also reflects our international obligations under human rights instruments to which Mauritius is a party including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which affirms the right of every person convicted of a crime to have their conviction and sentence reviewed by a higher tribunal. Hence, clause 42 of the Bill ensures that the proposed Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Act 2025 will continue to provide access to a convicted

person or his representative to make application to the Human Rights Division for enquiry to be conducted in cases where there is sufficient fresh and compelling evidence that will satisfy the requirement to carry out investigation.

Madam Speaker, the Judiciary as we know, is the cornerstone of our democratic society. By simplifying the criminal appeal and review cases, we are reducing unnecessary delays; we are alleviating the burdens of our courts. We are ensuring that judicial time and resources are focussed on the substance of justice.

Today, this House is being asked not only to pass another legislation but rather to reshape the very system of justice for our country. We are being asked to bring clarity in an area of law that is complex and confusing for our system and for our people. We are being asked to ensure that the pathway to justice is a clear road that is accessible to all regardless of status, regardless of age and regardless of means.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, I would like to thank the hon. Attorney General and the State Law Office team for coming forward with this progressive piece of legislation that will reshape the criminal appeal and review cases, thus increasing public confidence in our institution.

I therefore, urge all the party members to come together to give full support for this Bill as custodians of justice and delivery a framework that will serve the law and the people it is designed to protect. We are sending a strong message to the people of Mauritius that we believe in a justice system that is transparent, fair and equal for all. Thus, upholding a fundamental principle of the law, as one says –

“Justice must not only be done but it must be seen to be done for everyone”,
and the Bill aims to achieve that.

Madam Speaker, with these words, I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, I think we have time for you, hon. Lobine!
(4.39 p.m.)

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, first of all I am just flabbergasted by this despicable performance by the hon. Member from the Opposition side. Completely out of subject, he could not understand what the particular clauses of this Bill is all about and the more so, he is just cut off from the reality, from the debates. Debates with regard to criminal appeal and criminal review date way back in 2012. He is talking about the Law Reform Commission, way back when the then Guy Ollivry, Queen's Counsel, was the Chairman of the Law Reform Commission. They have already worked on it because they got it from a Green Paper that was presented by the then Labour Government when Lord Mackay of Clashfern made a comprehensive report as to how we have to move on to reform the Judiciary.

So, he is completely cut off from debates, from reality and it is not with the Certificate of Urgency that debates have started on this particular Bill with regard to review and also with regard to access to justice.

Mr Lobine: And what surprises me, Madam Speaker, is that lack of decorum, lack of elegance from the Member but what can we expect from somebody who came through the backdoor and entered the previous Government? Madam Speaker, he became Speaker through the backdoor.

For the past ten years, the previous Government got all these reports already worked in their drawers. They could not do a single reform with regard to judiciary or the judicial system and since January 2025, it is this Government which is bringing reforms, under the abled capacity of the Attorney General who is rising above politics with regard to all these amendments. These amendments have nothing to do with petty politics. This is access to justice. He could not understand and due lack of decorum, he is not even here to listen to the debates. This is a lack of courtesy; lack of manners and I am very sad that this hon. Member is a lawyer. Either he understands the Bill or he pretends not to understand what the Bill is all about, but if he does not understand that, then there is a problem with regard to his capacity as a lawyer, as a barrister because we have to rise above party politics with regard to this particular Bill, Madam Speaker. And I am also...

Madam Speaker: Speak on the Bill now!

Mr Lobine: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, after the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill that was enacted, which is now an Act, this is another piece of legislation that is another milestone to render justice more accessible to our people. And the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill is a timely and essential piece of legislation aimed at reforming and unifying appellant procedures in criminal matters. The hon. Attorney General rightly put it, this Bill replaces a fragmented and inconsistent legal framework with a single coherent system designed to ensure fairness, legal certainty and access to justice. This is a clear signal as to the commitment of this Government to come with institutional reforms, be it, through the judiciary responsiveness to longstanding challenges and delivery of justice as a public good.

The way appeals are being done under this current system, Madam Speaker, the appeal procedures are dispersed across outdated and inconsistent enactments. The Attorney General pointed out the Criminal Appeal Act, the Criminal Appeal Rules 1954 and the Court Act, the District and Intermediate Courts Criminal Jurisdiction Act, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Children's Court Act 2020. This scattering of rules has created uncertainty, procedural inefficiency and at times impeded on the administration of justice. This Bill brings a sort of consolidation of what we, law practitioners and the public at large, desire.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the work of law practitioners, it is indeed something that will render justice and also deliver justice and give advice to clients more efficiently because first and foremost at clause 42(3), this Bill introduces a statutory deadline by amending section 132A of the Criminal Procedure Act. Madam Speaker, the Court now must impose sentence within 14 days of conviction. This fills a longstanding gap in our criminal process. Previously, there was no statutory framework for sentencing past convictions leading to prolonged uncertainty and delay in initiating appeals.

Madam Speaker, for the first time, this Bill introduces a uniform appellant process with standardised timelines for filing notices, skeleton arguments and replies. The Bill includes deadlines that will reduce abuse of adjournments and promote discipline among both parties in the Courts. And timely access to records, Madam Speaker, with the clear timelines being provided, now it is also upon the Court Registry to furnish, complete appeal records within a fixed time because it is clearly elaborated in this particular legislation that there are timelines to

be respected. So, it will facilitate jobs of the legal professionals but also, the public at large, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, clause 3 of this Bill – the statutory duty to notify right of appeal – this is something – for the first time again – very innovative approach in our law. Every subordinate Court will be required now, Madam Speaker, to notify a convicted person of their right to appeal. This is a transformative procedural safeguard and we are not far from other countries that are embarking on such reforms with regard to criminal procedure. In India, for example, they are trying to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure in the same manner that we are proceeding. In the UK, they are also debating in their 2025 Law Reform with regard to procedures, with regard to criminal appeal.

So, Madam Speaker, another milestone is clause 9 – review of convictions and acquittals. Clause 9 introduces a long-needed mechanism for the review of criminal cases after finality. Until now, Mauritius had no statutory provision, allowing for the reopening of cases where new and compelling evidence emerges. The only recourse was presidential pardon. This Bill introduces a robust, judicially supervised review process. Post-conviction reviews may be initiated by the accused. Post-acquittal reviews may be brought by the DPP if the acquittal is tainted.

Madam Speaker, this aligns our country with Article 4(2) of Protocol 7 of the European Convention on the Human Rights which permits the reopening of criminal proceedings if there is new or newly discovered evidence or if there has been fundamental defect in the proceedings and this is what the Law Reform Commission said in 2012 with regard to miscarriage of justice, following acquittals or convictions.

Another milestone of this Bill, Madam Speaker, a couple of weeks back, we spoke with regard to legal aid. Here, in clause 37, Madam Speaker – legal aid without application. One of the most commendable features is this clause 37, Madam Speaker, empowering the Master and Registrar to refer deserving cases for legal aid to the Chief Justice, even if no application has been made. This provision realises the opinion given by the Law Reform Commission with regard to the paper on legal aid reform that complements the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Bill 2025 which was very recently debated and unfortunately again, hon. Adrien Duval, was not

present when we were debating about it. He pointed out to legal aid. This is already in our law now.

Madam Speaker, we must realise that with all those amendments, we are complying with what the UN Committee Against Torture, in its concluding observation made in April 2025 following the consideration of the 5th periodic report, that is, we are consolidating our criminal justice system. This Bill responds directly to those recommendations by addressing procedural gaps and enhancing appeal and review rights.

And, Madam Speaker, I will not go into the comparative studies that are being conducted throughout the world. New Zealand is doing it through the streamlining of their criminal procedures, the UK through the 2025 Law Reform Commission Review recommending widening of access to criminal review. In Canada, they are doing it following the famous case of *R v Jordan*. So, in that respect, Madam Speaker, Mauritius is not merely following. We are acting in solidarity with other democracies tackling the same systemic issues through principal reform.

And to conclude, Madam Speaker, I would quote Lord Atkin. Lord Atkin said –

“Finality is a good thing but justice is better.”

This is all about justice and I commend this Bill to the House. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. I think now we can take a break of 30 minutes.

At 4.49 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.30 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Junior Minister, are you ready? Yes, please!

(5.31 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr H. Narsinghen): Madame la présidente, je vous remercie de me donner la parole.

I have been, in fact, expecting a lot from the Member of the Opposition. I expected him to come with very valid points. In fact, dialectics should have called upon him to see what are the shortcomings in the Bill. But unfortunately, he chose another path.

We should, in fact, commend the hon. Attorney General for the good work which is being done. Within a very short span of time, he has come with a string of at least five legislations in order to consolidate democracy and human rights.

While commending him, at the same time, I would say that he is forcing me to confine myself within pedagogy. So, it is good for me to explain, not to our seasoned barristers and lawyers in this House, but I am here more to speak to the common men and to explain to them.

Donc, je ferais un petit plan, une petite introduction pour expliquer la base philosophique de cette nouvelle loi. En deuxième point, je parlerai le pourquoi de cette nouvelle loi. En troisième point –

- les failles de la loi actuelle et quelles seront les avancées et les apports de cette nouvelle loi ;
- comment on va voir une consolidation des droits de l'accusé et l'appelant ;
- comment on a intégré les standards internationaux ;
- comment on va respecter les droits humains encore plus;
- finalement, comment apporter un équilibre entre les droits de l'accusé et les droits de la société et ;
- une petite conclusion.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes réunis pour débattre d'un texte fondamental pour la consolidation de notre État de droit. L'État de droit, il faut bien comprendre, Madame la présidente, d'abord, c'est la primauté du droit et aussi, il faut qu'il y ait ce qu'on appelle l'égalité devant la loi. Il faut aussi qu'il y ait ce qu'on appelle la sécurité juridique. Il faut une interdiction de l'arbitraire et aussi permettre un accès à la justice et respecter la séparation des pouvoirs. L'*Attorney General* a bien fait mention de ce concept fondamental qui existe dans notre Constitution, à travers l'article 10 de la Constitution, un concept très important, ce qu'on appelle le concept d'un procès équitable. Et quand on parle d'un procès, ce n'est pas seulement la première partie de ce procès. Il faut aussi inclure l'appel.

Donc, cette nouvelle loi, le *Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill*, arrive à temps. Ce texte marque une évolution décisive de notre système judiciaire pénal et s'inscrit dans une volonté ferme de garantir un accès effectif à la justice et aussi de renforcer la transparence et de

moderniser les institutions. Et l'*Attorney General* a bien mentionné qu'il viendrait incessamment avec une nouvelle loi pour qu'il y ait une autre cour d'appel.

C'est le produit, Madame la présidente, d'une réflexion et aussi d'une volonté politique. Mon collègue, avant moi, a bien précisé que le travail a déjà été fait en amont par la *Law Reform Commission*. J'étais moi-même membre de cette *Law Reform Commission*. Il y a eu des discussions. Il y a eu des consultations au préalable. Donc, cette loi n'est pas une nouvelle loi. On a archi discuté de cette loi.

La volonté politique, évidemment, n'existait pas dans le passé. Aujourd'hui, on est en train de voir de visu cette volonté politique. Et l'opposition a le culot de critiquer cette volonté politique pour aller vite en besogne. On a déjà pris huit mois. Donc, il faut aller vite, d'après moi, et il ne faut pas critiquer.

Pourquoi un nouveau projet de loi ? Quelles sont les insuffisances qu'on cherche à corriger et surtout, en quoi améliore-t-elle le sort des accusés, la qualité de la justice et la protection des droits fondamentaux ? Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de répondre point par point. D'abord, pourquoi un nouveau projet de loi ? Toute société démocratique, nous allons voir, doit se remettre en question. La loi actuelle, le *Criminal Appeal Act* date de 1954. Ainsi, les réglementations et autres lois sont aussi désuètes, et je peux les qualifier de fossiles législatifs imprégnés de traces coloniales. Je constate que, malheureusement, nos amis de l'opposition veulent garder ces lois.

Dans toute société, Madame la présidente, il y a des intérêts différents des différentes parties. D'abord, d'un côté, la société doit être protégée, les victimes doivent être protégées, mais aussi les accusés et les condamnés. Ce n'est pas parce qu'ils sont des accusés ou des condamnés qu'on ne doit pas respecter leurs droits.

D'ailleurs, notre Constitution, à travers différentes dispositions telles que les articles 3 et 5 et surtout l'article 10, donne cette protection. Ainsi, Madame la présidente, les lois ordinaires doivent être en conformité avec les lettres et l'esprit de notre Constitution. Tel n'était pas le cas, malheureusement, avec certaines lois qu'on a héritées de l'ère coloniale. Le législateur a l'obligation constitutionnelle, je dirai, légale et aussi morale de trouver le juste équilibre pour concilier les différents intérêts compétitifs dans une société guidée par un sens de justice, d'équité et du respect de la démocratie et des droits humains.

Ce projet de loi est né d'un constat. Notre cadre juridique existant en matière d'appel et de révision pénale était devenu obsolète, aussi fragmenté, comme l'a bien précisé l'*Attorney General* et mes autres collègues, et inadapté aux exigences contemporaines de la justice. Donc, les règles sont éparpillées, comme bien précisé par mes collègues avant, tantôt dans le *Criminal Appeal Act*, dans le *Criminal Appeal Rules*, tantôt dans le *DIC*, c'est-à-dire dans le *District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act*, et dans d'autres lois et d'autres réglementations, et évidemment, cela manquait de clarté, d'uniformité et aussi d'efficacité.

En somme, il s'agissait d'un cadre hérité de l'époque coloniale qui peinait à garantir une justice équitable, rapide et accessible à tous, en particulier aux personnes vulnérables et aussi aux personnes sans ressource juridique. Et ce gouvernement a à cœur l'intérêt de ces personnes.

Le nouveau projet de loi, Madame la présidente, vise, donc, à centraliser d'abord, clarifier et renforcer les procédures relatives à l'appel et à la révision des affaires pénales tout en les adaptant aux meilleures pratiques internationales.

Maintenant, quelles sont les failles sous l'empire de la loi actuelle ? Quelles étaient les failles des lois précédentes ? D'abord, Madame la présidente, il y avait une incohérence juridique : les règles étaient dispersées dans plusieurs textes. Je pense que quand vous faites une comparaison entre la loi actuelle et le projet de loi, vous allez voir que le nouveau projet de loi est beaucoup plus structuré en six parties, comme l'a bien indiqué l'*Attorney General*.

C'est cela le drame. Je crois que le membre de l'opposition n'a pas bien lu la loi actuelle, le *Criminal Appeal Act*. Vous allez voir que parce qu'il y avait un drafting qui datait de 1954, c'était un genre de désordre. Par contre, avec la nouvelle loi, nous allons voir qu'elle est très bien structurée.

Donc, il y avait aussi une autre lacune, c'est-à-dire, il y avait une complexité procédurale et d'ailleurs les démarches pour faire appel ou demander une révision étaient trop techniques, je dirais, inaccessible pour les non-initiés et souvent hors de la portée des justiciables, surtout ceux qui n'avaient pas d'avocat. Et même c'était un peu complexe pour les nouveaux avocats. Comme vous le savez, Madame la présidente, le droit pénal à Maurice s'inspire du droit français mais par contre toutes les procédures sont inspirées du droit anglais. Dans un système de droit mixte, il fallait dépoussiérer, il fallait moderniser cette loi.

Et aussi sous l'empire de l'ancienne loi, il y avait une lenteur judiciaire, pas par la faute des juges mais par la faute des procédures, dont l'absence des délais clairs et de mécanismes efficaces entraînaient des retards importants nuisant à la crédibilité du système judiciaire. Et aussi, Madame la présidente, il y avait des obstacles à la révision post-condamnation. Les conditions pour obtenir une révision étaient si strictes que certaines erreurs judiciaires n'étaient jamais corrigées. Il y avait aussi, je constate, une surcharge des juridictions supérieures ; les recours abusifs où mal formulés encombraient inutilement les juridictions d'appel au détriment des affaires réellement fondées.

Donc le projet de loi introduit une série d'avancées notables et quelles sont ces avancées, Madame la présidente ? Maintenant on voit une sorte de codification, une sorte de structuration claire de ces droits, l'ensemble des droits relatifs à l'appel et à la révision est désormais regroupé dans un seul texte qui est très important pour garantir d'abord la lisibilité, la cohérence et aussi une meilleure compréhension pour les profanes.

Nous voyons aussi avec la nouvelle loi une accessibilité accrue. La simplification des procédures facilite l'accès à la justice – un point très important, je dirais – notamment pour les personnes non représentées où issues des milieux défavorisés et je mets l'emphasis sur les gens issus des milieux défavorisés.

Et aussi, nous voyons une autre innovation qui est cette fois-ci un filtrage de recours non-fondé, avant cela n'existait pas. C'est ce qu'on appelle qu'il faut passer par un *leave to appeal*. Donc, l'introduction d'une procédure de demande d'autorisation permet aux juridictions de se concentrer sur les cas présentant un véritable enjeu juridique.

On a aussi introduit un point très innovateur, Madame la présidente, plus de souplesse pour les preuves nouvelles. Le texte facilite l'introduction d'éléments de preuve découvert après le procès afin de prévenir des erreurs judiciaires. On voit aussi une dématérialisation des procédures qui ouvre la voie, Madame la présidente, à une gestion, dans un contexte moderne, numérique des recours, accélérant leur traitement et réduisant leur lourdeur administrative. Donc, avec la nouvelle loi, on verra des délais beaucoup plus encadrés, le projet fixe des délais clairs pour l'introduction et le traitement des recours, assurant une justice beaucoup plus rapide.

Nous voyons aussi, Madame la présidente, une consolidation des droits de l'accusé et l'appelé. Donc, comment ce projet de loi renforce-t-il les droits de l'accusé ? Ce texte consacre,

vous allez voir, pleinement des droits procéduraux fondamentaux. D'abord, le droit d'être entendu : toute personne condamnée a le droit de faire valoir ses arguments en appel ou en révision, avec l'assistance d'un avocat si elle le souhaite ; accès aussi à l'aide juridictionnelle et là, c'est un point très important, on a pu lier ce point fondamental avec l'autre projet de loi qu'on avait passé.

Donc le projet s'articule avec la réforme de l'Aide légale pour garantir que personne ne soit privée de recours pour des raisons financières et aussi on verra une réévaluation de la peine. Il permet de revoir des sanctions disproportionnées ou prononcées dans des conditions contestables. Protection contre l'injustice, le texte, Madame la présidente, autorise des juridictions à ouvrir les affaires en cas de doute sérieux sur la culpabilité même après l'épuisement de recours ordinaires et cela est un point qui a été touché par mon collègue. On a suivi de près, dans une société démocratique moderne où il le faut absolument, les standards internationaux. Et là, nous allons voir que le projet de loi est aligné sur les engagements internationaux, l'impact internationaux relatifs aux droits civils et politiques et consacre le droit à un procès équitable et à un recours effectif. Les principes de Bangalore, par exemple, Madame la présidente, sur la déontologie judiciaire qui prône l'indépendance, la compétence et l'intégrité du judiciaire, et aussi les bonnes pratiques du Commonwealth, ainsi que les recommandations du comité des droits de l'homme des Nations unies qui insistent sur l'importance des mécanismes efficaces de révision post-condamnation.

Donc, en ce sens, Madame la présidente, le projet de loi replace notre législation pénale dont le giron des états modernes et démocratiques respectueux des droits fondamentaux. Donc, c'est pour cela que je suis surpris comment mon ami de l'opposition au lieu de féliciter l'Attorney General, est en train de critiquer.

Donc, nous voyons aussi une consolidation des droits humains, et comme vous le voyez bien, ce nouveau gouvernement a hâte de consolider les droits humains, donc nous voyons un respect de l'état de droit et des droits humains.

Ce projet de loi, encore une fois, Madame la présidente, est une affirmation du respect de l'État de droit. Il garantit la transparence dans le fonctionnement de la justice pénale. On voit aussi une responsabilité accrue des juridictions, à rectifier les erreurs. L'égalité devant la loi pour que nul ne soit désavantagé dans l'exercice de ses droits. Il répond aussi, Madame la présidente,

à des exigences morales fondamentales, un système juste, mais pas celui qui ne se trompe jamais mais celui qui reconnaît les fautes et les corrige. Donc, quel est impact sur l'ensemble du système pénal ? Nous allons voir avec cette nouvelle loi, une modernisation du système judiciaire. Le projet rationalise les flux des dossiers, réduit le retard et renforce l'autorité des décisions de la judiciaire.

Nous allons voir aussi, avec ce nouveau projet de loi, Madame la présidente, une crédibilité renforcée. En permettant une justice plus accessible, rapide et équitable, il renforce la confiance du publique dans l'institution judiciaire. Et ça c'est absolument important pour une démocratie. Nous voyons aussi une justice beaucoup plus substantielle. Il ne s'agit pas uniquement de suivre les procédures, procédures oui, mais il y a des limites à des procédures, mais de rendre des décisions justes dans l'esprit du droit.

Et finalement, nous voyons, Madame la présidente, – cela est important dans une société et un état de droit – un équilibre entre les droits de l'accusé et les droits de la société. D'une part, il faut protéger la société en général, les victimes aussi on n'a pas oublié, mais il faut respecter les droits d'un accusé et pour cela il y a une garantie constitutionnelle.

Donc ce texte réussi, Madame la présidente, à trouver un équilibre, je dois concéder, délicat mais nécessaire pour une société démocratique. Il protège les droits fondamentaux de la personne condamnée sans remettre en cause inutilement les décisions de justice – là aussi, c'est un point très important à retenir. Il évite des recours dilatoires ou abusifs parfois, qui saperaient la stabilité du système. Il préserve les intérêts des victimes, de la société en assurant que justice soit rendue de manière efficace et sans impunité. Finalement, c'est un modèle d'équilibre, d'une part, rigueur judiciaire, humanisme et respect des droits de l'homme.

En conclusion, Madame la présidente, le Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill n'est pas une simple réforme technique comme bien précisé par l'Attorney General. Il s'agit en effet d'un acte de foi dans la justice, un acte de foi de notre Premier ministre et du vice-Premier ministre dans la justice et de tous les membres de cette Assemblée, et aussi un signal clair que notre république ne va pas tolérer l'injustice même au nom de la procédure. Il modernise notre appareil judiciaire, renforce les droits fondamentaux et consolide la paix sociale pour une justice beaucoup plus crédible, accessible et surtout équitable. En adoptant ce texte, Madame la

présidente, nous affirmons d'une façon claire et nette que la justice n'est pas un privilège, je mets l'emphasis sur ce point, mais un droit et aucune erreur judiciaire ne doit rester irréversible.

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Merci beaucoup. Je suis jalouse de ne pas pouvoir prendre la parole. Allez-y *hon. Minister* !

(5.50 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you. Madam Speaker, in fact when one reads the Explanatory Memorandum of this piece of legislation, there are certain words that are used that in fact, give the clue as to what exactly this legislation is all about.

Now, when the word 'clarify' is used and immediately after that 'simplify', and then the third word used is 'standardise', it is clear that this Bill is doing nothing else than simply do exactly what those three words say.

Now, it takes some qualities in certain people to be able to complicate what is simple and it's exactly what I have witnessed today. Now, there are various reasons why such things are done in order to complicate what is simple. It's either one wants to be of bad faith and therefore only opens one's mouth for the sake of uttering certain words and making certain sounds or it is to try to be constructive.

Now, what I have heard the Opposition and allow me to halt a disjuncture and say, once again, the ladies and gentlemen who are watching us outside this Assembly, have the opportunity today to see the Opposition benches, again, ...

Ms Anquetil: Empty!

Mr Mohamed: ... again, again, ...

Ms Anquetil: Empty, as usual.

Mr Mohamed: I said again three times because all three members who usually are seated there – who have, I am sure, a lot of interesting things to contribute to the debate...

The Prime Minister: Please, no. They don't!

Mr Mohamed: I am trying to be nice, hon. Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Too nice!

Mr Mohamed: Too nice! I am just trying to be very diplomatic. It is not that I agree with whatever they say and I will show why I don't agree. I am not going to be very long.

They are not here again and what exactly would be the explanation for their absence? It's a pity. It's a pity because they are here in order to be able to encourage this culture of debate. We do not have the monopoly of knowledge. We are not always right, we may debate and come to the best solution for the people of Mauritius. That's the whole idea of this democracy. And the fact that they are not here again, and again and again, shows exactly how they hold this population in high esteem and what type of esteem they hold the population in.

So, let me go back to the Constitution. My late father, Senior Counsel, Mohamed, always said to me, whenever I started practicing law, even after 20 years or 30 years of practice, he would say that –

“Go to the law, read the Constitution.”

And, I read Section 10 (5) of the Constitution – I say this because the hon. Member, Mr A. Duval, stated that this piece of legislation somehow, someplace is putting, is challenging the principle of ‘*autrefois acquit and autrefois convict*’. This principle of ‘*autrefois acquit and autrefois convict*’ is a legal principle that is rooted in the principle of *res judicata*.

So, it is as simple as that. You know, this is the very *A B C de la loi*. We learn this at law school when we start.

Madam Speaker: Conflict *res judicata*.

Mr Mohamed: Well, no one should be retried for an offense for which he has already been tried and there has been a judgment pronounced. If he has been acquitted, he cannot be retried again for the same offense.

Madam Speaker: Good!

Mr Mohamed: However, there are exceptions in the law and that is why I think it is important to go to the Constitution. The Constitution says –

“No person who shows that he has been tried by a competent court for a criminal offence and either convicted or acquitted shall again be tried for that offence or for any other

criminal offence of which he could have been convicted at the trial of that offence, except upon the order of a superior court in the course of appeal or review proceedings relating to the conviction or acquittal.”

So, whatever, the hon. Attorney General is coming to propose today in this piece of legislation, is in line with what is already provided for under section 10 (5) of the Constitution. And I go further, it is in line with what is already in the law under the Criminal Appeal Act of 1955 as amended.

When I look at the original legislation and I see here section 11 of the Law as it is – Supplementary powers of Court and this is the section of the law that the hon. Member referred to–

“(b) order any witnesses who would have been compellable witnesses at the trial to attend...”

That particular subsection or subsection (c) –

“(c) receive the evidence, if tendered, of any witness (including the appellant) who is a competent but not compellable witness.”

All those issues under section 11 that the hon. Member takes objection to – it’s amazing – he takes objection to what is in the Bill now when it is already provided for under section 11 here.

The hon. Attorney General and his officers have come and clarified everything; nothing more. He said that there is importance for him to have been consulted. This government understands the meaning of consultation. This government and the proof – let’s look at the Finance Bill of today. It’s been circulated today. It is only going to be taken at Second Reading on Friday and only the hon. Prime Minister will address the National Assembly.

On next Tuesday – we are giving ample time for everyone to be able to ascertain, assess, study, be ready for the debate because this government understands, appreciates and values the importance of consultation, the importance of circulating a Bill that changes the things fundamentally but here, the question that I put and this is what he should have put – is there any fundamental change of such difference, of such importance that would warrant the need for consultation?

And here, I don't see any fundamental change in principles. No change whatsoever in actual time, apart from clarifying the issues. Issues that cropped up in the case before the Supreme Court, the Maigrot case and other cases with regard to delay, when to appeal, at conviction, at the time of sentence, the delays – everything is clarified. So, I fail to really understand what was the point that the hon. Member was trying make.

And secondly, I think he spoke about suspended sentence. He did speak about suspended sentence. I mean, in order for there to be a suspended sentence, there needs to be a conviction, a sentence. And, if I understand him correctly and I am sure I understood what he meant, he meant that there could be a suspended sentence without a sentence.

Madam Speaker: Oh, wow!

Mr Mohamed: As I said, some people have the ability to complicate things that are very simple. I am at great difficulty in understanding how can one have a suspended sentence without a sentence.

Now, I understand why he has allied himself with the MSM. I mean they really make a mess of things. Fair enough!

So, now, Madam Speaker, let me take this Opportunity to and I don't say it simply for the sake of saying, I really mean it. I would like to thank the hon. Attorney General for having understood that there was the need to simplify and clarify. And, what is the purpose of doing all this?

The purpose of doing all of this is also to satisfy the principles of democracy, to create ease of access, clarity, resource optimisation, efficiency. All this is in the spirit of giving sense to what democracy is. Removing it from black on white written in a book and making it – we breathe democracy.

And the proof of the pudding, as the hon. Prime Minister always says, is in the eating. You see, they have always tried to criticise this government about many things and it's their right but let me say it and I think it is important for the people to understand. Each and every piece of legislation that has been brought to this House has been the underpinning, has been to consolidate democracy and even if they are to go outside and criticise, which is their right, they will have no one trying to arrest them for having the right to express their views.

Even if they are to go outside and criticise, which is their right, they will have no one trying to arrest them for having the right to express their views. On the contrary, they are entitled to have their views even if it makes no sense. They are entitled to it.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Attorney-General, your summing-up speech!

(6.00 p.m.)

Mr Glover: Je regarde et je vois des sièges vides. Je ne vois pas mon confrère, mon collègue de l'Assemblée, le *Whip* de l'opposition, entendre ce que j'ai à dire sur ce qu'il avait à dire plus tôt. Je ferais donc son procès *in absentia*.

Madam Speaker, the initial point made by the Whip of the Opposition is quite as extraordinary as the rest of his intervention. He has qualified this Bill as being one which smacks of legislative ambush. Not only is that not the case, as will become apparent in the summing-up, to add to what my colleague, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands has said, the Whip of the Opposition has failed to mention that the Finance Bill and associated legislations have been circulated this Tuesday morning prior to the First Reading next Friday.

Given the time we shall start on Friday, we shall hear only the mover of the Bill at Second Reading stage. The Opposition will have ample time, another three more days, to be ready to reply to the hon. Prime Minister's address. And this, they will do next Tuesday.

So, the surprising accusation of the Whip of the Opposition is to use an oft-quoted expression by our own courts, an accusation which is devoid of any merit. The second matter he had to say as an introduction to his speech was that we had not held formal consultations with the Bar Association, the law society and the Law Reform Commission. Well, if we had too, we would have. But since this Bill had more importantly resonance with the Judiciary, we held extensive consultations at every stage with the Judiciary, since it is the Judiciary that will be applying this law day in and day out.

Whilst it is important to note that there is no constitutional duty to consult external bodies before legislating – and rightly so – given the separation of powers, this Government has always welcomed the views of legal practitioners, because they are the ones who work within the system

every day and know where it needs improving. I was one of them only a few months ago. Of course, the Office of the Attorney General, which I have just joined, which starts with drafting and piloting such legislations, is itself deeply familiar with the workings of our courts and the practical challenges they face.

Madam Speaker, having had to sit and hear the quite extraordinary statements of the Whip of the Opposition, I am still reeling in disbelief at what he has said. Clearly – and I am being very polite –, he has no idea of what this Bill is all about. You see, Madam Speaker, in my younger days, I remember clearly my father instilling in me a basic requirement to understand. You must read anything you need to, from the first page to the last, including the preface, the acknowledgments and the epilogue. This kept me in good stead in my years I studied at Oxford and the Middle Temple and throughout my four decades of practice at the Bar. When you do not read and think, you do not understand!

The Whip of the Opposition has just understood what is clearly stated in the Explanatory Memorandum. The purpose, as my friend, hon. Mohamed, just stated, is to clarify, simplify and standardise existing procedures for all appeals in criminal matters and modify certain procedures in order to be fairer to the accused parties.

The Whip of the Opposition has attacked me when he stated that I have, by this Bill, dented a fundamental right – the right of appeal. How? He never said! His next point, in fact, threw light on his lack of comprehension of this law.

He advocated, to the astonishment of all the lawyers in the House, that there cannot be an appeal against suspended sentences and community service orders. What nonsense! He should be ashamed to make such clearly erroneous statements in this House.

A suspended sentence or a community service order cannot be ordered unless there has been a custodial sentence first. I hope he understands what custodial means! It means – and let me spell it out for him – imprisonment. His reference to Section 22 is another grave misconception. Again, I am being very polite. What is provided in that section already exists in the law. Quite surprisingly, the learned Whip of the Opposition just discovered that it existed!

The hon. Minister of Housing and Lands has, of course, taken us through the principal of *autrefois* acquit and *autrefois* convict. He has not answered the question of the Chair regarding

res judicata. Res judicata means already decided, already adjudicated upon. Therefore, you cannot come back.

Madam Speaker: I just wanted everybody to understand.

Mr Glover: In fine, Madam Speaker, this debate has brought to the fore one important fact, that this law has become absolutely necessary not only to bring certainty, clarity and simplification to the law, but it has become absolutely necessary to ensure that some law practitioners, who, unfortunately, do not know their basic law, will now be able to refer to only one statute in order to advise their clients as to the appeal process in criminal matters.

I am done, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Attorney-General, you have to commend the Bill again.

Mr Glover: I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill (No. XVII of 2025) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with the Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Criminal Appeal and Criminal Review Bill (No. XVII of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 25 July 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Adjournment matters!

It is his right to do that.

MATTER RAISED

(6.14 p.m.)

RODRIGUES HEALTH SERVICES – DEFECTIVE EQUIPMENT – CRITICAL SITUATION

Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Madam Speaker, the issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, to whom I gave notice, and as a follow-up to his comprehensive answer to my PQ B/749 this morning, I have been further informed of the sufferings and difficulties of patients transferred from Rodrigues to Mauritius.

Also, there are very seriously and critically defective medical equipment in Rodrigues, namely the phaco machine for cataract surgery, scanner, sterilizer, x-ray, cystoscope. There are around 300 patients awaiting physiotherapy leading to a situation of *état d'urgence dans le service de la santé à Rodrigues. C'est une question de vie ou de mort.*

May I humbly request, the hon. Minister, pending his multidisciplinary team's setup, to collaborate with Rodrigues and his high-level delegation visit to Rodrigues to promptly look into possible remedial actions thereof? Thank you.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned that the entire responsibility lies in the Regional Assembly of Rodrigues but as far as my Ministry is concerned, I am going to convey your request to the officers of my Ministry and I will see to it that the needful be done.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. So, now, I think, we can be released.

At 6.14 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 25 July 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

EXPORT INCENTIVE SCHEMES (PHASING OUT)– ECONOMIC SAFEGUARDS

(No. B/720) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third 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 Export Incentive Schemes which Government has decided to gradually phase out over a two-year period, as announced in the Budget Speech 2025-2026, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the measures taken, if any, to mitigate the impact thereof on the local economic operators.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that Export Incentive Schemes introduced by the previous government, namely the Trade Promotion and Marketing Scheme, the Freight Rebate Scheme, the Export Credit Guarantee Insurance Scheme, and the SME Refund Scheme for Participation in International Fairs were temporary measures and were supposed to end in June 2025. This is clearly mentioned in the guidelines issued in July 2024 by the Economic Development Board for these schemes. The schemes may be terminated or amended at any time.

It is important to note that subsidies under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules must be time-bound and cannot be granted on a permanent basis. To align with WTO obligations and as part of our broader economic restructuring objectives aimed at enhancing competitiveness, reducing inefficiencies, and ensuring fiscal discipline, the four main Export Incentive Schemes will be gradually phased out over the next two years.

Furthermore, I am informed by the EDB that large companies have benefited from these schemes substantially more than the SMEs. It has also been observed that the same companies benefit from these schemes year after year.

I wish to highlight that the Sea Freight Rebate Scheme for the transport of goods from Mauritius to Rodrigues is being maintained.

As part of a broader shift toward long-term competitiveness and innovation-led export growth, Government is introducing a new set of measures to support local operators, namely –

- (i) A review by the EDB of the existing export promotion model to fully capitalise on the new market opportunities arising from the implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement with India,

the Free Trade Agreement with China, and the African Continental Free Trade Area;

- (ii) A new '*En Route vers l'International*' Scheme to be launched in the form of a matching grant to help companies structure their export strategy;
- (iii) Strengthening the supply-side capabilities of exporting enterprises by promoting greater adoption of digital technologies, encouraging sustainable manufacturing practices, and supporting the use of energy-efficient production methods;
- (iv) Tax deduction on investments in AI technologies up to an amount of Rs150,000 for Start-Ups and SMEs, and
- (v) 50% waiver on the increase in electricity prices for industrial operators moving towards 100% renewable energy.

It is important to highlight that export-oriented enterprises continue to face challenges due to a shortage of skilled local labour, which affects their capacity to meet export delivery deadlines. To address this, we are accelerating the recruitment of foreign labour and expertise through a streamlined, rule-based work permit system, which will be administered by the Economic Development Board.

“SYNTHETIC” DRUGS SEIZURE –RAIDED LOCAL LABORATORIES – TRACK DOWN MEASURES

(No. B/721) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to “synthetic” drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) quantity thereof seized at the airports and seaports over the past five years;
- (b) local mini laboratories thereof identified and raided, and
- (c) measures taken to track down consumers to suppliers thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**PITON POLICE DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS – POLICE VEHICLES –
OPERATIONALITY & ROADWORTHINESS**

(No. B/723) **Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart)** 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 Piton Police Divisional Headquarters, he will, for the benefit of the House obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of police vehicles at the disposal thereof, indicating the roadworthiness thereof in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Piton Police Divisional Headquarters to which the hon. Member is referring is known as the Northern Divisional Headquarters, located at La Paix, Piton.

The Northern Divisional Headquarters serves as the regional arm of the Mauritius Police Force, with a jurisdiction spanning approximately 326 square kilometres, encompassing parts of the Districts of Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart, and with an estimated population of 250,000.

The Division comprises 13 Police Stations, 1 Police Post and 14 specialized units. It also hosts a Detention Centre located at Royal Road, La Paix, Piton.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a total of 73 vehicles have been allocated to the Northern Division for use by its Stations and Units. These include cars, vans, motorcycles, prisoner van/trucks, micro bus and mini buses. Out of these, 62 are currently roadworthy, while 11 vehicles are temporarily non-operational due to repairs, accidents, or mechanical breakdown. The details of each vehicle and their current status are being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**SODNAC WELLNESS PARK – OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT – PROPOSED
REPLACEMENT**

(No. B/725) **Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** 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 Sodnac Wellness Park, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Employees Welfare Fund, information as to whether consideration will be given for the replacement of the outdoor equipment found thereat and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**US DOLLAR LIQUIDITY – DEMAND & SUPPLY GAP – SHORTFALL
MEASURES**

(No. B/726) Mr A. Duval (Fourth 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 US Dollar liquidity on the domestic market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the average daily volumes of demand and supply thereof over the period 01 June 2025 to date, indicating the measures taken to address any shortfall thereof.

(Withdrawn)

**CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – MAURITIUS-UK AGREEMENT –
CHAGOSSIANS CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS**

(No. B/727) 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 agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom and of the Republic of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, he will state the recent development in relation thereto in the UK Parliament and the impact thereof on the citizenship rights of the Chagossians, if any.

(Withdrawn)

KITE SURFING – LICENSING & SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

(No. B/728) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to kite surfing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the relevant authorities, information as to whether a person is required to hold a valid license in order to practice same on his/her own in our lagoons, further indicating if the presence of a coach or monitor is required onsite for those practicing same.

(Withdrawn)

**POLICE OFFICERS – FOOT & BICYCLE PATROLS –EQUIPMENT
UPGRADE**

(No. B/729) Mr A. Duval (Fourth 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 Police Officers assigned to foot and bicycle patrols, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the standard equipment currently issued thereto, indicating whether any upgrade thereof is currently being envisaged in line with international norms and, if so, further indicate the –

- (a) equipment being proposed;
- (b) quantity being contemplated, and
- (c) expected timeline for implementation.

(Withdrawn)

LE MORNE PUBLIC BEACH – RENOVATION WORKS – STATUS

(No. B/766) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to Le Morne Public Beach, especially, at the stretch between the Riu and St Regis hotels, he will state if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) renovation of the existing toilets and provision of electricity and water thereat, and
- (b) installation of –
 - (i) showers;
 - (ii) shops for beach hawkers selling food and drinks, and
 - (iii) a mess room for the toilet cleaners.

(Withdrawn)

2030 RENEWAL ENERGY ROAD MAP – OFFSHORE WINDFARM PROJECT – REPORT DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/767) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the implementation of the 2030 Renewal Energy Road Map published in 2022, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) where matters stand regarding the setting up of a planned 50 MW Offshore Wind Farm, as announced by the previous Government, and

- (b) the number of projects and expression of interests obtained as at to date regarding ocean renewables like offshore wind farms and wave and tidal power plants, giving details of reports, feasibility studies and recommendations available in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)