



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 29 JULY 2025

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(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands
Hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister
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Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
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Hon. Muhammad Reza Cassam Uteem	Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations
Hon. Mahomed Osman Cassam Mahomed	Minister of Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection
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Hon. Mahendra Gondeea, OSK	Minister of Arts and Culture

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 31 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 29 July 2025

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 11.30a.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 Civil Appeal Bill (No. XXI of 2025).
(In Original)

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

The Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Costs of Transport of Canes for Small Planters) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 60 of 2025)

Madam Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTION

CASCAVELLE – BUS ACCIDENT (18 JULY 25) – PERLE DE LA SAVANNE BUS OPERATIONS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Perle de la Savanne bus operator, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to the –

- (a) causes of the accident of a bus thereof on Friday 18 July 2025 at Cascavelle, indicating if the bus has been examined and the outcome thereof;
- (b) number of buses thereof involved in accidents on bus routes 5,120 and 243, since June 2014 to date, and
- (c) number of complaints received from passengers against the bus operator since June 2014 to date, indicating the actions, if any, taken in relation thereto.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, this is the third PNQ addressed to me since I took office, hence explaining the importance of the Land Transport Sector which is responsible to commute the whole population and some 450,000 passengers daily by bus.

Hence, numerous initiatives are being envisaged at the level of my Ministry to enhance the level of service of buses, which I will highlight during the course of my reply.

At the very outset, I wish to draw the attention of the House and the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the accident which occurred on 18 July 2025 around noon involves bus number 1620 MR 13 of make UD Trucks, Model SP 210, belonging to Perle Logistics Ltd., and not Perle de La Savanne, as mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition in his substantive question.

An hon. Member: *Rat target!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: From the Registration Mark, it can be inferred that the bus is just over 12 years old which is within the operating age of public buses, namely 21 years. The hon. Leader of the Opposition will surely recall that this age limit was increased from 20 to 21 years in 2021 when the hon. Leader of the Opposition, himself, was a Cabinet Minister.

Madam Speaker, without any further ado, let me straightaway reply to part (a) of the question.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Osman Mahomed: The accidented vehicle was examined at Autocheck Vehicle Examination Station for roadworthiness on Wednesday 16 July 2025, that is, only two days prior to the accident, by the Vehicle Tester, Mr Dhunnoo, of the station. So, we cannot possibly have a more recent fitness report than this one. Two days!

According to the report from the Centre Manager of the Vehicle Examination Centre, no technical defect was found during the examination of the said bus. The vehicle passed the brake roller test according to the report submitted by the Vehicle Examination Station.

With the Axle play detector apparatus, used for the examination of the suspensions visually, no defect was found according to the Centre Manager Report.

Visual examination was also done for the undercarriage of the vehicle and the report does flag that some defects were observed with regard to the exterior appearance and smoke emission level, which I am informed by the expert, do not impact adversely on the roadworthiness of the vehicle.

Certificate of Roadworthiness was issued on 17 July 2025 and same is valid up to 16 July 2026. The bus was authorised to run on Routes 243 (Quatre Bornes to Chamarel). The MVL is valid up to February 2026.

The bus owner, like I said earlier, is Perle Logistics Ltd. since 25 May 2021. According to the NLTA, Perle Logistics Ltd. has a fleet of three buses. One bus operates along Route 5, which is Baie du Cap to Quatre Bornes; one along Route 120, which is Baie du Cap to Port Louis; and one along Route 243, which is Chamarel to Quatre Bornes.

As regards Perle de La Savanne, it has a fleet of four buses, out of which, three buses ply along Route 5 and one bus operates along Route 243. It is to be highlighted that the Certificate of Roadworthiness was not issued on the same day of the examination as the licensee failed to

produce the Public Service Vehicle Licence issued by the NLTA, commonly known as the bus licence, which is a mandatory requirement.

The bus licence was produced on the following day. I am saying this because if the hon. Leader of the Opposition asks for the report, he would see there is a day difference. The bus licence was officially issued *en bonne et due forme* on the next day, hence explaining the effective date of the roadworthiness certificate which was delayed by one day.

As regards the causes of the accident, I am informed by the Police that the bus was motoring from the direction of Chamarel and proceeding towards Bambous, reaching at Clarence around 200m before the main entrance of Casela Nature Park. Then, the driver lost control of the bus.

The result of which the bus knocked against a tree on the left side of the road and overturned on its nearside. Alco-test was performed on the driver by the ERS personnel and same yielded negative results.

Sample of blood test was taken for analysis. Everybody knows, now it is public, 29 passengers were injured, including the driver – and quite seriously so. The said bus has been removed and is being kept at La Gaulette Police Station for further investigation.

Coming to part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Police that four accidents occurred along bus routes number 5, 120 and 243 since June 2014. Same includes three accidents on Route 120 and one on Route 243.

In so far as part (c) of the question is concerned, the NLTA informed that some 30 complaints have been received from passengers against operation of buses along Route 243 which is basically served by Perle Logistics Ltd. and Perle de La Savanne.

Madam Speaker, since the hon. Leader of the Opposition has made mention of Perle de La Savanne, let me inform the House that buses of the said operator are currently not being operated since 14 November 2022...

An hon. Member: *Dominer! Fer dominer!*

Ms Anquetil: *Pa renseigne?*

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... as these vehicles had been prohibited for failing to provide satisfactory service and to comply with the conditions of the licence by the regulator which is the NLTA and that was a subject of a Cabinet Decision by the former government. The hon. Minister would be aware, he was in the Cabinet at that time, I am informed. This was the

subject of a long court case for which judgement was delivered for the reinstatement of the buses.

Madam Speaker, the House and the population will recall that I have met with the captains of the bus industry and other stakeholders only five days ago, on last Thursday, to present to them the broad parameters of the Bus Services Industry Bill which is surely expected to revamp the public land transport landscape for the benefit of the travelling public and in the quest for the modernisation of the bus transport system. A lot of emphasis will be placed on Technology which will at long last eliminate subjectiveness in control and monitoring by the regulator.

For the first time ever, in this Budget exercise, a financial provision, and quite a hefty one I must say, Rs78 million has been earmarked for the implementation of the Fleet Management System which through Global Positioning System (GPS) – I have explained many times in Parliament – and a centralised control system based at the NLTA will allow the real time monitoring for all the 2000 buses plying on our roads daily.

The Legislation will empower us to also install cameras in the buses. We are also envisaging, Madam Speaker, to fit each and every bus, if we have the funds, of course, with a dashcam which will provide invaluable information on driver behavior and circumstances of accidents; that is normally placed on where the driver sits, on the dashboard.

On a related note, we are also contemplating the implementation of the Passenger Information Network that seeks to give the travelling public real time information on the movement of buses including expected time of arrival. This will significantly improve commuters' travelling experience and reduce considerably stress related to bus journeys.

The Bus Services Industry Bill will bring, in its margin, a Code of Conduct for bus drivers, conductors, stand regulators as well as passengers and also the owners.

The House and the population will also recall that only 4 days ago, the Cabinet of Ministers has given to my Ministry the greenlight to give drafting instructions to the Attorney General's Office for the preparation of an improved version of the Penalty Point System which, this time around, will be more stringent as it contains more than 30 offences as compared to 21 previously, because over the last 10 years the number of accidents have increased significantly.

We are currently waiting for the final report from the Police as to the real cause of the accident which is the subject of the question but, Madam Speaker, as a concluding note, I wish to give the assurance to the House and the population that the safety and security of passengers

and road users are of utmost importance for this Government and in particular, to the Prime Minister because many times he talks about road safety to me. There will be no cover up in this particular accident or any other accident for that matter. Whomsoever is responsible for any accident will have to bear the consequences of his action as per the law. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. Your first supplementary question!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I myself have complained against buses operating on those routes as far back as 2018, when I was MNA of that Constituency, that is, Constituency No.14.

Mr Etwareea: Question! Question!

Madam Speaker: Chut! Come with your question! Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: Will the hon. Minister inform the House, even though he has said that a test certificate was delivered for that bus, whether he is aware that a Mechanic who examined the bus had informed the owner of the existence of several failures on that bus which had to be corrected? If he is aware, will he, therefore, at least meet that person to listen to his version?

Madam Speaker: One minute! You mean before he went for the test?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, this confirms what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying, before the test and in between the test, the company must have surely resolved the problem because I have a clean certificate from the station which I can table if he wants to.

Madam Speaker: Yes, please table!

Yes, your next question, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister must be aware of the numerous complaints against buses operating on those 3 routes, that is, 5, 120 and 243, especially with regard to over speeding. Can he inform the House of actions that are being envisaged to reduce over speeding along those 3 routes?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, speeding is not the domain of my Ministry. It is the domain of the police because although the Road Traffic Act is under my Ministry, implementation of measures contained therein rests with the police – it is the onus of the police.

But I can tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition, like I explained just now, we are using technology, if a bus happens to over speed, on the screen of the NLTA with the GPS, we could detect if the bus is over speeding. It does happen sometimes but buses try to overtake their counterparts so as to catch passenger on the next bus stop; it does happen. This is a phenomenon that not only happens on this route but island wide, that is why we are coming with bold measures to address this issue which is a road safety concern.

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

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister, whether he is aware that the licensee for that bus has been called several times by the National Land Transport Authority and has been found to be not a fit and proper person to hold a licence?

Mr Mohamed: *Ti pe swiv Ganoo so lord sa! Instriksion pe done par Ganoo.*

Mr Osman Mahomed: Does your question pertain to Perle Logistic Ltd or Perle de la Savanne Ltd?

Perle Logistic Ltd?

An hon. Member: *Ganoo inn piez twa.*

Mr Osman Mahomed: No? My officers are telling me that no formal complaint has been lodged against the company.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Because your original... Hon. Leader of the Opposition, remember your original question was not...

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to Perle de la Savanne, can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether complaints have been made for non-payment of fees to its respective cooperative, that is, the Quatre Bornes Bus Owner's Cooperative Society?

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: *Li pe al dan enn lot kestion la!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, just reply!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I have explained at length to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the subject of his question relating to that accident does not pertain to Perle de la Savanne Ltd but instead...

The Deputy Prime Minister: *La osi li pa kompran...*

Mr Osman Mahomed: ... Perle Logistic Ltd which is a totally different entity.

So, how does he expect me to have information on Perle de la Savanne?

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Why I expected that hon. Minister?

Madam Speaker: Question!

Mr Lesjongard: Can you confirm whether when you met the captains of the bus industry five days ago, they made representations to you with regard to a sum of Rs350,000 owed by Perle de la Savanne ...

(Interruptions)

and whether ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Shame!

An hon. Member: *San kompran!*

Mr Lesjongard: Whether he is aware that complaints have also been filed at the NLTA against the same company?

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: Irrelevant!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let the hon. Minister reply, please! He is doing very well.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It would appear that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has a fixation on Perle de la Savanne which is totally wrong because this is not the subject of your question but I will reply to you.

(Interruptions)

My officers, all the officers are here. I do not recall anyone standing up and making a complaint formally against Perle de la Savanne during that said meeting otherwise I would have recalled because I answered all the questions myself.

Madam Speaker: One more question!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *To pa honte!*

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister, whether he will consider starting an enquiry on this company and proceed to a full assessment of their vehicles and staff so as not to endanger the lives of innocent passengers?

Madam Speaker: You mean of Perle de la Savanne?

Mr Lesjongard: Both companies.

Madam Speaker: Both companies! Why not?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, as regards Perle Logistics Ltd, there is a police enquiry on the accident which we are awaiting like I have said extensively, during the reply.

As regards *Perle de la Savanne*, he is targeting someone in the House. We all know. There has been a Court ruling on this company and this Court ruling allowed the company to go back on the road. So, what am I going to do...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Dominer!*

Mr Mohamed: *Aler dir!* Go against the Supreme Court! Go!

An hon. Member: *Pu ale Cabinet!*

Mr Mohamed: *Ganoo pann dir twa?*

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister gave assurance to the House that there will be no...

Mr Mohamed: Check refund!

Mr Lesjongard: ...cover up with regard...

(Interruptions)

to any enquiry regarding those two companies...

Madam Speaker: Can you hear?

Mr Lesjongard: Can you confirm again what it just stated?

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: I concluded by saying this...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let the hon. Minister speak, please! Yes, hon. Minister.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, let me tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I did take the undertaking earlier. The subject matter on which the hon. Prime Minister talks to me more often regarding my Ministry is in regard to road safety. So, we are leaving no stones unturned, Madam Speaker, to enhance road safety in Mauritius and the Cabinet Decision of last Friday – only after eight months – approving that we apply, that we give drafting instruction to the Attorney General to come forward with legislation on penalty point system with more than 30 offences. I think that now it is about 34, bears testimony – as compared to 21 before – to our commitment to road safety.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The question was about cover up. Just answer that question.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is in my substantive reply...

Madam Speaker: Yes, I know!

Mr Osman Mahomed: No cover up will be made.

Madam Speaker: Yes, if there is cover up, you will come back with another question.

Mr Lesjongard: That was my question, Madam Speaker. I have got a last question. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how will his Ministry remedy to the lack of buses in the western region of the country, particularly from Baie du Cap?

Mr Mohamed: It is not related!

An hon. Member: *Dir pass, dir pass!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, over the last ten years, this land transport sector has been totally neglected. Totally neglected!

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Now, we are doing our level best, including starting with a holistic survey by the NLTA and in a few days' time, the Prime Minister and myself, we will be inaugurating hundred electric buses which were given to us by the Government of India. This will be very useful in trying to address the problem island-wide. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you!

(Interruptions)

One moment!

(Interruptions)

Members! Members! That's the end of it! I have a problem. I cannot see my brief. Will you please give me a brief? I think there are so many papers today.

Mr Mohamed: He just lost his brief.

Madam Speaker: There are so many papers today. I must have left it or I do not know. Anyway, let us carry on. We have now finished with the PNQ. We will start with PQs addressed to the hon. Prime Minister!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/804 will be replied by the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting.

PQ B/779 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – ADDITIONAL PARKING SLOTS – DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

(No. B/768) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) 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 Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., information as to whether consideration will be given for the provision of –

- (a) additional parking slots, roads and exit gates thereat, and

- (b) adequate directional signage on the parking areas of the old terminal, indicating the current use made thereof and if same will be operational anew and, if so, when, giving details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Chief Executive Officer of Airport Terminal Operations Ltd that the car park at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport has a total of 1,562 parking slots located as follows –

- (i) the Old Terminal - 670 slots, and
- (ii) the New Terminal - 892 slots.

1,207 of these parking slots are dedicated to the public whilst the remaining 355 are used by airport stakeholders.

Following complaints received from members of the public with respect to the lack of parking spaces at the New Terminal, two surveys were conducted by the Airport Terminal Operations Ltd on 05 and 10 March 2025, respectively. These surveys had revealed that 35% of the parking slots were occupied by car rental vehicles, thus, reducing the availability of parking facilities for the public. The situation becomes particularly chaotic during peak seasons due to insufficient parking spaces.

To address this issue, a dedicated parking zone of 144 slots for car rental operators, is now operational at the Old Terminal car park since May of this year. Consequently, this decision has significantly helped to eliminate the persisting problem of parking available for the general public near the New Terminal Building. Since these changes have been made, no complaints have been received.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Chief Executive Officer that there are now already adequate parking spaces, roads and exit gates at the airport. It is, therefore, not envisaged to provide additional facilities at this point.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the 670 parking slots at the Old Terminal have always been operational. As stated, 144 slots are dedicated for car rental operators and the remaining 526 are meant for the general public. Adequate directional signage is available to guide car park users, through and out the Old Terminal parking.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that following an Open National/International Bidding exercise, a contract was awarded on 12 August 2024 to VDTEC Distributors Ltd for the sum of 1,421,493.00 dollars excluding VAT, which would make around Rs66,810,171 at

the time, for the implementation of a Smart Car Park Management Solution project in two phases.

This project is expected to smoothen the traffic flow and improve parking experience at the airport. Phase 1 of the project which is presently being implemented, is expected to be operational in December of this year.

I also wish to inform the House that the Board of Airport Terminal Operations Ltd did not deem it important to appoint a Consultant to ascertain that the works undertaken is in compliance with the terms of the contract. Secondly, another disturbing fact is that one of the members of the Bid Evaluation Committee is the very person who is now certifying the quality of the works prior to the payment. That is the MSM! This matter has been referred to the Financial Crimes Commission.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr Apollon: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Just a suggestion – perhaps to consider putting automatic paying tickets for parking to reduce the traffic at the airport. I got a supplementary question. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that daily fighting and discussions among taxi operators at the SSR Airport have been reported several times at the Police Station of the SSR Airport? No action has been taken. Will an investigation be initiated to ensure the safety of our citizens at the airport?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware that there have been no investigations but I will certainly transmit this to the Airport's authority.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

BUDGET 2025-2026 – MOTOR VEHICLES – EXCISE DUTY – NEW RATES

(No. B/769) 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 new rates of excise duty applicable on motor vehicles with effect from 01 July 2025, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of requests from importers and their association regarding vehicles shipped before 05 June 2025 and after 05 June 2025 with Import Permit as at 5th June 2025 and, if so, indicate if a meeting has been held therewith and, if any, give details of the outcome thereof and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in the Budget Speech 2025-2026, I announced that the rates of excise duty on vehicles would be increased. This budgetary measure was implemented through a Financial Resolution passed on the day of the Budget, that is, 5th June 2025. This makes the increase in the rates of excise duty effective as from 6th June 2025.

In a spirit of fairness, we provided a transitional period whereby a vehicle continued to be subjected to the old excise rate as was applicable, that is, prior to 6th June 2025, provided that –

- (i) the vehicle has been issued with an import permit or has been shipped or placed in a bonded warehouse before 6th June 2025 – there are two conditions, and
- (ii) was cleared from the Customs on or before 30th June 2025.

Accordingly, after the transitional period, that is, from 01 July 2025, all vehicles cleared from Customs are being subjected to the new excise rates.

Representations have been received from dealers of both new and second-hand imported motor vehicles through their respective associations.

The ‘Motor Vehicle Dealers Association,’ which represents dealers of new imported motor vehicles requested in writing that the cut-off date of 30 June 2025 for the transitional period be extended by 6 months, that is, to 31 December 2025.

The ‘Dealers in Imported Vehicles Association’, which represents second-hand imported vehicles, requested for a meeting with Government to discuss issues that they had on the transitional provision or the new tax rate on hybrid vehicles.

Officers of the Ministry of Finance held a meeting on 25 June 2025 with representatives of the ‘Dealers in Imported Vehicles Association’, namely the Chairperson and two members. The latter made the following proposals –

- (i) to extend the cut-off date of 30 June 2025 to 30 September 2025 for cars already shipped as well as those not yet shipped, but for which an import permit had already been obtained before 06 June 2025;
- (ii) motor vehicles in respect of which applications for import permit had been made on 05 June 2025, that is, on Budget Day, be subjected to the old rate of excise duty, and

- (iii) to extend the cut-off date of 30 June 2025 to 15 July 2025 for cars in bonded showrooms or warehouses due to administrative bottlenecks following a surge in the number of vehicles requiring clearance at the level of various government agencies.

Madam Speaker, as regards to the extension of the cut-off date, I wish to highlight that the two Associations had requested different extension dates. Entertaining their requests would have accentuated the alarming rate of increase in vehicles on the road and defeated the very purpose of introducing that measure.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that, during the transitional period, which we extended and lasted for 25 days, a total of 6,703 cars, of which, 4,093 were new and 2,610 imported second-hand cars were cleared by the Customs Department under the old rates of excise duty.

I think these figures speak for themselves, Madam Speaker.

The number of cars cleared during the transitional period represents more than three times the average monthly import in 2024, which was 2,020 cars. In fact, the number of cars cleared during the 25 days of the transitional period represents nearly 30% of the total number of imported cars in 2024 – total number.

It is evident, therefore, that dealers in new and imported motor vehicles have been able to take full advantage of the transitional period.

During the month of June 2025, imports of motor vehicles led to a total outflow of foreign currencies of around USD 200 million. This has impacted negatively on the trade deficit as well as the availability of foreign currencies on the forex market.

Therefore, Government does not intend to extend the cut-off date of the transitional period.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

Yes!

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, est-ce que le Premier ministre peut expliquer à la Chambre pourquoi – même s’il a, dans sa réponse, donné beaucoup d’explications – un délai aussi court de seulement 24 jours a été imposé pour tout finaliser ? Alors qu’il faut entre six et huit semaines à un bateau pour arriver à Maurice, que ce soit depuis le Japon ou de l’Angleterre, par exemple.

The Prime Minister: I must say, Madam Speaker, that there were discussions and many people wanted not to have a transitional period at all. The cut-off date had to be on Budget Day, that is, the next day, on 06 June. But we decided to give some time.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, look at the number of cars that were imported during that short period, and how much the Government actually lost. But that is the way it is!

Mr Quirin: Une dernière question, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Oui, allez-y!

Mr Quirin: Donc, comme je l'ai dit, vu le temps que prennent les bateaux pour arriver à Port-Louis, le Premier ministre peut-il – malgré tout ce qu'il a dit et je l'ai bien compris – envisager d'accorder un délai raisonnable de 92 jours aux importateurs, comme cela avait été le cas pour une transaction similaire en 2016, à travers le G.N. 165 de 2016 en fait ?

The Prime Minister: In our case, the answer is no.

Madam Speaker: Très bien.

Next question! Hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

ANGUS ROAD, VACOAS – IMMOVEABLE PROPERTIES ACQUISITION – INVESTIGATION

(No. B/770) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the allegations levelled against Mr P.K.J. and Mrs K.J. in relation to the acquisition of immoveable properties at Angus Road, in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand regarding the inquiry initiated thereinto, indicating the –

- (a) names of the witnesses heard in relation thereto, further indicating if late Mr L.G. and Mr P.K.J. have been heard, and
- (b) if there has been any evidence of attempts to close the inquiry.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Financial Crimes Commission that there is an ongoing investigation on the allegations with respect to the acquisition of immovable properties of the former Prime Minister at Angus Road.

With regard to part (a) of the question, this inquiry is still going on at the FCC, and therefore, it would not be advisable to give further information on that.

But as regards part (b) of the question, the straight answer is yes. The House may wish to recall that in June 2014, the Attorney General's Office had made a request for Mutual Legal Assistance to the UK authorities on the very subject. This request had been made specifically to trace the money trail in this very matter. However, soon after the MSM-led coalition came to power in December 2014, the then Attorney General, Mr Ravi Yerrigadoo, had, in early 2015, advised the defunct ICAC that the MSM-led government did not wish to pursue the request for Mutual Legal Assistance with the UK authorities.

(Interruptions)

That is plainly, plainly interference in an inquiry.

It is deeply troubling, Madam Speaker, that such a crucial avenue of international cooperation was deliberately shut down.

This only reinforces the concerns about how politically sensitive matters were handled or rather mishandled in the past 10 years by the former MSM-led government. Instead of supporting the search for the truth, steps were allegedly taken to block investigations. To kill investigations, in fact!

We, on the other hand, are committed to institutional integrity, accountability, and the proper functioning of the judicial process.

Madam Speaker: Yes, your supplementary!

Mr Jhummun: Thank you. But the hon. Prime Minister must acknowledge that the public demands clear and tangible outcomes from such inquiry. Can he give assurance to this House that this will be the case?

The Prime Minister: I can give the total assurance, 100,000%, that this will be the case. No cover-up. Nobody will be spared. The truth will have to prevail.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: ...*bizin met bracelet dan zot lamain!*

Madam Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue!

**FORMER COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, MR A.K.D. – TENURE OF OFFICE –
CAR ALLOCATION**

(No. B/771) Mr L. Caserne (Third 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 Mr. A.K.D., former Commissioner of Police, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Government vehicles –

- (a) allocated thereto from the Police Car Pool during his tenure of office, indicating the –
 - (i) make, model and registration number;
 - (ii) duration, and
 - (iii) purpose thereof, and
- (b) acquired therefor, indicating –
 - (i) the make, model and registration number;
 - (ii) the purchase price and running cost thereof, and
 - (iii) if they were sold to him following his retirement and, if so, indicate the selling price thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that seven vehicles from the Police Car Pool were allocated to the former Commissioner of Police during his tenure of office...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Seven?

The Prime Minister: Seven! Yes, seven!

(Interruptions)

Even I do not have seven!

... from 03 August 2021 to 12 November 2024.

In respect to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

With regard to part (a) (iii) of the question, I am informed that there is an ongoing investigation on this matter.

With regard to parts (b) (i), (ii) and (iii) of the question, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the tenure of Mr Anil Kumar Dip, former Commissioner of Police, no vehicle was specifically acquired by the government for his use, although, in accordance with the recommendation of the 2021 PRB Report, the Commissioner of Police may either be allocated a government vehicle within the prescribed ceiling value for both official and private use or opt for a 100% duty exemption car up to 2000 cc with relevant allowances.

Upon his retirement on 13 November 2024, Mr Anil Kumar Dip acquired a car from the VIP Car Pool of make Porche, model Macan for the sum of Rs415,140.00, which was delivered to him on 16 November 2024.

Madam Speaker: Mr Caserne, you are alright? Yes!

The hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – CIVIL MARRIAGES – RODRIGUAN & FOREIGN NATIONALS FORMALITIES

(No. B/772) 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 celebration of civil marriage between a Rodriguan and a foreign national and between foreign nationals in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Civil Status Office, information as to the procedure that obtains specifically on the publication aspect thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Civil Status Division, that the celebration of civil marriages in Rodrigues, including those between a Rodriguan and a foreign national, as well as between two foreign nationals, is governed by the Civil Status Act which applies across the Republic of Mauritius.

As regards the publication procedure for marriages involving a non-citizen to a citizen, I am informed that –

- a) both persons must appear in person at the Central Civil Status Office to submit a joint application for publication, along with all the mandatory documents;

- b) upon verification and acceptance of the documents, the Civil Status Officer proceeds with the publication of the intended marriage at the Central Civil Status Office, the Civil Status Office of the district where each party has resided for at least seven days, and the Civil Status Office of the district where the marriage is meant to take place;
- c) the publication notice is affixed in the respective offices for a period of 30 consecutive days. It is to be noted that the civil marriage cannot be celebrated during that period of publication, that is, 30 days;
- d) moreover, during the 30-day publication period, any person may lodge a notice of objection to the marriage with the Registrar, and
- e) if no objection is received, or if any objection is overruled, the marriage may then be celebrated within a period of three months.

Madam Speaker, with regard to marriages between two non-citizens, I am informed that the procedure is as follows –

- a) an application for publication of the intended marriage, along with all required documents, must be submitted to the Central Civil Status Office either via email or through a registered wedding coordinator at least one month prior to the intended date of the celebration, to allow for necessary verification and clearance from the Passport and Immigration Office;
- b) upon arrival in Mauritius, both parties must report in person to the Central Civil Status Office for verification of their original documents;
- c) once the documents have been verified and approved, the parties proceed to the Civil Status Office of the district where the marriage is meant to be celebrated to complete the publication procedures, and
- d) the civil marriage may then be celebrated on the day immediately following the day of publication.

As for Rodrigues Citizens intending to marry a foreign citizen or for two foreign citizens to marry in Rodrigues, they have to follow the process in Mauritius, as it is described above, and therefore, proceed to Rodrigues for the celebration of the civil marriage.

Madam Speaker: Yes, your supplementary?

Mr Edouard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his reply. Some years back, I understand that the procedures were done in Rodrigues, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House if he will consider that this be resumed, as it was before?

The Prime Minister: I must say I didn't quite understand the question. You want a different procedure for Rodrigues?

Madam Speaker: Yes, he said – will you accept to go back to the previous procedure when it was done in Rodrigues.

The Prime Minister: I will have to look into that matter.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I think so. What is interesting is that Mauritius is not Gretna Green. You can't just go and get married, you need publication.

Okay, I think now we have reached the Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, hon. Apollon!

MALHERBES, CUREPIPE – 24 SEPTEMBER 2024 INCIDENT – MR G. G. COMPLAINT – INQUIRY

(No. B/773) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the incident which occurred on or about 24 September 2024 at Malherbes, in Curepipe, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand regarding the inquiry initiated therein following the complaint lodged by Mr. G. G.

The Prime Minister: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 24 September 2024 at around 19 20 hours, Mr G.G. reported to the Police that, earlier at about 17 00 hours, he was in the company of five persons and they were peacefully demonstrating on the pavement near the New Social Living Development Housing Units at Résidence Malherbes. All six individuals were wearing white T-shirts bearing the inscription “NON A DEAL PITI-MAMA” and were holding a banner on which was written: “NON A DEAL PITI-MAMA ET RANN NU LATER.”

The House may wish to recall that the deal ‘PITI-MAMA’ pertained to a case of potential conflict of interest given that it involved a transfer of a 60-year lease for a plot of land in Port Louis.

At one point during the demonstration, four individuals known to the declarant approached the group, pushed them, forcibly took the banner and tore it, and then uttered offensive words directed at them.

I am further informed, Madam Speaker, by the Commissioner of Police that on the 27 December 2024, that is, three months after the incident, the case was referred to the Central Criminal Investigation Department for further investigation.

During the course of the enquiry, Police recorded statements from the complainant, the five individuals who were with him at the material time, and four of the Police Officers who were on duty thereat.

This inquiry is still ongoing. So far, no person has been arrested.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Apollon!

Mr Apollon: Okay!

Madam Speaker: Alright, the hon. Third Member for Port-Louis North and Montagne Longue, hon. Caserne!

CITIZEN SUPPORT PORTAL – COMPLAINTS – FOLLOW-UP & MONITORING – STATE-OWNED COMPANIES’ SERVICES

(No. B/774) Mr L. Caserne (Third 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 Citizen Support Portal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Citizen Support Unit, information as to –

- (a) the manner in which complaints lodged through same are followed-up and monitored, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the inclusion of State-Owned Companies offering services to the citizens thereon and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Citizen Support Portal (CSP) which was launched in April 2017, is a digital platform that allows citizens to register their complaints, queries, and suggestions related to government services. Each registered complaint is allocated a ticket number. At the backend of the portal, the CSP connects 583 Ministries, Departments,

Local Authorities, Parastatal Bodies and some State-Owned Companies for the purpose of resolving the complaints and channelling the suggestions and queries.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, when a citizen registers a ticket through the website or a mobile app, it is automatically channelled to the CAB nearest to his residence. The Citizen Support Officer (CSO) posted there, reviews the case and, where possible, addresses the problem. If the issue requires support from any Ministry or Department or Parastatal Body, then the CSO transfers the ticket directly on the system to the Desk Officer or the Focal Point designated by the organisation concerned. It is the responsibility of the organisation to resolve the ticket within different timeframes set by them and to inform the complainant accordingly.

The Focal Point analyses and monitors all the tickets which have been created within the Organisation and its subsidiary Departments and Parastatal Bodies.

The CSU also conducts an overall monitoring of tickets registered on a regular basis to identify recurring and systemic issues and provide Ministries with evidence-based insights for performance monitoring, policy, and service improvement.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that as at 24 July 2025, 14 State-Owned Enterprises under the aegis of various Ministries have been included into the CSU software ecosystem and data analytics dashboard.

Other State-Owned Enterprises, Statutory Bodies, and Parastatal Organisations are being encouraged to register on the Portal. It will be in the public interest that all such bodies be taken on board of the CSU Portal.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, the hon. Second Member for Rodrigues, Mr François!

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – UK GOVERNMENT & MAURITUS AGREEMENT – CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS OF CHAGOSSIANS

(No. B/775) 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.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a Bill entitled “Diego Garcia Military Base and British Indian Ocean Territory Bill” was presented to the UK House of Commons and read for the first time on 15 July 2025. The purpose of the Bill is, *inter-alia*, to provide for the dissolution of the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory”.

As per the press release recently issued by the British High Commission, Chagossians’ British citizenship remains unaffected by the domestic law enacted by the UK Parliament to give effect, that is to the Agreement between Mauritius and the UK concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia.

Madam Speaker, nothing in this Agreement between Mauritius and the UK on the Chagos Archipelago purports to adversely affect any citizenship rights that any Chagossians may be entitled to under the UK citizenship or nationality laws.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I wish to recall that Mauritius has never recognized the so-called “British Indian Ocean Territory” which was purportedly created by the UK following this unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence.

Madam Speaker: Yes! It’s alright!

Yes, the hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River!

ADSU – WESTERN DIVISION TEAM — AREA UNDER JURISDICTION – OFFICERS & VEHICLES

(No. B/776) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Western Division Team of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of officers attached thereto;
- (b) area under their jurisdiction, and
- (c) number of vehicles at the disposal thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) of the Western Division operates under the

command of a Superintendent of Police, who reports to the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of ADSU. Its office is located at the Divisional Headquarters in Rose Hill.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Western Division has 58 police officers of various grades. The team includes supervisory, investigative, and operational personnel.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that for operational effectiveness, the Western Division is deployed into five sub-teams in 36 regions comprising *inter alia* Albion, Black River, Beau Bassin, Rose Hill and Bambous.

Regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that a fleet of 15 vehicles is at the disposal of the Division.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that while ADSU sub-teams are assigned specific jurisdictions within the Western Division, they retain the authority to operate island-wide, particularly if there is intelligence about urgent threats.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one question.

Mr Babajee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned – ‘area covered’. Will he consider to bring a new Western Division to the West – a new headquarter or main office to the West?

The Prime Minister: Now, this is a proposal that is being looked at because when it is at Rose Hill, that is the complaint that has been made. They are looking whether it is possible to split. I just said, there are sub-divisions but may be that should be considered.

Madam Speaker: Okay, happy?

The hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac.

MRS. S.O., ATTORNEY AT LAW – SALARY AND ALLOWANCES – PERIOD 2015-2024

(No. B/777) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mrs. S.O., Attorney at Law, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total quantum of fees and allowances paid out thereto, together with the other fringe benefits to which she was entitled over the period 2015 to 2024 in her capacity as legal representative, chairperson,

board member and for any other legal services rendered to the different Ministries and parastatal bodies.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, on the basis of information gathered so far, Mrs Sonah-Ori has served as –

- (i) Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers for period 15 May 2015 to 21 October 2019, drawing a monthly salary of Rs100,000, a travelling allowance of Rs9,000 and a driver's allowance of Rs7,000.

Mrs Sonah-Ori was re-appointed on 13 December 2019 with a monthly salary, which was then increased to Rs120,000, a travelling allowance which was Rs9,000, but with a driver's allowance of Rs8,400. She resigned on 27 February 2020.

- (ii) She also served as a Member of the Assessment Review Committee for a period of three years, with effect from 02 July 2020, with an all-inclusive monthly allowance of Rs86,845 and a monthly travelling allowance of Rs11,500.

Following the PRB report in 2021, her monthly all-inclusive allowance was revised to Rs96,295 and travelling allowance of Rs 12,000 with effect from 01 January 2021 up to 30 June 2022. The travelling allowance was also increased to Rs13,200 as from 01 July 2022.

Mrs Sonah-Ori was re-appointed as Member of the ARC for a further period of 3 years, with effect from 01 July 2023, and she resigned on 17 October 2024.

- (iii) She was a Board Member of AHL Properties from September 2023 to November 2024, drawing Rs10,000 monthly salary as board fees.
- (iv) She was also Board Member of Landscape (Mauritius Ltd) from March 2018 to October 2019, and from March 2020 to November 2024, with a monthly fee of Rs25,000.
- (v) She was a Board Member of BPML Freeport Services Ltd from May 2018 to November 2024, for a monthly fee of Rs8,500.
- (vi) She was also a Board Member of Informatics Parks Ltd, ...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: Jackpot! Jackpot!

The Prime Minister: ... from May 2018 to October 2019, drawing a monthly fee of Rs10,500.

(vii) She was also a Member of the Council of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute/ Rabindranath Tagore Institute from 2015 to 2019, for a total fee of Rs98,160.

(viii) She was also the Chairperson of the Senior Appointment Committee of the Mauritius Institute of Education, from April 2017 to October 2019 for a total fee of Rs102,599.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, it is not over. It is not over.

Mrs Sonah-Ori also served as Legal Adviser to various public organisations –

(i) Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd, from November 2023 to October 2024, for a fee of Rs1.3 million;

(Interruptions)

(ii) She was, again, a Legal Adviser to Mauritius Duty Free Paradise, from July 2016 to December 2023, drawing legal fees of Rs4.8 million;

(iii) She was also a Member of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, from March 2024 to January 2025, drawing Rs239,900 as fees;

Mr Mohamed: *Voler! Voler!*

The Prime Minister:

(iv) She was also a Member of the SBM Holdings Ltd. She was earning fees of Rs4.7 million in 2024, and

(v) She was also a Member of the SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd, for the years 2020 to 2024, and believe it or not, for a total fee of Rs37.2 million.

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: Shame!

Mr Mohamed: *Voler!*

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, not over ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Not over!

The Prime Minister: Mrs Sonah-Ori was enlisted as legal representative for the following institutions –

- (i) The Mauritius Police Force, representing former Commissioners of Police in several cases, drawing a total of Rs4.3 million;

(Interruptions)

- (ii) She was also the legal representative of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, in June 2022, for a fee of Rs61,000;
- (iii) She was also the legal representative of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority from 2016 to 2024...

An hon. Member : *Circule sa la liste la !*

The Prime Minister: ... for a fee of Rs12.1 million;

(Interruptions)

- (iv) She was also the legal representative of Mauritius Housing Company Ltd for period October 2021 to March 2025, at a cost of Rs1.4 million;
- (v) Furthermore, she was also the legal representative at the Financial Intelligence Unit, for services provided in December 2023 and January 2024, at a cost of Rs1.5 million;

Mr Assirvaden: *Franco, kot ton al asizer laba !*

(Interruptions)

Ekoute!

The Prime Minister:

- (vi) Madam Speaker, she was also a legal representative for Air Mauritius Ltd, for a disciplinary committee in March 2017, for a fee of Rs115,000;

Mr Jhummun: *Chorni!*

The Prime Minister:

- (vii) She was also the legal representative Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd, from January 2018 to September 2018, and in February 2021, against a fee of Rs188,400;

- (viii) She was also the legal representative of Independent Review Panel, for two cases in 2020 and 2023, against a total payment of Rs567,500, for two cases, and
- (ix) Maubank Ltd, she was also the legal representative there for period January 2022 to December 2024, for a total fee of Rs348,700.

Madam Speaker, for period 2015 to 2024, Mrs Sonah-Ori, Attorney-at-law, has received a total amount of Rs82.7 million...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! Shame!

Mr Jhummun: *Sa kalite la!*

An hon. Member: *Maha chorni sa!*

Mr Jhummun: *Maha chor!*

An hon. Member: *Chorni!*

Mr Jhummun: *Chorni!*

The Prime Minister: In addition, Mrs Sonah-Ori has made a claim of Rs2,027,500 to the FCC. If we add this, the sum amounts to an astronomical figure of Rs 84.7 million in favour of Mrs Sonah-Ori.

I sometimes ask myself, Madam Speaker, were there no other Attorneys in Mauritius?

Ms Anquetil: *Incroyable!*

The Prime Minister: Only one person!

(Interruptions)

You ask yourself – “What do these people eat?”

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: What could they be eating to take so much money?

Mr Jhummun: *Sona! Sona!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: How fat can you get on money?

Ms Anquetil: *Incroyable!*

All hon. Members: Shame! Shame! Shame!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, Mr A. Duval.

An hon. Member: Time is over!

Mr Jhummun: Sona! *Ena beze la!*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Zot inn fini sa pays la zot inn garde!*

Ms Savabaddy: *Aprè tonn envi kone Pan African komie inn depanse, komie pann depanse ? Mo pou dir twa la!*

Madam Speaker: Okay, let us have this one. Then, we will stop.

Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT – MAURITIUS DELEGATION & PARTICIPATION

(No. B/778) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North and 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 Fifth Ordinary Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Pan-African Parliament, held in Midrand, South Africa, from 16 July to 01 August 2025, he will state whether an official delegation of the National Assembly of Mauritius participated therein and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the composition of the delegation, duration of stay and total costs incurred in respect of air travel, accommodation and *per diem* allowances;
- (b) whether the members of the delegation were sworn in as members of the Pan-African Parliament, and
- (c) the meetings, committees or other events in which the members of the delegation participated.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the Statement I made in the House last Friday, 25 July of this year, wherein I denounced the unpatriotic and disgraceful act of the Opposition which caused the reputation of our country to be sullied.

Now, I have already addressed parts (b) and (c) of the question in the Statement that I made at the Sitting of Friday 25 July 2025.

As regards part (a) of the question, the delegation comprised hon. Jhummun, hon. Ms Savabaddy, hon. Lukeeram, hon. Apollon, and hon. Baboolall. The total cost incurred amounted to Rs1,134,471.

I am informed that the hon. Members will refund the excess *per diem* that was paid to them as their mission, which was initially scheduled from 16 July to 01 August 2025, lasted only from 18 July to 25 July 2025.

Ms Savabaddy: *Nou pa bann zwiser nou!*

The Prime Minister: That is how we operate and decide.

Ms Anquetil: Exactly! Exactly!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is worth pointing out that the hon. A. Duval became Speaker after his predecessor was consigned to the ICU under the false pretext that he had to undergo urgent cardiac treatment. There was a confusion as well. He made a statement saying, 'I have not resigned. I am well.' Then, we heard that he is going! God knows what happened!

Over the 78 days when the hon. Member was Speaker, he realised the feat of chairing four sittings of the National Assembly and undertook three missions over a span of two weeks shuttling from India to China and to Armenia. Three missions that cost the cost the taxpayers an amount of Rs748,112.

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *To pa honte? To pa honte?*

Ms Anquetil: *La honte! La honte!*

The Prime Minister: And this amount...

Mr Assirvaden: *To ti enn ti kok, tonn vinn enn ti zwiser!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: This amount of Rs748, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: *Ti zwiser!*

The Prime Minister: ...Rs748,112, this amount excludes expenses for other members of the delegation, that is, only for him.

As I indicated, Madam Speaker, in my Statement last Friday, the hon. Quirin has already served two full terms as a member of the national delegation to the Pan-African Parliament, that is, from May 2015 to May 2018, and again from May 2020 to October 2024.

For the period 2015 to 2018, he undertook five missions for a total cost of Rs1,112,011.

Now, during the period 2019 to 2024, he participated in meetings of the Pan-African Parliament on ten occasions.

Ms Anquetil: Wow!

The Prime Minister: The expenditures incurred for these missions were Rs 2,723,195.75.

The total expenses for these 15 missions, as a member of the national delegation amount, to Rs3,835,206.75.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to the protocol of the Constitutive Act of the African Union relating to the Pan-African Parliament which was adopted in 2014, and I quote —

“The term of a Member of the Pan-African Parliament shall be five years. He or she shall be eligible for re-election for one further term only.”

This clause is currently in the process of ratification. Had it been ratified, the hon. Member would not even have been eligible for that re-election. I am a bit surprised that this escaped his attention!

Article 4, Madam Speaker, is clear. What does it say? It does not say that Members of the Opposition should be included. It says that it should include a ‘diversity of opinion.’

But I remind the House, we have a diverse coalition here. Four parties plus Members from Rodrigues. We have diversity of opinion!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Rann kass do!*

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, there are many precedence of delegations being told to ‘*al zot lakaz*’ because of the way they have been constituted. I will ask the hon. Prime Minister....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr A. Duval: ...whether he is prepared to take back the injurious Statement that he has made against the Pan-African Parliament?

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Ey!*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Last Friday on the African Union.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Fausse!*

(Interruptions)

Assize do bourik!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I made the Statement, Madam Speaker, precisely because of the unpatriotic way that they have behaved...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Lâche!

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

The Prime Minister: ...and sullied the reputation of this country.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Hon. Members, ...

Mr Bhagwan: *Vender!*

Mr Assirvaden: *Zwiser!*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, we have gone...

Mr A. Duval: *Zot ki zwiser!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I am trying to speak! We have gone well beyond the time limit for you, hon. Prime Minister. So, we are ending here.

B/780, B/782 and B/783 have been withdrawn.

Now, we move to questions addressed to hon. Ministers. I am calling on the Chief Whip!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, I should call you the hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes because it is in this capacity that you have put the question.

Go ahead!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. B/786 !

Madam Speaker: Avant la réponse, Monsieur le ministre, permettez-moi de dire tout ce qui a été retiré. *Let me do that.*

The Table has been advised that PQ B/796 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Tourism. PQ B/798 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands. PQ B/805 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Tourism. PQ B/812 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Local Government.

Now, hon. Minister!

BEAU BASSIN-ROSE HILL-EBÈNE – CYCLE NETWORK PROJECT

(No. B/786) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Cycle Network Project for the region of Beau Bassin, Rose Hill and Ebene, he will state where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated by his Ministry in relation thereto.

Mr Osman Mahomed: B/786 is a nice coincidence. It is my registration number of the Roll of Engineers.

Madam Speaker, I would like to refer the hon. Member to my reply to her PQ B/153 of 18 March 2025 whereby I informed the House that an inquiry will be carried out on the Cycle Network Project, which was implemented by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of

my Ministry, owing to its high value and failing of the paint at several locations, which the hon. Member had mentioned in the House.

To recall, the hon. Member had questioned me as to whether an inquiry would be conducted on this project that cost Rs61.94 million, inclusive of VAT. In this respect, Madam Speaker, the Internal Control Unit of my Ministry was requested to conduct an inquiry with the following terms of reference –

- (a) To assess compliance with procedures;
- (b) Review the procurement process, and
- (c) Assess the role of stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, the Internal Control Unit has submitted its report to my Ministry on 30 May 2025. I must say the findings are appalling. The list is quite long. I will just mention the salient ones for this project at this stage which I have to remind the House, as I stated before, is devoid of a regulatory framework –

- (i) Regarding the compliance and procedure part, which is the first part of the terms of reference, the capital project process manual and the conditions of contract have not been complied with;
- (ii) There are instances where major items which have not been completed, but they were paid for. This tantamount to forgery;
- (iii) The photos and fading road markings, as were tabled by hon. Ms Anquetil, has been confirmed by the Internal Control Unit. As a matter of fact, there have been discrepancies in the materials used.

Now, coming back to the second part of the terms of reference, the review of the procurement process. The findings are as follows –

- (i) There were inconsistencies in the scope of works for the consultancy services of Mega Design Consultants Ltd., which is the consultant that was appointed.

I am informed that there are deviations as regards requirements of the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). There were in appropriate in evaluation of technical bids for consultancy services and I am informed that the consultant was paid a total of Rs13.472 million inclusive of VAT.

- (ii) There were inappropriate cost estimates by that the TRMSU.

- (iii) Rate submitted by the contractor was on the high side.
- (iv) The contract was awarded to Transinvest Construction Ltd though the contract price was 25.13% higher than the cost estimate. It is to be noted that the required limit as per the capital project process manual of the Ministry of Finance is only 15%.

Madam Speaker, as regards the assessment of the role of stakeholders which is the third part of the terms of reference, the Internal Control Unit found major shortfalls in connection with lack of supervision by the project manager at the TRMSU and at the Ministry's level.

Madam Speaker, against this backdrop, I would like to inform the hon. Member and the House that the report is now being submitted to the Financial Crimes Commission for further investigation.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil : *Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Je suis abasourdie par la réponse du hon. Ministre.* Will the hon. Minister inform the House of the number of meetings chaired by the former Minister Ganoo in connection with this project? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: I do not have this number but, Madam Speaker, I have to say that in my more than a decade of career in the Civil Service, I have never seen such level of deviation with approved processes and manuals. In as much as the report is being forwarded to the Financial Crimes Commission, I will leave it to the Commission to elucidate whether the officers took it on themselves or were instructed by other people including the former Minister.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Ms Anquetil: A last one, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister indicate whether the findings of the inquiry will be made public in the interest of transparency and good governance?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I have a report with me. It is quite thick. This is the report that is being forwarded to the Financial Crimes Commission for further enquiry. I believe at this stage it will be improper for me to table it.

Madam Speaker: Yes, too early.

Yes, Hon. Beejan, the Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'or.

GOODLANDS – DOORGACHURN HURRY GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – CONSTRUCTION OF DRAINS

(No. B/787) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the Royal Road, Goodlands, in the vicinity of the Doorgachurn Hurry Government School, he will state if consideration will be given for the carrying out of urgent measures, including construction of drains, to address the issue of large water accumulation during and after heavy rainfalls thereat since years thereby rendering same inaccessible and unsafe for pedestrians and vehicles and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the road in front of Doorgachurn Hurry Government School in Goodlands known as the Mapou-Goodlands A5 road is frequently flooded during heavy rainfall period due to surface run-off from lateral roads and lack of adequate drainage network. These floods events caused significant disruption to school attendance, caused serious safety risk to students, pedestrians and road users and adversely affect vehicular movement along the Mapou-Goodlands road.

To resolve the flooding problem at this locus, a comprehensive drainage scheme has been proposed by the Land Drainage Authority comprising two main components namely, –

- Component 1 – Provision of concrete drains, dimension 0.7 metre by 0.7 metres over stretch of 400 metres along A5 road in front of the school, and Construction of the cross drains across A5 road to evacuate water from lateral roads.

Given that the first component relates to a main road, the works have been entrusted to the RDA. The works have been estimated at Rs18 million and will be carried out under the framework agreement of the RDA to be funded under the National Flood Management Programme. Once financial clearance is secured, a work's order will be issued and the drain works will be implemented within eight months.

- Component 2 – in parallel, the National Development Unit has been requested to proceed with complementary flood mitigation interventions within the vicinity including –
 - (i) a provision of the 50 metres-stretch of absorption drains along Verger Road capture excess run-off from upstream regions, and

- (ii) construction of absorption drains and installation of cross drains along GSS Road, Reservoir Road and Soobhany Road with grating.

The works are currently being implemented by General Construction Ltd for an amount of Rs14.6 million. Works started in October 2024 and are expected to be completed by August 2025.

Madam Speaker, a long-term solution to the issue of flooding along Royal Road, Goodlands in the vicinity of Doorgachurn Hurry Government School, will be obtained once both components have been implemented.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one question!

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister confirm if a request has been obtained previously by the former Government representative in the Assembly regarding these repeated problems in the region of Goodlands?

Mr Gunness: As far as I am aware, I do not think a request was made but anyway we are undertaking the works by RDA and the NDU. There are two projects that will be undertaken.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River!

RIAMBEL – STATE LANDS – LEASEHOLDERS & SQUATTERS – REGULARISATION

(No. B/788) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State lands in Riambel, he will state the number of –

- (a) leaseholders thereof, and
- (b) squatters thereof, indicating the mechanism, if any, put in place by the Ministry for the regularisation thereof and, measures taken, if any, for them to have access to water and electricity.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a total of 2 to 9 leases has been granted by my Ministry over State Lands at Riambel as follows –

- (i) 155 for residential purposes;
- (ii) 64 *campement* sites, and
- (iii) 10 for industrial purposes.

I am also informed that all the sites are connected to the CEB and CWA networks.

As regard part (b), I am further informed that there are new squatters over State Land at Riambel. However, there are three cases of squatting within the Surinam ex-CHA Housing Estate which forms part of the bigger portion of State Land at Riambel.

My Ministry is considering the possibility of regularising these three cases. In so far as access to water and electricity is concerned, I understand that application should be made to the CWA and CEB, respectively.

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay.

Mr Babajee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the 64 *campements* sites you just mentioned, hon. Minister, I have been informed that there are lots of them which are unoccupied and these places are being used as drug-trafficking areas. Will your Ministry consider to have some site visits over there as they are bushy, they are neglected, there are lots of trees, bushes. Will your Ministry consider having a site visit over there so that we can check if those sites are being properly maintained or be used as I have just said?

Mr Mohamed: I am very thankful to the hon. Member who as usual is very meticulous when it comes to those issues. I would gladly go through the bushes with you. I mean to those *campements* and we would look into it. I would gladly love the opportunity of doing so with the other Members of the Constituency as well, and my officers. And if at all any *campement* site is totally left abandoned, I see it as a *changement de destination* and as such, I would explore the possibility of putting an end to those leases, rightly so. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay.

The hon. Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre D'or!

LE MÉRIDIEN HOTEL – DIVING CENTRE ACCIDENT 20 MARCH 2025 – INVESTIGATION

(No. B/789) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre D'or) asked Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the tragic accident which occurred on 20 March 2025 at a Diving Centre found within a hotel compound in the north of the Island, he will state if his Ministry has investigated same and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) outcome thereof and actions, if any, taken to avoid any future mishap thereat, and
- (b) number of hotels registered under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and –
 - (i) table the list thereof inspected since 20 March 2025, and
 - (ii) indicate the number of contraventions booked.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am informed that on the 20 March 2025, a tragic workplace accident occurred on the premises of Sagar Hotels and Resorts Ltd more commonly

known as Le Méridien Hotel located at Pointe aux Piments. The incident involved the explosion of the diving cylinder which, unfortunately, caused the death of one person.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that on the same day, the National Occupational Safety and Health Department of my Ministry started an investigation on the site to determine the cause of accident. I am informed that the matter is still under investigation. The Ministry is awaiting the testimony of a supervisor of the deceased who was out of town, as well as the report of the Forensic Science Laboratory on the gas cylinder that exploded.

Madam Speaker, the police have informed my Ministry that, on the date of the accident, the police conveyed the body to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital mortuary where an autopsy was carried out and the Principal Medical Officer certified the cause of death as ‘shock due to multiple injuries’. According to information gathered by the police, it came out that the deceased was replenishing one cylinder with compressed air by a compressor when the cylinder exploded. The cylinder was secured by the police and sent to FSL on the same day for deeper analysis and investigation. My Ministry has been informed that the FSL completed its investigation on 28 July 2025 – yesterday – and the report has been submitted to the police. My Ministry has requested for a copy of this report as it may provide critical insight into the cause of explosion and also help the Ministry determine any breach as regards to compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Madam Speaker, under section 72 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act –

“(3) No gas cylinder for corrosive gases shall be filled unless it has been examined or tested by a competent person at least once every 2 years and no gas cylinder for other gases shall be filled unless it has been examined or tested by a competent person at least once every 5 years (...)”

I am informed by the Police Department that the cylinder that exploded was purchased on 07 September 2022 and the Director of the centre, Mr M. B. is qualified and possesses a valid certificate to carry out verifications. He stated that the hydrostatic test is carried out after 5 years as per guidelines of the manufacturer and the provision of OSH Act.

Madam Speaker, although the law clearly provides that gas cylinders must be examined at least once every five years, it would appear that in practice, inspection and testing occur only once every five years.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the officers of OSH undertake regular visits to places of work, including hotels. On average, visits are carried out at some 20

hotels yearly. As at 23 July 2025, 130 hotels are registered under Occupational Safety and Health Act.

In respect to part (b)(i) and (b)(ii) of the question, I am further informed that officers of the OSH have carried out visits at 12 hotels since March 2025 and no contravention has been established. I am tabling the list of the 12 hotels that have been inspected.

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

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister inform the House regarding the number of officers posted in the Enforcement Section to cover whole Mauritius and if there has been any lack of OSH officers in the department – fact that you have just announced 20 hotels are visited on a yearly basis despite having 135 hotels registered at the Ministry?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister?

Mr Uteem: I have been informed, Madam Speaker, that there are currently only 19 officers posted at the Enforcement Division of the OSH at my Ministry and at least, 25 staff are required. We have made request for unfunded positions to be filled.

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

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since we are talking about tragic accidents with regard to diving, diving may also cause serious decompression sickness. Will the hon. Minister consider formal implementation of hyperbaric oxygen treatment by hotels which offer large scale diving? Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Very good.

Mr Uteem: I will certainly convey this message and I will have to discuss with the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker: Of course, thank you.

Yes, the hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac! Last question!

METRO EXPRESS LTD. – CONTRACTS AWARDED – ENTITIES – CONTRACTUAL VALUE

(No. B/790) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Metro Express Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the names of the individuals and

entities having been awarded contracts for works related or incidental to the setting up and operation thereof, indicating the contractual value thereof, in each case.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, Metro Express Ltd was incorporated on 26 October 2016 as a public limited company. It is wholly owned by the Government of Mauritius and responsible for the implementation of a multimodal transport system by pioneering a new sector in the local transport industry through the development, financing, construction, operation and management of the Metro Express Light Rail Transit System in Mauritius under the Metro Express project.

The phase 1 and phase 2 of the Metro Express Project was financed by the Government of India, partly through a grant and partly through a Line of Credit. As part of the requirement within the funding through the Line of Credit Agreement with Government of India, the appointment of a Project Manager Consultant (PMC) was made and since this project was being financed by the Government of India, an Indian company, namely RITES, was selected by the Government of India and appointed by Government of Mauritius.

The Government of Mauritius, under its G2G agreement with the Government of Singapore, enlisted the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise to provide Delivery Support and Advisory Services (DSAS) to ensure that the concept design of the project was being effectively implemented by the EPC contractor. Under the DSAS, the scope of works comprised of the design and construct delivery services, focused on design and contract management integration, issues resolution, refinements, provision of technical support and briefings and support the Metro Express Ltd (MEL) on other enabling aspects related to the development of the project and ensure that the concept design is effectively implemented.

Madam Speaker, in view to operate the Light Rail Transit System, the services of consultants were enlisted by MEL to capacity build and train the required staff for operation readiness as follows –

- (a) Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT) Cooperation from September 2018 to September 2020 amounting to Rs296.5 million but paid in Singapore dollars;
- (b) Independent Safety Assessment (ISA) by Metro Transit Solution (MTS) for phase 1, approximately Rs4.69 million, and
- (c) SMRT Singapore Cooperation Enterprise and STRIDES for phase 2A, 2B, 2C for approximately Rs89.55 million.

Madam Speaker, for the sake of time, I am tabling the full list of contractors who have been enlisted by MEL since its setting up with the names, dates, contract amount and nature of service.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes?

Mr Jhummun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, proper procedures have been followed in all these activities and if not, whether an inquiry will be opened?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Time and again, we hear about the methodology used by the Metro Express Ltd but I can certainly ask the officers based on the list that I have submitted to give me a report on the processes followed for the award of these contracts.

Madam Speaker: Yes. That's it for this morning. I will suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour!

At 1.00 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated!

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

MORC. GREEN PARK, TERRE ROUGE – DRAINS, ROAD SIGNS & GREEN SPACE AMENITIES

(No. B/791) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to Morcellement Green Park, in Terre Rouge, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Pamplemousses, information as to whether consideration will be given for the –

- (a) cleaning of drains and bare lands;
- (b) installation of road markings and traffic signs, and
- (c) setting up of a green space thereat and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the drains were last cleaned from 26 June to 30 June 2025. The next exercise will be undertaken within a few weeks.

As regards road markings, I am made to understand that the hon. Member effected a joint site visit with representatives of the TMRSU and the District Council. Road markings should be undertaken as from next week and no right turn traffic signs would be fixed thereat.

The setting up of a green space at the said Morcellement is under consideration.

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

MORCELLEMENT BOUCAN, CAMP CAROL & REGIONS – IRREGULAR WATER SUPPLY – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/792) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Morcellement Boucan, Camp Carol and surrounding regions in Grand Bay, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the short and long terms remedial measures envisaged to address the issue of severe irregular water supply prevailing thereat over the past eight years, indicating the expected start and completion dates thereof.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je suis informé par la Central Water Authority que Morcellement Boucan, Camp Carol et les régions environnantes de Grand Baie reçoivent un approvisionnement en eau intermittente, soit de 4 heures à 8 heures du matin et de 16 heures à 20 heures le soir, en raison de l'insuffisance de la mobilisation des ressources en eau et de pertes d'eau.

De juin 2025 à ce jour, la CWA a enregistré quelques 350 plaintes concernant l'absence d'eau dans la région de Grand Baie et de Pereybère.

M. le président, la CWA m'a informé qu'elle a remplacé environ 1.8 kilomètre d'anciennes canalisations le long de la route principale de Morcellement Boucan. En raison des contraintes financières, toutes les routes secondaires de Morcellement Boucan n'ont pas pu être remplacées.

Suite à la pose d'environ 50 mètres de tuyaux le long de la route Adolphina, à Morcellement Boucan, une quinzaine de foyers, auparavant approvisionnés en eau par camion-citerne, reçoivent désormais l'eau du robinet.

Concernant la région de Camp Carol, j'ai été informé qu'il n'y a pas de problème majeur d'approvisionnement en eau, aucune demande de camion-citerne n'ayant été formulée. Cependant, le réseau de Camp Carol étant principalement constitué de vieux tuyaux en amiante-ciment, ceux-ci devraient être remplacés pour éviter les fuites régulières.

La CWA m'a également informé que quelques 35 kilomètres de tuyaux ont été identifiés dans la circonscription no. 6 comme étant anciens et défectueux et devront être remplacés, sous réserve de la disponibilité de fonds.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr Beejan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House why has the CWA, under the former government, allowed this problem to persist for nearly 8 years despite repeated complaints from residents? Were there any systemic issues like corruption hindering resolution at Grand Bay? Thank you.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je pense que l'honorable membre a raison. Vous savez, pendant des années, la CWA fut comme la cour du roi Pétaud. Chacun faisait ce qu'il voulait, avec l'ancien *General Manager*, le fameux Monsieur Prakash Maunthrooa, comme chef d'orchestre.

Donc, l'opacité, l'indiscipline, le gaspillage et la corruption furent le quotidien de cette organisation. Nous sommes, aujourd'hui, encore à découvrir les frasques de l'ancienne direction, avec les fameux R700 millions du *pipe replacement programme*.

La Chambre est sûrement au courant que suite au rapport que nous avons reçu sur le réservoir de Cluny, 4 officiers ont été suspendus. Donc, nous sommes encore à découvrir et à mettre de l'ordre. Ça prendra, je suis sûr, quelques années encore pour mettre l'ordre qu'il faut. Mais l'honorable membre a raison, oui, c'est vrai, cela rime à ce qu'on disait.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

MV WAKASHIO SHIPWRECK – COMPENSATION & COMMISSION OF INQUIRY REPORT

(No. B/793) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Wakashio Shipwreck, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) where matters stand regarding the –
 - (i) inquiry initiated therein, and
 - (ii) payment of the compensation due to people of the South East affected therewith, and

- (b) whether the report of the Commission of Inquiry set up to look thereinto will be made public.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the grounding of the MV Wakashio off the South East coast of Mauritius on 25 July 2020, the Shipping Division of the Ministry conducted a preliminary inquiry in accordance with the Merchant Shipping Act and the Merchant Shipping (Preliminary Inquiries and Formal Investigation of Shipping Casualties) Regulations 2017.

The purpose of the preliminary inquiry was to investigate the maritime accident and to make recommendations for improving safety in Mauritius waters.

The report of this preliminary inquiry was submitted on 27 August 2020. The investigation found that the main reason of the accident was because of failure of the captain to continuously monitor the ship's position due to social distractions on the bridge. But, of course, there is more to it than meets the eyes because I have been told that there were false entries in the VHF logbooks of the Operation Room and of Pointe du Diable, where National Coast Guard is. So, that was mentioned in the light of information that was relayed to me. I am sharing it with the House.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that criminal investigation was conducted by the Police Department, whereby the captain and the chief officer of the ship were arrested on 18 August 2020 and they were remanded to the police cell. On 20 December 2021, both were charged for endangering the safe navigation in breach of Section 217 (8) (g) of the Merchant Shipping Act before the Intermediate Court. Both accused parties pleaded guilty to the charge. On 27 December 2021, they were sentenced to 20 months of imprisonment. They made no appeal against the sentence. They were released from jail and repatriated to India on 30 December 2021.

I am further informed that a court of investigation was set up on 18 September 2020 to investigate and to report on, inter alia, the circumstances leading to the grounding of the vessel, and on 15 September 2022, the court of investigation submitted its report.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (ii) of the question, I am informed that over the period 2021 to 2022, the Japan Protection and Indemnity Club, insurer of MV Wakashio has paid compensation as follows –

- total amount of USD 2,650,048 that was made on the 23 December 2021 to the 999 beneficiaries comprising 198 applicant fishers, 107 fisher mongers and 624 registered fishers.

Accordingly, each affected fisher or fisher monger received around 130,000 as compensation from the insurer, representing the full – that’s what the insurance company wants us to believe – and final settlement of all claims for loss of income, including damages to fishing gears, equipment and tackle for the period August 2020 to March 2021.

- A total of Rs22,108,000 from 26 January 2021 to 29 April 2022 to 1,246 individual claimants such as artisanal jewellery makers, boat painters, skippers, hawkers and seafood collectors, that submitted the claims for compensation on the e-platform set up jointly by the Ministry and the then Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Planning on 14 August 2020.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard part (b) of the question, I am informed that the then government decided that the report would not be made public in view of the fact that certain documentation contained in the report of the Court of Investigation were referred to the Director of the Public Prosecution for action on the 09 April 2023.

I am further informed that the Office of the Director of the Public Prosecution has directed the Commissioner of Police to investigate into possible offences based on the recommendation of the report. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the report of the Commission of Inquiry has not been made public, and so far, no inquiry has been initiated. I wish to reassure the firm that shortly, I will hold discussions with my colleague the Attorney General and the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

Mr Lukeeram: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Could the hon. Minister, please, inform the House whether in connection with this matter, there is an inquiry still going on or not? Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: As of now, no. From the report submitted by the Commissioner of Police it is clear and obvious that there is no on-going investigation. However, may I remind the House that the Senior Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions on the 13 March 2023, impressed upon the then Commissioner of Police that certain inquiries have to be conducted in the light

of false entries in the very high frequency log books of operation room and false entries in the VHF log book of Pointe du Diable. But, as you know, there has been no follow-up, no outcome and here, we are. You know, following the meeting which I will have with colleagues, then I will convey the message to the Cabinet and then we will certainly look into as whether the time has come to render the report public.

The Deputy Speaker: One last question on this item!

Mr Seeburn: Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Now, we know that the accused parties in this case have been convicted, is the hon. Minister prepared to inform the House whether those individuals who resides in those areas and who have been affected and who have lodged a case then for the loss they have incurred, whether those individuals would have to proceed with their case individually or whether the Government will look into it?

Dr. Boolell: I cannot dispense advice in relation to the specific question you have asked but I see no reason why they cannot lodge their case before the court.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, the hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

ENSAFRICA MAURITIUS – ALLEDGED DISCRIMINATORY DISMISSAL – INQUIRIES

(No. B/794) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, he will state if the cases of dismissal of two employees allegedly for wearing hijabs in their place of work have been reported to his Ministry and, if so, indicate –

- (a) if inquiries have been initiated thereinto and, if so, where matters stand;
- (b) the number of reported cases of similar discriminatory practices since 2022 to date and the outcome thereof in each case, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for the toughening of the existing legislation in relation to similar practices.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission I would reply to Parliamentary Question B/794 and B/810 concurrently as they relate to the same subject matter, that is, alleged discriminatory treatment and dismissal of two employees for wearing hijab in their place of work.

I am informed that on 05 June 2025 and 06 June 2025, respectively, Ms M. A. and Ms N. A. who were employed at ENSafrica Mauritius, reported to my Ministry that they were prevented from wearing head scarfs (hijab) at their work place. On 13 June 2025 they were suspended from work and on the same day they registered a complaint at my Ministry as they considered that they had been discriminated on religious grounds.

My Ministry convened the representative of ENSafrica Limited Mauritius on 25 June 2025 to secure their version and they informed that there is a dress code which has been well established since the past 30 years and all employees of ENSafrica Limited Mauritius have to officially adhere to same. The dress code is an implied term of their contract of employment. Employees are not allowed to wear anything which is outside the dress code. However, they pointed out that there was no written policy regarding dress code.

On 02 July 2025, the aggrieved workers reported the existence of a labour dispute between themselves and ENSafrica Limited Mauritius to the President of the Commission of Mediation and Conciliation under section 64(1) of the Employment Relations Act 2008 on whether they should be allowed to wear head scarfs on their uniform at their workplace. Conciliation meetings were held at the Commission on 07, 11 and 17 July. The workers were present, assisted by their legal counsels. However, ENSafrica did not appear on the three occasions. On 18 July 2025, the Commission informed the workers and the employer that it was of the view that a state of deadlock had been reached and the workers had requested the Commission to refer the matter to the Employment Relations Tribunal.

However, on 21 July 2025, the Commission received a letter from ENS Mauritius Limited purported to be dated on 18 July 2025, which was a Saturday, terminating the employment of the two workers. I am informed that on 22 July 2025, the two aggrieved workers registered a complaint at my Ministry to the effect that their employment had been terminated by way of a letter dated 18 July, summarily, allegedly because they had been spreading false and misleading information about ENSafrica Limited which resulted in apparently threats being made to the safety of the members of the firm.

The workers requested that they be reinstated back to their post. On 23 July 2025, my Ministry conducted an inquiry at ENSafrica Mauritius and met with Mr Thierry Koenig, Senior Attorney, Director and Mr Maxime Sauzier, Senior Counsel, Chairman among others. The firm is agreeable to pay all dues prescribed by law upon termination of employment but are not agreeable to reinstate the workers.

I wish to highlight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that although one of the reasons of the termination was misconduct, no disciplinary hearing was held for the employees to provide the workers with the opportunity to answer any charge against them. I am also not aware if the employer reported any alleged threat which they apparently had received to the police for inquiry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 25 July 2025, my Ministry referred the matter to the Employment Relations Tribunal to claim reinstatement of the workers. Concurrently, the application to join the Workfare Programme has been referred to the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity for payment of Transition Unemployment Benefit.

My Ministry has been informed by the Equal Opportunities Commission that Ms N. A and Ms M. A. also lodged individual complaints against their employers before the Equal Opportunities Commission on 25 and 30 June 2025. Both complainants alleged that they had been discriminated on the basis of their creed as they had been required by their employer to stop wearing their head scarfs at their place of work. ENSafrica Mauritius has yet to give their version to the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, relating to similar cases of discrimination, I am informed that since 2022, there have been three cases reported to my Ministry as follows –

- On 10 March 2022, a bus conductor reported a case regarding request to have his Sundays off to attend church services;
- On 03 April 2023, an educator of Muslim faith complained that he was denied access to his workplace because of his beard, and
- On 01 July 2025, the Private Enterprise Employees Union reported a dispute to the effect that employees of the National Social Inclusion Foundation were not being allowed to display any religious symbols on their office tables.

Following the intervention of my Ministry, the first two cases have been resolved to the satisfaction of the workers and the third case is still under mediation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, discrimination of workers cannot be tolerated in a plural society like Mauritius. Section 11 of the Constitution guarantees a citizen's right to practice his religion

and section 16 of the Constitution protects every citizen against discrimination including on the basis of creed and religion.

Section 5 of the he Worker's Rights Act 2019, very clearly provides that –

“No employer shall treat, in a discriminatory manner, any worker who is in his employment.”

The definition of “discrimination” includes affording different treatment to workers attributable, wholly or mainly, to their creed or religion.

Moreover, Section 64 of the Worker's Rights Act 2019, further provides that an employment cannot be terminated by an employer by reason of a worker’s race, colour, caste or religion.

Let me reassure the House that this matter is being taken very seriously as highlighted in the report of Cabinet Decision of 25 July 2025 –

“Cabinet has taken note, with concern, of the case [...] The possibility of action being taken against the law firm is being examined.”

My Ministry is in consultation with the Attorney General’s office, working towards the reinforcement of labour legislations to prevent violation of the human rights of workers including such cases of discrimination.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have one supplementary?

Mr Lobine: Yes. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taking into account that there are many cases that are not reported due to fear of being dismissed from work, will the hon. Minister and his Ministry consider embarking on a national campaign to inform workers of this country that they cannot be discriminated on the basis of caste, religion or religious belief? And, also to inform those employers who are perpetrating discrimination that this cannot continue in this democratic country.

Mr Uteem: I thank the hon. Member for this very valuable suggestion. We will consider with officers of my Ministry whether, to have this national campaign in MBC TV, through the media and the press.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have one supplementary?

Mr A. Duval: Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

May I ask the hon. Minister, given that section 5 is an offence punishable under section 123 by Criminal Punishment as the hon. Minister knows well, why has an interview not been conducted with ENSafrica under potential violation of section 5; the more so that the parent-company features on its website, at least five persons wearing hijab and, therefore, it suggests that this is not a global policy but one which is local? So, why has there not been any action under section 123?

Mr Uteem: The hon. Member will be happy to note that my Ministry has already referred the matter to DPP for an advice, specifically on whether section 5 of the Worker's Rights Act has been breached and what legal action can be taken against ENSafrica in Mauritius. We are awaiting the advice of the DPP's office.

With regard to ENSafrica, my Ministry wrote to them officially to report this dispute and to ask whether, there was any dress code imposed by ENSafrica in South Africa and the answer was no.

I personally spoke to the Director of ENS South Africa. They are taking this very seriously and we are still hoping that, ENS Mauritius will come to better terms and reinstate these workers.

The Deputy Speaker: You have another one?

Mr A. Duval: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, quickly!

Mr A. Duval: Now, with regard to the course of action that has been taken by the Ministry, that is, for reinstatement, as it is now doubtful that the bond of trust that existed between employer and employee still exists or will be able to resuscitated in the future, is the hon. Minister agreeable that this is the right time to make an example out of this sort of practice? Even if section 123 has not been utilised in the past, he should ensure that this time, an example is made.

Mr Uteem: Absolutely, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is why Cabinet took the decision to refer the matter to the Attorney General for advice as to what action can be taken against the law firm and also to consider whether, we need to make any amendment to our law. I understand you are referring to the provisions of the ERT with regard to reinstatement whether, it is the breakdown of relationship. All this is being looked into by the Attorney General's

office and we will come with necessary amendments if it is required to reinforce the right of every citizen of this country to dress in accordance with their religious belief.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

The hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26 – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES – ARTISTS’ ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/795) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the eleven schemes included in Financial Year 2025–2026 in terms of financial assistance to artists, he will state –

- (a) the eligibility criteria to benefit therefrom, and
- (b) if Rodrigues artists are eligible to apply thereunder and, if so, how and, if not, why not.

Mr Gondeea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the eleven schemes which have been included in the Financial Year 2025-2026, have as overall objective, to provide structured financial support to artists across the Republic of Mauritius including Rodrigues with the aim of promoting artistic creation, professional development, international outreach and the safeguarding and valorisation of our cultural heritage.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to clarify that there are currently nine schemes being implemented by my Ministry as follows –

1. The Scheme for Concerts;
2. The Scheme for Development of Performance Arts Group;
3. The International Development Grant Scheme for Performing Artists;
4. The Scheme for International Award;
5. The Scheme for International Competition Participation;
6. Other Support to Artist Scheme;
7. The Production Grant Scheme;
8. The Emerging Talents Grant Scheme, and
9. The Research Grant Scheme.

Each of these schemes has its own eligibility criteria based on the specific objectives of the schemes. With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the detailed criteria for each of the nine schemes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that three of these nine schemes namely the Production Grant Scheme, the Emerging Talents Grant Scheme and the Research Grant Scheme were previously being implemented under the Finance and Audit (National Arts Fund) Regulations 2017.

Following the measure announced in the Financial Year 2025-2026 to wind up all such funds, provision has been made in the budget of my Ministry to honour the contractual obligations under these schemes already entered into the National Arts Fund with applicants. The remaining two schemes namely, the Cultural Rebate Scheme and the Heritage Stewardship Scheme are newly announced schemes in the 2025-2026 Budget and are being worked out in consultation with stakeholders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that all the above schemes will be reviewed during the forthcoming *Assises des Arts et de la Culture* which will be organised shortly by my Ministry. This national consultation platform will serve to finalise the design and implementation of the two new schemes and to assess the nine ongoing ones which may be amended where necessary, to better align with the needs and expectations of the artists' community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform that artists from Rodrigues are fully eligible to apply under all the schemes being implemented by my Ministry. It is to be highlighted that for Financial Year 2025-2026, only one application from Rodrigues has been received as at date under the General Assistance Scheme Other Support to Artists and which has been approved by the Ministry.

My Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry remains firmly committed to promoting inclusive and equitable access to opportunities for all artists across the Republic of Mauritius.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, one supplementary!

Mr Edouard: I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. May I ask the hon. Minister if representatives from Rodrigues will participate in the *Assises* or will there be consultations in Rodrigues itself? Thank you.

Mr Gondeea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, they will be invited to participate in the *Assises des Arts et de la Culture*.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

The hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River!

KITESURFING – SAFETY & COMPLIANCE MEASURES

(No. B/796) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to kitesurfing, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the relevant authorities, information as to the required criteria for allowing the practice thereof in designated areas, indicating whether –

- (a) the operators currently offering this activity are complying therewith, and
- (b) consideration will be given for the taking of measures to ensure that adequate health and safety protocols are enforced.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism!

The Minister of Tourism (Mr R. Duval): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. With your kind permission, I will reply to both PQ B/796 and PQ B/805 together as they are related to the same subject matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tourism Authority that kitesurfing is a sport activity which is practised throughout the year when the weather is windy. It is carried out mostly by tourists. I understand that there are currently 20 operators of rental agency for kitesurf registered with the Tourism Authority who are operating across the island.

The First Schedule of the Tourism Authority Act 2006 provides for an operator or of a rental agency of a kitesurf to hold a tourism enterprise license from the Tourism Authority. There is no provision for individual kitesurfer, both local and tourists, to hold any authorisation to practice that activity.

For individual kitesurfers not going through a rental agency, there is also no obligation legally or otherwise for the coach or monitor to be present on-site for the practice of that activity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Tourism Authority that the operation of a rental agency for kitesurf is regulated under Government Notice No. 328 of 2021. These guidelines, which set the criteria, standards and procedures for the safe operation

of the activity to be carried out by duly licensed rental agency, provide for the licensee to insure the kitesurfers.

The kitesurfer is knowledgeable in the kitesurfing activities and is briefed on a code of practice which forms part of the guidelines, and fills and signs a disclaimer form before carrying out kitesurfing activities. Moreover, the licensee should ensure *inter alia* that a register is kept with the details such as the –

- date of the activity;
- name of the client;
- National Identity Card;
- passport number;
- age;
- time in and out;
- signature of the client, and
- name of instructor if accompanied, etc.

Such information should be readily available at a place where the kitesurfing activities is carried out for inspection by an authorised officer of the Tourism Authority.

An inspection of all kitesurf boards, safety gears, rescue, craft and related equipment is carried out to ensure that they are properly maintained and are in safe operating conditions. Safety devices are tested prior to carrying out kitesurfing activities or renting same to clients.

A signal system is going to be put in place, visible to all kitesurfers engaged in the activity to at least ensure constant communication with the kitesurfers to inform of weather conditions, of any changes thereof, or any other dangers, and constant look out is carried out throughout the duration of the kitesurfing activities.

I am also informed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the code of practice that the licensee is rightly required to brief any kitesurfer on the do's or the don'ts of the activities, the hours of operation, the area where he is allowed to practice as well as the precautions to be taken.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling a copy of the guidelines for the operating rental agency for the kitesurf and the code of practice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, legally, there is no designated area at sea for the activity to be carried out. It can be practised both in the lagoon or off the lagoon. On spot monitoring is carried out randomly by tourism enforcement officers to verify if the rental agency are complying with the prescribed guidelines. It is to be highlighted that the security boat and kitesurfing equipment of the rental agency are also verified to ensure compliance with the established checklist.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards to the health and safety measures, the guidelines provide the following –

- The prevailing climatic and sea condition to be monitored continuously during the activity to allow for sailing;
- Availability of signal system to inform persons carrying out kitesurfing activities of weather conditions and of any changes thereof;
- Verification of equipment to ensure that they are safe for use;
- Availability of an emergency plan in case of accident;
- Wearing of an appropriate floatation device by kitesurfers to ensure safety at the sea;
- The kitesurfing instructor to be holder of a valid First Aid Certificate and Lifesaving Certificate.

The Deputy Speaker: If the list is long, you can circulate the guidelines as well.

Mr R. Duval: Yes, if you want, of course.

The Deputy Speaker: Any supplementary question? Hon. Babajee!

Mr Babajee: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister consider introducing a rescue team at the same spot as ‘Dangerous Bathing’ is written over there? Normally, people are disallowed to go and swim over there. If he can consider to put the same team at Tamarin where everyone is surfing, especially when the sea is rough?

Mr R. Duval: Definitely, we will be looking at the matter. I must say that we have met with the operators lately. We will be having more meetings in the following weeks. From there, we will know where to go.

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Babajee: Also, if the hon. Minister will consider or agree to introduce jet ski so as to save someone if he/she is in trouble – the coast guard has such vessels – as when people are kitesurfing, they are going too quick?

Mr R. Duval: I will consider.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or!

FALSE INFORMATION & FAKE PROFILES – PROLIFERATION – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/797) Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the circulation of false information and the use of fake profiles to disseminate same, amongst others, he will state the urgent measures he proposes to take to address the issue and the risks inherent thereto, while preserving the sacrosanct principle of freedom of expression in Mauritius.

Dr. Ramtohul: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. Indeed, the phenomenon of false information and the proliferation of fake profiles often accompanied by anonymous postings is creating significant disruption on social media and our society at large.

This concern has been substantiated by the high number of cases reported to the Cyber Crime Unit between 2014 and 2024 as also indicated by the hon. Prime Minister in his reply to PQ B/715.

In fact, our legal framework, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, remains outdated. While the legal framework for many other countries like the UK, the European Union, France, Germany have actually been updated, our legal framework as of date does not define what really online harm is. Here, we are talking about the online harms.

Nevertheless, our laws provide for some parameters that deter unacceptable or unlawful online behaviour. I would like to seize this opportunity also to inform the House and the population at large that the Cyber Security and Cyber Crime Act defines a fake profile as an untrue online representation that is probably non-existent.

Under the same law, Section 16 criminalises the use of fake profile to cause harm, yet online harms are not defined, with the penalties running up to Rs1 million or 20 years of penal servitude.

Therefore, Section 23 mandates even the administrators of those social media platforms or groups to moderate and control undesirable online contents, which can be deceptive or inaccurate, that have been posted with an intent to defame or threaten, or abuse, or mislead the public. It is important to know that it applies even to private WhatsApp groups as far as a telecommunication device is being used in that communication process. The ICT Act at Section 46 prohibits knowingly sending false or fraudulent messages.

Coming to the substantive part of the answer, over and above the measures mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister in his reply, the measures that we have put up are –

- (i) Under enhanced reporting and monitoring mechanism run by the CERT-MU we have upgraded MAUCORS to MAUCORS+. It now allows people or agreed parties to provide more information so that the work of the police can get easier and so that we also able to undertake a lot of analytic work on that to define the patterns.
- (ii) Secondly, there is the establishment of a multistakeholder committee at the level of my Ministry which is attended also by the Police IT Unit and the Cybercrime Unit to monitor and follow up on incidents.
- (iii) We are continuing with our sensitisation campaigns, targeting students, educators and the general public. This one has started in January and it is ongoing, and
- (iv) there are also security alerts when the CERT-MU identifies a message that can be of seriously aggravating nature.
- (v) My Ministry has also made a request to the police to operate and conduct effective cyber platforms through automated tools which are actually AI-powered on a 24/7 basis, and lastly,
- (vi) We are also exploring mutual legal assistance to bring accused who are hiding behind barriers, they are offshore and from there, they are actually disturbing our social construct in the country. So, we are exploring MLA to mutual legal assistance, and finally,
- (vii) We have also decided to establish the Cyber Resilience and Cybersecurity Unit which will look into this matter more deeply.

As for the second part of the question, the right to freedom to expression is guaranteed under Section 12(1) of the Constitution and all actions that we are taking will be within

conformity of this provision. But Section 12(2) also provides for reasonable limitations for the freedoms of expression which are necessary to protect public order, security and rights of others.

To conclude, we are looking at robust legal sanctions and ongoing legislative reforms in coordination with the office of the Attorney General. There is enhanced reporting, investigation and law enforcement, there are public awareness and campaigns...

The Deputy Speaker: In a question you do not have to conclude. You just answer the question. You have already said all these?

Dr. Ramtohul: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with these measures aim to safeguard our digital space and its integrity. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any supplementary question?

Mr Etwareea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding this bone of contention, I would like to know whose responsibility it would be to handle the complaints reported by complainants? I would like to know exactly who is the watchdog when there are problems here.

The Deputy Speaker: Can you answer this question?

Dr. Ramtohul: Thank you. The CERT-MU is an agent that routes complaint to the police. So, ultimately it is the police who has the responsibility to carry out the investigations. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, one supplementary question!

Mr Edouard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for many users social media is a licence to defame. I understand that...

Mr Deputy Speaker: Put your question, please!

Mr Edouard: Yes, I must put the context because I have been informed that there is a problem with cooperation with the police from the social media platform owners. Will the hon. Minister consider coming up with measures to force these platforms to cooperate with the police when there are investigations? Thank you.

Dr. Ramtohul: I would not say that there are problems per say. We are putting in all our efforts together with the police to have the social media platform service providers to actually comply to the provisions of our local legislations and the work that we are doing together with the office of Attorney General is going into the direction as well. Thank you.

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

**ARSENAL – MALAKOFF ROAD – DRAIN WORKS – DELAY &
COMPLETION**

(No. B/798) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplémousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the closure of Malakoff Road in Arsenal for drain works undertaken by Transinvest Construction Ltd, he will state the –

- (a) work progress thereof;
- (b) reasons for the delay beyond the one-month expected completion date, and
- (c) new expected completion date thereof and of reopening of the road.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to the Parliamentary Question B/798.

I am informed that the NSLD requested clearance from Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to close Malakoff Road for a period of one month as from 17 March 2025 for the construction of a culvert. I am also informed that during implementation, the CWA and the CEB approached the NSLD to use the trench which has been dug for pipe laying and extension of CEB underground network thus saving on costs. Also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, works related to the culvert were completed in March 2025. However, works being undertaken by the CWA and the CEB are still ongoing.

In regard to part (b), I am made to understand that there has been a slight delay due to clearances needed by CWA and the CEB from the Road Development Authority in regard to way leave across A4 road.

As regard part (c), I am informed by the NSLD that the works are scheduled to be completed by mid-September 2025 following which the road will be reopened.

I would like to add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that all this is in line with the construction of 2 NSLD sites: Arsenal 1 and Arsenal 2. Both of those sites clearly required some major roadworks such as I have just described and it is quite unfortunate that all this could have not been done in parallel with the construction but it had, since there was so much bad planning on the part of the previous Government, it is only when we took office that you will note that letters were sent to all authorities seeking clearances for the work to start and that is why there has been this closure and that is why there has also been a delay in the delivery of houses by

the NSLD. Unfortunately, that particular area of Mauritius only but an example and there are many more.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues!

STC RODRIGUES – TRAINING FACILITIES – PROMOTION

(No. B/799) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Honourable Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the existing training facilities for officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation (STC), information as to the grades of officers concerned therewith, indicating if

—

- (a) same are relevant for the promotion prospects thereof, and
- (b) officers of the STC Rodrigues benefit therefrom.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the government trading arm, the State Trading Corporation (STC) starts with importing key essential and strategic commodities such as ration rice, wheat flour, petroleum products, liquefied petroleum gas, Basmati rice, milk powder, edible oil and pulses.

I am informed that there are currently 240 officers at the STC of which 13 work in STC Rodrigues. These officers are spread across 55 grades in various technical and administrative cadres.

I am further informed that all these officers are given training facilities both in-house and on-the-job. Over the last five years, these officers have received training in over 150 courses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that only the officers of the supplies and sales cadre are currently affected by this criterion.

The prescribed scheme of service for the different posts in the supplies and sales cadre of STC requires the officers to have a certificate or a diploma in purchasing and supply management or procurement and supply management or logistic management to be eligible for the promotion.

I am further informed that in 2004, the STC sought the assistance of Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd for the mounting of a specific course for the officers in the supplies and sales cadres. This will entitle them to receive either a certificate or diploma. This will entitle them to receive either a Certificate or a Diploma. Since October 2024, 21 supplies and sales officers of the STC in Mauritius, had enrolled in the certificate course on Sustainable Logistics and Supply Chain Operations. However, four of them have, since dropped out. Additionally, three

other supplies and sales officers have enrolled in the diploma course on Sustainable Logistics and Supply Chain Operations. I am informed that both training courses are fully sponsored by the STC. Once these officers have successfully completed their courses, they will be eligible for promotion in the supply and sales cadre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there are six officers of the procurement and sales cadre in the STC Rodrigues who are required to be trained. I am further informed that Polytechnics Mauritius has agreed to mount the training for these officers in a specific delivery format which will include fly-in fly-out model for the faculty along with selected face to face sessions facilitated by the team in Rodrigues. It is expected that the courses will start by the end of August this year.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. The hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 20 – MORC. LA CONFIANCE, BEAU BASSIN – FOOTBALL
GROUND REHABILITATION**

(No. B/800) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football ground found in Morcellement La Confiance, Beau Bassin, in Constituency No.20, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau-Bassin-Rose-Hill, information as to whether consideration is being given for the rehabilitation thereof and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer is in the positive.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, you are Ag. Minister of Local Government?

Mr Bachoo: I am acting.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. It is for the record.

Mr Bachoo: The answer is in the positive. Due consideration is being given for the rehabilitation of the football ground found in Morcellement La Confiance, Beau Bassin. The following works will have to be carried out for the reinstatement and returfing of the Morcellement La Confiance football ground –

- (i) Supply and spread of topsoil, including the levelling and preparation of the ground;

- (ii) Supply of grass, including planting, watering and maintenance, and
- (iii) Fixing of goal post, removal of hoarding and reinstatement of part of the surrounding area.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, supplementary!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je sais que l'honorable ministre n'est pas le ministre responsable de ce dossier, mais peut-il quand même indiquer à la Chambre est-ce qu'il a une date à laquelle ce terrain sera réhabilité et surtout, mis à la disposition des jeunes de cette région ?

Mr Bachoo: A site visit was conducted by the officers of the Ministry, together with the Municipal Council of Rose Hill and work is going to start very soon.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ B/801 has been withdrawn.

So, we go to PQ B/802. The hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien!

MORC. LE HAMEAU, BEAU PLAN – ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT LICENCE

(No. B/801) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to Morcellement Le Hameau situated at Beau Plan, he will state if the promoters thereof were required to obtain an Environment Impact Assessment Licence prior to developing same and, if not, why not, indicating whether his Ministry is aware that the plots of land of the said Morcellement have been sold as part of a morcellement development.

(Withdrawn)

MARE D'ALBERT SWIMMING POOL – RENOVATION & REPAIR WORKS – REOPENING DATE

(No. B/802) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the ongoing renovation and repair works being carried out at the Mare d'Albert Swimming Pool, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sports Council, information as to where matters stand, indicating the expected reopening date thereof.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Sports Council that the Mare d'Albert Swimming Pool is closed since June 2024 to allow for major

repair works, specifically the servicing of the boiler and replacement of an electric control panel. These works have now been completed. Pre-commissioning of the electrical control panel has been completed. The MSC is currently awaiting the replenishment of the pool to carry out the final commissioning of the boiler and the electric control panel which is expected to be completed in the coming days. Thereafter, an engineer and a Safety Health Officer will assess the safety and stability for use. In the event the report is in the affirmative, it is expected that the swimming pool will be ready for reopening by end of August 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, supplementary!

Mr Apollon: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House since when the swimming pool was not operational?

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I stated in my reply, the Mare d'Albert Swimming Pool is not operational since June 2024. The House may wish to note that after I assumed office last November, I took cognizance of the numerous representations made on the deplorable condition of the pool. I effected a site visit accompanied by hon. Members of that constituency where indeed, I witnessed its unacceptable state, including the green water of the pool. Not only was the pool impracticable, it was also a potential health hazard, being a breeding ground for mosquitoes and bacteria.

I immediately impressed upon the Mauritius Sports Council which managed the facility, to initiate urgent action for the prompt remedy of the situation. Consequently, procurement exercise was initiated and the issues that were hindering the operation of the pool have now been addressed. Thus, the facility is now expected to be operational soon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will further upgrade the facility through additional civil works such as replacement of tiles, flush door, bird deterrent system. The scope of works is being worked out.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

FOUNDATION PROGRAMME – LITERACY, NUMERACY & SKILLS – RODRIGUAN EDUCATORS' EMPOWERMENT

(No. B/803) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the Foundation Program in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills, he will state where matters stand regarding the –

- (a) training programs scheduled for the empowerment of educators of Rodrigues;

- (b) required resources for an effective implementation of the program, and
- (c) transfer of secondary 9E+ students to the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Foundation Program in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills was introduced in January 2025 in grade 7, 8 and 9 to replace the former Extended Programme which was not adapted to the needs of those students who did not pass their PSAC examination. From 2022 to 2024, around 7,419 students who had enrolled in the Extended Programme exited the education system with neither a PSAC nor a NCE certificate.

Allow me to provide the House with a few figures related to the performance of our students in Rodrigues –

- in 2022, only 3 out 167;
- in 2023, only 21 out of 204, and
- in 2024, only 7 out of 209

extended stream students who had enrolled for the NCE exam, passed it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thus, out of the 580 students who took the NCE exam in Rodrigues, only 31 were successful. This new foundation programme is offered to those students who have not obtained their PSAC at the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 1. It offers a blend of academic knowledge and vocational skills that will ensure the progression of students to the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system stream. Henceforth, all students completing the Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills in 2025 will be awarded a Foundation Certificate which will be pitched at the NQF Level 2. This certificate will enable the students to enrol in a Specialised National Certificate Level 3 courses at the MITD training centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that two workshops were conducted this year, for this training of around 169 educators in Rodrigues during the month of January and May 2025 respectively. In addition, meetings and discussions were also held with around 30 Rectors, Deputy Rectors, Senior Educators for the Foundation Program in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills Development. Work sessions were also held with the Departmental Head, Commission of Education and other stakeholders in Rodrigues. A third workshop, focusing on elective subjects, is scheduled for the third week of August 2025 and will be conducted by the lecturers from the MIE.

With regard to part (b), I am informed that both the MIE and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute have developed full sets of curriculum content for all subjects, including electives. The curriculum has been divided into three clusters, namely –

- (i) Functional literacy and numeracy;
- (ii) Life skills and values, and
- (iii) Trade and livelihood skills.

These materials are available on the MIE website and educators in Rodrigues have already been trained on how to access and use them effectively.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has also released funds through the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA) with each school in Rodrigues receiving a sum of Rs15,000 to print and distribute materials to students. A second disbursement will be made in August 2025.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c), I am informed that as at now, there are approximately 141 students in grade 9 and 163 students in grade 9+ in Rodrigues. These students are expected to begin their training at MITD centres as from 2026.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Yes, the hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis.

Ms Anquetil: Il n'est pas là ! Il n'est pas là!

The Deputy Speaker: He is not here.

Ms Anquetil: Cela a été transféré au PM.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, it has been transferred to the Prime Minister.

KITE SURFING – LICENSING & SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

(No. B/805) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports 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 licence 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.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/796)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Rodrigues, Ms Collet!

2025 INTER-COLLEGE SPORTS COMPETITION– COST, HANDISPORT INTEGRATION & RECURRENCE

(No. B/806) **Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the 2025 Inter-College Games held from 14 to 18 July at the Côte d’Or National Sports Complex and other venues, he will state –

- (a) the total budget allocated and actual expenditure incurred therefor;
- (b) the specific initiatives taken to promote values of discipline, inclusion, and drug prevention through the Games;
- (c) whether and how handisport disciplines were integrated therein, including the number of participating students with disabilities and support provided, and
- (d) whether the Inter-College Games will become an annual event.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Inter-College Sports Competition 2025 was a joint collaboration between my Ministry and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, some Rs2 million was spent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, prior to the holding of the final of the Inter-College Sports Competition 2025, several coordination meetings were held, comprising officers of my Ministry, Educators, Rectors from schools that had qualified for the final as well as officers from the Mauritius Police Force and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, where matters such as discipline, respect of the rules of the competition and good behaviour were raised and discussed.

During the finals, Police Officers from several divisions, along with the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service officers, security officers of the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd, Educators and accompanying staff, ensured a secure and disciplined environment for athletes and supporters at all competition sites. The venue was physically accessible to people with disabilities, and the organising team ensured that no athletes or supporters were discriminated based on his/her social background, schooling, gender, physical appearance and otherwise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, the House will appreciate the fact that this is the first edition of the inter-college competition that this Government has organised in its endeavour to revive this competition. As such, this first edition did not cater any special event for a student with disabilities. That being said, both my Ministry and the

Ministry of Education and Human Resource are considering special events for handisport disciplines in future editions for the Inter-College Sports Competition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (d) of the question, I can inform the House that the Inter-College Sports Competition will be an annual event.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, do you have a supplementary?

Ms Collet: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il fournir des précisions quant aux dépenses totales engagées pour l'organisation des finales nationales de l'*Inter-College Sports Competition*, lesquelles ont permis à plusieurs jeunes athlètes prometteurs originaires de Rodrigues de se démarquer ?

Mr Nagalingum: The Ministry of Youth and Sports spent Rs1.4 million, and the Ministry of Education spent Rs650,000.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière!

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION – GENERAL ASSEMBLY (11 JULY 2025) – MEMBERS COMPOSITION

(No. B/807) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the General Assembly of the Mauritius Judo Federation held on 11 July 2025, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Federation, information as to the –

- (a) names of the elected members, and
- (b) number of clubs which took part in the election.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 13 July 2025, my Ministry received an email from the Mauritius Judo Federation informing my Ministry that it had held a special General Assembly on 11 July 2025 at its registered seat at Dojo, at Grand River North West.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I am tabling the composition of the newly elected Managing Committee, as submitted by the said federation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Judo Federation that 13 clubs took part in this election.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform the House that in accordance with Section 3 (a) and 3 (b) of the Second Schedule of the Sports Act 2016, there exists a specific statutory provision which sports federations are required to comply with when convening a General

Assembly. In light of this recent notice of meeting, circulated by the Mauritius Judo Federation, my Ministry has found it prudent to seek the advice of the Attorney General's Office to ascertain whether all the prescribed notification period and procedural requirement have been duly observed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I have personally committed to seek a fair and acceptable resolution to the ongoing issue affecting the Mauritius Judo Federation. To this end, I have convened and chaired more than three mediation meetings in an effort to bring the parties together. It is, in my view, wholly unacceptable that approximately 18 judo clubs continue to be denied official recognition by the federation governing body. This situation is detrimental not only for the development of the sport, but also to the athletes and stakeholders involved.

I would like to inform the hon. Members that the matter is currently before the Sports Arbitration Tribunal with the hearing scheduled for Thursday 31 July 2025. I remain confident that the issue will be resolved in the coming days.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, est-ce que l'honorable ministre est en train de confirmer que son ministère n'a pas été informé au préalable de la tenue de cette Assemblée générale électorale de la Fédération de Judo?

Mr Nagalingum: No, we were not, because there is no reason for any federation to tell us when they are going to hold their election. So, we learnt it afterwards.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je pense que c'est la moindre des choses. Mais si le ministre trouve que c'est normal, je n'en dirai pas plus.

Donc, dans l'éventualité, M. le président, où le Tribunal Arbitral du Sport donne gain de cause dans un proche avenir aux 18 clubs de judo que la Fédération refuse...

The Deputy Speaker: No, this is speculating. Hon. Member, the case is before the Tribunal. We cannot predict or....

Mr Quirin: Non, mais on peut quand même...

The Deputy Speaker: ...speculate what will happen.

Mr Quirin: Écoutez la fin de ma question. Vous allez comprendre pourquoi je la pose.

Le ministre peut-il envisager de demander l'annulation des résultats que...

The Deputy Speaker: This is a speculative question. You have to await the outcome of the Tribunal. Then, the Minister will decide what to do. You ask the question after the outcome of the Tribunal. Thank you.

Mr Nagalingum: The question is hypothetical. When we come to the bridge, we will cross it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

MINISTERIAL VISIT TO RODRIGUES – PURPOSE & OUTCOME

(No. B/808) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the recent official visit he undertook to Rodrigues together with an accompanying delegation, he will state the –

- (a) purposes and outcomes thereof; and
- (b) list of National Development Unit projects awarded and, in each case –
 - (i) giving details of the initial date of conception thereof; and
 - (ii) whether any delay occurred in the implementation thereof and, if so, the reasons thereof.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I would like to inform the House that purpose of my mission to Rodrigues was to renew the Memorandum of Understanding between the RDA and the Commission for Public Infrastructure, Transport and Housing of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, which expired in 2024.

Furthermore, the mission team was tasked to carry a monitoring and evaluation exercise for projects that were being implemented by the National Development Unit as well as Land Drainage Authority at various locations in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also had the privilege to attend a high-level presentation of the Inception Report on the Land Drainage Master Plan on Wednesday 31 July 2025 in the presence of the Deputy Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues, representatives from the Ministry of National Infrastructure, Land Drainage Authority, Road Development Authority, Commission for Public Infrastructure, Commission for Agriculture, Rodrigues Public Utilities Commission, Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the consultant *Société d'études techniques et économiques* (Setec), amongst others.

The delegation conducted field visits to several key sites across Rodrigues, namely –

- Baie Malgache;
- Camp du Roi;
- Pont-la-Digue;
- Anse aux Anglais ;
- Rivière Anse Raffin, and
- Cascade Victoire 1 et 2, where the consultant, Setec, has installed hydrometric instruments to monitor real-time water flow and rainfall patterns as part of the broader Flood Risk Assessment Strategy.

The team also carried out various site visits for drain works at Quatre Vents, Anse aux Anglais and Acacia, raising of ford at Baie Topaze, Pistache, Mourouk 1 and 2, Diamant 1 and 2, and at Grand Baie.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the contract for the formulation of the Land Drainage Masterplan for Rodrigues has been awarded to Setec, a French consultancy firm. The overall objective of the LDMP is to build climate resilience and reduce Rodrigues' vulnerability to flooding, taking into consideration the island's specificity. The project was launched on 13 March 2025 and the inception report was submitted in July 2025. The launching of three projects, namely –

- (i) Drain works at Quatre Vents Dans Darisse ;
- (ii) Raising of ford at Baie Topaze, and
- (iii) Raising of ford at Pistache was held at Pistache by myself in the presence of the Chief Commissioner and Deputy Chief Commissioner in presence of local inhabitants and representatives from various institutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that the following projects will be implemented by the National Development Unit subject to availability of funds –

- (i) Port Mathurin Phase 3;
- (ii) drain works at Anse aux Anglais;
- (iii) raising of ford at Diamant 1 and 2;
- (iv) raising of ford at Grand Baie;
- (v) raising of ford at Mourouk 1 et 2;
- (vi) raising of ford at Baie du Nord;
- (vii) raising of ford at Rivière Cocos, and
- (viii) drain works at Acacia.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the full details of the above projects.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

2030 RENEWAL ENERGY ROADMAP – IMPLEMENTATION – PROJECTS & FEASIBILITY STUDIES

(No. B/809) 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 Roadmap published in 2022, he will state –

- (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 expressions of interests obtained as at to date regarding ocean renewables like offshore wind farms and wave and tidal power plants, giving details of reports and feasibility studies and recommendations available in relation thereto, if any.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je voudrais tout d’abord informer la Chambre qu’une nouvelle feuille de route pour les énergies renouvelables est actuellement en cours de révision. L’objectif fixé par l’ancien régime était d’atteindre 60 % d’énergie renouvelable dans notre mix énergétique d’ici 2030 parallèlement à la suppression progressive du charbon. Nous sommes actuellement, malheureusement, à moins de 18 % d’énergie renouvelable et cet objectif n’est donc ni réaliste, ni réalisable.

Mon ministère, M. le président, a obtenu l’assistance de l’Agence internationale pour les énergies renouvelables (IRENA) pour la révision de cette feuille de route pour les énergies renouvelables, qui sera également alignée sur le nouveau plan stratégique pour l’énergie renouvelable en cours de finalisation par la MARENA.

Concernant la partie (a) de la question, je suis informé qu’une assistance technique a été obtenue en 2023 auprès de l’université technique danoise pour la réalisation d’une étude de préfaisabilité sur l’énergie éolienne offshore à Maurice. Dans le cadre du Fonds conjoint pour les objectifs de développement durable (ODD), le rapport soumis en décembre 2023 proposait le développement d’un parc éolien offshore fixé à 100 MW au nord de l’île Maurice, entre l’île Plate et l’île Coin de Mire. J’ai également été informé qu’en juin 2024, l’année dernière,

l'université technique danoise a élaboré un avant-projet pour le développement d'un parc éolien offshore de 100 MW.

Cet avant-projet prévoit les spécifications techniques générales relatives aux fondations, aux éoliennes, à l'aménagement d'un parc, au chemin des câbles et au raccordement du réseau. La prochaine étape consiste à réaliser une étude de faisabilité détaillée sur une évaluation préliminaire de l'impact environnemental et social. Mon ministère est actuellement en train d'obtenir le financement nécessaire.

Concernant la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé, M. le président, que MARENA a lancé en 2021 une manifestation d'intérêt pour des services de conseil nécessaire et une étude de faisabilité sur les technologies d'énergies renouvelables océaniques en république de Maurice. Malheureusement, le projet n'a pas eu de suite.

J'ai également été informé que MARENA dans le cadre de son programme national pour les concepts de projets émergents basés sur les technologies d'énergies renouvelables a retenu une candidature d'un projet de conversion de l'énergie thermique des mers (ETM). Ce projet bénéficie du soutien du gouvernement japonais pour le développement d'une installation ETM terrestre à 1 MW, destiné à fournir l'énergie renouvelable et une production d'énergie de base. Hormis ce qui précède, M. le président, j'ai été informé qu'aucune autre étude n'a été réalisée sur les énergies renouvelables maritimes.

M. le président, le nouveau plan stratégique et la feuille de route des énergies renouvelable fourniront une indication des technologies à adopter du calendrier en fonction de leur maturité et leur faisabilité économique et technique.

ENSAFRICA (MAURITIUS) LTD – MS N.A. & MS M.A. – DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT & DISMISSAL – INQUIRIES

(No. B/810) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in relation to the alleged discriminatory treatment and dismissal of Ms N.A. and Ms M.A. by ENSafrica (Mauritius) Ltd., he will state if the matter has been reported to his Ministry and, if so, if inquiries have been initiated thereinto and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Vide reply to PQ B/794)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River!

FISH FARMING – LICENCES – HAZARDS – VANDALISM CASES

(No. B/811) Mr S. Jugurnauth (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to fish farming, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fisheries Planning and Licensing Division, information as to the –

- (a) names of the companies having been issued licences therefor;
- (b) regions where same is currently carried out, indicating the species of fish farmed and the potential hazards these species may pose to the local marine flora and fauna, and
- (c) whether cases of fish escaping from fish cages as a result of vandalism or adverse weather conditions have been reported.

Dr. Boolell: I thank the hon. Member for putting the question. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I seek your indulgence, I will circulate the reply. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary question?

The hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

MORCELLEMENT ST ANDRÉ – FOOTBALL GROUND – RENOVATION

(No. B/812) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Morcellement St André Football Ground, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if consideration will be given for the renovation thereof, including remedying the defective lighting thereat and, if so, indicate the expected start and completion dates thereof.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, as Acting Minister of Local Government, I shall reply to this question. The answer is in the affirmative.

As regard to the lighting system thereat, I am informed that this issue is being addressed. The expected starting date of replacement of flood lights is 04 August 2025. The project is expected to be completed within two months of the award of the contract.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. First Member for Savanne and Black River!

**LE MORNE PUBLIC BEACH – BETWEEN THE RIU & ST REGIS HOTELS –
RENOVATION OF EXISTING AMENITIES**

(No. B/813) 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.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Beach Authority that the toilet block was constructed in 2008 and is fully operational. The building is structurally sound and is maintained by the cleaning contractor Keep Clean Ltd.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard to the provision of electricity, I am informed that the CEB has initiated a project for the installation of a new underground electricity network from the entrance of Le Morne Heritage Site up to Le Morne Brabant public beach. Works are expected to be completed in the near future.

Concerning water supply to the toilet block, I am informed by the Beach Authority that a new CWA meter has been installed on 16 July 2025 and water supply is now available in the toilet block. In case of shortage of water supply, the cleaning contractor together with the CWA provide water tankers regularly to ensure that the toilet block is functional and kept in a clean and hygienic state for the benefit of all beach users.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Beach Authority that there are actually no showers. Consideration is being given for the provision of same in the very near future. Regarding part (b) (ii) of the question, the Beach Authority is working on a project with regard to same. With regard to (b) (iii) of the question, the matter has been discussed to the cleaning contractor for the provision of a decent facility to the toilet cleaner.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, supplementary?

Mr Babajee: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Can the hon. Minister consider to provide a small space or a room for the Ministry of Tourism as this is the place where the kite surfers are growing in numbers and we can have a small rescue team over there?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are planning a site visit very soon with the Ministry of Tourism, the Local Authority to look into all the development of the site.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, now we go to question B/779 to be replied by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Hon. Etwareea, put your question B/779! It was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister but it will be answered by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

AFRICAN UNION – AFRICAN RATING AGENCY – LAUNCHING IN SEPTEMBER 2025

(No. B/779) Mr R. Etwareea (Third 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 initiative taken by the African Union to launch an African rating agency in September 2025, he will state if he proposes to support same.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr D. Ramful): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. At the outset, I wish to inform the House that the Government of Mauritius fully supports the initiatives taken by the African Union to launch an African Credit Rating Agency.

In fact, the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) held in January 2017 in Addis Ababa adopted a decision directing the African Peer Review Mechanism which is a specialised governance entity of the African Union to provide support to African Union Member States in the field of rating agencies.

Consequently, the 6th Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration, ministerial meeting held in July 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya, adopted a Declaration endorsing the establishment of a private sector driven Africa Credit rating Agency based on self-funding.

The establishment of the Africa Credit Rating Agency represents a pivotal initiative which aims at enhancing financial transparency, credibility and investment attractiveness across the African continent. Realising the critical role of reliable credit ratings in fostering economic growth and stability, the Africa Credit Rating Agency seeks to provide independent assessments of credit worthiness tailored for African markets.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 09 June 2025, the Mauritian Embassy in Addis Abeba, transmitted a *note verbale* from the APRM Continental Secretariat *inter alia* inviting interested African Union Member States to submit an Expression of Interest by the deadline of 30 June 2025, on country competitiveness as a primary jurisdiction for the registration of Africa Credit Rating Agency.

The Continental Secretariat of the APRM also encouraged African Union Member States to inform Credit Rating Agencies, operating in their respective countries, to formally expressed their interest for a joint investment for Africa Credit Rating Agency through a potential merger acquisition or technical partnership.

On the basis of high level of consultations that I held with the Ministry of Finance and the Economic Development Board and pursuant to the call issued by the APRM, the Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning, submitted on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, on 30 June 2025, an Expression of Interest to host and register the Africa Credit Rating Agency as a primary jurisdiction in Mauritius.

The Expression of Interest has been submitted to the Mauritius Commercial Bank Capital Markets, a subsidiary of the Mauritius Commercial Bank that has been appointed by the APRM as an independent transaction adviser to facilitate the establishment of the Africa Credit Rating Agency as an independent, credible and private sector-driven entity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the submission of Expression of Interest by Mauritius to host the Africa Credit Rating Agency is testimony of Government's full commitment to enhance the visibility of the Mauritius International Financial Centre on the African continent.

To conclude, in line with our shared commitment to the ideals, principles, and aspirations of the African Union, Mauritius thus fully support the establishment of the Africa Credit Rating Agency.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: This was the last question. Time is over.

Madam Speaker will resume the seat.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

Second Reading

THE FINANCE BILL (No. XVIII of 2025)

&

THE RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. XIX of 2025)

&

THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MEASURES (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL (No. XX of 2025)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following Bills –

- *The Finance Bill (No. XVIII of 2025);*
- *The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2025), and*
- *The Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XX of 2025).*

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, you have the three Bills and now, you have the floor.

(4.46 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (The Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Le 5 juin dernier, c'est-à-dire, 50 jours de cela, le gouvernement de l'Alliance du changement avait présenté son tout premier budget et force est de constater que ceux qui ont fait confiance au grand défenseur de la liberté, ont vite déchanté après l'annonce des mesures. Ces amendements proposés dans ce Finance Bill vont accélérer l'appauvrissement de la population qui a déjà commencé depuis quelques mois.

En cette période hivernale, Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement a jeté un froid parmi la population avec ce premier budget qui laisse un goût amer et qui est mal digéré par le peuple. Je qualifierai ce Finance Bill comme du 'pain rassis' et 'une tasse de thé sans sucre et sans lait', Madame la présidente.

En passant, le sachet de lait se vend aujourd'hui à R 300.

(Interruptions)

Le ministre du Commerce devrait revoir le *Mark-Up* sur ce produit. Certains importateurs...

Madam Speaker: Members, he is only at the beginning.

Mr Lesjongard: ... se tapent des millions sur le dos du peuple. Même la paire de *dholl puri* se vend à R 25 à certains endroits.

An hon. Member: *R 84 millions pour Sona Ori.*

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, je vais maintenant aborder en détail les divers lois clés qui ont été amendées dans ce Finance Bill comme la *Companies Act*, *the Finance and Audit Act* et *l'Income Tax Act*.

Ce Finance Bill vient nous démontrer, encore une fois, qu'il y a un manque de coordination entre ce gouvernement et le service public et je vais citer quelques exemples – la mauvaise gestion du dossier du *Basic Retirement Pension*, le méli-mélo du *Fair Share Contribution* et ce gouvernement a présenté des mesures sans prendre en considération leurs impacts sur la population et sur l'économie de notre pays.

On a annoncé l'abolition de la *Basic Retirement Pension* pour ceux entre 60 et 65 ans sans aucune consultation et étude au préalable et après, on vient mettre en place des comités ministériels qui ont ensuite essayé d'atténuer les effets de cette mesure très impopulaire. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, deux organisations syndicales étrangères, la branche Africaine de l'International Trade Union Confederation et l'IndustriALL Global Union ont dénoncé avec force le fait que ce gouvernement a transgressé la Convention 144 du Bureau International du Travail dont Maurice est signataire. Cette Convention, Madame la présidente, concerne l'obligation de l'État à avoir des consultations tripartites. Ils dénoncent aussi cette décision unilatérale qui va directement impacter non seulement la vie des travailleurs mais aussi des pensionnaires de notre pays. Ils demandent tous au gouvernement de respecter cette Convention et de faire marche arrière sur le *Basic Retirement Pension* et d'engager au plus vite possible des consultations sur le sujet.

Quelle honte pour ceux qui se disent proches des travailleurs et quelle honte pour ce gouvernement qui est composé des parties qui se disent être socialistes!

Madame la présidente, la question qu'il faut se poser cette après-midi est la suivante –

Est-ce un gouvernement qui travaille pour ou contre le peuple ?

Même si le Finance Bill comporte certaines propositions positives, les fondamentaux de ce projet de loi et du budget n'ont pas changé et les vulnérables seront les plus touchés.

Madam Speaker, I refer to section 39 of the Finance Bill which deals with the National Pension Act.

Après les débats du premier *Finance Bill* de ce gouvernement, les membres de l'autre côté la Chambre vont voter en toute conscience l'abolition de la pension de vieillesse pour ceux âgés entre 60 à 65 ans.

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de faire référence à un extrait de la réponse de la PNQ que j'avais posé au ministre de la Sécurité sociale le 8 juillet dernier. Sa réponse démontre clairement l'agenda antisocialiste de ce gouvernement et aussi des conseillers au sein de ce gouvernement.

Il avait dit, je cite –

“Three proposals for Income Support were put forth to the Inter-Ministerial Committee: Rs5,000 Income Support, Rs7,500 Income Support, and Rs10,000 Income Support. And the Financial Advisers – I must stress – had recommended the amount of Rs7,500.

However, Government having heard the people, having heard the difficulties surfaced through the recent weeks, has decided to provide the sum of Rs10,000 as Income Support.”

Donc, à en croire certains membres de ce comité interministériel, une personne de 60 ans peut vivre avec R 5000 *of income support*. Selon ses conseillers, qui, aujourd’hui, – il faut le dire – touchent plus de R 100,000, une personne âgée de 60 ans peut vivre avec R 7500.

Madame la présidente, avec l’augmentation du coût de la vie qui est de plus en plus inquiétante, l’inflation dans les années à venir, les R10 000 ne suffiront pas. Vous êtes en train de forcer les gens, même ceux qui sont malades, à travailler après leurs 60 ans pour pouvoir survivre.

Let me now come to Section 53 which is related to the Social Contribution and the Social Benefits Act.

Lors de son intervention, l’honorable Premier ministre, vendredi dernier, avait affirmé ceci, je cite –

“The previous government had planned to end abruptly the different CSG allowances, namely the CSG Income Allowance, the Child Allowance, the School Allowance, the Maternity Care Allowance and the Pregnancy Care Allowance. As a compassionate Government, we are ensuring that the CSG allowances are renewed and gradually phased out over the next two years.”

Madame la présidente, c’est l’ancien gouvernement qui avait mis en place ces allocations et il n’y avait aucun plan d’enlever ces allocations. *Now, if you are really a compassionate Government, then, why are you phasing out the CSG?* Quelle contradiction !

La CSG, Madame la présidente, avait sa raison d’être. C’était un système plus juste qui a permis au gouvernement de générer des milliards. Avec ces milliards, nous avons non seulement augmenté la pension, mais également introduit des allocations, par exemple, qui a permis à un citoyen mauricien qui touchait, allons remonter jusqu’à 2014, R 1500 par mois, de toucher graduellement R 20,000 comme revenu aujourd’hui ! Par exemple, le *Child Allowance* était une mesure réfléchie et sociale et dans un esprit d’alléger le budget d’un couple...

An hon. Member: Koz reward money!

Mr Jhummun: Sattar!

Mr Lesjongard: ...ayant un projet de fonder une famille.

Ms Anquetil: *Poz PNQ lor reward money!*

Mr Lesjongard: Tout comme d'autres allocations qui étaient bénéfiques à la population.

Dans ce budget, malheureusement, un certain nombre de ces allocations seront soit réduites ou éventuellement éliminées. Vous allez encore nous sortir cette fameuse phrase, '*la caisse vid'*'!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *Pena nanye dan la caisse!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Pena mem fonds dan la caisse!*

Mr Lesjongard: Mais, aujourd'hui, ...

An hon. Member: *Zot inn pren la caisse la zot inn ale!*

Mr Jhummun: *Zot inn devid li zot inn ale!*

Mr Lesjongard: Aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Vous les...

Mr Lesjongard: Pas un seul Mauricien ne croit à votre argument que les caisses sont vides !

(Interruptions)

Sauf vous au sein de ce gouvernement.

Mr Jhummun: Sonah-Ori !

Mr Lesjongard: Aujourd'hui, une très grande majorité de la population croit fermement que ce gouvernement protège les intérêts de ce qui possède au détriment de la classe moyenne.

(Interruptions)

Cette politique va malheureusement créer l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres.

An hon. Member: *Twa ki pe dir sa la?*

An hon. Member: Sonah-Ori! Sonah-Ori!

Mr Lesjongard: Car, Madame la présidente, nous savons tous les efforts qui ont été faits pour diminuer cet écart par l'ancien gouvernement.

Pour soutenir cet argument, je fais référence au rapport publié par *Statistics Mauritius* en février 2025 sous le titre *Poverty Analysis 2023*. Ce même bureau de statistiques qui a été très critiqué par l'actuel gouvernement ! Ce rapport confirme – et c'est vérifiable – que pendant ces dix dernières années, nous avons grandement progressé dans la lutte contre la pauvreté dans le pays.

(Interruptions)

Et cela grâce aux allocations et à l'État providence.

(Interruptions)

Ce gouvernement sera responsable de l'appauvrissement de la population.

An hon. Member: *Dix ans, pani nay ba!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, la valeur de la roupie dégringole, les prix des produits flambent, la pension et les allocations sociales disparaissent. Aujourd'hui, les PME sont taxées et les intérêts sur les prêts augmentent. Et nous ne sommes qu'au début du mandat de ce gouvernement !

Pendant ce temps, on nous demande, encore et encore, de serrer la ceinture. Mais jusqu'où devons-nous serrer la ceinture ?

(Interruptions)

Ms Savabaddy: *Ori so kaba pena sintir!*

An hon. Member: *Pena sintir!*

Mr Jhummun: *Ori so sintir inn kasse!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, les promesses faites dans le manifeste électoral des partis...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: *Pena sintir!*

Mr Lesjongard: The more they shout, the more I speak louder, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: No, I...

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Les promesse faites dans le manifeste électoral des partis de gouvernement pour rétablir le pouvoir d'achat...

An hon. Member: Sattar!

Mr Mohamed: *To pe krwar seki to pe dir la?*

Mr Lesjongard: ...ne sont que des illusions.

An hon. Member: Sattar!

Mr Lesjongard: Vous avez tourné le dos au peuple et vous n'êtes plus un gouvernement crédible!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Assez!

Mr Jhummun: *Twa ki credible?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Je vais maintenant commenter la clause 4 du *Finance Bill*.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Aumeer: *60-0 pe dir twa!*

Mr Lesjongard: La *Banking Act* ainsi que *the Bills of Exchange Act* sont en train d'être amendés pour, je pense, améliorer le marché d'échanges. Ce gouvernement avait critiqué la politique de l'ancien régime à ce sujet.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: Avec raison! Avec raison!

Mr Lesjongard: Depuis leur prise de pouvoir, il y a eu cinq interventions de la Banque de Maurice sur le marché d'échanges pour un total de 70 millions de dollars.

An hon. Member: *Devaliz la Banque Maurice!*

Mr Lesjongard: Et les résultats, le dollar ne cesse de grimper et l'euro est aujourd'hui à R 53, Madame la présidente. Chiffres record sous ce gouvernement. L'impact sur l'importation sera terrible et l'effet cascade sur les prix de nos supermarchés se fait déjà sentir.

Concernant le secteur de la construction, la situation actuelle est très difficile. Difficile pour un secteur qui est passé pendant dix ans par deux lockdown et qu'ils ont survécu.

Mais, c'est un secteur qui aussi a eu une croissance de l'ordre de 28 %, Madame la présidente.

Aujourd'hui, ce secteur est aux abois de par les mesures annoncées dans le budget et ne tardera à licencier des employés. À la clause 7(3) du *Finance Bill* qui concerne le *grading of contractors*, le gouvernement décide de revenir à l'ancien système de *grading* des compagnies de construction. Ce système avait été revu et les contracteurs classés en trois catégories. Cela afin de permettre aux petits contracteurs d'avoir accès à des gros projets. Aujourd'hui, à cause de leur chiffre d'affaires et avec cet amendement, ces compagnies seront condamnées, si je peux utiliser ce terme, à *tal lame* à des gros contracteurs. Avec ce budget, ces mêmes gros opérateurs sont dans l'inquiétude vu l'absence d'investissement dans des gros chantiers pour les prochaines années à venir.

La grande réforme de l'amélioration du trafic routier prévoyait plus d'accessibilité grâce à un réseau routier moderne et un système moderne de transport en commun. Qu'est-ce que le *Finance Bill* vient nous proposer pour diminuer le trafic routier : pas d'extension du métro, deux projets de routes qui seront mis en chantier dans trois ans et pour faire simple, rendre les voitures inaccessibles aux Mauriciens en augmentant la taxe sur les voitures.

Je viens maintenant à notre secteur touristique et la question est : est-ce que ce gouvernement a une vision pour ce secteur ? Ce qu'on veut savoir de ce gouvernement est : quelle est la stratégie pour nous rendre plus compétitif vis-à-vis des pays comme les Seychelles et les Maldives ? L'introduction du *tourist fee* à clause 58 du *Finance Bill* va obliger les directeurs de *tourist accommodation* respectives à verser un *tourist fee* par nuitée pour chaque touriste ayant séjourné chez lui en euro, s'il vous plaît, chaque mois à la MRA. Pour les gros opérateurs, ce ne sera sans doute pas un souci parce qu'ils ont les moyens mais qu'en est-il aux petits opérateurs ? Pourquoi ne pas prélever ces sommes directement à leur arrivée. Le système de paiement préconisé dans le *Finance Bill* va définitivement promouvoir des magouilles. Certains opérateurs touristiques vont collecter le *tourist fee* et vont peut-être déclarer moins et dans la pratique ce sera difficile pour la MRA de vérifier les comptes.

And to add insult to injury, Madame la présidente, comme si cela n'était pas suffisant d'augmenter les prix des billets d'avion entre Maurice et Rodrigues, cette fois comme mesure de redressement et de changement, que propose le *Finance Bill* à la clause 12 ? On va amender la *Customs Tariff Act* pour que tous ceux qui voyagent entre Maurice et Rodrigues paient la VAT sur les produits achetés dans les magasins *Duty Free*.

Et maintenant, j'en viens au *Fair Share Contribution*. Dans le discours du budget, le Premier ministre avait annoncé une taxe de 10 % pour ceux qui touchent entre R 12 et R 24 millions par an et 20 % pour ceux qui touchent plus que R 24 millions par an, et comme par magie cette partie du discours du budget avait disparu quelques heures plus tard et aujourd'hui, c'est une *Fair Share Contribution* unilatérale de 15 % pour ceux qui touchent plus de R 12 millions annuellement soit une hausse de 5 % pour une catégorie et une baisse de 5 % pour une autre catégorie. Pourquoi ce changement ? Qu'est-ce qui ou plutôt qui a influencé cette décision ? Je laisse la population en juger par elle-même.

Madame Speaker, previously this tax was known under a different name, that is, the Solidarity Income Tax and was repealed in January 2012 and the tax rate applicable was 10%. The Fair Share Contribution would include dividends received from a resident company and/or a cooperative society while dividends as item 1 of Sub-Part B of the Second Schedule of the Income Tax Act is exempt and I expect Prime Minister to clarify this inconsistency when he intervenes later. There is also, Madam Speaker, a possibility of double taxation as dividend is derived from profit of the company which is subject to tax at 15%. Under the Fair Share Contribution, the same dividend is being taxed, now, in the hands of the shareholder.

Now with regard to companies, the introduction for Fair Share Contribution for companies having chargeable income of more than Rs20 million, 5% applies to domestic companies and 2% to export companies and their Fair Share Contribution is to be paid in VAT returns on a quarterly basis. It will be an additional burden. It would have been much simpler to handle the Fair Share Contribution for those companies under the Advance Payment System of the income tax rather than declaring it in the VAT returns, Madam Speaker.

With regard to PART XIID, dealing with financial assistance, I believe that this fiscal policy may have negative social implications or disproportionately affect certain group of people and I consider this measure also as an antisocial measure.

I now refer to Section 150G which deals with the Housing Loan Relief Scheme. The decrease in the Housing Loan Relief Scheme could significantly impact low to medium income

families who very often rely on such programmes for home ownership. This change will no doubt exacerbate housing affordability issues and make it more challenging for these groups to secure financing and achieve stable housing, Madam Speaker.

When one takes a closer look at the new tax rate, and this is important, for example, individuals earning over Rs1 million will now automatically be placed in the 20% tax bracket. Under the previous tax structure, the 20% rate applied only to those with income not exceeding Rs2,390,000. This measure, and mark my words, will again affect the middle class, rendering them more vulnerable and contributing to their financial decline, Madam Speaker.

Let me now come to section 61, concerning Value Added Tax. Madam Speaker, businesses with a turnover of taxable supplies amounting to Rs3 million are now required to apply for compulsory VAT registration, whereas the previous threshold was Rs6 million. I have said it and I say it again, this measure will negatively impact on businesses and in the majority of cases, that burden will be passed over to consumers.

Pendant que la colère gronde et qu'il n'est plus apparent pour qui roule ce gouvernement, on va amender la *Consumer Protection Act*. Pour quoi faire ? Pour permettre de veiller sur les achats en ligne. C'est un pas en avant de légiférer les *online transactions* sur les réseaux sociaux, mais je pense qu'il faudrait rendre obligatoire l'enregistrement de tous les opérateurs ou individus qui font de la vente en ligne. Et j'attire l'attention de la Chambre que par exemple, concernant la vente en ligne des suppléments médicaux ou alimentaires, aujourd'hui il n'y a aucun contrôle.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to section 50P concerning Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-up Tax (QDMT Tax). A Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-up Tax is being imposed on a resident parent or subsidiary of a large multinational enterprise to raise their effective tax rate to 15%. The OECD has developed the Global Anti-Base Erosion Rules (GloBE) to ensure that Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) having annual consolidated revenue of 750 million euros or more, are taxed on their global income at a minimum rate of 15%. If a resident subsidiary of such Multinational Enterprises is being taxed at an effective rate of less than 15% in a jurisdiction, the application of the GloBE Rules will imply that another tax jurisdiction – usually the jurisdiction where the multinational is headquartered – will collect the difference in tax.

The QDMT is going to adversely impact on the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Mauritius International Financial Centre. It will also create frustrations among international

financial centres, while at the same time, distort, I believe, diplomatic ties and bilateral relationships between Mauritius and countries in Europe where most of those Multinational Enterprises come from. The QDMT, as a disincentive, will hinder the relocation of MNEs headquartering and various other offshore structures in Mauritius and there is significant risk of many existing offshore corporate structures exiting Mauritius towards a more attractive international financial centre such as for example, Dubai or Singapore.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de terminer sur cette note. Le *Finance Bill* sera malheureusement voté et les mesures budgétaires seront mises en place. Je ne vais pas retourner sur les effets de ces mesures sur la population dans son ensemble. S'il y a une chose – et je pèse mes mots quand je le dis – que la population doit prendre en considération, c'est que ce projet confirme le démantèlement de l'Etat providence dans notre pays.

An hon. Member: *Akoz zot inn kokin!*

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, un vote en faveur de ce texte de loi va graver les noms de ceux qui ont voté pour, comme ceux qui ont arraché la pension des mains d'honnêtes travailleurs et qui va plonger la classe moyenne et les plus vulnérables dans une profonde pauvreté. Vous allez condamner des centaines de milliers de familles mauriciennes à vivre dans l'endettement et la précarité pendant votre mandat et j'espère...

Madam Speaker: Pas le mien! Pas le mien!

Mr Lesjongard: J'ai le souhait que vous allez en prendre conscience rapidement et revoir certaines de ces décisions.

J'en ai terminé, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: *Merci. Merci beaucoup*, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Minister of Labour!

(4.28 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madam Speaker, before answering to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, may I start by commending the hon. Prime Minister today, for doing away with the practice that was established by the MSM Government, which is to lump all type of legislation in the Finance Bill, and that went against the ruling delivered by the late hon. Kailash Purryag on 21 July 2009. And I think it is worth reminding what he said –

“In the light of the foregoing principles and practices, I rule that the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill should not contain provisions intended to make permanent changes in existing laws unless they are essentially connected with national finance, or, are consequential upon, or incidental to the taxation proposals and may also include provisions that are sufficiently closely related to those matters within the spirit and scope of the Bill as defined in the long title.”

And this is why today, we have a Finance Bill which deals with all financial measures announced in the budget and then we have another Miscellaneous Provision Bill. The MSM did the contrary and as a result, I remember – and the hon. Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet then – we used to have Finance Bill amending 90+ legislations in 300 pages long document, which no one read most of the time, only to find out that surreptitiously, certain amendments had been proposed and voted and not sufficiently debated in this House. So, we are doing away with this practice, Madam Speaker, and that is welcomed.

L'honorable leader de l'Opposition parle d'appauvrissement de la population. Où étiez-vous lorsque votre gouvernement a donné R 89 millions à Madame Sonah-Ori? Ça ce n'est pas l'appauvrissement ? Quand votre gouvernement a donné plus de R 150 millions à M. Hajee Abdoula, ça ce n'était pas l'appauvrissement de la population ? Les millions donnés à Maradiva, pas d'appauvrissement ?

Hon. Members: Milliards!

Mr Uteem: Les milliards donnés...

(Interruptions)

...à ceux qui sont tout autour, qui ont bénéficié du *MIC* et les R 160 millions de *reward money*. Donc, vous êtes très mal placé, M. l'honorable leader de l'opposition pour parler de l'appauvrissement de la population.

Vous parlez des changements qu'on a effectués suite au budget. A l'annonce du budget, on a mis sur pied deux comités. Oui, effectivement on a écouté, on a trouvé qu'il y a certaines personnes qui sont les plus vulnérables –

- les femmes au foyer ;
- les personnes qui ont travaillé trop dure dans la vie ;
- les gens qui touchent moins de R 10 000, et

- les familles qui touchent moins de R 20 000.

Et on a fait un effort. On a fait un effort et on va leur donner un *special allowance* de R 10 000. Qu'y a-t-il de méchant dedans ? Pourquoi prenez-vous objection à cela?

Bien sûr si demain on a les moyens de faire plus, on va faire plus, mais aujourd'hui vous avez laissé les caisses vides. Pourquoi dites-vous que les caisses n'étaient pas vides?

Peut-être que je dois vous rafraîchir la mémoire et vous dire ce que votre propre ministre avait annoncé dans cette Chambre.

An hon. Member: *Savat dodo?*

Mr Uteem: Le ministre *Savat dodo*, le ministre des Finances, en réponse à une question parlementaire du 24 octobre 2023, je cite –

« M. le président, le montant total déboursé pour le paiement de ces prestations est d'environ R 25 milliards. Il ne reste donc rien par rapport aux contributions de la CSG. »

Je le redis –

« Il ne reste donc rien (...). »

Quand il ne reste rien, cela veut dire que la caisse est vide !

(Interruptions)

Votre propre ministre des Finances a dit, qu'il a tout balayé. Tout pris !

Mr Juman: *Pena* la caisse!

Mr Uteem: Les R 25 milliards qu'il a ponctionnés des salariés sous la Contribution sociale généralisée...

Mr Jhummun: La caisse *nay ba*!

Mr Uteem: ...il a tout balayé! C'est pourquoi on vient dire que la caisse est vide. Et, aujourd'hui, vous avez l'audace une fois de plus de remettre en question le fait que la caisse n'est plus vide.

Quand les autres parlent du fait qu'il n'y a plus de caisse, c'est parce que quand le Premier ministre avait répondu aux questions, il a montré que ce n'étaient pas R 25 milliards qui avaient été dépensés, c'est aussi R 3,3 milliards et R 7 milliards en plus. C'est-à-dire un total de R 10,2 milliards en plus de la CSG qui n'avait plus rien. Donc, vous avez pris la caisse aussi et vous êtes partis avec.

Madame la présidente, le leader de l'opposition nous parle de *Fair Share Contribution* et il nous dit qu'on avait annoncé dans le budget qu'il y aura une contribution de 10 % pour ceux qui touchent entre R 12 millions et R 24 millions, alors que ceux qui touchent plus de R 24 millions auront à payer 20 %. C'est vrai, c'était dans le discours budgétaire. Mais ce qu'il ne dit pas, c'est qu'au paragraphe 272, il est écrit, et je cite –

“272. A high-income earner, earning annual net income exceeding Rs 12 million, inclusive of dividend income, will be required to pay a Fair Share Contribution at the rate of 15 percent of his chargeable income (...).”

Donc, c'était déjà annoncé que ce sera 15%. Oui, il y avait une contradiction. Ailleurs, c'était 10 % et 20 %, mais on ne change pas les règles du jeu. On vient juste clarifier ce qui a été déjà dit au paragraphe 272 du discours budgétaire.

Le leader de l'opposition nous dit qu'on va taxer deux fois les dividendes. Mais, là aussi, il a la mémoire courte. Lorsqu'il était dans le gouvernement en 2022 et lorsque le gouvernement d'alors avait introduit la *Solidarity Levy*, la *Solidarity Levy* incluait les dividendes. Si c'était plus de R 3 millions, vous deviez payer la *Solidarity Levy* de 15 % en plus sur les dividendes. Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait une année plus tard, en 2023 ? Sous pression du gros capital, ils ont aboli la *Solidarity Levy*. Et, aujourd'hui, quand on met un *Fair Share Contribution*, ils nous pointent du doigt et ils nous disent qu'on est en train de protéger les riches ? Alors qu'en 2023, l'ancien gouvernement avait aboli la *Solidarity Levy*.

Le leader de l'opposition nous parle de la stratégie qu'on a pour le secteur touristique. Je ne vais pas répondre à la place de l'honorable ministre du Tourisme, mais comme tout le monde, tous les Mauriciens ont lu dans les journaux aujourd'hui que l'arrivée touristique du 1^{er} janvier 2025 au 15 juillet 2025 s'élevait à 722 184 touristes, alors que pour la même période, l'année dernière, c'était 700 880. Donc, comparé à votre gouvernement, notre gouvernement est en train d'augmenter le nombre d'arrivées touristiques. Donc, pourquoi vous dites qu'on est en train de tuer le secteur et quelle est notre stratégie touristique ? En tout cas, c'est 'une stratégie' qui marche parce qu'on a plus de touristes aujourd'hui qu'on avait sous votre gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, sur le sujet de l'*income tax*, je dois vous dire que le leader de l'opposition est un peu confus parce que, d'une part, il nous dit qu'on ne taxe pas suffisamment les riches, qu'on fait la part des choses pour les riches. Et puis, dans la même phrase, il nous

dit : ‘Ah, vous êtes en train de tuer la classe moyenne. Vous êtes en train d’imposer trop de taxes à la classe moyenne.’

Mr Jhummun: *Pa’nn konpran nanye!*

Mr Uteem: Comme l’avait dit l’honorable Premier ministre la dernière fois, vous ne pouvez pas tout avoir. Je ne vais pas reprendre l’expression qu’il avait dite avec la crémaillère, mais il faut faire un choix. Il faut faire un choix dans la vie.

Le choix qu’on a fait, Madame la présidente, et c’est bon de le rappeler, se trouve à la page 54 du discours budgétaire au paragraphe 295 –

“(…) raising the tax exemption threshold by Rs 110,000, that is, by 28 percent.

(…) removing 44,000 individuals from the tax net.”

44,000 personnes qui payaient la taxe, sous le gouvernement MSM, ne payent plus la taxe sous ce gouvernement.

“(…) 75,000 individuals earning between Rs 500,000 and Rs 1 million in a year will actually be paying less income tax; and

As a result of the measures I have introduced, 81 percent of employees in our country will not pay any income tax.”

C’est cela la réforme fiscale : exonérer un maximum de personnes. 80 % des travailleurs de ce pays ne vont pas payer la taxe et ceux qui ont les moyens, ceux qui touchent plus de R 12 millions par an, ça va être imposable, 15 % additionnel à partir des R 12 millions. Donc, moi, j’ai absolument aucun problème avec la fiscalité. Au contraire, je pense que c’est une très bonne chose pour les personnes au bas de l’échelle en termes de fiscalité.

L’honorable leader de l’opposition n’a pas parlé du *Fair Share Contribution* concernant les entreprises, mais il est de mon devoir de faire le ressortir parce qu’il y avait eu tellement d’articles négatifs dans la presse et sur les réseaux sociaux à l’effet que soi-disant le gouvernement était en train de revoir sa copie pour favoriser les entreprises. Que nenni, Madame la présidente. Jamais ! On n’a pas touché au *Fair Share Contribution* que vont payer les entreprises, les compagnies. Ils continueront à payer ce qui a été annoncé dans le budget, jusqu’à 5 % pour les compagnies qui touchent plus de R 24 millions.

La seule clarification qu’on a faite, c’est concernant les banques. On a clarifié que le montant maximum que les banques vont payer – parce qu’elles payent aussi d’autres taxes et

pas que le *Fair Share Contribution* – c’est 35 % sur le bénéfice qu’elles font avec les transactions de *domestic banking*. C’est tout. C’est le seul changement qu’on ait fait par rapport à ce qui a été dit dans le budget. Cela a été fait pour clarifier. Aucun *backpedalling*, aucun retournement de veste malgré la campagne mensongère qui a été en dehors de cette Chambre.

Madame la présidente, j’ai souri parce que je m’attendais à ce que le leader de l’opposition, visiblement mal renseigné...

Mr Etwareea: Il est dépassé !

Mr Uteem: ...tombe dans le piège du *Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-up Tax*.

Mr Etwareea: Il ne comprend pas !

Mr Uteem: Non, il crie au scandale, la fin de notre secteur offshore. Grand défenseur du secteur financier ! Mais ce qu’il ne dit pas, Madame la présidente, c’est quand il était au Cabinet, le ministre des Finances dans le Finance Bill de 2022, qu’est-ce qu’ils ont fait ? Ils ont, en 2022, déjà introduit dans le *Income Tax Act*, la notion de *qualified domestic minimum top-up tax*. Ils avaient déjà parlé de *Global Anti-Base Erosion Model Rules developed by OECD*. Donc, aujourd’hui, ce qu’on est en train de promulguer, c’est un concept qu’ils avaient déjà mis dans la loi, dans le *Income Tax Act*, depuis 2022, et pourquoi l’ont-ils fait ? Parce qu’on est sous pression des organisations internationaux : l’OCDE, le G20, qui forcent à tous les pays d’avoir un minimum de 15 % – qu’est-ce que cela veut dire ?

À Maurice, le taux général est de 15 %, mais il y a plusieurs pays et il y a plusieurs entreprises qui paient moins de 15 %, par exemple : les *global business companies*, certains d’entre eux paient seulement 3 %. Donc, avec cette loi qui a été adoptée par plusieurs pays, notamment l’Afrique du Sud, l’Angleterre, si vous avez une multinationale sud-africaine, par exemple, qui investit à Maurice et qui paie seulement 3 % de taxe, et bien, en Afrique du Sud, elle va payer 12 %. Donc, nous, à Maurice, on a un manque à gagner de 12 % de taxe parce que sous cette convention qu’on appelle le *Pillar Two*, le pays d’origine va taxer la différence entre 15 % et le montant qu’il paie à Maurice.

Donc, pourquoi renier notre souveraineté sur des 12 % de taxe ? Pourquoi les donner à l’Afrique du Sud ? C’est cela que cette loi vienne dire : c’est que maintenant on pourra, à Maurice – dans les cas exceptionnels des multinationales qui ont un chiffre d’affaires de 650 millions d’euros – les taxer jusqu’à 15 %. Bien sûr, on a écouté ce que le secteur financier nous a dit mais dans le projet de loi lui-même, comme l’a si bien expliqué l’honorable Premier

ministre lorsqu'il a introduit ce projet de loi, on a dit qu'à travers des *regulations* on pourra exonérer certaines entreprises.

On a dit qu'à travers des *regulations* on pourra avoir des mesures pour contrecarrer l'effet que cette taxe d'un minimum de 15 % aura sur les entreprises. On est conscient et on a eu des discussions avec les capitaines de l'industrie. On s'est assis, on a parlé, et avant de passer le projet de loi, ils ont dit qu'ils sont d'accord. Ils sont d'accord, il y a un dialogue, ils vont parler avec le ministre des Secteurs financiers, ils vont parler avec le *Junior Minister* des Finances et à travers des *regulations*, s'il y a lieu d'exonérer certaines sociétés de cette taxe minimum, on le fera. Madame la présidente, je crois que j'ai répondu à la plupart des points soulevés par l'honorable leader de l'opposition.

J'aimerais juste faire un dernier point sur quelque chose qui est dans le *Finance Bill* mais que, malheureusement, le Premier ministre, il y avait tellement de choses à dire, n'a peut-être pas assez mis l'accent dessus. Je veux en parler parce que c'est quelque chose qui nous tient, au sein d'un gouvernement, très à cœur. Vous vous souviendrez, Madame la présidente, que ceux qui bénéficient d'une pension : qui sont en retraite ou bien qui ont un handicap, des veuves, des orphelins, cette pension est automatiquement coupée s'ils passent plus de six mois en dehors de Maurice. Et dans le discours budgétaire, le Premier ministre a déjà annoncé que cette règle ne s'appliquera plus dans les cas des personnes qui suivent des traitements à l'étranger.

Mais après l'annonce de cette mesure budgétaire, on a reçu des représentations de la part des personnes qui reçoivent une allocation. En particulier, il y a une personne qui est aveugle, qui est une fille et parce qu'elle est en train de poursuivre ses études à l'étranger, en France, elle ne peut pas être physiquement à Maurice. Et malheureusement, les autorités ont appliqué la loi et ont décidé de lui réclamer la différence de toutes les contributions qui lui ont été faites par le ministère de la Sécurité sociale alors qu'elle étudiait à l'étranger. Donc, elle s'est dit ce n'est pas possible!

As a caring Government, le Premier ministre est venu maintenant dans le *Finance Bill* avec une provision : non seulement les personnes qui sont à l'étranger pour des raisons médicales mais aussi celles qui sont en train d'étudier à l'étranger, à elles aussi on ne leur coupera pas leur pension si elles ne sont pas à Maurice pour plus de six mois. Et on est allé encore plus loin, et on a dit que pour avoir un peu plus de flexibilité, on va permettre à celles, *for good cause shown*, une fois ; on ne va pas appliquer la règle si elles viennent nous prouver,

good cause shown, pourquoi elles n'ont pas pu rester plus de six mois à Maurice – donc, *for a one-off*. Et moi, je pense que cette mesure méritait d'être soulignée.

Avec ceci, Madame la présidente, *I commend the Bill to the House*.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, I think we can have a break now for tea and we will come back in 30 minutes.

At 4.48 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.34 p.m., with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues, Mr Edouard. The floor is yours.

(5.34. p.m.)

Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for giving me the floor to intervene for the first time on the Finance Bill.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I will comment on some Acts that will be amended in the Finance Bill, together with the amendments proposed to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

We have been warned of the technicalities of these amendments. So, I will try to be cautious. I will try my utmost best not to be out of subject. I will comment on some of these amendments from a layman perspective before coming to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

First, the Construction Industry Authority Act. The amendment in connection with government-owned companies; I think it is important. You know, contrary to popular perception, when properly managed, government-owned companies help a lot in saving money and creating jobs. The new grading of contractors gives better opportunities to small contractors who are otherwise swallowed by large contractors. It might be a good thing for Rodrigues' contractors indeed.

We also note the amendments to the Consumer Protection Act, Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act, Essential Commodities Act, Fair Trading Act, Higher Purchase and Credit Sale Act and these amendments are most welcomed. Empowering authorised officers will no doubt ensure better control of the widespread abuses we are now

witnessing and this will benefit consumers. The amendment in connection with online transactions is also very important and maybe more control is needed. So many scammers, fake traders and fake goods are up there.

Before taking the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, I would like to say one word about the National Savings Fund Act. I think there is some confusion about the retirement age of employees. I have seen in the press, some are saying that with the amendment, an employee will no longer be able to retire at the age of 60 or before. I don't know if I have missed something. I understand that with the amendment, section 2 (b) (ia), is now, I quote –

“in respect of a person aged 60 or more, retirement, or otherwise ceasing to work, on or before [the pension age].”

Perhaps this needs more clarification because you know the BRP was previously known as the Old Age Pension. When it has become the Basic Retirement Pension, it is being confused with the retirement pension of employees. So, maybe the confusion is there. I don't know, maybe this needs clarification.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. One is contributory and the other one is not.

Mr Edouard: Yes.

Madam Speaker: One is universal, the other one is contributory.

Mr Edouard: Yes.

Madam Speaker: If I may.

Mr Edouard: Madame la présidente, maintenant je viens au *Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act*. Avec cette loi qui consacre l'autonomie de Rodrigues, une nouvelle relation a été introduite dans la république; une relation de partenariat qui s'élève des spécificités d'une partie de la république.

Madame la présidente, c'est dans l'exercice de la gestion qu'on acquiert la maturité. Rectifier le tir, se donner le moyen pour atteindre les objectifs fixés fait partie de la normalité qu'on a la responsabilité de gouverner. Parfois cela ne va pas sans souffrance et humiliation.

Madame la présidente, certains à Rodrigues font preuve de démagogie en faisant croire que les amendements proposés par l'honorable Premier ministre portent atteinte à l'autonomie ; tout en imputant cette soi-disant atteinte à l'autonomie aux actuels gouvernants régionaux. Comme l'a souligné l'honorable Premier ministre, ces amendements interviennent dans le

cadre de la réintroduction du *PBB (Performance Based Budgeting)* pour que Rodrigues soit aligné sur l'amendement de la *Finance and Audit Act*, voté le 18 mars dernier.

Madam Speaker, the present Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill has the same Explanatory Memorandum as the Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill of March 2025; to provide for, I quote –

- “(a) the introduction of Performance-Based Budgeting (PBB) so as to –
 - (i) link funds with results and outcomes, and improve operational efficiency in the administration of Rodrigues; and
 - (ii) enforce greater fiscal responsibility, accountability and transparency;
- (b) the preparation of estimates of expenditure based on programmes and sub-programmes on a 3-fiscal year rolling basis, specifying the resources to be allocated, the outcomes to be achieved and outputs to be delivered.”

Madame la présidente, on se rappellera que ce n'est pas la première fois qu'un tel amendement est apporté à la *Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act* et c'était justement pour introduire le *Programme-Based Budgeting* en 2009, un concept introduit sous l'actuel Premier ministre, le PBB qui a été abandonné après et qui a été réintroduit cette année.

Madam Speaker, the Additional Stimulus Package (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. I of 2009), made provision for the introduction of the PBB in Rodrigues in 2010 and this required an amendment to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

We can read in the Hansard, Debate of 07 April 2009, I quote –

“The draft amendments to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act have received the concurrence of the RRA in accordance with Section 75E of the Constitution. A certificate to that effect from the Chairperson of the RRA addressed to the hon. Speaker has been laid on the Table of the National Assembly on 31 March 2009.”

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister for consulting the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, which he said is agreeable to the amendments. The hon. Prime Minister did it though he had no obligation to do so. If my reading is correct as far as section 75E of the Constitution is concerned and the fact that he has the majority to go without.

I think PBB is maybe the best thing to do. It focuses on results, on activities completed and benefits for end users. Fundings are allocated based on predetermined results related to specific objectives. Progressive measure to demonstrate proper goals are being met. It is important to know how government policies translate into spending. It is about transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. Wastes must be eliminated. We must ensure that funds are allocated to programmes that deliver value for money.

Madame la présidente, le *PBB* appelle à la responsabilité et à la transparence. La transparence accroît la confiance du public en s'assurant des résultats tangibles.

Ces amendements arrivent dans un contexte bien précis. *I think that it is imputing motives to the hon. Prime Minister; motives that are unwarranted to think these amendments have other objectives than to introduce the PBB.* Ces amendements, Madame la présidente, en appellent certainement d'autres pour éliminer les obstacles qui sabotent l'*implementing capacity* de Rodrigues et influencent les résultats.

Ceci n'étant peut-être pas le forum approprié, nous aurons certes l'occasion d'y revenir. Je ne vais pas être plus long, Madame la présidente. Mes chers collègues, je vous remercie.

Madam Speaker: Merci.

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

(5.45 p.m.)

Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this must be the first time I think in the parliamentary history that the Finance Bill is being introduced in such haste.

Hon. Members: *Ein?*

Mr A. Duval: Such haste between the moment it is introduced to the House, only one week's notice to amend no less than 60 pieces of legislations.

(Interruptions)

Of course, you will no doubt note haste because important documents, including the explanatory notes and existing legal provisions, were only furnished to the House on 25 July, a few days ago. You may know, Madam Speaker, that for previous Finance Bills, including the last one, at least 12 days were given to hon. Members to study it together with the accompanying documents.

To make matters worse, Madam Speaker, this Finance Bill is riddled with errors. Numerous provisions do not even tally with the explanatory notes. I will come to them. It is an inescapable sign of the amateurism that has plagued this entire budgetary exercise. Even more, Madam Speaker, the Budget Speech, as read by the hon. Prime Minister on Budget Day, differs materially from the actual content of the Finance Bill on several key issues.

It begs the question: who prepared the Finance Bill? I will ask: Are these the so-called Senior Advisers that have seen their pay rise from Rs90,000 to now a staggering Rs230,000, plus 25% gratuity, amounting to Rs287,000 a month? Are they the ones who have prepared it?

(Interruptions)

If they have, they should be let go!

(Interruptions)

The very spirit, Madam Speaker, of reading a Budget Speech...

Mr Jhummun: *To pe insilte lintelizans banla!*

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ...to the nation is to bring hope to showcase well thought, coherent policy to inspire confidence. Instead, this budget and this Finance Bill have done the opposite. They have generated confusion, contradiction and uncertainty. Take, for example, clause 29 of the Finance Bill. We talk of property taxes on foreign investors. The initial policy regarding foreign investment, as it was read in the Budget Speech and as it was contained in the Annexes, was far worse than what was actually made out in the Finance Bill.

I had myself raised the alarm over the introduction of a 30% capital gain tax on the transfer of residential property to non-citizens which is found on page 42 of the Annex, at paragraph 23 (b)(iii) in addition to the doubling of land transfer tax and registration duty for promoters and foreign buyers. These measures were to come into force immediately upon the publication of the Finance Act without any transition period – a reckless move to destabilise the property market overnight. There were countless number of applications, hundreds on the desk of the EDB waiting for approval. Applications where commitments were already done, and these persons were now made to accept such horrendous increases overnight.

An hon. Member: Check your facts!

Mr A. Duval: I checked my facts because they were to take effect as from publication of the Gazette. This is how it was read in the Annex.

(Interruptions)

I stated the relevant paragraph; I invite hon. Members to go and read it. So, they were to come immediately upon the publication of the Finance Act. So, we scared away investors. We detailed a hostile policy to foreign investment. We stated, ‘We will tax you. We will introduce capital gains as a record 30%. We do not care if your application has sat for 8-9 months on the EDB’s desk. You are also going to be made to foot the Bill.’ That is what was stated. Fortunately, it has been changed. But it is the first time that a budgetary exercise, instead of promoting a reasoned fiscal policy and measures that tie the nation together, had, in fact, the contrary effect. It is a good thing then that the Government has backtracked on this. It is a good thing that the capital gains have been scrapped and are no longer part of Clause 29. And it is a good thing that a one-year moratorium has been given to those persons.

A one-year moratorium has been given under Clause 29. It takes effect as from 01 July 2026, and not as from the publication of the Gazette. You will go and read for yourself. But, Madam Speaker, the damage has been done, and these changes come too late. The confidence has been shaken already. So, what was the point of frightening off foreign investors? Many have been frightened. We cannot really just quantify how many, but many have been frightened from the initial announcement to now the Finance Bill. The question is why?

Madam Speaker, even more concerning is that under Clause 44 which concerns the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act, it had been stated at paragraph 76 of the Annex that Government would ban, not just the acquisition, but also the disposal of any property and, therefore, would ban the sale of any property already owned by a foreign individual if same was located on State Land or *pas géométriques*. In other words, foreigners who had legally purchased property would now be barred from selling it, a measure bordering on expropriation. And it seemed that the Ministry of Finance was not even aware of the investment, promotion and protection agreements that it has itself signed on behalf of Mauritius with no fewer than 29 countries, binding treaties, designed to encourage and protect foreign investment, particularly from any form of the deprivation or arbitrary restriction. How could you have ever thought that this would be reasonable or legal? The Budget, Madam Speaker, would have been illegal and this is why I say: “amateurism”. A disregard for legal obligations which has now

greatly shocked that market – a prominent market which Mauritius, as I stated before, relies heavily on.

Let me turn to Clause 39 of the Finance Bill, Madam Speaker, with regard to the National Pensions Act. You will no doubt have noticed, Madam Speaker, that changes are being brought to the National Pensions Act – changes which, you might be surprised, do not tally between the Finance Bill and the explanatory note. If you look at the explanatory note at page 49, you will see that the coming into effect of the BRP to the age of 65 is scheduled for 01 September 2030.

In the Finance Bill, this clearly states, September 2033 and this in itself has been contrary to what has been announced either in the Budget, in the annexes, the various and numerous statements on the issue, the various replies to PNQs that it was meant to take effect on 2030, and now, it is 2033. What has happened, Madam Speaker, is that now the years have been staggered to 2 years for every year that the retirement is going up. But, Madam Speaker, how can it be that the explanatory notes provided by the Ministry of Finance are different to the Finance Bill? How can it be? Such a mistake on such an important issue has made its way through such an important exercise!

So, not only does it contradict the explanatory note, but the Finance Bill, also, on that issue, contradicts previous Government announcements, talks about oversight. And, Madam Speaker, even though this last-minute amendment to stagger the increase in eligibility age has been made, it was not the original intention but they were simply compelled due to mass public demonstration to change their tune somewhat.

But, let us be clear, Madam Speaker, this is still not acceptable, this is still not what was promised by your Alliance, by this Government, to the people of Mauritius. Be that as it may, Madam Speaker, the public does not care whether this increase has been staggered to after 2023, 2033 or 2030. What the people expected, and rightly so, was for Government to show some of the sacrifices themselves – to cut back on overseas travels and their *per diems* ...

(Interruptions)

which have reached record level, to reduce on the purchases of new cars and to roll back the astronomical 155% increase...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: ... in senior advisers' salaries and these excesses have, it seems, become *une source d'embarras* for the Government.

An hon. Member: *Inn bien tape apre...*

Mr A. Duval: There is no way that persons who have worked their whole life would accept to be deprived of five years of full pension – Rs1 million not even counting the annual increases with inflation. So, how would you think that they would have accepted this? How?

I could talk, Madam Speaker, of the latest episode referred today, the Rs1.1 million...

Mr Jhummun: *Sonah Ori to pa dir?*

Mr A. Duval: ... on the Pan-African Parliament that has been wasted, I could talk about how my PQ was unanswered, but for lack of time, I will move on.

(Interruptions)

Let me come to an important issue, the tourist tax, Clause 58 which is said to come into operation on 01 October 2025. The first issue I would like to raise is that there is an issue of drafting.

At Section 39B the word “accommodation” is missing after “tourist” at the first paragraph. I think this should be corrected, obviously, but more importantly, Section 39D(1)(b) requires managers or owners of tourist accommodations to remit the tourist fee electronically in Euro to the MRA. As you know, Madam Speaker, payments are often made in MUR, USD, South African rands (ZAR) to these tourist accommodations.

Madam Speaker: I am giving you one more minute.

Mr A. Duval: The first issue is foreign exchange cost. The second, given that it has to be transferred in Euros, commercial banks charge an astronomical fee of €30 per transfer. So, if you are paying, for example, for 10 nights for one person, €30, you would pay the same in the transfer fee because the MRA's bank is at the SBM. So, the question is, now, how will the MRA make sure that this is workable in practice?

Now section 39C on the registration of tourist accommodations, it creates another hurdle. As the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands will no doubt agree, many accommodations, today, offering services of tourist accommodations are still waiting for their leases to be converted from residential to industrial. That bars them from being granted a licence of tourist accommodation licence from the Tourism Authority and that is to no fault of their own.

I am concluding. I will suggest to go as per what the hon. Junior Minister for Tourism has said himself, has proposed, which is a good idea, that in the interim we grant those persons a provisional licence whilst they wait for their conversion which takes years, which has taken years under every government anyway, so that they be given a provisional licence or temporary licence so that they may have an insurance which will cover the liability, and so that they may be in accordance with law.

It is not my idea; it is one of the hon. Junior Minister of Tourism. I think Government should follow; it is not... I am concluding, unfortunately.

To conclude Madam Speaker, there must be many more mistakes, inconsistencies or plain contradictions in the Finance Bill which I have not seen for myself given the rush, but as with many things under this Government, time will tell.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. A. Duval.

Hon. F. François is going to speak.

(6.00 p.m.)

Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I will briefly comment on two specific clauses of the Finance Bill (No. XVIII of 2025) namely, Clause 18 which amends the Finance and Audit Act in relations to Rodrigues and Clause 54 which amends the Statistics Act.

The majority of my intervention will focus on the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment Bill) (No. XIX of 2025).

Clause 18 of the Finance Bill amends Section 19 to add a new subsection 3A to the Finance and Audit Act requiring that the financial statements be prepared in accordance – very important – with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

The Director of Audit, in his Annual Report 2023-2024, stated that –

“In view of the challenge to move to accrual-based accounting, the IMF recommended a phased approach for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) transition to accrual IPSAS, and a roadmap was established, which the RRA did not comply with. It is recommended that the RRA must comply with IPSAS.”

Clause 19, specifically for Rodrigues, provides, to add a new subsection (8), which states

—

“The Commissioner [responsible for the subject of Finance under the Regional Assembly] shall, within 10 months [instead of 3 months] of the close of every fiscal year, sign and submit a consolidated financial statement, in compliance with IPSAS.”

Madam Speaker, as additional financial information requirements to the financial statements, Clause 3(b)(iii), provides to file a progress report on performance. This will ensure that project implementations stay on track financially and enable early detection of problems or deviations.

Madam Speaker, Clause 54, Subclause 2A (2) to (5) – Statistics Act amended, introduces a new National Statistics System so as to establish an integrated system for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics, in accordance with the Act and the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The hon. Prime Minister, in his budget speech concerning innovation – hon. Dr. Sukon – and research, rightly affirmed his long-term vision for an innovative and inclusive Republic of Mauritius. Unquestionably, Statistics Mauritius will need to revamp national indicators to cover national, sectoral and service-level government data and align with the national development plan.

Madam Speaker, it is worth noting that the promotion of research, innovation and development relies heavily on accurate and reliable data. One of the emerging avenues for data capture, sharing and addressing statistical needs is climate change today, and for us, a revamp of the Rodrigues Statistics system with additional data. I will not go into the details.

Madam Speaker, now, allow me to address my main intervention on the technical but important bill, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2025). Its primary objective is to amend five sections of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act to facilitate the re-introduction of Performance-Based Budgeting (PBB). This reform aims to –

- (i) link funds with results and outcomes;
- (ii) enhance operational efficiency in the administration of Rodrigues, and
- (iii) more importantly, enforce greater responsibility, accountability, stability and transparency within any regional government governing Rodrigues.

The introduction of PBB will enable Regional Government to shift focus from traditional line budget inputs to measurable results. I must also highlight that, given the current state of the local budget affairs *kafouyaz ek dezord*, this Programmed-Based Budgeting is more than necessary for Rodrigues. This will strengthen the legal, institutional, and financial frameworks

needed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure from available funds allocated from national budget.

Madam Speaker, let me now address the constitutionality of this RRA (Amendment) Bill to clear any confusion or misunderstanding. By convention, there is no alternative but to proceed pragmatically, with due respect to the constitutional provisions entrenching the Regional Assembly. I find reassurance in the respect and functionality of the autonomy of Rodrigues, as affirmed by the hon. Prime Minister, who stated that, and I quote –

“The Executive Council [the actual one] of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been consulted and is agreeable to the proposed amendments.”

Madam Speaker, this Bill will enable the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to prepare the 2026-2027 Budget Estimates using the new PBB framework. The House will recall that the first transition from Output-Based Budgeting to Programme-Based Budgeting by the Regional Assembly occurred in 2009 rightly stated by hon. Edouard and amended in 2015, which faced several implementation challenges.

The then Chief Commissioner, following approval of the RRA amendments by the Central Government, moved a Motion in his name and I quote –

“That the Regional Assembly concurs with the amendments of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act as proposed by the Central Government to enable the introduction of Programme-Based Budgeting, pursuant to section 75E of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius.”

This Motion was debated, approved, and concurred with by the Regional Assembly. Let me cite the Article 75E which stipulates that –

“(...) any law giving effect to this Chapter and to any incidental matters shall not be altered without the concurrence of the Regional Assembly unless such alteration is supported at the final voting in the National Assembly by the votes of not less than two-thirds of all the members.”

Therefore, the implementation of this Bill, will require, alongside the concurrence of the Regional Assembly, certain amendments to the Regional Assembly Standing Orders and Rules – locally there.

Madam Speaker, you will agree with me that any government has power but misuse of that power and poor policy decisions are unwarranted and pose risks to our society. The present

amendment to the Regional Assembly Act is not only a reform towards a PBB approach for pragmatism and practicality, but also a meaningful, responsible and productive piece of legislation that promotes good governance.

Madam Speaker, the principle of accountability of government domains and functions to Parliament will enable us, as Parliamentarians, to raise concerns about proper political choices, objectives, and the rational planning and allocation of resources. For example, let me substantiate that, if a vulnerable person is waiting for years to obtain a social housing, while Government decides to prioritise unwarranted purchase of Rs147 million worth of vehicles, now lying idle with no drivers or qualified operators – despite budget provision of only Rs33 million – this highlights wastes and misallocation. PBB will also redress procurement collusion between politicians and civil servants.

Madam Speaker, the new Section 21A at Clause 18 of the Finance bill, outlines the overall responsibilities of Accounting Officers, precisely at subclause (b) to provide for –

“(b) effective and appropriate steps are taken to prevent unauthorised, irregular and wasteful expenditure;”

And the House will also recognise the seriousness of the regional situation, as the hon. Prime Minister stated in his reply to my PQ B/650 that –

“The Chief Commissioner’s Office of the RRA issued a Circular in June 2025 on Procedures of Reallocation that are not consistent with the Ministry of Finance’s policies and principles on virement.”

This issue stems from the line-item budgeting which leads to abuse and the reckless use of funds resources.

In that regard, I commend the hon. Prime Minister’s proposals to address this mismanagement of public finances, including collaboration between the Ministry of Finance and the RRA, to issue a revised circular on virement. I am informed of excess virement of more than 30% to the last budget for unprecedented non-spent capital budget, whereas the allowable limit is only 2%.

It is witnessed that public administration, under public pressure, blindly follows political instructions without complying with established rules and regulations.

Madam Speaker, to substantiate same, just to have a picture of what I am saying and the seriousness of this matter, how can a construction project for constructing approximately 26

parking slots, 200 meters of masonry coastal protection (including demolition and reconstruction), and a new 15 meters jetty – which was not budgeted during last financial year. No request for proposal nor the Ministry of Finance financial clearance was obtained – was awarded to a contractor through work orders under the budget item roads at a cost exceeding Rs40 million, to the expense of announced budgeted roads projects like Montagne Cabri-Est – *mo bann pov frer Montagne Cabri* – and Montagne Malgache to Port Sud-Est?

I put it clearly. I am not opposed to any development projects in Rodrigues, Madam Speaker. But the financial procedures applied are problematic, leading to uncontrollable and unpredictable budget decisions.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill comes at an opportune time for sound fiscal planning and greater budget credibility. As the saying goes, '*Se enn lokasion pou met enn bon lord dan bann desord zestion finans piblik dan Rodrig. Chaque roupie dépensée, bizin bien depense.*'

Madam Speaker, I hope that the recent unwarranted, illegal and politically motivated regional budget increase without Cabinet's concurrence, violating established practices and conventions of technical discussion and agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the RRA, will once and for all become things of the past.

I hope PBB will mark a full stop to the abuse of our local public finances and remedy the erosion of intergovernmental trust from political propaganda. *Lager larzan bidze ek santaz.* We have to be responsible and serious, especially with regard to the autonomy of Rodrigues, for which our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers have fought for to give us, the people of Rodrigues, an identity. Today, when we see some people *salir cette autonomie, Madame la présidente, vous savez ce que cela me fait en tant que Rodriguais responsable, et aussi, à tous ces gens de Rodrigues, qui sont conscients de l'avenir de Rodrigues de demain – des gens responsables ?*

Madam Speaker, let me conclude!

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr François: In its political combat for Rodrigues'...

Madam Speaker: One minute!

Mr François: I am concluding.

In its political combat for Rodrigues' autonomy, the OPR aspires to leave a legacy of an exemplary and model Rodrigues for future generations.

PBB is one of the right paths to end political misappropriation of Rodrigues' future, while preventing the population from being kept in the dark by complacent behaviours and opaque decisions.

PBB is not only a necessity, but an urgent need that the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Deputy Prime Minister and hon. colleagues will agree with.

Surely, Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill will link funds with results and outcomes, improve operational efficiency in Rodrigues' administration, and enforce greater fiscal responsibility, accountability, and transparency.

Madam speaker, I am confident that this august Assembly will unanimously vote in support to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill of 2025 as proposed by the hon. Prime Minister and the Government.

I can also assure the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Deputy Prime Minister, and the House that the OPR Party, at the Regional Assembly, will have no quarrel on any motion of concurrence in the interest of good governance for Rodrigues and the success of our autonomy.

Madam Speaker, with these words, I thank you for your kind attention. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, you were right on time!

Mr François: Oh, yes!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Damry, please!

(6.17 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Finance (Mr D. Damry): Madam Speaker, the amendments in the Finance Bill set a clear policy and direction for our long-term public finances and our economy. It is important to note that the clarity of vision for public finances will, henceforth, be growth-led revenue rather than tax-led revenue.

This is a stark demarcation from what the MSM did for 10 years. They printed money; they imported inflation; they applied consumption tax; they applied devaluation tax, and they applied inflation tax at the detriment of the citizens. This is what we are changing.

Growth-led revenues are very important because it is growth that sustains the viability of a social system, be it pensions, education, social housing or health care.

I think it is time to put one matter to rest. The MSM government clearly intended to terminate all CSG Allowances on 30 June 2025. I would like to quote paragraph 30B (3) of the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act 2021.

It is about income allowance –

“(3) The income allowance shall be payable to an eligible individual directly in his bank account at the beginning of each month for the months of [hear it] July 2022 to June 2025.”

It cannot be clearer than that.

Now, when we come to the social contract, the spirit of pension reforms is very clear. It is aligning payment age to retirement age, and it is phased over five years.

Now, for the benefit of our youth, we are building that bridge to the future. I would like, once again, to shed some more light on the policy. The policy is to develop and promote outlier growth revenues while at the same time consolidating recovery and resilience revenues.

Let me illustrate it through four amendments in the Finance Bill –

- (i) The Banking Act and The Bank of Mauritius Act provide for KYC institutions;
- (ii) The Bills of Exchange Act provides for electronic bills of exchange;
- (iii) The Economic Development Board Act provides for innovative Mauritius scheme, and
- (iv) The Income Tax Act provides for virtual assets service providers.

To the layman, it may sound that each of these proposed amendments have individual intended consequences. However, when put together, the sum of these amendments and the sum of these intended consequences provide a giant leap in our economic policy. They provide for the digital and AI economy. But we will not see the benefits of these amendments today because the previous government has done nothing for the past 10 years.

Allow me to illustrate because we are talking about strategy. Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition said that we do not have a strategy for tourism. Hang on! We have a strategy not only for tourism, but for the entire economy.

So, let me make some reference, let us learn from what is happening in the global economy. Last year in 2024, the Nobel Prize winner for Economics, MIT’s known Professor Daron Acemoglu wrote a paper called the Macroeconomics of AI. In that paper, he studied the

impact of AI on global economies. Goldman Sachs said that productivity gains could be anything around 1% of global GDP – say 7 trillion dollars. McKinsey said the productivity or impact of AI could be anywhere between 1.5% to 3.5% in terms of productivity gains, and Singapore is estimating that the productivity gains, over the next few years, will be up to 18% of their GDP.

So, just imagine, if in the years to come, we make even a 1% productivity gain to our GDP – through the measures that we are setting out today, that's 1% GDP gain. What Singapore is very good at doing, they are also creating a SPRING Board to be in the supply chain of AI Services. And, Mauritius is well poised to do that and if we do that, we add another 1% to our GDP. All of a sudden, that's 2% to our GDP. The reason I said, it is outright growth is because these sectors are meant to grow exponentially, 6%, 7%, 8%, 9%, 10%, that's the kind of growth that we can expect from these sectors.

But in the meantime, while we invest in that, while we prepare, we have to ensure economic growth through recovery and resilience sectors. There are two sectors: the first one is property development. What the previous government did was ten years of property sales. They had no clue what to do in productive economies. Because this Government wants to create jobs, we want to bring forex in our country and when speaking about property, it was clear that no one is above the law, even the Government is not above the law. This Government could not, like the previous government did, subject this nation to another Betamax or another Patel Engineering Ltd, by not following the law. That is one of the reasons why we grandfathered Smart City regulations and other property regulations. That is the reason why we had to bring these amendments to the Finance Bill.

The second reason is: while developing the new economic order, we have to ensure that we get at least 3 to 4% growth as we have estimated in our medium-term outlook. The second sector is, of course, the global business sector, and here, I would like to touch upon, – hon. Uteem said it very well. In fact, both of us have been professionals in the financial services sector for the past 20 years, at least me, before getting in this House and this is a sector we know very well and the hon. Leader of the Opposition talked about the qualified domestic minimum tax top-up. Hon. Uteem explained it very well.

The OECD and the G20 adopted this Global Anti-Base Erosion Model Rules and what this means is that 15% in your country but if you are paying 3% here, then you have to pay the balance in another country. At the same time, MNEs like big MNCs, any MNC, any business

for that matter, any investor for that matter, they always need clarity and certainty. I will not share the name but I had a discussion with one of those MNCs in Mauritius, and they were worried because they had no clarity of what was Mauritius' position with regard to QDMTT because 131 countries in the world have subscribed to it. So, you cannot have investment if you do not have certainty. This is one of the things that this amendment is bringing. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said that such MNCs would go to Singapore and to UAE, if I heard well.

Well, let me, for his knowledge, advise, Singapore adopted the QDMTT law in 2024, the Multinational Enterprise (Minimum Tax) Act 2024. The UAE adopted the same law through a Cabinet Decision No. 142 of 2024. So, they have done it before Mauritius, we are playing catch-up. We have been playing catch-up in every growth area, Madam Speaker, and this is what this Finance Bill is trying to remedy.

Let me now also add one thing that the proposed amendments in this Finance Bill, they will provide for a sound Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) risk adjusted macroeconomic fundamentals. What this means is that international institutions will always look at us with a lot of attractiveness.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition made reference to foreign currency. So, we are proposing an amendment in the Income Tax Act where businesses earning more than 50% of their revenues will pay their tax in foreign currency. These are measures that should have been brought in way earlier but they have not.

Madam Speaker, I don't think I will speak more because the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Reza Uteem canvassed the Finance Bill so well but I always like to end with one or two short stories that inspire me and maybe they can inspire you too.

Madam Speaker: You have a bit of time!

Mr Damry: That's alright. I think, let me tell the story. So, the Mauritius nation...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Nou ekout zistwar la!*

Mr Mohamed: *Mo ti kroir story la lor li sa!*

Mr Damry: No, I will not. But, since you told me I have a bit of time, three very short stories.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Damry: The first thing is its...

(Interruptions)

It's important, I know...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Zistwar la billet mil...*

Madam Speaker: Let him speak!

Mr Damry: Let me speak. I know why the hon. Leader of the Opposition... So, I will ask the House a question – what is the average IQ of a normal human being?

Madam Speaker: 155!

Mr Damry: It's about 122.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Damry: Right? Elon Musk and Einstein, their IQ is about 155.

Madam Speaker: That's it!

Mr Damry: Guess who else has this IQ? AI! And guess what is happening to the IQ of AI? It will keep doubling over the next six months. This is the prediction and this is why the face of change, the velocity of change will be so rapid that we have to adapt. I am glad to say, now the hon. Prime Minister will be happy, because we have a leader, a leadership that adapts to change. And, there are two stories that I would like, one for the nation and one for us. The nation has always stood with the motherland whenever the motherland has needed its children.

So, since we are speaking about the economy, you have Jack Ma. Jack Ma always talks about entrepreneurs in this way, he says –

"Today is difficult, tomorrow is even more difficult, but the day after tomorrow morning will be very beautiful."

Unfortunately, most of the people give up, they give up tomorrow afternoon.

They don't wait till day after tomorrow morning. And I am very happy and this really touches me that the nation is with us and together, we will rise; this government, the whole nation, after three years, when we have redressed our economy based on our budget outflow.

And the one commitment that we can make to the nation and this is what the Prime Minister said, he does not promise to take the nation to heaven but he certainly will not take the nation to hell. And I can tell you this is what Thomas Edison said –

“Maybe I did not find 10,000 ways that worked but I will keep trying till I find that one way that will work.”

And this is what we will do to support the Prime Minister, to support this government and with this, I commend all the three Bills to the House.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Ms Jeetun.

(6.33 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning (Dr. Ms J. Jeetun): Madam Speaker, I rise today in this august Assembly with a sense of deep responsibility and purpose to support the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2025.

This government was entrusted with a historic mandate, not only to reverse a decade of drift and to rebuild fiscal credibility but also to reignite economic dynamism and to inspire confidence and hope in the future of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, one of the key objectives of the Finance Bill 2025, is a total reset of our economic model, starting with fiscal consolidation, that is, reducing government deficits and improving the fiscal balance. So, we could either cut public spending or increase revenue or do both. And as a responsible government, restoring investor confidence is paramount to achieving the challenging revenue targets set by this budget. Push too hard on the revenue side and the perceived tax burden becomes too high, and we face the risk of losing investors' confidence which then can lead to a direct negative impact on growth. Some of the changes to the Finance Bill that I will be talking about, are to avoid that situation.

So, just as social safety nets were introduced to protect the vulnerable groups through the Income Allowance, it is also important that our revenue sides, fiscal measures do not dampen growth.

Madam Speaker, we have an inclusive and responsible approach to governance. We listen to the voices of the people; we listen to the voices of enterprises and we are therefore introducing a number of refinements and clarifications to this Bill. These changes reflect the valuable feedback received from various stakeholders. They reaffirm our commitment to

getting the details right, to ensure that reforms are not only ambitious; they are fair, they are practical and they are implementable.

So, Madam Speaker, allow me to highlight the key amendments relating to the financial services sector. First, under the Income Tax Act, with regard to the Fair Share Contribution for businesses, global business entities are exempted. I wish to draw the attention of the House to some important clarifications brought with respect to foundations and trusts which are the two cornerstone structures in our global financial services architecture.

The Finance Bill provides for the harmonisation of treatment of these entities under the Income Tax Act ensuring that they benefit from the same legal clarity and fiscal predictability afforded to global business license holders. So, by replacing the term global license with global business license, the Bill ensures that foundations, trusts, and similar fiduciary structures are appropriately included in our tax and regulatory framework.

These measures strengthen Mauritius status as a trusted and innovative jurisdiction for wealth management, succession planning and philanthropic capital particularly for Africa and Asia where such instruments are gaining relevance. Let me immediately reassure the House that the principle of the source of chargeable income will be respected. So, trusts and foundations with chargeable income from domestic activities will not benefit from this exemption.

Second, Madam Speaker, the Finance Bill legislates key revenue raising measures from the budget including the introduction of the Fair Share contribution and the Domestic Top-up Tax as part of our commitment to align the OECD Pillar Two – Global Minimum Tax rules.

We understand that parts of the industry have expressed concerns about the potential impact of these measures on competitiveness. The QDMTT Provisions did create some causes for concerns and uncertainty in the industry given that many countries such as the US and India have not yet implemented these rules.

However, as the Prime Minister clearly emphasised the other day, consultations will be held with the industry stakeholders and regulations will be made to make provisions for exclusions and incentives to give relief to companies that become liable to the Global Minimum Tax. This provides the much-needed clarity and assurance to global businesses set up in our financial services sector. It improves legal certainty and reduces the risk of ambiguity for affected tax payers. Bottom line, it safeguards the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Mauritius International Financial Sector.

Third, Madam Speaker, the next amendment concerns the Value Added Tax Act, to bring clarity on the banking sector. We are expressly clarifying that the 35% cap on chargeable income applies solely to domestic banking business and not to global business.

Madam Speaker, the financial sector in Mauritius remains the largest contributor of corporate tax of our national revenue, underscoring its vital role in sustaining our fiscal framework. The sector contributed some Rs15 billion in corporate tax that is, more than 68% of corporate tax. The Banking Industry continues to report good level of profitability which supports the merit of proposal to increase taxation on banks.

However, we must recognise the inherent duality of the Mauritian Banking Industry, which necessitates a nuanced approach to taxation policy. On one hand, the domestic banking sector remains dominated by two large players. If we are to promote greater competition in this sector, particularly encouraging participation from international banks in our domestic market, we must ensure that taxation policies are not detrimental to this objective.

So, a differentiated taxation approach is therefore essential with a cap of 35% for domestic banking operations being justified to maintain competitive conditions that can attract new entrants while ensuring fair contribution from profitable institutions.

On the other hand, the global banking sector of the Mauritian Banking Industry relies heavily on the attractiveness of the Mauritius International Financial Centre as a jurisdiction of choice. High taxation levels will make returns less attractive in this segment and may prompt international banks currently using Mauritius to channel their resources to other more attractive or tax efficient jurisdictions. Not only this could undermine our strategic position as a leading financial hub, but it will also go against our agreed strategy to position this sector which is already the first pillar of our economy into a major engine for growth.

Therefore, while there is clear merit in increasing taxes on banks given their strong profitability, we advocated for a differentiated taxation policy that recognises the distinct dynamics of our domestic and global business banking sectors. Madam Speaker, it was important to clarify this.

This approach will ensure we maximise fiscal revenues while preserving the competitiveness and attractiveness that has made Mauritius a preferred financial services destination.

The fourth amendment, Madam Speaker, is under the Economic Development Board Act where the salary threshold for occupation permit regime is being adjusted to Rs30,000.

It is no secret that the financial services sector is entirely dependent on highly skilled staff, and it is also no secret – we have outlined that in our Strategy Report in 2025-2030 for the sector – that there are major human capital gaps in the sector. So, while measures will be taken to mitigate this situation in medium and long term, it is important to recognise the need of the industry in the short term.

For example, the unique structural model and operational characteristic of fund administration in our global business sector requires fund accounting professionals. This change, therefore, ensures that Mauritius can avail itself of talent in specific sectors to remain competitive and aligned with international fund servicing norms.

Madam Speaker, last but not the least, I wish to draw the attention of the House to a significant clarification affecting the real estate and property development sector. In fact, this industry should not be seen in isolation.

It is very intricately linked to the financial services sector as many of the non-citizens who buy properties in these schemes administered by the Economic Development Board are also investors in our global business structures. It is, therefore, important to understand the life cycle of a real estate project that can take up to four, five, six, seven years from concept design to feasibility to marketing, having to secure more than 75% of funded reservation with deposits to secure the *Garantie Financière d'Achèvement (GFA)* and get all the permits before they can even start digging for construction.

Many foreign investors relocate their businesses to Mauritius through the global business sector. They also relocate with their families and they put in a deposit and have to wait for years before they actually take possession. So, there was a need for some certainty in this sector. The Bill, therefore, introduces transitional provisions in the form of grandfathering arrangements to protect ongoing projects.

This grandfathering mechanism is essential to maintain investor confidence, mitigate uncertainty and ensure that strategic long-term developments in the sector are not being adversely impacted. It also aligns with global best practices in safeguarding preexisting contractual commitments, particularly in jurisdictions where property development is a major source of FDI. We must also not forget the direct linkage not only to the financial services sector, but also the multiplier effect that these buyers have on the wider economy.

Madam Speaker, these refinements reflect our conviction. They show that this Government leads by listening and governs with both ambition and precision. By pairing bold

reforms with thoughtful transitional measures, we are demonstrating maturity, responsibility and fairness in policy making. This is how lasting, inclusive reform is done with clarity and consultation. With this Bill, we are making choices not for popularity, but for posterity.

We are choosing bold reforms over political convenience, substance over spectacle and strategic foresight over short term fixes. All this for the betterment and future of the nation.

Madam Speaker, the Finance Bill is not only about legislative changes. It is about credibility, purpose, and ambition. It is about the kind of country we wish to be: transparent, forward thinking and resilient. It is about the confidence we must inspire among citizens, but also confidence about investors and our partners. This Bill is also not merely about laws. It is about leadership. It is not just a collection of amendments. It closes the chapter on a decade of decline and opens a new chapter grounded in economic reality in hope and in future prosperity built on solid foundations.

We are not here to be populists. We are here to govern by principle with empathy and responsibility. History will retain, Madam Speaker, that this Government led by a bold and courageous Prime Minister and a Deputy Prime Minister and all my colleagues in this House here who had the audacity to choose a path that was albeit the most difficult one, but it was the right one. As I said, we are not here to be liked, but we are here to lead.

With this, Madam Speaker, I am very proud of the vision and courage that this Bill presents. I invite the House to lend its support so that we can convert legislative intent into transformative impact.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, I beg to move for the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 01 August 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 6.49 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 01 August 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR. K.P. – RENUMERATED POSITIONS – CONTRACT DETAILS & ALLOWANCES

(No. B/780) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Mr. K.P., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the Ministries/Government Bodies/Parastatal Bodies in which he held remunerated positions over the period 2015 to 2024, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) capacity thereof;
- (b) terms and conditions of contract, including remuneration and other allowances and benefits drawn, and
- (c) overseas missions undertaken, indicating the –
 - (i) costs incurred, giving details thereof
 - (ii) countries visited
 - (iii) duration thereof, and
 - (iv) name of other members of each delegation.

(Withdrawn)

GRAND GAUBE POLICE STATION – ROAD OFFENCES & NOISE POLLUTION OFFENCES – CONTRAVENTIONS

(No. B/781) 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 Grand Gaube Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of contraventions booked by officers attached thereto since 12 June 2025 to date, indicating the number thereof booked for road offences and noise pollution offences, respectively.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 12 June to 27 July 2025, 102 contraventions relating to road offences have been established by the Grand Gaube Police Station. There has been no contravention for noise pollution for the period under reference.

However, there are complaints from inhabitants concerning noise pollution in the coastal region of Grand Gaube.

In this regard, Police, with the support of Special Mobile Force personnel, are deployed on Grand Gaube public beach during weekends as a deterrent.

Furthermore, during this year, 19 sensitisation campaigns and 110 crackdown operations have been carried out by officers of Grand Gaube Police Station with the assistance of other Units of the Police. In addition, 23 crackdown operations were carried out this year in the region of Grand Gaube by the *Police de l'Environnement*, Special Mobile Force and Special Support Unit.

I am informed that the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has made provision in this financial year for the acquisition of Noise Measuring Instruments for the *Police de l'Environnement*. Regarding the use of these instruments, the assistance of the Health Engineering Unit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness will be solicited to provide training to officers of the *Police de l'Environnement*.

FOREIGN WORKERS – ILLEGAL STAY IN MAURITIUS – NATIONALITY

(No. B/782) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to foreign workers recruited since January 2015 to November 2024 having overstayed and currently illegally staying on the Mauritian territory, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the number and nationality thereof.

(Withdrawn)

FORMER PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISERS – NAMES AND REMUNERATIONS

(No. B/783) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) 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 Advisers whose services were retained by the former Prime Minister, he will state the names

and pay packages thereof, including the boards on which they equally served over the period 2015 to November 2024.

(Withdrawn)

AMNESTY SCHEME – LOAN OVERDUE – WRITE-OFF CASES

(No. B/784) 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 amnesty scheme for the writing-off of long outstanding loans of over 20 years or of deceased planters, breeders, fishermen and micro entrepreneurs of both mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the number of –

- (a) cases thereof settled as at to date and total quantum of the loans written off, and
- (b) outstanding cases as at date, indicating where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd (DBM) that, following Budget 2021-2022, an Amnesty Scheme was introduced with the objective of writing-off long outstanding loans owed by planters, breeders and fishermen who were facing difficulties to repay their dues. The Scheme was halted in Financial Year 2022-2023.

However, a new Amnesty Scheme was introduced in Budget 2023/2024 and extended in 2024-2025 with the eligibility criteria broadened to include micro entrepreneurs and long outstanding loans of more than 20 years as well as unpaid loans by deceased borrowers in the aforementioned categories.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that, as at 30 June 2025, the DBM has approved 884 cases for write-off of long outstanding dues for an aggregate amount of Rs192.1 million, of which, 126 cases relate to beneficiaries from Rodrigues for an approved amount of Rs20 million. Of note, out of the Rs192.1 million, Rs71 million pertain to loans of 313 deceased borrowers, of which, 30 cases for a total amount of Rs4.4 million are from Rodrigues.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that there are 23 outstanding cases, of which, 15 cases relate to Rodrigues and same are under process.

SODNAC WELLNESS PARK – OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT

(No. B/785) 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.

Reply: I am informed that the first phase of the Sodnac Wellness Park started in 2009 and was completed in August 2012. The park was officially launched on 06 November 2012.

Under the second phase, an open outdoor gym was set up comprising a series of physical exercise equipment. The gym was officially launched in April 2014.

After a decade of heavy use, the gym equipment is now out of order and nothing has been done by the previous government to renew the equipment and restore the wellness park for the benefit of the inhabitants. On the 28 November 2024, the public has been advised not to utilise same to avoid any injury.

I am informed that the contract for the disposal of all existing equipment as scrap from the park has already been awarded to Grap Stella Steel Ltd., a recycling company, for a receivable amount of Rs16,380.

I am also informed that EWF has earmarked an amount of Rs7 million for Financial Year 2025/26 for the replacement of the gym equipment.

A tender exercise will be carried out shortly for the supply, fixing and commissioning of the new gym equipment.

MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SME & COOPERATIVES – OFFICIAL OVERSEAS MISSIONS – NOVEMBER 2024 TO 29 JULY 2025 – DELEGATION & COST

(No. B/804) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the official overseas missions he has undertaken since November 2024 to date, he will, in each case, state the –

- (a) dates, purpose and country/countries visited;
- (b) composition of the delegation, and

- (c) cost incurred in terms of –
 - (i) air tickets;
 - (ii) accommodation;
 - (iii) *per diem* allowances, and
 - (iv) cars put at the disposal thereof, if any.

Reply (The Prime Minister): The hon. Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives has effected 4 overseas missions to date as follows –

- (i) 21st General Session of African-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) Conference, and the 77th and 78th Sessions of the AARDO Executive Committees, held from 19 to 24 February 2025 in New Delhi, India;
- (ii) The Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting, held in Namibia from 18 to 20 June 2025;
- (iii) Corporate Council on Africa's 2025 US-Africa Business Summit in Angola from 22 to 25 June 2025, and
- (iv) International Trade Centre Global SME Ministerial Meeting, held from 22 to 24 July 2025 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

As regards parts (b) and (c) of the question, the information requested for is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.