



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 04 FEBRUARY 2025

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

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

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

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MAURITIUS

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 02 of 2025

Sitting of Tuesday 04 February 2025

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

(a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No I of 2025). (In Original)

(b) The Financial Crimes Commission (Extension of Time) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 11 of 2025)

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

The Report of the Director of Audit and the Financial Statements of the National Parks and Conservation Fund for the financial year ended 30 June 2021.

C. Ministry of Land Transport

The Road Traffic (Control of Structures and Objects During Procession) Regulations 2025. (Government Notice No. 10 of 2025)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

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

**CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – SOVEREIGNTY – UNITED KINGDOM-MAURITIUS
NEGOTIATIONS**

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 exercise of sovereignty by Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, he will state where matters stand as to the negotiations for an agreement with the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me first of all thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to clarify matters on this issue, because lots of rumours are also going on.

As the House is aware, on the eve of the dissolution of the National Assembly, that is, on 03 October of last year, Mauritius and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement confirming that after 13 rounds of negotiations, they had reached a political agreement on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

Madam Speaker, immediately after I became Prime Minister, I received a letter from the British Prime Minister, the Rt Honourable Sir Keir Starmer, informing me that he proposes to send his special envoy, Mr Jonathan Powell, to Mauritius to discuss these matters.

I had a meeting on 15 November 2024 with local officials in order to take stock of the status of the negotiations between Mauritius and the United Kingdom since the contents of those negotiations, which had taken place, that is, since November 2022, were unknown to the new Government. Absolutely unknown!

So, I immediately asked for an independent review of the confidential draft agreement that we had just been made aware of. This is why I also asked that Mr Jonathan Powell delays his arrival in Mauritius so that I have time to look at what was in the document.

Madam Speaker, the British Prime Minister sent his political envoy, Mr Jonathan Powell, to meet with me on 25 November 2024, and he briefed me on the situation to date. And I had told him that we are a bit surprised that the agreement was made on the eve of the dissolution of Parliament. We, in the Opposition, were not aware of anything, and we could only see what was happening in the House of Commons.

Anyway, following the completion – I said I have to look at the document, analyse it, and see what is in it – of the independent review, the opinion submitted by the legal advisers was considered by an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by me and comprising the Deputy Prime Minister, the Attorney General, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

Madam Speaker, following the letter which the British Prime Minister addressed to me on 12 November 2024, and the meeting which I had with Mr Jonathan Powell, a delegation of senior officials from the United Kingdom came to Mauritius from 09 to 12 December 2024 for discussions with the Mauritian authorities.

Apart from meetings which were held between senior officials, that is, from Mauritius and the UK, the Head of the UK delegation also called upon me.

During the discussions, Mauritius made it clear that, while it was still willing to conclude an agreement with the United Kingdom, the draft agreement which was shown to us after the general elections is one which, in our view, would not produce the benefits that the nation could expect from such an agreement. Mauritius accordingly submitted counterproposals to the United Kingdom so that an agreement which is in the best interests of Mauritius can be concluded.

The response of the United Kingdom to our counterproposals was received on 16 December 2024, and these counterproposals were again considered by the Inter-Ministerial Committee, which I just mentioned. Thereafter, on 31 December 2024, Mauritius submitted its response to the United Kingdom and suggested that the parties meet in London in January 2025.

A delegation led by the Attorney General proceeded to the United Kingdom to discuss the issues which were raised by us.

The talks reached an advanced stage, and the Attorney General returned earlier than expected to brief me. As a result, a special Cabinet meeting was called on 15 January 2025 to discuss the progress made. However, early on that day, before the Cabinet meeting, we were informed by the United Kingdom that, in view of the imminent change in the administration in the United States of America, they would look for the views of the new administration before signing the agreement between Mauritius and the United Kingdom on the Chagos Archipelago.

Notwithstanding the unilateral decision of the United Kingdom to postpone matters, a Mauritius delegation, led again by the Attorney General, went to the United Kingdom for further discussions with the UK in London on 16 and 17 January, as was planned. When the Attorney General met his British counterpart, Lord Hermer, and the Under Secretary of State, Stephen Doughty, they both assured him of the commitment of the UK Government to signing the agreement between Mauritius and the United Kingdom.

At that stage, Mauritius and the United Kingdom had a final agreement ready to be signed. The Attorney General has kept in touch with the Foreign Office, and we are awaiting developments on the UK's side.

Madam Speaker, I had a telephone conversation last Friday with the British Prime Minister on the way forward. He rang me, and the British Prime Minister informed me that he intends to push ahead with the agreement reached between Mauritius and the United Kingdom on the Chagos Archipelago.

We remain confident that we will reach a speedy resolution in the coming weeks.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Having listened to the hon. Prime Minister, I believe we understand that the stark reality is that as of today, we do not have an agreement with the UK government. *On avait cru voir la lumière au bout du tunnel avec l'accord du 3 octobre de l'année dernière, mais j'ai comme l'impression que cette lumière est en train de s'éteindre.* Because the hon. Prime Minister mentioned in his statement made to the House on 17 December last year and also in his reply that he had received a response from the UK Government with regard to counterproposals that our government made, can I ask him to provide the House with details of the counterproposal?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me say something because he made reference to it; that the light was darkening or whatever.

An hon. Member: *Soley inn' kouche!*

The Prime Minister: The agreement that the former Prime Minister agreed with the UK was a sell-out! We could not agree to it. We would never agree to it. That is something that must be clear. Otherwise, why wouldn't we sign it? We did not agree with it. I do not want to go into the details, but if you ask me, I will. It was so bad that we said, no way! Sovereignty was the biggest issue. It had to be unambiguous and undiluted that we have full sovereignty, not only on the Chagos but also including Diego Garcia. That was not in the agreement!

The second point: the agreement was for an agreement of 99 years, and then, unilaterally, the British would decide on an extension of that agreement for 40 years. We had no say in it. We disagreed completely! It cannot be that an agreement is signed for 99 years, and then the British on their own would decide that they will renew the agreement and we have no say in it. We totally disagreed with this. We said, no, we have to have a say. Both parties must be able to discuss.

Thirdly, the package was very badly negotiated. That was the third issue. So, that is why we said no; we have to renegotiate and see whether we can come to an agreement. And I am confident that we will come to an agreement.

I must say something else, Madam Speaker. I said in my answer that unilaterally, the British decided that they would want now to wait for President Trump to become President. I must say the Deputy Prime Minister said it many times, and I also supported that: why are we afraid of President Trump coming? As if he will tear the agreement! In fact, it would be better to let him have a look. If it is a good agreement, why would he not agree? Let us see. So, that is the situation, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: You want another bite?

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, of course! The hon. Prime Minister raised three issues which are still under discussion. The first one is with regard to sovereignty, the second one is with regard to the duration of the lease, and the third one is with regard to the financial package being proposed by the UK government.

With regard to the first one, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there have been changes concerning the exercise of sovereign rights granted on Diego Garcia and the conditions attached to it?

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed, there have been changes. The British agreed. We insisted that the sovereignty issue is the crucial and most important issue, not the financial package, but the sovereignty issue. This is a battle that started long ago. Now, we are about to reach the end of it. We insisted that it be clear that we have complete sovereignty over the Chagos, including Diego Garcia. The British agreed to that, and this has been changed.

Mr Lesjongard: So, we understand that this has been changed. With regard to the duration of the lease, is it still 99 years now or less than 99 years?

The Prime Minister: I will remind the Leader of the Opposition; maybe he is not aware because all this was done in secrecy. Even the officials, Madam Speaker, were not aware of what the agreement was. They went to London, but they were asked to leave the room. Only the former Prime Minister and the British Prime Minister spoke! This is why the deal is like what it is.

Ms Anquetil: *Incroyable !*

The Prime Minister: He had agreed to 99 years plus an extension where the British would decide themselves that they want to extend the lease, and we will have to accept. We disagreed with this also. We said, 'No, 99 years, okay.' Reluctantly, we agreed, but not on the extension. The extension has to be agreed upon by both parties. It cannot be unilateral from the British. And I am glad to inform the Leader of the Opposition that the British have agreed to that also.

Mr Lesjongard: So, this is good news, hon. Prime Minister.

Now, may I ask the Prime Minister with regard to the financial support given by the Government of the UK, first to Mauritius and second to the Chagossians, have we also finalised on that issue?

The Prime Minister: I am not in a position to give details, but let me say something. That package was very badly negotiated. I cannot understand how. It seems somebody who did not know mathematics, who did not know that inflation existed, who had negotiated. They had agreed to a package for 99 years, but it was not inflation-proof. The exchange rate, because it is in dollars, would be fixed once, and then, the last in 99 years. How can that be? Any ordinary Form 5 or Form 6 student would agree that inflation exists and we have to be inflation-proof. What is the point of getting money and then having half of it by the end? This is what would have happened!

We have made the calculation. So, that also, we did not agree to. And we also wanted to do front loading; some of the money had to be front loaded, and that also is being agreed to, I think.

Mr Lesjongard: So, do I understand from the hon. Prime Minister that now all issues have been cleared, and we have an agreement with the Government of the UK?

Madam Speaker: This is not what the Prime Minister said, as far as I can hear. But, hon. Prime Minister, please, maybe you want to reply.

The Prime Minister: You are absolutely right, Madam Speaker. I explained that we had come to this agreement, ready to sign, on that basis, but as we had said ourselves, as the Deputy Prime Minister repeatedly said, President Trump is not a wolf. Let him see if the agreement is good or not good, and we also agreed. Now, the British have, late in the day, decided that yes, it is better to let the new administration have a look, and this is what the situation is.

Madam Speaker: Il est peut-être déguisé en loup.

Mr Lesjongard: I will get to President Trump later, Madam Speaker.

Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether Mr Olivier Bancoult, the President of the Chagos Refugee Group, has been regularly briefed on discussions on the agreement and whether he had attended meetings chaired by the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me say that he was briefed, both by myself and the Deputy Prime Minister. I even saw him recently, and again, we had spoken because he was also wondering what was happening, but he was not in the meeting. The meeting, the British decided, would be the Mauritius Government and the UK Government.

Mr Lesjongard: Now, since I have mentioned Mr Olivier Bancoult and the Chagos Refugee Group, will the hon. Prime Minister be able to inform the House whether, with regard to resettlement and financial compensation for the Chagossians, we have reached an agreement on that issue, that is, resettlement of the Chagossians on the Archipelago?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we have, Madam Speaker. Also, there is a special fund that has been earmarked just for the Chagossians. That also is there; that was negotiated before; it is still the same. I must also say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I am going to the African Union meeting that is being held in Addis, and I have asked Mr Bancoult to accompany me because we need to tell our African brothers what is happening about the last decolonisation in Mauritius.

Mr Lesjongard: Let me ask a question in relation to what you have just said. You have had a phone conversation with the hon. Prime Minister of the UK. President Trump is now in office. Do we have a time frame with regard to the issue of Chagos now?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the American president has just been elected. I am not in a position to impose my timetable on him. He will have to look at it. He has other issues at the moment, just like we had at the very beginning; we are still having them, and we will then start the negotiations or whatever.

Mr Lesjongard: Hon. Prime Minister, in your reply, you stated that there has been an independent review of the draft agreement by a team of legal advisers. Can you inform the House of the persons comprising that team?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Of course, there was the Attorney General, then there was the former Solicitor General, Mr Dheerendra Dabee, who was present; there was Mr Milan Meertarhan, who is a constitutional lawyer and knows about the problem of Chagos; there were also the civil servants from the Foreign, Mrs Martin, who knows Chagos. But for the legal team, specifically, you asked for the legal team; there was the legal team here, but I also took international experts from a firm called Withers. They were advising because they also know of the problem. Remember that I am the one who took Sir Ian Brownlie, QC, as the

first barrister to look at Chagos, and I am the one who engaged Mr Philippe Sands to continue the negotiations. So, that is what we are doing.

Mr Lesjongard: Since you mentioned Professor Sands, can you inform the House whether he still forms part of the legal team?

The Prime Minister: I think the Attorney General had meetings with him, but no, he is not in the legal team. We have to have a new legal team. Professor Sands was part of the team that made the previous deal, so we are looking at it with a pair of fresh eyes.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, I have put this question because Professor Sands has been dealing with this case since 2008, and as you said, you appointed him. And I understand that in this situation that the hon. Prime Minister mentioned, Professor Sands was not informed that his services were no more required and that there was no proper handing over between Professor Sands and the new legal team.

The Prime Minister: In fact, may I tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that Professor Sands's contract expired on 31 December 2024. After that, I wrote a letter to him to thank him for his services and to keep in touch.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue has asked. Otherwise, he won't have time because time is almost up. Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister mentioned two delegations going early January. May we know the composition of both delegations – the first delegation and the second delegation that went to London?

The Prime Minister: There was, as I said, the Attorney General, the former Solicitor General, Mr Meetarbhan. I think Martin was in the first one, but not in the second one. That's it!

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Mr Lesjongard: I have got two last questions.

Madam Speaker: Yes, time is almost over.

Mr Lesjongard: I will make fast.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, the UK Foreign Secretary in a statement to the House of Commons on 07 October said the following –

“With regard to this agreement, a treaty and a bill will be submitted to the UK Parliament for scrutiny.”

May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House as to the way forward for Mauritius once an agreement is reached between Mauritius and the UK? Will it be, as it is in the UK, scrutinised by Parliament?

The Prime Minister: You see, I have asked this question to the former Prime Minister: why did he come to an agreement all in *catimini* and nobody knew about it. Nobody knew.

Mr Lesjongard: You have not answered my question. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House, in the advent that no agreement is reached or that President Trump and the US are not favourable to Mauritius obtaining sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, what will be his next course of action?

The Prime Minister: Let us not cross the bridge before we reach the bridge. Let us reach the bridge, and then we will cross it.

Madam Speaker: I think that is the end of that very important issue.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, now we move to questions for the hon. Prime Minister!

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/9 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms.

Hon. Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil, Mr Beehook! Yes!

SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLES – ACCUMULATED DEBT – PERIOD 2015 TO 2024

(No. B/1) Mr R. S. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), he will state the number thereof established since 2015 to 2024, indicating, in each case, the amount of accumulated debt incurred therefor as at date.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Ministry of Finance that, on the basis of a survey carried out, 78 Special Purpose Vehicles have been set up over the period 2015 to 2024, and in that, it comprises 69 state-owned companies and 9 special funds, but in all 78.

The outstanding debt of these state-owned companies at the end of December 2024 stood at some Rs33.6 billion. Rs33.6 billion! It represents 4.8% of our GDP, Madam Speaker.

The list of the companies, including the special funds and their outstanding debt as at the end of December 2024, is being tabled because it is a long list, and we don't have all the information yet.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Beechook.

Mr Beechook: Does the hon. Prime Minister intend to come with a law or regulation that would make all these SPVs accountable to Parliament? Because they have been operating in total opacity till date.

The Prime Minister: This is why I tell people... You know, some people are impatient. We need to do all this. They will have to account for every penny that has been spent or stolen or whatever; it has to be accounted for.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Third Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or.

COMMISSION ON PREROGATIVE OF MERCY – GRANT OF PARDON – BENEFICIARIES - NAMES & OFFENCES – 2015-2024

(No. B/2) **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 Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission for the period 2015 to 2024, information as to the number of persons granted pardon, indicating, in each case, the name thereof and the offence in respect of which conviction was secured.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Commission of Prerogative of Mercy has, for the period 2015 to 2024, received 7,109 petitions for grant of pardon, out of which 4,599 have been acceded to. Information indicating the names of the persons granted pardon and the offence in respect of which conviction was secured is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, the House will appreciate and concede that the question covers a relatively long period of time and implies compiling a list of thousands of names of convicted persons who, for the past 10 years, have applied to the Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy and who have benefitted from its decisions.

The list, as I said, will be circulated when the exercise is completed, but some indications of cases of notorious reputation have already been flagged in the media, which have provoked widespread criticism. Of these, the infamous case of one Chandra Prakashsing Dip, found guilty in a case of fraud and sentenced to one year of imprisonment. Here, the Commission intervened to substitute the prison sentence with a fine of Rs100,000.

This was a case where the Commission delivered a decision whilst a stay order – stay order – of the judgement was in force against a convicted individual, that is, Mr Dip, who was therefore under judicial control. It has never happened before; while the judiciary says hold on, the Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy decided that no, we do not have to wait for the judiciary. And that convicted individual, as we know, happened to be the son of the former Commissioner of Police, and it was easy for the public to draw its own conclusion and express the disgust of such an overt defiance of the judicial system.

This case was another scandalous legacy left by the previous regime. And we need to make sure that this does not happen again. That is what we have to make sure of.

We need now to retain two fundamental points from this state of affairs –

- (i) This was a clear case of violation of the principle of separation of powers, whereby the powers of the judiciary have been outrageously usurped by the executive, by a clique in power. This is what happened here. You scratch my back; I will scratch your back. I will keep your secrets; you keep my secrets. This is what happened.
- (ii) The Commission on the Prerogative of Mercy, through its conduct, was perceived by the public as blatantly lacking independence. Again, we had very good people in the past, but this is what happened this time. It was perceived as yet another striking illustration of the decay of our public institutions under the previous regime.

Madam Speaker, this episode showcases the harm which an irresponsible Executive can cause to a country, going to the extent of perverting the course of justice to satiate the totalitarian appetite of a petty dictator.

Madam Speaker, we intend, and we will, revisit how the Commission is set up and how it should function to prevent a repeat of such a scandalous matter.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Third Member Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière.

ROAD ACCIDENTS – DRUG IMPAIRED DRIVING – MEASURES

(No. B/3) 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 road accidents, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of drivers involved in these accidents having been tested positive to drug from 01 January 2024 to date, indicating the number of fatal ones, and
- (b) measures being taken by the Police to deter the use of drugs by drivers.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, driving under the influence of drugs is a major concern and contributes to road accidents resulting in fatalities; more and more, this is the case.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from 01 January 2024 to 30 January 2025, 13 drivers involved in road accidents were tested positive to drugs. Two of these accidents were fatal.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that enquiries into the thirteen cases are ongoing.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that several measures are being undertaken by the Police to deter the use of drugs by drivers, and some of the measures are as follows –

- a) from 01 January 2024 to 30 January 2025, 2,771 public campaigns focusing on the dangers of both drink and drug driving have been carried out in malls, public places, traffic centres, and schools;
- b) delivery of lectures to private companies on safe driving and behaviour on the road;
- c) patrols are being carried out; they have been increased on a regular basis, and

- d) 3,378 targeted operations were carried out during the period January 2024 to 30 January 2025 in order to track road traffic offenders, including those who have consumed drugs.

From 01 January 2024 to 30 January 2025, 1,146 drivers have been booked for driving under the influence of drugs or intoxicating substances. Over the last weekend, some 18,258 vehicle checks were conducted, out of which 3,900 contraventions were established and 1,286 fixed penalties were issued. Furthermore, 54 drivers were tested positive for alcohol and 14 drivers tested positive for drug consumption.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that the Ministry of Land Transport is, in parallel, conducting sensitisation campaigns on the MBC TV, radio, and other media platforms, again on the dangers of drink and drug consumption and driving.

Madam Speaker, my Government is very much concerned about the overall damage caused by drugs on individuals and the public at large, including road accidents involving drug-impaired drivers.

We are committed to ensuring the safety of all road users and will relentlessly fight against the scourge of drugs in our society. Government intends to have a thorough review of the whole issue of road safety and the Penalty Point System. The Penalty Point System will be reintroduced; it should never have been stopped. But we are going to look at it in a global manner. In some places, there need not be cameras on motorways forcing drivers to suddenly brake. All this will be looked at; we are having an expert to look at this.

This is what I had to say. I could also say that we are looking for people from outside to come and have a look.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, le Premier ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre, parmi ces 13 cas qu'il a mentionnés, combien sont liés à la consommation de cannabis, combien à la consommation de drogue de synthèse et combien à la consommation de cocaïne, héroïne ou autres types de drogues ?

The Prime Minister: The information I have does not detail which drug was used, but I can say that 13 were tested positive.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, une dernière question. Le Premier ministre est certainement au courant des dégâts causés par les drogues de synthèse qui sont facilement

accessibles aux jeunes dans les coins et recoins du pays. De ce fait, le gouvernement compte-t-il imposer des mesures pour que les chauffeurs de transports publics qui ont la vie de milliers de Mauriciens entre leurs mains soient systématiquement soumis à des contrôles avant de prendre la route ?

The Prime Minister: Yes, as I said, we are looking at it globally. All this will happen, but may I remind the hon. Member that the previous regime, – look at what happened – drug erupted in schools; young children were taking drugs. This never happened before, but, anyway, whatever has happened, we are going to look at this. I should perhaps add that we are taking it so seriously that we are having a special agency, and I am appointing Mr Sam Lauthan, who knows the issue very well. He will be like a czar for drugs! He will be in my Office, but he will be the Chairperson of that national agency.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. The hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

SYNTHETIC DRUGS PROLIFERATION – SURVEY

(No. B/4) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands, in regard to the proliferation of drugs in Mauritius, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether any survey or study has been carried out in the past 5 years to evaluate the extent of damage caused by synthetic drugs over the island and, if so, indicate the outcome of the survey or study and, if not, indicate if consideration will be given for same to be done at the earliest.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the World Drug Report of 2023 warned of a proliferation of supply, demand, and use of synthetic drugs as well as an increase in substance use disorders. As per the report, the number of people using drugs has increased by 11 percent globally and by as much as 40 percent in Africa in 2023.

Madam Speaker, in response to the growing threats posed by synthetic drugs, the United States launched the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drugs Threats, aiming to accelerate international efforts to tackle this rising crisis.

As part of the Global Coalition initiative, the Government of the United States provided funding to the UNODC to conduct a detailed assessment of the threats posed by synthetic drugs. This project also evaluated national and regional capacities of six East

African countries, namely Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, and Mauritius, which were included in that to implement key actions outlined in the UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy. A validation workshop was held from 25 to 27 September 2024 in Nairobi. This report, which has yet to be finalised, is expected to be released in March.

As part of the assessment, in July 2024, the UNODC conducted a study on synthetic drugs specifically in Mauritius, and some of the main findings of the UNODC report are as follows –

- Among the six countries that I have named, Mauritius has been identified as the leading user of synthetic cannabinoids. Mauritius is the leading one!
- Drug rehabilitation efforts within the public sector remain severely limited.
- Although methadone treatment - this is what the report says - is available - I remind the House that methadone was introduced when I was Prime Minister. When the new government came in 2014, the Minister then decided that ‘no, methadone is not important.’ I know an expert from Reunion Island expressed his views on that; that it is a big mistake. Then, later on, they had to reintroduce the methadone. Now, it says, although methadone treatment is available, other forms of treatment remain underdeveloped and inadequate.
- Psychological support and interventions, including traditional medicine where available, need further strengthening.
- With limited resources and insufficient follow-up strategies, many individuals either fail to complete inpatient treatment or relapse after finishing it.

Madam Speaker, the threat posed by synthetic cannabinoids and other drugs in Mauritius was already highlighted in the Global Organised Crime Index 2023, which measured 15 criminal markets, including drug markets across 193 member states. And in that report, out of the 193, Mauritius was ranked at the 7th place with regard to the synthetic drug market behind South Africa in this area.

However, in spite of Mauritius forming part of the US Global Coalition since November 2023, the previous Government allowed the situation to worsen. Nothing was done as usual! It has failed to fully leverage the benefits and resources available through the Coalition to strengthen the country’s response.

Madam Speaker, as stated in the Government Programme 2025-2029, which was just read by His Excellency The President, the fight against drug trafficking and use will be one of the major priorities of this Government. Let me reiterate the actions that my Government intends to take to deal with this –

- Additional resources will be provided to the Police. Not just resources, not just spending money; these people will have to be trained to know how to tackle the problem, to increase their capacity to deal efficiently.
- Bold measures will be adopted to end the suffering of families and society in general.
- A Select Committee of the National Assembly will be appointed in the near future to look into the ways and means to address this problem of drugs.
- Government will develop and implement a comprehensive Action Plan for a more efficient and effective response.
- The legal provisions in respect of trafficking, consumption and treatment of drug addicts will be reviewed to cater, *inter alia*, for differentiated treatment of traffickers and consumers.
- Government, as I mentioned just now, will set up a National Drug Policy, Monitoring and Coordination Agency that will bring together various public bodies, all under one roof, to combat drug trafficking, provide rehabilitation and support families of victims of drug abuse, all under one roof.

This is why I mentioned Mr Sam Lauthan, a former Minister, to be the Chairperson of this Agency.

We will also ensure, Madam Speaker, that actions being taken to combat drugs are aligned with the recommendations of the UNODC report.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Rookny: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Prime Minister advise if the said study indicates if the problem of drugs is concentrated in certain regions of Mauritius or whether this is eating our future as a whole?

The Prime Minister: From what I see so far, Madam Speaker, it is a national problem – not just in one region, but a national problem.

Madam Speaker: Yes, thank you. The hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

VIPSU POLICE OFFICERS – DEMOTION

(No. B/5) 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, in regard to the Very Important Person Security Unit (VIPSU), will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether Police Officers formerly posted at the VIPSU have been subject to any demotion and, if so, state if consideration will be given for their reinstatement to their promotional ranks.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for this question, as it gives me an opportunity to let the Police and the country at large see what kind of shenanigans the previous regime resorted to, thereby causing untold injustice and demoralising the Police Force.

The Very Important Person Security Unit (VIPSU) is a specialised Unit, as you know. In the context of filling vacancies in that Unit, officers are assigned higher duties, that is, to the next rank above their current substantive capacity for a period of six months. Such officers may be considered for promotion in the substantive capacity only after having satisfactorily completed the six-months' assignment. In the event they are transferred to other Divisions or Branches of the Mauritius Police Force during the six-months' period, their assignment of duties lapses.

Now, Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that in December 2014, shortly after the new Government came to power, 21 Police Officers posted to the Very Important Person Security Unit and who had been assigned higher duties were reverted to their former ranks immediately!

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from 10 November 2024 to 30 January 2025, 47 Police Officers posted to that Unit and who were assigned higher duties on 24 August 2024, that is, just prior to the election, were transferred to other Divisions and Branches of the Mauritius Police Force. As they were transferred before the completion of the six-months period at that Unit, their assignment of higher duties had lapsed.

But I wish to inform the House and the hon. Member that since 2015, several officers attached to the Very Important Person Security Unit have benefitted from accelerated

promotions, superseding other very deserving officers. Juniors were favoured over more experienced and senior officers. It was a blatant injustice to members of the Police Force under the previous regime – everything was politicised. There are some very able Police Officers in the VIPSU. Not only did their juniors go over their head, but they were downgraded - what they already received was being downgraded. And then, the juniors were given accelerated promotions! One, two, three, even four promotions during that period! These injustices, Madam Speaker, will have to be addressed and corrected.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr A. Duval: Could you allow me two supplementaries on this?

Madam Speaker: Yes, please!

Mr A. Duval: Firstly, Madam Speaker, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there are Police Officers reckoning 27 years of service as Sergeant, promoted to Inspector, in fact, were appointed to the Unit under his first tenure as Prime Minister? There are officers with 20 years of service appointed on your second tenure as Prime Minister, again, Sergeant promoted to Inspector, they have been stripped off of their promotion the most unfairly a few days after the Prime Minister took office.

The Prime Minister: I suppose the hon. Member does not know. I have just explained how injustices were performed. Now, if a Police Officer, who has been appointed, gets accelerated promotion and becomes, in other words, a senior to somebody who was already a senior and who has been downgraded, you have to correct the injustice; that is what happened.

Mr A. Duval: I am sure the Prime Minister will realise that 27 years as a Sergeant promoted to Inspector is not accelerated.

Madam Speaker: This is not a question.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the question is: the Prime Minister recalls the 21 VIPSUs being promoted in 2015. This is why the Prime Minister gave the assurance on 22 September at Triolet in a meeting, on his own volition, giving the guarantee that no Police Officers would be transferred and stripped of promotion, and that the same had happened to him. He gave that word, and yet a few days later, after being elected, these poor Police Officers have been stripped of their promotion. My question to the Prime Minister is whether,

in considering his own word that has been given prior to the election, he will not remedy the injustice that he has himself been aware of prior to that.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member does not say it; not all the Police Officers who have had promotions have been stripped off – not all. I have mentioned the figures here. But when we are looking at what has happened, we have to take corrective measures. And I am telling you one thing: I will not stand for injustice in the Police Force. We have to correct the injustices that have happened. It happened, unfortunately for them.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One last one, yes.

Mr A. Duval: The hon. Prime Minister might, at least for those officers, again, those who have not had fast-track promotion, those who have not jumped the head of their more senior colleagues, if at least he could give consideration to those officers, restore their promotion. As I said, at least two cases of those appointed under you to the VIPSU have been promoted and stripped off recently; whether he will at least give consideration to cases that look to be genuine.

The Prime Minister: I will give an example to the hon. Member. He keeps saying appointed under me. Do you know that one of the VIPSUs who was in the car behind me, whom I promoted through the Police Disciplined Forces, was given that promotion to be behind the Prime Minister? It is a great privilege. Do you know what he did? He is the one who went and told the MSM leaders that the Police did not do a proper search in my home; there is another safe. The Police came; through his declaration, he went to see the then Commissioner of Police and the former Prime Minister, and they came to my home. They had already turned my home upside down everywhere; all the drawers had been thrown, and everything was upside down. They came again; I asked the policeman, ‘Why are you coming again? You did this job two days ago.’ He said, ‘I cannot tell you, but I will tell you in a minute.’ He did not want to say in front of other people, and then he told me, ‘The guy who was in your car, whom you had promoted, this is what he has done! Do you want me to just stay quiet and say, ‘Ok, *jay de*’. No, sir! This is gone! We will take action! We will take action!’

(Interruptions)

I know who he is, but we will take action. We have to correct these injustices and these traitors.

They had the duty to be with me, as at that time I was the former Prime Minister, and this is what they did. And you think that I will just sit down and accept? No, I will not!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Inn anvi remet Dip!*

Madam Speaker: Your next question, please.

PHONE TAPPING PRACTICE BY POLICE – DISABLING OF EQUIPMENT

(No. B/6) 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 phone tapping, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if such a practice is being resorted to by the Police and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the disabling of any equipment used for tapping.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to Parliamentary Questions B/6 and B/15 together as they relate to the same issue.

Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member again for giving me the opportunity of informing the House of recent developments in connection with the very, very disturbing practices resorted to by the last Government to spy on our citizens; everyone. You will be shocked!

In view of the importance of this matter, Madam Speaker, I crave your indulgence and that of the House for taking a little bit more time to give a comprehensive reply.

Madam Speaker, the protection of the freedom of expression of any person is enshrined in Section 12 of our Constitution. Let me quote Section 12(1) of the Constitution –

“Except with his own consent no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference, and freedom from interference with his correspondence”.

It is, therefore, crystal clear, Madam Speaker, that phone tapping constitutes a breach of our fundamental human rights and is particularly an intrusion of the right to privacy.

Now, the whole nation was shocked – I am sure some Members of the Opposition too might have been shocked – when it came to know, in October of last year through the “*Moustass Leaks*”, that private telephone conversations of individuals, key Government

officials, political opponents, and even members of the Judiciary, Diplomatic missions, were being listened to by the MSM Government.

As soon as I became Prime Minister, I considered that it was an urgent priority to investigate the nature and extent of surveillance, to investigate the techniques and activities employed by the previous regime to spy on its own citizens, and to take swift action to render them inoperable. I tell people; many people are impatient. We have a priority; this is a priority. I had to stop this phone bugging, the listening to people's conversations.

Comme on dit, le chat ne boit pas du lait chaud deux fois ; cela m'est arrivé avant. So, to be absolutely sure that this was being done, I invited international experts – real experts – to carry out a thorough investigation together with senior members of the Police Force and the Commissioner of Police.

I have to inform the House that the results of these preliminary investigations have been nothing short of shocking.

Their initial conclusions are as follows, and as I said, they are breathtaking to say the least. I have not shared this with most people except the Deputy Prime Minister.

The MSM Government, believe it or not, Madam Speaker, did not only do phone tapping of certain high-profile Members of the Opposition or even, as I have said, of its own ministers, even its own allies, including the PMSD.

(Interruptions)

They were listening!

What happened to you with the car accident, all these they have listened to; who said who to tell you to do this, not to do that. All this! I can tell you.

They even went further, Madam Speaker, and this is what is more shocking even! Even that is shocking! But they conducted mass surveillance! Mass surveillance! They had multiple sites – not one site, multiple sites – where this was being done.

What this means, Madam Speaker, is that the last Government put in place systems to monitor and intercept calls and internet traffic in the country. This is what is called mass interception. Let me quote what the experts said –

“The system put in place is a highly sophisticated mass-monitoring tool for state surveillance of the people of Mauritius.”

In other words, what I am saying, it is not just me, or the Deputy Prime Minister or Members of the Opposition, but everyone, including allies, including Ministers, including members of the Judiciary!

This means that every mobile phone conversation – I am putting stress on ‘every’ – every landline call, every post on WhatsApp, Facebook, Signal, Tiktok, every e-mail – of everyone, I am saying, not just us, but everyone – was being monitored by the MSM Government. Do you realise what this means?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

The Prime Minister: It is a massive...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

The Prime Minister: ...massive monitoring.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame!

The Prime Minister: Every piece of digital data communicated by a citizen to every single citizen in this country was diverted – everything you are saying was diverted – to these Government systems for storage and subsequent analysis and exploitation! And exploitation! When Judas came and approached the Leader of the PMSD, it is through this that they knew what was happening.

The system had the capacity to intercept and store all communications on the island. All! Not just some selected cases; all! Journalists as well!

All this cost a lot of money and, of course, it was the public that was paying. Not them, the public!

As our Nation was groaning and was suffering under financial strain on facing – each one had a problem, in every household we know – the cost of living, what were they and their henchmen engaged upon? Spying on all the Mauritians, all of them. All the people you see

here who have been on the phone, including you, Madam Speaker. Everyone! Even if you were not in politics, you were being listened to.

So far for the cost, we have uncovered payments in connection with these systems. Listen to this carefully. Do you know how much? Over USD 110 million for this system!

People are complaining about the cost of living. They are having difficulties to make end meets. Here, the Government, the previous regime spent – so far, I said, it is probably going to be more – USD 110 million on this.

A company based in Dubai – I will name it – Pertsol, was being paid to service the system, the equipment. How much do you think? How much could servicing a system cost? I will tell you: USD 7.5 million per year! How is that possible? How can you spend millions of dollars...

Ms Anquetil: *La honte!*

An hon. Member: *La honte!*

Ms Anquetil: *La honte!*

The Prime Minister: What it means is that some of that money went into the pockets of some people. That is what it means because it cannot cost that much.

An hon. Member: *Bizin bour zot deor ankor!*

An hon. Member: *Mo kwar Melrose mem zot plas!*

The Prime Minister: I am sure all the Members of this House, every Mauritian will feel as I did when I learnt of this, a sense of revulsion and disgust at what the priorities of the previous Government of the MSM and its Leader were. These were the priorities. And now they are jumping, they think they will get elected again.

An hon. Member: *Reve! Reve!*

The Prime Minister: I should add, Madam Speaker, that when international experts who, as I said, were accompanied by the Mauritius Police Force, sought to establish what information has been gathered, they found that the stations had been wiped clean. And when? We know: as the results of the election were coming in, this is when they were cleaning

everything. It shows to me that they thought they would win the elections. I do not know in what tower they were living, but when they realised that they are losing the elections, while people started with their flags, very happy that we have been relieved of these maggots, here they were cleaning their mess. They were wiping clean everything.

But let me give a word of warning, because this is being done in other places too. We are aware of what is happening at the State Bank, for example. We are aware of a few other places. Let me give a word of warning, Madam Speaker. The experts, they are real experts. Whatever you clean, they will be able to retrieve the information. They are able to; this is why I know, information that has been cleaned supposedly. We know now, we have them. We will identify those who destroyed evidence. As the Attorney General and other lawyers know, it is a criminal offence and it carries heavy penalties. They think they would wipe out and we would not know. I can assure the House, they will have to bear the consequences of their deeds. They will feel the full force of the law, and we will see whether we have to strengthen the law for these people. I agree, we will have to. In fact, by attempting to destroy evidence, they are worsening their situations. They have been warned. Take your responsibility! If you want to go and destroy evidence, go and destroy if you want! We will get the evidence. I am pretty sure of that now.

Madam Speaker, the task of sifting through the squalid rubble and debris left by this mafiosi regime, which was utterly devoid of moral scruples who ignored what the Constitution said, we will continue until the whole truth is known to the nation.

As far as for the last part of the question, I can tell the House and the whole nation that I have asked an end to be put to the secret surveillance installed by these undemocratic and perverse groups which had practised a blatant state capture and confiscated our liberty. This was what the election was about – liberty and unity.

This should never be allowed to happen again. I can confirm what the experts said, and I quote –

“All equipment have been catalogued, shut down and disconnected.”

The system is now disabled. Nobody is going to listen to what you say. I can assure you. There will, under this Government, never, never be any restoration of mass interception or mass surveillance. Never! I can tell you! Both of us have been Prime Ministers. I am Prime

Minister again; the Deputy Prime Minister has been Prime Minister. I can tell you; I was in the Opposition; I became Prime Minister afterwards. Neither of us ever did these undemocratic deeds. We never spied on the opponents, neither him nor me, and we were not together at the time.

As these experts describe it, what was being done – and this is also important – they were using the most sophisticated technological equipment for eavesdropping, but they were also making use of the cameras. We have said, you remember hon. Osman Mohamed said the camera was pointing at his home, and Sir Anerood said, ‘well, close your window’. At Desforges Street, there were four cameras; only one exit, but four cameras. They were using that and they were using the cameras to monitor. In other words, they knew not only what you were saying on the phone, but also your movements. That also was being monitored. A mass-monitoring tool for state surveillance of every citizen in this country. This is what was happening!

Madam Speaker, this Government will not be deflected from seeking out the truth and bringing to justice, and making accountable to the law, those who are responsible for such despicable acts. I can tell the House; I will update the House once I get further reports. I am even prepared to lay the report on the Table of this Assembly so that you can see with your eyes what was happening to our country.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, time is already up, but in view of the importance of the question, of course, I did not stop the Prime Minister; so, I will also allow one question. Just one!

Mr A. Duval: Just one? If you might allow two, because I have two Parliamentary Questions.

Madam Speaker: One! Just one!

Mr A. Duval: Well, I will put it all together then. The Prime Minister said on 20 January that he has not received assurances that there might not be other systems in use right now, and therefore, this is very serious. Not only what the Prime Minister has described as *un outil de surveillance massif, officiellement installé*, but it also appears that the own Prime

Minister's line has been taped and subsequently used. Is the Prime Minister not now of the opinion that perhaps the most important matter regarding privacy, regarding secrets of the Mauritian State, safeguarding the secrets, given that he cannot say if those equipment are still being used, according to his interview on the 20th - my question is: doesn't the hon. Prime Minister deem it fit to instate a Commission of Inquiry to shed the light on, first of all, who has ordered for this system to be put in place...

(Interruptions)

... secondly, the funds that have been paid, and thirdly, who have kept copies of what? Because from what we understand, the data has been deleted. And we must know!

Madam Speaker: Question! Question!

Mr A. Duval: Yes, the question is...

Madam Speaker: Not statement! Not statement!

Mr A. Duval: It appears that the data has not been kept in one place and that many persons, more than one, may still have that data because same has been leaked during the campaign. Therefore, the question is: does he not see it as a matter of urgency to set up a Commission of Inquiry, which has already been set up by the previous Government?

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat yourself!

An hon. Member: *Mari long sa!*

Mr A. Duval: And to urgently shed all the light on this whole saga which we should not forget has put you in power!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: We were put in power...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, let the hon. Prime Minister speak!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we were put in power because people in this country felt in their guts what was happening and they voted for liberty! That is what they

voted for: liberty and unity! Because the communal campaign went on as well, but nobody cared. Mauritians are Mauritians! *Un peuple admirable comme on dit!*

But I answered the question that you asked. I have made sure international experts – precisely what I said in January – this is precisely why I got international experts, real experts to look at the whole matter. I have even quoted what they said, that the system has been disbanded. That is why I say it is a preliminary investigation. We cannot say at the moment who has got what or what have they kept. We will know, unless they leave the country for good. We will know. If they are here, we will know.

These people, you know, Madam Speaker, are like the scums of the earth. That is what we are dealing with. We ought to rub their face in the gutter where they belong!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, time is up now for PMQT!

(Interruptions)

Please, may I speak? I just want to...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Lot semenn li pou sanz plas la !*

Mr A. Duval: *Met commission d'enquête la !*

Madam Speaker: May I speak?

(Interruptions)

Otherwise, I will have to shout, which I do not want to do!

Under PMQT, PQs B/12 and B/16 have been withdrawn.

Now, we proceed with questions addressed to hon. Ministers. Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ B/28 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and PQ B/65 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Local Government.

I now call on the First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix!

SADC – MAURITIUS’ SUSPENSION – FEES NON-PAYMENT

(No. B/17) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the sanction imposed to suspend Mauritius from participating in activities as a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) due to the successive non-payment of contribution fees to the SADC Mutual Defence Pact, he will state the –

- (a) reasons as to why payments were not effected as at date;
- (b) total amount due, and
- (c) steps taken and/or being envisaged to remediate the situation.

Mr Ramful: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that on 04 December 2024, the Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) informed me that Level 1 sanctions had been imposed against Mauritius for non-payment of the sum of USD 11,056,083, which is equivalent to Rs508,667,161. Now, these sanctions entailed the suspension of Mauritius’ right to speak and to receive documentation for all SADC meetings, including senior officials, ministerial, and Heads of States and government levels.

I further wish to inform the House that although Cabinet under the previous government was informed on two occasions, Madam Speaker, in March 2024 and August 2024, that Level 1 sanctions will be imposed on Mauritius if these payments are not made, and despite the fact that provisions had been made in the national budget for Financial Year 2024-2025 to the tune of Rs640 m., no payment was made by the previous government.

Madam Speaker, I have so far, unfortunately, received no plausible explanations as to why payment of the overdue contributions was not made by the previous government. I also wish to recall that I assumed duty as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Trade on 22 November 2024 and could not even participate in the SADC Council of Ministers meeting held virtually on 09 December 2024 due to sanctions imposed on Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that as of 29 January 2025, the total amount payable by Mauritius for both the SADC Mission in Mozambique and the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) stood at USD 18,259,439.

This amount, Madam Speaker, includes –

1. a sum of USD 2,795,485 for the SADC Mission in Mozambique for the period between July 2023 and July 2024;
2. a sum of USD 8,260,589 for the first mandate of the SADC Mission in DRC between December 2023 and December 2024, and
3. the sum of USD 7,203,365 for the extended mandate of SADC Mission in DRC, that is, for the period December 2024 to December 2025.

With regard to section (c) of the question, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that on 30 January 2025, my Ministry transferred the budgeted sum of USD 11,056,083 to the SADC Secretariat in order to honour our financial commitment to SADC. I also wrote a letter to the Executive Secretary of the SADC Secretariat informing him of the payment and calling for an immediate lifting of the sanctions. The SADC Secretariat has acknowledged receipt of the said amount and informed that the sanctions have been lifted.

It will be noted that a sum of USD 7,203,365 for the extended mandate of the SADC Mission in DRC for the period December 2024 to December 2025 remains outstanding, and this amount is due on 01 April 2025.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to add that while the situation in Mozambique has stabilised and the SADC Mission in Mozambique has been dismantled, the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo remains volatile.

The SADC Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government which was held on 31 January 2025 in Harare, the Republic of Zimbabwe, where Mauritius could not once again participate, took note with concern of the recent attacks by the M23 armed group and Rwanda Defence Force on the government forces of DRC, the SADC Mission in the DRC, and the civilian population in various areas of North Kivu. The summit expressed concerns that the recent attacks continued to worsen the security and humanitarian situation in the DRC. Given the continued instability in the region, it is unlikely that the situation in the DRC will stabilise in the short term. As such, it may not be sustainable for Mauritius to maintain financial contributions to these peace-making missions.

In this context, Madam Speaker, Mauritius will engage with the SADC leadership, including the SADC Executive Secretary and the President of Zimbabwe, current SADC Chairperson, on the margins of the upcoming African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, where a delegation that will be led by the hon. Prime Minister will attend. These discussions will

highlight and reaffirm Mauritius's unwavering commitment to regional solidarity and security and explore the possibility of securing a waiver for the remaining balance pertaining to the extended mandate of the SADC mission in the DRC.

Mauritius will also propose that future *ad hoc* contributions be made voluntary and urge SADC to explore alternative funding mechanisms such as the African Union Peace Fund to ease the financial burden of Small Island States like Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight that the payment of the contribution to the SADC peacekeeping missions was dealt with in a complacent and irresponsible manner by the previous Government. As soon as the new Government was apprised of the situation, a decision was taken to effect the payment as an utmost urgency to restore the credibility and prestige of Mauritius.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister! Hon. First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue!

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 – WATER SUPPLY ISSUES – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/18) Mrs A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the –

- (a) measures taken during the last 10 years to alleviate the water problem in the constituency, and
- (b) reasons for the delay in the reinstatement of the roads following the excavation works carried out by the Authority.

Mr Assirvaden: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the measures taken during the last 10 years to alleviate the water problem in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue are likely to take some time. The list is being compiled and will be tabled in the Library of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I regret to inform the House that despite the amount of Rs700 m. spent by the Central Water Authority in its Pipe Replacement Programme and the reinstatement of some roads following the excavation

works carried out in 2024, *avant mais aussi* in 2024, in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue has been delayed.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that there was a shortage of bitumen on the local market between June and September 2024. I am further informed that bids for permanent road reinstatement in the Montagne Longue were launched by the Central Water Authority in August and September 2024, respectively. However, these two bidding exercises were cancelled due to non-responsive bids.

Subsequently, another bid exercise for the north of the tune of Rs70 million was launched in October 2024 following an evaluation of bids that were found to be responsive and will be awarded shortly.

Madam Speaker, for today, I am circulating a list of roads where pipe laying and reinstatement works have been carried out in Constituency No. 4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue.

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

Mrs Savabaddy: I am shocked, hon. Patrick Assirvaden about those millions. *Donc, on se pose la question : kot tou sa bann milyon la finn ale pendant toutes ces dernières années. Une question par rapport à l'état de nos routes, je ne parle pas uniquement pour la circonscription numéro quatre, mais pour les 20 circonscriptions à travers l'île par rapport à l'état de nos routes, les conditions, qui sont dans un piteux état...*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I am sure the Minister will not be able to reply for everything. Your question was on your constituency.

Mrs Savabaddy: Okay, for my constituency.

Madam Speaker: Of course.

Mrs Savabaddy: Alors, toutes les routes dans la circonscription sont dans un état piteux. Ma question est : ces contracteurs qui ont été contractés par l'ancien régime, est-ce des vrais contracteurs ? Est-ce des professionnels ou des braconniers ? Est-ce que vous comptez les garder en poste ? Merci.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, je comprends l'irritation de l'honorable membre.

An hon. Member: *Nou tou!*

Mrs Savabaddy: C'est normal!

Mr Assirvaden: Je peux dire que les R 700 millions englouties par la *CWA* pendant des années dans ce *Pipe Replacement Programme* où il n'y a ni queue ni tête, et je peux vous assurer, honorable membre, qu'en ce qui concerne ces R 700 millions que je qualifierai de « dévalisées » au nom du peuple mauricien, l'enquête est actuellement confiée à la *Financial Crimes Commission* pour savoir qu'est-ce qui s'est passé avec ces R 700 millions et surtout avec ces tuyaux que vous voyez tout autour du pays, pas enfouis, mais tout autour du pays. L'ancien *General Manager* de la *CWA* et ceux responsables de ces R 700 millions vont devoir répondre à la justice de ce pays.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mrs Savabaddy: Est-ce que le leader de l'opposition, ancien ministre des Utilités publiques, ainsi que l'ancien *GM* de la *Central Water Authority*, est-ce qu'ils pourront répondre et dire *ki finn fer ek tou sa pake kas la ek tou sa milyon la ?*

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, l'enquête nous dira ce qu'il faudra faire.

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Nou pa pu ponn !*

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, let me speak!

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, please!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I will not tolerate this kind of attitude. I will not tolerate! You have to put your question, await an answer, and then put another question! That's it! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you wanted to say something? It's question time.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, if she wants to blame the former Minister of Public Utilities, she has to come with a motion in this House, and then we will debate.

Madam Speaker: You opened the floodgates, you see? Now, let's carry on. We have a few minutes left for lunch. Maybe it is because of that that we are getting excited.

Okay, the next person is, I think from memory, now you got me lost; I think B/19 is from Fourth Member for Rodrigues, yes!

RODRIGUES – COMMODITIES’ SHORTAGE – SECOND VESSEL INTRODUCTION

(No. B/19) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether in regard to the shortages of certain commodities in Rodrigues due to the limited transportation capacity of vessel Peros Banhos, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd., information as to whether consideration will be given for the introduction of a second vessel on the Mauritius/Rodrigues route.

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd that as of February 2024, the MV Peros Banhos is being used to transport, on average, 260 containers to Rodrigues per voyage. It has made 27 voyages to Rodrigues in 2024. The MV Trochetia effected six voyages in the same year and went for dry docking in Sri Lanka in September 2024.

The Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd also enlisted the services of MV Black Rhino, which made four voyages in the months of January and February 2024, that is, before the arrival of MV Peros Banhos. Now, with a view to increasing the supply of commodities to Rodrigues, I am informed by the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd. that as from this month, one additional voyage by MV Mauritius Trochetia is being scheduled to Rodrigues monthly along with three other voyages for MV Peros Banhos.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that MV Peros Banhos can carry an average of 350 containers to Rodrigues. Since its arrival, the vessel has been utilised effectively to transport cargo to Rodrigues. However, due to the depth constraints at Port Mathurin, it has only been able to carry, on average, 260 containers per voyage. The average 350 containers can only be accommodated if the depth of the port is increased.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister! I will have a last question. I will call hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle.

NEW CLUNY SERVICE RESERVOIR & NOUVELLE FRANCE RESERVOIR – CONSTRUCTION & COST

(No. B/20) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the New Cluny

Service Reservoir and Nouvelle France Reservoir, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to –

- (a) the dates of the construction and commissioning of the reservoirs, indicating in each case the costs incurred, and
- (b) if they are operational.

Mr Assirvaden: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the contract for a glass-fused steel reservoir at Nouvelle France was awarded to Pacific Builders on 10 July 2023 for a sum of Rs48,412,738. Construction works started on 06 September 2023. The reservoir was put into service on 17 September 2024.

Madam Speaker, as for the Cluny Reservoir, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that tenders for a Design and Build Project for the construction of one reinforced concrete reservoir of 3,000 m³ at Cluny and one reinforced concrete reservoir of 2,000 m³ at Riche en Eau were launched in January 2021.

The tenders for the construction of both reservoirs were awarded to Sotravic Ltd for a total sum of Rs74,713,000. I am further informed by the Central Water Authority that the construction of Cluny reservoir started on 05 October 2021, and the contractual completion date was *le 4 octobre 2022*. The completion date was revised to April 2023, but the date of completion of works was 13 June 2023.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that defects were observed in the reservoir when the CWA carried out its first drop test on 06 March 2023. The contractor, that is, Sotravic Ltd, was thus requested to effect remedial works in accordance with the condition of the contract. Same were completed in March 2023. The reservoir was put into operation in July 2023 and was inaugurated in August, *le 17 août 2023* by the then Prime Minister. Handing over was done on 06 September 2023.

During a site visit by the officers of the CWA in July 2024, vertical dam patches were visible on the reservoir's wall. The contractor was again requested to effect remedial works. The remedial works were undertaken by the contractor and specialist contractor, Tusk, from *27 août 2024* to ... August 2024. In September 2024, the contractor was informed that there were still some patches visible on the reservoir's wall despite the repair works carried out. The contractor was again requested to remedy the defects.

Madam Speaker, I effected a site visit at Cluny reservoir on 16 January 2025, accompanied by officers of my ministry and the CWA. I have noted the leakages visible on the external wall surface of the reservoir at several places.

Madam Speaker, I have requested a full-fledged independent inquiry into the execution of this contract, particularly the quality of work and supervision of the contract. The inquiry team will be required to situate responsibilities, and action will be taken as appropriate. Despite its intended purpose – *et ça c'est important pour le peuple mauricien* – and substantial investment involved, *plus de R 74 millions*, the reservoir remains non-operational at a time when the country is facing a severe water crisis. This failure not only highlights potential mismanagement and oversight lapses, but also raises serious questions about responsibility and the effectiveness of decision-making in such a vital infrastructure project.

An urgent and transparent investigation is ongoing to determine the root causes, and hold those accountable for these critical shortcomings. *Merci.*

Madam Speaker: Just one question!

Mr Ramdass: In view of the significant amount of taxpayers' money spent on the construction of these two reservoirs, which, I understand, are, regrettably, not operational, will the Minister inform the House as to what corrective measures have been taken or will be taken by his ministry to make sure that the water supply of those inhabitants is not interrupted?

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, c'est clair que ce réservoir va devoir être détruit. Il n'y a pas d'autre choix. 25 fissures sur ce réservoir qui n'a que 16 mois à peu près. Avec des millions et des millions investis justement pour répondre à ce que nous vivons actuellement, cette sécheresse. Une enquête est en cours pour situer les responsabilités. Le contracteur va devoir assumer ses responsabilités, mais moi, ce que j'ai envie de voir, c'est que ceux qui sont responsables dans la *Central Water Authority* paient les conséquences de ces décisions qui ont été prises dans le temps. *Merci Madame.*

Madam Speaker: Now, it is time for me to break. We will break for one and a half hours and we will resume at 2.30 p.m.

At 1.02 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.33 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière.

MAURITIUS JUDO FEDERATION - JUDO CLUBS - RECOGNITION

(No. B/21) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Judo Federation, he will

—

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand as to the request for the recognition of the 18 Judo Clubs by the Federation, and
- (b) state the actions taken by his Ministry to facilitate the affiliation process with the Federation following the meeting recently held with the representatives of the 18 Judo Clubs and, if not, why not.

Mr Nagalingum: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that upon assuming office, one of the priority issues I addressed was the situation concerning the Judo Federation. To this end, three meetings have been held with the President of the Federation. The first two meetings were held in December 2024 and January 2025, which I personally chaired, followed by a third meeting involving officials from my Ministry. These discussions were aimed at identifying a lasting resolution to the various challenges faced by judo clubs and athletes.

With respect to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in accordance with the Sports Act 2016, a Sports Arbitration Tribunal has been established. This independent body is empowered to adjudicate cases where individuals or entities feel aggrieved by decisions made by the National Sports Federation, among others. I would like to report that the tribunal has recently been reconstituted and has already commenced its operation. In this regard, the Mauritius Judo Federation has informed me that the judo clubs contesting the Federation's decision not to consider their affiliation have referred the matter to the tribunal. The Federation has assured my Ministry that it will fully comply with the tribunal's decision once it is rendered.

As regards part (b) of the question, I would like to apprise the House of the outcomes of the three meetings held with the Mauritius Judo Federation. Following these meetings, the Federation has formally communicated the following to my Ministry —

- Pending the tribunal's adjudication on the admission of new clubs, arrangements have been made under Section 3 (2) of the Sports Act 2016 to issue competition

licences to any judoka wishing to participate in events organise by the federation, and

- Access to the national dojo for training purposes will be granted to all judokas provided they adhere to the established code of discipline applicable to all athletes. The federation has committed to fully abide by any decision reached by the Sports Arbitration Tribunal.

Madam Speaker, these measures demonstrate the Ministry's commitment to ensuring fairness, inclusivity and the smooth function of sport governance in Mauritius. I am tabling a copy of the letter addressed to me by the federation.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, avec votre permission.

Madam Speaker: Allez-y!

Mr Quirin: Cela fait six ans que cette situation au niveau du judo perdure, Madame la présidente. Douze clubs qui ont vu leur renouvellement d'affiliation être rejeté et six nouveaux clubs dont la demande d'affiliation n'a pas été acceptée. Ce qui fait 18 clubs au total.

Madame la présidente, le judo mauricien, jadis dominant dans la région, sur le continent, a très peu brillé ces dernières années. De ce fait, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire s'il compte organiser entre les deux parties concernées une table ronde afin qu'une fois pour toutes, on mette de la bonne volonté et ne se fie pas uniquement au tribunal d'arbitrage du sport pour régler ce problème ? Il faut bien le dire, le tribunal d'arbitrage du sport est au courant de ce problème depuis 2022 et aucune solution n'a été trouvée jusqu'à présent.

Donc, ma question est : est-ce que l'honorable ministre, au niveau de son ministère, compte organiser une rencontre, parce que je crois que, là où on en est arrivé, Madame la présidente, il faut de la bonne volonté – s'asseoir, discuter et trouver une solution à ce problème qui n'a que trop duré.

Mr Nagalingum: We have already done that meeting, *Madame la présidente*.

Mr Quirin: Donc, si j'ai bien compris, dans sa réponse initiale, l'honorable ministre a parlé de trois réunions qu'il a eues avec le président de la fédération ; deux réunions avec le président de la fédération et une réunion avec les officiels. À aucun moment, il n'a parlé des réunions conjointes entre les dirigeants de la fédération et ceux qui contestent justement la situation, ceux qui attendent que leur demande d'affiliation soit enfin acceptée. À aucun

moment, l'honorable ministre ne nous a parlé, ne nous a informés de cette rencontre que je crois être salulaire pour le bien du judo.

Mr Nagalingum: I have just received, like I said, a letter from the Federation on 03 February 2025, and a meeting is going to be held shortly.

Mr Quirin: Voilà, c'est différent, totalement différent de ce qu'il nous faisait croire.

Donc, Madame la présidente, si on fait référence justement au *Sports Arbitration Tribunal*, depuis 2022, comme je l'ai dit, ce tribunal a ce cas à solutionner. De 2022 à ce jour, trois ans, peut-on savoir...

The Deputy Prime Minister: Et une élection!

Mr Quirin: Puis-je faire mon travail, Madame la présidente?

Madam Speaker: Je vous écoute! Je vous écoute !

Mr Quirin: Je n'aime pas être dérangé!

The Deputy Prime Minister: *Bérenger, pa dérangé!*

Mr Quirin: Encore moins par Bérenger! Alors, comme on peut le constater...

Madam Speaker: Do not mind!

Mr Quirin: Bien sûr, je laisse braire ! Comme on peut le constater, beaucoup ont abandonné la pratique du judo, Madame la présidente, parce qu'ils n'ont pas la possibilité de participer aux compétitions localement et au niveau international.

Madam Speaker: Si vous me permettez, si j'ai bien compris – peut-être que je n'ai pas bien entendu aussi à mon âge – mais si j'ai bien compris, il y aura une réunion, et peut-être suite à cela, si ça ne va toujours pas, vous pouvez toujours venir avec une nouvelle question.

Mr Quirin: Il n'y a pas de souci. Je termine la question. Peut-on savoir, au niveau de votre ministère, M. le ministre, quelles sont les raisons pour lesquelles ce *Sports Arbitration Tribunal*, pendant trois ans, n'a pu trouver une solution à ce problème ?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let the Minister reply!

Mr Nagalingum: That was the past! Now, we are looking into the new Sports Tribunal. You were with us when we discussed that. So, you know!

Madam Speaker: No, do not get personal, hon. Minister! Do not get personal! Do not talk to him about whether he was there or not! You are new to the...

Mr Nagalingum: That is right.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Mr Nagalingum: That is right.

Madam Speaker: That's it! I think we can rest here. We can rest here. You will follow up!

Next question, hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

ROUTES NO. 11 & 87 – IRREGULAR BUS SERVICE

(No. B/22) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the persistent irregular bus service along Route No 87 (St Hubert – Curepipe) and Route No 11 (St Hubert – Mahebourg) and along the south east coastal area, he will state the actions his Ministry envisages to remediate the situation.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, since I have assumed office as Minister of Land Transport, I have had repeated complaints from residents of St Hubert from one Village Councilor of that locality, Mr P.J., also known as Nitin, as well as from my colleagues from Grand Port, hon. Ms Babooram, hon. Mr Seeburn and the questioner, hon. Mr Ramdass, on the irregular and unsatisfactory bus services being provided by individual bus operators along route 87 and route 11, meaning St Hubert to Curepipe and St Hubert to Mahebourg, respectively.

As the problem was persistent and occurring on a daily basis, I convened a meeting at my Ministry on 23 January 2025, at which were present my three colleague MPs, the Village Councilor and representatives from the National Land Transport Authority to consider the problem. During the course of the meeting, Madam Speaker, some disturbing information was provided on the bus releases as recorded on the stand regulator sheet and subsequently tampered with in the returns from the Bus Owners Cooperative Society of the South, on the basis of which payments are effected to bus operators of Routes 87 and 11.

The stand regulator sheets for Routes 87 and 11 for the last week of December 2024 were obtained together with the returns from the cooperative society. A scrutiny of both documents disclosed glaringly the existence of a collusion between the bus operators and the

cooperative society to defraud disbursement of public funds under the free travel scheme and subsidies on diesel. The comparative exercise carried out revealed that the cooperative society wittingly ignored the entries made on the stand regulator sheet where buses were absent from operation during the whole days as well as where buses had performed a significantly lesser number of trips. In both instances, the cooperative society had recorded the buses to be present in service throughout the month and credited these buses with a higher number of trips in spite of these buses being completely absent on some days.

In December 2024, the NLTA effected full payment for all operators of routes 87 and 11 as per the returns of the cooperative society in spite of the fact that two buses were absent for a total of three days out of seven days for which a thorough forensic exercise was carried out. Also, a full diesel subsidy was paid to all the bus operators. In light of the outcome of the comparative analysis carried out, the NLTA had disbursed Rs9,405 in excess on free travel and Rs3,885 in excess of diesel subsidies.

These amounts, Madam Speaker, appear insignificant at first look, but I would like to stress the fact that the scrutiny of records focused on only two problematic buses over a period of seven days, out of which, three days the buses were absent, and for which claims were fraudulently claimed and fully paid for. But then, there is a total of over 800 individual bus operators grouped within cooperative societies who have been operating under the same payment system for the last 20 years, that is, since the introduction of the free travel scheme and other financial support, such as the diesel subsidy.

When this finding from the forensic exercise is brought to the national level, for 800 individual bus operators on a scheme that cost taxpayers Rs 2.5 billion yearly, therefore tens of billions of rupees over 20 years, one can easily deduce that the amount defrauded could be in billions over the last twenty years! The more so, the number of complaints my Ministry receives day in, day out.

Madam Speaker, the Government and the travelling public are not deriving the full benefits from this scheme, and hence, I would like to thank my colleagues MPs from Constituency No. 11, as well as the Village Councillor, Mr Nitin, for their precious help in bringing to light the malpractice outlined above. I would like to encourage my other colleague MPs to report cases where they consider that public funds are being defrauded.

The NLTA has been instructed to record a statement from the Village Councillor on the inaccuracies disclosed. This statement has been referred to the police for inquiry and eventual prosecution. I am tabling a copy of the statement with the permission of Mr Nitin.

As for Routes 87 and 11, my Ministry intends to consider the invitation of applications from the public to replace the unscrupulous operators, and the provisions under Section 77D of the Road Traffic Act will be used to expedite their replacement.

Madam Speaker, may I now seek your indulgence for a few more minutes to tell the House and the stakeholders the remedial measures which are part of the substantive question that my Ministry is taking in respect of the systemic problems regarding the poor level of bus transport service occurring around the island in order to have better control over the operation of buses and for enhancing accountability on the disbursement of public funds to bus operators while ensuring an improved level of service for the travelling public.

- (i) A fleet management system will be introduced requiring all buses mandatorily to be fitted with a GPS system linked to a control room which will be situated at the NLTA. This system will provide real-time information on the number of buses in operation as well as the number of trips performed. This system is expected to come into operation during the course of this year itself if all goes as scheduled.
- (ii) The Memorandum of Understanding relating to the payment of free travel compensation signed between the NLTA and the bus operators will be reviewed subject to Government approval from a daily-based payment to a trip-based one.
- (iii) Similarly, the Fleet Management System will enable a more accurate computation of mileage incurred by each bus on a daily or monthly basis for disbursement of fuel subsidies – diesel subsidies, in fact.
- (iv) The road service licence of operators not providing services as per the conditions of their licences will be revoked, and as mentioned earlier, section 77D of the Road Traffic Act will be used to have new players.
- (v) My Ministry will arrange for strengthening the inspectorate staff of the NLTA, which is currently devoid of such officers, and to have Management Support Officers pending a substantive recruitment exercise of the Inspectors. This arrangement will allow for a higher NLTA presence along bus routes and at the stations.

- (vi) My Ministry is also holding consultations with bus operators to acquire new buses and avail of the incentive provided under the bus modernisation programme.
- (vii) We will assist, as far as possible, to expedite the recruitment of foreign workers in the bus industry to meet labour shortages.

Madam Speaker, to end, the situation in public transport has declined and is today subject to a significant number of complaints that the satisfaction level in all segments of the population is quite low. I am of the view that this is the result of yet another failure of our institutions and a complete absence of bold policies during especially the past 10 years to make the transport sector inclusive and attractive.

Therefore, it is worth mentioning that with the collaboration of my colleague MPs and with the Village Councillor, it has taken my Ministry only one meeting to detect and disclose malpractices impacting negatively on the disbursement of funds for which institutions ought to have noticed and addressed, but did not do so. I am therefore taking bold measures to ensure that the roles and the responsibilities of the NLTA are reinforced.

Lastly, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry will ensure that notable improvements are brought to the bus services throughout the island and that all sums of money spent on transport for the mobility of the population are effected with high responsibility and accountability. It is indeed a daunting challenge, Madam Speaker, but I am fully prepared to take it head-on. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister! Yes, the hon. Fourth Member for Rodrigues.

RODRIGUES – CATTLE PRODUCTIVITY INCENTIVE

(No. B/23) Mr J. Edouard (Fourth Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Cattle Productivity Incentive Scheme, he will state –

- (a) the number of applications received from Rodrigues breeders under the scheme as at date, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the increase in the budget allocated to meet the increasing demands to benefit from the scheme.

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much, hon. Member. Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Cattle Productivity Incentive Scheme was launched in Mauritius in the year 2013 with the

objective of providing a grant to breeders in order to assist them in taking better care of their animals during the critical life period of a calf from day one to 3 months.

The Cattle Productivity Incentive Scheme is managed by the Small Farmers Welfare Fund and provides for a cash grant of Rs15,000 as an incentive to small registered breeders for each calf that has reached the age of three months up to a maximum of 40 calves per year. Now, the overall objective is to increase cattle productivity and enhance food security.

Madam Speaker, subsequently, in Financial Year 2023/2024, provision was made for the Scheme to be extended to Rodrigues as well to enable the registered breeders in Rodrigues to also benefit from the Scheme.

Now, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Small Farmers Welfare Fund that an amount of Rs1 m. was budgeted in the Financial Year 2023/2024 for Rodrigues, and 76 applications were received from breeders in respect of 138 calves for a total amount of Rs2,070,000. Out of the total of 76 applications, payment of Rs150,000 for 10 calves was made to 3 applicants in the Financial Year 2023/2024 while payment of an amount of Rs1,920,000 will be effected to 73 applicants in the financial year. Rs1 m. has been budgeted by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in this financial year, and the remaining amount, Rs920,000 will be paid by the Small Farmers Welfare Fund.

Now, as regards part (b) of the question, I wish to highlight that in accordance with the decision of the Ministry of Finance, the Scheme in respect of Rodrigues for Financial Year 2024/2025 is being implemented by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. I am also informed that the Scheme is operated on a demand basis and additional funds can be reallocated by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly from other schemes to meet the increasing demands.

According to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, as of now, no application under the Scheme has been received, and there has been no disbursement of funds in this financial year.

Madam Speaker: Go ahead, thank you. Yes, hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East.

NSLD – ARSENAL HOUSING PROJECT

(No. B/24) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the housing project at Arsenal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the New Social Living Development Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the total cost of the project, indicating the amount of Value Added Tax exemption benefited on the purchase of construction materials;
- (b) the number of units constructed to date;

- (c) the name of the architect therefor, and
- (d) if all necessary permits from local authorities were obtained prior to the construction of the housing units.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for his question, and my answer is as follows. I am informed by the New Social Living Development Ltd (NSLD) that the project at Arsenal consists of the construction of a total of 574 housing units on two sites, that is, 284 units on one site opposite Arsenal Government School and 290 units on another site opposite La Pépinière d'Arsenal.

With regard to part (a), I am informed by the NSLD that the total cost of the project is approximately Rs1.92 billion. According to information provided by the Ministry of Finance, the contractor has benefitted from exemption of VAT as other contractors have also done under this particular social housing project. In this particular case, it was Rs54 million for the project at Arsenal.

As regards part (b), I am again informed by the NSLD that works on both sites are currently ongoing and the building works of the 574 housing units only are expected to be completed by September 2025.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (c), the architectural firm for the project at Arsenal is NK Architect Ltd.

Insofar as part (d) is concerned, I am informed that the Building and Land Use Permit in respect of both sites was first obtained on 04 August 2023, and my understanding is that a BLUP is only issued by a local authority after all required clearances have been obtained. I would like to add, however, that there was an amendment in the application for an amended BLUP on both sites, and I am informed that they date to 11 October 2024.

Madam Speaker: Yes, alright. The hon. Second Member for Rodrigues, hon. François. We are glad that you made it!

Mr François: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

RODRIGUES – OFF-LAGOON FISHING SCHEME – CANOTTE PURCHASE

(No. B/25) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to support

extended to fishers in Rodrigues through the off-lagoon fishing scheme for the purchase of Canotte and outboard engine, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) number of applications –
 - (i) received, and
 - (ii) approved, indicating the amount disbursed in each case;
- (b) time taken for the processing of applications, and
- (c) remedial measures being envisaged, if any, on the expiry of fisher's quotation for outboard engine as a result of the long processing delay.

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, the off-lagoon fishing scheme, purchase of Canotte was introduced with the aim of providing financial support to registered artisanal fishers to enable them to purchase better equipped fishing boats of 7 to 12 metres, commonly known as Canotte for fishing in the outer reef in order to enhance the livelihood of the artisanal fishers while altogether increasing local fish production.

The scheme provides for the following –

- (a) A grant representing 50% of the cost of the boat and other related costs, including navigation and fishing accessories, up to a maximum of Rs300,000.
- (b) A loan from DBM representing 90% of the remaining cost of the project at an interest rate of 3% per annum and a repayment period of 7 years, including a one-year moratorium.
- (c) The beneficiary meeting 10% of the remaining cost from his own fund.

In this context, my Ministry has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd for the implementation of the scheme.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the scheme was available for Mauritian fishers, and it is only recently, that is, as of July 2023, that the scheme was extended to fishers from Rodrigues.

As regards part (i) of the question, my Ministry received from the Commission for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Production, Forestry, Plant and Animal Quarantine of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly 22 applications from fishers in Rodrigues. These applications were subsequently submitted to the DBM on 31 August 2023 for financial assessment at this end.

Regarding part (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Chief Executive of the DBM that on 3 October 2023, 19 out of the 22 applications were approved.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that in January 2024, a total grant of Rs4,219,740 was disbursed in favour of the 19 eligible fishers from Rodrigues. As regards the breakdown of the total grant amount disbursed in respect of each of the 19 beneficiaries, I am tabling the information.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mr François: Just one supplementary, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Minister aware that out of the 19 applications received or approved, only three or four canottes have been purchased, and some of the fishers – probably out of the Rs4 million you mentioned – have received part payment for the construction of their canottes for a construction period of only three months, which has already lapsed? Why did it lapse? Because local marine contractors could not respond positively with all the problems of shortages of raw materials and increasing cost of materials. So, will the hon. Minister request a review or an extension of this construction period with DBM and the local authorities thereat in the interest of our fishers?

Dr. Boolell: Thank you very much hon. Member. Since you are acting in the interest of the fishermen and we all agree, we have no choice but to impress upon DBM to do the needful.

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

QUATRE BORNES MARKET –TRAFFIC LIGHTS MAINTENANCE

(No. B/26) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the traffic lights opposite the Quatre Bornes market which are not operational since several months, he will state when same will be repaired for the safety of the road users.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry that the traffic lights opposite the Quatre Bornes market are currently operational for vehicular traffic, while for pedestrians, these traffic lights are not presently operational.

In fact, the cables connecting the pelican heads and pedestrian lights along Victoria Avenue B72 road, in reference to the controller box, have been found to be faulty. Due to faulty cables, erratic timing and complete power outages of the whole set of traffic light signals have been observed. As such, only the pelican heads along Victoria Avenue, meaning B72, have been disconnected to ensure the operational characteristics of the traffic lights on the other legs for vehicular traffic.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that the underground sleeve harbouring the cables is completely jammed. As a result, civil works, meaning excavation of the road and putting in new trunks and cables, will have to be undertaken to change the sleeve and the cables. This intervention does not fall under the contract for maintenance of traffic lights. At this moment in time, no contract for civil works can be awarded under the framework agreement because same has expired and new tenders will have to be launched. This might take some time. However, the repairs of these traffic signals will be given priority and consideration in view of their strategic location. Meanwhile, the TRMSU has written to the Commissioner of Police to ensure safe pedestrian crossing at the location.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Yes.

Ms Anquetil: I have three supplementary questions.

Madam Speaker: Yes, one at a time.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie...

Madam Speaker: One at a time!

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.* Would the Minister inform the House when was the last maintenance or inspection conducted on these traffic lights, and what were the findings?

Mr Osman Mahomed: Like I said, the problem is underground, Madam Speaker, because the cables are faulty. That is why there is an erratic light signal on the pelican heads. It is not due to bad maintenance. It is because of the cables. I asked the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that since the trunks are already there, why don't they slot in new cables? But the problem is, over the years, 20 years or so, it has been jammed with mud and all these things, and it has not been possible. So, it is not a question of maintenance. It is a question of faulty cables.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Ms Anquetil: *Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.* In the Estimates of 2024-2025, a sum of Rs25 million has been allocated for the maintenance of the traffic lights. Can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of how this amount has been spent so far? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: If I knew...

Madam Speaker: It is a very tall order.

Mr Osman Mahomed: It is indeed, and, you know, I have been Minister for two months. Previously, hon. Ganoo was there. I do not know how he spent that money, but we will have to...

Madam Speaker: You will find out!

Mr Osman Mahomed: I will find out and get back to the hon. Member.

Ms Anquetil: Last one for the Minister.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Ms Anquetil: *Thank you very much, hon. Minister.* Madame la présidente, le dysfonctionnement de ces feux de signalisation représente un grave danger, d'accord ? Dans notre circonscription et surtout vis-à-vis du marché de Quatre Bornes. En attendant leur réparation, le ministre pourrait-il indiquer quelles mesures urgentes peuvent être prises pour assurer la sécurité des piétons ? Je vous remercie. Madame la présidente.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I have replied to this. I have said that the TMRSU has written to the Commissioner of Police to ensure safe pedestrian crossing at that location. So, if there is none...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear the answer, please!

Mr Osman Mahomed: ...if there is none, I will have to speak to the Commissioner of Police – if that is allowed of course – to ensure that needful is being done there because we have written formally and I am quite surprised that no Police officers are there.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Will that do? Yes, alright. As long as everything is secure. Hon. Third Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle!

**JAWAHARLALL NEHRU HOSPITAL – ANGIOGRAPHY TEST MACHINE –
CORONARY TREATMENT**

(No. B/27) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to coronary angiography treatment, he will state if he has been made aware of the difficulties faced by inhabitants of the southern part of the island in terms of waiting time for treatment and, if so, indicate if –

- (a) the Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital is equipped with an angiography test machine, and
- (b) same is operational.

Mr Bachoo: Madam Speaker, complaints have been received regarding the long waiting time faced by the inhabitants of the southern regions before undergoing coronary angiography and angioplasty. This is due to the fact that the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital has not been equipped with an angiography machine. Accordingly, patients requiring routine and emergency coronary angiography and angioplasty had to be referred to the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care for treatment.

Madam Speaker, as at 31 December 2024, there were 121 patients on the waiting list at Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital. Since July 2023, an angiography machine had been transferred from Cardiac Centre Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, but the equipment has been non-functional. However, I have to highlight that electrical works, including air conditioning, have been contracted out and will be completed by 16 February 2025. Additionally, the CAT-lab comprising five cardiologists, trained nursing staff and 18 ICU beds has also been set up there.

Madam Speaker, the preinstallation works for the angiography machine are almost completed at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and the machine will be operational around mid-February 2025, thus alleviating the plight of the inhabitants of the region. Nonetheless, being a second-hand machine, the angiography equipment has to be tested to assess its functionality. In the same vein, my Ministry is exploring the possibility of acquiring new angiography equipment in the future.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. PQ B/28 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Social Integration.

So, hon. First Member for Rodrigues, Ms Collet!

RODRIGUES – FATAL ROAD ACCIDENTS – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MECHANISM

(No. B/28) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to fatal roads accidents in Rodrigues, he will state the assistance, if any, extended to the families of the victims thereof, indicating the number of claims received and processed as at 15 January 2025.

The Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (Mr A. Subron): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry provides financial assistance under the National Solidarity Fund to bereaved families residing in Mauritius in respect of death cases, including victims of fatal road accidents.

With regard to Rodrigues, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that they do not have any similar mechanism in place for providing financial assistance to families of victims of fatal road accidents thereat, nor have they made any application so far to my Ministry to that effect.

In view of ensuring fairness to all citizens of the Republic residing in Rodrigues, my Ministry is proposing to assist the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in setting up a similar mechanism so as to provide financial support to families of victims of fatal road accidents in Rodrigues for timely relief.

I am tabling to this House a list of assistance under the National Solidarity Fund, the National Pensions Act and the Social Aid Act to bereaved families in respect of death cases, including victims of fatal road accidents in Mauritius. Thank you.

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

SOCIAL REGISTER OF MAURITIUS – PROXY MEAN TEST – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA REVIEW

(No. B/29) **Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Proxy Mean Test used to determine eligibility to fall under the Social Register of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether any remedial action or review is being envisaged with regard to the eligibility criteria following the shortcomings identified in the system for the allocation of subsistence allowance and other services to potential beneficiaries.

Mr Subron: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) was introduced in 2008 as a centralised database to register individuals requesting financial support. Eligibility for assistance is based on two criteria –

- (i) income, and
- (ii) a Proxy Means Test (PMT), which is a formula used to determine the eligibility of an individual or a household to benefit from empowerment support.

The Proxy Means Test (PMT) formula aims at addressing the living standard of each household and is based on demographic and socio-economic characteristics, such as age, gender, and number of children, as well as whether the applicant is the owner of his or her dwelling and the housing conditions thereof.

The existing criteria in use for the PMT dates back to 2016. In view of the changing socio-economic conditions, the PMT criteria, which still makes use of data from the Household Budget Survey 2012, need to be reviewed to take on board new criteria to be worked out. In addition, after nine years, observations have been made of elements of subjectivity when applying some of the criteria of the PMT.

The previous government has, in June 2023, initiated action to review the PMT. *Maurice Stratégie* (MS), which currently falls under the purview of the Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning, was solicited to assist with the review and is providing the services of a local and an international consultant for the review thereof with the financial support of *Agence française de développement* (AFD) and *Expertise France*. However, the

review of the PMT is also largely dependent on the findings of the latest Household Budget Survey 2023, which is expected to be finalised by February 2025 according to Statistics Mauritius.

Furthermore, the Board of the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) is presently being reconstituted after an expression of interest for which 269 applications were received by 27 January 2025. Once the NEF Board is reconstituted, my Ministry will decide on the follow-up mission by the consulted plan in March 2025 to finalise the PMT review or any other alternative process necessary to review the outdated PMT.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, Ms Collet, First Member for Rodrigues!

EDUCATION SYSTEM – CURRICULUM, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & EQUITY – PROPOSED REFORMS

(No. B/30) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the education system, he will state the reforms being proposed for the transformation of the current educational system, indicating if this process will address issues pertaining to curriculum, digital transformation and equity in quality education and, if so, give details thereof.

Dr. Gungapersad: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. First Member of Rodrigues for a question which is as vast and broad as education can be. The concerns regarding the proposed reforms and issues pertaining to curriculum and digital transformation and equity are legitimate. I wish to assure the hon. Member that this Government is fully committed to revamping and reconstructing our education system on the basis of equity.

As mentioned in the Government Programme 2025-2029, this Government will ensure that the reforms of our education system cover the widest possible number of issues hampering the development of our students while addressing emerging challenges in a constantly evolving sector.

Today, this Government has the dual task of quickly cleaning the massive pedagogical mess left by the previous regime and coming forward with a set of innovative measures to address the myriad emerging challenges facing the education sector. After what we have

experienced over the past 10 years under the previous regime, where our children were martyred by an oppressive pedagogy that mercilessly excluded thousands of students of the Republic, now is the time to redress the situation.

This Government believes that each child of the Republic, regardless of their background or ability, has the right to receive an equitable and quality education. Equity in education involves the transformation of all physical and learning aspects of the school, such as curriculum, pedagogy, learning strategies, assessment and teacher training, and creates an education system that responds to the needs of all children in a healthy and conducive learning environment adapted to the intellectual, social, physical, artistic, cultural and economic needs.

The previous Government did not realise that our schools have to cater for all the children of the Republic. We have to cater for the aspirations of the high flyers and nurture their quest for excellence, and at the same time, we should not neglect the average and slow learners. Different students learn in different ways and at different paces. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all pathway for all our children. This Government cares for all the children of the Republic. The new educational policy orientations of my Ministry have been very aptly articulated in the Government Programme 2025-2029. Unlike the previous Government which imposed policies and which obstinately refused to entertain meaningful dialogues with partners in the educational sector, we believe in listening to stakeholders. Since holding office, this is what I have been relentlessly doing. A blueprint will be prepared after the *Assise de l'Éducation* which will be held in April 2025.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. Member that my Ministry sent a delegation to Rodrigues during mid-January for a sensitisation campaign on the implementation of the new foundational programme which has replaced the obnoxious Extended Programme which unfortunately massacred the future of thousands of our students who left the system neither with a PSAC nor with an NCE Certificate. Another team from my Ministry is proceeding to Rodrigues soon for the implementation of the Google Classroom Digitisation Project. We believe that digital transformation encourages a shift from teacher-centred instruction to student-driven learning.

Madam Speaker, curriculum development, digital transformation and equity are interdependent factors that shape the future of quality education. While digital technologies offer immense potential to enhance learning experiences, they also present challenges related

to accessibility and fairness. A forward-thinking curriculum must integrate digital tools, promote competency and value-based learning and ensure that every child, regardless of their background, can benefit from technological advancements. Only by addressing these challenges can our education system fully harness the power of curriculum and digital transformation while ensuring quality education and equity in education. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister! Yes!

Ms Collet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the hon. Minister indicate whether there will be consideration for some civic education to be included in the curriculum for our children at all levels, including the secondary level in Rodrigues?

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you for that supplementary question. Without civic education fully embedded in the new curriculum that we are envisaging, we cannot contemplate the education of the future. Today more than ever, when we see what is happening in this society, when we are reconstructing a new Mauritius, definitely at the basis of that reconstruction phase, we will need civic education. Sometimes I will say it, tongue in cheek, not only for students but for all Mauritians; we need that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, alright. So interesting, we were sleeping almost. I didn't mean that. I meant we were very interested, and it woke us up.

The hon. Third Member for Pamplemousses and Triolet!

DISABILITY ALLOWANCE/PENSION – CRITERIA & APPLICATION – DISCREPANCY

(No. B/31) Mr K. Rookny (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to disability allowance/pension, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the criteria put in place by the Medical Board at his Ministry to benefit therefrom, indicating if the criteria differ to that applied by medical doctors employed by public hospitals;
- (b) the number of cases –
 - (i) referred to his Ministry for evaluation and thereafter disallowed, and
 - (ii) granted but thereafter suspended or cancelled, and

- (c) if his Ministry proposes to review the assessment and granting of such allowances.

Mr Subron: With your permission, Madam Speaker, I shall answer Parliamentary Questions B/31 and B/54 together, as they both relate to the same subject matter.

Madam Speaker, I thank both hon. Members for their respective questions. I must say that since I was appointed Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, I am in the presence of constant complaints and outcries in relation to the entitlements of our citizens to rights and benefits related to disabilities. Complaints are never-ending and, on a daily basis, reported either to the Ministry, to me or to the Junior Minister, to my colleague Ministers and to Members of this Assembly. Many citizens are of the view that their applications are unjustly rejected, disallowed or abruptly stopped. Many citizens cannot understand why they are constantly being called for new medical assessments on a yearly basis when they view their disabilities as being of a permanent nature or when they are completely bedridden.

Madam Speaker, the malfunctioning disability benefit system is exposed by the fact that the average time spent by a medical doctor from the Medical Board to assess the degree of incapacity of a person and hence to determine his or her eligibility for Basic Invalid Pension or Disability Allowance is less than five minutes per applicant.

Consequently, and in reply to part (c) of question B/31 and to the first part of PQ B/54, my Ministry will formulate new policies and bring structural changes to the assessment processes and procedures used to determine pensions and allowance entitlements of our citizens with disabilities. Same has already been mentioned in the Presidential Address and the Attorney General is being notified of this legislative reform agenda. Disability-related NGOs, specialists and activists are being and will be further consulted in this context.

In regard to part (a) of PQ B/31, I wish to inform the House that presently persons with disabilities are entitled to an Invalid Basic Pension or a Disability Allowance after an assessment by a Medical Board. Additionally, as from July 2024, children suffering from a disability of less than 15 years who are in receipt of an Invalid Basic Pension or a Disability Allowance are eligible for an additional monthly allowance of Rs3,000.

The criteria for someone to benefit from an Invalid Basic Pension in accordance with section 8 of the National Pensions Act 1976 is that the person be under the age of 60 years

and have a disability of 60% or more which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months. With regard to eligibility for Disability Allowance, a person in accordance with section 30A of the Social Contribution Act and Social Benefits Act 2021 is entitled to same if, firstly, he has a disability of not less than 40% and not exceeding 59% due to an injury or medical condition specified in the sixth schedule of the Act –

“(b) he is under the age of 60 years, and

(c) he is not in receipt of a basic pension under the National Pensions Act.”

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of PQ B/31, I am informed that presently a medical assessment is carried out by Medical Practitioners of my Ministry to determine the eligibility of the Invalid Basic Pension and Disability Allowance. Assessments are carried out either by a Medical Board which comprises two Medical Practitioners or by one Medical Practitioner at the claimants’ residence for those who are bedridden and who cannot attend Medical Board.

A Medical Guideline dated 2016 is also used by Medical Practitioners who sit on Medical Boards for assessment of claimants for the benefits.

These guidelines have been prepared with the help of specialists in various fields from the Ministry of Health and Wellness with the view to standardising the assessment made by doctors while evaluating the eligibility of claimants. The guidelines also stipulate the duration of the award of the benefits.

With regard to the rest of part (a) of PQ B/31, I am further informed that medical doctors employed in public hospitals only examine patients for their respective ailments for which they present themselves. This examination is not conducted to determine eligibility for any kind of benefit. However, medical certificates which are issued by medical doctors employed in the public hospitals and private institutions are presented by claimants on Medical Board. The whole assessment process is presently under scrutiny and will be subject to review in the context of the upcoming reform.

Madam Speaker, at present a person whose case has been disallowed by a Medical Board or Domiciliary board has the right to make an appeal to the Medical Tribunal. The Medical Tribunal is composed of two specialists in relevant fields and is chaired by a representative of the Attorney General’s office. The above step two will also be subject to a review in the context of the coming reform.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) (i) (ii) of PQ B/31, I am informed that from July 2015 to January 2025, my Ministry has received 88,628 applications for the invalid basic pensions, out of which 44,301 cases have been allowed and 41,385 cases have been disallowed by Medical Boards.

I am further informing the House that as of February 2025, there are 26,057 beneficiaries of invalid basic pensions and 630 beneficiaries of disability allowance. For the information of the House, I am tabling a document compiling the data of the cases processed for the last ten years.

Madam Speaker, this House can rest assured that this government will ensure that all our citizens who have disabilities will be treated with dignity, respect and a fair and caring manner.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr Rookny: Madame la présidente, tout d'abord, je voudrais remercier l'honorable ministre pour les réponses qu'il nous a fournies. De sa réponse, je tiens que presque 50 % des applications pour l'allocation d'invalidité ont été rejetées par un *board* composé d'un ou deux médecins qui ne passent que cinq minutes pour évaluer ces cas. Donc les personnes qui ont besoin de cette allocation d'invalidité sont souvent dans un grand besoin. Quelle mesure urgente peut le ministre proposer dans ces cas en attendant la réforme qui vient ?

Madam Speaker: Question très pertinente !

Mr Subron: *Très pertinente!* First, this will be the main component of the coming reform.

Secondly, what we are trying to do now is reorganise the team so that we can process the applications in a speedier manner. We had a legal problem with the constitution of the board; there was a mistake in the law which was clarified by the State Law Office, which took time. I received the opinion of the State Law Office two weeks ago – of the legality of the Medical Board.

Now that this has been clarified, maybe we will also review the composition of the Medical Board which is performing these tests and seek their rational criteria when assessing applications for invalidity pensions or disability allowances.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: So, the next question would now be from the hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue.

SAINTE CROIX, CITE LA CURE, RUISSEAU ROSE & LONG MOUNTAIN – PIPE LAYING WORKS

(No. B/32) Mr L. M. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to pipes laying works carried out in the region of Sainte Croix, Cité La Cure, Ruisseau Rose and Long Mountain effected last year, he will state the reasons as to why the roads concerned with the laying of pipes have not been resurfaced, indicating when remedial works will be undertaken.

Mr Assirvaden: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the road reinstatement works in these regions were delayed due to a shortage of bitumen on the local market between June and September 2024.

I am further informed that the Central Water Authority launched another bid exercise in the North in October 2024. The two bids received were evaluated. However, approval was not obtained for the award of the contract due to the last General Elections. I can assure the hon. Member that this project would be looked into as a matter of priority.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac.

CWA – RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILLES DAM PROJECT – FUNDS EARMARKED

(No. B/33) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Rivière des Anguilles Dam Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the amount of fund earmarked during the current financial year for the construction of the dam.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame la présidente, le projet de barrage de la Rivière des Anguilles était à l'ordre du jour du gouvernement précédent pendant tout son mandat de cinq ans. Le projet a été annoncé lors des discours budgétaires successifs et des fonds ont été alloués à sa mise en œuvre pendant cinq ans ou même sept ans.

En 2020, Madame la présidente, l'ancien gouvernement avait annoncé que le barrage de la Rivière des Anguilles serait construit pour un coût estimé à environ R 7,5 million. Je parle en 2020 ; cinq ans de cela – milliards, pardon !

Dans le discours sur le budget de 2021-22, l'octroi des fonds pour la construction du barrage et de la station de traitements des eaux a été annoncé. Des fonds à la hauteur de R 100 millions ont été de nouveau annoncés dans le discours de 2022-2023 pour démarrer la construction du barrage de la Rivière des Anguilles.

Dans le cas du dernier budget 2023-24, il a été indiqué que la conception détaillée et la préparation du projet du barrage de la Rivière des Anguilles avaient été finalisées. Malheureusement, il ne s'est presque rien passé.

This year, Madam Speaker, an amount of Rs930 million has been provided in the Estimates of 2025-25 du dernier gouvernement pour la construction de ce Rivière des Anguilles Project.

Merci.

Mr Jhummun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether we are coming with the project or *ça va rester l'éternelle poulidor*? Merci.

Mr Assirvaden: Madame Speaker, si vous me le permettez avec votre permission.

Madam Speaker: Allez-y !

Mr Assirvaden: I am informed that the pre-qualification exercise for the construction of Rivière des Anguilles was launched in February 2024, *l'année dernière*, under the aegis of the Central Procurement Board. The closing date, *en avril 2024*, 9 applicants had submitted their proposals, and following an evaluation exercise conducted by the Central Procurement Board, the Ministry was informed that 08 firms had been shortlisted. It is to be noted, hon. Member, *Madame la présidente*, that in accordance with the loan agreement signed with the funding agencies, their prior no-objection to the evaluation exercises and shortlisted bidders is required before proceeding with the notification process in accordance with the Public Procurement Act.

I am further informed that once the funding agencies have conveyed their no-objection to the shortlist of bidders established by the Central Procurement Board, the bidding exercise for the appointment of a work contractor would be launched by the Central Procurement Board.

It is expected, hon. Member, *Madame la présidente*, that the bidding exercise for the appointment of a contractor and the subsequent no-objection of funding agencies to the

selection of a contractor may take around 6 months. The duration for the construction of the dam is around 40 months, 2029-2030. *Merci.*

Madam Speaker: May I just find out if we are going in a wrong direction. We were on B/33? You finished B/32? It was also...

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: Sorry, I am still fishing for information. I want to hear from the hon. Minister when we are starting with the project. Thank you.

Mr Assirvaden: It is expected to start the work end of this year, December 2025.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Now, we have the hon. Second Member for Rodrigues!

RODRIGUES – ANIMAL FEED SHORTAGE

(No. B/34) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the problems of shortage of animal feed in Rodrigues, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reasons for the reduction in the stock delivery of animal feed from Mauritius, and
- (b) state the measure, if any, being envisaged to remedy the situation.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Madam Speaker, I am informed there is a shortage of animal feed since the beginning of January 2025. According to the information provided so far, producers in Mauritius did not provide the normal amount of animal feed to supply to Rodrigues in December 2024. There was also an increase in demand in the consumption of animal feed from 468 containers of 20 ft in 2023 to 542 containers in 2024. Therefore, an increase of 74 containers was noted.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (b) of the question, I have been informed that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has already initiated discussions with stakeholders concerned, including the Mauritius Ports Authority, Mauritius Shipping Company Limited, Velogic Limited and Associated Container Services Ltd, to devise and implement short-term measures to address the challenges which have been identified so far.

I further note that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has reported that it will continue to encourage and facilitate the business community in Rodrigues to enhance their warehousing and storage capacity.

Mr François: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer, Madam Speaker. I am also following up with the importers and breeders in Rodrigues. With regard to the number of containers of livestock feed and meeders feed on each Peros Banhos voyage to Rodrigues lately, I have some statistics: On 03 December, 12 containers; 04 January, 10 containers; 15 January, 23 containers; and 25 January, 25 containers. Will the hon. Minister ensure and request the concerned authorities not to reduce the normal containers quota for animal feed? From information gathered from breeders, there were many animal losses during the period of December and January.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I believe the hon. Member should have asked the question to my colleague, the Minister of Shipping, but I will talk to him.

Madam Speaker: Yes, alright. That is fair enough.

Dr. Boolell: Already talked!

Madam Speaker: Fair enough, okay!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I spoke to him on Friday.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes!

ST JEAN – FLOODING – FAST-TRACK PROJECT

(No. B/35) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the fast-track project to prevent flooding at St Jean, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, I am informed that on 29 November 2023, work orders amounting to a total sum of Rs66 m., inclusive of VAT, were issued under the framework agreement of the Road Development Authority to Gamma Construction Ltd to undertake the drain works over a stretch of some 800 meters along Old Moka Road up to Rivière Sèche located near the MCB building with a view to mitigating flooding at St Jean.

The region of St Jean, being a densely populated area with an extensive network of buried services, appropriate measures had to be undertaken to prevent any disruption in the existing services and to avoid inconvenience to the inhabitants thereat.

Consequently, trial pit works had to be carried out to identify buried services. The works which started on 13 November 2023 were expected to be completed by 30 May 2024. However, the project has not yet been completed for various reasons. This project has been

declared an emergency whereby the risk to life and damage to property were significant. Yet, it has been delayed for almost one year. Since my assumption of office as minister, I have expressed my dissatisfaction with the progress made up to now. I have chaired several meetings with different stakeholders to remove all bottlenecks being encountered and to expedite the completion of the project.

I have been informed that the delays in the project were the result of major relocation and realignment works pertaining to the extensive underground services, such as the CWA waterlines, Emtel lines, Mauritius Telecom lines and sewer lines. I also wish to highlight that due to major relocation, realignment works and the increase in volume of excavation, the cost of the project now stands at some Rs180 m., for which financial clearance has already been secured.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the relocation of all underground services has now been completed, except for the relocation of the sewer lines, which is ongoing and expected to be completed by 22 February 2025. As at date, 70% of the works have been completed. The drain is expected to be functional by 26 February 2025, and the whole project is expected to be completed by 15 March 2025.

Madam Speaker, let me reassure the House that in the event of heavy rainfall in the region of St Jean, prior to the completion of the project, both the consultant and the contractor have been requested to ensure that all measures are taken to avoid flooding and associated damages. The contractor has also been requested to mobilise mobile pumps of adequate capacity in standby mode along with water carrier lorries to pump out water at the cemetery's entrance if required. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. Je remercie le ministre également pour sa réponse. Madame la présidente, des tombes provenant du cimetière de St-Jean ont envahi la cour des habitants. Un projet supposément en mode *fast-track* accuse un retard indécent. Nous parlons de 250 tombes endommagées, Madame la présidente.

C'est grave ! Et tout cela, sous l'ancien régime ! Les habitants de St Jean vivent dans la peur à chaque grosse pluie. Vu la grande urgence, est-ce que le ministre envisage d'organiser un *site visit* dans les plus brefs délais avec les différents départements concernés, s'il vous plaît, parce que je peux vous dire que les habitants vivent dans une grande peur. Merci, Madame la présidente.

Mr Gunness: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is right in saying that this project was supposed to be an emergency project. It took one year because there was no follow-up action and because we had many stakeholders involved – the CWA, the Telecom, and Emtel. I have gone through the file, and I have not seen any meeting chaired by the former minister, at least to expedite matters so that the project can go fast. We can imagine that now the project has gone up from Rs66 m. to Rs180 m. It has taken nearly one year, putting the lives of people in danger there.

So, now, as soon as I assumed office, I chaired meetings so that we can expedite matters. As I have said to the hon. Member, we are expecting the completion of the project by 15 March. The drain will be functional on 26 February, and the whole project will be functional by 15 March. But I have no objection to having a site visit. We can fix a common date so that we can go on site and explain to the people. Thank you.

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

CANDOS GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – ROAD SAFETY MEASURES

(No. B/36) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to road safety around Candos Government School, he will state if consideration will be given for the installation of a pedestrian crossing, appropriate signage, traffic lights, speed bumps and cameras thereat.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry that it has thoroughly effected a road safety inspection around Candos Government School, and the following measures have been recommended –

- (i) The setting up of a pedestrian crossing to ensure safe crossing of school children, the fixing of warning signs to indicate the presence of school, the fixing of 40 km/h speed limit signs, the painting of ‘SLOW’ road markings on approaches to the school gates, and the fixing of handrails over a length of about 50 metres to properly segregate pedestrian traffic from vehicular traffic along Tolerance Avenue fronting Candos Government School;
- (ii) The fixing of warning signs to indicate the presence of a school along Robert Edward Hart Avenue, and

- (iii) The reinstatement of all traffic signs associated with existing humps, the fixing of warning signs to indicate the presence of a school and the fixing of a 40 km speed limit along Seechurn Avenue.

Madam Speaker, the TMRSU is currently working on the cost estimate in respect of the recommended measures that I have listed above.

At this moment in time, like I said earlier, no contract for civil works can, however, be awarded under the framework agreement because the same has expired and new tenders will have to be launched. This might take some time; funds are also being identified in the meantime because, like I said earlier, again, all funds had been used up before my arrival at the Ministry – I am told. Once funds are secured, a procurement exercise and onwards awards of contract for implementing the measures that I have listed will take place. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente, une seule supplémentaire. Est-ce que le ministre pourrait nous donner une indication par rapport à une date ? Nous parlons de la sécurité des enfants qui, à chaque sortie de classe, courent. On s'attend au pire. Est-ce qu'on peut avoir une indication sur un *timeframe*, allons dire ? Merci.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, like I said, a framework agreement is a tender that covers the whole island of Mauritius for works to be implemented by TMRSU, and it is awarded by the Central Procurement Board. So, there is a procedure to be followed, but also, funds are being identified. I can safely say that within the next 3 to 4 months we should be able to see daylight on this.

Ms Anquetil: Permettez-moi une question. Une petite parce que je n'ai pas eu la réponse complète.

Madam Speaker: La réponse était claire pourtant. Allez-y.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente. On parle de la vie des enfants en bas âge, des mineurs. Je voudrais savoir, Monsieur le ministre, en attendant... Je comprends qu'il y a des procédures, oui, tout à fait, je respecte les procédures, ok. En attendant, ces enfants traversent la rue d'une façon vraiment brutale parce qu'ils ne comprennent pas, ils ne savent pas, il n'y a pas de policiers, il n'y a pas de passage piéton, il n'y a rien. Alors, on voudrait savoir est-ce qu'en attendant vous auriez pu mettre des mesures en place pour pouvoir justement sécuriser ces enfants ? Merci.

Madam Speaker: Il faut mettre les *lollipop men*, *you know*, ceux qui se mettent debout au milieu de la rue tout ça pour faire traverser les enfants !

Mr Osman Mahomed: I can certainly look into it to ensure that road safety measures are being implemented. I will do it.

Madam Speaker: Okay. The hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière!

NHDC – COROMANDEL – HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/37) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the construction of National Housing Development Company units in Coromandel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to the work progress thereof, indicating –

- (a) the eligibility criteria to be selected as beneficiary;
- (b) when applicants are expected to be called for interview, and
- (c) the policy for the allocation of the housing units.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I presume that my hon. colleague is referring to the construction project of 750 housing units being undertaken by the New Social Living Development (NSLD) at Coromandel. I am informed by the NSLD that 70% of the on-site construction works, housing units and on-site infrastructure have been completed. These works are expected to be completed by the end of June 2025.

As regards part (a) of the question, the main criteria to benefit from social housing units are as follows –

- (i) the monthly household income of the applicant should not exceed Rs40,000;
- (ii) the applicant should not be the owner of housing units or residential plot of land; and
- (iii) the applicant should not have benefitted from any government grant for the casting of roof slabs and for the purchase of building materials.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b), the applicant will be called for interview 2 to 3 months prior to the completion of the project. However, allow me to halt at this stage to underline the following: there is a misconception among the members of the public believing that calling them for the interview means that they have been granted the right to a house. No. I would like to underline that calling them for an interview does not guarantee the obtention

of the house. It is only to assess the eligibility of each applicant, and that is the purpose of the interview.

In regard to part (c), the 750 housing units at Coromandel will be allocated as follows –

- 100 units for families living in Constituency No. 1
- 50 units for families living in Constituency No. 2
- 200 units for families living in Constituency No. 19
- 400 units for families living in Constituency No. 20

Those are my answers, and if the hon. Members require any additional information, I shall be glad to oblige.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre, en ce qui concerne les futurs acquéreurs, s'il y aura plusieurs catégories ? Je veux dire en fonction des différents critères de sélection, de remboursement et de revenus, bien sûr.

Mr Mohamed: I think this is a very important question that needs, in fact, an answer. There are two ways of proceeding. I could proceed by tabling the criteria for allocation of NSLD housing units, which I will; I believe it is important for it to be a public document, and I will just briefly say that over and above the fact that I talked about 40,000 income, the date of application, of course, is of utmost importance. I have found through my research at the level of the Ministry that it was not obviously the Ministry that carried out the whole idea of allocation of houses; it is either the NHDC or the NSLD and committees therein. I am convinced that there has been misuse of power. I am convinced there have been people who have listened to orders coming from some sort of kitchen to decide not which cook is going to go therein but who is going to be living where and when and in what type of house. This is basically, our lives and the lives of citizens of this country were dictated from beginning to end by someone in charge of this kitchen.

So, in order to put some order in the kitchen, I would like to blow up the kitchen and start afresh, but then again, the people did it for us; they blew it up. So now, household type and composition – that also is a criterion. A couple with dependants earns 10 marks – there is a marking system. Hon. Osman Mahomed, now Minister, at one point in time he was at the NHDC, if I am not mistaken; he was also one of those responsible for the setting up of these criteria, as well as hon. Bashir Khodabux at one point in time, but those are legacies that were left.

Unfortunately, some people have found ways and means of going round the excellent work they have done in order to give houses, and the condition of obtaining houses was how much of a nice person you are, holding up the *drapeau* of certain people, but this is not what we are about.

So, criteria are very important, and we are not going to be choosing based on political appurtenance, on where you are, who you are, what you are and how close you are. It is criteria, and it is going to be rule-based. So, I can assure the hon. Member of that. Catchment area is obviously important because, as I have said, some people come from certain constituencies; therefore, where you live, where you come from, is also a very important criterion. Then you have criteria for allocation to hardship cases; I have had the opportunity of speaking with my learned colleague Minister Ashok Subron, whereby he has intimated his wish to be more helpful and grant more help to the needy, victims of fire, cyclones, floods, natural disasters, domestic violence, single parents with dependents, and persons with severe medical conditions and impairments.

My hon. friend, Minister Subron, has spoken to me about that. So, I can assure the hon. Member, the House, and those listening to us, Madam Speaker, that we will be rule-based and there will be no favouritism and discrimination.

Allow me to add, however, that if there are delays, it is because offsite works have not been completed because the then Government created a company called DICL. It gave the responsibility to DICL to carry out drain works all around the island, around NSLD projects. And I can say that they have not been functioning very well. We have had very urgent meetings chaired by the Senior Chief Executive of my ministry with DICL and the officers in order to ensure...

Yes, I know the problematic, but then again, it is not the responsibility of the present Minister to have started last year. When the project started, they should have started then. So, it is through the incompetence of the then Government and the minister in charge; I cannot remember his name, the then Bobby, or some name of that nature. I cannot remember whether it was him, but through incompetence, he did not start it. And the hon. Member will remember, if I am not mistaken, he himself *a déjà croisé le fer* with those incompetents.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes, he has not finished.

Mr Quirin: Une chose qu'on a souvent tendance à oublier, c'est qu'avec les pluies torrentielles et les inondations récurrentes, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire si les constructeurs ont prévu un système de drain afin d'évacuer l'eau, évitant ainsi que les appartements au rez-de-chaussée soient inondés comme c'est le cas au complexe de Vétiver à Petite Rivière ?

Mr Mohamed: I can assure the hon. Member that as an example that I can give, only yesterday I had the pleasure of going to a site visit in Constituency No. 1 with hon. Minister Arianne Navarre-Marie who is here, and hon. Fabrice David, who is also together with me. We went for a visit in Constituency No. 1, and there we have been very careful to note little issues – little issues which, in fact, are very important – drain works, and we found that all of them have made provision, but I come back to DICL.

DICL is given the task of completing offsite works, precisely in order to ensure that those projects are not flooded, and this is very important, but unfortunately, there are projects for which the houses are ready, but I will not be able to deliver; at least NSLD will not be able to deliver to beneficiaries, and you will find that there will be *dégradation* of the quality of material because you are closing the houses. We have to wait for the offsite drain works to be completed because we do not want such situations to occur where people are flooded in, but those are issues high on the agenda, and we are working closely with the new Minister of National Infrastructure and all my colleagues in Cabinet. We are also being helped by Members of Parliament, backbenchers who are giving us a lot of information and assistance to ensure that we give a better product to the beneficiaries.

And let me hasten to add that they have not even considered the possibility of adding solar panels on the roof in order to provide for hot water. They have not even considered rainwater harvesting when we are talking about the age of climate change and the need to have an environmentally sustainable construction. They have thought very fast but have been incompetent in the end result.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, dernière question !

Madam Speaker: Allez-y, il me reste...

Mr Quirin: Rapidement. Peut-on savoir de l'honorable ministre quelles sont les infrastructures sociales et de loisir qui ont été prévues pour les...

Madam Speaker: Non, non, non ! Je ne peux pas vous laisser, parce que ça, c'est nouveau. Une nouvelle question sera bien pour la semaine prochaine.

Mr Mohamed: I will share it with you.

Mr Quirin: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Non, parce que ça c'est nouveau. Quand même. Allez-y !

Mr Quirin: Non, c'est par rapport au contexte de...

Madam Speaker: Mais, on peut parler de tout si on veut ! Allez-y, Monsieur, après !

Mr Beehook: Oui, Madame la présidente. J'aimerais demander à M. le ministre que beaucoup de personnes se sont plaintes qu'elles sont sur une liste d'attente depuis plus de 20 ans, une dizaine, vingtaine d'années, et que, lorsqu'ils appellent ou ils rendent visite au bureau de la NHDC, ils se plaignent de dossiers perdus. *Can the Minister please put up a campaign or a fast track campaign* afin de réactualiser les dossiers des demandeurs en vue du processus d'allocation des logements sociaux ?

Mr Mohamed: Even though, Madam Speaker, it does not really... but it is within the ambit if I may help. I do not want to adopt such a fast track that we have unfortunately as hon. Ms Stéphanie Anquetil has said. We have what we have had where people are at *Cimetière St Jean* with the fast track. So, we do not want that. We want to sort out the problem, and the issue is that, with the new government and the new direction at the level of both the NHDC and the NSLD, what we are ensuring to do is that there is a proper customer service, that we ensure that those criteria are adhered to, but that there is an efficient communication between the end user and the builders; the promoters.

So, this is what we need to do, because a lot of the times, I totally agree with you, I end up being the one answering at least hundreds of calls a day, which is happening to my home. And just to add it up, I tested the customer service at the NHDC last year as soon as I took office and I pretended to be someone from Curepipe and I waited for 20 minutes and I still

did not get the answer. So, in other words, in the first week, I can assure you that those issues have been attended to and I am very thankful to the officers of the NHDC, NSLD and the Ministry for really helping to improve service and I am sure that we will be successful.

Madam Speaker: Yes?

Mrs Savabaddy: Merci, Madame la présidente. M. le ministre, en parlant des critères d'éligibilité, plusieurs familles sont dans l'attente depuis des lustres, nous le savons tous. Qu'en est-il de ceux qui ont déjà atteint l'âge de la retraite, voire 60 ans + ? Est-ce qu'ils devront attendre longtemps ? Est-ce qu'un jour, ils pourront devenir propriétaires d'une maison de la NHDC et est-ce qu'il y aura aussi une attention particulière ? Je vous attends, merci.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Member for the question. I have had the opportunity of meeting MauBank, one of the financing institutions, precisely for many other cases that were finding some difficulties, but precisely for old-age pensioners who have been on the list for many years, and they were saying that they could not consider that they were eligible for a loan because of their age. So, we have tried to find solutions together, and one of the solutions would be that one of the relatives, a child, would be guaranteeing the loan and take on that responsibility.

Grosso modo we are finding solutions, and I do agree with the hon. Member that many people have waited, not only old-age pensioners. You have a lot of single mothers; you have a lot of mothers who are divorced with children who need to find a home to live in and do not want to continuously be paying rent, and they want to become homeowners. We have more than 40,000 applications. The previous government had said that they were delivering 6,000 houses before the end of their mandate in 2024. That was a lie. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Hon. Juman, First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East.

STATE LAND – *PAS GEOMETRIQUES* – LESSEES & LEASING FEES

(No. B/38) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State Lands on *Pas Géométriques*, he will state the total number of lessees thereof, indicating the –

- (a) amount of outstanding leasing fees, if any, as at date, and
- (b) lessees whose leasing fees are due for more than 24 months, giving a breakdown of the fees due.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, once again let me thank the hon. Member for the question. So, as a prelude to the answer, *Pas Géométriques* basically consists of a narrow belt, theoretically 81.21 metres in width nearly all around the coast of the island of Mauritius and are state-owned. I am informed that there are approximately 6,405 leases that have been granted by my Ministry over *Pas Géométriques*. Let me hasten to add that this was not granted by me ever since we came into office.

In regard to part (a), I am informed that as of 31 December 2024, the outstanding rental in respect of all leases, including all those *Pas Géométriques*, is approximately Rs1.8 billion. Yes, that is the figure that is owed for all those leases –Rs1.8 billion.

In regard to part (b), I understand that there are more than 11,000 leases, both on *Pas Géométriques* and non-*Pas Géométriques*, which are in arrears of annual rental for more than 24 months. The amount due is approximately Rs968 m.; almost a billion is owed to the government by those lessees.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr Juman: Hon. Minister, is it possible to table the list of the debtors and the respective amount due?

Madam Speaker : *Un peu plus fort, s'il vous plait !*

Mr Juman: Je demande à l'honorable ministre s'il peut déposer la liste des débiteurs.

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Mohamed: I must admit that I have the list in my hand. But I have to take advice from the Attorney General's Office to ensure that I am not in violation of any data protection legislation before I do this because it holds names, addresses and what is owed.

However, I must say that I am considering at the level of the Ministry that we have to recuperate this money. It cannot be that we do not recoup this money because I am aware as

well from memory that there is Article 2279 of the Civil Code. Article 2279 of the Civil Code is that we can only claim three years back in terms of rent, and I will have to seek confirmation of that from the Attorney General's Office. But we will have to find whether any non-payment of such money to the government, causing prejudice to the government, is a violation of contract. If this is a violation of contract, it means what it means. It means that we would therefore be able to consider whether or not we take action for breach of contract. We will also see whether we can recuperate.

But we will endeavour – I can reassure the hon. Member and I thank him for his question again – to recuperate all of it. We will go after each one of them and explore all avenues. We will try to ensure that the mandate that has been given to us, we will honour it and not let this go away into oblivion as though it is nothing. This is owed to the people, and it must be refunded.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

Mr Seeburn: Madam Speaker, being given that we are talking about state land occupied by these holders on *Pas Géométriques*, in order to alleviate this situation, would the hon. Minister consider the possibility of granting the opportunity to residential leaseholders, in particular those who have occupied those lands for more than 30 years, to have the freehold title at a price which can be determined by the government under his Ministry?

Mr Mohamed: If my friend is referring to the *Pas Géométriques*, there would be issues there because then, the *Pas Géométriques*, from my knowledge, is inalienable.

Madam Speaker: Yes, exactly.

Mr Mohamed: I like it when I see the Attorney General nodding, and he is Senior Counsel. I love it! Thank you.

So, we would have to amend the law. Then, this is something which would require the government to take a policy decision, and this is not for me to pronounce myself on. Difficult, however! But already, as far back as I recall, the Labour Party, at one point in time, when in government, had made legislative changes in order to allow owners of CHA houses to become owners for the *modique somme de R 2,000*. And this is continuing. This is a social

measure brought in by the Labour Party that is continuing. I am happy to see that a lot of people are becoming homeowners.

Madam Speaker: But *Pas Géométriques* is another issue. I think we will stop here.

I have a few questions that have, in fact, been withdrawn: B/42, B/45, B/49, B/52, B/57, B/58, B/60, B/65, B/68, B/69, and B/70. Hon. Members agree with these? You have withdrawn your questions, and I understand why you did that. So, if you agree, we will stop Question Time here!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I 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.

Madam Speaker: It means you are staying late!

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Financial Crimes Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 1 of 2025) was read a first time.

MOTION

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2025-2029

Madam Speaker: Hon. Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka! My pleasure!

(4.12 p.m.)

Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to move the motion standing in my name –

“This Assembly resolves that the Government Programme 2025-2029 presented to this Assembly on Friday 24 January 2025, copy of which has been circularized amongst Honourable Members, be and is hereby approved.”

Madam Speaker, dear hon. Members, I am deeply honoured to address this august Assembly on the occasion of my maiden speech in the context of the debates on the 2025-2029 Government Programme, presented by His Excellency the President of Mauritius, Mr Dharam Gokhool.

As a new Member of this Assembly, a neophyte, I am privileged to initiate discussions on a groundbreaking programme that binds us to our destiny, that is, to serve this land and its people with diligence, honour and integrity. As a new parliamentarian, I thank the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and our Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Béranger, for having bestowed upon me the duty to serve the nation.

Along with my fellow new Members of the Assembly, I can affirm that we are privileged and honoured to have been chosen by the people to represent them, to fight for their best interests and lead a nation from darkness to light with our dreams and hopes, shaping a guiding beacon.

May I express my gratitude to our leaders for having embraced the aspirations and hope of every citizen for a land where our human rights and dignity are respected and valued, a land where humanity is protected and our future held dearly. This programme epitomises the leaders of the Alliance of Change’s commitment to build a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

We, elected Members of this Assembly, sit at the cusp of history. We have been entrusted with the people’s faith to rebuild a nation that was formerly entrapped in the throes of pain and despair. With this programme, we carry the flame of hope the people have conferred upon us. We carry the aspirations of thousands of men, women, youth and elderly who have dreamt of a land where life shall flourish. Above all, we have been bestowed with a

duty of rebuilding a land with a programme that encapsulates the essence of struggles led by workers, ecologists, human rights activists, feminists and engaged citizens who firmly believe in a fair and just society for each and every citizen.

As an eco-socialist with an unflinching faith that a free and equitable world can be constructed for us all, this programme empowers me to continue the people's struggle for social, economic and ecological justice.

The 2025-2029 Government Programme in its entirety imbues us with hope and pride. It anchors in our spirit an unflinching sense of duty towards our people, our nation and our homeland.

It is indeed a bridge to the future, a brighter, more secure and peaceful future.

As noted by His Excellency the President, the country had experienced one of the darkest periods of its history prior to the November 2024 elections. In contrast, this Programme paves the path into a future where this Government is strongly responsive to the needs and aspirations of its people. May I express my deep gratitude to His Excellency the President of Mauritius who articulated our vision with shared faith, hope and commitment. This Programme channels our manifesto, the history-making signed agreement among four political parties to lead a nation from darkness to light, from despair to hope, from subjugation to freedom. It is the bridge to a safe and empowered future for the people.

May I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your nomination. Madam, you have ensured so far that the Assembly is an illustrious democratic space where the freedom of expression is upheld in utmost respect. Dear Madam, you symbolise the aspiration of us, Mauritian feminists, and you are a role model to us all. Though we may appear little, we are fierce, as our dear Shakespeare said about strong women.

Madam Speaker, I am deeply grateful to this Government, to our inspired leaders who have dared to augur systemic change that shall protect the democratic rights of future generations. This Government is embarking on key constitutional reforms to protect the nation from any further violation of our democratic rights. The dark days we formerly experienced are deeply scarred in our memory, and we are still tending to our wounds. The balm, Madam Speaker, has been provided with the future Constitutional Review Commission. It is to be noted that this Commission will guarantee that Local Government Elections will be held regularly according to law. This Commission further has been tasked

with incorporating public interest litigation and class action into the Constitution. In a healthy democracy, people should be empowered to reflect, question, mobilise and take action. History has been made repeatedly when people mobilised to overthrow injustice across the world. With the forthcoming public interest litigation and class action motion, we are proud of a government that places faith in the people's independence, leadership, intelligence and decision-making capacities.

Mauritius has shone as a firm model of democratic freedom when the people rose to oust its former regime under which it had been suffocating. Constitutional reforms hailing democratic rights are the hallmark of a government ready to serve the people. The right to recall motion recognises similarly the primacy of public interest. It augurs good governance and accountability and guarantees future generations that their needs will be prioritised.

Likewise, through the concerted address of digital rights, this Government Programme emphasises its commitment to protecting the people from the former invasive surveillance that threatened every fabric of our lives and robbed us of our serenity. A healthy democracy is where each citizen breathes freedom, where each citizen can reflect, think critically and contribute to the country's wellbeing. The November 2024 elections precisely demonstrated the people's intelligence, their firm stance against oppression and their refusal to be swayed by money and false promises.

The Freedom of Information Act further seals the will of this Government to construct a model democratic state where every media organ will be free, where each citizen's voice can be heard and heeded. A healthy dynamic and functional participatory democracy will be the historical legacy of this government, a government that seeks to empower people rather than divide and rule. A Government that aims to recognise our brotherhood and sisterhood, a nation with a shared cultural history, rather than draw boundaries based on obsolete and absurd ethnic divisions, is a government that is decolonising our minds.

I am immensely proud to be a member of this Government that will undertake constitutional reforms whereby any Mauritian may stand for elections as a Mauritian. This Government is, thus, discarding the divisive legacy of colonisation. As a former academic who specialised in postcolonial cultural histories of embodied resistance and resilience, I can but beam with pride and respect for our leaders who are making history and ending decades of injustice. This Government is indeed entrenching the decolonisation of minds, souls and the entire island. It is setting an example for the post-colonial world to condemn and reject

the toxic colonial legacy of divide and rule. This Government is setting an example for the entire world to emulate by forging a future where communalism may be dismantled and our shared humanity valued.

Madam Speaker, system change is what we need to build a better, fair and just society. This is embedded in our Government Programme where the Just Transition Commission will be set up to anchor a firm ecological consciousness in every socio-economic endeavour.

In a context of economic crisis and chaos, our leaders are to be lauded for having understood the ecological imperatives on which human survival depends. The Programme is an affirmation of this Government's commitment to protecting life, nature and the land. By inserting the rights of nature in the Constitution, this Programme will align this Government along with the visionary and exemplary nations such as New Zealand, India and Canada, which recognise nature as a right bearing entity.

For a fervent ecologist, inserting the rights of nature in the Constitution is the prime signal of a government that is cognisant of the life-threatening implications of the climate crisis. I warmly thank all ecologists who have led multiple struggles to which our government leaders have now responded with utmost sensitivity. Nature is life. Nature is our mother. Nature is our home. Nature does not belong to us. We belong to it. This Government has solemnly pledged to protect nature. It has solemnly pledged to protect life. It has solemnly pledged to protect us all and our land. Thank you to our leaders from the depth of our ecological souls that have been seared by the past destruction of our ecosystems. The protection of our ESAs, that is, our Environmentally Sensitive Areas, similarly illustrates how this Government has embraced eco-consciousness. This is hope. This is the bridge to the future; we embrace it wholeheartedly.

Madam Speaker, economic crises are engineered to shape precarity, psychosis and a sense of fragility that make us vulnerable to economic predators. It is within this context that we need to appreciate this Programmes' emphasis on socio-economic rights. This Programme epitomises our leaders' refusal to sacrifice the people's rights, well-being and future, no matter how deep we are mired in troubled economic waters. Our leaders will not sacrifice our people on the altar of economic imperatives. This is true humanism. This is true leadership. This is true ethos-driven decision-making. Thank you.

I acclaim this government's insistence on protecting workers, women in particular, with regard to the regulation of working hours with the 40-hour workweek. The provision of

maternity leave for up to one year and flexi-time for women, as well as work-from-home schemes. As a feminist, I have strongly deplored the manner in which capitalism exploits women who bear the burden of social reproduction and care work, both of which are invaluable to the economy.

The economic value of work carried out mostly by women in the home is silenced, erased, and taken for granted because capitalism instrumentalises patriarchy. Measures announced in the Government Programme with regards to workers' rights place an onus on work-life balance and seek to ease the mental charge of women. I am grateful to women who withstand the demands of capitalism. I am grateful to feminists who fight for women's care work to be valued. I am grateful to our decision-makers who have finally acknowledged that women's work matters, women's bodies matter and patriarchy needs to be dismantled for women to thrive.

Similarly, I applaud the visionary step to be taken to amend the artist status in the law. The artist will no more be condemned to survive in an exploitative, denigrating and destructive system. This programme seeks not only to value the artist but also to confer upon the artist a recognised employee status for him/her to rise above precarity. As such, the programme recognises how the empowered and secured artist will be key to developing the cultural industry as a new pillar of the economy.

Culture is our lifeblood. Culture is our identity; culture incorporates our dynamic and creative modes of engaging with our daily reality, our history and our dreams for the future. A thriving cultural industry is the heartbeat of a healthy society. This Programme rightly emphasises the much-needed expansion this industry requires to celebrate our shared culture and heritage.

Madam Speaker, the Government Programme recognises the primacy of socio-economic and cultural rights as identified by the treaty, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that Mauritius signed on 12 December 1973. Yes, 52 years later, we now have a government; we now have leaders who will honour this treaty by incorporating our social and economic rights in our Constitution. This is system change. Indeed, what we are privileged to be part of is a leadership based on care and empathy. A leadership that will forge a stronger nation; a nation that looks after the most vulnerable members of our society. A nation that values dignity, respect and solidarity. The very values

that our Prime Minister has reminded us are our empowering legacy from our history of enslavement.

This Programme expressively stipulates that in Mauritius, the elderly, people with disabilities, widows and orphans will be taken care of. This is a solemn pledge that can but empower us in our daily struggles to help thousands who suffer from systemic discrimination.

Madam Speaker, authentic leadership is about care and empathy. It is based on meaningful connections with humanity as a whole. This leadership of care is exemplified by careful attention paid in the Programme to a range of reforms aimed at improving the lives of each and every citizen. Indeed, pension reforms and the e-social security system are fundamental. They are concrete steps being envisaged to upgrade a system that currently condemns thousands to profound misery.

As newly elected members of the Assembly, we are being called upon daily to respond to multiple cases of genuine and heartbreaking human distress. The previous system has been nothing but criminal; it has been cruel, deadly and monstrous. It has inflicted needless pain and suffering on the weakest of our citizens. This programme precisely seeks to give us the tools to support our most vulnerable fellow men and women. We welcome with our whole heart the much-required change in the social security system. We will not only care, but we will act upon our care.

Madam Speaker, the Mauritian family has been under dire stress over the past years. Rising costs of living, poor employment prospects, the burden of long working hours and children having no hope of the future in their homeland, as well as significant social ills, have made our families frailer.

This Programme recognises that the family unit has to be strengthened in order for our society to stand firm and strong again. Families are the foundation of social reproduction; they protect life and the future of humanity. Protecting each family is the government's ultimate responsibility.

With regard to education, we genuinely applaud the Programme's emphasis on inclusion. Our education system has long been discriminatory and elitist with systemic exclusion of the most vulnerable, that is, students with SEN requirements. In the recent past, we have further witnessed the deliberate dismantling of the education system. Exclusion in a competitive system that is overly exam-oriented has sapped our children of the potential to

develop their full intellectual abilities. It has been orchestrated, an intellectual genocide of the innocent and the underprivileged.

Inclusion, in contrast, is progress. Inclusion is ethics; inclusion is the valuing of each child's right. Inclusive education is the way forward. This government has already demonstrated its dedication to implementing inclusive education by eradicating the Extended Stream Programme. It was the prime example of how our children were being failed by a system that could not even develop their numeracy and literacy skills.

This Government Programme, in addition, seeks to value teachers and their role. This fundamental aim can but redress the profound flaws of a system where teachers are not empowered to support the intellectual and holistic development of our children. Our children and their future can no more be sacrificed on altars of narrow policies and dysfunctional educational practices. Dedicated teachers change lives, forge aspirations and shape a country's future. One of the main reasons I stand here today is because my teachers believed in me. With a growth mindset, teachers can make a difference for each Mauritian child. This is precisely what this government seeks to achieve.

Madam Speaker, we can similarly applaud the close attention paid to food security in the Government Programme. Food security is one of the primary challenges we face due to the climate crisis. Anxiety about food access during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic still lingers in our minds. Disruption of the supply chain and the rising food crisis resulted in mere mass psychosis. It is to the honour of this government to tackle food insecurity and ensure that such traumatic lack of access to food never occurs again. Food is a basic human right; it is the fundamental physiological need as defined by Maslow, without which no other need can be satisfied. A government that feeds its people and that provides equal access to food is a responsible and caring government. It is duty bound and driven by contentious awareness about the climate crisis. It is good governance, for it bears foresight into an insecure future in the Anthropocene era.

Madam Speaker, with regard to restoring law and order, we can but breathe with relief that the Prime Minister and this government are spearheading immediate and concrete action to battle the scourge of drugs. Madam Speaker, drugs have and are taking their toll on our society. Not a single day goes by without us witnessing the tragedies drugs entail in every corner of our society. The case of baby Catalea, murdered by a neighbour under the influence of synthetic drugs, exemplifies the human loss we endure due to the pervasiveness of drugs

across the island. Drugs are killing our children, murdering our youth and incapacitating whole families. They are the bane of the land and its people.

The Government Programme demonstrates precisely the genuine leadership required to battle the scourge no matter how hard it is. Amidst various urgent significant measures stated in the programme, the distinction to be made between traffickers and consumers denotes the willingness to take care of victims, to look after the people. This programme seeks to heal, save and protect. We are thankful and hold dearly the hope that no more children shall suffer the fate of Baby Catalea. May her soul rest in peace. May innocent children suffer no more.

Madam Speaker, I thank this Government for paying due attention to improving access to justice, to enhancing judiciary processes and to forging public trust in the Police. The police and criminal justice, as well as the Criminal Evidence Bill, will no doubt be elaborated with due expertise to safeguard the public and ensure institutional efficacy. We may now breathe with relief. To have faith in the judiciary and the Police is what the people have been hoping for with bated breath.

The former failures of both institutions had almost led us to the state of the Homo Sacer as defined by Giorgio Agamben, the state of exception where our humanity, our safety and our right to life were no more upheld by those in power. This Government is therefore ready to take on the most dire of challenges: make the island safe again. I am grateful to our decision-makers who have paid due consideration to the appropriate, safe and conducive conditions Police Officers need to work in.

I strongly deplore the current dilapidated state of many police stations, particularly in Constituency No. 8. I think particularly of women police officers who work odd hours in conditions where they cannot even access clean and operational bathrooms. This programme reflects humane and sensitive attention paid to the working conditions of Police Officers. They are frontline employees and have to undertake extensive emotional labour. My constituency has witnessed the worst of crimes. It is our duty to look after those who will help us seek justice. It is our duty to ensure they can perform to the best of their abilities in safe and healthy conditions.

Madam Speaker, a caring government is a government that dares take on board the criminal dysfunctionalities of systems it has inherited. One such dysfunctionality of extensive proportions lies in the healthcare sector, where we have witnessed the tragic loss of lives of patients on dialysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the firm intention of supporting

substance abuse rehabilitation, improving current mental health care and ensuring more adequate services to the elderly, the programme entrenches the Government's dedication to providing public health care. Free, quality public healthcare is the hallmark of a functional welfare state that forges equity across our society.

As Margaret Mead stated –

“Civilization is only achieved when the most vulnerable and sickly is carefully looked after.”

Indeed, this Government programme epitomises the duty of care towards us all. I am proud to be part of a government that further places emphasis on youth empowerment, developing a dynamic sports sector and ensuring just access to housing. This programme bears in mind the precise social and economic dimensions that can empower each Mauritian, no matter his or her walk of life.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, the people rose, broke their chains and handed us the beacon of light to a future of hope for each Mauritian. This programme etches a vision of ethical governance based on care for life, nature and the land. An equal and just society is what this programme aspires to. We understand the economic challenges, but we can't hail the vision of our leaders.

The drive to protect the people, redress the multiple wrongs Mauritians have been subject to for years and rebuild a nation where we can all live securely, breathe freely and be at peace is inspiring.

A vision empowers. It draws from every struggle for human dignity, respect and the right to life. It boldens our spirit to climb over mountains and cross rivers. A true revolutionary is guided by love for humanity, hope and a vision for its upliftment. I therefore call upon this august Assembly to approve this motion. *C'est le plat de résistance et de résilience de notre gouvernement. Merci.*

Madam Speaker: Thank you so much for your first speech. Thank you and welcome. I need someone to second the Motion.

Mr Mohamed rose and seconded.

(4.42 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Mohamed): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to congratulate hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo for her maiden speech. It was indeed *une bouffée d'air frais*.

I am sitting down here, trying to remember what it was like not so long ago. Very often, when I am outside of this Assembly, I am told that they enjoyed it, not because the other Speaker threw me out very often – I did not enjoy that very much! We were in competition, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and others; you were also there on the agenda, a lot of us were – but what they do say is they are wondering how it will be different.

Madam Speaker, allow me to say that having listened to the hon. Member address this Assembly, not only did she do it with a lot of quality in the content, but she did it very calmly by respecting this august Assembly. All those of us here can say that when we hear her, we understand why she has been up to the challenge of going to the constituency of the former Prime Minister and taking him on and teaching him a lesson!

As far as I am concerned, I find myself a bit in between those generations. When I hear the hon. Member address the Assembly, when I listen to the content very attentively, I say there is indeed a bright future for the future of this country when you have generations that are going to be taken care of by Members of Parliament of your calibre. Congratulations, Madam!

I cannot forget to mention that in 2015, I remember I found myself sitting in the second row over there. The members of the MMM were also in the opposition. We were the only four of the Labour Party, only four! I happened to be *le chef de file* of the Labour Party. Quite quickly, I was joined by my good friend and brother, hon. Dr. Boolell, and he allowed me to continue as a *chef de file*. We happened to have lived a lot of events in this House, a lot of events! All those who have joined today, I feel sorry for you; you would not have lived it. It was a learning experience, a learning curve. History: one day, down the road, the future generation will at least know what you must not do.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Exactement !

Mr Mohamed: Then, watch the videos of what the former Speaker did, watch what the former Prime Minister did, and watch what the ministers of the last regime did! When we told them time and time again that the people out there would not forgive, they laughed at us! When we questioned them and embarrassed them, the Speaker stood up and threw us out! Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, when I look at the Government Programme and I look at

the last phrase, 'Let Mauritius be Mauritius again', those words mean a lot, full of meaning. Let Mauritius be Mauritius again!

Mauritius, I have always talked about that in my public speeches; I talked about our national anthem. I even had the courage – was it a good idea or not – but I sang the national anthem, and then again, I thought it was quite good, but then again, when I heard myself in a video from the back, I do not believe I will change careers to adopt singing.

When I sang those words, I said it to my son who was with me there, and I said to him, 'I will sing it' – when I left home, I said it to him. And he looked at me before I was going to pronounce my speech in Port Louis, and he said, 'Dad, sing it,' and for a minute I almost said, No, I would not. But the future generation not only understands the importance of those words, but they live it; they breathe it. It is in their DNA, and this is what Mauritius is all about. Let Mauritius be Mauritius again! This is what it is all about.

Today, people can go to social media and talk against us. It is their right. It is their right to criticise, and we all know that they have views that we may not agree with, but it is their right, and look at the difference! None of those who have spoken out against us have found themselves behind bars; none of them have been arrested. You have not had police officers lurking around your yard early in the morning, breaking cameras, blocking their numbers and not wanting to be identified. You don't have them pulling you out of your home without any reasonable suspicion, with no grounds for arrest.

I remember what they did to the former Prime Minister; I remember what he did to me. I remember going to central CID with my then counsel, the hon. Attorney General here, Gavin Glover. I remember the tears of my late father; I remember how they made him cry. I will not forget. And when I stood in this Assembly and I said to some ministers the next day after my arrest, 'I will not forget', but I do not come after you with revenge; I will not. I will not forget, and I said to them, 'We will put nails in your coffins – political coffins', but they chose otherwise. We talk about political coffins, whereas we have seen what they do to their political agents. We cannot forget!

Let Mauritius be Mauritius again! Where people are not assassinated for political reasons, there is no cover-up by politics or by police officers. Let Mauritius and every single department of government live again and breathe again where meritocracy starts existing and has meaning, not just words! And today when the hon. Prime Minister stood up and answered

the question from the Leader of the Opposition – I have to make reference to it – I was flabbergasted.

Can you imagine what it means? What does our Constitution mean? When you have the Prime Minister – he used to sit opposite us there – say he stands up and he does not know or maybe pretends to ignore what a sovereign democratic state is, what does democracy mean? What does sovereignty mean? What does all this mean? You do not say only words! You have to understand its meaning; you have to live it. Can you imagine what it means when you, somewhere, some place, conspire with others to spend more than USD 100 million in order to have a mass surveillance mechanism – MSM: Mass Surveillance Mechanism?

Do you know what that means? I listened; I heard myself talking to hon. Assirvaden. Oh yes, it was you; do not deny it! Hon. Juman was talking on it; hon. Dr. Aumeer, who is not here, was on there. I heard my voice; it was my voice; it was me; I confirm it. Now, can you imagine the former Prime Minister knows exactly what I thought of him? I thought it was a secret; I thought it was a secret! And all along he knew exactly what I thought of him! That's bad! But I am happy. Can you imagine that he spends hundreds of millions of dollars?

Not long ago in 2023, there was an enquiry being carried out in Germany. In Germany, there was the whole mechanism that was put into place for mass surveillance, and the public prosecutor there recommended charges and prosecutions for the offence of high treason. High treason means that you cannot embark upon any process to break down democracy, the very essence of this country. If you are trying to break down democracy, therefore destroying democracy and, in other words, controlling the country by occult means such as mass surveillance systems, in certain jurisdictions, it is indeed high treason. I say it here that any person, Mauritian or otherwise, who embarks upon any process to carry out mass surveillance of the citizens of this country is indeed guilty of high treason and should be prosecuted for high treason, but it is not for me to decide; it is my view.

The former government: the Prime Minister decides, the Police act – and who cared about what the DPP thought? But no! I am only giving you my humble opinion. There are many lawyers and colleagues here who would be able to express their views on that: is it not high treason to try to destroy democracy? What is contained in the Constitution, the right to privacy – isn't this part of democracy? When one person who is the executive decides to spend taxpayers' money to eavesdrop and not only eavesdrop! Worse! He stores the information for God's sake.

Didn't we talk here about ways and means that he and others talked to the Commissioner of Police in order to get people to say what they wanted the witnesses to say in order to get people arrested? Let Mauritius be Mauritius again!

When I hear the hon. Duval questioning about those *Missie Moustass*, does it not mean that he has come to realise that Mauritius indeed should be Mauritius again because he is sitting next to partners that he would love not to be sitting next to?

They tried to get him arrested for God's sake! They tried to get him arrested. Can you imagine? One Dr. Joomaye calling and saying: well, you know, let's tell him to say this; let's get him to say that. No, I have gotten him, then calling another lawyer who was a candidate in Constituency No. 2 and telling him, oh, you know what? I have said it, you know. I have told him to say so. No worries; this is going to be said, and that is going to be said. And today those people think that this is their version of democracy, but the people of this country have decided – you know when hon. Bhagwan said to them, '*met to cask integral*'. You see, he was being very... He cared for them and made sure no part could be hurt! You see he is a very caring gentleman. *Integral!* And one thing I learnt from him – very often when I was minister, he used to say to me, 'Hey, by the way, you got your duty-free already?' I said, 'Why?' He said, 'You won't be in power soon!' This is what I learnt from him, and I went to say to the other friends, and you know what? They never believed us!

They never believed us, and I said to them, You would really fall and fall hard because what you are doing is not a crime against us. Forget about me, forget about the leader of the Labour Party, forget about the leader of the MMM and us. We are just mere mortals, but you cannot do what you are doing to the people of this land. The people will rise, and they will punish you!' And it was done.

Now, this is behind us. Unfortunately, in order to chart the course, we need to know what happened behind us. That is why I have to talk about it. You know, let me say that. I was thinking very carefully about the preparation of what I would say today, and I decided to go *extempore* because we have lived interesting days, sad days, and if I had to live it again, I would say yes. I would live it again because it defines who you become. You see?

I remember – I will stop talking about the past in a minute – but when I remember the Leader of the Labour Party being dragged from his home, Rue Desforges, they wanted to break him, but it defines what he has become, and I told him just now, at lunch – your

victory, this victory that you lead this alliance to as Prime Minister, will be remembered for the future generations and the generations to come because in spite of all that they have done, he has taught us that if you believe in one thing, stick to it, be consistent, and stand up to those who try to crush you. Stand up to them! And he did it lawfully; that is the difference.

He did not send police officers to the home of the former Prime Minister. He did not call the Police and say, 'Get the former Governor of the Bank of Mauritius arrested; shut him in.' He did not do all that. So much so, the people were asking questions about how come so-and-so is travelling, how come the former Prime Minister is going shopping on the Champs-Élysées and on Oxford Street and carrying Chanel bags and whatnot. This is his life; let him live it. But he was so concerned and obsessed with the former Prime Minister that he ensured that everyone in the country could be eavesdropped on, and he was ensuring that he could destroy this man, but thank God and thank the Almighty, he has not succeeded.

I look at hon. Osman Mahomed, and there is nothing wrong, so don't...

(Interruptions)

You see, very often he speaks of Singapore. Allow me to say why I say that. He speaks of Singapore, and when he speaks of Singapore, he always talks about what he has learnt from Singapore. I know, hon. Uteem has also worked there, and therefore, is it a coincidence that both of them are candidates in No. 2? No, but it is a fact that I learnt a lot from both of them; maybe sometimes they have the impression that I do not listen, but I hear whatever they say, and I take a lot of lessons from what they say. And when they talk of Singapore, they talk about the greatness of the technology in Singapore and the society in Singapore. So, this is how we were talking about reform.

A lot of people have asked me what the digital twin is. A lot of people ask. In the Government Programme, we refer to the digital twin of Mauritius. As I stand before you as Minister of Housing and Land today, I went to my ministry in December and asked the Senior Chief Executive for whom I have a lot of respect, as well as the officers there, to show me a map of Mauritius. I wanted to see a map, a virtual digital map whereby I would be able to identify. I asked them to show me which land belongs to the State, which land belongs to the private sector, which land is environmentally sensitive, and which land is flood-prone. I asked them to give me all the data.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of platforms, but none of the platforms could give me what I was looking for, and it hit me that I met certain very important individuals; I say important because I admire their intelligence, and they are important people to me – those who have a lot of intelligence, those who do not talk for the sake of talking but talk sense. Those people at the Economic Development Board told me that there is something called the Digital Twin that was implemented in Singapore, and this is what this government will embark upon implementing. It is, in fact, digitalising Mauritius, the whole of Mauritius, and using it as an urban planning tool.

Imagine the future; let me take you to this future through my words. Imagine a future where you do not have to send land surveyors out there to measure the topography. You have a platform at the Ministry of Housing and Land. In that electronic tool, that digital tool, you will have a digitalised Mauritius. The Ministry of Environment will be able to share data on that platform as to what are environmentally sensitive areas. We will have information from the Ministry of Transport; we will have information from the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of Tourism, all relevant ministries, and the Prime Minister's Office. We will have information about the Safe City Cameras, so much so that if someone wants to apply for a BLUP, he will simply have to apply for one electronically; he will have access to the digital Mauritius as well. We will simply plug in the format of the building he wants to put up, and you will see the virtual building immediately pop up. And we will know, using artificial intelligence on that platform, with all the data, including on that platform, disaster management will be able to be catered for. We will know what traffic will be like in the 1, 2, 3, 5, 10 years to come. We will know what electricity will be required and what water will be required. We will know everything we need to know in order to plan a smart Mauritius.

This is going to be a legacy project, and I have embarked upon this, and I know I can count upon the help and collaboration of all my colleague ministers, backbenchers and junior ministers for us to be able to move forward and stop working *in silos*. And that has been the big problem. A lot of our administration in Mauritius is such that whatever information the Ministry of Agro-Industry will have; the Ministry of Housing will not necessarily have it. Whatever information I have at Housing, you do not necessarily have it at the Environment, and we go on like that. We have to be able to have all information without any silos and be collaborative on one platform to plan a smarter Mauritius, and this is what we are embarking upon. Singapore has done it. So much so, Singapore today can know everyone.

Access to information – this is what this government is all about. Not only will the government be able to hold the information close to its chest, but it will also be able to have it; maybe a subscription form, maybe in a different format, but we will be able to sell this data or share this data with members of the public in order to build a new Mauritius. Gone are the days where you do not have proper planning, and since I am talking about planning, Madam Speaker, let me say that there are two planning legislations regulating land development in Mauritius.

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1954 and the partly proclaimed Planning and Development Act of 2004. These laws, Madam Speaker, work together to guide land use planning, but the Town and Country Planning Act of 1954 has become outdated and does not fully address modern land use challenges. Efforts to update that piece of legislation, including the passing of new Acts in 1990 and 1995, have been unsuccessful. While the Planning and Development Act of 2004 was intended to replace the Town and Country Planning Act, it could not be fully implemented due to changes in other laws, such as the Business Facilitation and Local Government Acts. Additionally, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1954 appellate function was transferred to the Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal of 2012, a real mess.

So finally, we need to put some order in all this, and I will be working very closely with my learnt colleague, the hon. Attorney General, and his office in order to achieve this. There is a need to align the legal framework for the preparation and approval of all planning instruments. The current framework for the outline planning scheme has often been challenged in court, with one of the most recent cases being *Beaux Songes Development v/s UBP*, decided by the Privy Council in 2018. Now, this situation has impacted environmentally sensitive areas, for example, Pomponette and La Cambuse. Loopholes and inconsistencies saved promoters from being unable to bypass certain parameters.

There is another issue I would like to address, Madam Speaker, and it is as follows. This is a challenge that we will have to decide and deal with at the level of government. Back in 2017, everyone will remember and try to recall – let us go through the full exercise – who was Minister of Finance in 2017? Anyone will recall? Who? Yes, him. Call him by his name! So, when he was Minister of Finance in 2017, the big question we have right now is access to land. Not only have we heard questions about access to social housing this morning, but think

about all the *Pas Géométriques* and state lands around Mauritius that a lot of promoters are after. That is a fact!

So, as a country, we are at the junction right now, and we will have to decide where we stand. Yes, there is a need to have foreign direct investment coming to Mauritius, and there are various ways and means for it to come in. One of them is through the sale of property to foreigners. One of them. In 2017, the Ministry of Finance wrote a letter to the Managing Director of the Board of Investment whereby it referred to the apprehensions of the Economic Development Board. The Economic Development Board was against the scheme put up by the then government to sell state lands. They devised ways and means to facilitate the selling of state lands to foreigners. For example, you have promoters who come in, they convert their lease, *campement*, and then they have the right to sell to foreigners as though it is behind the whole idea of a *co-propriété*.

When one listens to people of this country speaking, one of the issues they are preoccupied about is as follows. Yes, it brings in revenue. I have had some facts, and I will share them with the House. It brings in revenue, but at what price? You see, let us look at it this way. When I look at the facts, between 2017 and January 2025, the EDB was in receipt of 1,230 applications for acquisition of ground plus 2 residential apartments by non-citizens. The gross value of these applications – 19.6 billion. That is the record of the EDB.

Out of these applications over that period, 144 were in relation to an apartment, part of a residential development situated over state land, *Pas Géométriques*, with coastal frontage. The value of these applications grossly amounts to 4.1 billion. The status of these 144 applications: 75 applications approved, having a gross value of 1.79 billion. Out of the 75 authorised transactions, 61 were concluded for an amount of 1.256 million as per records of the EDB.

So, the issue is, yes. What is the rental per *arpent*? Between 390,000 and one million. Yes, you get money in terms of registration or land transfer, but at the end of the day, when you have apartments selling for 1.5 million euros or 2 million euros bought by foreigners, that does create a disbalance with regard to the price of property and accessibility for Mauritians. So, finally, I was, myself, walking on the north coast – that is strange enough. I never thought I would become Minister of Housing and Lands. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister – I wanted to rent out a property because – I will share it; we are all family – my

sister-in-law is coming, and I wanted to make her spend a nice time at the beach and find a nice property on the beach. I stood before a building on the *Pas Géométriques*, and I found an excellent property.

When I was there one night having dinner with her, I managed to speak to the watchman. I often do that, and you learn a lot of things. The Prime Minister taught me that if you speak to the person on the ground, you will learn more. And I learnt a lot. I learnt that the whole building was owned by foreigners on *Pas Géométriques*. The north coast, all of it, is owned by foreigners. So, the job of my ministry, therefore, with the help of my colleagues, will be to decide as a balancing exercise: are we, in the name, ready to sell the whole property, the country, to foreigners? Then, we all end up being what? We will have to rent out to be able to enjoy a frontage? That is the problem.

So, let me conclude, Madam Speaker, by saying that I am indeed in a very important position, I admit. Once upon a time, this position was occupied by my late grandfather. I must say that *la barre* is very high, very high indeed because not only did he, at one point in time, carry out and implement measures that are still today helping the country. But the expectation of the Prime Minister for each of us, his Ministers, Members of Parliament, Junior Ministers and backbenchers is indeed very high because the people out there expect us to provide solutions to the wrongs of the past.

So, yes, NHDC and NSLD will be reviewed and reformed. Social justice for social housing. My friends will have the opportunity of putting questions on those matters which I will gladly answer, and I will enlighten the House on all development as we go along. However, why I chose to speak about this issue of foreigners – we have nothing against foreigners, clearly – but somewhere, some place, we have to brainstorm because we do not want Mauritians to end up being *lokater* in their own country. That is not the aim of this government. I am certain.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister for raising some very important issues for the benefit of the people.

I wanted to say that, in fact, before you spoke, we were to have hon. A. Duval speak. But I want to make it quite clear to everybody that he decided not to speak for whatever

personal reasons. It is not that I have asked him not to speak. He was to speak, in fact, before you. I thank you.

I think we can break for tea. I was going to say 30 minutes. 40 minutes? I think we need a bit of rest, and then we will have fresh ideas. So, we will be back here in about 30 minutes.

At 5.14 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.50 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair:

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please be seated!

Yes, hon. Etwareea, you have the floor!

Mr R. Etwareea (Third Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) : J'ai adoré le regard dans les rétroviseurs de l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed juste avant. J'ai adoré comment il a lancé le débat autour de la place de la promotion immobilière pour la croissance de l'île. J'ai apprécié l'hommage qu'il a rendu au Premier ministre, surtout à sa résilience.

À mon tour de rendre hommage à l'honorable Paul Bérenger. Très personnellement, je dois ma carrière à Port-Louis, à Genève, puis à Bruxelles, et maintenant cette place à l'Assemblée législative, grâce à lui. Je parle d'un travailleur infatigable, rigoureux, percutant. Je parle d'un intellectuel accompli, d'un homme de conviction ayant un sens profond de l'humain et de justice sociale. C'est un historien avec une grande compréhension des relations internationales. Je me souviens lorsqu'il nous parlait déjà à l'époque du taux repo, de l'OTAN et de programmes d'ajustement structurel du FMI.

Il a fait face à des vents contraires, à des trahisons, à des retournements de veste, il a persévéré et, comme le Premier ministre actuel, il est là alors que ses détracteurs se trouvent dans *Karo Kann*, comme on aime bien le dire. Il a inspiré plusieurs générations d'hommes et de femmes politiques, dont moi. Travailler avec lui au Parlement aujourd'hui, mais aussi au sein du Mouvement militant mauricien, membre de l'Alliance pour le changement, est un privilège. Je suis tout aussi heureux de siéger ici aux côtés du leader de cette alliance à qui je rends également hommage.

Pour ce discours inaugural, je ne peux pas oublier feu mes parents et toute ma famille qui ont relevé avec moi les défis de ces dernières élections. Je leur exprime ici mon immense reconnaissance, tout comme aux électeurs de la circonscription Grand Baie/Poudre d'Or où 57 % de l'électorat a donné un magistral coup de pied à un régime MSM décadent et pourri

dont les intérêts personnels de ses dirigeants comptaient davantage que ceux du pays. Il fallait avoir du toupet pour dire qu'il y avait un *feel-good factor* dans le pays alors même que, comme aujourd'hui encore, l'eau courante n'est pas accessible à de nombreuses familles à Grand Gaube ou à Grand Baie ; qu'un blackout pend comme l'épée de Damoclès sur la tête de la population à Goodlands, à Roche Terre et en réalité sur tout le pays ; que les transports en commun inefficaces laissent des centaines de passagers sous des arrêts d'autobus à Melville, à Madame Azor ou à Cap Malheureux.

M. le président, je me retrouve parfaitement dans le discours du programme présenté l'autre jour par le président de la République. Je n'ai donc aucune hésitation à soutenir le vote de remerciements présenté par notre amie et collègue, l'honorable Babita Thannoo, il y a un instant. Même la bourse mauricienne a salué le programme du gouvernement, et puis les indices boursiers ont augmenté à Maurice alors que les principales places financières dans le monde ont cédé leur position la semaine passée.

Le programme présenté l'autre jour fait une place prépondérante à l'économie bleue. Effectivement, le pays a besoin d'un nouveau pôle de croissance. Une industrie de la pêche se reposant sur la technologie et des infrastructures modernes a un potentiel énorme en termes de création d'emplois et de richesses. Le poisson remplace graduellement la viande dans nos assiettes et devient la principale source de protéine pour un nombre croissant de la population dans le monde, mais également à Maurice. Sa demande est telle que l'aquaculture a pris le dessus sur le poisson pêché de façon industrielle ou artisanale depuis une dizaine d'années. En 2019, les exportations mondiales des produits de la pêche et de l'aquaculture ont été évaluées à 161 milliards de dollars, soit environ 11 % des exportations des produits de la mer. À titre de comparaison, le PIB mauricien ne pèse que 14 milliards de dollars. Les exportations mauriciennes de poisson s'élèvent à un maigre 20 millions de dollars, autant dire qu'il y a du pain sur la mer.

L'ensemble de l'économie bleue pèsera, selon le CDE, 3000 milliards de dollars par an à partir de 2030. Avec une zone maritime de plus de 2 millions de kilomètres carrés, nous devrions en toute logique pouvoir croquer notre part de poisson.

On a beaucoup parlé de la pêche durant ces dernières années, on a beaucoup parlé dans le programme. La pêche, l'industrie de la pêche, apparaît plusieurs fois dans le discours du président. J'ai confiance que, maintenant, les dés sont jetés, que la volonté politique est là.

Et en même temps, M. le président, j'aimerais que le gouvernement porte une attention particulière aux accords de pêche que nous avons signés avec nos différents partenaires, qui leur donnent un droit de pêche dans nos zones maritimes. Trop souvent, nos ressources halieutiques sont pillées par ces puissances étrangères. Et trop souvent, ces accords sont signés, sont négociés en toute opacité et la population ignore totalement les enjeux, notamment financiers. Victimes de la surpêche et de la concurrence déloyale de pêcheurs étrangers, les pêcheurs de Grand Gaube, Grand Baie, au fait de toute l'île, doivent aller toujours plus loin dans la mer pour garantir une prise qui n'est jamais garantie. Nous sommes un importateur de poisson avec 2 millions de kilomètres carrés de zones maritimes. Nous ne sommes pas autosuffisants en produits de mer.

M. le président, je pense plus particulièrement à l'accord de pêche signé avec l'Union européenne. Vous savez, après avoir raclé leur propre mer, les pêcheurs européens sont autour de l'Afrique et de l'océan Indien. Ils imposent déjà des accords de pêche contre les programmes de coopération technique avec nos pays. Nous devrions savoir ce que nous rapportent ces contrats. Profitent-ils vraiment aux pêcheurs qui sont les premiers concernés ? La transparence concerne, au niveau de la pêche, la pêche qui doit devenir une industrie importante chez nous.

Poursuivons. Le programme fait la part belle aux secteurs agricoles. De la même façon, nous sommes un pays agricole et nous devons importer beaucoup de vivres. M. le président, dans le programme au menu, une agro-industrie moderne est en ligne de mire, une meilleure sécurité alimentaire. J'aimerais attirer votre attention et l'attention de la Chambre sur ces milliers de lopins de terre abandonnés aux quatre coins de l'île. Un cadre du ministère de l'agriculture a pris le temps et le plaisir aussi d'estimer qu'une surface d'environ 5000 arpents, peut-être que cela ne nous parle pas de ce que ça veut dire, mais c'est à peu près 10 fois la taille d'une ville comme Rose Hill, est laissée aux mauvaises herbes ou transformée en déchetterie. Nous connaissons les raisons de cet abandon : taille marginale de ces parcelles, aucune garantie de rentabilité, pénurie de main-d'œuvre.

C'est paradoxal que nous importions des vivres comme la pomme de terre, l'oignon, de l'ail alors que de larges surfaces sont abandonnées. Renversons, M. le président, la tendance en créant des conditions cadres pour ramener les familles d'agriculteurs dans les champs, pour encourager les coopératives : achat des semences et d'intrants groupés et prix garanti à la vente, prêts bancaires facilités.

M. le président, le programme met l'emphasis sur une croissance qui repose sur des investissements, sur une productivité accrue et appelle à la diversification économique, mais la planification économique devra aussi mettre la question de la main-d'œuvre, qualifiée ou non qualifiée, à l'agenda. Ce n'est un secret pour personne que des entrepreneurs de tous les secteurs vivent le cauchemar de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre. Faute de bras et de cerveaux, des entreprises sont contraintes de réduire les activités. Dans un contexte de pénurie mondiale de main-d'œuvre, la situation ne va pas s'améliorer chez nous.

M. le président, dans l'immédiat et à court terme, nous colmatons les brèches en important des Bangladais, des Malgaches et autres travailleurs. À long terme, il nous faudra passer à autre chose.

Merci pour votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Can I now call upon hon. Beehook on the floor.

(6.01 p.m.)

Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I stand before you today to commend your election and the election of Madam Speaker as the beacon of this 8th National Assembly of the Republic of Mauritius. Your appointment symbolises the dawn of an era where the people's desire for change in the conduct of the matters of this House is finally realised. This hallowed hall of democracy now regains the solemnity it once held, deserving once again to be called an august Assembly.

Gone are the days of the loudspeaker's relentless barrage, assaulting the ears of our honourable members. No longer will the menacing index finger haunt this House, a sordid finger that once loomed like a razor-sharp finger knife haunts in the darkest kitchen of our nation's history; *la fameuse Lakwizinn* poised to silence the legitimate voices raised in this Assembly, but now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and under the guidance of Madam Speaker, we can look forward to a future where the voices of the people are heard and respected. And where the true spirit of democracy can flourish. The enlightened people of Mauritius, *le peuple admirable comme le dit si bien l'honorable Paul Bérenger*, have buried the loudspeaker not in the dustbin, but in the Mare Chicose of history *et même Mare Chicose ne voulait pas de lui. Elle s'est immolée pour ne pas engloutir cette nouvelle espèce d'ordure toxique pour la démocratie.*

M. le président, avant de poursuivre mon discours, je saisis cette occasion pour exprimer ma profonde gratitude. D'abord au Premier ministre et leader de l'Alliance du

Changement pour m'avoir accordé l'investiture dans cette élection qui n'était ni plus ni moins qu'une noble lutte pour notre deuxième indépendance. Comme l'a dit Nelson Mandela, la liberté ne peut être atteinte que par ceux qui sont prêts à être des champions de la cause de la liberté.

Ensuite, j'exprime ma reconnaissance envers les électeurs de la circonscription no 9, Flacq-Bon Accueil, qui m'ont honoré de leur confiance avec 27 605 votes lors des dernières législatives. Je vous suis éternellement reconnaissant. Enfin, je rends hommage à ma famille, à mes proches, à mes amis, à mes deux colistiers et à mes bienfaiteurs qui m'ont soutenu lorsque je n'étais personne. Plus particulièrement, je dédie cette reconnaissance à mon ange gardien, mon défunt père, qui, malgré nos modestes origines familiales, rêvait toujours que je devienne un jour parlementaire. Merci papa. Ce discours est un hommage à tous ceux et celles qui ont cru en moi et qui ont contribué à ce moment qui m'est historique.

M. le président, à peine Son Excellence, le Président de la République, Dharambeer Gokhool, avait entamé la lecture éloquente de son discours-programme intitulé 'Un pont vers l'avenir' que je ne pouvais m'empêcher d'imaginer ce pont de l'avenir. C'est précisément sur ce pont que repose le poids de l'espoir du peuple mauricien qui a renversé le MSM et ses acolytes lors des législatives du 10 novembre dernier. La colère du peuple s'est transformée en une force puissante comparable à celle d'un Kärcher pour nettoyer ce pays de la cohorte d'incompétents qui nous gouvernait depuis 10 ans.

L'héritage du MSM se compare à ses piliers en bois du pont vers l'avenir infesté de termites orange. Ce n'est pas une coïncidence. Éternellement affamés, extérieurement solides, ses piliers sont en réalité évidés et fragilisés. Ses piliers fragiles reposent sur un chantier en ruine, honteusement masqués par des mensonges à répétition. Ils ont menti de manière répétitive, même ici, dans ce temple de la démocratie. Quelles pitreries le Premier ministre sortant et son ministre des Finances n'ont-ils pas proférées ici. La dernière en date : je laisse derrière moi une assise solide, c'est à mourir de honte. Je dirais même que c'est à *douner* de honte. En voici quelques exemples : Le produit intérieur brut (PIB) a été artificiellement gonflé de 5,6 % en 2023 et de 6,5 % en 2024.

Notre chère roupie a perdu 46 % de sa valeur face au dollar américain, entraînant une flambée vertigineuse du coût de la vie. L'inflation a obéré le budget des ménages comme jamais auparavant. Les produits essentiels, tels que la sardine, *manze mizer*, *manze dimounn pov*, nourriture des plus démunis, sont passés de R 12 à R 32 sous le MSM. Une boîte de

Glenrick est passée de R 42 à R 112. Notre fameux fromage cheddar Kraft est passé de R 47 à R 101,40. Enfin, M. le président, notre cher *corned mutton*, *Watsonia* si par malheur le MSM était resté au pouvoir, croyez-moi, aurait dû être acheté non pas au supermarché, mais chez le bijoutier.

Les Mauriciens l'auraient rangé non pas dans leurs buffets, mais dans l'argenterie de leurs salons. Le *corned mutton* est passé de R 72 à R 174,41, soit une augmentation, tenez-vous bien, de 381 %. Pour terminer avec ce bal de mensonges du MSM, comment pouvais-je faire l'impasse sur ce qu'ils ont fait de la Banque de Maurice ? Une abomination ! De joyau de notre économie, le MSM a transformé notre banque centrale en planche à billets pour tantôt financer son budget, tantôt remplir sa dette, et tantôt la convertir en *ATM*, guichets automatiques pour distribuer de l'argent aux petits copains de la cuisine, tels que Pulse Analytics, l'éternel Maradiva, Ambre et tant d'autres. Ce programme gouvernemental vient rendre ses lettres de noblesse à la Banque de Maurice.

Voilà comment le vampire MSM a sucé le sang des ménages mauriciens. Winston Churchill l'avait si bien dit : le courage, c'est d'aller de l'avant malgré la peur. C'est pour cela, M. le président, qu'il faut saluer l'audace, l'ingéniosité et le courage de ce gouvernement. Un gouvernement intrépide qui, bravant ce chantier de ruine, nous a gratifié d'un programme de gouvernement 2025-2029 qui s'attaque astucieusement non seulement aux problèmes urgents, mais qui englobe une vision ambitieuse à moyen et long terme.

J'aimerais également saluer le leadership de cette alliance. Permettez-moi de préciser : qu'est-ce qu'on n'a pas dit du Premier ministre et du Premier ministre adjoint ? On les a traînés dans la boue, mais nous avons en face de nous deux personnes, si vous me permettez, l'honorable Bérenger, l'un a vaincu un cancer, l'autre a vaincu le *COVID*. Certes, pour une raison, pour une cause. Et cette cause, justement, c'était pour sauver la patrie, pour sauver ce pays !

Il y a un proverbe en mi-punjabi et en hindi qui dit : *Jako rakhe saiyan, maar sake na koi*. Si Dieu est de votre côté, rien ne peut vous arriver. Et c'est justement la voix du peuple, soit la voix de Dieu, qui a fait de l'un le Premier ministre et de l'autre le Premier ministre adjoint. M. le président, ce programme de gouvernement est fondé sur une idéologie solide. Il dit la vérité au peuple. Ce n'est pas un assemblage de mesures superficielles comme l'étaient les deux précédents programmes sous le règne du MSM.

Ce programme concerne sérieusement l'avenir des générations à venir. Pour ce débat, je me suis appesanti sur le thème de la prospérité, qui, même si elle n'est pas explicitement mentionnée dans le discours programme, en est le cœur. La prospérité, *barakat*, comme on le dit chez nous à la campagne. C'est la jauge pour évaluer le bonheur, le progrès, la joie et la satisfaction dans le cheminement de la vie. Ce programme vise à rétablir la notion de prospérité qui est si chère. Avec votre permission, si je peux continuer...

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, I have been made to understand that there is an agreement between hon. Members that backbenchers will have 10 minutes and the Ministers will have 20 minutes. So, I do not want to stop you, but please...

Mr Beechook: No, it is fine.

The Deputy Speaker: ...try to abide by the agreement that you have reached. Thank you.

Mr Beechook: M. le président, je terminerai cet exposé en disant qu'on aura réussi à la fin de ce mandat sur tous les plans, mais si on rate, si nous ne gagnons pas la guerre face à cette nébuleuse du trafic de stupéfiants, si nous ne renforçons pas la lutte contre la toxicomanie pour sauver les enfants de notre République, on aura échoué sur tous les plans. Ce même peuple qui nous porte aujourd'hui dans son cœur, dans son estime, ne nous le pardonnera jamais.

On ne peut pas se permettre d'avoir deux millions de touristes d'un côté et des enfants de la République drogués gisants au même sol par ici et par là. Dans l'île Maurice moderne et prospère que nous ambitionnons tous de bâtir au gré du travail et au prix de notre sacrifice, on ne peut plus continuer avec cette culture d'impunité *made by MSM* face aux diaboliques trafiquants de drogue aux aguets.

Je suis certain, M. le président, qu'ensemble, nous vaincrons *as one people as one nation*.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Jhummun!

(6.15 p.m.)

Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me from the very outset thank everyone here for their contribution towards the overwhelming, yet anticipated, victory in the last general elections. While each of us did contribute to that victory, we cannot undermine the fact that the hon.

Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party was the architect, firstly in constituting the *Alliance du Changement*, and secondly, in driving us all towards that end.

While some were sceptical, he knew what he was doing. Without any dint of doubt, we all believed that he was *l'homme de la situation*. *M. le président*, I would like to thank the Leader of the Labour Party, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, for having given me the opportunity to represent Constituency No. 13 and to serve the country. My parents brought me up; you brought me here, and I will always be grateful to you.

Of course, my journey from a sugar camp to this august Assembly would not have been possible without free education. So, I salute *chacha* Ramgoolam for the game-changing initiative since the 1970s.

M. le président, we are often told that *grand est celui qui se tombe et se relève*. My message to the newly elected members, including me, is this: when doubts haunt you, when disappointment stares you in the face and you see not one ray of hope on the horizon, think of the *dominer* endured by the Leader of the Labour Party, and immediately, you will begin to feel stronger in the midst of overwhelming sorrow that you may be. I have never seen someone so brave, bold and daring. The saying goes, When the going gets tough, the tough get going, and you are the toughest of all, Sir. However, at the same time, this reminds us that nothing is permanent in life; *la roue finit par tourner*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I used to tell my students that when we are in a predicament, we need to ask three questions: first, where are we now? Second, where do we want to be? And third, how do we reach there? So, I will stick to this paradigm. Where are we now? I will be neither pessimistic nor optimistic but rather realistic in saying that never in the history of this country has so much harm been done in so little time. If you go through the PESTEL model – politically, economically, socially, technologically, environmentally and even legally – they have failed *lamentablement* in all fronts.

I do not want to get too technical, but the document State of the Economy, published on 10 December 2024 and presented by the hon. Prime Minister, gave a true picture of where we are now. Mismanagement of the economic affairs of the country like never before led to low economic growth, the weakest rupee ever against the USD, and a trade deficit that stood very high; inflation peaked, fuelled by the continuous depreciation of the rupee *vis-à-vis* the USD.

Regarding unemployment, there is a mismatch between the competencies and job vacancies with a serious problem of underemployment and disguised unemployment. Where

are we now? *M. le président*, as of last year, the public sector debt stood at nearly Rs560 billion, representing approximately 84% of our GDP. This means that we are living beyond our means. In other words, we are living dangerously. This is the legacy of the previous government upon us, our children and yet-to-be-born ones. The MSM-led government favoured politically congruent policies over economically correct ones, and this was the perfect recipe for their failure.

M. le président, le comble dans tout cela, c'est qu'ils osent dire : *a kot monn fote*. The most infamous phrase in the Mauritian context, a kot tonn fote? I just hope that they are listening to us. You failed by the postponement of municipal elections, killing democracy and instilling a culture of despotism – we just witnessed the *Moustass Leaks* under your government, and this boomeranged upon them. You failed by allowing the rupee to depreciate, prices to rise, and not reducing petrol prices even though there was public outcry. You failed by dilapidating public money and the reserves of the central bank.

Pour reprendre la phrase du DPM, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, ils sont partis avec la caisse, and you say *a kot noun fote*? You have failed to ensure regular water supply. You promised 24/7, not us; you failed to prevent flooding even though billions of public money were spent on drains; you failed to give houses even though you promised 8000 houses to the poor, and you dare to say *a kot zot inn fote*. They failed in the case of Wakashio, which was an environmental disaster; they failed during COVID-19, where they made millions on the back of a helpless population with the infamous scandal of Pack & Blister, Molnupiravir, and Hyperpharm, to mention a few. *M. le président*, they failed to *kass lerin mafia la drog* instead, more drugs were entering the country than ever before. They failed to restore law and order and to get the trust and confidence of the population. Instead, people started to mistrust the very institution which is there to protect them, the Police Force.

Surtout le Striking Team, which instils a *climat de terreur* in the country. They failed because of their mismanagement; many public bodies and institutions ended up in precarious financial situations – I will mention STC, CEB, METRO, CWA, Air Mauritius, and the Casino of Mauritius. I remember once a former Prime Minister said, it is the only country in the world where casinos are making losses, and they did make losses for the last 10 years.

M. le président, on ne peut pas oublier le cas de Betamax, BAI, Patel Engineering, Silver Bank and même la State Bank. All these cost billions of public money, and you are all aware there is no such thing as state money; there is only public money. It is our money that

they have dilapidated. They failed because they did everything to kill horse racing in Mauritius, to kill the MTC and to protect their biggest stakeholder, which is known to everyone.

M. le président, never in the history of this country has so much harm been done to the educational sector in so little time. It is a pity today to see what they have done to free education, which was the greatest gift from SSR to this nation. With the extended programmes, where less than 4% – yes, 4 out of 100 only – made it to the mainstream. On one hand, we have academies and co-education; on the other hand, we have regional schools where there are only boys or girls. We are indeed in a real mess. *Le collège Royal de Curepipe, de Port Louis, le QEC et le collège Dr Maurice Curé, jadis une fierté, sont aujourd'hui méconnaissables.*

M. le président, due to time constraint, I know, it is not possible to go to all the *frasques* of the previous government, like honourable, my good friend, Rajesh Bhagwan, whimsically said that they will have to move with helmets to protect themselves. But my friend, let me tell you that Mauritians are nice people; they will not throw stones. Instead, the Mauritians did an extraordinary thing in an extraordinary way when they all went out with their pen, *s'il vous plait*, and sanctioned the previous government.

It is commonly said that in politics you can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time. So, the writings were on the wall, and this is what happened. *Heureusement pour nous, M. le Premier ministre, grâce à vos efforts ces derniers temps, Moody's a donné la note Baa3 investment grade, mais bien sûr avec des avertissements.*

Where do we want to go? This is spelt out in the Government Programme 2025-2029: A Bridge to the Future. A cursory glance at the document will give an idea of the new economic model and new social order we are planning to have in order to shape a new destiny for our country. It is there for everyone who wants to consult, and it has already been scrutinised by my colleagues. It is very concise and limits itself to the essentials; it could not have been better given the precarious state of the economy.

M. le président, where do we want to go? Business as usual is no more an option; only fools expect different results by doing more of the same. We are not foolish. The fools have been 'collected' – *pour reprendre ce que le loudspeaker avait dit*, 'collect this man' – and

taken, as my friend just said, to Mare Chicose, and two months before, the loudspeaker went there to inspect Mare Chicose, and today he is a sirdar, there inspecting these.

What we need, *M. le président, je vais terminer*, is an independent central bank with clear monetary policy objectives and economic imperatives, not the one like under the previous government which was at the mercy of the Minister of Finance. We need diversification, diversification and diversification. This is the way forward. We need the right balance between equity and efficiency. Pay raises are very important, but people must be encouraged to earn their income; they have to be productivity-based. We have to promote productivity and not passivity. To prevent brain-drain, *la meritocratie doit primer*. We must get rid of nepotism and put the right man in the right place, such as for the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Attorney General, and the Governor of the Central Bank, to mention a few.

Procurement and tender exercises have to be made more transparent. Use of information technology can be very useful. Education is the key to success. We can say that it is now in safe hands. However, the present system is doing more harm than good. We need a gradual phasing out of the academies in their present form. Either co-education is good or it is bad. We need uniformity for all colleges, not two systems within the same system.

While we are in favour of three credits to promote to HSC, we must not kill elitism, which holds our future. We cannot do without discipline, discipline and discipline. Yes, *M. le président*, fostering a positive environment in schools and creating safe, inclusive, supportive and fair school climates call for maintaining a high level of discipline both inside and outside schools. It has never been so good to be young as it is today. Youngsters never had it so good. Yet, they are making a misuse of the internet, mobile phones and social media.

M. le président, je vais terminer...

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please!

Mr Jhummun: *On ne peut pas être enceinte à moitié ! Soit on l'est, soit on ne l'est pas !* We cannot stay on the fence; we cannot play safe. We need bold, firm actions against indiscipline and the use of mobile phones on school premises!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Okay.

Mr Jhummun: *Je vais terminer...*

(Interruptions)

Je voudrais faire une petite remarque. During our school days, we were given bread, cheese, milk and dried fruits. Today, our kids are only served a *dipin sek*. This is food for thought for everyone. I am just asking whether it is not high time to give a full meal only to those in need. If we know it really, if we mean what is inclusion, we want to move from social exclusion to social integration.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I give you another 30 seconds.

Mr Jhummun: I conclude. I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Jhummun: So, to conclude...

The Deputy Speaker: 30 seconds.

Mr Jhummun: So, to conclude, I do not believe in half-full or half-empty glass theories. I believe in either full or empty glasses. The previous government emptied our glasses to the lees. Our government and particularly our Prime Minister has the daunting task of filling them so that the people of this country lead a fulfilling life; I would even say fulfilling days.

The purpose of this government, which has been massively supported by the people, is to be a government full of purpose for the people. I would reiterate what my friends said –

Let Mauritius be Mauritius again. Long live Mauritius!

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member. Hon. Narsinghen, you have the floor!

(6.30 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr H. Narsinghen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the

people of Mauritius, especially the voters of No. 13, for their trust and support. At the same time, I would like to thank the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Labour Party, hon. Navin Ramgoolam, for his unwavering trust and the Leaders of the *Alliance du Changement*, especially hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger but also Mr Richard Duval and Ashok Subron for their team spirit and commitment, and also all the MPs and multiple collaborators who helped us during the electoral campaign. My thanks also go to my family, especially my wife and my late father, who was more passionate than me about politics.

All the Members of Parliament supporting this government here have been able to emancipate Mauritius following the unprecedented state capture. So, this evening, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will focus on two important points. One is on democracy and human rights, and the second point, if I have time, is on economic diplomacy. So, at the time, let me remind everybody that a landslide victory of 60-0 places more responsibility and pressure on all the Members. And especially on the two charismatic leaders, historic leaders, the Hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Prime Minister, and the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Paul Bérenger.

As for me, this evening, it is with an unwavering sense of duty – a sense of duty is very important – that I address you today. And in fact, our nation stands at historic crossroads where the echoes of the past – we have to understand the past, as hon. Mohamed said – but also the imperatives of the present and the boundless potential of the future, how all this would merge to forge a transformative destiny.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the people of Mauritius have spoken with clarity and conviction, entrusting this government with an unequivocal mandate to initiate courageous reforms that will shape a prosperous, just and resilient society. When MPs are elected, when people are elected, they should not only think about sticking to power. We have to take bold measures to bring the reforms. After 10 November, the newly elected Members, spearheaded by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and other Ministers, have, in fact, a twist with destiny. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a twist with destiny. So, we cannot disappoint the people. It is very important for all the Members present here to remember that we cannot disappoint the people.

So, looking at the first 64 days of the new era, we can feel that the people can breathe the fresh air of liberty, and liberty is very important. The presidential address is one of the best. The address reflects what we have in the political manifesto, and this is very important,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we cannot fool the people. We had a political manifesto, and we have been able to transform what is found in the political manifesto in the presidential address.

So, first of all, I would like to briefly comment on parliamentary democracy. So, what we are seeing today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the way you are conducting the debate, the way the Speaker has been conducting the debate, is a lesson. We have learnt of the outstanding work done by people, other Speakers like Sir Harilal Vaghjee, Sir Kailash Purryag and so many others, but unfortunately, at one time, from 2014 to 2024, this august Parliament was transformed into a sort of boxing ring, and today, it is really an august National Assembly.

Unfortunately, at the same time, the previous regime did not understand that the Constitution is supreme and, once elected, there is a sort of constitutional right to remain an MP, and the Standing Orders, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, cannot prevail over the Constitution. We witnessed the abusive naming of so many MPs, like hon. Paul Bérenger, hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger, hon. Dr. Boolell, hon. Shakeel Mohamed and so many others, and also hon. Patrick Assirvaden. And in fact, our Parliament lived one of its bleakest periods. I hammer on that, one of its bleakest periods in history. So therefore, what I propose is that we must revisit Section 32 of the Constitution but also the Standing Orders of the National Assembly to avoid such abuse which took place from 2014 to 2024. *Du jamais vu*, such a type of abuse!

So, this time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and also addressed to Madam Speaker, your benevolent leadership and also characterised by neutrality and impartiality. The composure of both of you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and Madam Speaker, has given back the prestige to our Parliament. Hopefully, our people will be proud of your speakership, both for you and Madam Speaker.

Now, let me just refer to the sort of dictatorship where the previous government took us. For the past decade, our nation has faced significant setbacks in democracy, human rights, governance, and, unfortunately, institutions meant to safeguard justice and equity were weakened, allowing political interference to erode public trust. Transparency was compromised, and the fundamental rights of our people were challenged. The independence of key institutions, including the judiciary – I lay emphasis on this – and regulatory bodies, because it is important to make a clear distinction between regulatory bodies and normal parastatal bodies, were severely undermined, affecting governance and accountability.

Citizens faced increasing restrictions on their right to privacy with intrusive surveillance policies, as explained by the Prime Minister this morning. Also, there was possible sniffing which breached the fundamental freedom of our citizens.

We cannot forget the attempt to undermine the role of the DPP, and the amendments which were brought to the IBA and the ICTA are still fresh in the minds of the people. The freedom of expressions of citizens was jeopardised, just to mention a few among the multiple breaches of democracy and human rights by the previous regime. Planting of drugs also, we should not forget, was used to quell some Members of the Opposition and members of the civil society. So, let us hope now that the police and the judiciary will shed light; just like in the case of Kistnen, people want justice to be done. We should not forget that rating agencies and international agencies on human rights like V-Dem, *Reporters sans frontières*, Mo Ibrahim, the State Department of the US, etc., downgraded Mauritius. A paradise island, once a cradle of democracy, became a dictatorship led by Mr Pravind Jugnauth and the MSM.

What can we do now to remedy the situation? In his presidential address, the President has proposed to set up a constitutional commission. Here, it is important to understand why it is important to set up a commission because government itself cannot be in a situation of conflict of interest. So, it will be good to have an independent commission with independent experts and possibly with some Members of the House who will form part of that important commission.

At the same time, we must not reinvent the wheels, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, the proposal that came out from the Labour-MMM in 2014 was not bad. In fact, we can polish up to improve it. Other informal groups like the one led by Mr Jack Bizlall, Dr. Milan Meetarbhan, the late Joseph Tsang Mang Kin, Jocelyn Chan Low, Mr Laridon and myself have come up with interesting proposals, and so has *Rezistans ek Alternativ*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now speak briefly about the need to...

The Deputy Speaker: You have only one minute.

Mr Narsinghen: One minute, okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Very briefly!

Mr Narsinghen: So, let me speak briefly about the importance of electing a president. A new way of electing a president is very important. We are in the context of a parliamentary democracy. We are not in a context of a semi-presidential or presidential regime. So, therefore, having a broad electoral college is important because the President cannot be a stooge person of the Executive. So, it is important to allow the President to be elected on the basis of a broad electoral college.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also important to reform the electoral system. Let me remind our Members that, yes, I have criticised the BLS system, but if we want to reform, we have to know how to subsume the BLS system into the new reform which we are going to propose.

Last point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to comment on human rights and so many other things, but with the constraint of time...

The Deputy Speaker: You will have other opportunities!

Mr Narsinghen: I just want to mention local democracy. It is important to come up with reforms to amend the Constitution and to make sure that no government can postpone elections. Referring to local democracy, I just want to highlight also that we have to ensure that local democracy means that all constituencies are treated in the same way. Equitable treatment is important because, in a way, I have to say it quite frankly that the South, including Constituencies No. 11, 12, 13 and 14 have been, to coin the phrase of Frantz Fanon, a sort of *damnés de la terre*, the wretched of the Earth. So, I will make a special appeal to all the ministers and all the parliamentarians to make sure that there is a sort of equitable distribution in terms of infrastructural development for the distribution of jobs and other types of permits, of course, on the basis of merit, on the basis of qualifications and experience. This is very important.

My last point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

The Deputy Speaker: Of course, you have a last point.

Mr Narsinghen: My conclusion...

The Deputy Speaker: Your conclusion, yes!

Mr Narsinghen: My conclusion is that we have witnessed a sort of Arab Spring – quiet, no violence. So, we cannot betray the people. We have to work and work and work with dedication. This is very important. Also, we have to govern with humility and compassion.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Hon. Minister Pentiah, you have 20 minutes!

(6.44 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr L. Pentiah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is indeed a singular honour for me to stand before this House today to deliver my first speech in the context of the Government Programme 2025-2029. As an elected Member of the National Assembly for Constituency No. 7, Piton-Rivière du Rempart, following what my hon. friends have said earlier on, the landslide victory of *l'Alliance du Changement*. This resounding *vox populi* clearly demonstrates that indeed the voice of God is loud and clear for our country to be governed by a responsible and honest class of politicians. This government shall indeed serve the people of the country in the manner and with the respect it deserves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me please, at the very outset, congratulate Madam Speaker and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for your election as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and reiterate the trust that has been placed upon your capable shoulders to conduct the affairs of this august Assembly with fairness and within the procedures of the Standing Orders.

I also wish to very highly acclaim the Leader of the House, our Prime Minister, for his personal achievement as well as his resilience in the face of significant challenges. I have witnessed some personally, displaying – the word I chose, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir – ‘*indomptable*’ as a lion. But then, again, the computer refused it.

It gave me an ‘indomitable spirit’ that has allowed him to continue leading with both strength and vision. His tenacity to persevere during difficult times, which we have all witnessed in the hands of the previous government, and his ability to remain resolute even in

the most dire circumstances are an inspiration for us all. Through his leadership, he has shown that with determination and perseverance, even the greatest obstacles can be surmounted.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to join in to also extend my heartfelt gratitude to our valued partners of the Alliance du Changement: the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) led by hon. Deputy Prime Minister Paul Béranger, *emblématique en son nom, en sa capacité et en ce qu'il a fait pour le pays et sa contribution*; the Nouveaux Démocrates; and comrades of Rezistans ek Alternativ for their support of this shared vision.

Last but certainly not least, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people of my Constituency No.7, Piton/Rivière du Rempart, for their trust and confidence in me for believing in my conviction. Their unwavering support is the driving force behind my commitment to serve them with dedication and integrity. I also wish to extend my sincere thanks to my two esteemed colleagues in this journey, whose collaboration and partnership have been invaluable. Together, we will work tirelessly to ensure the progress and wellbeing of our constituency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme 2025-2029: 'A Bridge to the Future', as presented by His Excellency the President of the Republic, contains all essential ingredients to redress our country, especially after having suffered under the dictatorship of unpatriotic political leaders for over a decade.

The measures announced reflect the philosophy along which this elected government is determined to give a renewed dynamism to the way the affairs of our country will be conducted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I quote –

“The rate of criminality of a country is nothing else but an indication of its economy in crisis.” – Fidel Castro.

First and foremost, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this government is firmly committed to redressing the economy of our country with clear, sharp, expert economic measures while at the same time ensuring the constitutional powers of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in order to foster effective measures to address issues of criminality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, drugs are one such major issue. To merely say that the scourge of drugs has reached uncontrollable limits would be an understatement. *M. le président, avec le gouvernement précédent, les dealers sont devenus des barons et ont eux aussi bénéficié des promotions.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what have we not seen? Que Dieu nous protège pour que nous ne voyions plus les barons de drogue voyager en classe affaires aux frais du peuple. Pour que nous ne voyions plus les barons de la drogue prendre le lac sacré en otage et gare aux gens avec la responsabilité ministérielle qui ont saccagé la sainteté du Ganga Talao au vu et au su des dirigeants du pays d'alors. Le bonhomme se tapait l'estomac en se disant que c'était son gouvernement qui avait institué une commission d'enquête sur la drogue et, à la surprise, comme a dit le DPM, et son impératrice et lui-même, les doigts ont été pointés vers lui, son gouvernement, son entourage et surtout son supplier de *kamaron* et *bred songe*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what have we not seen from *tractopelle* to gas cylinders and Wakashio with fishmongers travelling in police helicopters while families have suffered, kids have died, and youngsters have derailed while filling custodial centres with victims consuming a panoply of substances supplied by the unscrupulous scourge of drugs walking free? Beware: this government is coming for you!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, NATReSA, recklessly dismantled by the previous government, will rise from its ashes, and the committee managing the new NATReSA will be carefully chosen by no one else than the Prime Minister himself. The concern of this government is to go to its people suffering from addiction. To cater for them through proper and effective rehabilitation programmes and to ensure effective reinsertion in the bosom of their families and the society. This is the programme of a responsible government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while the Police Force will be valued and properly equipped, there will be transparent recruitment, training and promotion procedures, thereby ensuring competence, fairness and confidence in the Police Force, which should get the respect it deserves as it stands to protect our children, our elders, our families, *entre autres*, and the people of our country. The Police Force will be equipped with modern technologies and a proper legal framework, and the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill is going to be a reality in the hands of this Prime Minister and Leader of this House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our country's progress since independence has long been driven by the indelible contribution of our public officers. The individual and collective

contributions have steadily driven us forward on the path towards prosperity and social justice over decades.

However, our public service needs to move towards embracing a modern, adaptive leadership style that fosters innovation, collaboration and responsiveness. The needs of the people as per the bold measures announced in the Government Programme which clearly set out unprecedented administrative reforms. We are indeed living in an era of unmatched technological advancements and complex global challenges that have a tremendous impact on everyday facets of our lives.

Our public service must evolve to meet the aspirations of our population, which demands round-the-clock, people-centric services, greater transparency, efficiency and accountability. Today we reaffirm our commitment to transforming the public sector into a responsive, transparent and people-centric institution that serves as a bedrock to spearhead the audacious reforms outlined in the Government Programme such that the public service positions itself as a driver of national progress.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the heart of this transformation is the Public Sector Reforms Bill which my Ministry will spearhead. This landmark bill reflects the government's dedication to modernising the public service, fostering good governance and transparency and ensuring accountability at all levels. It is a bold step forward providing a comprehensive framework to guide reform initiatives and lay the foundation for a future-ready public sector. The bill will lay emphasis on regulatory oversight, give legal status to key documents, and introduce mechanisms to ensure statutory compliance with reforms and transformation initiatives. My Ministry will no longer simply make recommendations for changes; it will now have statutory authority to enforce them, ensuring reforms are implemented consistently and effectively across all public institutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the previous government, led by the MSM, we saw a systematic and systemic pattern of discrimination. Doors to employment and contracts or whatnot were wide open for '*nou ban*', while for '*ban la*' the doors remained firmly shut, regardless of their competence or experience. This inequality became even more glaring when those already in employment often, '*ban la*', were subjected to harassment, victimisation and unfair dismissal.

One particularly troubling example from November 2015 was the recruitment of 10 doctors who had close ties with government members. Who knows not the case of Doctor

V.J., a PhD holder in Economics with extensive lecturing experience at the MIE, who was unjustly denied a position despite a favourable court verdict!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is just a few of many instances where merit was sidelined in favour of political favouritism, further eroding the public's trust in our institutions. It is my duty to also point out that the previous irresponsible government violated all principles of ethics and good governance.

M. le président, le gouvernement précédent a osé recruter et donner les promotions que quelques jours avant les *writs* des élections d'octobre 2024 à pas moins de 426 personnes, qui ont été recrutées dans les services publics ou promues pendant la période clairement indiquée par des circulaires du PSC, LGSC et DFSC que toute décision devait être gelée en ce sens.

This can no longer continue. The people have spoken and overtly shown that it demands '*changement*'. This government will respond to the demands of the people. What the people want is simple – a government that listens, a government that acts in the best interest of all its people, and a government with courage, competence and convictions. M. le président, et certainement le peuple, a dit non au petit bonhomme souvent référé à juste titre comme '*Pinocchio*'.

The dire need for change is not just a call for new leadership. It is a call for a return to fairness, transparency and equal opportunity which this government has set as its mission statement in its programme as enunciated by His Excellency, the President of our country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is worth noting that the existing Performance Management System, the PMS as we call it in the public sector, framework will be reviewed and aligned to reflect the new vision of government for an effective and efficient public sector. In line with this philosophy, a more holistic approach towards performance management in the public sector will be adopted where the focus will be on both individual and organisational performance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new training institute will be operational in the days to come to cater for training and capacity and capability building. The institute will provide quality training tailored to the needs and requirements of public officers serving the people of our country. The *mot d'ordre* at the centre of it – serving the nation. The institute will be a state-of-the-art infrastructure equipped with modern facilities and will evolve and serve as a regional centre of excellence. It will operate with a strategic plan conceived and constituted from experts' input both from our country and from abroad while linkages are being

developed and encouraged with international institutions from India, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Malaysia, and Rwanda, to name only a few.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, restoring trust in public institutions is one of the greatest challenges we face. Over the years, there has been quasi-complete erosion of trust fuelled by inefficiency, lack of transparency and unequal opportunities. This government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is committed to addressing these issues head-on to enable our institutions to function at their optimum.

Furthermore, as the Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms, I am committed to ensuring that these reforms are implemented effectively and that they deliver tangible benefits for both public officers and the people of our country.

Let us embrace this opportunity to make a difference. Let us commit to upholding the values of transparency, fairness and integrity in all that we do. Together, we can lay the foundation for a brighter, more prosperous future for our country. As we move forward with confidence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us work together, united in purpose, to transform our civil service into a beacon of trust, innovation and service-centred institution that inspires and meets the aspirations of generations to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, long live Mauritius in peace, justice and liberty. I thank you.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, Madam Speaker will now take over the Chair.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated. Yes, hon. Mrs Leu-Govind.

(9.04 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Arts & Culture (Mrs V. Leu-Govind): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Members, before I begin with my speech, first of all, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to Madam Speaker and the Deputy Speaker for their nomination. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr the Honourable Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, my leaders – hon. Kushal Lobine and hon. Richard Duval – for the trust they placed in me.

This is the stark contrast with what I was made to endure by the leader of PMSD. He had a problem with my background; he had a problem with my accent, but look at the turn of history. That traitor has been dismantled politically and thrown out by Mauritians. And, today, I stand before this august Assembly representing my village, Case Noyale, and I am very proud of my roots. For this, I am grateful to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister who defended me and trusted me. It is both an honour and a privilege to serve under their leadership. I am fully committed to fulfilling my responsibilities with dedication and integrity.

I stand before this House today as the elected representative of Constituency No. 14, a constituency that has for long been marginalised, ignored and used as a political pawn by certain individuals who only sought personal gain, but today, after ten years of repression and stagnation, Mauritians have regained control of their country.

Today, after ten years of repression and stagnation, the Mauritians have regained control of their country. They have placed their trust in this government and have great expectations from their government.

Under the previous administration, Mauritius was left in ruins. However, the Government Programme 2025-2029 is bringing new hope and real solutions to many long-standing issues that have affected our people. Madam Speaker, one of the biggest struggles in my constituency is housing. Too many families are living in poor conditions without access to basic infrastructure. Hon. Mohamed has already announced plans for NSLD housing, and I am confident that these homes will be built with proper facilities, unlike what happened in the past.

Madam Speaker, it is deeply shameful and unacceptable that in 2025, families in my constituency are still living without access to basic necessities such as water and electricity. For example, the inhabitants of Coteau Raffin. This is not just an oversight. It is a betrayal of trust. The Leader of the Opposition, hon. Lesjongard, is well aware of this situation, as he was personally involved in helping these families to obtain their plots of land. Yet, when he assumed the position of Minister of Public Utilities, he failed to fulfil the promise made to provide them with access to water and electricity!

How can we allow people to be used for political gain? This must stop, Madam Speaker! Our role is to serve the people, not to exploit their vulnerabilities for short-term political advantage. In some areas, children have to walk three to four kilometres just to catch

a bus to go to school. This is unacceptable! I sincerely thank hon. Minister Osman Mahomed for acting quickly. Within just 3 months, he provided a temporary solution while a long-term plan was being developed. Yet, it is the same constituency where one man ruled for 40 years, the former king of 14, and even served as the Minister of Transport but did nothing to fix the issues!

Healthcare remains a major concern in my constituency. We lack proper healthcare facilities and ambulances in the locality. I want to thank the Hon. Anil Bachoo, who is working tirelessly to improve healthcare services, not only in my constituency but across the island. I am sure he will bring a real solution for these problems. Madam Speaker, for years, the previous government undermined democracy. One of the worst injustices was cancelling municipal elections, taking away the right of citizens to vote for their local representatives. This government is restoring the democracy.

As part of the Government Programme 2025-2029, a new law will guarantee that the municipal and district council elections are held on time so that no government can again violate fundamental rights. Yet, hon. Adrien Duval dared to question municipal elections even though he stood by and watched as the previous government destroyed democracy. Worse, councillors of his party are still sitting in municipal councils. Yet, they have been completely silent since the general election. Where is their voice now?

Let me be clear. In just a few months, people will have their say, and they will send a strong message through the ballot box. I also want to congratulate the hon. minister Woomat and his Junior Minister, hon. Fawzi Allymun, who are bringing reforms to local government to stop the abuse of the power that was happening before.

Under the previous government, civil servants were pressured to either sign the documents or get transferred. Some resisted and they paid a heavy price. I want to publicly thank Madame Bhujohory, my former deputy CEO when I was president at the Black River District Council. She stood by her principles and dared to report Alan Ganoo to the police for organising an illegal concert.

Artists were being denied permits to perform at the cost of her job position. Yes, she got transferred for this action. Where is Alan Ganoo today? In the dustbin of history! This is karma!

Madam Speaker, I have always fought for the rights of artists. Today, I am honoured and grateful to the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Khushal Lobine for entrusting me with the

position of Junior Minister for Arts and Culture. This is a vast and important ministry and I am privileged to work alongside with hon. Mahen Gondeea to restore the dignity of the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

Under this government, the Arts and Culture sector is being strengthened like never before. We are removing bureaucratic delays and creating streamlined systems to make it easier for artists to organise events. For the first time, artists will have official recognition allowing them to access funding, social security and professional opportunities, making cultural spaces more accessible, promoting local talent and ensuring that our artistic heritage is preserved and celebrated.

I also want to thank the members of the *Rezistans ek Alternativ* who have been strong supporters for the art and culture sector and continue to stand by this government's initiatives. This Government is not working in silos. We are collaborating across ministries to bring real impactful changes. I want to thank the Ministry of Agro-Industry, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism, who have been key players in the Île aux Bénitiers project.

I extend a special thanks to my colleague, hon. Richard Duval; hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger; and hon. Fabrice David, as well as the President of the Black River District Council and councillors, who have all worked together to assess the situation on the ground and invest in sustainable development to reduce long-term environmental risks. Along with my two esteemed colleagues, hon. Jugurnauth and hon. Babajee, we will continue to press for real solutions in our constituency.

Madam Speaker, gone are the days of a government that ignores the struggles of the people. Today, we have a government that listens, acts and delivers results.

The Government Programme 2025-2029 is not just a vision. It is a commitment to change. To those who still defend the corrupt, oppressive past, let me remind you, Mauritians remember. They remember the censorship, the erased documents and the injustice they endured. Today, we have a government that truly represents the people. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Junior Minister! Hon. Dr. Boolell!

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, I beg to move for the adjournment of the debates.

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 07 February 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

Adjournment Matters! We are not forcing anybody. Yes, hon. François.

MATTERS RAISED

(7.17 p.m.)

RODRIGUES – AIR MAURITIUS – SEATS NON-AVAILABILITY

Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The issue I am raising tonight, again, is with regard to the present non-availability of seats on Air Mauritius prevailing on the Rodrigues-Mauritius route addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, I spent the whole day from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. with so many of the citizens at Plaine Corail Airport trying to secure a seat to attend to my parliamentary duty on time today. Finally, the personnel thereat this morning, and I do not know with what *koustik*, have been able to uplift me to reach parliament late. I have to say that I appreciate and thank them for their valuable efforts despite situations that are beyond their control.

May I again request the hon. Prime Minister, through his good office, to request Air Mauritius to review and increase its flight schedule on the Rodrigues-Mauritius route, especially during weekends, on Fridays and Mondays, and alternate weekdays?

Actuellement, c'est un calvaire, M. le Premier ministre, pour de nombreux voyageurs qui souhaitent voyager. La queue partout! This should no longer be allowed to continue.

In the same breath, allow me, Madam Speaker, to request the government, through the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry for Rodrigues, and the Ministry of Shipping, to also reconsider and plan for the availability of passenger seats by sea on the MV Mauritius Trochetia, especially during the coming school holidays period. I thank you.

The Prime Minister: I will certainly look into the matter. It is a good sign that more people are travelling. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: It is a good thing he managed to come today.

Yes, hon. Beechook!

(7.19 p.m.)

SALAZIE, PONT BONDIEU & NOUVELLE DECOUVERTE – MOBILE NETWORK PROBLEM

Mr R. Beechook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): I will request the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication, and Innovation if he could urge the telecommunication companies to please ensure that there is a mobile network in the locality of Salazie, Pont Bondieu, and Nouvelle Decouverte because this road is being used by lots of people who, from Constituency No. 9 to Ebene, travel to work. Very often there is no network, and in the absence of a network, very often when they have issues and breakdowns of their vehicles, it is very dangerous for them to stay there without a network—it also extends to La Nicolière, where the people from the North, Constituency No. 7, and Constituency No. 6 use that road very frequently to travel to Ebene and to the centre of the island. Thank you.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Dr. A. Ramtohul): Hon. Beechook, thank you for the note; we are aware of this problem. We are also aware of the fact that there has been an increase in the density of traffic through that road from Pont Bondieu to Salazie, and we have already taken up the matter with the key suppliers of the network across the island. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

At 7.20 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 07 February 2025 at 3.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RODRIGUES – ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER SUB-OFFICE – FIRE OUTBREAK

(No. B/7) 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 fire outbreak that

destroyed the office housing the Electoral Commission in Rodrigues on or about 30 October 2024, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Office of the Electoral Commissioner, information as to the outcome of the –
 - (i) Police Forensic Investigation carried out, and
 - (ii) property damage assessment report, indicating the actions taken to recover lost data and documents pertaining to electors, and
- (b) state if consideration will be given for the construction of a new office.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 30 October 2024, a fire outbreak was reported in a building located in Port Mathurin, administered by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and housing the Sub-Office of the Electoral Commissioner.

According to information obtained from the Office of the Electoral Commissioner, the administrative block, including the Sub-Office of the Electoral Commissioner, was completely destroyed by the fire. All the furniture, office equipment and documents, including forms containing details of all qualified electors in Rodrigues have been destroyed.

Police inquiry, in the matter, is ongoing.

In order to ensure the smooth running of the National Assembly Elections held on 10 November 2024, with the approval of the Island Chief Executive, the Sub-Office of the Electoral Commissioner was temporarily relocated to an office at the English Bay Youth Centre. As at date, the Sub-Office is operating therefrom.

I am further informed by the Office of the Electoral Commissioner that the Office has embarked, since 24 January 2025, on a comprehensive House to House Inquiry exercise for the island of Rodrigues, for the compilation of the Electoral Register for Constituency 21, including filling of a fresh elector's card for each and every existing elector.

As for part (b) of the question, the decision to construct a new building at the site of the fire incident rests with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

POSTMORTEM EXAMINATIONS – YEARLY STATISTICS – COUNTER- EXPERTISE CASES

(No. B/8) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in

regard to Post Mortem Examination, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) relative indications leading to the necessity thereof;
- (b) number of Post Mortem Examination performed yearly over the past five years, and
- (c) number of requests for counter expertise over the past five years, indicating the number –
 - (i) acceded to, and
 - (ii) of such cases revealing different causes of death.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that whenever a case of death has been referred by a public hospital or reported to the Police, a postmortem examination is carried out by the Police Medical Officer in accordance with Section 110 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act.

The reasons for carrying out a postmortem are to –

- (a) determine the cause and manner of death;
- (b) assist in investigations;
- (c) determine types of weapons used to commit offences and time of death;
- (d) collect specimens like drugs and/or poisons for analysis;
- (e) examine skeletal remains for identification purposes, and
- (f) provide valuable insights that often go beyond the immediate circumstances surrounding an individual's death.

As regards part (b) of the question, from January 2020 to 30 January 2025, the number of postmortem examinations performed yearly over the past five years are as follows –

Year	No. of Postmortem Examinations
2020	1,202
2021	1,435
2022	1,458
2023	1,425

2024	1,541
2025 (as at 30 January 2025)	141

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that over the past five years, there have been three requests for counter-expertise. All these three requests have been acceded to. In two cases, the counter-expertise has come up with the same conclusion as to the cause of death certified by the Police Medical Officer. In the remaining one, the counter-expertise report has not yet been communicated to the Police.

As the House is aware, several cases of postmortem examinations that came to light recently have raised serious doubts on the way such examinations are undertaken. I have in mind the case of the late Soopramanien Kistnen and that of late Jacquelin Steeve Juliette. The judicial enquiry held in the case of the death of Kistnen on 04 December 2020 has raised strong doubts on the reliability of the postmortem carried out. Regarding the case of Jacquelin Steeve Juliette, the population took cognisance with a sense of profound disgust, revolt and horror of the conversation between the former Commissioner of Police and the Chief Medical Officer casting further doubts on the credibility of postmortem examination.

Both cases are currently being reviewed.

I intend to ask for assistance from international experts to throw light on these cases.

I wish to inform the House that I have given strict instructions to the new Commissioner of Police that postmortem examinations should be carried out in strict compliance with the protocol existing in countries like the UK.

RECRUITMENT EXERCISES – POST WRIT OF ELECTIONS 2024

(No. B/9) 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 recruitments made after the issue of writ of elections in 2024, he will state the –

- (a) number of recruitments effected in each Ministry, parastatal body and other public services;
- (b) policy established in these circumstances, and
- (c) estimated budget to be incurred for these recruitments.

Reply (The Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms): Clause 1.2 (c) of Article 1 to the Code of Conduct for National Assembly Elections 2024 stipulates that *“holders of public office shall not exercise their office or utilise or allow public resources to be utilised, in such a way as to become the subject of complaint for having been used to further or foster partisan purposes. They should discharge their public duties reasonably, fairly and impartially”*.

Following the dissolution of the National Assembly and issue of the writ of elections on 04 October 2024, the attention of Supervising Officers of Ministries/ Departments and all public entities operating under the aegis of the respective Ministries/Departments was drawn to the provisions of the Code of Conduct and the restrictions regarding the exercise of delegated powers from the Public Service Commission, during pre-election period by way of a Circular dated 08 October 2024 issued by the then Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service.

In addition, these instructions were re-inforced through PSC Circular Notes No. 5 of 2024 and No. 6 of 2024 issued on 08 October 2024 informing Responsible Officers of Ministries/Departments that –

- (i) the PSC, in the context of the National Assembly Elections, decided that the powers delegated to them under section 89 of the Constitution for appointment in respect of specific grades in their respective Ministries/Departments should not be exercised with effect from the date of the Circular, and
- (ii) following the dissolution of the National Assembly, action should be stayed on the issue of all Public Advertisements and/or Circular Notes in respect of filling of vacancies.

I am informed that no recruitment exercise has been carried out after the issue of the writ of elections on 04 October 2024 by the Public Service Commission, the Disciplined Forces Service Commission and the Local Government Service Commission.

I am also informed that following appointment exercise carried out prior to the issue of writ of elections *i.e* from July 2024 to September 2024, 281 officers have joined the public sector after the issue of the writ of elections.

I am duty bound to point out to the House that, in effect, in a matter of days prior to 04 October 2024 *i.e* the date of issue of writ of elections, no less than 281 persons were issued

letters to join the Public Service which took effect post 04 October 2024. That is after the writ of elections were issued.

Furthermore, I am informed that there are 6 cases where offers of appointment were made after the 04 October 2024 as follows –

- (i) Ministries/Departments – 4
- (ii) Parastatal Bodies – 2

I am to inform the House that the Attorney General's Office is being consulted for advice as to the way forward regarding these cases.

Concerning the budgetary expenditure involved, all the posts were funded in the Budget of the respective Ministries/Departments and other public entities concerned.

The list of recruitment exercise which took effect after 04 October 2024 by grades and organisations involved is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

RODRIGUES – COMMODITIES' SHIPMENTS – DEMAND NEEDS

(No. B/10) Ms M. R. Collet (First 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 shipments of key commodities to and from Mauritius and Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the current state of the infrastructure and facilities available to handle the increase in shipment volumes;
- (b) if a survey has been conducted to assess the economic impact of the frequency thereof on businesses and consumers in Rodrigues, and
- (c) the measures being implemented to improve the efficiency and timeliness thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries that the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd operates two vessels for shipment from Mauritius to Rodrigues. The MV Mauritius Trochetia is a passenger-cum-cargo vessel while the MV Peros Banhos is used exclusively for transport of cargo. The normal schedule is to operate three trips by the MV Peros Banhos to Rodrigues on a monthly basis, with an additional trip by the MV Mauritius Trochetia as from this month, based on demand for travel to and from Rodrigues.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that the port area of the Port Mathurin spans around 2.5 hectares, with a yard providing for 295 containers. Additionally, there is an 875 square metre granary shed with a 600 tonnes capacity for storage of food items such as bagged rice, flour, and sugar.

Furthermore, I am informed by the Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries that the cargo capacity of the MV Peros Bahnos is sufficient to meet the average demand of 250 containers per shipment to Rodrigues.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that its Consumer Affairs Unit has gathered feedback from businesses in Rodrigues about challenges in shipping goods from Mauritius, such as limited storage capacity and low ship frequency, particularly during period of festivities. Accordingly, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is encouraging the private sector to enhance its warehousing and storage capacity.

With regard to part (c) of the question, as already informed, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd has planned an additional trip to Rodrigues through the MV Mauritius Trochetia, on a monthly basis, which will enable to also meet any additional demand for the shipment of commodities.

Moreover, I am informed by the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection that discussions are on-going with the State Trading Corporation with regard to the possibility of the construction of storage facilities for MOGAS and Gasoil, especially following the recent shortage of certain commodities during the end of year festivities.

I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that it had, on 30 May 2023, enlisted the services of a consultancy firm to review the Port Master Plan 2016. On 07 October 2024, the updated Port Master Plan was submitted to the Mauritius Ports Authority for consideration.

One of the recommendations pertains to the development of a new 225-metre-long commercial quay in Rodrigues for long-term port capacity expansion. The recommendations contained in the plan will have to be studied in view of the financial implications.

NEW ILLICIT SYNTHETIC DRUGS – FENTANYL, XYLAZINE & NITAZENE – REPORTED CASES & ACTIONS

(No. B/11) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) 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 increasing proliferation of new illicit synthetic drugs in the country, in particular, Fentanyl, Xylazine and Nitazene, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of –

- (a) reported cases of possession thereof from November 2024 as at date, and
- (b) persons found to be under the influence of these drugs, indicating the immediate actions taken/being envisaged in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness that Fentanyl and Xylazine are both listed in Schedule II of the Dangerous Drugs Act. Fentanyl is used mainly to treat patients with chronic severe pain, especially cancer patients or patients suffering from severe pain following surgery, whereas Xylazine is used as a sedative, anaesthetic, muscle relaxant, and analgesic for animals.

Both Fentanyl and Xylazine can be imported by pharmaceutical wholesalers after getting import permits from the Pharmacy Department of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

As for Nitazenes, which are a novel class of synthetic opioids, they are not yet listed in the Dangerous Drugs Act. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has been requested to review the Schedules to the Dangerous Drugs Act, to include Nitazenes.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the period November 2024 to 31 January 2025, one case suspected to be Nitazene was reported to the Police by the Officer of the Customs and Anti-Narcotics Section of the Mauritius Revenue Authority who secured a parcel at the Harbour Post Office on 16 January 2025.

A sample of the substance has been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for examination and a report from the Laboratory is awaited. The case is under enquiry.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, for the period of November 2024 to 31 January 2025, there has been no reported case of person found under the influence of Fentanyl and Xylazine.

I have in my earlier reply to PQ B/4 expressed the commitment of my Government in the fight against drug trafficking and use, as spelt out in the Presidential Address –

1. a Select Committee of the National Assembly will be appointed to address the scourge of drugs, and
2. a National Drug Policy Monitoring and Coordinating Agency will be set up under the chairmanship of Mr Sam Lauthan – Adviser at Prime Minister 's Office.

**SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – NEW AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER
PROJECT**

(No. B/12) 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 New Air Traffic Control Tower Project at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Civil Aviation Department, information as to the –

- (a) current status of the project;
- (b) amount therefor disbursed so far, and
- (c) expected completion date of the project.

(Withdrawn)

**SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DEPARTURE & ARRIVAL COUNTERS –
LONG QUEUES**

(No. B/13) 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 departure and the arrival counters of the Passport and Immigration at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, he will state if he has been made aware of long queues at these counters and, if so, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the urgent remedial measures being envisaged to address same, indicating if consideration will be given for the introduction of a third shift for the Police Officers posted thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of the Passport and Immigration Office that long queues at immigration counters at SSRIA are normally caused by the following main factors –

- i) during peak times, there are simultaneous landing of several wide-body aircrafts at the SSR International Airport within a timeframe of 20-minutes, thereby putting significant pressure on immigration processing;
- ii) the efficient processing of large volumes of passengers has been slowed down due to the aging server of the PIO, and
- iii) shortage of staff leading to fewer immigration counters being operational.

I am further informed that several remedial measures have been put in place to ensure fast processing at immigration counters both during arrival and departure, namely –

- i) Police Officers from the Head Office have been deployed to serve at the Airport;
- ii) additional Police Officers from the Head Office are assigned to the Airport during peak periods, and
- iii) 22 Retired Police Officers have been employed on a contract basis to assist at the Head Office and arrangements are being made to recruit additional Retired Police Officers.

During my previous mandates, I arranged for putting in place a system which ensured a smooth flow of passengers both on departure and arrival. Whenever any problem arose, remedial action was taken promptly.

I am informed that necessary actions have been taken by the Passport and Immigration Office to have additional staff with a view to implementing a three-shift system at the Airport shortly.

I am further informed that the Passport and Immigration Office is working on a new border control management system with the possibility of integrating e-gates so as to improve service delivery as well as to enhance the overall passenger experience.

The whole issue is being looked into in a holistic manner with relevant stakeholders.

CABINET DECISION 25 OCT. 2024 – ALLEGED MISUSE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

(No. B/14) 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 Cabinet decision dated 25 October 2024 for arrangements being made for the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry to inquire into and report on the alleged misuse of telecommunications infrastructure and the recent publications and/or broadcast of alleged telephone conversations on social media and other platforms, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The House will recall that in October 2024 during the electoral campaign, a series of messages were broadcast on social media and elsewhere by “*Mr Moustass*”. These messages include, *inter alia*, conversation between officials occupying important positions in Government, the legal profession and also the relatives of prominent politicians at the helm of power. These messages clearly indicate the sinister forces at work to undermine the functioning of our institutions, and were clearly indicative of a government engaged in a broader scheme of “State Capture”.

Messages aired on social media and other online platforms were of a highly prejudicial nature, a threat to national unity and the security of the State. One particularly nefarious message was so blasphemous that the head of the Catholic Church had to send a powerful message to the then Prime Minister for immediate action against the authors of the message.

In the light of the national outcry against the despicable purveyors of hatred, the former Government had, at its meeting held on 25 October 2024, agreed to set up, in accordance with the provisions of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, a Commission of Inquiry to inquire into and report on a matter of public interest, namely, alleged misuse of telecommunications infrastructure and publication and broadcast of alleged telephone conversations on social media and other platforms.

The decision by the MSM government to set up a commission of inquiry, was hastily taken once its secret had been discovered.

It is obvious that it was a political ploy to attenuate the wrath of the nation when they heard these unbelievable conversations.

The Commission of Inquiry announced by the then Prime Minister was never set up. It never saw the day – even its terms of reference were never finalised.

I can assure the hon. Member, my Government is conducting a thorough inquiry into this issue. This Government will seek out the truth and those who have committed criminal

acts or conspired with others – will have to bear the full force of the law. We need to make an example of them and we have a mandate to do this.

My Government is conducting a thorough inquiry into this issue and my Government will not be deflected.

MOUSTASS LEAKS – PHONE TAPPING – SECURITY MEASURES

(No. B/15) 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 “*moustass leaks*”, he will state the remedial actions being taken to secure the official telephone line –

- (a) at the Prime Minister’s Office, and
- (b) of other high-ranking officials and diplomatic missions against phone tapping.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/6)

DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARIES – 2023 RECRUITMENT EXERCISE

(No. B/16) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the recruitment exercise for the post of Deputy Permanent Secretaries, advertised in 2023, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of Deputy Permanent Secretaries recruited.

(Withdrawn)

CLOSEL, PHOENIX – EMIRATES AIRLINE SWIMMING POOL & SPORTS COMPLEX AT – OWNER – PROJECT COST

(No. B/39) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the Emirates Airline Swimming Pool and Sports Complex at Closel, Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to the –

- (a) name of the owner of the land where same has been constructed;
- (b) amount of public funds injected for the –
 - (i) construction, and

- (ii) maintenance of the complex, and
- (c) amount being paid in terms of rent to the Council, giving a breakdown thereof.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to apprise the House that the outgoing government had initiated the Emirates Airline Swimming Pool and Sports Complex project in the year 2019, on land partly belonging to Société Central Park and partly on a strip of State land of 3m wide at Phoenix. This project is a tangible proof of the incompetence and gross mismanagement by the former government as State land when, in fact, it was, and is still privately-owned land as at today.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix that in 2019, the then Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning vested a plot of land of an extent of 9500 m², at Closel, Phoenix, into the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, for the construction of the Sports Facilities. In the same year, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix had put a plot of land of an extent of 5700 m² at the disposal of the Vacoas/Phoenix Swimming Pool Foundation, for the construction of the swimming pool with associated amenities, in line with the terms and conditions of an MoU between the Foundation and the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix.

In that context, in 2022, the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix signed a lease agreement with the Foundation to lease the plot of land of an extent of 4000 m² where the Swimming Pool has been constructed against the payment of an annual fee of Rs500,000.

In 2019, the Ministry of Housing and Lands approved the vesting of the subject site of the extent 2A26 in the Ministry of Local Government to be put at the disposal of Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix.

However, on 30 April 2024, the Ministry of Housing and Lands waived the vesting of the land formerly belonging to Société Central Park given that the deed of exchange had not been finalized.

In order to sort out the land issue, the Ministry of Housing and Lands is presently liaising with Société Central Park to finalise the exchange of land so as to secure title for the plot of land over which stands the swimming pool and also MUGA project.

With respect to part (c) of the question, I wish to apprise the House that as per the terms and conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) dated 04 February 2022 between the Council and the Foundation, the latter has to pay a yearly rental of Rs500,000 to the Council for the lease of the said plot of land. In this context, a payment amounting to Rs500,000 was made on 10 February 2022. However, the yearly payment rental for the years 2023 and 2024 have not been made given to irregularity with respect to the land in question.

My Ministry is liaising with the Ministry of Housing and Lands to sort out the irregularity on the exchange of land and ensure that the deed of sale is drawn at the earliest.

In that respect, a meeting was held at the level of the Ministry of Housing and Lands on 04 December 2024, where it was agreed that officers from the latter Ministry would amend the survey report with the appropriate extend to be exchanged, following which, the deed of sale would be drawn and signed by all parties concerned.

UPSEE –EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT 2008 – OBJECTS ALIGNMENT

(No. B/40) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the Union of Private Secondary Education Employees (UPSEE), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether the objects of UPSEE aligns with the definition of a Trade Union as provided for in section 2 of the Employment Relations Act 2008 and, if not, the measures being envisaged by his Ministry in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Registrar of Associations that the Union of Private Secondary Education Teachers was registered in June 1976 as a trade union under the repealed Industrial Relations Act 1973 and it changed its name into Union of Private Secondary Education Employees (UPSEE) in April 1979.

Section 2 of the Employment Relations Act 2008 defines a trade union as follows –
“trade union” –

- (a) means a registered association of persons, having as one of its objects the regulation of employment relations between workers and employers, and
- (b) includes a federation or a confederation, except in relation to certain provisions of the Act.

I am informed that, on 21 August 2024, the Registrar of Associations received an application dated 20 August 2024 from the Secondary and Preparatory School Teachers and Other Staff Union for the cancellation of the registration of Union of Private Secondary Education Employees, under section 7(2) of the Employment Relations Act 2008, on grounds that the registration of UPSEE was obtained by fraud or misinterpretation, in as much as, inter-alia, UPSEE’s registration under the repealed Industrial Relations Act (ITA) 1973 does not align with the definition of a trade union that is “an association of persons, whether registered or not, having as one of its objects that the regulation of industrial relations between employers and include a federation”.

I am further informed that the Registrar of Associations subsequently issued a notice dated 30 August 2024 under section 7(2) of the Employment Relations Act 2008 to the Union of Private Secondary Education Employees (UPSEE) to –

- (i) notify it of the application received for the cancellation of its registration from the Secondary and Preparatory School Teachers and Other Staff Union and the ground for cancellation, and
- (ii) show cause by 20 September 2024 why its registration should not be cancelled.

On 16 September 2024, the UPSEE, through its attorney-at-law, wrote to the Registrar of Associations, and denied the allegations made by the Secondary and Preparatory School Teachers and Other Staff Union, and objected to the cancellation of its registration as a trade union.

As required under section 7(3) of the Employment Relations Act 2008, the Registrar applied to the Employment Relations Tribunal (ERT) for the cancellation of the registration of the Union of Private Secondary Education Employees.

However, the Registrar of Associations has informed the ERT that the objects of UPSEE are aligned with the definition of a trade union as provided for in section 2 of the Employment Relations Act 2008.

In its Order of 10 February 2025, the ERT, having considered the evidence on record as well as the submission of Counsel, held that it cannot be satisfied that the UPSEE's registration must be cancelled pursuant to the present application made under section 7(3) of the Act and set aside the application from the Registrar of Associations.

CÔTE D'OR NATIONAL SPORTS COMPLEX – ACCESS TO INFRASTRUCTURE – CONDITIONS

(No. B/41) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Côte d'Or National Sports complex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Multisport Infrastructure Limited, information as to the conditions attached for the use of the infrastructure of the complex by sports federation.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd. that all National Sports Federations can use the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex for their events and competitions, upon payment of a rental fee which has been set below cost to support sports

development. Bookings are subject to formal application and payment procedures, which vary according to the contract value.

As the House is certainly aware, the Côte d’Or National Sports Complex also houses a High-Performance Centre. This Centre plays a crucial role in providing top-tier training resources for athletes and coaches, especially those nominated by my Ministry. These services are provided free of charge to the athletes.

MAHEBOURG – BARACHOIS – LEASEHOLDER’S DETAILS

(No. B/42) 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 Barachois found next to the fisheries post in Mahebourg, he will state if same has been leased and, if so, indicate the name and address of the leaseholder of the barachois.

(Withdrawn)

WATER SUPPLY CRISIS – PRIVATE OPERATORS – BOREHOLES REQUISITION

(No. B/43) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the current water supply affecting several regions around the country, he will state if consideration will be given for the requisitioning of boreholes from private operators to alleviate those regions.

Reply: The water 24/7 slogan repeated *ad nauseam* by the previous government has turned out to be a complete lie. Today our country is facing a crisis which is affecting adversely water distribution throughout the island. To address this critical issue, I have given instructions to my Ministry to consider seriously the option of requisitioning groundwater boreholes licensed to private operators.

I am informed that in accordance with Section 16(1) of the Ground Water Regulations 2011, the Central Water Authority has the right, in the public interest, to abstract water from private boreholes in the event of a severe drought or water shortage caused by climate change or any other calamity.

This provision is a mandatory condition attached to groundwater licences at the time of issuance or renewal. According to Water Resources Commission records, there are 165 private boreholes with a yield of 500 m³/day or more, located across the island.

Given that the situation is more severe in the North, the CWA has identified six boreholes in the North, in the first instance and is actively engaging with borehole licensees to facilitate their temporary use for water supply reinforcement. Four out of the six licensees have agreed to collaborate and CWA is making necessary arrangements accordingly.

Meetings are ongoing with the remaining licensees. The exercise will pursue regarding private boreholes as well as boreholes not in use located in other parts of the island.

Every effort is being made to mobilise additional resources to supplement the deficient storage of our main reservoirs in order to alleviate the situation of the population.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 10 – FLOOD PRONE AREAS – DRAIN PROJECTS

(No. B/44) Mr R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the recurrent flooding of roads resulting from rainwater runoff since the initiation of the new derocking process in sugar-cane fields in Constituency No. 10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, he will state the measures being taken to clear the drainage systems of these flooded roads to ensure that excess water is effectively channelled into the river, thereby mitigating the risk of accident.

Reply: The Land Drainage Authority has identified 14 flood prone areas in Constituency No. 10.

Out of those 14 areas, the following eight regions are impacted due to overland flows emanating from sugar cane fields, namely –

- a) Morcellement Sans Souci, Montagne Blanche;
- b) Avenue des Echassiers, Mont Ida;
- c) Clemencia;
- d) Tagore Road, Ernest Florent;
- e) Camp de Masque;
- f) Pont Lardier, Bel Air;

- g) Junction Petit Paquet Road, and
- h) Cooperative Road, Melrose.

In view of attenuating the impact of flooding, 70 drain projects have been identified in Constituency No. 10 for a total project value of Rs1.66 billion. 22 of those projects have already been completed, whereas one project regarding the upgrading of Camp Sonar Bridge for a contract value of Rs6.154 m. at Camp de Masque Pave is nearing completion.

Moreover, several cutoff drains and internal drain networks will be constructed, including the upgrading of culverts at different localities, namely Morc Sans Souci, Mt Blanche; Avenue des Echassiers, Clemencia; Pont Lardier, and Melrose, among others.

MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – AMBULANCE SERVICES

(No. B/45) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the ambulance services at Mahebourg hospital, he will state the –

- (a) number of ambulances –
 - (i) currently available and operational;
 - (ii) in good working conditions and fully equipped to handle emergencies, and
- (b) ongoing efforts, if any, to improve the fleet.

(Withdrawn)

E-HEALTH PROJECT – STATUS

(No. B/46) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the E-Health project, he will state the current status of the project.

Reply: My Ministry, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has embarked on an e-Health project for a paperless, modern and integrated health care information management system, which would improve the quality of health services in all the public healthcare facilities. The first phase of the project will consist of the deployment of foundational systems that establish the necessary digital infrastructure to support patient and health service management.

The core modules under Phase I include –

- a) Patient Administration System (PAS) to manage the administrative lifecycle of patients, including registration, admission, discharge, and transfer processes;

- b) e-Health portal and mobile application to provide a digital interface for patients and healthcare providers to access health services, personal medical information, and appointment scheduling;
- c) Blood Transfusion Services (BTS) and Donor Management Application to support the end-to-end management of blood donations, donor records, and transfusion processes;
- d) Reporting and analytics to facilitate real-time data aggregation, dashboards, and performance monitoring to support evidence-based decision-making and health system governance, and
- e) Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) integration with the e-Health system and deployment across wards to enable electronic test ordering with automated transmission of results from laboratory analysers to wards and patients (where required).

When I took office last November 2024, I was apprised that Phase I, which was supposed to go live in November 2024, had accumulated a lot of delays. In January 2025, I chaired a meeting together with the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, the Resident Representative of the UNDP and all other parties involved in the implementation of the project.

After discussions, it has been decided that all the components of the project would be re-prioritised with the objective of having a soft launch of Phase I by August 2025 at one of the health regions which is most appropriate in terms of site readiness.

The current status regarding the project is as follows –

- (a) site assessment has been completed for all the health regions;
- (b) supply, design, installation, testing and commissioning of the e-Health system is at prototype-testing phase;
- (c) digital health architecture and blueprint is in process through consultancy services;
- (d) data and electrical cabling works are in progress;
- (e) training of the end-users is ongoing, and

- (f) the Attorney-General's Office is being approached for the elaboration of the digital health law.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 10 – FIRE STATION - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/47) Dr. R. Saumtally (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the multiple instances of fire outbreaks encountered in Constituency No 10, Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of a Fire Station in the said Constituency, taking into account that the closest Fire Station is situated at Centre de Flacq and, if not, why not.

Reply: At the very outset, I wish to inform the House that the previous government did not prioritise this crucial infrastructure project, which is directly linked to the safety and well-being of our citizens. Despite being under consideration for over a decade, the project faced significant procedural delays. In fact, it took eight months to relaunch the tender process following an unsuccessful initial bidding exercise.

I have been informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) that the first tender for the construction of a Fire Station at Montagne Blanche was launched on 11 October 2023 through the Central Procurement Board (CPB), with the closing date for bid submission set for 14 November 2023. However, due to various technical and procedural issues, the bidding documents required amendments, which were carried out with the technical assistance of the Ministry of National Infrastructure. The revised documents were subsequently submitted to the CPB for vetting on 17 June 2024.

On 02 September 2024, the CPB requested further amendments to the bidding documents, particularly concerning the template of "Sub Clause 2.42(a)" - Special Experience. The necessary modifications were made, and the tender was relaunched on 04 September 2024. The closing date for bid submission was set for 28 January 2025, and the bid opening took place on 31 January 2025, during which five bids were received.

Following this, the Central Procurement Board will now proceed with the evaluation of bids through a dedicated Bid Evaluation Committee. Once a contractor is selected, an 18-month construction period will be allocated from the date of site handover to complete the project.

This Government is fully committed to fast-tracking projects that are essential for public safety. The construction of the Montagne Blanche Fire Station is a strategic initiative aimed at reducing emergency response times and strengthening firefighting capabilities. This facility will provide additional support to the Fire Stations in Flacq, Quatre Bornes, and Curepipe, particularly in the event of major incidents.

Furthermore, I am pleased to inform the House that, in addition to the Montagne Blanche Fire Station, a Satellite Fire Station is also being planned for Bel Air. The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, in collaboration with the District Council of Flacq, has identified a 1600m² plot of land within the Bel Air Market compound for this purpose. My Ministry is currently coordinating with the technical team from the Ministry of National Infrastructure, which is finalising the preliminary drawings, expected to be completed by mid-February 2025.

The establishment of this Satellite Fire Station will enable the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service to achieve a targeted emergency response time of five minutes, aligning with international standards set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 1710).

My Ministry remains in continuous coordination with the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and the Ministry of National Infrastructure to ensure that both projects are executed efficiently and without unnecessary delays.

The safety of our citizens is of utmost priority to this Government. We are fully committed to ensuring that critical emergency response infrastructure is in place to protect lives and property.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS – REPORTED DRUG CASES (2015-2024)

(No. B/49) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to drug in primary and secondary schools, he will state the number of reported cases thereof between 2015 to 2024, indicating the preventive measures being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

CLUNY GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – CORRODED SHED – RENOVATION

(No. B/50) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the dilapidated state of the shed found in the compound of the Cluny Government School, he will state if

consideration will be given for the renovation of the shed for the safety of the staff and students at the school.

Reply: I am informed that the shed being referred to in the compound of Cluny Government School comprises two components –

- (i) a Corrugated Iron Sheet structure, and
- (ii) old classrooms no longer in use.

The shed is used mainly as a covered link for pupils and staff to access the toilet block.

Following site visit carried out by officers of my Ministry in May 2024, it was noted that the metallic structures and corrugated profile sheets were heavily corroded. Accordingly, a joint site visit was also carried out by officers of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and my Ministry in July 2024.

In order to address the issue, it was recommended that the shed be subject to renovation which involves –

- (i) dismantling of the damaged iron sheets and metal bars, and installation of new ones;
- (ii) painting works, and
- (iii) upgrading of floor (laying of screed and application of floor dressing paint).

The necessary procedures are being followed for the implementation of the project during this year.

CANCER SURGERIES – MEDICAL TEAM – CHENNAI, INDIA

(No. B/51) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to cancer, he will state if a medical team from Chennai, India, is expected to perform surgeries on patients suffering from cancer during the month of February 2025 and, if so, give details thereon, indicating the number of patients concerned.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that two teams from Chennai, India will be on official visit to Mauritius in the month of February 2025.

The first team, which includes Professor Balaji Subramoniam Muthiah, Director of Balaji Dental and Craniofacial Hospital, and Professor Deepak Chandrasekharan, Professor and Head of the Department of Orthodontics at SRM Kattankulathur Dental College, will be in Mauritius from 03 to 08 February 2025. During their visit, Professor Balaji Subramoniam

Muthiah will be performing complex oral cancer surgeries, along with cranio-maxillofacial surgical, rehabilitative, and reconstructive procedures at both the New Cancer Centre and Victoria Hospital. The latter is expected to review and operate on 20 complex cases, addressing critical medical conditions that require highly specialised expertise.

The second team comprises Dr. Balaji Ramani and Dr. Sriprakash Duraisamy, who are experts in Head & Neck Oncology, focusing on oral malignancies, thyroid disorders, parotid tumors, and reconstructive surgeries and will be in Mauritius from 12 to 16 February 2025. The team is expected to review and operate on around 10 complicated cases.

Prior to the visits, consultative meetings have been held at the New Cancer Centre to ensure the proper staffing and coordination. Nursing staff have been temporarily redeployed to support the surgical team, and two anaesthetists will be rostered to assist with the intricate procedures. Additionally, our local specialists will be involved in assisting with these complex surgeries.

During their stay, the visiting medical experts will also conduct an assessment of the clinical facilities and provide valuable recommendations to ensure the infrastructure is prepared for future complex surgeries. These insights will be crucial in planning for upcoming visits, which will address other surgical specialties within oncology.

These collaborations represent significant steps toward enhancing the capabilities of Mauritius in handling complex oncology cases and improving healthcare services for the future.

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION – ELECTIVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 27 NOV 2024 – COMPOSITION & PROCEDURES

(No. B/52) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Football Association, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to –

- (a) whether all procedures were followed with regard to the Elective General Assembly thereof held on 27 November 2024, indicating the –
 - (i) names of the candidates for the post of President of the Association, and
 - (ii) the reasons as to why the candidature of Mr E. R. for the post was rejected, and
- (b) the composition of the newly elected managing committee of the Association.

(Withdrawn)

VACOAS –URBAN TERMINAL – PROJECT STATUS

(No. B/53) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the development and operation of a modern urban terminal at Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: The outgoing government had, on 13 February 2024, launched a Request for Proposal (RFP) inviting proposals from potential promoters having the necessary experience, expertise and resources for the development and operation (Design, Build, Finance, Manage and Operate) of an integrated Urban Terminal at Vacoas.

The closing date for the submission of proposals was fixed on 14 May 2024. However, following a request from one potential promoter, the closing date was extended up to 31 May 2024.

As at the closing date for the submission of the proposal, only one proposal from the Joint Venture “JV LMH Vacoas” was received.

After examining the observations in the Bid Evaluation Report, the Ministry took note that the Promoter had a few queries with respect to the requirements in the RFP, which had to be addressed, prior to deciding as to whether a Notification of Award could be made to the Promoter.

In the light of the queries raised by the Promoter and the fact that no decision has not yet been made as to whether to make a Notification of Award to the Promoter, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry would apprise Cabinet on the status of the various Urban Terminal Projects based on the advice of the Attorney General’s Office, which has been sought on 18 December 2024.

The Attorney General’s Office has requested further clarifications from my Ministry, and same are being attended to.

DISABILITY PENSION – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – REVIEW

(No. B/54) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to disability pension, he will state if consideration will be given for the review of the

eligibility criteria to benefit same, indicating the number of complaints received from the beneficiaries of disability pension to date.

(Vide Reply to PQ B/31)

COVID-19 – RENAL DIALYSIS PATIENT’S DEATH – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE REPORT – ACTIONS ENVISAGED

(No. B/55) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the report of the Fact-Finding Committee on the death of renal dialysis patient during COVID-19 pandemic laid on the table of the National Assembly on 20 December 2024, he will state the actions taken and/or being envisaged by his Ministry on the report.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that, following the tabling of the Fact-Finding Committee Report and the subsequent Reports of Enquiries conducted by the Medical Negligence Standing Committee regarding the death of dialysis patients at New Souillac Hospital during the COVID-19 Pandemic, my Ministry has taken appropriate decisive action regarding the matter at hand.

After tabling the report of the Fact-Finding Committee in Parliament, my Ministry has referred the case to the Office of the Commissioner of Police to initiate a comprehensive and in-depth Police Enquiry, so that responsibilities could be situated. Once the report of the Enquiry is received, action will be initiated to deal with the culprits.

This action reflects our commitment to upholding the highest standards of accountability and transparency, particularly when it comes to issues as serious as medical negligence. The police investigation will ensure that all relevant facts are thoroughly examined, and that those responsible are held to account in accordance with the law.

The safety and well-being of our citizens, particularly in healthcare settings, remain a top priority for this government. My Ministry will continue to act swiftly and judiciously to address any concerns and to safeguard the trust of the public in our health institutions.

RODRIGUES – SPORTS ADVANCEMENT – FEDERATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS LIST

(No. B/56) Ms M. R. Collet (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the advancement of sports in Rodrigues, he will state

and table the list of sports federations and associations with which his Ministry has been collaborating therefor, indicating the financial assistance extended to the sports federations and associations.

Reply: Section 26 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, provides, *inter-alia*, that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly shall be responsible for the formulation of policy in respect of youth and sports. In Financial Year 2024-2025, an amount of Rs111.2 million was allocated for the promotion of Sports and Sports for All by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

However, despite this autonomy in the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for youth and sports, I am pleased to inform the House that several National Sports Federations allocate a portion of their annual grants provided by my Ministry to support the advancement of sports in Rodrigues. This is a commendable recognition of the immense sporting talent that the island of Rodrigues possesses.

Indeed, Rodrigues is an island brimming with potential, and its athletes continue to demonstrate exceptional skill and dedication on both national and international stages.

Additionally, my Ministry provides facilities such as airport transfers and board and lodging when our fellow athletes from Rodrigues come to Mauritius to train or to participate in competitions.

A list of the federations thereof together with the financial assistance to their sports discipline in Rodrigues is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

MONKEYS – YEARLY EXPORTATION & REVENUE

(No. B/57) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to monkeys, he will state the number of monkeys exported yearly, since 2014 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) average selling price thereof, and
- (b) annual revenue generated from the sale of the monkeys.

(Withdrawn)

LA SOURCE FOOTBALL PLAYGROUND – PLAYERS’ SAFETY

(No. B/58) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to La Source Football playground, he will state –

- (a) if he has been made aware of –
 - (i) the non-compliance thereof to be classified as a football field, and
 - (ii) the construction of a concrete barrier at the playground, and
- (b) the measures being envisaged for the safety of the players thereat.

(Withdrawn)

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL ACADEMY PROJECT – INVESTMENT & OUTCOME

(No. B/60) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Liverpool Football Academy Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the sum invested into the Academy up to December 2024, indicating the outcome derived under this project for Mauritius.

(Withdrawn)

TYPE 1 DIABETES – CONTINUOUS GLUCOSE MONITORS & INSULIN PUMPS PROVISION

(No. B/61) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to Type 1 Diabetes, he will state the number of persons below the age of 18 and above diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, indicating if consideration will be given for the provision of continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps to patients suffering this chronic condition.

Reply: In the Budget Speech 2023-2024, it was announced that Continuous Glucose Monitoring machines would be provided to some 1,000 Type1 Diabetes patients and that some 450 high-risk diabetic patients would be provided with insulin pumps. However, according to available records at my Ministry, 1,061 patients are currently undergoing treatment for Type 1 Diabetes.

I am informed that until now, the budgetary measure could not be implemented as several factors had to be taken into consideration, namely –

- (a) The cost associated with implementing the project. Insulin pumps and Continuous Glucose Monitoring machines and the associated consumables are

costly. Even in high income countries, these devices are generally available through private medical insurance, depending on the level of insurance coverage;

- (b) The proper and safe use of these advanced technologies require a system with trained Endocrinologists, diabetes nurses and appropriate clinical environment to download the glucose data from the Continuous Glucose Monitors, and our healthcare system in Mauritius is not currently adapted to implement this project;
- (c) Introducing new services, the safety of patients has to be taken into consideration as new technologies may lead to an increase to stress, anxiety and burnout which, in turn, can lead to psychological problems;
- (d) In case of misuse, the automatic administration of insulin by the pump may lead to uneasiness, hypoglycaemia and potentially to critical conditions, including death;
- (e) Comprehensive education programs for patients, healthcare officers and dieticians in diabetes technology would have to be provided. This awareness program should include training on the use of diabetes management tools and technologies, workshops and webinars to share experiences and knowledge, and
- (f) Furthermore, personalised training would have to be conducted for patients by considering their lifestyles factors, age, comorbidities and personal preferences.

My Ministry has considered all risks associated with the use of insulin pumps and Continuous Glucose Monitors. Accordingly, the proposal for Type 1 diabetic patients to be provided with Continuous Glucose Monitors is being given due consideration. This project would cost around Rs120 million annually and would be implemented in a phase-wise approach.

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES – INCINERATOR – OPERATIONALITY

(No. B/62) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the incinerator situated at Vallée des Prêtres, he will state the current state of the incinerator, indicating if it is operational and, if not, since when.

Reply: I refer the hon. Member to my response to PQ I B/9 from the Sitting of 10 December 2024, in which I provided a detailed update regarding the electric cremation incinerators. That response included information on the number of incinerators installed, those currently out of service, and the progress on necessary repairs.

I have been advised by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that the incinerator at the Cipailles Brûlé Cremation Ground in Vallée des Prêtres has not been operational since 2023. This issue is of serious concern as the incinerator has repeatedly broken down due to the lack of a proper maintenance contract.

Considering that there are 16 incinerators nationwide requiring maintenance, my Ministry has established a priority list. This list is based on the absence of alternative incinerators within local authorities and the availability of qualified contractors to perform the repairs. Priority is, therefore, given to those areas where no other incinerator is available.

The repairs and maintenance for the incinerator at Cipailles Brûlé are scheduled to commence at the end of February 2025 and are expected to be completed within approximately one month.

CATARACT SURGERY – WAITING LIST & COSTS

(No. B/63) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to cataracts surgeries in Mauritius, he will —

- (a) give a list of public hospitals where same are being performed, indicating the number of patients on the waiting list for surgery, and
- (b) state if his Ministry is having recourse to the services of private hospitals for cataract surgery and, if so, indicate the total cost incurred, if any, as at date.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that, until recently, cataract surgeries were primarily being conducted at Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital and New Souillac Hospital.

However, in an effort to reduce the waiting list in a sustainable manner, as well as to decentralise these essential services for the benefit of patients, my Ministry kickstarted cataract surgery services on 17 January 2025 at Flacq Hospital. Presently, Flacq hospital is

performing 13 cataract surgeries daily, contributing significantly to meeting the needs of our citizens.

The number of patients on the waiting list of cataract surgeries is as follows –

- (i) 1,173 patients at Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital as at 26 January 2025;
- (ii) 477 patients at New Souillac Hospital as at 26 January 2025, and
- (iii) 121 patients at Flacq Hospital as at 03 February 2025. (A total of 108 cataract surgeries have already been completed since 17 January 2025).

I am informed that in 2023, 1,500 patients were referred to a private clinic for cataract surgeries to the tune of Rs19,000 per cataract surgery, amounting to a total of Rs28,500,000. In the year 2024, 4,200 patients were referred to three private clinics for cataract surgeries. A total of 1,400 patients were referred to each of the three private clinics at the cost of Rs21,000 per cataract surgery, amounting to a total of Rs29,400,000 payable to each clinic.

The last batch of patients is expected to be completed by mid-February. The total cost for referral of cataract surgery patients since 2023 is to the tune of Rs116,700,000.

EMMANUEL ANQUETIL GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – TELEPHONE LANDLINE CONNECTION

(No. B/64) Mr E. Juman (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether in regard to the Emmanuel Anquetil Government School, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the telephone landline of the school has been connected to the telecom network and, if so, since when.

Reply: I am informed that the telephone landline at Emmanuel Anquetil Government School in Zone 1, which was disconnected on 23 September 2024, has been reconnected to the telecom network since 24 January 2025.

RIVIÈRE DU POSTE – PONT ROUGE BRIDGE – REPARATION & REHABILITATION

(No. B/65) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the “Pont Rouge” bridge at Rivière du Poste, he will state if consideration will be given for the repair and rehabilitation of the bridge, indicating the expected start and completion dates of the work.

(Withdrawn)

**LOCAL AUTHORITIES – STAFF RECRUITMENT IRREGULARITIES –
YEAR 2024**

(No. B/66) Mr R. Beehook (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the local authorities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total number of staff recruited in each local authority during the year 2024, indicating if these recruitments were accounted for in the budget for the corresponding financial year.

Reply: I have been informed by the Local Government Service Commission that a total of 1,765 appointments were made, and 32 staff members were promoted within local authorities during the calendar year 2024, covering the period from 01 January to 03 October, the eve of the issuance of the Writ of Elections. A detailed breakdown of these appointments, categorised by local authority, is being tabled for the information of the House.

I wish to inform the House that these recruitments were accounted for in the financial years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, during their respective budget preparation and approval processes. Additionally, the previous government approved the creation of 998 new positions within local authorities in 2024. Given that this was a general election year, separate financial clearances for these positions were sought and obtained on 24 April, 30 May, 11 June, 02 July, 15 July, and 23 September for the year 2024.

However, the Secretary of the Local Government Service Commission has since reported serious irregularities in the recruitment process at the Commission between January 2022 and October 2024. These irregularities include the 998 appointments made in various grades in the months leading up to the issuance of the Writ of Elections.

In light of these concerns, the Local Government Service Commission formally sought legal advice from the Attorney General's Office on 10 December 2024 regarding the legality of these appointments. The Attorney General's Office has advised that all decisions taken by the Chairperson of the Local Government Service Commission regarding appointments and promotions under delegated powers are legally void.

Furthermore, the Secretary of the Local Government Service Commission has requested further clarification from the Attorney General's Office on the legal implications of these appointments and promotions.

Once the final legal advice is received, the matter will be referred to Cabinet for appropriate consideration, and the necessary policy decisions will be taken to ensure that due process is followed in addressing these irregularities.

MAHEBOURG MARKET – RENOVATION WORK – FINANCIAL CLEARANCE

(No. B/68) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the works for the renovation of the Mahebourg Market, he will state if his Ministry is in presence of any request from the District Council of Grand Port for financial clearance for the renovation work of the market and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

WRIT OF ELECTIONS 2024 – RECRUITMENT & PROMOTION –ENQUIRY

(No. B/69) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the recruitment and promotion exercises carried out in 2024, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof made after the issue of the writs of election in 2024 by the
 - (i) Public Service Commission, and
 - (ii) other public bodies, indicating if same will be reviewed, and
- (b) if an enquiry will be carried out to determine the legality of these recruitments and promotions.

(Withdrawn)

ROUTES NO. 10A, 99 & 137 – BUS SERVICES PROVISION

(No. B/70) Mr C. Lukeeram (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the irregular bus services in the region of Plein Bois, Carreau Esnouf and Carreau Accacia, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Land Transport Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the provision of a regular bus service along Route No. 10A, L'Escalier/Plein Bois to Curepipe; Route 137, Carreau Accacia to Curepipe via Rose-Belle and Route 99, from Carreau Accacia to Mahebourg, respectively.

(Withdrawn)