



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 01 AUGUST 2025

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Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands
Hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Housing and Lands,
Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries
Hon. Govindranath Gunness	Minister of National Infrastructure
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Minister of Health and Wellness
Hon. Christian Harold Richard Duval	Minister of Tourism
Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron	Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
Hon. Gavin Patrick Cyril Glover, SC	Attorney-General
Dr. the Hon. Mrs Jyoti Jeetun	Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning
Hon. Patrick Gervais Assirvaden	Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

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

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 32 of 2025

Sitting of Friday 01 August 2025

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 3.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT

4TH EDITION OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT – 21 & 22 AUGUST 2025

Madam Speaker: You may be seated.

Hon. Members, I am pleased to announce that we will be hosting the Fourth Edition of the National Youth Parliament on 21 and 22 August 2025, here in the Chamber of the National Assembly.

Youth Parliaments have developed worldwide, providing young people with a platform to discuss issues of national and international importance. There are several models. In Mauritius, our youngsters are invited to engage in parliamentary simulations and thus they can deepen their understanding of democratic processes and express their views freely on matters which are of concern to them. They can exercise fully their rights and liberties as proclaimed in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and also in our Constitution.

In keeping with this spirit, this fourth edition of the National Youth Parliament will bring together 76 young individuals, aged between 14 and 23, to role-play as Members and officers of the National Assembly. Intensive training and preparatory sessions, starting on Monday, 04 August 2025 will enable them to communicate with efficiency, and learn how to develop their leadership skills while having a deeper understanding of parliamentary history, legislative procedures, and the rules and decorum that guide the proceedings of this August Assembly.

Hon. Members, during the event, the participants will engage in debates centred on the Sustainable Development Goals, and other themes, and they will discover how they also have a role to play to promote « peace, justice and liberty».

This is an excellent opportunity for our youth to draw our attention on issues which as adults we may not see in the same way. It may be an eye opener for some of us. In any case, as civic education is not yet a reality in all schools in Mauritius, this is a unique occasion for our youth.

Hon. Members, I, therefore, seize this opportunity to invite you all to attend and provide valuable encouragement to the participants through your presence over the two-day event on 21 and 22 August.

I thank you for your attention.

PAPERS LAID

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

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

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Sugar Insurance Fund Board (SIFB) for the year ended 30 June 2024.

B. Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations

- (i) International Labour Instruments – Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No.208) (In Original)
- (ii) International Labour Instruments – The Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments) Convention, 2023 (No.191) and Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments) Recommendation, 2023 (No. 207) (In Original)

C. Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Research

The Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Higher Education Commission for the year ended 30 June 2024.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

CSG FUND – SOCIAL ALLOWANCES SCHEMES – PHASING OUT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr G. Lesjongard) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the progressive phasing out of the social allowances schemes financed through the *Contribution Sociale Généralisée* (CSG) funds, he will state –

- (a) the number of employers contributing thereto, indicating the amount collected therefrom since January 2025 to date and projected collections for the financial years 2025-26 and 2026-27, and
- (b) under each respective social allowance scheme, the –
 - (i) number of beneficiaries concerned therewith, and
 - (ii) amount expected to be saved on a monthly and annual basis, respectively, until the complete phasing out thereof.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me at the very outset remind the House that the former government in a bid to win the 2019 General Elections, announced on 01 October 2019 on the occasion of the International Day for the Elderly that the monthly Basic Retirement Pension would be increased from Rs9,000 to Rs13,500 without any consideration whatsoever on the sustainability of such a decision. *C'était clairement un bribe électoral – seulement cinq semaines avant les élections de 2019.*

Madam Speaker, the former government decided to introduce the CSG to finance the additional budget deficit created by this measure. However, in so doing, they simply destroyed the pension system by abolishing contributions to the National Pension Fund established since 1976 and which served as a cornerstone for our retirement system providing financial security and stability for our citizens.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the rates of CSG contribution in respect of an employee earning up to Rs50,000 a month are 1.5% and 3% of basic salary for the employee and his employer, respectively. As regards an employee earning above Rs50,000 a month, the rates of contribution are 3% and for the employer 6 %.

I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that from January 2025 to date, the number of employers from the private sector who have contributed towards the CSG is 33,291.

In addition, there were some 10,026 self-employed who have contributed to the CSG, and furthermore, the Government has also contributed to the CSG.

The total amount of the CSG collected from employers during the period January 2025 to date amounts to Rs5.1 billion of which –

- (i) Rs4 billion is from the private sector, and
- (ii) Rs1.1 billion from the public sector.

The total amount of CSG collected from employees in the private and public sectors amount to, therefore, Rs2.6 billion.

As regards self-employed, they have contributed a total of Rs123 million during the period January 2025 to date. The projected CSG collection from employers for financial year 2025-2026 is Rs9.6 billion and for financial year 2026-2027 is Rs10.9 billion.

The total amount of CSG collection, that is, including employers, employees and self-employed, is projected to be Rs14.7 billion in financial year 2025-2026 and Rs16.7 billion in financial year 2026-2027.

As regards part (b) of the question, Madam Speaker, the previous Government had introduced a number of schemes under the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act instead of paying the increase in the pension –

- (i) the CSG Income Allowance was introduced as from July 2022;
- (ii) the CSG Child Allowance was introduced as from July 2023;
- (iii) the Independence Allowance was introduced as from July 2023;
- (iv) the CSG School Allowance was introduced as from July 2024;
- (v) the Pregnancy Care Allowance was introduced as from July 2024;
- (vi) the Maternity Allowance was introduced, again, from July 2024;
- (vii) the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* was introduced in July 2024, and
- (viii) the Equal Chance Allowance was introduced in July 2024.

With regard to part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed by MRA that the number of beneficiaries under each scheme, since January 2025 to date, is as follows –

- 349,168 under the CSG Income Allowance;
- 38,783 under the CSG Child Allowance;
- 6,780 under the Independence Allowance;
- 84,478 under the CSG School Allowance;

- 3,909 under the Pregnancy Care Allowance;
- 11,117 under the Maternity Allowance;
- 58,562 under the *Revenu Minimum Garanti*, and
- 610,117 under the Equal Chance Allowance.

Madam Speaker, all these allowances, except for the Independence Allowance, were planned to end abruptly in June 2025 by the previous Government. I am also informed by the MRA that, for the period January 2025 to date, a total amount of Rs7.6 billion has been disbursed from all these schemes.

In addition, Madam Speaker, Government is paying the CSG Retirement Benefits, the Industrial Injury Benefits and the Disability Allowance. During the period January 2025 to date, a total of Rs2.1 billion has been disbursed for these expenditures. The previous Government must have known – surely, they must have known – that these allowances were not sustainable. Let me quote the former Minister of Finance when he replied to a Parliamentary Question in October 2023. He confessed and I quote –

« *Il ne reste donc rien par rapport aux contributions de la CSG.* »

I would also like to inform the House that for Financial Year 2024-2025, payments effected under the CSG far exceeded the contributions being collected by some Rs9.3 billion.

Madam Speaker, as a compassionate Government, we are ensuring that, instead of abruptly ending the CSG allowances, as was planned in June 2025, we have decided to gradually phase it out over the next two years. We are also providing for the vulnerable individuals and households registered on the Social Register of Mauritius to continue receiving these allowances in full, including the Independence Allowance. Furthermore, we also provided that –

- (a) the payment of the Disability Allowance to persons over 60 years, who are now not eligible for Basic Retirement Pension but will qualify under the Income Support criteria;
- (b) the increase of the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* Allowance has been increased from Rs500 to Rs899 in Financial Year 2025-2026 and to a further Rs1,890 in Financial Year 2026-2027 so as to ensure that a full-time worker earns a minimum monthly revenue of Rs20,000, and

- (c) we are maintaining the Equal Chance Allowance at Rs2,000 per month, per household earning less than Rs20,000 monthly.

Madam Speaker, the previous Government had introduced the CSG to unknowingly undermine the very purpose of the National Pensions Fund. The NPF – I remind the House – was established in 1976, operated as a contributory scheme, that is, both employees and employers made mandatory contributions which were then invested to ensure long-term sustainability and to provide retirement benefits which were linked to individual contribution. In contrast, the CSG was designed as a ‘pay-as-you-go system’, that is, a tax where the funds are credited to the Consolidated Fund, whereby current contributions are immediately therefore used for payments with no direct link between what an individual contributes and what they ultimately receive. The CSG rapidly revealed deep structural weaknesses that now threaten the very foundations of our pension system and the fiscal health of our nation.

With regard to part (b)(ii) of the question, there would have been significant savings in relation to expenditure, that is, if we had implemented what the previous Government planned, that is, ending the payments in June 2025. On the contrary, we are making provision for the payment of the allowances over the next two years despite the fiscal challenges we are facing. In addition, we are taking steps to reform the pension system with a revamped NPF.

In this context, as I have announced in the Budget Speech, the setting up of a Commission of Experts to look into the reform of the various pillars of the pension system as well as the revamping of the National Pension System is ongoing. The Ministry of Finance is currently liaising with both the IMF and the World Bank to assist in the formulation of the Terms of Reference of the Commission. I would not like, Madam Speaker, to pre-empt the recommendations of the Commission, but however, it is obvious that the bulk of the CSG contributions in its current form, would be used to finance the new NPF system.

Madam Speaker, I wish to emphasise that review of the CSG Allowances needs to be considered in conjunction with the overall revamping of the pension system. This reform is absolutely critical and has to be looked into in a global or holistic manner. It does not only aim at enhancing fiscal sustainability but will also ensure a parity between what each generation pays and receives, thereby promoting fairness in intergenerational burden sharing.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Yes, first question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. As far as I know, those allowances were never meant to be stopped abruptly, that is, in June 2025.

(Interruptions)

In his reply, the hon. Prime Minister referred to what he stated in the Budget Speech, that is two months ago, that is, for the setting up of a Commission of Experts. Already two months have lapsed. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister when that Commission will be set up?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that he himself voted for that abrupt stopping of the CSG and it was in the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2024. It was meant to amend the Social Contribution and Social Benefits Act and these – it is said and he said it also – to stop the payment of these allowances in June 2025. You seem to have forgotten that you voted for it. You did not realise that you voted for it.

As for the Commission on the pension, I just mentioned that we have already chosen – but we are not naming him officially because we want to name all the members – the person who will preside. And also, we are waiting for the Terms of Reference because you have to be very precise on the Terms of Reference. And the World Bank and the IMF are helping out with this.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Your second supplementary question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Madam Speaker, the phasing out of the CSG allowances will no doubt affect the livelihood of many families of this country. Now, during the second reading of the Finance Bill, the hon. Prime Minister determined the sum of Rs20,000 as the minimum monthly revenue till the end of the Financial Year 2026-2027. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether, the salary compensation for those eligible for the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* will be absorbed this time by Government and can he also confirm, based on what he said during his intervention on the Finance Bill in the House, that there will be no increase of the minimum monthly revenue till 2027?

The Prime Minister: It is obvious, Madam Speaker, that with the mess that they left us, where do you get the money from? Print money from the bank again? From the Central Bank? No question of doing that!

(Interruptions)

No question of doing that! You asked for the salary compensation. This is a matter of the PRB and we are looking at it because there was no money in the coffers. So, how do you distribute money? We do not intend to print money from the Bank of Mauritius!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: For the salary compensation, I meant for the private sector, Madam Speaker.

The Prime Minister: Sorry, I did not hear the question.

Madam Speaker: For the salary compensation, he meant for the private sector. That is what he just said. So, maybe you can...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: But this...

Madam Speaker: ...reformulate, please, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: My question is whether this will be absorbed by Government. Salary compensations are paid for workers of the private sector and the public sector also.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition surely knows this is an annual thing that happens. It is annual.

Madam Speaker: Your third supplementary!

Mr Lesjongard: So, it will be absorbed by Government then; both for private and public sector?

(Interruptions)

Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that the purchasing power of the majority of Mauritian citizens will take a hit and this will impact not only those families but also Small and Medium Enterprises?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: I am not quite sure I understood everything but whatever you say, the fact is that you made a mess of the economy and we are trying to redress this situation.

The Deputy Prime Minister: He is making a mess of himself!

Madam Speaker: Your fourth question!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, Madam Speaker. The Prime Minister recalled that in the Budget Speech, he had announced a sum Rs 2 billion, instead of the Rs10 billion promised by Government to reduce prices of basic commodities.

(Interruptions)

Can he inform the House where matters stand and whether the mechanism has already been put in place for those Rs2 billion?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Yes...

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. It seems to me that this does not arise from your question. But if the Prime Minister wants to reply.

The Prime Minister: I was going to say that it does not arise from the question. And furthermore, we never said Rs10 billion. We said for the first year, we are putting these Rs2 billion.

Madam Speaker: Do you have a further question?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the Housing Loan Relief Scheme, which will be phased out over the next two years, and the Home Ownership and Home Loan Repayment Schemes which will not be renewed, will the Prime Minister confirm that these decisions could significantly impact low-and medium-income families who very often rely on such programmes, Madam Speaker, for home ownership?

Secondly, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House what does Government intend to do to help those families?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I am not sure where the hon. Leader of the Opposition is taking out all these statements that I supposedly made. We are looking at it, as I said, in a

holistic manner. I mentioned all the allowances that they gave without any thought about whether it was sustainable or not. I mentioned all of them. And this is what I am referring to.

Madam Speaker: Nonetheless, hon. Leader of the Opposition, if I may, your question is on *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*.

Mr Lesjongard: But the allowances are derived from the...

Madam Speaker: From the CSG?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes!

Madam Speaker: Alright.

The Prime Minister: Actually, the schemes are not financed from the CSG funds. They have nothing to do with the CSG funds.

Mr Lesjongard: You are stopping those allowances.

Madam Speaker: Don't speak sitting down!

Mr Lesjongard: Okay.

Madam Speaker: You have finished? Your friend wants to speak.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I have two supplementaries, if you allow. The first being...

Madam Speaker: I will allow you one to start with.

Mr A. Duval: Yes, thank you. The first being: given that the low income earners earning less than Rs20,000, who are being guaranteed a minimum salary of Rs20,000 through the CSG Income Allowance and the *Revenu Minimum Garanti*, which is going to stagnate in the next three financial years to Rs20,000, as the Prime Minister no doubt knows, how will he protect those families from the rise of the cost of living and to make good on his promise to protect purchasing power of the lowest of the low?

The Prime Minister: We are already taking two measures to protect those at the lower rank. First of all – I just mentioned it – the contribution; we are doing Rs2 billion to stabilise the prices.

Secondly, we are adamant that we must try to stop this horrific depreciation of the rupee – 46% over 10 years. 46%! Already, the rupee has appreciated against the dollar, I think, by some 5%, if I am not mistaken. So, these are the measures we are taking.

Madam Speaker: Your second question, yes!

Mr A. Duval: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, given that the CSG allowances, including the CSG Income Allowances and the CSG Family Allowances, that is, child, school, maternity and housing, are being cut by 33%, one third, while the budget doubles down on sugar tax, hikes in motor vehicles and road licence fees and also significantly widens the VAT net to thousands of small retailers, which will have a significant increase on the cost of living, how will he protect the rest of those persons earning, therefore, Rs20,000 or more, up until Rs50,000, from the significant increases in the price of living, making good on his promise?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: You should have asked the former Minister of Finance when he was destroying the economy, what was he going to do for that! You should have asked him!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: Last question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, a last question!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you. The hon. Prime Minister, in his reply, stated that some 10,026 self-employed have contributed to the CSG. Now, with regard to those self-employed, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether this category of workers, who were contributing to the CSG Fund, will, now, be asked to contribute to the old NSF and NPF system?

The Prime Minister: As I said, Madam Speaker, we are looking at the whole pension scheme. We want to reestablish the National Pension Fund, which was destroyed by your government.

Mr Jhummun: *Atan nou gete!*

The Prime Minister: We are appointing a committee. We are waiting for the terms of reference. We could do the terms of reference, but we would like to have experts to guide us. The World Bank has huge experience in that and also the IMF. They are about to give us the terms of reference.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. That's it for the PNQ today.

Motion!

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

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: Hon. Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries!

(3.48 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is against the backdrop of a PNQ, which the Prime Minister has replied to very lengthily, in relation to a prohibitive forbidden tax called

Contribution Sociale Généralisée, that I move to give comments in relation to the three Bills moved by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. To me, these three Bills are all encompassing.

The crux remains the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill is an omnibus legislation with 66 clauses. I shall comment on Clause 47, amendments to the management of public sector debt, and Clause 57 which highlights the amendments to the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act.

Madam Speaker, Clause 47 is the backbone of the Finance Bill and it is the appropriate response to the huge economic challenges that the country is confronted with currently. Social spending, laced with corrupt practices, had grown over the last decade to unaffordable limits. It was not financed by revenue, but financed by debt.

If high and unsustainable debt is not addressed more forcefully, we will be into a serious economic and financial crisis. Do we have the huge sovereign wealth fund like Singapore? Certainly not! Many countries, like Argentina, have defaulted. Those who recall the Greek financial crisis know that its origin lays in cheating on economic data. This is what we found out upon assuming office in November last. The Prime Minister said it loud and clear in the parliamentary statement he made, in December, on the state of the economy. We know that GDP figures were grossly overstated, budget revenues were inflated and public debt heavily underestimated. MSM, as a cheat, gave a passport to the then Prime Minister to bluff and run down the economy.

The amendments to the Finance Bill are our lifeline, our lifeblood, for decent livelihood. In 2014, under the Labour-led Government, total public debt as a percentage of GDP was 60.5%.

The provision to Clause 47 sets up an Electronic Information Monitoring System. If you record information relating to the public sector debt received from general government and public enterprises, performance-based has to be the outcome.

As a responsible Government, Madam Speaker, we have taken measures to put the country on a sound fiscal path to bring public finances in order and under control. In view of the dire economic situation, we are compelled to hold back our electoral promises for some time. The country cannot continue living beyond its means without facing a crisis.

Our soaring debt burden has eroded our ability to respond to domestic and external shocks and we have to urgently rebuild our fiscal space to reduce our vulnerability to disasters.

The budgeted reform –

- (a) to slowly or gradually raised the entitlement to old age pensions to 65 years old follows from demographic changes that increase the number of pension beneficiaries relative to younger tax payers. Our fast-aging population is driving up pension, health and other social cost benefits which will be increasingly borne by the younger generations. With an aging workforce, for every employee, there will be a retiree sooner than expected. As a responsible Government, we cannot hijack the future of our children and grandchild, we are a notch above junk status. Is it the legacy that we want to bequeath? Either we take corrective fiscal measures and create tax buoyancy through investment in productive sectors or go downhill with outflow from global businesses. The Finance Bill means redress and road to recovery.

Instead of loading the country with even more debt, we have instead chosen to raise higher tax revenue upon companies with annual turnover of Rs24 billion or more and those who have broad shoulders to curb Government indebtedness. The fair share tax contribution is unavoidable to narrow the budget deficit. A significant part of the tax increase is temporary for a short period of three years, Madam Speaker.

Putting innovation at the centre of our growth strategy to enhance overall productivity is unavoidable. As a Government, we have to be highly competent and effective in the delivery of public services and in the design and execution of public investment. We have not refrained

from making hard choices. The country's future is at stake. We have to ride the waves with innovative changes. Under our leadership, brain drain will be become brain gain.

Madam Speaker, let me refer to Clause 57 of the Finance Bill which amends the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act. The corporate sector in the sugarcane industry has long benefited from comparative advantages under the law and they have no statutory obligation to provide land equivalence when land is converted for meaningful economic activities beyond agriculture. However, they do have a moral and legitimate obligation to meet Government's objectives under the Twelfth Schedule Part III of the SIE Act namely, to plough back at least 50% of the

proceeds from land conversion into sugar production at either field or factory level or into diversification within the sugar sector. We need bagasse, we need biomass. Over the last ten years, there has been a vertiginous fall in renewable energy production to 18% only. As to production of electricity from bagasse, it's a shocking 12% only.

- (b) To fully compensate the loss in agricultural production by generating an equivalent amount of such production for at least –
 - (i) crop cycle of eight years by putting under sugarcane cultivation of the land;
 - (ii) implementing projects relating to water and energy saving irrigation methods, it has to be a win-win situation for all stakeholders. And, I call upon the corporate sector to honour its obligations.

Madam Speaker, accordingly, sections 26, 28, and 29 of the Act are being extended to extend land conversions, provisions beyond Early Retirement Schemes, Voluntary Retirement Schemes and to also include Early Termination of Contract of Employment Scheme. But where there are rights, there are obligations, Madam Speaker. This is not merely a legal adjustment, it is a matter of justice and the corporate sector must live up to its responsibility towards those employees who opt to retire under Early Retirement Scheme or Voluntary Retirement Scheme or Early Termination of Contract of Employment Scheme.

I had a meeting with the representatives of workers on 27 July, and I gave them firm assurances that the rights of workers will be respected and obligations of the corporate sector or big planters, their obligations have to be honoured. They were taken for a long ride, far too long, by the previous regime. For recall, Madam Speaker, the case of Bel Air Agricultural Ltd in 2019 on the eve of the national poll. Their employment was terminated under the circumstances which fell short of the exit provisions of the law. Thirteen of these employees remained in limbo to this date, without the compensation they rightfully and lawfully deserved.

It is our Government, Madam Speaker, that is now addressing the trials and trauma and the Finance Bill 2025 regularises such cases and ensures that any termination of employment in the sugar industry is done in full conformity with the law. Under the new provisions, the authorisation of the Ministry will be mandatory with the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority providing a faithful report. The exempt in the amendments will also provide exemption from land conversion tax under sections 26, 28 and 29 of the Act. This will enable sugarcane

companies to recover the cost incurred under the Early Termination of Contract of Employment Scheme and, thus, meet their obligation towards affected employees.

As of today, a second batch of employees has not yet been able to proceed under the Early Termination of Contract of Employment Scheme due to lack of funds and this measure will empower the concerned company to raise the necessary funds, thereby allowing those employees to finally receive their rightful compensation.

Let me emphasise, this legal amendment support both existing and future sugar companies to ensure timely and judicious implementation of the Early Termination of Contract of Employment Scheme for sugar estate employees.

Amendment to the Fourth Schedule of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act.

Madam Speaker, further amendments are being proposed to the Fourth Schedule of the Act by adding a thirteenth institution namely, the Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board. And, what is the rationale of the amendment, Madam Speaker? In view of the urgent need to re-engineer the operation of the Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board, currently facing undue financial constraints, Rose Belle Sugar Estate shall be exempted from land conversion tax.

Amendment is being brought under the Fourth Schedule of the SIE Act. The exemption will facilitate the strategic redevelopment of the sugar estate lands, the attraction of private investment and the unlocking of economic potential of land under the Board's purview. It includes agro-industrial, renewable energy and value-added agricultural projects. Given such exemption, it will provide critical, fiscal space for Rose Belle Sugar Estate to restructure, to attract partnership and implement commercial, viable projects. It will not be burdened up front by land conversion tax. This measure will contribute positively to the revitalisation of the State, will improve land productivity and it will support national objectives in terms of employment, investment and sustainable development.

Madam Speaker, our colleague, the hon. Minister of Tourism was unfairly criticised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition despite the fact that, firstly, since April, and I must say, the number of arrivals had continuously increased month after month...

An hon. Member: *Zot fini ale!*

Dr. Boolell: For obvious reasons...

(Interruptions)

They have absconded from their responsibility.

Mr Jhummun: *Koup zot lapay!*

An hon. Member: Happy hour...

An hon. Member: *Dan bien la!*

Dr. Boolell: You know, what can we expect from an Opposition which is void, dull, lacklustre and is a note without a figure, Madam Speaker?

Secondly, in the month of April, the number of arrivals was more than 120,000 visitors.

Thirdly, a record was set in May and June, with more than Rs115,098 visitors respectively.

So, you are doing very well, hon. Minister of Tourism. Well, he always keeps it up.

Madam Speaker, these performances were achieved during what we call 'ease the low season'. The climate has become auspicious despite the fact, Madam Speaker, that we had to address, forcefully and in a meaningful manner, issues which were difficult but relevant to uplift a nation.

And today, I can say that people are looking forward to attend horse racing meeting in Champ de Mars. Decency and transparency are back but then, we are a government which privileges dialogue, consultation and in this respect, government is open to consultation as was stated by the hon. Minister for Financial Services and Economic Planning, with global business representatives and MRA to provide relief, by way of regulations to big foreign companies which will be subject to Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-Up Tax.

And the regulatory relief coming to force, with the start-up of the Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-Up Tax and the thrust remains compliant to OECD/G20 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting but we will continue to consult with EU on meeting our regulatory obligations safeguarding Mauritius' interest. Our interest are our rights and the privileges of those who are given the opportunities to work in a sector which is constantly growing, where, Madam Speaker, there is brainpower. And this is a sector which opens opportunities for many young people.

It is good to recall that under the previous regime, Mauritius was on the grey list established by European Union. And as we say, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Regulations will resolve outstanding issues. Our global business is a model of democratisation of brainpower and management of public debt and level playing field are important to

consolidate the sector. And we should say ‘never’ to a junk status which the previous government had brought us into.

Madam Speaker, let me end by saying that through these bold amendments, our government is not only addressing the legacy of past injustices but also securing the sustainability and resilience of our sugar industry and related institutions.

The key word remains ‘redress’ and we shall redress to give a better livelihood to a nation which is constantly on the march.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the floor is yours.

(4.05 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Merci, *Madam Speaker*.

Madam Speaker, je ne vais bien sûr pas répéter en longueur ce qui a été dit dans le cadre des débats sur le budget. Je me concentrerai sur les changements ou plutôt, les ajustements que nous avons faits dans le *Finance Bill* par rapport au discours du budget.

Néanmoins, qu’il me soit permis de dire que le but prioritaire en ce moment avec le budget et maintenant, le *Finance Bill*, reste la réduction de la dette et du déficit budgétaire tout en restant dans les faits, autant de justice sociale que possible et ensuite, d’engager le début de la réforme de tous nos modèles économiques.

Madam Speaker, nous avons fait le maximum pour les plus vulnérables de notre société. C’est pourquoi nous avons introduit un *Income Support* de R 10,000 par personne pour ceux qui ont un revenu de moins de R 10,000 par mois. Je suis sûre que ce sera plus mais cela nous coûtera environ R 9 milliards sur une période de cinq ans.

Nous sommes en train de nommer une commission d’experts pour réformer tout notre système de pension et trouver le moyen de remettre sur pied un *National Pensions Fund* – nouvelle version, nouvelle vague, si on peut le dire. Nous allons réformer – c’est déjà engagé – le *Disability Allowance*.

Et déjà, je me permettrai de faire une référence à quelque chose sur laquelle j’ai travaillé et qui me tient beaucoup à cœur. En attendant cette réforme de notre *Disability Allowance* en général, ce gouvernement est fier que dans ce *Finance Bill*, nous amendons la loi sur le

Disability Allowance de façon à ce que, avant quelqu'un qui bénéficiait du *Disability Allowance* et qui allait à l'étranger pour des raisons de santé, continuait même au-delà de six mois de toucher son *Disability Allowance* mais malheureusement, la loi ne prévoyait pas cela. C'est admirable que quelqu'un qui bénéficie du *Disability Allowance* trouve les moyens d'aller étudier à l'étranger. Nous sommes fiers d'avoir introduit cela dans ce *Finance Bill*, et nous allons voter ça. Et il y a un exemple – tout un exemple, tout un modèle, tout un symbole – une des héroïnes de Maurice, Jane Constance.

Vous savez ce qu'on lui a fait ?

Aveugle, elle bénéficie du *Disability Allowance*, elle va étudier à l'étranger mais parce que la loi le prévoit, après six mois on coupe son *Disability Allowance*. Ce n'est pas fini. Elle avait un petit compte dans le *Savings Account* de la State Commercial Bank. En son absence, alors qu'elle est en train d'étudier là-bas, on vide son *Savings Account*. Et ce n'est pas fini, on lui réclame additionnellement une somme qu'on lui a payée 'par erreur', étant donné ce que la loi était. Et on la menace de la police, s'il vous plaît. Tout cela à l'écrit, ça c'est la bureaucratie.

Mais le gouvernement précédent n'a rien fait pour changer sa. C'est le début d'une réforme de tout notre système de *Disability Allowance*. C'est tout un symbole, Madame la présidente.

Pour financer l'*Income Support* et les autres mesures sociales et en même temps, réduire les déficits budgétaires et la dette, faire tout cela en même temps, cela n'était pas facile. Et disons-le franchement, nous sommes obligés de faire les riches payer pour faire tout ce qui peut être fait à ce stade pour les plus vulnérables de notre société. C'est pourquoi nous demandons un *Fair Share Contribution* des grosses compagnies, des *Corporations*. C'est dans la loi, quelques R 5 milliard.

Nous faisons payer ces quelques 600 personnes, on a mis surtaxe, comme dans le cas des grosses compagnies, une surtaxe pour ces quelques 600 personnes qui gagnent plus de R 12 millions par an. Cela nous rapportera encore R 1 milliard.

Et, il y a d'autres mesures. Quand on veut réduire la dette, réduire les déficits budgétaires et en même temps, mettre sur pied le *Income Support Scheme*, nous sommes obligés de taxer les plus riches. C'est temporaire, on l'a bien dit. Le Premier ministre l'a dit, c'est temporaire. Le taux de fiscalité est augmenté de façon temporaire pour deux ou trois ans. Aussitôt qu'on peut, on reviendra à un taux de fiscalité moins fort mais qui attire plus, surtout les étrangers, *Madam Speaker*.

Mais, ce que nous avons eu à faire, c'est de faire tout cela sans casser le ressort du développement économique et faire fuir les investisseurs étrangers.

On aurait pu annoncer de grandes projections sur les investissements étrangers qu'on aura. Si on agit de façon maladroite, il n'y aura pas de développements qui financeront tout cela. Donc, c'est ce que nous avons eu à faire.

Je demande à la population, y compris aux syndicats, de bien comprendre que nous avons fait le maximum que nous pouvons faire pour les plus vulnérables. Nous faisons les riches payer cela, mais nous ne pouvons pas faire les riches payer et en même temps casser le ressort du développement économique et des investissements qui nous viennent de l'étranger.

Madam Speaker, ce *Finance Bill* est aussi le début de la réforme de tout notre système économique avec un *Fiscal Responsibility Act* à l'horizon. L'honorable Premier ministre l'avait annoncé dans le discours du budget. Nous confirmons que cela viendra. C'est difficile de le préparer et c'est difficile à l'appliquer, mais un *Fiscal Responsibility Act*, avec toutes les structures qu'il en faut, sera voté dans les mois ou les années à venir.

Dans le cas de Rodrigues, je ne peux pas m'empêcher de féliciter les deux députés du même côté, mais des deux côtés, qui ont parlé. Cela m'épate ! Les deux discours étaient des discours formidables ; celui de l'honorable Francisco François, comme toujours, mais le discours de l'autre député de Rodrigues, qui a parlé, était aussi superbe. C'est cela le Rodrigues d'aujourd'hui.

En fait, ce que nous faisons, c'est que nous introduisons le *Performance Based Budgeting*. Je note que les députés des deux côtés, tous ensemble avec le gouvernement, ont exprimé leur accord avec cette introduction. C'est une bonne chose. C'est une chose difficile à appliquer à Maurice. Donc, ce sera difficile à le mettre en pratique à Rodrigues. Mais cela introduira plus de discipline, plus de rigueur et plus de planification.

Je tiens à dire que l'amendement, qui intéresse Rodrigues en particulier, n'affaiblit en rien l'autonomie de Rodrigues. Bien au contraire, c'est l'intention de ce gouvernement de consolider, de renforcer et d'étendre l'autonomie à Rodrigues, *Madam Speaker*. Seulement, la loi dit, soit l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues en approuve, soit deux tiers des députés ici doivent en approuver.

Nous sommes un peu dans une situation paradoxale. L'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues ou plutôt l'exécutif de Rodrigues auront à approuver. Il sera demandé à l'Assemblée de l'approuver le 19 août. Mais ce sera trop tard ! Parce qu'il nous faut approuver le budget, y

compris cette mesure maintenant. Nous sommes obligés. L'Assemblée régionale approuvera plus tard ; il y aura des discours là-bas comme toujours. Mais nous sommes obligés aujourd'hui de demander à tous les députés et les ministres qui sont au pays de voter de façon à ce que nous ayons deux tiers, comme exige le *Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act*. Ce sera encore plus facile, car les quatre députés de Rodrigues ont exprimé leur soutien pour cet amendement, *Madam Speaker*.

Ce premier budget du nouveau gouvernement – je prie à tous les membres de bien me croire – a été préparé et adopté dans des conditions très, très difficiles. Un nouveau gouvernement s'installe, de nouveaux *Advisers* s'installent.

Tout un chambardement qui fait que ce premier budget de notre gouvernement a été préparé, comme je le disais, dans des conditions particulièrement difficiles avec 16 ministres sur 24 ministres pour la première fois de leur vie. On ne naît pas ministre, mais devenir ministre la première fois qu'on est élu est un défi supplémentaire. Mais nous l'avons fait. Cela a été difficile et dur, mais nous avons fait tout cela au cours des sept mois depuis que ce gouvernement est en place.

Madam Speaker, de mon point de vue, l'adoption de ce budget constitue un moment-clé – un tournant dans l'histoire actuelle, l'histoire récente de ce pays. Aujourd'hui, quand nous allons adopter ce budget, cela constituera un tournant. Il y aura un avant et un après l'adoption de ce budget et de ce *Finance Bill*. C'est un tournant dans l'œuvre de redressement de notre pays tout en adoptant autant de mesures sociales que possible.

Je demanderai à tout le monde de bien réaliser que nous sommes en train de faire l'histoire de ce pays. On a fait de beaux discours, de beaux slogans et attaqué l'opposition, tout cela est bien, mais nous sommes en train véritablement de faire l'histoire de ce pays. Il y a tout un pays à redresser. Ce n'est pas seulement l'économie, d'ailleurs. Tout est à refaire après dix ans de massacres de MSM ! Tout est à refaire à commencer par l'économie. Je suis fier d'être dans un gouvernement qui est en train de faire l'histoire de notre pays en commençant le travail de redressement de notre pays et de l'économie de notre pays.

Madam Speaker, bien sûr, il y a bien des promesses électorales que nous avons faites et que nous ne pouvons pas tenir la population. Nous ne sommes pas des sadiques. Nous sommes en train de faire le maximum qu'on peut. Nous faisons adopter les promesses que nous avons faites autant que nous le pouvons. Il faut le reconnaître : bien des promesses que nous avons faites de bonne foi, nous ne pouvons pas les tenir maintenant.

L'honorable Premier ministre, ministre des Finances, a présenté, il y a quelques mois, le *State of the Economy*. Tout le monde sait aujourd'hui – Il n'y a pas de bluff. Il n'y a pas de mensonges – ce que le MSM a laissé derrière lui comme faillite économique, comme endettements, comme banqueroute. Cela nous gêne et cela nous empêche d'adopter bien des promesses que nous avons faites. Même aujourd'hui, la priorité demeure d'éviter un *downgrading* par *Moody's*. Bien sûr, pour la population, *downgrading* ne veut rien dire. C'est un terme académique. Mais il faut bien réaliser que si nous avons été ou si nous sommes *downgraded* par *Moody's*, c'est tout un effet de cascade, une pagaille s'ensuit. Les investisseurs et les investissements étrangers ne viendront plus si nous sommes *downgraded* au *Junk Status*.

Ce n'est pas juste le *Junk Status*. Comme je le disais, il y a un '*junk Opposition*' aujourd'hui. Quand l'économie devient au *Junk Status*, il faut réaliser que ce n'est pas juste des phrases en l'air ; c'est toute une cascade de catastrophes qui s'ensuivent.

Nous n'avons pas eu une tâche facile, *Madam Speaker*, de redresser ce *mess* et en même temps de faire le maximum en termes de justice sociale et de commencer le redressement économique/la réforme économique de tout notre système économique. Mais les promesses que nous avons faites seront réalisées dans toute la mesure du possible et aussi vite que possible dans les mois et les années à venir.

Si nous maintenons le cap – ce n'est pas facile ces temps-ci – si nous continuons encore un an ou deux ans l'effort énorme qui est en train d'être fait, nous serons en position, mois après mois, année après année, de tenir toutes nos promesses électorales.

Nous n'avons qu'une seule parole. Il faut pouvoir tenir les promesses. Cela ne sert à rien pour l'opposition – limitation de l'opposition qu'on a aujourd'hui – de venir souligner : vous aviez promis ceci, vous aviez promis cela ! Ils ont laissé un *mess* derrière eux, une banqueroute derrière eux. Nous sommes en train de corriger cela, de redresser le pays et en même temps de commencer à mettre en pratique tout ce que nous pouvons mettre en pratique dans les circonstances actuelles, Madame la présidente.

Je tiens à saluer à nouveau le courage et la détermination du Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances. Je l'ai déjà fait, je tiens à encore une fois saluer le courage et la détermination du Premier ministre. J'ai été Premier ministre, j'ai été ministre des Finances ! Dans les circonstances dont on a hérité, là, après les élections, être Premier ministre et ministre des Finances – je me sers de l'expression que j'avais rayé pour mettre autre chose – mais vraiment, cela relève du surhumain. C'est n'est pas humain ! Je salue mais en même temps, je

sympathise avec le Premier ministre. Nous avons passé, nous sommes en train de passer encore, par une période très, très difficile. C'est pourquoi je tiens à saluer à nouveau le ministre des Finances et Premier ministre.

Je tiens aussi, Madame la présidente, à saluer les fonctionnaires, à commencer par le *Financial Secretary* et tous les fonctionnaires qui nous ont aidé à préparer un budget extrêmement difficile. Les *advisers* à commencer par le *very special financial adviser* du Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, mais aussi les autres. Et je tiens à saluer mes collègues ministres, à commencer par les nouveaux ministres. J'ai vu les chaperons des nouveaux ministres apprendre sous la pression des événements dans des conditions très difficiles. Je salue surtout les nouveaux ministres aussi, Madame la présidente. Je le répète, au-delà du tournant que l'adoption de ce budget représente – c'est vraiment tournant, il y aura un avant et un après ce budget – mais au-delà de cela, la prochaine étape de la réforme de tout notre système économique est déjà engagée.

Il y a dans ce budget des mesures et à l'horizon proche, des mesures qui vont nous faire évoluer sur cette voie d'un changement en profondeur et ce changement est déjà engagé avec ce budget, avec ce *Finance Bill*, cette réforme est déjà engagée, Madame la présidente. Je le dis, il faudra un effort soutenu. Cela ne sera pas facile mais il faudra un effort soutenu, mais cet effort soutenu, nous devons le faire au nom des enfants, des petit-enfants de l'avenir de ce pays, Madame la présidente.

A chaque étape de cette voie, avec autant de justice sociale que possible. Encore une fois sans casser le ressort économique mais autant de justice sociale à chaque étape, Madame la présidente. Autant de justice sociale que possible, que soutenable *at every point in time*.

Madame la présidente, notre île Maurice n'a pas le choix. Nous avons un seul pays, nous avons une seule jeunesse, un seul avenir et nous n'avons pas droit à l'erreur.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you. Hon. Prime Minister!

(4.06 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Yes, Madam Speaker, first of all, let me thank all the hon. Members, the Deputy Prime Minister and all the Ministers who have intervened on these three Bills.

We all know, Madam Speaker, I do not want to keep saying it, but we all know the unprecedented state of economic affairs which the previous Government left us – how they dilapidated the public funds and public finances of the country while they deliberately manipulated the economic figures to paint an illusionary positive picture of the financial and economic health of our country.

Madam Speaker, we could not afford to continue with business as usual and sacrifice the future stability of our nation. Bold actions had to be taken to avert as far as possible the risk of us joining the league of junk nations. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has just explained, I also explained in my speech, what happens when you become or you are labelled as a junk State. We do not even have to think about the problems that we would have had.

These Bills, therefore, mark a pivotal step in our vision to lead Mauritius from abyss to prosperity and secure a thriving, a fair and sustainable future for our people. The journey from recklessness to responsibility has not been an easy one as the Deputy Prime Minister just said.

Implementing structural reforms is inherently challenging. It demands significant time, patience and courage so that you can deliver lasting change that will benefit the whole society at large. This is the only way to build a prosperous nation where every citizen will have the opportunities to live up to his or to her aspirations. *Il faut, comme a dit l'honorable Deputy Prime Minister, redonner à la jeunesse mauricienne le droit à l'espoir et à l'ambition.* The path we have proposed is built around three main pillars: economic renewal, a new social order and fiscal consolidation.

The Bills give concrete form to the measures announced in the Budget Speech and the Annex, as I said, reflecting months of analysis and reflection across the broad spectrum of Mauritian society. The three Bills together, Madam Speaker, amend 73 existing laws providing a comprehensive answer to a difficult and complex context. The challenges are indeed daunting but let me remind the House, perhaps people do not realise it, the previous Government amended 96 of existing laws, lumping together laws that had nothing to do with the Budget or the Finance Bill – it was as if an occasion to slip in things. We did not do this. This is why we are bringing three Bills separately.

At the heart of our economic renewal, our strategic reforms designed to modernise our industries and make our country future-ready, we are charting an innovative development path by ushering in a new investment and export driven economic model. We are breaking away from what the previous Government fraught and unsustainable consumption driven approach.

We are giving a new momentum to investments in emerging sectors including the blue economy, renewable energy, AI-enabled industries and sustainable tourism. All this to promote resilience and high value addition.

This Budget, Madam Speaker, will fuel our transition to a digital knowledge driven economy. It is an undeniable fact that the AI revolution will have a much bigger impact on the world than the Industrial Revolution. Already I can tell you something that might shock some of you, the new CEO of Mauritius Telecom is planning to use AI to have a personal teacher for every student in the country.

Would you believe this? Don't forget – he is from Singapore. So, these are the kind of things that we expect from AI. We do not want to miss out on this historic transformation. We cannot and we must not be behind the curves. We must be ahead of the curves.

The Finance Bill renews our social pact to reshape our future together as one people and as one nation. We must grow our economy but with a commitment to inclusiveness and social justice. To take a phrase that the Deputy Prime Minister just used: *'sans casser le ressort'*. Otherwise, no growth, we are back to square one. Growth is also meaningless if not shared. This is why through the Finance Bill, we are amending the relevant legislations to provide for amongst others –

- the gradual phasing out of the CSG Allowances over the next two years, I just explained in the PNQ what the consequences would have been;
- for the increase of the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* Allowance to ensure that a full-time worker earns a minimum monthly revenue of Rs20,000, and also
- for maintaining the Equal Chance Allowance of Rs2,000 per month for households earning less than Rs20,000 monthly.

Madam Speaker, we have made the necessary, the difficult and complex decision to gradually move the age of eligibility of the BRP from 60 to 65. This will ease intergenerational inequity and safeguard the pension system for decades to come. Let me once again remind the House and the population, we have not changed the retirement age. It was 65, it is still 65. As a compassionate Government, we have also provided for the payment of a monthly income support of Rs10,000 to individuals aged 60, Rs20,000 if it is a couple and above who would not qualify for the Basic Retirement Pension subject to eligibility criteria. We are also setting up a fund, Rs10 billion for the Price Stabilisation Fund with an initial Rs2 billion allocation

this fiscal year – I think that I just explained that in the PNQ – to protect the purchasing power of the population.

Our policies, Madam Speaker, are guided by the need to balance social coherence and fiscal stewardship. In view of the fiscal mismanagement of the previous Government, we had no choice but to come up with a comprehensive fiscal consolidation plan. We are restoring prudence and credibility to our public finances with concrete measures aimed at reducing both the budget deficit and the public sector debt. We have ensured that those who are less privileged, are supported while those who have the means, do contribute their fair share to rebuilding Mauritius.

Through these amendments in the Finance Bill, Madam Speaker, let me remind the House –

- (a) some 81% of employees will now not pay any income tax. 81% and 75,000 individuals earning between Rs500,000 and Rs1 million will be paying less tax;
- (b) we are removing VAT on a range of essential foods to protect the purchasing power of the most vulnerable, and
- (c) we are giving certainty to individuals and the business community as well.

About the temporary measures, the Deputy Prime Minister just stressed it, temporary nature of some of the new tax measures such as the Fair Share Contribution. In spite of the urgency for fiscal consolidation, we have not raised VAT. We have not raised the rate of VAT because we all know it is a regressive tax and we have heard consumers, especially more of the lower rung of the ladder and the modest income.

Before I come to the specific points made by the two hon. Members of the Opposition, let me make some comments on the criticisms made, both inside and outside the House.

First, comments have been made by those who were desperately, I suppose, trying to come out of the gutter that they have been consigned to. One gets the impression that some prophets of doom in the Opposition, including the former Minister of Finance – of *savat dodo* frame– are shouting from the top of Pieter Both that this budget is ringing the death toll of the economy. *Si le ridicule tuait – je ne sais pas combien de fois il devait mourir*. They are as if literally praying day and night for the country to fail so that they can come out like vultures to feed on the cadavers of people.

On the other hand, there are many true patriots, including ordinary citizens but also some prominent, economic operators and the public at large who are spurring us. They realise, they

understand, they are encouraging us, expressing their gratitude for the measures that we have taken in time; in this particularly challenging conjuncture. Do not believe what you see all the time. I know there is a team at the Sun Trust. As soon as we speak, they write. They are paid monthly. They are paid because the MSM has unlimited money. They pay.

Mr Jhummun: Dirty!

The Prime Minister: And some people think that the people are criticising. Few people. People understand the catastrophic situation that we inherited and the need for bold and courageous actions.

There is, Madam Speaker, a Bhojpuri expression which I think is very appropriate to describe the development philosophy of the previous Government. What they said, I say it –

“Ek din ke raja, sau din bheek manga”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Will you translate, please?

The Prime Minister: In *kreol* –

“Enn zour lerwa, san zour mandian”

Basically, that is what it says. We do not want to perpetuate and instil this mode of living in our population.

The House will note that this is not only due to the allowances provided right, left and centre by the previous Government. I am talking about the Gini coefficient. Somebody mentioned the Gini coefficient in their speech. This is due to the allowances provided left, right and centre by the previous Government. Out of where? Huge amounts of printed money and this led to a significant level of rise in the debt level. These allowances were not sustainable. In addition, printing of money – we all know – a student who studies Economics in Form 5 knows, if you print money, you will intensify inflationary pressures and drive inflation at a rate which is going to be much high. It was 11.3% in February 2023. The improvement in the Gini coefficient has no meaning if the purchasing power of the population has been eroded by a significant increase in inflation. It is an illusion.

Third, let me make clear any confusion that hon. Adrien Duval might have created or tried to create in the minds of people, regarding the age of eligibility for the BRP. In the Budget Speech, I announced that we are going to increase the age eligibility for the basic pension to

65 in a phased manner over a period of five years, using a sliding scale. The operative words are ‘sliding scale’, which I do not think you understood. The five-year transition starts as from 01 September of this year and ends on 31 August 2030. That is, in the first year, let me clarify because you do not understand what a sliding scale is. In the first year, as from 01 September 2025 to the 31 August 2026, the BRP eligibility age is being increased by one year. That is, a person reaching 60 will receive BRP as from 01 September 2026 at the age of 61. In the second year, that is, from 01 September 2026 to 31 August 2027, again the BRP eligibility age is being increased by two years such that a person reaching 60, will receive BRP as from 01 September 2028, that is, at the age of 62. That is what a sliding scale is. I could go on.

In the third year, from 01 September 2027 to 31 August 2028, the eligibility is being increased by three years. In other words, a person reaching 60 years during that period will receive BRP as from 01 September 2030 at the age of 63.

It is not that we are cutting the pension for 60-year age and you will only get it at 65. It is a sliding scale. I could go on for the fourth year and for the fifth year. It will be increased again so that by five years, the person reaching 60 will receive BRP from 01 September 2034 at the age of 65. That is what a sliding scale is. This completes the five-year sliding scale increase in the age of eligibility.

After this 5-year period, that is, from 01 September 2030 and beyond, the BRP eligibility age will be 65. I hope that clears the confusion in the mind of hon. A. Duval and he will realise that it is intellectually dishonest to qualify the work done on the Finance Bill by the civil servants and the Advisers as ‘amateurism.’

Mr Jhummun: *Pa amater!*

The Prime Minister: I think you failed to grasp the fact that it is a sliding scale.

Let me now come to the fourth point on the CSG Allowances.

The previous government had planned to end abruptly – I say it again. I said it in the PNQ, ‘abruptly.’ It is in the speech. The Leader of the Opposition voted for that! – the CSG Allowances to be stopped abruptly on 30 June 2025.

This was clear in the amendments of the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2024.

As a compassionate Government, we are ensuring that the CSG Allowances are gradually phased out over the two next years. More importantly, Madam Speaker, all persons on the

Social Register of Mauritius will continue to receive these allowances in full, including the Independence Allowance.

Fifth, on the increase in the excise duty on vehicles.

I have already stated in a reply to a PQ, I think, last Tuesday that the purpose of increasing the excise duty on motor vehicles is two-fold –

- (i) To curb the rate of increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. We have seen the congestions we have and how many accidents there are and all these.
- (ii) To address the widening trade deficit and significant outflow of foreign currency.

Do you know, Madam Speaker, for the last month, from the imports of vehicles – they tried to beat the deadline – we have lost USD 200 million in one month! So, approximately, Rs9.6 billion or Rs9.7 billion in one month. Last year, – I said that before in my speech – it was Rs18 billion in one year, just for imported cars. If we take all vehicles together, it was around Rs24 billion. We could not extend the time by more. There was no question of extending!

Sixth, on the deterioration of the exchange rate.

Let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, during the last 10 years, under the previous government, the rupee has depreciated by 46% against the dollar. 46%! We all know that everything we import, practically everything, is in dollars. So, obviously, if the dollar is appreciating and the rupee is depreciating, everything you import is going to cost more. Therefore, prices will go up.

Following the implementation of the new monetary policy measures by the now independent Bank of Mauritius, there is greater stability in the value of the rupee. In fact, Madam Speaker, the rupee has appreciated against the dollar. Compared to then, 46% depreciation, the rupee has appreciated by some 3.5-3.6%.

Seventh, the Qualified Domestic Minimum Top-Up (QDMTT).

As rightly stated and very well-explained by hon. Uteem, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I think, has not understood the concept of QDMTT. We had to introduce this tax to preserve our tax base.

I think hon. Uteem explained it very well, but let me add. In 2022, the previous government had already introduced the enabling provisions for this tax. They introduced it, but regulations were never made.

As at date, around 30 jurisdictions, including South Africa, UAE, Singapore, UK and the majority of EU countries have already introduced QDMTT in their domestic legislation. If we do not do this, Mauritius, therefore, will be at risk to losing its tax base against these jurisdictions. This will ensure that Mauritius is compliant with the OECD rules.

Madam Speaker, I must emphasise that flexibility has been provided in the Bill for regulations to be made for the provision of incentives, if required. In this context, a special tax credit will be worked out together with the MRA in consultation with stakeholders, and implemented by way of regulations to provide reliefs to those companies which will be subject to the QDMTT. We mentioned this before.

The Ministry of Finance has taken a commitment following discussions with stakeholders that those tax credits and reliefs will take effect as from the same date as the tax will become applicable.

Eight, on the Reduction of the VAT registration threshold from Rs6 million to Rs3 million.

Let me remind the House that by joining the VAT system – I think many people, in fact, do not realise – the new VAT registered businesses will be able to recover VAT paid on inputs used, that is, on the raw materials, the semi-finished products as well as equipment, machinery and all these, in the production goods and services. May I remind the House that the threshold, at one time, was Rs2 million!

Furthermore, the reduction in the VAT registration threshold will create a level playing field and fair competition among operators in the same business activity.

Ninth, on the grading of contractors.

The contractor grading system is being democratised in a way to provide greater opportunities for SME contractors. They were being kept out of the system. As you know, only one person was getting all the contracts. The revised grading system has been aligned with the ceilings set out in the public procurement legislation to ensure fairness, but also coherence. Additionally, provisions are being made for the registration of micro-contractors to enable them to participate in these government projects.

Finally, Madam Speaker, regarding the double taxation of dividends under the Fair Share Contribution.

Let me remind, again, the Leader of the Opposition that the solidarity levy, which was introduced by the former government, was applicable on leviable income, that is, for levies which included dividends paid by resident companies. For the purposes of Fair Share Contribution, a similar definition of the term ‘dividends’ has been used.

Madam Speaker, we realise that navigating through the rough seas ahead will not be easy, but we are convinced that through our collective efforts and mutual support, we will steer the country to a secure and stable future.

Let me assure the House that the reforms in this Budget are carefully calibrated, again, I say, time-bound – the Deputy Prime Minister also said it. It is time-bound – and guided by our objective to reconstruct the economy and our society.

In this context, Madam Speaker, it is good that I quote Moody’s which has brought out a small report. They will have a full report, I think, next week. Look at what they said this morning, and I quote –

“Delays in fiscal consolidation that lead to persistently large fiscal deficits, causing debt to stabilise at high levels, would be likely to result in a rating downgrade.”

They said this. They had said it before, and they saying it black on white.

According to Moody’s, if Mauritius implements a comprehensive fiscal consolidation package that offers the prospect of reversing the rise in government debt, the outlook could be classified as stable.

As we achieve fiscal stability and economic recovery, we will pursue a light tax policy. This is an objective we plan to achieve within our five-year mandate, and bringing this Fiscal Responsibility Act so that no government can act as irresponsibly as they did.

Through these Bills, Madam Speaker, we are acting with empathy and we are also acting with a clear sense of responsibility.

Through these Bills, Madam Speaker, we are acting with empathy and we are also acting with a clear sense of responsibility. As we ask any Mauritian to contribute to the national efforts to save Mauritius from the abyss, we will also ensure that every Mauritian will share in the recovery and the benefit of growth. We hope we will touch all the people of Mauritius, not just a few. Let us, therefore, embrace the reforms, not as a burden but as a foundation, let us together rebuild Mauritius’ bridge to the future, strong and united.

Let me add also by thanking the team at the Ministry of Finance from the Financial Secretary to the Economic Adviser, to all the other advisers and also the Secretary to the Cabinet and the staff of PMO and also the people from the Solicitor-General onwards and the State Law Office.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I commend these three Bills to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

THE FINANCE BILL

(No. XVIII of 2025)

Clauses 1 to 12 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 13 (Economic Development Board Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 13 –

“in clause 13, in paragraph (d), in the proposed First Schedule, in Part I, in item 4, in the third column, by deleting the words “50,000 rupees” and replacing them by the words “30,000 rupees”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 13, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 14 to 22 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 23 (Gambling Regulatory Authority Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 23 –

“in clause 23, in paragraph (ab), in the proposed section 156 –

- (i) by repealing subsection (2);

- (ii) in subsection (3), by repealing paragraph (b), the existing paragraph (c) being relettered as paragraph (b);
- (iii) in subsection (5), by inserting, after the words “betting company”, the words “or lottery operator”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 23, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 24 and 25 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 26 (Income Tax Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 26 –

“in clause 26 –

- (i) in paragraph (a), in subparagraph (iv), in the definition of “global business entity” –
 - (A) in paragraph (b), by inserting, after the word “Global”, the word “Business”;
 - (B) in paragraph (c), by inserting, after the word “Global”, the word “Business”;
- (ii) by deleting paragraphs (d) and (e) and replacing them by the following paragraphs –
 - (d) a foundation;
 - (e) a trust or a trustee of a unit trust scheme;
- (iii) in paragraph (f), in the proposed new section 77A, in subsection (2), by deleting the words “under section 50R”;

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 26, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 27 to 38 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 39 (National Pensions Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 39 –

“in clause 39, in paragraph (g), in the proposed Tenth Schedule, in COLUMN 3, by deleting the words “September 2033 and after” and replacing them by the words “September 2034 and after”.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 39, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 40 to 46 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 47 (Public Debt Management Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 47 –

“in clause 47 –

- (i) in paragraph (a), in subparagraph (i), by deleting the words “Government”.”;
- (ii) in paragraph (c), in subsection (2), by deleting the word “exceeding” wherever it appear and replacing them by the word “exceed”.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 47, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 48 to 56 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 57 (Sugar Industry Efficiency Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendment in clause 57 –

“in clause 57 –

- (i) by deleting paragraph (d);

- (ii) in paragraph (e), by deleting subparagraph (i);
- (iii) by deleting paragraph (g);”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 57, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 58 to 60 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 61 (Value Added Tax Act Amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 61 –

“in clause 61, in paragraph (n), in the proposed new section 53N, by inserting, after subsection (7), the following new subsection –

(7A) The bank, paragraphs (a) to (f) and the chargeable income referred to in subsection (7) relate to transactions with residents, other than a global business entity.”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 61, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 62 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 63 (Economic Development Board (Smart City Scheme) Regulations 2015 amended)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in clause 63 –

“in clause 63 –

- (i) by deleting paragraphs (a) and (b) and replacing them by the following paragraphs –

- (a) in regulation 9, by inserting, after paragraph (5), the following new paragraph –

(5A) A smart city company or smart city developer issued with an SCS certificate on or after 5 June 2025 shall, on the issue the certificate, pay to the Economic Development Board, in respect of land area within a smart city which is being parcelled out, a smart city fee, which shall be computed in accordance with Part II of the Second Schedule to the Morcellement Act.

- (b) by inserting, after regulation 22, the following new regulation –

22A. Package of incentives for Smart Cities issued with letter of comfort on or after 5 June 2025

(1) Regulation 22 shall not apply to a smart city company, smart city developer and Special Purpose Vehicle set up under regulation 10(5) or 11(3) or Smart City Management Company, where the smart city company has been issued with a letter of comfort under these regulations on or after 5 June 2025.

(2) Where a smart city company has been issued with a letter of comfort under these regulations on or after 5 June 2025, the following incentives shall apply –

- (a) a smart city company or smart city developer shall, in respect of a project relating to the construction of a public transport station/terminal, be eligible to claim refund of VAT on buildings, capital goods and construction of public roads, for a period not exceeding 8 succeeding income years as from the date of the SCS Certificate;
- (b) a smart city company or smart city developer shall be eligible to claim refund of VAT for construction of public roads or roads that will be made available to the general public;
- (c) where a smart city company or smart city developer imports any dutiable goods, other than furniture, to be used in infrastructure works for the construction of a public transport station/terminal, no customs duty shall be paid on those goods;

- (d) where in relation to the construction of a public transport station/terminal, a smart city company or smart city developer imports furniture in such condition that it would, to the satisfaction of the Economic Development Board with the concurrence of Customs Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority, require further processing resulting into value addition of at least 20 per cent of the c.i.f. value at import, no customs duty shall be paid on that furniture;
- (e) income derived by a smart city company or smart city developer in respect of a project relating to the construction of a public transport station/terminal shall be exempt from income tax under the Income Tax Act, provided that –
 - (i) the period of exemption does not exceed 8 succeeding income years as from the date of the SCS certificate; and
 - (ii) the income is from an activity pertaining to the development and sale, rental or management of immovable property, other than an activity in respect of the supply of goods and services.
- (f) the Morcellement Act shall not apply to an excision by a smart city company, an excision for the purpose of transfer of land to a smart city company or a morcellement under the Scheme except for a project relating to the construction of a public transport station/ terminal.

- (ii) by repealing paragraph (c);”

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 63, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 64 to 66 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The First to Tenth Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Motion made and question proposed: “that the Eleventh Schedule stand part of the Bill.”

Eleventh Schedule

The Prime Minister: Madam Chairperson, I move for the following amendments in the Eleventh Schedule –

- (i) in the Eleventh Schedule, in the proposed Third Schedule, under CATEGORY 5, by adding the following new item and its corresponding entries, the existing item being lettered as paragraph (a) –

(b)Operator of Mauritius National Lottey to conduct activities through remote communication	5,000,000	12 months
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Amendments agreed to.

Eleventh Schedule, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Twelfth to Fifteenth Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

Madam Chairperson: We will proceed with the other two Bills.

The following Bills were considered and agreed to –

- (i) *The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2025)*
- (ii) *The Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XX of 2025)*

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Finance Bill (No. XVIII of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

The motion was made and seconded for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2025) to be read a third time and passed.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I move for a division of votes.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, as per the provisions of section 75E of the Constitution, any laws which alters the Rodrigues Regional Act, requires –

“ [...] 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.”

We will, therefore, proceed with the taking of votes by division.

Please, ring the bell!

(Division Bells were rung)

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Madam Clerk, proceed with the division.

On question put, the House divided.

AYES

1. Hon. M. Seeburn
2. Hon. Ms A. Savabaddy
3. Dr. the hon. R. Saumtally
4. Hon. K. Rookny
5. Hon. C. Ramkalawon
6. Hon. F. Quirin
7. Dr. the hon. S. Prayag
8. Hon. C. Lukeeram
9. Hon. K. Lobine
10. Hon. S. Jugurnauth
11. Hon. R. Jhummun
12. Hon. Ms D. Henriette-Manan
13. Hon. F. François
14. Hon. R. Etwareea
15. Hon. J. Edouard
16. Dr. the hon. Ms R. Daureeawo
17. Hon. Ms M. R. Collet

18. Hon. L. Caserne
19. Hon. N. Beejan
20. Hon. R. Beehook
21. Hon. B. Babajee
22. Dr. the hon. F. Aumeer
23. Hon. T. Apollon
24. Hon. P. Venkatasami
25. Hon. E. Juman
26. Hon. V. Baloomoody
27. Hon. Ms S. Anquetil
28. Hon. Ms V. Leu-Govind
29. Hon. K. Parapen
30. Hon. H. Narsinghen
31. Hon. Ms A. Babooram
32. Hon. F. Allymun
33. Hon. S. Pierre
34. Hon. Ms K. Foo Kune-Bacha
35. Hon. F. David
36. Hon. Ms J. Béranger
37. Hon. D. Damry
38. Hon. M. Gondeea
39. Hon. L. Pentiah
40. Dr. the hon. A. Ramtohl
41. Dr. the hon. M. Gungapersad
42. Hon. A. Ameer Meea
43. Dr. the hon. K. Sukon
44. Hon. M. Yeung Sik Yuen
45. Hon. Ms A. Navarre-Marie
46. Hon. Osman Mahomed
47. Hon. R. Uteem
48. Hon. D. Ramful
49. Hon. P. Assirvaden
50. Dr. the hon. Ms J. Jeetun
51. Hon. A. Subron

- 52. Hon. R. Duval
- 53. Hon. A. Bachoo
- 54. Hon. A. Gunness
- 55. Dr. the hon. A. Boolell
- 56. Hon. R. Bhagwan
- 57. Hon. S. Mohamed
- 58. Hon. P. Bérénger
- 59. Dr. the hon. Prime Minister

ABSENT

- 1. Dr. the hon. Ms B. Thannoo
- 2. Hon. A. Ramdass
- 3. Hon. C. Baboolall
- 4. Hon. R. Wochit
- 5. Hon. D. Nagalingum

ABSTENTION

- 1. Hon. A. Duval
- 2. Hon. G. Lesjongard

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the results of the Division are as follows –

Ayes: 59 Noes: 0 Abstention: 2 Absent: 5

Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2025) has, on the final voting, obtained 59 votes, that is, has been supported by a two-thirds of all the Members as required by Section 75E of the Constitution. I declare that the Bill has been read a third time and passed.

Hon. Prime Minister!

On motion made and seconded, the Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XX of 2025) was read a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, adjournment!

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 07 October 2025 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: *C'est comme des enfants qui vont en vacances.*

The House stands adjourned!

At 5.20 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 07 October 2025 at 11.30 a.m.