



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026

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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. Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie	Deputy Prime Minister Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed, GCSK	Minister of Housing and Lands,
Hon. Rajesh Anand Bhagwan, GCSK	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. 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 Ramtohol	Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Lutchmanah Pentiah	Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Ranjiv Wochit, OSK	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Mahendra Gondeea, OSK	Minister of Arts and Culture

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

Eighth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 10 of 2026

Sitting of Tuesday 19 May 2026

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT**OBITUARY****MR VALAYDON RAM MARDEMOOTOO**

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness that we have learnt of the demise of Mr Valaydon Ram Mardemootoo, former Member of Parliament, who passed away on 11 May of this year at the age of 72.

Born on 11 January 1954, Mr Mardemootoo pursued a distinguished career in the field of engineering. He worked as a Production Engineer and Textile Consultant. He also served as Chief Executive Officer in several companies in Mauritius and across the region.

Mr Ram Mardemootoo stood as a candidate in the 1991 General Elections for the Legislative Assembly under the banner of the Alliance Parti travailliste/ PMSD for the Constituency No. 19, Stanley & Rose Hill, but he was not elected.

He stood as a candidate in the 1995 National Assembly by-election under the banner of the PMSD for the same constituency, Stanley and Rose Hill, but he was not returned.

In 2005, Mr Mardemootoo stood as a candidate for the National Assembly elections under the banner of the Alliance Sociale for Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac. He was returned as Second Member. He was appointed to serve as a member on the Committee of Selection.

Beyond his professional and political career, Mr Ram Mardemootoo was also well-known for his dedication to social work and community activities.

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

Thank you.

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

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

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I fully associate myself to the tribute paid by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to late Mr Mardemootoo Valaydon.

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

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Members, I associate myself with the tribute paid to the memory of the late Mr Valaydon Ram Mardemootoo, former Member of Parliament, by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I direct the Clerk to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to the bereaved family.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office

Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications

Ministry of Finance

Ministry for Rodrigues and Outer Islands

Certificate of Urgency in respect of The Constitutional Review Commission Bill (No. VI of 2026). (In Original)

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

The Sugar Insurance Fund (Reduced General Insurance Premium and Fire Insurance Premium) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 57 of 2026)

C. Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Pensions Fund for the year ended 30 June 2019.

D. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities

The Energy Efficiency (Minimum Energy Performance Standards for Regulated Machinery) (Refrigerating Appliances) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 56 of 2026)

E. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

(a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 58 of 2026)

(b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2026. (Government Notice No. 59 of 2026)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**LGSC – RECRUITMENT EXERCISE 2026 – REFUSE COLLECTOR & GENERAL WORKER**

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 posts of Refuse Collector and General Worker, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC), information as to the number of employees recruited in each local authority in the 2026 recruitment exercise, indicating the –

- (a) number of rejected applications in the 2026 recruitment exercise;
- (b) number of the 2026 recruits –
 - (i) whose services from the 2024 recruitment exercise were terminated in January/February 2026, and
 - (ii) who are subject to police cases and do not possess a clean Certificate of Character, and
- (c) findings of the enquiry conducted, if any, following accusations of discrimination against the former chairperson of the LGSC, Dr S. M., in relation thereto.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Yes, Madam Speaker.

The recruitment and appointment exercises for local authorities fall under the responsibility of the Local Government Service Commission, which is an independent statutory body.

Madam Speaker, let me refer to what was stated last week in this House with regard to Parliamentary Question B/652, and I quote –

“Section 4(2) of the Local Government Service Commission Act, the Commission shall not, in the exercise of its functions, be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.”

Hence, Madam Speaker, no one can interfere in any matter falling within the statutory function or internal processes of the LGSC.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the recruitment exercise under reference was carried out following the reconstitution of the LGSC after this Government took office in November 2024. As the House is aware, concerns were raised regarding the manner in which certain appointments took place under the previous regime.

Following these concerns, and after consultation with the Attorney General's Office, advice was obtained to the effect that the appointments were tainted, procedurally improper and patently illegal. Consequently, the employment of 1,463 employees recruited on a temporary basis was terminated on 15 June 2025 following, as I said, legal advice received. Some of the employees took the matter to Court. The House will surely recall how the recruitments were made on the eve, Madam Speaker, of the 2024 General Elections, and that the then Chairperson is under investigation for possible wrongdoing.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition would be well advised to get information on the *modus operandi* of the former Chairperson of the LGSC, Mr Bhanoodutt Beeharee, who transformed the LGSC into a one-man Commission.

Madam Speaker, it would be apposite at this stage to quote part of the judgement of the Supreme Court on 23 January 2026 in the case lodged against the Local Government Service Commission and the Municipal Town Council of Vacoas/Phoenix. I quote from the judgement of the Supreme Court –

“We have found that the applicants’ appointment was legally invalid. The Commission was entitled to terminate their employment in the exercise of its statutory powers. Neither this Court nor the Commission should be seen as condoning an unlawful appointment.”

I am informed that following the judgement of the Supreme Court on 23 January 2026, the termination process was implemented on 29 January of the same year, in accordance with the decision of the court.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that, thereafter, fresh recruitment exercises were carried out by the reconstituted board of the LGSC. I am informed that these new recruitment exercises were conducted in accordance with the LGSC Act, the relevant schemes of service and the established procedures.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the number of employees recruited as Refuse Collector and General Worker in each local authority in the 2026 recruitment exercise, and information

requested by the hon. Leader of the Opposition at parts (a) and (b) of the PNQ, I am tabling the relevant information.

With regard to part (b) (ii), I am informed by the LGSC that the appointment to the relevant grades is made on the condition that a clear character certificate be produced within a period of two months. So far, this information is being awaited from the local authorities, and once the deadline of two months lapses, the Commission will then be in a position to know the exact number of appointed employees who have police cases, if any.

Madam Speaker, I need to add that a previous conviction per se should not be a bar to an appointment. Since 2012, the Equal Opportunities Act was amended to prevent discrimination in appointment or promotion where a previous conviction is unrelated to the ability of the person to perform his duties. We also recently voted a new Certificate of Character Bill aimed at preventing certain types of previous convictions from appearing on a person's Certificate of Character in order to help in the rehabilitation of such persons.

As regard to part (c) of the question, Madam Speaker, let me state that there has been no accusation of discrimination against the former Chairperson. The LGSC is an independent statutory body operating under the LGSC Act, and no one intervenes in its internal administrative matters or its decision-making processes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition, your first supplementary question.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he is aware of a press article dated 22 April in L'Express where the former Chairperson of the LGSC, Dr. S.M., who has resigned, accused the hon. Prime Minister of lying and misleading the House?

The Prime Minister: Lying and misleading the House in what context, Madam Speaker?

Mr Lesjongard: We will get to the context.

Again, Madam Speaker, with regard to the recruitment exercise, the hon. Minister for Local Government, last week, stated the following, and I quote, this is in Hansard –

“As the hon. Prime Minister stated in this House, a few weeks ago, the matter was looked into at the level of the Commission and the new Chairperson, subsequently, tendered his resignation. However, I am informed that as matters presently stand, no

inquiry has been initiated at the level of the LGSC in relation of these recruitment exercises. Subsequently, there is no inquiry report (...)"

And the hon. Prime Minister, while replying to a PQ, stated that the Chairperson resigned following an inquiry. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm which statement is correct because there is total contradiction in those two replies?

The Prime Minister: Not really, Madam Speaker. I was given to understand that there was the likelihood of an inquiry being done. This was not done.

Mr Lesjongard: No, that is not in the Hansard. No, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Question! No statements! Please, no statements.

Mr Lesjongard: He stated in his reply...

Madam Speaker: Yes, you have already said it.

Mr Lesjongard: ...that there is an inquiry. Now, if it is confirmed that there was no inquiry, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House why the Chairperson submitted his resignation then?

An hon. Member: *Bizin dimann li!*

The Prime Minister: Well, he submitted his resignation. In his letter, he said, for personal reasons.

Mr Lesjongard: Personal reasons. Then, why did he say that you lied?

Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he has been apprised of the discrepancies raised by my neighbour, hon. Ms Savabaddy, concerning this recruitment exercise?

Madam Speaker: Your neighbour, yes.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure what you are referring to. Discrepancies in what?

Mr Lesjongard: The recruitment process!

The Prime Minister: Yes, there were allegations at the time. We all know there were allegations.

Mr Lesjongard: You do not verify whether...

The Prime Minister: But none has been found. There was no complaint. There was no inquiry.

Mr Lesjongard: ...these allegations are true?

Madam Speaker: Do not speak at the same time!

The Prime Minister: I can tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition; any public officer has a duty to report any interference or any suspected act of corruption. He has not done so. So, there was none.

Madam Speaker: Do not comment while he is replying, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm, as stated again by my neighbour, hon. Ms Savabaddy, whether there has been discrimination on ethnic grounds in the recruitment process against one specific community? And if she would wish to come forward with a question, I will give her way.

Madam Speaker: Wow! Okay. Yes!

The Prime Minister: As I explained, Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

Please, let the hon. Prime Minister reply. Ethnic reasons; discrimination based on ethnic reasons.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of that, Madam Speaker. There were lots of allegations in the public. I think he quoted an article from L'Express. But there was no inquiry. There was no discrimination found because there was no inquiry. There was no complaint by the person himself.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister, for example, confirm whether at the Municipality of Port Louis, in two cases, the first one where three members of the same family, a mother and two sons, and the second case where again, members of the same family were recruited? Is this the type of recruitment which is in line with meritocracy, hon. Prime Minister?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: That is precisely why there were these allegations. That is precisely.

Madam Speaker: Sorry?

The Prime Minister: That is precisely why some people made allegations. That is what I said.

Mr Lesjongard: But this is true. This is on the list and I will table the list. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether for the Municipality of Port Louis, 50% of the 123 recruits are from one constituency only, that is, Constituency No. 2? Somebody must have had the lion's share, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Can you confirm that, hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I cannot confirm that because I do not interfere in what the LGSC does and does not do.

Mr Jhummun: *Si zot merite, zot pou gagne!*

An hon. Member: Méritocratie.

Mr Lesjongard: I am tabling that list, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. You are tabling which list?

Mr Lesjongard: The list of those people who had been recruited by the Municipality of Port Louis.

Madam Speaker: The list of those people who had been recruited, of one constituency, right? Constituency No. 2, that is what you said?

Mr Lesjongard: No, of the four constituencies.

Madam Speaker: Stand up when speaking!

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, of the four constituencies...

Madam Speaker: So, you have the whole list?

Mr Lesjongard: ...falling under the Municipality of Port Louis.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Okay?

Mr Mohamed: You cannot table it.

Madam Speaker: You have finished?

Mr Lesjongard: Why can't I table? I can table!

Mr Mohamed: Of course, you cannot table it!

Mr Lesjongard: I can table.

Mr Mohamed: Unless you can explain the source!

Ms Anquetil: *Exacte !*

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether he has received representations from elected members, including from his own party, alleging that the recruitment process was unduly influenced by political interference, and if this is the case, what remedial action has been taken, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Again...

Madam Speaker: *Chut! Chut!*

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Again, Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear the hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Again, innuendos! And I do not know where he is getting all this information from. I was surprised that he said he has a list. I do not have a list!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: May I have a look?

The Prime Minister: I do not know how you have a list!

Ms Anquetil: *Incroyable!*

Madam Speaker: May I have a look?

Ms Anquetil: *Incroyable!*

Madam Speaker: One moment, hon. Prime Minister. I want to have a look at the list to see what kind of list it is.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, can you help me, please? This is a list from the Mauritius Post. Where did you get that list from? What does...

(Interruptions)

Please, stand up! Stand up!

Tell me which list it is; I am not rejecting the list.

Mr Lesjongard: I am saying this is the list of recruits at the level of the Municipality of Port Louis, Madam Speaker.

An hon. Member: The source!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Kot tonn gagn sa?*

Mr Mohamed: How did you get it?

Mr Ameer Meea: Is it official?

Madam Speaker: We have to know where did you get it.

(Interruptions)

It comes...

(Interruptions)

May I?

Mr Lesjongard: It does not matter where I got that list.

Madam Speaker: May I do my job, please?

(Interruptions)

May I be allowed to do my job, please?

Mr Jhummun: Yes.

Madam Speaker: I want to know where did you get the list. This is the rule. You know that.

Mr Lesjongard: I am not supposed to tell you where I got the list, Madam Speaker.

Mr Jhummun: *Lakwizinn!*

Madam Speaker: You are not supposed to tell me?

Mr Lesjongard: I have got the list from the LGSC.

Mr Assirvaden: *Dir laverite, Joe!*

Mr Lesjongard: *Ki laverite? La verité est sur la liste!*

Madam Speaker: I will keep this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: *La poste gagn droit donn twa sa?*

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: *Incroyab sa. Bizin fer lenket!*

Madam Speaker: Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: May I continue, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: No, it is all right. You do not absolutely have to disclose your source.

(Interruptions)

Okay, I will let him lay it on the Table of the Assembly for what it is worth. We cannot force him to give his source.

Okay, you can take it.

All right. Next question!

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, that list contains, I presume, real names, unless it is been invented.

Madam Speaker: Of course.

Mr Mohamed: Unless it is fake. But if ever they contain real names of real citizens and addresses, would this not be a breach of the Data Protection Law?

Madam Speaker: That is it!

(Interruptions)

Okay.

Mr Lesjongard: ... done in the past.

Mr Mohamed: You do not care about the law! You!

Madam Speaker: Shut up all of you. Please !

Mr Lesjongard: Franchement, un gouvernement...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Hon. Members !*

Mr Assirvaden : Mais, c'est une liste fabriquée.

Ms Anquetil: *Exactement ! Inventée !*

Madam Speaker: *Donnez-moi le temps de dire.*

Because it is a very sensitive issue, I am going to keep my ruling and take time to consider. So, for the moment, it is here. I have not rejected it; let it be here. Give me time, hon. Leader of the Opposition. We will see.

Mr Lesjongard: Of course, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Because you do not have to disclose your source, but there is, of course, that question of names and details of other people. So, give me time to give a ruling. Okay?

Carry on with your other questions!

Mr Lesjongard: Let me come back to the Certificate of Character. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether among the newly recruited workers, some who have committed offences are still working?

The Prime Minister: Well, as I said, Madam Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition had listened carefully, there were amendments made to the law in 2012. Let me re-quote it –

“(...) the Equal Opportunities Act was amended (in 2012) to prevent discrimination in appointment or promotion where a previous conviction is unrelated to the ability of the person to perform his duties.”

Now, as far as I remember, in 2012, it was the MSM who was in Government, not us. You amended the law!

(Interruptions)

Oh sorry, it was us.

But, furthermore, a new Certificate of Character Bill aimed at preventing certain types of previous convictions from appearing on a person's Certificate of Character in order to help the rehabilitation of such person. It goes, therefore, with the amendment of 2012 so that it does not stay as a *épée de Damoclès*...

Madam Speaker: *Épée de Damoclès.*

The Prime Minister: ...on the head of the person. That was the reason.

Madam Speaker: Your next question!

Mr Lesjongard: Madame la présidente, si le gouvernement veut être transparent...

Madam Speaker: Il n'y a pas de 'si' ! Question !

Mr Lesjongard: ...il veut montrer que la méritocratie a primé...

(Interruptions)

Ms Anquetil: Quel culot !

Mr Lesjongard: Will the hon. Prime Minister undertake to table the list of persons recruited in each local authority, including their addresses, qualifications, selection scores, and the composition of the panel that appointed them?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: One moment! He said selection scores. Is that what you said, as well? Names, addresses, and selection...

Mr Lesjongard: Selection scores!

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Prime Minister! Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

Mr Lesjongard: We are talking about meritocracy.

Madam Speaker: Can you give that kind of list?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure I can, Madam Speaker, but I will seek advice on whether I can or not. But the hon. Leader of the Opposition, again, I remind him, he should look at what happened when he was in government, the MSM Government.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhummun: *Li pe vinn invant larou la !*

Madam Speaker: *Chut!*

The Prime Minister: The *modus operandi* of Mr Beeharee, the then Chairperson of the LGSC. He turned it into a one-man Commission. All this happened under their regime.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, all right. Next question!

Also, bear in mind that anybody who is unhappy can always go to the PBAT and to the Court. And I think, we heard that there were cases in court.

Mr Lesjongard: Yes, that I know, but my duty is to put questions in this House, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Of course! And I appreciate that you are doing so.

Mr Lesjongard: Madam Speaker, concerning the Board of the LGSC, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House when a Chairperson will be appointed?

The Prime Minister: It will be done this week, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Lesjongard: Now, is he aware that certain recruitments and promotions in local authorities have been delayed now for almost a year?

The Prime Minister: That is absolutely not true. He just gave a list of persons that we have recruited. Now, how can he say that it was one year?

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: You just shot yourself in the foot.

Ms Anquetil: *Inn mal ransegne.*

Madam Speaker: Hon. A. Duval!

Mr A. Duval: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister... In fact, I am reiterating from my last PQ; there were 1,463 who had been terminated after working 16 months and that contributed to their Pension Fund, an amount of Rs1,084 monthly – a total of Rs17,000. The hon. Minister to whom the subject was addressed did not answer. Now that you are the hon. Minister of Finance, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will see to it that these sums are reimbursed to those persons who have contributed in vain Rs17,000?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: I will look into this, but again...

Madam Speaker: Can you consider?

The Prime Minister: I can consider, but I will have to look into it carefully because the Court said that it was right to terminate their appointments because it was unlawful.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes, the question is...

Mr A. Duval: You unlawfully took their contribution.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not talk! Mr Duval, I like it when you stand up. Please, do that.

Mr A. Duval: Well, if I may?

Madam Speaker: Yes, of course. Of course.

Mr A. Duval: Well, Madam Speaker, it follows that if it was unlawful, then no contribution ought to have been taken; therefore, be reimbursed.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister said he would look into it and consider it.

The Prime Minister: Well, if we follow that logic, then they will have to refund whatever they were paid. You want them to refund whatever they were paid as well?

Madam Speaker: *Bon*, anyway. No comments! Anybody? Okay, so we finished with...

Mr Lesjongard: One last question?

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay.

Mr Lesjongard: Now, if the former Chairperson was not the subject of any formal finding of wrongdoing, will the hon. Prime Minister reconsider the circumstances of his resignation and reinstate that gentleman?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: As I said, Madam Speaker, I think, on 20 April, he submitted his letter of resignation and he said it was for personal reasons. I take it – but I could be wrong – I take it when the former leader of the MMM resigned, a lot of people resigned; maybe that was the reason he resigned.

Madam Speaker: We do not know. He resigned. That is what we have. Factually, I mean. That is what we have. Okay.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, thank you. Time up. So, now we go to PMQT.

Yes, hon. A. Duval.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTION – MISUSE, ABUSE OR ILLEGAL
USE – SAFEGUARD MEASURE**

(No. B/709) 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 interception of telecommunications, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether same is being resorted to combat crimes and, if so, indicate whether consideration is being given for the introduction of legislation to safeguard against the misuse, abuse or illegal use thereof, including the setting up of an independent oversight body therefor.

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Member for raising this important matter.

At the very outset, let me remind the House that the protection of freedom of expression and the right to privacy are enshrined in our Constitution. Any form of unlawful interception or tapping is a direct violation of the Constitution and of the fundamental rights and liberties enshrined in our Constitution.

As I have reported to the House in my earlier statements on this subject, the previous government had installed, at enormous cost to the public, – enormous cost – a very sophisticated electronic mass surveillance system to spy on every Mauritian indiscriminately.

They were spying on everyone, Madam Speaker – on you, Madam Speaker, on me, on the hon. Leader of the Opposition, on the former Prime Minister, on every Member of this House, including Ministers of the Government. The hon. Member, himself, was spied upon, his father, who was a Minister at the time, was also spied upon; on his family. Not only that, Madam Speaker, on the Judiciary, on the civil society, on diplomatic missions, on every family in their home and intercepting their private data.

The system was intercepting in real time every digital communication, every one of them –

- every telephone call, every email, text messages, social media communication,
- of every man, woman and young person who happened to have a mobile phone or an email. And they were storing it in a secret data centre for examination by their

own chosen agents – hand-picked – and for the purposes that had nothing to do with national security or the investigation of any crime.

If you even clicked to like a social media post like many people do on YouTube, Facebook or TikTok, the system would secretly harvest your action and store it for their use.

Madam Speaker, as I reported to the House last year, on my orders, that system was dismantled, shut down and rendered inoperable.

It was a grotesque abuse by a sinister regime, intent on perpetuating their power. It was also illegal and a serious criminal offence, and I can inform the House that a criminal investigation is underway. I am informed that arrests have been made and more will follow.

I am necessarily, Madam Speaker, constrained in the amount that I can say concerning this extremely serious matter.

But those grave and illegal abuses of the private lives of every citizen in this country should not blind us to the need for Mauritius, in a turbulent and increasingly perilous world, to ensure its freedom and security are not threatened by those within or without, and we want to put an end to that.

The properly authorised and legitimate use of covert surveillance methods is a time-honoured and necessary means of protecting the public.

There already, Madam Speaker, exist provisions in our legislation under several enactments for such lawful interception, for instance –

- Section 56 of the Dangerous Drugs Act;
- Sections 29 and 30 of the Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Act;
- Section 32 of the Information and Communication Technologies Act;
- Section 25A of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and
- Section 10B of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act.

All these laws, Madam Speaker, contain a fundamental safeguard. Any telecommunication interception may only be carried out upon the application to, and authorisation by a Judge in Chambers, on the basis of reasonable grounds. You must get a warrant for that. This judicial control constitutes a critical protection against any misuse, abuse or unlawful interception.

This Government will act within the law, Madam Speaker.

However, the House will shortly have the chance to scrutinise and debate the National Crime Agency Bill and its accompanying legislation, which together, will introduce the most profound and far-reaching changes in law enforcement that our country has seen since the colonial days, even before independence.

That legislation will not address the question of surveillance other than in the investigation of crime, and that only. But with the changing threats and the new law enforcement architecture to which this Government is committed, and as part of the Government's radical programme of reform and strengthening of the institutions of our country, it will be necessary in the near future, to consider new legislation.

That legislation will place the use of such means in the true and legitimate interest of national security, not the personal and political interests of a particular regime, on a sound constitutional and legal footing.

Careful thought is being given to the essential independent structures necessary to guarantee the proper and proportionate use of such tools to be included in the new National Security Act.

Madam Speaker, let me remind the House that this Government will not allow this country to drift back into an intrusive system where surreptitious eavesdropping was the order of the day instead of protecting the citizen, and where abusive power was exercised without any restraint at all.

We were elected to restore what had been compromised, that is, trust, accountability, freedom and liberty, freedom of expression, and respect for the rule of law.

We must never again return to the criminal abuses of the previous regime, which attracted such powerful and righteous indignation throughout the country.

Mr A. Duval: Yes, Madam Speaker, may I?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: Thank you. Madam Speaker, in reply to my question last year in February, the hon. Prime Minister gave a guarantee that all equipment had been shut down. Now, the hon. Prime Minister says that for judicial purposes, subject to a judge's order, there is interception and monitoring.

The Prime Minister: I did not say that.

Mr A. Duval: My question to the hon. Prime Minister is: given that the State still has the capacity to intercept – it is still within the State apparatus – with all the risks of political abuse and misuse, why does he not consider it urgent and necessary to come with an oversight and accountable mechanism like is being done overseas in Commonwealth countries?

The Prime Minister: I did not say, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member is wrong. There is no system at the moment. There is none. I explained. I just said that the system was dismantled, shut down and rendered inoperable. So, there is none at the moment, but what I said in my answer is that we will have to come with new legislation for the purpose of the matter that I mentioned like terrorism, drugs and all those criminal offences.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, are we to believe that judges' orders are not being complied with by the State?

The Prime Minister: There is no mechanism to listen to anyone. That is the problem. We are trying to get the people who are at great cost – millions of dollars we are talking about – to re-look. Let us see what was in that thing. They are refusing for the moment. Persol is the company concerned. They have not actually done so. I have requested that, instead of going to buy new equipment, we will have to... but again, under very strict control by the judiciary.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, my last question.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr A. Duval: There is no trust on the guarantees that have been given that the system is not being used. I will ask the hon. Prime Minister to consider urgently, as is being done in the UK with the setting up of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, to review, it is reported to a Select Committee of Parliament on all phone tapping and interference and monitoring activities, as well as a legislative framework, a stand-alone legislation. It is done there under the Investigatory Powers Act, with a commissioner being appointed, a former judge, who is appointed to ensure that there is oversight and accountability. It is ample time; does he not agree that this be done now in the wake of the *Moustass Leaks*? And I will end by this: if the former hon. Prime Minister had no idea he was being recorded, how can this one be so sure?

Madam Speaker: Okay, hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I did not catch the last bit of his question.

Madam Speaker: Yes, it is so long.

The Prime Minister: For the former Prime Minister, I did not hear.

Mr Mohamed: He was not aware that he was being monitored.

Mr A. Duval: No, what I said is: if in view of the opacity, the former Prime Minister himself did not know he was being on tape, how can the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

How can the hon. Prime Minister know? Because there is complete opacity. The question is to please consider what I am telling you.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is ridiculous what the hon. member has just said. It is the former Prime Minister who got this machine to be installed and now you are saying that he did not know?

Mr A. Duval: What about the oversight?

The Prime Minister: You are trying to defend the undefendable. Undefendable! They spied on everyone including himself, his father who was a Minister, his family.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, that is...

The Prime Minister: Now, you are asking for open house. Security matters have to be security matters. We did say that we will bring new legislation. There is no system – you might not believe or you might believe. There is no system to intercept anything at the moment. It is dismantled, but we will come with new legislation.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I...

Madam Speaker: No, no, no!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: First, I will invite the hon. Prime Minister to consider what Australia...

Madam Speaker: No, you have to ask a question!

Mr A. Duval: ...the UK and South Africa have done. Second, I have not provided an excuse for anyone. What I am saying is, how can the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: That is not what I said! What I said is, how can the hon. Prime Minister guarantee, if we have had former Prime Ministers on tape in office, that it is not happening to him given the opacity?

Madam Speaker: You have already said that!

Mr A. Duval: That is the question. Do not turn my words. This is not what I said!

The Prime Minister: I am not sure what he is saying. He is saying that I am spying on myself?

Mr A. Duval: No, but you do not know – the opacity!

The Prime Minister: I know.

Madam Speaker: Okay, next question! Next question, hon. Apollon!

**SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – FORMER PASSENGER TERMINAL –
CURRENT & FUTURE USE**

(No. B/710) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the former passenger terminal at the Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam International Airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) current use thereof, and
- (b) future use being envisaged therefor.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the present passenger terminal at Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam International Airport was commissioned in 2013. Thereafter, most passenger operations were transferred from the old terminal to a three-storey facility adjacent to the present one. Part of the old terminal continued to be utilised for mixed aviation operational, administrative, and commercial purposes while significant areas remained underutilised.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd that the ground floor of former passenger terminal is leased to airport stakeholders, including Air Mauritius Ltd, Mauritius Duty Free Paradise, the National Land Transport Authority for office administration and commercial purposes.

As regards the first floor, it houses the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd Aviation Training Centre, the Emergency Operations Centre, the Departure Boarding Lounge serving four boarding gates and the State Lounge, together with associated operational and service facilities. The second floor is currently leased to Air Mauritius Ltd and utilised as office space.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd that given the strategic location of the Old Passenger Terminal within the airport compound, airport stakeholders have expressed interest for the lease thereof for office and commercial operations. In this context, the Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd has established an internal committee to examine options to enhance utilisation of the available space.

Madam Speaker: Yes, are you okay? Yes.

Next question! Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles!

PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICE PROVIDER LICENCE – APPLICATIONS & PROCESSING DELAYS

(No. B/711) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third 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 Private Security Service Provider Licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the current number of registered holders thereof, indicating the –

- (a) number of new and renewal applications for the issue thereof –
 - (i) pending over the past five years, and
 - (ii) approved over the past two years, and
- (b) average time taken for the processing of applications for the issue of new or for the renewal thereof, indicating the reasons for delays, if any, in the processing thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, by virtue of Section 8 (1) of the Private Security Service Act 2004, “a licence or certificate granted under this Act shall, subject to subsection (2), be valid for a period of one year.”

Subsection 2 provides that “where a licensee or the holder of a certificate wishes to renew the licence or certificate, he shall apply to the Commissioner of Police for renewal in such form as may be approved by the latter, not later than 21 days before the expiry of the licence or certificate.”

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that –

- (a) as at 14 May 2026, there were 46 registered holders of Private Security Service Provider Licence, out of which 31 were renewed licences and 15 were for new licences;
- (b) over the past five years, that is, from January 2020 to 14 May 2026, there were in all 28 applications submitted before November 2024 which were kept in abeyance by the former Commissioner of Police. According to the present Commissioner of Police, these pending applications cannot be considered due to long lapse of time, that is, from the dates of the application. The concerned applicants have been informed that they have to submit fresh applications.
- (c) since November 2024 to 14 May 2026, 11 applications were submitted, out of which three have been approved and licences have been issued, and the remaining eight are under process.

Madam Speaker, Police have to ascertain that Private Security Service Provider Licence is issued to the right person who is expected to ensure the safety and security of people and property. Therefore, the determination of applications for Private Security Service Provider Licence warrants rigorous and strict compliance with the criteria set out under Section 4 of the Act which includes, *inter alia*, that –

- (i) the applicant for a Private Security Service Provider Licence is required to publish a notice in the gazette for three consecutive days. Members of the public have 21 days to lodge any objection thereto;

- (ii) the Commissioner of Police has to carry out investigation with regard to the application as well as to ascertain that the applicant is a fit and proper person;
- (iii) the applicant has to be trained in a recognised training institution with respect to security services;
- (iv) the Commissioner of Police has to ensure that the applicant has adequate facilities to operate the private security service, and
- (v) upon approval, the applicant is required to furnish to the Accountant General a bank guarantee of Rs3 million.

Though the procedures are lengthy, and I agree, they are lengthy, applications for licences have to be determined within a reasonable timeframe.

Madam Speaker: Yes, are you alright? Yes.

Hon. Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil! He is not here. Yes, he is not in Mauritius. Okay.

Dr. Aumeer, Third Member for Port Louis South!

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS – INFLOWS 2023-2025 – INCENTIVE MEASURES

(No. B/713) 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 Foreign Direct Investments, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Economic Development Board, information as to the –

- (a) total gross inflows thereof recorded since 2023 to date, giving a breakdown thereof on a yearly basis, sector-wise and from which countries, and
- (b) measures taken and/or contemplated to encourage same in emerging sectors.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me clarify that official foreign direct investment statistics are compiled and published by the Bank of Mauritius.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am tabling data on gross foreign direct investment (FDI) flows in Mauritius from 2023 to 2025, by sector and by country of origin.

Madam Speaker, FDI inflows fell from Rs37 billion in 2023 to Rs33 billion in 2024 before rebounding to a record high of Rs48 billion in 2025. While the real estate sector remained the primary recipient of FDI inflows, foreign investment in the financial services sector rose markedly from Rs974 million in 2024 to Rs18.7 billion in 2025, that is, the financial services sector. This was due to a significant investment in AfrAsia Bank by the Access Bank UK.

Notwithstanding this increase, higher FDI inflows were also recorded in the following sectors –

- (a) Information and Communication sector, from Rs192 million in 2024 to Rs985 million in 2025;
- (b) the Energy sector, from Rs352 million to Rs1 billion in 2025, and
- (c) the Agricultural sector, from Rs507 million to Rs807 million.

Clearly, FDI inflows are increasing.

With regard to the country of origin of the FDI inflows, France and South Africa have consistently been the main source countries, amounting on an average to 22 percent and 10 percent of total inflows, respectively, for the last three years. Other major source countries were –

- (a) the United States, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates in 2023;
- (b) Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Germany in 2024, and
- (c) Germany and the United States in 2025.

It is worth noting, Madam Speaker, that there was a significant increase in investment from the United Kingdom in 2025, largely driven by the investment in the local banking sector.

Madam Speaker, while encouraging growth has been recorded in investment flows to certain productive sectors in 2025, there is still need to further scale up such investments with a stronger focus on delivering capital towards productive and high-value-added activities.

As announced in the 2025-2026 Budget Speech, our new economic model will be investment-led, productivity-based and export-driven. Our investment strategy and policy measures are, therefore, geared towards attracting more FDI inflows into productive and emerging sectors.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Economic Development Board that several measures have been implemented to attract greater FDI flows into existing as well as emerging sectors. These include –

- (a) strengthening the Mauritius brand through more targeted, data-driven international marketing and investor outreach, aimed at enhancing the country's visibility, improving investor confidence, and attracting higher-quality and diversified FDI;
- (b) enhancing the ease of doing business by addressing the weaknesses identified in the World Bank B-Ready Report with a view to improving the overall investment climate and regulatory efficiency;
- (c) widening and deepening market access by leveraging economic and trade cooperation agreements, and
- (d) revamping the rules-based work permit system to facilitate the recruitment of foreign workers and skilled professionals.

Madam Speaker, with a view to mitigating the negative impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle-East on our economy, we are also implementing a number of measures to boost investment, such as, and I mentioned it before –

- (a) the introduction of a Golden Visa Scheme to attract investors and high-net-worth individuals to immediately relocate to Mauritius;

- (b) the establishment of a Fast-Track Concierge Service within the Economic Development Board to facilitate and accelerate the process for incoming high-net-worth individuals, and
- (c) the acceleration of the relocation of service providers in the Financial Services Sector through fast-track licensing by the regulatory bodies in Mauritius with no compromise on due diligence.

Madam Speaker, over and above these measures, we are taking new initiatives to further boost FDI inflows in the economy. We are developing a Special Economic Zone at Côte d'Or to attract global technology firms to, amongst others, establish AI, data, and disaster recovery centres, thereby positioning Mauritius as an exporter of AI services. We will also further develop and modernise our port infrastructure through the setting up of an Island Container Terminal to reposition Mauritius as a leading transshipment hub in the Indian Ocean region.

Government is firmly determined to attract greater foreign direct investment into productive and emerging sectors, as I just said, as a key driver of economic transformation. This commitment is focused on fostering diversification, enhancing value addition, and generating sustainable employment. Through continued reforms and strategic investment promotion, our goal is to build a more resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking economy for the benefit of the whole country.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes. I have been asked not to forget to let you know that PQs B/748 and B/778 will be replied by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, time permitting, which I very much doubt you will be able to do. So, we carry on?

Next question! Hon. Ms Savabaddy! Yes!

PRISON/POLICE CUSTODY – DEATH CASES – FOUL PLAY & INQUIRIES

(No. B/714) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to deaths reported in police custody and/or in prison custody since November 2024 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of reported cases thereof and the outcome of the inquiries initiated thereinto, indicating the number of cases in which –

- (a) foul play was established, and
- (b) arrests were effected and prosecutions initiated.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from November 2024 to 04 May 2026, two persons died whilst in Police custody and 35 deaths occurred in Prisons custody.

The two cases of death which occurred in August and December 2025, whilst in Police custody, are under investigation. In regard to the deaths occurring in Prisons custody, Police enquiries have been initiated in all the 35 cases, out of which 7 deaths were caused by asphyxia following hanging, 24 deaths were certified as resulting from natural causes and the remaining 4 cases are still under Police investigation.

Madam Speaker, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that foul play is suspected in two cases of death in Police custody and two cases of death in Prisons custody.

The two persons who died whilst in Police custody had been assaulted by members of the public prior to their arrest by the Police in alleged cases of larceny. In this connection, four persons have been arrested and provisionally charged for wounds and blows causing death without intention to kill and manslaughter. All four accused are currently out on bail.

In regard to the deaths occurring in Prisons, no arrest has been effected as yet.

Madam Speaker: Yes!

Ms Savabaddy: I have four supplementaries. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: We will see. Start with the first one!

Ms Savabaddy: Okay. From the answer given by the hon. Prime Minister, will the hon. Prime Minister agree that to dispel doubt due to the...

Madam Speaker: Do not ask for his opinion, remember? Do not ask for his opinion! Rephrase your question.

Ms Savabaddy: Okay. Thank you. From the answer given, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether Government will order an independent judicial and forensic inquiry so as to establish the exact cause, timing and circumstances surrounding the

death, especially, in the recent cases of Mr Jeff Alexandre Perrine and Dylan Sawmy? Thank you.

Madam Speaker: That was good! Yes!

The Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, pursuant to section 110 and 111 of the District and Intermediate Courts, whenever a person has died in prison or while in police custody, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions may direct a magistrate to hold an inquiry, that is, a judicial inquiry into the cause of death. Based on the outcome of such inquiry, the DPP will advise for further action or whether the case should be filed.

Madam Speaker: Right. Second!

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to confirm whether photographs, forensic samples and independent medical opinions have been secured and whether any prison officers, detainees or personnel are being investigated for possible foul play, assault, negligence or concealment of facts?

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Yes!

The Prime Minister: The inquiry is ongoing, Madam Speaker. I assume that they must have been done.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms Savabaddy: Thank you, Madam. *L'honorable Premier ministre sera-t-il d'accord que cette situation n'est pas saine ? Est-ce que le gouvernement...*

Madam Speaker: Encore une fois, vous ne lui demandez pas son opinion si...

Ms Savabaddy: Très bien ! Je viens directement à ma question. Est-ce que le gouvernement peut prendre à sa charge le coût des contre-autopsies que demandent là où les familles qui n'ont pas les moyens dans ce genre de situation ? Je parle là, de la situation de Messieurs Alexandre Perrine et Dylan Sawmy.

Madam Speaker: The cost !

The Prime Minister: Normally, it is not for the government to give for counter-autopsy, but I am sure they can raise the money if they want to.

Ms Savabaddy: My last one.

Madam Speaker: Okay!

Ms Savabaddy: *Thank you, Madam Speaker.* Puis-je demander à l'honorable Premier ministre ce qui est fait par notre gouvernement pour humaniser l'univers carcéral et permettre aux détenus de se réhabiliter tout en maintenant leur dignité ? Merci.

Madam Speaker: That is a tall order! I already have one there. Yes!

The Prime Minister: Lots of measures are being taken for rehabilitation. Measures are being taken for that. I do not know whether you have visited, for example, the Melrose Prison. Lots of measures are taken there and it was specifically designed for this purpose as well. Not just putting them in prison but for rehabilitation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, maybe you might want to come with a statement later on because of the...

An hon. Member: Rapport Lam Shang Leen la semaine prochaine.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

The Prime Minister: I know that there is an inquiry going on by the former Judge Lam Shang Leen. I know his report is about to be delivered.

Madam Speaker: So, okay, good. Hon. Ms Daureeawo!

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Can Dr. the hon. Prime Minister state whether the National Human Rights Commission has been requested to monitor or participate in the inquiry wherever there has been foul play?

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that they have started inquiries.

Madam Speaker: You do not ask them. They do it by themselves. I think, if I am not mistaken.

Okay, Mr François!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, with regard to the case of J.A.P., may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware, if the case has also been referred to the Human Rights Commission and if any inquiry is ongoing thereof?

Madam Speaker: Non, mais on vient de parler de ça là. On vient de dire ça là. Mais il fallait écouter !

The Prime Minister: My understanding is yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, okay. Next question, hon. Baboolall!

**BEL AIR POLICE STATION – STAFFING & VEHICLES – ASSISTANCE
REQUESTS**

(No. B/715) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Bel Air Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) current number of Police Officers on duty thereat at any one time;
- (b) number of police vehicles attached thereto;
- (c) estimated number of inhabitants residing in the catchment area thereof, and
- (d) number of requests for assistance which have remained unattended since November 2025 to date, indicating the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to Parliamentary Question B/1048 on 25 November last year, whereby most of the information requested were provided.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that presently, the Bel Air Rivière Sèche Police Station has a strength of 81 Police Officers of different ranks, operating on a shift system. At any one time during the day, there are around 15 Police Officers on duty thereat and at night, there are about 10 Police Officers on duty.

As regards part (b) of the question, there are two Police vans, one motorcycle and two bicycles attached to the Bel Air Rivière Sèche Police Station.

Madam Speaker, as I had already informed the House, reinforcement is sought from the Supporting Units such as the Emergency Response Service, the Divisional Support Unit, the Special Mobile Force and the additional support from neighbouring Police Stations, namely Flacq, Trou d'Eau Douce and Belle Mare, whenever the Bel Air Rivière Sèche Police Station is temporarily understaffed for unforeseen reasons or whenever its fleet of vehicle is engaged.

With regard to part (c) of the question, Bel Air Rivière Sèche Police Station has a jurisdiction over around 13 regions, with a population of approximately 70,000 inhabitants and covers a catchment area of approximately 41 square kilometres.

In regard to part (d) of the question, from November 2025 to 14 May 2026, the Bel Air Rivière Sèche Police Station recorded 8,775 complaints and requests for assistance, which have all been duly addressed.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Last question, hon. Fourth Member for Port Louis North. He is not listening to me. I am giving you the chance to put your question.

**BANK OF MAURITIUS – DIRECTOR OF SUPERVISION – ROLE &
RESPONSIBILITIES – INCUMBENTS NAMES**

(No. B/716) 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 post of Director of Supervision at the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) role and responsibilities assigned thereto, and
- (b) names of the incumbents over the period 2014 to 2024.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as per the Bank of Mauritius Act, one of the objects of the Bank is to ensure the stability and soundness of the financial system in Mauritius.

In this respect, the Bank regulates and supervises financial institutions and any other institutions which has authority to carry out financial activities in Mauritius.

For this purpose, the Bank has established a Supervision Department. As per the Bank's organisational structure, the Department is headed by three Directors: two for prudential supervision and one for Anti-Money Laundering/Combating Financing of Terrorism/Counter Proliferation Financing (AML/CFT/CPF) in short. They report to the Second Deputy Governor and the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius. Currently, there are two Directors in post.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the Directors of Supervision are responsible, *inter alia*, for overseeing the prudential and

AML/CFT/CPF supervision of 18 banks, 6 non-bank deposit taking institutions, 5 money changers and 7 foreign exchange dealers.

The roles and responsibilities assigned to the Directors of Supervision are *inter alia* as follows –

- (i) To formulate and oversee the execution of strategic initiatives and projects in relation to prudential and AML/CFT/CPF supervision;
- (ii) To formulate and implement regulatory and supervisory frameworks for both of them, that is, prudential and AML/CFT/CPF supervision through the implementation of risk-based on-site examination and off-site supervision;
- (iii) To ensure that the relevant legislative framework, policies and guidelines are in place and updated on an ongoing basis in line with international standards that they are implemented effectively by financial institutions;
- (iv) To oversee prudential and AML/CFT/CPF compliance by banks, non-bank deposit taking institutions, money changers and foreign exchange dealers and ensure that they implement effective programs that have adequate governance and risk management and internal control frameworks;
- (v) To make relevant recommendations to the Second Deputy Governor for necessary corrective actions to be undertaken by financial institutions in relation to possible deficiencies observed and ensure proper follow-up procedures for the implementation, and
- (vi) To recommend enforcement actions and ensure that appropriate remedial measures are taken by the financial institutions.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that the supervision department was headed by the following officers during the period 2014 to 2024 –

- (a) From 17 November 2014 to 17 November 2017, Mr Amar Kumar Bera served as Director. He was seconded by the Reserve Bank of India to the Bank of Mauritius;
- (b) From 18 November 2017 to 03 June 2018, the position of Director was vacant. During that period, Mr Chinniah, Mrs Hurrymun and Mrs Chuttarsing-Soobarah

in their capacity as Assistant Directors, jointly oversaw the operation of the Department;

- (c) From 04 June 2018 to 08 June 2019, Mr Ajay Kumar Choudhary was the Director of Supervision. He was also seconded by the Reserve Bank of India;
- (d) From 09 June 2019 to 11 May 2020, the post of Director was once again vacant. The Department was collectively supervised by Mr Chinniah, Mrs Hurrymun and Mrs Chuttarsing-Soobarah, Assistant Directors;
- (e) From 22 May 2020 to 13 July 2021, Mr Chinniah and Mrs Hurrymun were assigned duties as Acting Directors of Supervision;
- (f) From 14 July 2021 to 28 September 2025, Mr Chinniah and Mrs Hurrymun were the Directors. As from 29 September 2025, Mr Chinniah was no longer Director of Supervision as he had been appointed Second Deputy Governor. Mrs Hurrymun continued to serve as Director of Supervision, and
- (g) From 23 January 2024 to 24 September 2024, Mrs Chuttarsing-Soobarah was appointed Acting Director of Supervision and subsequently, as the third Director of Supervision as from 25 September 2024.

Madam Speaker, over the past few months, we have uncovered multiple financial scandals involving various local financial institutions under the former, if I may call it, kleptocratic regime.

- (a) The Silver Bank Ltd which, as per the Conservator's Report, as at March 2024, had Rs8.1 billion of non-performing loans out of a total loan portfolio of Rs8.3 billion;
- (b) The SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd which had written-off a massive cumulative amount of Rs14.34 billion of loans during the period 2014 to 2024 – Rs14.34 billion, Madam Speaker, written off;
- (c) The Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd, which as at 30 June 2025, had some Rs400 million of its total portfolio classified as non-performing, of which Rs304 million relate to five companies that are either in liquidation or under receivership, and
- (d) Maubank Holdings Ltd, which has a negative equity of Rs2.95 billion, resulting from accumulated losses since its inception in 2015.

Madam Speaker, when we look at these four banks, a total amount of around Rs25 billion has disappeared from their balance sheets either in the form of money siphoned-off, impaired loans or loans written-off. It is Rs25 billion, Madam Speaker. All these point to one common factor – a major deficiency in the supervisory role of the Bank of Mauritius during the 10-year rule of the previous Government.

The inadequate regulatory oversight by the Bank of Mauritius has allowed these banks to engage in risky and fraudulent practices. Such deficient supervision has delayed the implementation of corrective actions and led to the accumulation of significant toxic assets within these financial institutions. It can expose the economy to systemic instability, reduce investor confidence, and harm the country's reputation as an international financial institution. That is the result of the MSM regime.

It is not only the weakness at the Supervisory level of the Bank of Mauritius that was wrong but also the dysfunctioning boards of these commercial banks that led to the approval of toxic loans, because they had boards.

We cannot, Madam Speaker, remain silent in the face of this issue. Doing nothing is simply not acceptable. As a responsible Government, we are taking the actions required and ensure that the Bank carries out its mandate with full independence, greater rigour, transparency, and accountability, in the interest of safeguarding the stability and integrity of the financial system.

The Bank of Mauritius Act and the Banking Act will be reviewed to align them with international best practices in banking regulation and supervisory oversight. The Bank of Mauritius will look into the role of staff in these supervisory shortcomings and undertake a comprehensive restructuring of its Supervision Department and a thorough review of the existing supervisory practices.

Madam Speaker, in the light of the disturbing information concerning the Supervisory role of the Central Bank, I am informed that the Bank of Mauritius has taken actions already–

- (i) to review its internal operations to improve its Supervisory Role, and
- (ii) they have asked for the services of a professional from the Reserve Bank of India to reinforce capacity in the Supervision Department and to investigate previous shortcomings.

Government is fully committed to restoring confidence and reinforcing the integrity of the financial system. We will carry out the key reforms, strengthen the independence of supervision at the Bank of Mauritius, and ensure stronger accountability. This will lead to a more robust regulatory framework and a safer, more transparent and more resilient banking sector.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr A. Duval: One supplementary?

Madam Speaker: No, I will not.

Mr A. Duval: One supplementary. It is only fair, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, no, I will not because we have...

Mr A. Duval: I will make it short...

Madam Speaker: I said no.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, ...

(Interruptions)

I have one supplementary.

Madam Speaker: No, I said ...

Mr A. Duval: I am asking for only one...

Madam Speaker: No! Your question was already on my list to be put for next time, to be withdrawn.

Mr A. Duval: Can I just ask...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Non!*

Madam Speaker: No, *c'est moi qui décide.*

Mr A. Duval: But you have called the question. And now it is only norm that I have one...

(Interruptions)

... in the past other speakers have been given multiple supplementary questions.

Madam Speaker: I am going to raise the Sitting if you go on like that.

Mr A. Duval: But it is unfair, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Maybe it is unfair, maybe.

Mr A. Duval: It is totally unfair.

Madam Speaker: Maybe it is unfair. Will you let me speak?

Hon. Members, I pray for your indulgence regarding timekeeping. It is true that when the question was put, it was almost time to stop and because of the importance of the question, I allowed the question.

Mr A. Duval: Depriving me of...

Madam Speaker: May I speak?

Mr A. Duval: I cannot put the question again. I have no right now to ask a supplementary. You should not have called the question if you would not give me a supplementary.

You are depriving me the right of asking a question.

(Interruptions)

It is totally unfair.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I am sure...

Dr. Boolell: You cannot challenge the authority....

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I am sure that you will be able to put a different question.

Mr A. Duval: No.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Never mind, I have given a ruling.

Mr Mohamed: I will show you how!

Madam Speaker: Now, hon. Members, I also have to inform you. unfortunately, I was trying to give a chance to get this question through. So, maybe I was wrong. Maybe! I am not perfect.

Now, I have been advised the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/720, B/721, B/722, B/724, B/725, B/726, B/727, B/728, B/729, B/732, B/734 and B/748. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone.

Next, what I have to say now is that I am also allowing the hon. Minister of Housing to reply to his questions before we start with hon. Lobine's question because he is travelling tonight. We all know why he is travelling tonight. So, I will allow his questions to be put.

First question, hon. First Member for Vacoas and Floréal, Ms J. Bérenger!

Ms J. Bérenger: Donc, c'est B/741?

Mr Mohamed: B/740.

Madam Speaker: B/740.

**SALINES KOENIG, RIVIÈRE NOIRE – PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES – LEASE &
PROPOSED USE**

(No. B/740) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the lease of 25,5 arpents of Pas Géométriques situated at Salines Koenig, Rivière Noire, to Stella di Mare in 2021, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether same has been transferred to the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd. and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the yearly lease amount chargeable and outstanding amount thereof, if any, and
- (b) where matters stand regarding the implementation of the proposed hotel project thereat or proposed use to be made thereof.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I'm informed that Stella di Mare Mauritius Limited was granted a 60-year industrial lease over part of the Pas Géométriques and State Land at Les Salines, Koenig, covering an extent of 25 arpent and 25 perches for the construction of a five-star hotel.

The lease, which is valid from 11 June 2021 to 10 June 2081, was amended in 2022 to allow a change of purpose from the construction of a five-star hotel to hotel development under the Invest Hotel Scheme. There has not thereon been in favour of MIC any transfer of lease held by Stella di Mare Mauritius Limited.

As regards part (a) of the question, the annual rental chargeable is Rs16,305,854 and shall be adjusted every three years based on CPI. The outstanding rental, including interests, as of 14 May 2026 amounts to Rs18,953,172.34.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that construction had reached foundation level but subsequently stopped.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the opportunity of giving this information, at one point in time, the Stella di Mare informed the Ministry, on 04 November, 2024 that it is proposing to secure financing from the MIC. I'm adding to the plethora of events as recounted by the hon. Prime Minister.

So, on 04 November 2024, the Stella di Mare informed the Ministry of Housing and Lands that it is proposing to secure financing from the Mauritius Investment Corporation to the tune of Rs425 million and had requested the Ministry's written permission, in accordance with Article 5(b) of the lease agreement, to pledge the interest of the lease in favour of the MIC.

No permission of the Ministry was granted. Following searches carried out in LAVIMS, it was found that according to inscription volume transcribed – the number is there – dated 06 November 2024, MIC has subscribed from Stella di Mare Mauritius Ltd charges amounting to Rs425 million as follows –

- Fixed charge over the plot of State Land of 25 acres, 25 perches, and
- a floating charge on all movable and immovable assets.

What I am trying to say here is that in spite of the fact that the Ministry refused to give its consent, it did go ahead and obtained the pledge. So, as it stands, the situation is as follows, the pledge they hold is null and void.

I am also informed, the MIC did, at a certain point in time – and it was sometime in 2024 – disburse the amount of Rs325 million to Stella di Mare. Right now, since ever we have come to power and we've done away with that ridiculous regime that was running this country, and added to the Rs325 million that was given away as though it was theirs, the MIC is now using all the tools at its disposal in order to ensure that they can recover the Rs325 million.

My Ministry has to recover the millions that are also owed in terms of lease. But there is also another amount that is owed which is basically the cost sharing mechanism which amounts to Rs38,132,630.10.

Madam Speaker: Yes !

Ms J. Bérenger: L'honorable ministre, peut-il nous dire si son ministère envisage de transférer le bail à un promoteur pour un projet de villa et d'appartements ? Sachant qu'à l'origine, c'était un projet d'hôtel 5 étoiles qui peut apporter davantage d'emplois et de devises sur le long terme plutôt que des villas et des appartements.

Mr Mohamed: As it stands right now, I am aware that even though in my view that the pledge is null and void since it never obtained the authorisation of the Ministry, I have been approached by the MIC and we are working together to ensure that they can recover the Rs325 million.

Now, it will be up to the MIC to inform the Ministry of what its board has decided. Once the board of the MIC has decided to come to an agreement for the recovery of the Rs325 million, it will be sent to my Ministry for my approval as Minister of Housing and Lands.

I will then go to Cabinet to obtain Cabinet's approval with regard to the way forward. At this particular juncture, no, there is no such project or intention to transfer to anyone for any project of any sort at this particular stage.

Madam Speaker: Okay, your next question. You have one more?

Ms J. Bérenger: Si possible.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms J. Bérenger: Merci. L'honorable ministre est-il au courant que les deux directeurs de la compagnie ne sont pas des résidents ? L'adresse enregistrée au *Registrar of Companies* est celle du secrétariat. Donc, est-ce que la compagnie n'est pas en train d'enfreindre la section 132 du *Companies Act*?

Madam Speaker: Do you know that, hon. Minister?

Mr Mohamed: There is the issue which concerns the need to comply with the Companies Act. There needs to have a local resident as director. That's one issue. But right now, what I am concentrating on is not to get into those little details of breaches that are

clearly that is not the only one; there are many breaches. But I have to ensure to not react instinctively. If I am to react instinctively and cancel the lease, what happens is that MIC finds itself with a hole of Rs325 million and then we end up with simply a beautiful academic solution. Whereas the people of this country need us to be more intelligent and conscientious in trying to recoup what is owed by those who have taken it because of certain people who allowed it to be given away as though it was theirs!

Madam Speaker: Do not get carried away.

Mr Mohamed: No, no.

Madam Speaker: Do not get carried away.

Mr Mohamed: It is the truth.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Member, you have another question for the Minister?

POLICY A1 OUTLINE PLANNING SCHEME – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

(No. B/754) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the proposed amendments to Policy A1 under the Outline Planning Scheme allowing for the construction of storage units cum workers' quarters on agricultural land, he will state the –

- (a) rationale therefor;
- (b) safeguards to be put in place to prevent any abuse thereof for residential purposes, and
- (c) monitoring and enforcement mechanisms envisaged to ensure compliance therewith.

Mr Mohamed: It is B/754, *n'est-ce pas?*

Madam Speaker, Government remains fully committed to the protection of prime agricultural land for food security, sustainable agriculture and the long-term interest of our planters and farmers.

However, Government also recognises the practical realities faced by those actively engaged in agricultural activities and has agreed to the amendment to Policy A1 of Outline Planning Scheme under the Town and Country Planning Act to allow for the construction of a storage unit cum quarters for workers watchmen at a maximum gross floor area of 100 m²

on agricultural plots of a minimum size of 50 perches, approximately 2,115 m². This is subject to strict conditions.

Now, I have a list of the conditions, Madam Speaker. I can table the list of conditions.

As regards part (b) of the question, there are built-in multiple layers of safeguards to ensure that this facility is used strictly for its intended agricultural purpose.

There are strict size limits for the maximum gross floor area of 100 m² with ground floor coverage not exceeding 50 m². Space allocation for workers watchmen is capped at a maximum of 12 m². The list goes on. I will undertake to table it right away.

Regarding part (c), with a view to ensuring a robust monitoring, permits will set clear enforceable conditions attached to land conversion and building and land use permits regarding design, use and continued agricultural activity. There will be inspections and sanctions as appropriate.

Breaches will entail stop orders, demolition orders, fines, permit cancellations and other sanctions under the Town and Country Planning Act, Local Government Act and related legislations.

Madam Speaker, the balanced and conditional amendment reflects Government's dual commitment to safeguarding our limited agricultural land while supporting those who work it productively. It is a pragmatic step forward, not a loophole. Government will continue to monitor its implementation and take corrective action whenever so required to prevent abuse.

Madam Speaker: Yes !

Ms J. Bérenger: Vu des cas déjà en cours concernant les abus par rapport aux constructions qui étaient déjà permises pour des petites structures sur les terres agricoles. Est-ce qu'il n'y a pas là le risque de voir s'accélérer la, comment je vais dire ça ?

Madam Speaker: Une prolifération ?

Ms J. Bérenger: La disparition plutôt, progressive des terres agricoles au profit de terres quasi résidentielles quand le ministère augmente la permission par rapport aux structures qui sont possibles de construire sur les terres agricoles. Surtout à un moment où on parle de la sécurité alimentaire.

Mr Mohamed: I understand, Madam Speaker, the question from the hon. Member. Let me reassure her that at the time of consultations between our Ministries and the time the

decision was taken to go for an amendment pursuant to Town and Country Planning Act of 1954, all those issues were thought of. And as we speak today, well before this decision was taken, there were no such guidelines. It was open for all to do whatever they wished. And I totally understand that.

However, the reason why we have come up with a proper mechanism in the law with proper guidelines is to ensure that precisely such proliferation does not happen. What we have taken into account is what is the best way of managing to ensure that responsible agriculture goes forward and responsible farmers are helped in the process.

So, once this guideline is there, all that happens that goes outside the guidelines, there will be proper monitoring and there will be sanctions.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Yes. I find a third question for you from hon. Beehook.

Yes. I cannot find any other question. Do you have any other question, Minister, addressed to you?

Mr Mohamed: No, I do not have any other question.

Madam Speaker: Okay, hon. Beehook being absent. So, I think you are done.

Mr Mohamed: It will be going in as written format.

Madam Speaker: Yes, that is it. Thank you very much.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, all right. Then we will go to the question of hon. Lobine.

VACOAS-PHOENIX – DRAINS PROJECTS (SEPT 2025 TO MAY 2026) – CONTRACT & FUNDS ALLOCATION

(No. B/735) **Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the construction of new drains within the township of Vacoas-Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of approved projects since September 2025 to date, indicating the number thereof in respect of which funds have been allocated, further indicating in each case, the date of contract allocation.

Mr Woochit: Madam Speaker, the construction of new drains by local authorities is carried out in close collaboration with the Land Drainage Authority, which is a principal technical body responsible for the for identifying priority areas, approving drainage design

and ensuring that all project comply with the required engineering, safety and standard before implementation.

For the financial year 2025-2026, the Land Drainage Authority submitted a list of proposed drainage projects to local authorities on 24 October 2025. Following the submission and revision of cost estimates by local authorities, the overall estimated cost for the drainage project nationwide was revised to approximately Rs993 million and submitted to the Ministry of Finance on 11 March 2026. I am informed that the Ministry of Finance subsequently indicated that the request would be considered under the budget exercise 2026-2027.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, I am informed that although no new drain construction works have yet commenced since September 2025, substantial preparatory, technical and administrative works have already been undertaken. I am informed that consultancy services for detailed design of drainage infrastructure at 11 priority sites within the township were awarded to GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd for a contract value of Rs2.8 million inclusive of VAT. The consultancy includes hydrological and topographical studies, flood risk assessment, hydraulic calculation, preparation of detailed drawings and specifications, cost estimates, and bidding documents to ensure that drains are properly designed to address both present and future flooding risk.

The initial design report submitted by GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd on 05 August 2024 was referred to the Land Drainage Authority for technical approval. Thereafter, several technical meetings and consultations were held between the Municipal Council and the Land Drainage Authority and the consultant following request for further clarification and amendments.

Following additional consultations held on 17 December 2025, 29 April 2026, and on 07 May 2026, revised report was resubmitted to the Land Drainage Authority, subsequently to convey it's no objection, subject to certain technical condition for implementation at the 11 sites concerned.

In parallel, the Municipal Council has also initiated internal survey and design works for additional drainage project which are expected to be completed by 31 July 2026.

Madam Speaker, I wish to emphasise that construction works cannot proceed before obtaining the necessary technical approval of the Land Drainage Authority together with the required financial clearance. Drainage infrastructure projects involve important engineering, flood management and public safety consideration and all procedures must therefore, be properly complied with before implementation.

I am further informed that on 12 May 2026, the Municipal Council was requested to finalise the bidding documents and revise the estimates for the 11 priority sites so that implementation may proceed once all approvals and financial clearance are obtained.

I also wish to reassure the hon. Member and the House that the delay is not due to unwillingness or inaction on the part of the Municipal Council but rather to the needs to comply with all technical, procedural and financial requirements applicable to major drainage infrastructure projects.

My Ministry remain fully committed to ensuring that these projects are implemented in a proper, sustainable and effective manner for the long-term benefit of the residents of Vacoas-Phoenix.

I am tabling all relevant information concerning the drain project sites and the amended cost estimate as per report submitted by GIBB Mauritius Ltd of each site for the benefit of the House.

Madam Speaker: Yes. All right.! Hon. Beejan, if we can do it within two minutes, it would be fine? Yes. All right.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 6 – DRAIN PROJECTS – JULY 2025 TO MAY 2026

(No. B/736) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to drain projects in Constituency No. 6, Grand Baie and Poudre d'Or, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Land Drainage Authority and table the list thereof approved since July 2025 to date, indicating the

–

- (a) number of funded ones but in respect of which no contract was awarded and why;
- (b) location thereof;
- (c) amount of funds allocated therefor, and
- (d) date of contract allocation and, if not, why not.

Mr Guinness: Madam Speaker, I am informed that in the current list of projects for the construction and upgrading of drainage infrastructure, annexure to climate and sustainability fund for the financial year 2025-2026, the following projects have been approved and listed as projects under preparation for Constituency No.6, namely –

1. Completion of outstanding drain works at Fond du Sac, phase one;

2. Construction of drains at low lying points at Camp Carol, Grand Baie; Completion of drain works at Camp Carol Grand Baie.
3. Drain works at Mosque Road, Grand Baie;
4. Construction of outfall works from major drain at Fond du Sac, phase two.

Since the above projects have been listed as projects under preparation, the contracts are yet to be awarded as funds have only been provided for consultancy services up to the bidding document preparation stage for this financial year.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that the bidding documents for two projects, phase one of the drain project of Fond du Sac and the project Camp Carol-Grand Baie have nearly been finalised. Accordingly, and in line with the budget circular, my Ministry has requested funds for the works component of the two aforementioned projects for the next financial year. Once funds are made available, bids will be floated.

As regards the remaining projects at Mosque Road, Grand Baie and outfall works for major drain at Fond du Sac, phase two, these projects are still at the preliminary design stage with investigative works to follow.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to inform the House that the project construction of drains near Doorgachurn Hurry Government School Goodlands, which is being undertaken by the National Development Unit of my Ministry was awarded on 25 September 2024 to General Construction Co. Ltd for an amount of Rs14.62 million and is nearing completion.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am also tabling the requested information.

Madam Speaker: No, no. Time is up! Time is up! Yes, we will raise until 2:30 p.m.

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

On resuming at 2.32 p.m., with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated. The hon. First Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East!

DRUG-RELATED HEALTH CONDITIONS – ADMITTED ADOLESCENTS – MEASURES

(No. B/737) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to drug-related health conditions, he will state the number of adolescents admitted to public health institutions therefor over the

past five years, on a yearly basis, indicating if an assessment of the drug-addiction level of adolescents in Mauritius has been carried out and, if so, indicate the measures being implemented or envisaged to address same.

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Dr. A. Ramtohol): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question on behalf of the substantive Minister.

I would like to thank the hon. Member for this question. I am informed that the number of adolescents admitted to public health institutions for drug-related health conditions over the past five years is as follows –

- 2021 – 117 admissions;
- 2022 – 97 admissions;
- 2023 – 126 admissions;
- 2024 – 139 admissions;
- 2025 – 173 admissions.

These figures indicate a concerning upward trend in recent years, warranting sustained attention and targeted intervention.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the assessment of drug addiction among adolescents, I am informed that a national study was conducted in 2023 by the Ministry entitled, 'Study on Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour on HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse among Adolescents aged 15 to 17 in Mauritius and Rodrigues'. The study based on a representative sample of 400 school adolescents revealed the following key findings –

- (i) approximately 98% of respondents perceived drug addiction as a significant problem among adolescents;
- (ii) cannabis was identified as the most commonly used substance;
- (iii) the study underscored the need for further in-depth and continuous research, particularly in relation to emerging synthetic drugs.

In response to these findings and evolving trends, I am further informed that the National Agency for Drug Control is envisaging a comprehensive study entitled, 'Prevalence of Determinants of Synthetic Drug Use among Secondary School Students in Mauritius'. This

initiative aims at generating evidence-based data specific to the local context, identifying risk factors and behavioural patterns associated with drug use, and supporting the design of targeted data-driven interventions to address substance abuse among adolescents.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in parallel, several preventive and intersectoral measures are being implemented and strengthened, including –

- (i) Capacity building in schools. Since March 2026, a School Leadership Training Programme has been initiated in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, targeting rectors and educators. This programme focuses on early identification, prevention strategies and understanding evolving patterns of drug use among adolescents.
- (ii) Recognising that prevention is most effective at an early age, early childhood intervention programmes are being developed to build resilience, life skills and protective factors before the age of 12.
- (iii) Lastly, multisectoral collaboration, enhanced collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Non-Governmental Organisations are being pursued to promote structured and meaningful activities for young people, promote healthy lifestyles and social engagement, and reduce vulnerability to substance abuse through holistic youth development programmes.

And in conclusion, the Ministry of Health and Wellness remains fully committed to strengthening surveillance, prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation strategies to effectively address drug-related health conditions among adolescents. Currently, the Ministry has one residential rehabilitation centre for male adolescents at Long Mountain, one for female patients, including adolescents of Beau Bassin and there is one additional rehabilitation centre which will become operational in the coming weeks at Flacq. The approach being adopted is comprehensive, evidence-based and anchored in strong intersectoral collaboration to safeguard the health and future of our youth.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: No supplementary.

Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/739, B/767, B/770, B/777.

The hon. Third Member for Rodrigues!

MAURITIUS & RODRIGUES – NATIONAL SPORTS FACILITIES – REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS – HOMOLOGATION

(No. B/738) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the national sports facilities, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island, respectively, currently homologated for regional and international competitions, indicating –

- (a) in each case, the –
 - (i) type and location thereof, and
 - (ii) international or regional sports federation which homologated same, and
- (b) whether additional ones, including the Jean Daniel Andre Stadium, will be homologated.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to shed some light on the homologation of sports facilities before answering the question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, only national sports facilities which host international athletics and football competition require homologation from their respective international sport federations. However, the hosting of international competition in respect of other sports disciplines, national sport facilities do not need homologation, but they have to comply with the rules established by their respective international sport federation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hence, I am tabling a list of national sport facilities together with their status. At present, the Côte d'Or Athletics Track and Football Ground are homologated by World Athletics and FIFA respectively.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard part (b) of the question, my Ministry has sought funds for the upgrading of several sport facilities before homologation is envisaged. That being said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight that in order for the sport facility to be homologated, there are mandatory requirements that need to be met. If these requirements are being met, the homologation of the Jean Daniel André Stadium, it is envisaged to host international sports competition. Then, the onus to apply for homologation rests with the concerned National Sport Federation.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Ms Henriette-Manan: Est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire justement quels sont ces critères pour l'homologation de l'infrastructure qui est mentionnée ici, c'est-à-dire le stade de Camp du Roi?

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order for a sport facility to be homologated, there are mandatory requirements that need to be met. For instance, in the case of a football stadium, the requirements include compliance with, *inter alia* –

- (i) administration and documentation;
- (ii) pitch or field of play;
- (iii) technical areas and equipment;
- (iv) dressing rooms, team and official facilities;
- (v) match officials, doping and VAR, that is, video assistant referee, spectators' area and seating;
- (vi) safety, security and emergency services, and
- (vii) media, press and broadcast, lighting power and communications.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. B/741 has been withdrawn.

SAINT-CROIX SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE BUILDING - DEMOLITION

(No. B/739) Mr L. Caserne (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the demolition of the building housing the Saint-Croix Social Welfare Centre to make way for a Multi-Use Games Area project, she will state whether provision has been made for the construction of a new building to house the said centre and, if not, why not and, if so, where matters stand, indicating the reasons for the delay in the implementation thereof and the expected start and completion dates thereof.

(Withdrawn)

DYNAMO STREET, TYACK – WORKS' PROGRESS

(No. B/741) Dr. Ms R. Daureawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to the works being carried out at Dynamo Street, Tyack, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) scope and nature thereof, and
- (b) expected completion date thereof.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: So, I call upon the hon. Third Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil!

BIOMASS – LOCAL & IMPORTED USE – ROADMAP

(No. B/742) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to biomass, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the roadmap for increasing the use thereof locally produced and imported respectively, indicating the quantity thereof currently being used by the Independent Power Producers.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, actuellement, trois producteurs indépendants, *IPPs*, à savoir, Alteo Energy Ltd, Terragen Ltée et Omnicane produisent de l'électricité à partir de la bagasse et du charbon. Omnicane, Saint-Aubin, donc CTDS, dépend exclusivement du charbon pour sa production d'énergie. Au fil des années, on a constaté une nette augmentation de l'utilisation du charbon au détriment de la bagasse, compte tenu de la réduction significative des surfaces cultivées en canne à sucre.

Afin de promouvoir la production d'énergie à partir de la biomasse, notamment la bagasse, les résidus de canne à sucre et la biomasse, *wood chips*, et ainsi faciliter la sortie du charbon, le ministère de l'Agro-industrie a élaboré un cadre national pour la biomasse. Actuellement, les producteurs indépendants d'électricité (PIE), les *IPPs*, du secteur sucrier, consomment environ 750 000 tonnes de charbon par an.

M. le président, pour remplacer intégralement cette quantité de charbon par de la biomasse, il faudrait, selon les estimations, 1 500 kilotonnes de biomasse par an. Il est également estimé que la biomasse locale, en particulier les copeaux de bois, *wood chips*, si elle était pleinement exploitée, représenterait environ 20 % des besoins en biomasse.

M. le président, afin de mettre en œuvre la politique de sortie progressive du charbon et dans le cadre national pour la biomasse, mon ministère a sollicité l'assistance technique du Mécanisme africain d'appui juridique (MALJ), bras juridique de la Banque africaine de développement. Le MALJ a désigné Trinity International LLP, cabinet d'avocats international spécialisé dans la structuration d'initiatives similaires en Afrique, et Hinterland Management, expert en biomasse, comme consultants pour ce projet.

Mon ministère a entrepris plusieurs actions, notamment –

- (i) une évaluation de l'état des centrales des producteurs indépendants d'électricité ;
- (ii) l'approvisionnement en biomasse locale et importée, et
- (iii) la mise en place d'installations de stockage pour la biomasse importée et des investissements nécessaires à la conversion des équipements existants des *IPPs* pour fonctionner à la biomasse. On parle ici de *wood chips*.

Par ailleurs, une société à vocation spécifique, Mauritius Biomass Fuel Aggregation Limited (MBFAL), a été créée avec les *IPPs* et la SIC comme actionnaires. Cette société sera responsable de l'approvisionnement en biomasse et de toute gestion logistique liée à la manutention portuaire, au regroupement et au transport de la biomasse locale.

M. le président, compte tenu de la disponibilité limitée de biomasse locale pour remplacer intégralement le charbon, des missions d'études ont été menées en Afrique du Sud, en Namibie, en Eswatini et au Mozambique afin d'évaluer la disponibilité des copeaux de bois de biomasse présentant les caractéristiques, le volume et les prix souhaités pour Maurice. Il a été confirmé, M. le président, que le marché sud-africain est bien établi en tant que région de production forestière, de transformation et d'exportation des copeaux de bois à grande échelle. Jusqu'à 1000 kilotonnes de copeaux de bois peuvent être importées durablement depuis des ports de Richards Bay et de Durban.

Afin d'évaluer la disponibilité du terminal sucrier – on parle ici du Shed No. 2 du Bulk Sugar Terminal – pour le stockage de la biomasse importée, une étude de sécurité et de contamination est en cours. Le rapport est attendu le 25 mai de ce mois-ci.

Il est proposé au cours des deux prochaines années, M. le président, de remplacer environ 15 % du charbon par de la biomasse locale et importée. Que 15 %. Les producteurs indépendants d'électricité, les *IPPs*, seront tenus de co-combuser, donc de brûler, des copeaux de bois locaux et importés dans les chaudières existantes, moyennant des travaux de rénovation minimales, à titre expérimental. À moyen et long terme, l'abandon progressif du charbon est envisagé sous réserve de développement d'une filière biomasse locale robuste, d'installations de stockage de la biomasse adéquates et d'autres projets de production d'électricité.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Ramkalawon: Can the Minister inform the House if his Ministry, more precisely the CEB, will use pellets to replace coal in the production of electricity? Thank you.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, je dois dire qu'il y a une différence entre les *pellets* et les copeaux de bois, les *wood chips*. À l'île de la Réunion, ils brûlent les *pellets*. Ils ont les moyens qu'on n'a pas malheureusement. En brûlant les *pellets*, l'efficacité est bien plus importante, c'est vrai. Mais les *pellets* coûtent peut-être dix fois plus cher en termes de kilowattheures que les copeaux de bois. C'est pour cette raison que nous avons pris la décision d'écartier l'utilisation des *pellets*. On peut trouver les *pellets* en Afrique du Sud ou en Namibie, oui, mais les *pellets* coûtent extrêmement cher.

Donc, l'investissement dans les *pellets* va coûter extrêmement cher en termes de kilowattheures pour le CEB. C'est pour cette raison que nous sommes partis pour les copeaux de bois, *wood chips*, qui se trouvent, ici, à Maurice et en Afrique du Sud. Donc, en termes de prix, en termes d'efficacité, je pense que le pays gagnera énormément dans ce *phasing out* du charbon dans les trois ans à venir, autour de 15 %.

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

ROSE BELLE FOOD COURT – STALLS SPECIFICATIONS, FACILITIES & AMENITIES

(No. B/743) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the newly constructed food court at Rose-Belle, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to the –

- (a) overall size thereof, indicating the size of the stalls;
- (b) distance separating the said food court from the Rose-Belle Market, and
- (c) facilities and amenities provided thereat.

Mr Wochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the newly constructed food court at Rose Belle has an overall dimension of 47.5 metres by 17.5 metres. The project has been designed to accommodate two categories of stallholders –

- The first category concerns stallholders engaged in cooking food on site and selling directly to the public. For this category, 34 stalls have been constructed, each having a dimension of 3.9 metres by 2.2 metres.
- The second category concerns stall holders involved in the sale of already prepared food and beverages. For this purpose, 36 stalls have been provided, each measuring 1.9 metres by 2.2 metres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the food court is situated at an approximate distance of 40 metres from the existing Dr. James Burty David Market Fair at Rose Belle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, prior to embarking on the project, the District Council of Grand Port held consultation with stallholders of the food section of the Rose Belle Market Fair on 28 February 2022. During that meeting, the proposed concept and design of the food court were presented to the stallholders.

Subsequently, bids were invited through open national bidding on 30 September 2022 for the extension of the Dr. James Burty David Market Fair to accommodate the food court

project. The works commenced in January 2023 and were completed in September 2025 at a total cost of Rs16.8 million.

Following completion of this project, another consultative meeting was held on 23 April 2026 in the presence of the Chairperson and Officers of the District Council of Grand Port together with stall holders concerned. Out of 74 stallholders invited, 62 attended the meeting. During discussion, a small number of stallholders raised concerns mainly regarding ventilation, ceiling heights and sitting amenities for customers. I am informed that the District Council has already taken note of these observations and is presently undertaking the necessary additional works and adjustment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the food court project was initiated mainly to provide a more organised, safer and dedicated space for food related activities, particularly in view of the fact that the existing market fair does not presently hold a valid fire certificate.

I am further informed that there are presently 36 stallholders engaged in cooking food on site, whereas 34 cooking stalls have initially been constructed. In this respect, the Council has already identified two additional stalls for extension and conversion so as to fully accommodate all concerned stallholders.

As regards stalls for the sales of already prepared food and beverages such as *dholl puri*, *briani*, *alouda*, juice and salad, there are 36 stalls available for only 20 existing operators. Subsequently, the District Council of Grand Port proposes to conduct an Expression of Interest exercise for the remaining stalls after completion of all formalities. For the operation of the food court, the District Council is required to obtain both a health clearance from the Ministry of Health and Wellness and a fire certificate from the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service. Site visits have already been carried out by the relevant authorities, and the Council is presently completing the remaining infrastructural and compliance requirements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that the food court has been equipped with the necessary basic infrastructure and amenities including the water supply, electricity supply, lighting facilities, ventilation arrangement, wastewater disposal system, extractor fans for cooking stall and parking facilities. Provision has also been made for individual electricity supply to each stall following allocation.

In addition, four wall fans have already been installed, and the Council is proposing the installation of eight additional ceiling fans in order to further improve ventilation and comfort for both stall holders and members of the public. Ancillary works related to water, electricity and wastewater disposal are also being analysed. I am informed that toilet facilities are not located directly within the food court itself. However, members of the public and stallholders will have access to existing sanitary facilities situated at the Rose Belle Market Fair and the Rose Belle Traffic Centre including facilities for men, women and persons with disabilities. Necessary repair works to certain facilities are also being attended to.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that the draft regulations governing the operation and management of the District Council of Grand Port, Dr. James Burty David Food Court have already been prepared and vetted by the legal advisor of the Council and are presently being processed for gazetting. The District Council of Grand Port is proposing to render the food court operational as soon as all remaining minor works and statutory clearance are completed, including the issuance of the fire certificate and health clearance. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Ramdass!

Mr Ramdass: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a food court by definition ought to make provisions for seating arrangements for customers to sit and eat. Would the hon. Minister be able to enlighten the House as to whether this newly built food court is equipped with seating arrangements precisely for customers to sit and eat?

Mr Woochit: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am informed that the Council has already taken note of concern raised regarding seating arrangement and is examining additional provision within the available space and in compliance with safety requirements. So, this also has been taken note by the Council.

Mr Ramdass: My question was whether the newly built food court has seating arrangements for people to sit and eat?

The Deputy Speaker: He said the Council is looking into it.

Mr Ramdass: Further question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Does the hon. Minister find it normal for a newly built food court not to be equipped with toilet facilities so that as he said

himself, customers have to walk all the way to late Dr. James Burty David Market Fair to have access to toilet facilities?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Woochit: I just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is only from the main market to the food court, we have only 40 metres. So, it is not far. In fact, the toilet for the disabled is broken. We are all repairing all these for men, women and the disabled one and you can even use the traffic centre toilet and even the main toilet at the Rose Belle Fair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart!

100 ELECTRIC BUSES FLEET – CHARGING STATIONS – DEPLOYMENT & OPERATIONALISATION

(No. B/744) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the fleet of 100 electric buses donated by the Government of the Republic of India, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Corporation, information as to the deployment thereof across the various depots, indicating the –

- (a) timeframe set therefor and for the full operationalisation thereof, and
- (b) number of charging stations or pods installed therefor.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I read a Facebook post from the hon. Prayag of last Saturday afternoon, that is three days ago, thanking me and the NTC for the addition of nine electric buses to operate from the Rivière du Rempart depot. From the photo I saw, he even visited the buses at the depot.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to mention that we could afford to send these nine new electric buses, which in real terms cost more than Rs100 million, because they came to us from a fleet of 100 buses evaluated at more than a billion rupees, generously donated by the Government of India to the Government of Mauritius in five batches, the last one of which was delivered on 08 April 2026, last month.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to mention that even before the final handing over of the e-buses by His Excellency Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister to the Republic of India on Friday 09 April 2026, a large number of e-buses were already in

operation and the number increased with each passing week to reach 90 buses today, out of the 100 electric buses.

The spreading out of these buses among the various depots of the NTC are as follows –

- 21 at Remy Ollier Depot;
- 41 from La Tour Koenig Depot;
- 19 from Forest Side Depot, and
- 9 from Rivière du Rempart Depot which I just mentioned.

These buses are already providing services along 10 routes which ply from Remy Ollier Depot, 13 routes from La Tour Koenig Depot, 6 routes from Forest Side Depot and 4 routes from Rivière du Rempart Depot. The deployment of the 10 remaining electric buses will continue under a phased hybrid model combining both diesel and e-buses to ensure optimal service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that all the 100 e-buses will be fully operational by June 2026, meaning next month.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I have to point out that the Government of the Republic of India has donated 20 electric chargers along with the 100 e-buses. Two chargers have already been installed at Remy Ollier Depot and seven at La Tour Koenig Depot. Two additional chargers are currently being installed by the Indian Authorities at La Tour Koenig. The installation works are nearing completion and will most probably be completed this week. I am given to understand that the remaining chargers would be installed at the Forest Side Depot by the end of June 2026, next month. And with this, the operationalisation of the 100 electric buses will be completed.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Dr. Prayag: Thank you, hon. Minister. Is the Ministry considering to train all staff, I mean, mechanical repair staff for different depots to be able to repair these electric buses in their own depots, minor repairs if in case if they break down?

Mr Osman Mahomed: I am given to understand that training is ongoing and also capacity building is being done by the Indian side as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Third Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil.

FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT – DIRECTOR – CONTRACT

(No. B/745) **Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning whether, in regard to the current Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit, Mrs L.P., she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) her terms and conditions of appointment, including salary and other allowances drawn, and
- (b) the number of overseas missions undertaken as at to date, indicating, in each case, the expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets, per diem and other allowances.

Dr. Ms. Jeetun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Mrs L.P. joined as the Director of FIU on 04 March 2025.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the terms and conditions of her appointment are as follows –

1. She draws a monthly salary of Rs161,100, a salary compensation of Rs3,400 rupees, petrol allowance of Rs18,415, and a phone allowance amounting to Rs1,500.
2. She uses the organisation's car, and the services of a driver of the FIU;
3. She earns passage benefit at the rate of 5% per annum of her annual salary drawn. She is also eligible for a gratuity of two months' salary payable after completion of 12 months' satisfactory service, and she's eligible for loan facilities of a maximum of 12 months' salary at interest rate of 4% per annum, refundable in 48 monthly instalments subject to production of a bank guarantee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, the FIU informed that the Director has up to date attended eight missions since her appointment, which has cost Rs1,532,900. I am hereby tabling the details regarding the mission attended and the cost incurred for each mission in terms of air ticket, per diem, and other allowances.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Ramkalawon.

Mr Ramkalawon: Can the hon. Minister suggest whether she will consider resigning to follow the steps of her husband?

Dr. Ms Jeetun: I will ask her.

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

MAURITIUS RECREATION COUNCIL – EVENTS – EXPENDITURE

(No. B/746) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Recreation Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain a breakdown of expenditure incurred for the activities, programmes and events organised since 01 July 2025 to date, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) nature thereof;
- (b) venue where same was held;
- (c) number of participants;
- (d) NGOs, associations, clubs or other bodies which collaborated therewith, and
- (e) financial contributions and sponsorships received therefor, if any, giving details thereof.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Recreational Council, a parastatal body falling under my Ministry, was established under the Mauritius Recreational Council Act 2021. It is responsible for the promotion and organisation of recreational activities in Mauritius. Activities, programmes, and events are organised by the Council with fundings granted by my Ministry and the Lotto Fund.

It is to be noted that the MRC has been organising activities in different parts of the island in line with its objectives as per section (4) of the Mauritius Recreational Council Act 2021. The activities organised by the MRC encompass recreational sports and leisure opportunities and are structured to ensure that individuals of different age groups can participate meaningfully.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MRC has organised activities in many regions which were not touched before. The Council has also collaborated with NGOs, associations, clubs and other bodies for the organisation of activities.

I am informed by the Mauritius Recreational Council that since 01 July 2025 to date, 23 activities, programmes and events have been organised across the island. The total cost for these activities has been met fully under the budget of the MRC to a tune of Rs5.54 million.

However, I am also informed that MRC has collaborated with other associations, agencies, NGOs for the organisation of 127 recreational sports and leisure activities around the island.

Regarding the nature of these activities, venue where activities are organised by the MRC, as well as those organised by other organisation and within the MRC, collaborated along with a number of participants and the NGOs, association, clubs or other bodies and the financial contribution and sponsorship received. I am tabling the details thereof.

Mr Quirin : L'honorable Ministre, peut-il indiquer à la Chambre, quelles mesures ont été prises pour assurer la transparence dans l'octroi des contrats tels que l'allocation d'équipement et prestation de service liés aux activités organisées ?

Mr Nagalingum: Funds distributed by the Mauritius Recreational Council for the conduct of activities, there are procurement officers who deal with the procurement and all activities are well managed within the Council.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable Ministre peut-il nous dire si une évaluation indépendante a été effectuée afin de mesurer l'impact de ces programmes sur la jeunesse, en particulier dans les régions affectées par le fléau de la drogue ?

Mr Nagalingum: I am going to table the list of activities that has been done throughout the MRC and the hon. Member will acknowledge what activities have been done, first, and where the activities have been done. If he goes through the papers that I am going to table, he will find out what we have been doing.

Mr Quirin : M. le président, si vous me permettez...

The Deputy Speaker: A last question.

Mr Quirin: Une dernière question mais aussi je souhaiterais revenir sur la réponse de l'honorable Ministre.

Ma question est simple. Je lui ai demandé est-ce qu'une évaluation indépendante a été effectuée pour mesurer l'impact réel des programmes des activités qui ont été organisées, en particulier dans les régions affectées par le fléau de la drogue ? Il a répondu totalement à côté. Je passe à la prochaine question.

Peut-il préciser quels critères sont utilisés pour sélectionner les ONG, associations et clubs bénéficiant d'une collaboration avec le Mauritius Recreation Council ?

Mr Nagalingum: These organisations have already been established in the past and we are working with these organisations. I am going to table what the hon. Member is saying. I am not going *à côté de la plaque et vous allez voir vous-même avec vos...*

Mr Quirin: Quelles sont les critères ?

Mr Nagalingum: Vous allez voir. C'est tellement volumineux que je ne peux pas prendre le temps de la Chambre pour dire un par un. Allez voir vous-même, honorable membre, et puis vous allez ...

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you. The hon. Second Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien.

MAHEBOURG FIRE STATION – PROPOSED RELOCATION

(No. B/747) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the proposed relocation of the Mahebourg Fire Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, information as to where matters stand, indicating the new location identified therefor.

Mr Woochit: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Chief Fire Officer that the relocation of the Mahebourg Fire Station has been under consideration for several years in view of the operational needs to provide a more adequate, accessible, strategically located facility to better serve the region of Mahebourg, Plaine Magnien, Beau Vallon, and surrounding areas.

I am informed that in 2017, the Ministry of Local Government requested the Ministry of Housing and Land to identify an appropriate plot of land of an extent of approximately one arpent for the relocation of fire station from Mahebourg to Beau Vallon or its periphery.

I am further informed that a plot of land adjoining the Beau Vallon Football Ground had initially been identified for that purpose. However, despite consultation and negotiations carried out at the level of the relevant authorities, the owner of the land, namely, Compagnie de Beau Vallon Ltd, was not agreeable to release the land. Consequently, the proposed acquisition process could not be finalised and alternative option had to be explored.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following further consultations held in December 2025 and 16 January 2026 with the Ministry of Housing and Lands and other stakeholders, a site visit was carried out on 20 January 2026 in the presence of representatives of my Ministry, the

Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Ministry of National Infrastructure, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and representative of Compagnie de Beau Vallon Limitée.

I am informed that following these consultations and site assessment, two alternative sites situated along the Plaine Magnien-Mahebourg A10 Road at Beau Vallon were identified as being potentially suitable for the relocation of the Mahebourg Fire Station. The first proposed site of an extent of approximately one arpent is located near the C-Lab, Beau Vallon, adjoining the Muga, Beau Vallon and is owned by Compagnie de Beau Vallon Limitée.

The second proposed site of an extent of approximately 1.15 arpent is located opposite the C-Lab, Beau Vallon near the roundabout area and is owned by King Savers Limited.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following consultation with the architect of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and relevant technical authorities, both sites may be considered for the construction of the new fire station, subject to the requirement, technical clearance and statutory approvals from the relevant authorities, including the Land Drainage Authority, the Road Development Authority, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, and other concerned agencies.

In order to proceed with the project in a coordinated and transparent manner, the Fire and Rescue Service addressed a formal correspondence on 28 January 2026 to the Ministry of Housing and Lands requesting that clearances, technical views and evaluation exercise be initiated in respect of both sites in parallel so as to facilitate an informed decision regarding the eventual acquisition of the most appropriate site.

I am further informed that following a reminder issued on 15 May 2026, the Ministry of Housing and Lands confirms that the views of the relevant authorities have been received at its level, including the views of the Land Drainage Authority which were communicated on 11 May 2026.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Ministry of Housing and Lands is expected to convene a technical meeting with all stakeholders concerned so that a final assessment may be carried out and a clear and reasoned decision may be taken regarding the most suitable site for the relocation of the Mahebourg Fire Station, prior to the initiation of the land acquisition procedures.

A further joint site visit is also expected to be carried out with all the authorities concerned, and the hon. Member and his two colleagues of his constituency will be invited

accordingly. As regards to the implementation time frame of the project, same will depend on the completion of the land acquisitions procedures, the outcome of the technical clearance, geotechnical assessment and other statutory and administrative requirements connected with the selected site.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that relevant Ministries and authorities are actively pursuing the matter in so that the relocation project may be proceeded within the shortest possible delay once all procedures and approvals have been completed. Thank you.

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

MOGAS & GAS OIL – VAT PAYABLE

(No. B/748) Mr A. Duval (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to Mogas and Gas Oil, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the estimated monthly amount of Value Added Tax payable thereon respectively under the prevailing price structure.

(Withdrawn)

TAXI OPERATORS' WELFARE FUND – CHAIRPERSON & MEMBERS – REMUNERATION & OVERTIME

(No. B/749) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) fees payable to the Chairperson and Members of the Board thereof, and
- (b) total remuneration paid to the officers thereof, indicating the amount disbursed as overtime allowances since the setting up thereof to date.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund was established pursuant to the coming into operation of the Taxi Operators Welfare Fund Act 2021 with the objective of promoting the advancement and welfare of the taxi operators and their families.

The fund became fully operative as from January 2022. By virtue of Section 5 of the TOWF Act, the fund is administered by and managed by a board, the composition of which is governed by Section 5(2) of the Act. The board consists of a part-time chairperson and four representatives of taxi operators as well as three members representing different ministries as mentioned in the Act. In addition, a secretary provides administrative support to the board.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the fees payable to the chairperson and members of the board are determined by the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms.

The part-time chairperson of the fund is eligible to a monthly fee of Rs22,000, while each member is paid a fee of Rs1,500 per sitting up to a maximum of Rs3,000 per month as well as travelling allowance of Rs375 for each sitting, where applicable.

The secretary is paid a fee of Rs1,650 per sitting and up to a maximum of Rs3,300 per month. The TOWF was reconstituted on 20 June 2025 for a period of two years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the TOWF has no permanent staff under its establishment. Currently, the TOWF is being manned by officers of my Ministry with one officer assigned the duties of administrative officer against the payment of an allowance as approved by the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms and seven other staff of the general administration cadre against payment of appropriate allowances.

As regards (b) of the question, I am informed that since its the inception of the fund up to 30 April 2026, a total sum of Rs2.86 million has been disbursed as remuneration detailed as follows, to be precise, Rs2,863,321.05 cents –

- Attendance fees to Chairperson and members: Rs721,940;
- Allowances to administrative staff: Rs921,527.81, and
- Overtime payment: Rs1,228,264.84.

Out of the amount for overtime payment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which is part of the substantive question, a staggering sum of Rs1,113,011 was allocated to the then Administrative Manager, that is, prior to the 2024 general election.

I wish to point out that since the new board was reconstituted to date, overtime amounting to only Rs62,565 has been paid to the administrative staff for clearing a backlog which cropped up due to the fact that there were no board sittings between September 2024 all the way to October 2025.

166 applications received during that period from taxi operators were processed through overtime performance and a sum of Rs3.45 million was consequently disbursed as support to taxi operators.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the board of the TOWF was reconstituted in April last year, I met with all the members and outlined what I expected from their management of the fund. I also broadly charted out the host of responsibilities devolving on them to meet the legitimate expectations of the taxi operators.

Some 10 months have elapsed, and I take note grievances are still being voiced out by some operators on radios and other media on the lack of communication from the fund on existing welfare schemes, on delays in the processing of applications and also on the absence of schemes they consider essential to meet their operational needs.

As I take note of these grievances, I expect the members of the fund to take quick measures to make the fund a more responsive institution. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Member!

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. Je remercie l'honorable ministre pour sa réponse. Le ministre peut-il expliquer à la Chambre comment une telle somme, il est question d'un montant – il vient de le préciser – de plus d'un million de roupies pour des heures supplémentaires.

Mais comment une telle somme a été autorisée? Précisez s'il estime qu'il y a eu abus ou absence de contrôle dans ce dossier. Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was quite astonished to see the figure as well. If I take the previous manager and today's manager, the previous manager has drawn 92% of the total overtime paid while the current manager has drawn only 8%. So, there is something quite awkward there. We will have to probe into it and see what went wrong. Because this money belongs to the taxi operators.

Ms Anquetil: Je vous remercie, M. le président. En tout cas, le ministre Ganoo, excusez-moi, mais il a fait fort, hein. Le Ministre peut-il indiquer à la Chambre si cette situation ne nécessite-t-elle pas l'ouverture d'une enquête ? De nombreux chauffeurs de taxi de ma circonscription, de notre circonscription, sont concernés dans cette affaire.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, in the interest of the taxi community, I will ask the Internal Control Unit of my Ministry to probe into this anomaly and come up with a report on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have a question, hon. Ramkalawon?

Mr Ramkalawon: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Does the Minister still consider to make this fund, this contribution, optional as discussed in several meetings at his Ministry and or attach any benefit when taxi drivers are paying such funds? Thank you.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, out of the 7,208...

The Deputy Speaker: Try to be very brief with your answer because this question has nothing to do with the main issue.

Mr Osman Mahomed: If we do this, if we make it optional, the fund will collapse.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

The hon. Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière!

NATIONAL CADET CORPS OF MAHARASHTRA, INDIA – MAURITIAN DELEGATION – OUTCOMES

(No. B/750) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the recent visit of a Mauritian delegation to the National Cadet Corps of Maharashtra, India, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) composition, objectives and terms of reference thereof;
- (b) total cost incurred and source of funding thereof, and
- (c) outcomes thereof, indicating whether any Memorandum of Understanding or formal agreement is being envisaged and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, youth development remains a key national priority for government and my Ministry continues to implement programmes aimed at promoting youth empowerment, leadership, social responsibility and national cohesion.

My Ministry is proposing to establish a National Cadet Corps in Mauritius inspired by the successful model of the National Cadet Corps of India, which has been operational since 1948 and has proven effective in promoting discipline, leadership, civic responsibility and patriotism. Several Commonwealth countries have adapted the NCC concept to suit their national realities and have achieved positive outcomes in youth engagement and leadership development.

The proposed establishment of a National Cadet Corps in Mauritius is very important as it intends to provide a structured platform for inculcating discipline, leadership, citizenship, patriotism and civic responsibility among youth. This programme would aim at promoting characters building, social responsibility, teamwork and community service while helping young people develop resilience, self-confidence and respect for national institution. It will also contribute towards strengthening social cohesion and encouraging youth participation in nation building activities.

In this context, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry started consultation in 2025 with the Indian Ministry of Defence through the High Commissioner of India in Mauritius. The Indian authorities recommended that a study visited be undertaken by high level officers to the NCC India in order to obtain first-hand exposure to the structured administration training programme and operational framework of the Indian NCC prior to any decision of implementation in Mauritius.

Following Government approval in November 2025 and the availability of the Indian authorities, a high-level delegation proceeded to the NCC India from 19 to 25 April 2026. The delegation comprised the acting Permanent Secretary of my Ministry, who headed the delegation, a Deputy Commissioner of Police and the Advisor in Social and Political Matters of my Ministry.

The high-level delegation, through this visit, was tasked to gain an understanding of the structure and management of the Indian NCC model –

- (a) obtain information, discuss on curriculum design, training modules and cadet progression systems;
- (b) Identified areas where technical and material assistance may be required;
- (c) Assess the budgetary implication for implementation in Mauritius;
- (d) Identify potential implementation risks and challenges;
- (e) Propose an appropriate structure for the NCC adapted to the Mauritian context, and
- (f) Identify element for the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding between Mauritius and India for collaboration in the implementation of the proposed NCC in Mauritius.

Exchanges in India took place with the top hierarchical officers of the NCC and were very productive.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard for part (b) of the question, the cost of the air ticket and the relevant allowances of officers of my Ministry were met under the approved budgetary provision of the Ministry, while the airfares along with the relevant allowances for the Police Officers, or the officers from the Mauritius Police Force, were borne by the Police Department. Accommodation and inland transportation cost for the high-level delegation were met by the Indian authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and as far as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the mission report including key findings and recommendations is at drafting stage. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian authorities for technical cooperation and guidance is also being proposed.

Discussions are currently being pursued with the Indian side, prior to finalise the MoU. I am further informed that the Indian authorities have expressed their willingness to extend technical and material support in areas such as provision of technical expertise for curriculum design, training and implementation, capacity building and consultancy support, assistance with uniforms and basic equipment and facilitation of exchange programme and cadet visit.

This area of cooperation would ultimately be considered within the framework of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries. Further, consultations will also be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders in Mauritius and also with the Indian authorities before final recommendations are submitted to Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in order to guide preliminary works on the project, my Ministry will proceed with the setting up a Steering Committee at its level comprising representatives from the Mauritius Police Force, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, the National Youth Council and other Ministries/Departments as may be required. Same has already been approved by Government in November 2025, a meeting of this Steering Committee will soon be held.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposed establishment of a National Cadet Corps in Mauritius is an important and sensitive initiative which requires careful consultation, proper planning and broad institutional coordination.

My Ministry is, therefore, proceeding in a responsible and consultative manner to ensure that any proposed framework is adapted to the Mauritian context and serve the best interest of our youth and the country as a whole. The more so, when our youth are facing so many challenges, any MoU to be signed needs full consideration and consultation, and should follow the necessary procedures.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, tout en constatant le côté positif de ce programme, s'il est bien implémenté, je voudrais cependant demander à l'honorable ministre pourquoi il a préféré déléguer son Advisor, de surcroît un agent politique, au lieu d'un technicien de la section jeunesse de son ministère. Doit-on déduire que c'est son *Advisor* qui, par la suite, va implémenter le programme à la place des techniciens de la section jeunesse de son ministère ?

Mr Nagalingum: The hon. Member should be aware that all policy decisions are taken by my Ministry. And to form part of a delegation – we know who are the competent people who can advise us when they come back to Mauritius. So, we have no lesson to take from anybody else. We have the Permanent Secretary who led the delegation. Mr Darma Mootien is an advisor in social and political matters. He is called upon to assist and advise me on the

impact of these projects and Mr Darma Mootien has a track record. If the hon. Member would look it up, you will find that he has a track record. He has even worked for the ex-Prime Minister who is sitting here in this august Assembly. He has been an adviser for that Minister. So, before you put a question, you should know beforehand the people who can contribute for the country. He might be an adviser, but the knowledge he has, the knowledge he is going to share among us, this is the priority of all. Everything that you ask nowadays, all questions that you ask about somebody, an adviser, everybody does politics in this country. So, am I going to be ashamed to send someone who is politically...

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, hon. Minister, I think that you have answered the question.

Mr Nagalingum: So, next time...

The Deputy Speaker: You have answered the question.

Mr Nagalingum: ... I would ask you, please, do your homework before you come to the House.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je n'ai aucune leçon à recevoir de l'honorable ministre.

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question! Put your question!

Mr Quirin: Et j'aimerais qu'il nous dise...

The Deputy Speaker: Your last question!

Mr Quirin: J'aimerais qu'il nous dise, il a parlé de personne compétente. Est-ce qu'il veut dire qu'au niveau des techniciens de la section jeunesse de son ministère, il n'y a pas de personne compétente, capable d'être déléguée et par la suite, venir implémenter le programme ? Je le dis, je le répète, il est positif. Je n'ai absolument rien contre le programme, mais comment se fait-il qu'on oublie qu'on a des techniciens qui, par la suite, vont venir implémenter le programme ?

Mr Nagalingum: Probably one day when you become Minister of Youth and Sports, you can choose whoever you want but as of now, whatever decisions we have taken, we have taken the right choice. The implementation is going on and then we are going to seek funding.

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

**CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD – OVERDRAFT BALANCE – LOAN
FACILITIES CONTRACTED**

(No. B/751) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) overdraft balance thereof as at 30 April 2026, and
- (b) loan facilities contracted by the Board over the past five years, indicating in each case, the –
 - (i) amount thereof;
 - (ii) lending institution;
 - (iii) purpose therefor, and
 - (iv) outstanding balance as at 30 April 2026.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (a) de la question, je suis informé par le CEB que le solde de découvert bancaire au 30 avril 2026 était de R 2.6 milliards, dont R 750 million de prêts sur le marché monétaire. J'ai également été informé que, dans le but de réduire ses frais d'intérêts bancaires, le CEB a refinancé une partie de son découvert bancaire en contractant deux prêts à terme de R 2 milliards mauriciennes chacun auprès d'abord de la SBM, ensuite d'Afrasia Bank.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la partie (b) de la question, j'ai été informé que le CEB a contracté des prêts bancaires suivants pour financer des investissements –

- (a) Un prêt d'un montant de R 322 million auprès de *l'Export-Import Bank of India* le 2 août 2021 pour la mise en place d'une centrale photovoltaïque de 8 MW, à Henrietta.
- (b) Un prêt de 110 millions USD le 21 juillet 2023 auprès de la Banque africaine de développement pour le financement d'un projet de 10 postes de transformation (GIS) des *bushings* pour pouvoir mettre de l'énergie renouvelable ou d'autres énergies sur notre réseau.

J'ai été informé que le solde total des prêts au 30 avril 2026 s'élevait à R 3.3 milliards pour les prêts étrangers.

Comme je l'ai indiqué précédemment, M. le président, le CEB a contracté des prêts locaux aussi d'un montant total de R 4 milliards auprès de *l'Afrasia Bank* et de la *State Bank of Mauritius*.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Beejan?

Mr Beejan: Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the house how the CEB, in 2022, with a surplus of around Rs7 billion, not million rupees, billion rupees, has ended today with a deficit of around billion rupees. How?

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, pour répondre à l'honorable membre, c'est qu'ils ont bangolé l'argent de la population. Pour vous donner une partie de ce qui a été fait dans le passé par le chef du département démantèlement des finances, l'ancien ministre des Finances, Dr. Padayachy, qui s'asseyait ici. Pour vous dire, M. le président, en quelques semaines, et je pense que c'est important de rétablir certaines choses aujourd'hui en ce qui concerne les finances du CEB. Il est vrai de dire que juste avant les dernières élections générales, personnellement, j'avais fait des déclarations concernant la baisse des tarifs de l'électricité de 15 %. Cela a été dit, a été redit en boucle sur les réseaux sociaux. C'est important aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée Nationale de rétablir certaines choses. Après avoir été nommé ministre par le Premier ministre, j'ai été voir les finances du CEB pour me demander comment faire pour effectivement baisser les tarifs d'électricité.

Laissez-moi dire, M. le président, avec votre permission, à la population en quelques paragraphes ce que l'ancien ministre des Finances avec la complicité de l'ancien Premier ministre et l'ancien ministre de l'Energie, ont fait avec le démantèlement en quelques semaines de l'argent du CEB. Le 29 novembre 2021 à midi, R 700 millions ont été retirés des comptes du CEB pour être transférés dans le *Consolidated Fund* à l'initiative de l'ancien ministre des Finances, Renganaden Padayachy...

Ms Anquetil: *Alias savat dodo!*

Mr Assirvaden: ...avec l'aval du gouvernement MSM. Le même jour, à 17 heures de l'après-midi, des instructions sont données par le ministère des Finances pour un retrait de R 600 millions des comptes du CEB – l'argent que j'allais utiliser pour baisser les tarifs de l'électricité – soit R 1.3 milliards en un seul jour, le 29 novembre 2021. R 1.3 milliards prélevés en une seule journée dans les comptes du CEB – l'argent de la population.

M. le président, 2021, alors que tout le monde se préparait pour fêter la fête de Noël le lendemain, le 24 décembre à 4 heures de l'après-midi, ils ne sont pas partis à la maison, ils

sont toujours au bureau le 24 décembre 2021. Le ministre des Finances, recevant des instructions de l'ancien Premier ministre, donne des instructions au ministre du temps d'alors, Joe Lesjongard, pour transférer R 300 millions de roupies de l'argent du CEB, puis R 900 millions le même jour. R 1.2 milliards supplémentaires prélevées en l'espace de quelques heures, à la veille de la fête de Noël, des comptes du CEB. Et aujourd'hui, j'entends l'honorable Padayachy, l'ancien ministre des Finances, venir nous accuser que nous avons imprimé de l'argent, alors qu'il a dévalisé les comptes du CEB.

Ms Anquetil: Scandaleux ! Scandaleux ! Scandaleux !

Mr Assirvaden: Malheureusement, M. le président, ce n'est pas tout. Le 28 janvier 2022 dans l'après-midi, le ministère des Finances avec M. Padayachy, donnait encore des instructions au CEB pour transférer cette fois-ci R 500 millions pour envoyer dans le *Consolidated Fund*. Au total, M. le président, l'honorable membre me posait la question, comment est-ce possible que nous sommes sortis en 2022 à R 7 milliards de surplus ou à 2024 à des déficits, alors que nous dans l'Opposition, on se disait qu'on allait utiliser cet argent-là pour baisser l'électricité.

J'avais posé la question à l'honorable Dr. Padayachy quand j'étais assis, ici, dans l'opposition. Il m'avait dit : « Oui, effectivement, nous pensons à transférer 3.2 milliards. » Au total, c'est R 3.6 milliards qui ont été siphonnés en quelques semaines selon un calendrier qui interroge autant que les montants eux-mêmes ! Les coupables, à mon avis, puisque nous n'avons pas pu baisser les tarifs d'électricité, sont : l'ancien Premier ministre, l'ancien ministre des Finances et l'ancien ministre de l'Énergie !

Ms Anquetil: La honte ! La honte ! La honte !

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac!

MAURITIUS-CHINA – ZERO-TARIFF MEASURES & FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

(No. B/752) **Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the People's Republic of China, he will state –

- (a) whether Mauritius will be reciprocating the recent zero-tariff policy to our imports applicable as from 01 May 2026, and
- (b) in respect of the Free Trade Agreement entered therewith in 2021, indicate –
 - (i) whether Mauritius is benefitting therefrom and, if so, indicate the impact thereof on local businesses, and
 - (ii) the total amount of revenue foregone in terms of excise and import duties as at to date.

Mr Ramful: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before replying to the substance of the question, allow me to provide a brief background for the benefit of the House.

In June 2025, China announced the introduction of a new trade framework called the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development with African countries. The new trade framework proposed to extend a zero-tariff treatment on 100% of tariff lines to 53 African countries for their exports to China, following bilateral negotiations with each of them.

On 28 April 2026, China issued an announcement that it will unilaterally grant the zero-tariff treatment to 20 African countries having diplomatic relations with it, but which are not classified as least developed countries, without the need for bilateral negotiations. The 20 African countries include Mauritius, and the zero-tariff treatment is applicable for a two-year period as from 01 May 2026 to 30 April 2028. Thus, Mauritian exporters can already take advantage of the zero-tariff treatment on all their exports to China as from 01 May 2026, subject to applicable rules of origin.

Within the two-year implementation period of the zero-tariff treatment, that is, from 01 May 2026, Mauritius will have to negotiate and upgrade its current FTA with China. As the House is aware, Mauritius signed a free trade agreement with China in October 2019, which entered into force on 01 January 2021. The purpose of the upgrade is to ensure that we continue to benefit from the zero-tariff treatment for our exports to China and to ensure long-term predictability and consistency with the World Trade Organization rules.

One of our main exports to China is sugar. For this product, we are informed by the Chinese side that the tariff rate quota (TRQ) of 50,000 tonnes, currently granted to Mauritian

sugar under the FTA, will be maintained as granted under the FTA with 15% duty in quota instead of the normal tariff of 50%. We are also informed that Mauritian exporters will have the option to choose between the preferential tariff treatment under the existing FTA or the new zero tariff treatment. The choice will depend on the most commercially advantageous option for our exporters, but will remain subject to compliance with the applicable rules of origins under each arrangement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a key feature of the zero-tariff measure is cumulation. This means that producers can source inputs from eligible African countries having an agreement with China for manufacturing in Mauritius and exporting duty-free to China as an originating product. This extensively enlarges our source of inputs for manufacturing locally. It is to be noted that since the zero-tariff measure is new, Mauritius is in constant communication with the Chinese authorities to seek additional information pertaining to the modalities and operational procedures and details.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having provided the background, let me now respond to part (a) of the question by saying that the zero-tariff treatment granted by the People's Republic of China, as from 01 May 2026, is unilateral, and therefore, Mauritius is not required to reciprocate the zero-tariff treatment.

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, the current FTA between Mauritius and China is the first of its kind that China has concluded with an African country. The FTA is indeed beneficial to Mauritius. Under the FTA, China has committed to eliminate tariffs on 8,547 tariff lines on goods over a period of seven years. The concession covers a wide range of products, including garments, frozen fish, paints, wines and spirits, dairy products and chemicals. In addition, China has granted Mauritius an export quota of 50,000 tonnes of sugar at a preferential tariff rate of 15% instead of the normal rate of 50%.

Mauritius, for its part, has provided China with duty-free access on 192 tariff lines and reduced tariffs on a further 51 tariff lines. The House may wish to note that, at the time the FTA was signed, approximately 93% of our tariff lines were already duty-free to all countries. It is also worth noting that China was already the main import market of Mauritius, even prior to the FTA coming into force. It is the hope that this new measure and the eventual upgraded FTA can contribute meaningfully in reducing the trade deficit that we currently have with China.

With regard to the impact of the FTA on local businesses, I wish to inform the House that since the entry into force of the FTA in 2021 until 06 May 2026, total exports to China under the FTA amounted to Rs1.75 billion. While trade flows have fluctuated over the years, exports to China under the FTA have recently shown an increase from some Rs126 million in 2024 to Rs449 million in 2025. The main export products include textile products and sugar. The significant increase in the export data from 2024 to 2025 is mainly due to export of sugar to China under the TRQ. The House may note that 14 local businesses are currently exporting their products to China under the FTA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in terms of impact on local producers, the FTA has created new export opportunities, especially for sugar and textile products. There remain further export potentials for products such as fresh agricultural produce, seafood, and special sugar. Discussions are ongoing with stakeholders to identify additional products for export to China and to address implementation challenges with a view to help them take full advantage of the FTA.

Another concrete outcome of the FTA has been the establishment of the China-Mauritius Renminbi Clearing Centre in June 2025. This centre, which is based in Mauritius, greatly facilitates payment systems for business operators dealing with China, thereby reducing transaction cost.

Concerning part (b) (ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House that as per information provided by the Ministry of Finance, the duty concessions relating to trade in goods under the FTA cover only import duties, that is, tariffs, and are not applicable to excise duties. Consequently, there is no revenue foregone in terms of excise duties arising from the implementation of the FTA. However, regarding import duties, the total amount foregone as at date is around Rs330 million.

However, I need also to state that import duties paid under MFN, that is, goods that are not eligible under the FTA, for the period 01 January 2020 to May 2026, we have collected approximately Rs3 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to add that trade is not only about revenue generation or revenue loss. It is much more than that. It is conventional wisdom that free trade contributes to the welfare of consumers in terms of wider choice and more competitive pricing. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhummun.

Mr Jhummun: Thank you. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether, following this agreement, are we importing more and more from China or is it more or less the same?

Mr Ramful: As I have said, we are currently negotiating the new FTA Framework. There are currently two officers who are in China and they are having a training session, and they are being trained on the implementation of the new FTA. Once they are back, negotiations will follow and then we will decide whether we will go ahead with the new FTA or not.

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

STATE TRADING CORPORATION – RATION RICE – PRICE & STOCK

(No. B/753) Mr J. F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the hon. Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to ration rice, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the quantity of monthly consumption thereof in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island, respectively, indicating the –

- (a) buying and selling price thereof, and
- (b) available stock thereof, indicating whether –
 - (i) the storage thereof meets the required standards, and
 - (ii) same is fit for consumption.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that the monthly consumption of long grain white rice amounts to 1,650 metric tons in Mauritius and 400 metric tons in Rodrigues.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that for the period of 01 November 2025 to January 2026, the buying prices of long grain white rice per metric ton on a cost and freight basis were as follows –

- the price of long grain white rice in 25 kg bags is 398 USD per metric ton, while that in 5 kg bags is 428 USD per metric ton.

This is an average equivalent to Rs26.22 per kilogram resulting in an estimated subsidy of Rs380 million for the period July 2025 to June 2026 based on a total estimated quantity of 25,000 metric ton over this period.

- The maximum retail price for 500 grams is Rs5.40;
- 2.5 kilo is Rs28;
- 5 kg is Rs56, and
- 25 kg is Rs270.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the STC that the current stock for Mauritius is 3,511 metric ton which represents 70 days consumption as at 18 May 2026. The stock of long grain white rice for Rodrigues as at 18 May 2026 was 565 metric tons representing 45 days consumption. A next shipment of 200 metric tons of long grain white rice is expected to reach Rodrigues around 11 June 2026.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regards to part (b)(i), I am given to understand that the long grain white rice procured by STC is stored in Shed A Warehouse in Mer Rouge, Port Louis, in Mauritius with storage capacity of 5,500 metric tons and in STC Granary with storage capacity of 900 metric tons at Port Mathurin in Rodrigues. In order to ensure quality assurance of long grain white rice, the STC regularly carries out fumigation exercises in both warehouses, that is in Shed A Warehouse in Port Louis, Mauritius and in the Granary Warehouse at Port Mathurin in Rodrigues. Furthermore, both warehouses are kept well-ventilated so as to minimise moisture, humidity level therein.

With regards to part (b)(ii), I am informed that to ascertain the quality of this strategic commodity, in line with the provision made in the bidding document for long grain white rice, each supplier of long grain white rice is mandatorily required to submit to the STC the undermentioned documents prior to any consignment reaching Port Louis, Mauritius –

1. A Health Certificate certifying that the rice is fit for human consumption issued by a public body or its authorised agency in the country of supply;
2. Pre-shipment inspection certificate issued by an independent and internationally recognised inspection agency like SGS or Bureau Veritas;

3. Fumigation Certificate issued by a public body or its authorised agency in the country of supply;
4. Phytosanitary Certificate issued by a public body in the country of supply, and
5. Container Cleanliness Certificate issued by independent and internationally recognised inspection agency, presently SGS and Bureau Veritas.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr François: Yes, thank you, hon. Minister. Will the hon. Minister inform the House as to where matters stand with regards to the construction of the new STC warehouse in Rodrigues, if you have information?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, I met the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues last week. We had a meeting and we are discussing about the warehouse, and he will try to identify a place to allocate it to the State Trading Corporation.

Mr François: Will the hon. Minister agree to request, despite his good answers, a thorough investigations following various complaints received with regards to the quality of ration rice when cooked, what they call in the local language, '*diri labou*', *ler kwi vin labou*, and then despite the remarkable appreciated efforts by MSCL to ship rice to Rodrigues in brand new containers?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I will check with the STC whether the quality is okay right now and I will revert back to you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Third Member for Rodrigues!

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS – YOUTH'S MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

(No. B/755) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the concerns expressed as to the adverse effects of social media on the mental health of the youth, he will state whether consideration is being given for the implementation of stricter controls, including mandatory age-verification measures in respect of access to social media platforms for minors under the age of 16 years.

Dr. Ramtohul: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for this question. A very topical one indeed. Mauritius has over the recent years experienced a rapid

increase in the use of digital technologies and online platforms. While these platforms offer many benefits, they also expose users, especially our children and youth, to significant risks including cyberbullying, harassment, sextortion, scams, exploitation and child pornography. Every single online harm on our children is far too many and it is our duty to protect our children from such ills. This situation today has become unacceptable.

In the first four months of this year only, there have been 81 reported cases of online harms caused to our children under the age of 16. In other words, every three days, there have been two children falling victim to online harms. In some cases, cyberbullying incidents have had severe consequences including tragic loss of life among young people.

The impact of social media on mental health and well-being of our young people is receiving increasing international attention. In April 2026, the World Health Organisation highlighted that certain patterns of technology and social media use may contribute to risks such as anxiety, depression, sleep disorder, particularly among vulnerable young people. Several countries including Australia have introduced or are considering restrictions on access to social media platforms for children under the age of 16.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer to the reply given by my colleague, hon. Dr. Gungapersad, to PQ B/99 on 24 March 2026, in which he stated that his Ministry, with the support of mine, had launched an awareness campaign on cyberbullying.

I also refer to my reply PQ B/107 from hon. Ms Savabaddy on 24 March 2026, where I outlined the measures my Ministry took and further intends to take to address the growing concerns about the risks and harmful effects faced by young people on social media.

As mentioned in my reply on 24 March, my Ministry, together with the ICTA, has taken steps to reduce children's exposure to harmful and illegal contents on the internet. Accordingly, in December 2025, a Child Online Protection measure which provides easy-to-use parental control solutions was launched by three internet service providers, namely Emtel Ltd., Mauritius Telecom Ltd., and Mahanagar Telephone (Mauritius) Ltd.

On Monday, 11th of May, we launched, together with Mauritius Telecom, Phase 2 of Child Online Protection, which gives further governance powers to parents to remotely administer the mobile phones of their children. This allows a parent to remotely switch off the mobile phone of the child or control which applications will this child have access to and

during which time band. This will go a long way in empowering parents to provide additional protection to their children.

Further, my Ministry has initiated preliminary consultations with various stakeholders on delaying access to social media for children below the age of 16 for stronger online protection for children. The consultations, along with the experience of Australia, have highlighted several challenges, including the need for reliable technical ecosystem for age verification process, compliance with data protection requirements, cooperation from social media platform owners, and the prevention of the use of virtual private networks to bypass restriction are some of the challenges.

Although Mauritius has already established laws such as Data Protection Act, the Information and Communication Technologies Act, the Children's Act, and the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act, there is currently no specific provision regarding access to social media platform based on age. In fact, those platforms actually ask the age of the applicant or the user. Below 13, they do not allow access, but children tend to give ages that do not reflect their actual age.

Mauritius is therefore likely to face similar implementation challenges as Australia if access to social media platforms were to be delayed for children under a certain age. Discussions are well underway in order to gauge the position and views of relevant stakeholders to understand the benefits and challenges of such an approach in Mauritius. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no final official position has currently been taken.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central.

INVALIDITY PENSIONS – BENEFICIARIES – REJECTED APPLICATIONS

(No. B/756) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity whether, in regard to the Invalidity Pensions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to, since January 2024 to date on a yearly basis –

- (a) the number of beneficiaries thereof, indicating the number thereof whose pensions have been stopped, and

- (b) whether applications therefor from persons suffering from long-term chronic diseases, acquired long-term disabilities and inborn disorders have been rejected and, if so, indicate the number thereof.

Mr Subron: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that at present, persons with disabilities are entitled to an invalid basic pension or a disability allowance after an assessment is carried out by a medical board, which falls under the aegis of the medical unit of my Ministry.

The basic invalid pension is granted based on the degree of disability associated with the medical condition for a definite period ranging from one year to five years, and in some cases, permanently.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the number of beneficiaries of invalidity pension, as well as the number of cases where payment thereof has been stopped for the period of January 2024 to December 2025 on a yearly basis is as follows –

- Year 2024, the total number of beneficiaries was 31,904, and the total number of beneficiaries whose pensions have been stopped was 4,168;
- For 2025, the total number of beneficiaries was 31,262, and the total number of beneficiaries whose pension have been stopped was 3,801.

The possible reasons for pensions being stopped are as follows –

- (a) The applicant no more meets the criteria set out in the present medical guidelines, and these vary from case to case;
- (b) The beneficiaries are granted basic invalid pension for a defined period without re-boarding reassessment, such as pacemaker, fracture, etc.;
- (c) Some beneficiaries did not appear at the medical board for renewable despite being convened and reconvened twice;
- (d) Some beneficiaries reached pension age and thus receive Basic Retirement Pension;
- (e) Some beneficiaries have passed away, and
- (f) Some beneficiaries are abroad for a period of more than six months.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b), first, I am informed that all applications for invalidity pension are examined by a medical board consisting of two general

practitioners in accordance with the existing medical guidelines. All applications, including long-term chronic diseases, acquired long-term disabilities, or inborn disorders are assessed based on the degree of disability associated with the medical condition and not on the basis of the medical condition itself.

In this respect, applications are not allowed or discontinued where the degree of disability assessed does not meet the prescribed threshold in the medical guidelines. Those suffering from mild or moderate disabilities usually do not satisfy the eligibility criteria, and hence, are not allowed when boarded or assessed.

Precise statistics as requested by the hon. Member of the number of persons suffering from long-term chronic diseases, acquired long-term disabilities, and inborn disorders who have been rejected, that is, disallowed or discontinued, are not available at this stage. The specific data disaggregation and collection is being reorganised. However, I can give the hon. Member some indicative statistics.

First, the number of new applications related to long-term chronic diseases, acquired long-term disabilities, and inborn disorders which have been rejected for the period of January 24 to December 2025 on a yearly basis is as follows –

- For year 2024, the total number of such application disallowed and rejected is 44 out of 10,064, and
- For year 2025, 72 such applications out of 9,795.

Second, I have indicative figures for the number of beneficiaries whose pensions were related to long-term chronic diseases, acquired long-term disabilities, and inborn disorders and which have been discontinued. The figure is around 5% of the yearly number of beneficiaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to state that the assessment process is carried out on the basis of the medical guidelines which dates back to 2016, and which is being updated in the first phase of the disability pension reform. We are now processing for the clearance of the Ministry of Finance for this much awaited and much needed reform.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Aumeer.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Sir.

May I ask hon. Minister whether, the medical unit at his Ministry, has given him information as to the basis of rejection of gentlemen and ladies with inborn incapacity or long-term acquired deficiencies, for example, epilepsy or those having chronic cancer conditions, whether this initial basis of rejection was made on an objective basis or a subjective assessment?

Mr Subron: The information provided is from the medical unit, and whether the assessment is objective or not, I'm not in a position to give my views on this. It is the Medical Board. Let me remind the hon. Member that any person who is dissatisfied with the Medical Board can go to the Medical Tribunal where there are specialists and even to the Supreme Court for appealing, which has never been done up to now.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. May I ask the hon. Minister, in a spirit of compassion to the people who depend on invalidity pension, does the medical unit not consider it deem fit to avoid the recourse to appeals and tribunal? At the very outset, assessments that are made at the residence of people, done specifically by medical officers, who have the experience and knowledge, are they able to reject it outright? Or to accept it so as to avoid these people to go unnecessarily to the medical appeal and the board when afterwards, it is overturned? Thank you.

Mr Subron: I take on board your proposal. This would be taken in the second phase of the reform. But let me add that the number of cases accepted at the level of the medical board has increased by 5% during the course of this Government. So, there are less appeals right now.

For specialised doctors, normally, now, they are medical doctors employed by the Social Security Unit of my Ministry and the Medical Unit. The new system of assessment will change completely. It will be qualitatively new. This will be in the second phase of the reform. The work is in progress, and there is progress. Thank you.

Dr. Aumeer: One rejected case.

The Deputy Speaker: Your supplementary, hon. François!

Mr François: Yes, if you allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one question.

Mr François: Yes, sure. Will the hon. Minister be able to confirm or state or table the specific number or statistics of beneficiaries whose invalidity pensions have stopped for Rodrigues? For the mentioned period specifically.

Mr Subron: I do not have this statistic. I do not have it. I think it's under the RRA. I will check it. But for the medical board, it's under the RRA. The medical appeal is under my Ministry.

I take this opportunity to reply to you to say that the Medical Appeal Tribunal, which we talked in the last session, will be going to Rodrigues in mid-June.

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

FISHERMAN REGISTRATION CARD – SUSPENSION, REVOCATION & ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/757) 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 Fisherman Registration Card, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number thereof suspended or revoked over the period 2023 to 2024, and
- (b) when the next exercise for the issuance thereof will be conducted, indicating whether any change in the eligibility criteria therefor is being envisaged.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me thank our hon. friend for putting this question. I will say that in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that for the period 2023 to 2024, one fisherman card was revoked as the fisherman was engaged in other gainful employment.

I wish to refer the hon. Member to replies made to PQ B/987 at the Sitting of 11 November 2025 and PQ B/238 at the Sitting of 17 March 2026, respectively. I inform the House that our lagoons have been over-exploited and depleted over the years. The previous government had gone against sustainable fisheries by issuing a substantial number of new fishermen cards.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that from January 2025 to date, a total of 80 applications for fisherman card have been received at the 14 fisheries posts across the island. These 80 applications have been kept in abeyance for the time being.

With regard to the eligibility criteria, so far, no change is being envisaged.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes!

Mr Apollon: Can the hon. Minister inform the House, the operation of checking if all the fishermen that have been delivered a card on the eve of the election, is the process of revoking or suspending their card still going on?

Dr. Boolell: No, we are mindful and watchful. There is a monitoring unit looking at the cases. Although they were given fishermen cards almost on the eve, on the threshold of general election, but we have to make sure that they are in gainful employment in relation to ocean activities. Otherwise, appropriate corrective measure will be taken.

The Deputy Speaker: A last question from hon. Ramdass.

PACK & BLISTER – FAULTY MEDICAL VENTILATOR – FEES RECOVERY

(No. B/758) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether, in regard to the case lodged before the First Instance Court in Spain to recover the 1.8 million euros paid to Pack and Blister Distribuciones Farmaceuticas SL located in Spain for the acquisition of 50 medical ventilators which proved to be faulty on delivery and the incidental storage and legal fees being incurred in relation thereto, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Dr. A. Ramtohol): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question on behalf of my colleague, Hon. Minister Bachoo. I would like to first thank the hon. Member for this question.

The House would recall that the previous government had during COVID-19, through the STC, procured 50 ventilators from Pack and Blister, Distribuciones Farmaceuticas SL located in Spain, against an outright payment of 1.8 million euros. These ventilators were found to be defective and not according to the specifications, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Initially, a Spanish law firm, Ferran Abogados and Asociados, was enlisted by the previous government to recover the 1.8 million euros from Pack and Blister. However, it is no surprise to anybody that not much progress was made. But as a responsible Government, we cannot accept to let go of the 1.8 million euros as this fund comes from the hard work of our people.

Therefore, further to the advice of the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Health and Wellness retained the services of another Spanish law firm, namely Pérez-Llorca Law Firm.

After several consultations, this law firm advised that an action may be brought for performance or termination of the contract under Article 1124 of the Spanish Civil Code against Pack and Blister.

Alternatively, an action for defective performance could be brought under Article 1166 of Spanish Civil Code. Accordingly, on 29 April 2026, the Spanish law firm sent correspondence to Pack and Blister, initiating an alternative dispute resolution proceeding, whereby the sums of euro 2,216,390.65, inclusive of interest, and Rs41,181.50 are being claimed.

The offer established a one-month deadline for acceptance, and response is being awaited. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: I already have one question because time is already over.

Mr Ramdass: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This acquisition dates back to 2020 and it involves a significant amount of taxpayers' money. In view of the risk of the supplier raising a potential defence of the claim being time-barred, may we have a clear indication as to when the proceedings will be launched, if any?

Dr. Ramtohul: Sure. As responded in the substantive part of my answer, we made this offer on 29 April 2026, giving them one month notice, which implies that by 28 May 2026, we expect a response, failing which, the Ministry will decide, under the advice of the hon. Attorney General, on the way forward. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/759, B/760, B/761, B/762, B/763, B/764, B/765, B/768, B/769, B/772, B/773, B/774, B/775, and B/780.

Time is over.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

Mr Bhagwan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Constitutional Review Commission Bill, (No. VI of 2026) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. V OF 2026)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, Dr. A. Ramtohul!

(4.21 p.m.)

The Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (Dr. A. Ramtohul): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2026) be read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise to present the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill. This amendment Bill represents a significant advancement in modernising the legal structure for electronic transactions in Mauritius. Its goal is to make sure our laws adapt to technological evolution, facilitate business activities and enhance our reputation as a reliable hub in the digital economy.

The Electronic Transactions Act, enacted in 2000, was a pioneer for its era. Nonetheless, the digital environment has transformed considerably. Nowadays, trade is increasingly conducted on digital platforms, automated systems and via paperless transactional tools. Our legislation needs to evolve in order to represent this truth and facilitate further adoption of digital technologies.

This Bill aims at updating the Electronic Transaction Act to better align with advancement in digital commerce and to ensure that the country's legal framework is in line with international standards. Particularly those established by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

The amendments are largely informed by the following instruments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

- Model Law on Electronic Commerce 1996 (MLEC);
- Model Law on Electronic Signatures 2001 (MLES);
- United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts 2005 (ECC), and
- Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records 2017 (MLETR).

By adhering to these instruments, Mauritius strengthens legal certainty and improves its capacity to engage comprehensively in cross-border digital trade. It is also crucial to emphasise that these modifications will enable our posture to become a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts, as we said, known as the ECC.

Furthermore, Mauritius can join this international agreement which makes it practicable for electronic communications to be legally recognised in cross-border contracts by also harmonising our local laws with the convention's tenets. There are currently about 25 contracting states, including Singapore, that are signatories to the ECC, indicating a growing global acceptance. Although the number of contracting states is still growing, it comprises both developed and emerging economies. As nations update their frameworks for digital trade, adoption is continuously rising. Enhanced legal certainty in international transactions, better acceptance of our electronic communications overseas, and increased appeal of Mauritius as a jurisdiction for international trade and digital business are only a few of the obvious advantages of this accession.

The Bill is technical because the subject matter is technical, but its objective is simple: to facilitate business and provide legal certainty. It updates core provisions of the law to reflect how transactions are actually conducted today. Digitally, across borders and increasingly through automated systems. Far from over-legislating, it removes ambiguity and aligns Mauritius with internationally accepted standards. These reforms also represent an important milestone in the implementation of the Government's ICT Blueprint (2025-2029).

That strategy sets out a clear vision for Mauritius to become a digitally empowered economy, underpinned by robust legal and regulatory frameworks. By modernising the Electronic Transaction Act, we are giving concrete effect to that vision, creating the legal infrastructure necessary to support digital trade, foster innovation and enhance trust in electronic transactions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this reform is not happening in isolation. It is linked by the roots with the Blueprint (2025-2029) and aims at positioning Mauritius as a digitally empowered economy. We are not just updating a law. We are building the legal infrastructure for innovation, digital trade and economic growth.

The Bill introduces three main areas of reform –

- (i) It modernises the law on electronic signatures;
- (ii) It provides legal recognition for automated contracting and smart contracts;
- (iii) It introduces a comprehensive framework for electronic transferable records.

This third section is the most transformative part of the Bill, which I will come to as we build the foundation, and I will briefly address each of these.

Firstly, strengthening the objects of the Act under section 3. The Bill updates the objectives of the Act to clearly include the support of cross-border electronic transactions and deepens the integration of Mauritius into the digital global economy. This addition is not just symbolic. It shows a clear policy direction to ensure that Mauritius stays compatible with international electronic systems and remains, therefore, attractive for global business.

Secondly, modernising the key definitions under section 2. The Bill revises the language of the Act to match current technological realities. It replaces the term 'electronic agent' with 'automated messaging system', defined as a system that can start or respond to electronic communications without human involvement.

This aligns the Electronic Transactions Act with the language in the ECC and reflects modern practices. The term 'automated message system' is internationally recognised and better reflects modern technologies, including platforms and algorithm-driven systems. It ensures clarity and alignment with global legal frameworks, particularly in recognising contracts formed without human intervention.

The definition of 'electronic record' now includes all information logically linked to the record, ensuring consistency with international standards. A new definition is added to support the legal framework for transferable instruments in electronic form.

Thirdly, reform of electronic signatures, section 8 – and this one is a replacement. A central feature of this Bill is the amendment to section 8 on electronic signatures. The new provision sets out a clear and modern test. An electronic signature will meet a legal requirement if it identifies the signatory and shows intention, and the method used is reliable and appropriate for its purpose or has proven to achieve that purpose.

This introduces for the first time in our laws a flexible and technology neutral standard based on reliability. This approach has several benefits, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It accommodates various technologies, it reflects how electronic signatures are commonly used, and it ensures legal validity is assessed in the right context. This amendment aligns with Article 6 of the Model Law on Electronic Signatures and Article 9 of the ECC. It also introduces flexibility while maintaining legal clarity, and it ensures technology neutrality. This approach is widely adopted internationally and ensures legal certainty while also being technology-agnostic. It allows courts to assess the signature in context rather than relying on rigid or outdated criteria.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to exemplify with a concrete case. Consider a Mauritian company entering into a high-value supply contract with an overseas partner. Instead of simply signing a document electronically, the parties now use a secure digital signing platform which requires a multi-factor authentication to verify the identity of the signatory, uses encryption and digital certificates to link the signature uniquely to that person, and generates a tamper evident record so that any alteration to the document, after signature, becomes detectable to prevent frauds and it produces a time-stamped audit trail showing when and by whom the document was signed so that tracing can be enabled in case of any investigation of wrongdoings.

Now, under the amendment, under Section 8, the law does not simply ask, ‘was there a signature?’ but it asks, ‘is the method used reliable and appropriate for that purpose?’. In a high-value commercial contract, a system with authentication, encryption and audit trails would clearly meet that standard. In other words, the law now recognises not just that a document is signed, but it is signed in a way that can be trusted. With regard to recognition of foreign electronic signature – and this is a new section under 15A – a new section states that the legal effectiveness of an electronic signature or certificate cannot be denied merely based on the geographic location where it was created or used, or merely on the basis of the location of the issuer's or signatory's business. This rule promotes cross-border acceptance and

removes legal obstacles to international electronic transactions. It simply ensures that geography does not determine validity.

A foreign signature must still meet the same functional and reliability requirements under Mauritian law. This is essential for cross-border trade and ensures that Mauritius is not isolated from international digital transactions. While the existing Act already recognises secure electronic signatures, the new provision removes any doubt by expressly providing that a signature or certificate cannot be denied legal effect solely because it originates from abroad. Therefore, this strengthens legal certainty and aligns Mauritius with international best practice. In fact, this is a non-discrimination rule, which is stronger in legal interpretation.

With regard to trust and digital signature framework under Section 16, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in any digital ecosystem, the circle of trust represents a fundamental element that builds credibility. This Bill contributes to strengthen the trust in the use of digital signatures in our jurisdiction. It clarifies that any alteration to an electronic signature after it was made, must be detectable. This may appear technical, but it is essential to ensure integrity, transparency and confidence in digital transactions.

And another keyword, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is traceability. Electronic records and digital signatures under Section 18 and 19 contain amendments that clarify that a digital signature applies to the entire electronic record and not just to part of it or only to the pages on which that signature was affixed and that there is consistency in how secure digital signatures are treated. These changes eliminate confusion and reflect current verification practices internationally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With regard to clarifying electronic communications under Section 15, this Bill introduces important updates to the rules governing electronic communications. Section 14 is updated to align with the ECC by redefining the time of dispatch as the time at which a message leaves the originator's system, and clarifying that receipt occurs when a message can be retrieved.

Additional provisions clarify that the location of equipment does not determine the place of business, and in a world that is dominated by cloud technologies, this section becomes very important. It also clarifies that domain names or email addresses do not specify or imply a specific location. This Bill further clarifies that the location of servers or equipment do not define a party's place of business and using a domain name or email address linked to a country, does not imply a presumption of location. These provisions are

crucial in a digital environment where infrastructure is often spread across multiple geographical areas. The concept of cloud computing, as mentioned, is one such example.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a common practical application of this clause can be described by the following situation. An exporter sends shipping instructions or confirms contract by email or through an online platform. The law will now clearly determine when, that is the time stamp, that communication takes legal effect, thereby removing disputes about whether or not and when a message was sent and/or received with the time stamps. It also ensures that server location does not determine the place of business and domain names do not create presumptions of jurisdiction. These updates reflect the realities of modern digital infrastructures and practices.

With regard to legal recognition of automated contracting under new Sections 14A to 14D, an important innovation in this Bill is the introduction of rules about automated messaging systems. These new sections clarify that online proposals are generally invitations to make offers unless otherwise stated. Contracts formed through automated systems are legally valid even without human intervention and there are safeguards for input errors allowing for withdrawal under certain circumstances or conditions. These rules provide a solid legal foundation for smart contracts, algorithm driven transactions and digital platforms. Such contracts are already widely used in practice. The law is simply recognising reality and providing legal certainty. Importantly, the Bill does not remove safeguards. General contract law continues to apply and specific protections are introduced including provision for input errors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a logical question that arises relates to protection for individuals dealing with automated systems. The Bill introduces a clear safeguard. Where a person makes an input error and the system does not provide an opportunity to correct it, the person may withdraw the erroneous part of the communication under two conditions; notice is given promptly and no benefit has been derived. This ensures fairness in automated environments. It is a balanced approach that supports innovation and at the same time, protects users adequately and it reflects everyday commercial reality. When a buyer places an order on an online platform and the system automatically confirms the purchase, the system generates an invoice and processes payment and a contract is then formed. This Bill ensures that such transactions are legally recognised while also protecting users in cases of input errors where no correction mechanism is provided for.

Consider another situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in which a Mauritian seller provides products to a foreign purchaser through a blockchain-enabled system. A smart contract is created with predefined terms. For example, once the shipment is confirmed as delivered and verified, payment is automatically processed and released to the exporter. In this arrangement, there is no need for manual intervention once the conditions are met and satisfied. The system automatically executes the contract and all actions are recorded transparently on the blockchain network. In practical terms, this means faster settlement of payments, reduced reliance on intermediaries, and greater trust between parties who may be from different jurisdictions.

There is a clarification, however, I need to bring at this stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This Bill is not a substitute for customer or consumer protection legislations or cross-border enforcement mechanisms. Its role is to provide legal certainty, evidentiary recognition, and trusted rules for digital transactions. These elements are essential foundations for protecting users in the digital economy. No electronic transaction law anywhere in the world can guarantee that a foreign seller will deliver goods ultimately.

What similar laws do provide for is the legal framework necessary to establish enforceable digital rights, reliable evidence, and trusted electronic transactions. Without these amendments, Mauritian users would face even greater uncertainty when transacting internationally online because the legal validity of electronic records, signatures, and automated transactions would be less clear. Further legislations can now be built by the relevant Ministries, relying upon this Bill for protecting online customers and merchants.

With regard to the introduction of electronic transferable records, which pertain to the New Part II, Sections 8B and 8L, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, increasing reliance on modern trade, on digital documentation, makes it imperative to introduce a new framework for electronic transferable records. Without this framework, electronic trade documents cannot function effectively, and Mauritius risks being excluded from paperless trade systems.

This Bill enables key commercial instruments like negotiable instruments and documents of title to exist and to operate fully in electronic form with legal certainty. The framework is based on three main principles –

- Firstly, the legal recognition. Electronic transferable records cannot be denied validity just because they are in an electronic form.

- Secondly, functional equivalence. An electronic record will meet legal requirements if it contains the necessary information and a reliable method ensures its integrity, identification, and control.

The operationalisation of the above two principles ensures that electronic transferable records do not increase the risk of fraud. In fact, it reduces the risk as the operational framework mandates –

- (i) a reliable method to ensure integrity;
- (ii) exclusive control equivalent to possession, and
- (iii) secure systems preventing unauthorised access.

Digital systems also provide audit trails that are often stronger than paper-based processes.

An important feature of this Bill is control equivalent to possession. The Bill also introduces the idea of control as the electronic equivalent of possession, allowing these instruments to be transferred securely in digital form. Therefore, this approach begs the question as to whether replacing possession with control is legally sound or not. In fact, the answer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is yes. This is a well-established principle under the UNCITRAL model. The term control performs the same legal function as possession in a digital environment. It ensures that only one person can exercise rights over the record at a time, and transfers can be effected securely and verifiably.

In addition to establishing the legal recognition of electronic transferable records, the Bill also sets out clear operational rules to ensure that these instruments can function effectively in practice.

First, the Bill addresses endorsement and amendment. In traditional paper-based systems, documents such as bills of lading or promissory notes may be endorsed, meaning rights are transferred by signing or amended where necessary. The Bill ensures that these same actions can be carried out electronically, using reliable methods that preserve the integrity of record. For example, an electronic bill of lading can be endorsed digitally to transfer rights from an exporter to a bank or buyer without the need for physical handling.

Second, the Bill provides clarity on transfer and control. In the physical world, possession of a document often determines who has rights over it. In the electronic environment, the concept of control replaces the concept of possession as explained above, and this implies that only one party at a time can exercise rights over the electronic record, and the system must ensure that control can be transferred securely from one party to another. For instance, when an electronic bill of lading is transferred, the system ensures that the previous holder does not have control anymore, thereby preventing duplication or competing claims.

The Bill finally deals with conversion between paper and electronic formats. Recognising that both systems may coexist during a transition period, the law allows for documents to be converted from paper to electronic form and from electronic form back to paper, provided that a reliable method is used to maintain integrity, and ensure that only one valid version exists at any given point in time. This avoids situations where both a paper and an electronic version circulate simultaneously, which would create legal uncertainty.

The Bill also provides for cross-border recognition. Electronic transferable records will not be denied legal effect simply because they are used in another jurisdiction. This is essential for international trade. Referring to the earlier example of electronic bill of lading issued abroad, it can now be both recognisable and enforceable in Mauritius, and vice versa, facilitating seamless cross-border transactions. This framework aligns with the UNCITRAL model on electronic transferable records and marks a major step towards paperless trade.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taken together, these provisions ensure that electronic transferable records are not only legally recognised, but are also operationally viable, secure, and fully functional within both domestic and international trade systems.

In the current law, when goods are exported, a bill of lading is issued to serve as a proof of shipment. Evidence of the contract of carriage and a document of title to the goods are also issued. However, in many cases, this document must be physically couriered across jurisdictions before the buyer can take delivery of goods. This creates delays and is more expensive.

With this new section, the same bill of lading can now exist solely in electronic format and be transferred digitally from one party to another with full legal recognition. This implies

- no waiting for courier services;
- reduced risk of loss or delay, and
- faster release of goods at destination.

For perishable exports, this can make a critical difference.

The House may note that the Finance Act 2025, at Section 4, amended the Bills of Exchange Act, enabling legal recognition of electronic bills of exchange, an instrument that deals with the movement of funds only.

The current Bill extends electronic recognition to a whole new category of instruments, such as bill of lading and promissory notes. This Bill establishes a general, cross-cutting legal framework that applies across all electronic transferable records. While the Bill of Exchange Act modernises a specific instrument, this Bill ensures that the same principles apply consistently across the entire digital trade ecosystem. It is standardisation across the system. This reform ensures coherence, consistency, and future readiness.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill is not about introducing complexity. It is about removing uncertainty. It ensures that our laws reflect modern commercial realities, supports innovation and positions Mauritius as a credible participant in the global digital economy.

Additionally, this Bill facilitates businesses to conduct online transactions by reducing friction and by increasing certainty instead. Businesses will benefit from clearer rules on electronic signatures, recognition of automated transactions, and the ability to use electronic trade documents. This will lower costs, speed up transactions and improve competitiveness. This Bill is a forward-looking reform that balances innovation with legal clarity. It updates our legal framework, supports digital and cross-border transactions, backs emerging technologies like smart contracts and paves the way for paperless trade.

Mauritius has already made significant progress in digital government services, electronic registration systems and legal recognition of documents. We are, in fact, following the track of states like Singapore, United Kingdom, France and Abu Dhabi, among others. This Bill positions Mauritius as a jurisdiction ready to compete in the digital economy while

following international best practices. It sends a clear message that Mauritius is ready to operate confidently and securely in the global space.

It is worthy of note that Mauritius will be the first country on the African continent to apply model law on electronic transferable records across to give legal recognition and enforceability to different types of instruments for digital trade. This Bill also prepares Mauritius to take benefit from the digital trade protocol of the African Continental Free Trade Area by recognising electronic documents of member states once they legislate the recognition on electronic transferable records.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are paving the way on the continent. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister.

I suspend the Sitting for half an hour.

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

On resuming at 5.29 p.m., with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT

UNLAWFUL DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL DATA & CITING OF NAMES - RULING

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I want to give a ruling. I am going to give a ruling on unlawful disclosure of personal data and citing of names. This morning, during the Private Notice Question, the Leader of the Opposition referred to a document which he wanted to lay on the Table of the Assembly. I asked him to let me peruse the said document and decided to withhold my ruling as to whether it was proper to render this document public.

Now, I have had time to look closely at the document and I rule as follows –

Standing Order 22(1), which relates to the rules concerning contents of question, including supplementary questions, provides, in its rule –

“(h) a question shall not include names of persons or statement of facts unless they are necessary to make the question intelligible and, in the case of statements of facts, can be authenticated by the Member concerned, nor shall it contain charges which the Member asking the question is not prepared to substantiate;”.

I can tell hon. Members that most of my predecessors have drawn the attention of the House on this very important principle, the more so as those persons whose names are mentioned, are not in the House to defend themselves. But more than that, we now have to refer to the Data Protection Act 2017. I am referring to Section 42 of the said Act which came into force in January 2018. I am referring to Section 42(3) of that Act, subject to subsection (4), which doesn't really concern us –

“(...) any person who -

- (a) obtains access to personal data or obtains any information constituting such data, without the prior authority of the controller or processor by whom the data are kept, and
- (b) discloses the data or information to another person, shall commit an offence.”

In the circumstances, I will hand the document back to the Leader of the Opposition. I will send it back to him, with a word of caution, in view of what I have just said. But this would apply, of course, to any Member of Parliament.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. V OF 2026)

(5.33 p.m.)

Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues): Merci beaucoup.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de commencer mon discours avec une anecdote. Le cas d'une amie qui, pas plus tard que février, me racontait comment pour le besoin d'une signature sur un document pour son business, elle a dû payer le voyage de son frère du Canada vers Rodrigues. Et elle a dû le faire car la signature devait se faire en personne. Une signature donc qui coûterait moins avec l'avènement de ce projet de loi.

Madame la présidente, mon discours ne sera peut-être pas technique, mais elle sera plus sur l'impact et l'implication de cette loi sur nos citoyens, surtout pour nous à Rodrigues. Madame la présidente, moi d'abord saluer la volonté du ministre des Technologies de la

communication et de l'innovation d'emmener Maurice, ainsi que Rodrigues, aux réalités d'une économie numérique moderne. Il s'agit de reconnaître que les affaires, la communication, le commerce et les services publics ne fonctionnent plus uniquement à travers les documents papier, des signatures manuscrites et des transactions en présentiel. De plus en plus, il repose sur des plateformes numériques, des systèmes automatisés et des échanges électroniques transfrontaliers.

Ce projet de loi vise à garantir que notre législation évolue en conséquence. Pour Rodrigues, ce débat n'a rien d'abstrait. La connectivité numérique n'est pas simplement une question de commodité pour mon île. C'est une question d'inclusion économique et d'égalité des chances. En raison de notre éloignement géographique, les entrepreneurs rodriguais, les étudiants, les professionnels et les petites entreprises font souvent face à des coûts plus élevés, à des délais plus longs et à des charges administratives plus lourdes que ceux de l'île Maurice.

Lorsque les documents doivent être transportés physiquement, lorsque les signatures nécessitent un traitement en personne ou lorsque les transactions commerciales dépendent de systèmes papier, Rodrigues supporte ce fardeau de manière plus conséquente. Dans ce sens, un cadre moderne pour les transactions électroniques peut devenir un outil de décentralisation et d'autonomisation. La reconnaissance des signatures électroniques fiables peut réduire les délais pour les entreprises et les citoyens qui doivent actuellement se déplacer ou envoyer inutilement des documents par courrier.

La reconnaissance juridique des transactions numériques automatisées peut soutenir les plateformes de commerce électronique, les services en ligne et les technologies financières, permettant aux entrepreneurs rodriguais d'atteindre des clients au-delà de nos frontières. La reconnaissance des documents électroniques transférables pourrait faciliter le commerce sans papier, ainsi que les systèmes logistiques et maritimes qui deviennent progressivement la norme internationale.

Madame la présidente, l'économie mondiale évolue rapidement. Le commerce international s'oriente vers la documentation numérique, le financement commercial électronique et les systèmes contractuels automatisés. Si Maurice souhaite demeurer compétitive en tant que juridiction internationale pour les affaires et le commerce, notre cadre juridique doit suivre ces évolutions. À cet égard, ce projet de loi est à la fois bienvenu et nécessaire.

Je note particulièrement les efforts déployés dans ce texte pour adopter une approche neutre sur le plan technologique. Plutôt que de lier la loi à une plateforme ou une technologie spécifique, le projet met l'accent sur la fiabilité, l'intégrité et la fonctionnalité. Cela est important car la technologie évolue plus rapidement que la législation. Une loi rigide devient très vite obsolète. Je salue également les dispositions reconnaissant les signatures électroniques étrangères et les documents électroniques transférables transfrontaliers. Dans une économie mondialisée, les systèmes numériques ne peuvent s'arrêter aux frontières nationales.

Cependant, Madame la présidente, le soutien à la modernisation doit aussi s'accompagner de vigilance et de responsabilité. En numérisant les systèmes commerciaux et en reconnaissant juridiquement les documents électroniques transférables, nous augmentons également notre exposition aux cybermenaces, à la fraude, au vol d'identité et aux vulnérabilités des systèmes. La question n'est pas donc seulement de savoir si les systèmes électroniques doivent être reconnus, mais aussi si nos institutions sont suffisamment préparées pour les sécuriser.

Nos entreprises, en particulier les petites et moyennes entreprises, disposent-elles des capacités techniques nécessaires ? Nos citoyens comprennent-ils les implications du consentement électronique et des contrats automatisés ? Investissons-nous suffisamment dans les infrastructures de cybersécurité, dans la culture numérique et dans la protection des consommateurs en ligne ? Ce sont là des questions essentielles.

Madame la présidente, Rodrigues en particulier ne doit pas être laissée pour compte dans cette transition numérique. Le succès de loi comme celle-ci dépend non seulement de la réforme juridique, mais aussi des infrastructures et de l'accessibilité. Une connexion internet fiable, des services publics numériques, une sensibilisation à la cybersécurité, des outils technologiques abordables doivent atteindre chaque partie de la République. Sinon, nous risquons de créer une fracture numérique où certains bénéficieront pleinement de l'économie numérique, tandis que d'autres resteront exclus. Et Rodrigues n'a pas besoin qu'on allonge encore plus la liste des choses dont on est exclu.

J'encourage donc le gouvernement, parallèlement à cette réforme législative, à continuer d'investir dans les infrastructures numériques à Rodrigues, dans la préparation en matière de cybersécurité et dans l'éducation du public sur la transaction électronique des droits numériques.

Ce projet de loi reflète une transformation plus large qui s'opère dans le monde entier. La transition d'économie fondée sur le papier vers des économies connectées numériquement.

Maurice ne peut pas s'isoler de cette transformation mais nous ne devons pas non plus adopter la numérisation aveuglément. Nous devons promouvoir l'innovation tout en protégeant la sécurité, l'accessibilité et l'équité. Pour Rodrigues, l'économie numérique représente à la fois, une opportunité et un défi. Si elle est bien gérée, elle peut réduire l'isolement, élargir les marchés et créer de nouvelles opportunités pour notre jeunesse et nos entrepreneurs. Mais si elle est mal gérée, elle peut aggraver les inégalités et exposer les utilisateurs vulnérables à des nouveaux risques. Il est donc de notre responsabilité en tant que législateur de veiller à ce que le progrès technologique reste centré sur nos citoyens.

Madame la présidente, avec ces observations et tout en encourageant une attention continue à la cybersécurité, à l'accessibilité et à l'inclusion numérique, je soutiens les objectifs de ce projet de loi ainsi que la modernisation qu'il cherche à réaliser pour la République de Maurice.

Merci.

Madam Speaker: Je vous remercie.

Hon. Baboolall.

(5.42 p.m.)

Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to intervene on this Bill.

Let me state from the outset that Front Militant Progressis, (FMP) is not against modernising our Electronic Transaction Framework. We accept that the Electronic Transaction Act 2000, now 26 years old, needs to be brought into line with international developments, including the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on electronic transferable records, the ETR, and the United Nations Convention on the use of electronic communications in international contract.

Madam Speaker, what we will not accept is a Bill that transplants the legal text of advanced jurisdictions without transplanting the institutional infrastructure and practical safeguards that make those provisions actually work. What this House is being asked to approve is a legislative facade, the front of a building with nothing behind it.

I will demonstrate this, Madam Speaker, not by reference to the opposition standards, but by reference to the Government's own Digital Transformation Blueprint 2025-2029, published last year, signed by the President and the hon. Prime Minister, and issued by the very Minister who presents this Bill today.

Let us look at the Singapore's homework; the borrowed text but missing architecture. Madam Speaker, this Bill is modelled almost clause for clause on Singapore's Electronic Transaction Amendment Act 2021. The new part 2(a) on Electronics Transferable Records mirrors Singapore's part 2(a). The definition of automated message system in Clause 3 is virtually identical. Section 14 (a) to 14 (d) replicates Singapore's contract formation provision. The revised section 8 adopts the same reliability-based standard.

There is nothing wrong with drawing on international models but when Singapore passed its 2021 amendment, it did not pass legislation into a vacuum. It passed legislation into a mature ecosystem. Let me describe what Singapore built and what Mauritius lacks.

Madam Speaker, in Singapore, the controller function is exercised by the Infocom Media Development Authority (IMDA) a well-resourced body with dedicated PKI oversight. In Mauritius, it sits within ICTA, as one mandate among many, and the Controller of Certification Authority, CCA website was last updated in September 2022. Singapore has two accredited Private Certificate Authority, plus GovTech as a public CA approved in October 2024. Mauritius has eMudhra operating through post office and Mausign oriented towards e-procurement.

In Singapore, every citizen with Singpass can produce a legally recognised secure electronic signature from their smartphone. In Mauritius, you must physically attend a post office.

Madam Speaker, when Singapore enacted its ETR provision, it backed them with trade trust, a government-developed open source blockchain framework. In 2023, Singapore executed the world's first live cross-border electronic bill of lading. In February 2026, IMDA launched a funded trade trust readiness program. Four trade trust platforms have P&I club approval, giving electronic trade documents the same insurance status as paper.

What does Mauritius have?

Section 8 (b) to 8 (l) – legal text, no platform, no accreditation regime for ETR management systems. No cross-border arrangements and no funded adoption program.

Madam Speaker, Singapore amended its Evidence Act to create specific presumptions for electronic records in court. Mauritius still operates under the Courts Act 1945 with general principles from the Civil Code. There is no certification mechanism for electronic record keeping system. Every case is proved from scratch.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has given us the front page of Singapore's homework, but not the working that supports it. Let us look at our PKI infrastructure and controller. Madam Speaker, the entire framework, electronic signatures, secure records, electronic transferable records, depend on a functioning public key infrastructure. A PKI is the trust system that allows parties who have never met to verify each other's identity. At its apex sits the root certificate authority.

In Mauritius, the CCA within ICTA, below it sits the issuing CAs, eMudhra and Massign. Below them sits the entities, citizens, business and government agencies.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius does have a PKI. The bones are there but it serves one narrow-use case, primarily government e-procurement and has not been scaled to the broader economy. There is no trusted time stamping authority, essential for disputes about the timing of electronic transferable records. There are no attributes, certificates, binding rules and authorities to identities, essential for confirming who may endorse or surrender an electronic bill of lading.

Madam Speaker, there is no sector specific deployment into banking, trade finance or the legal profession. The mobile ID enables digital signing, but the MNIS Certificate Authority on the identity card is not even licensed under the ETA. The infrastructure exists in separate silos.

The infrastructure exists in separate silos. Madam Speaker, the ETA 2000 envisaged a rich institutional ecosystem. A well-resourced controller, multiple competing license CAs, accessible registration authorities, formal cross-border recognition, and domain-specific public sector CAs under Section 19 (b) (iii).

26 years later, the CCA sits at the function among many within ICTA, competing for attention against spectrum actions and broadcasting regulation. No public sector agency apart from Massign has been approved as a CA. No comprehensive cross-border recognition regime exists. The Government has not fully stood up the institution required by the existing Act and now proposes to expand its scope dramatically. This is building the second floor while the first floor remains incomplete.

Madam Speaker, let us look at the Government's blueprint to prove our point. Madam Speaker, the most compelling evidence that this Bill is premature comes from the Government itself. The Digital Transformation Blueprint 2025-2029 is structured around four pillars and five enablers. The blueprint recognises that legal reform, enabler two, is the only one of the five enablers needed. The other four are digital public infrastructure, institutional coordination, cybersecurity and trust, and data governance. All five must work together.

Let me examine what the blueprint promises and what this Bill delivers. Enabler 1, Madam Speaker, acknowledges that there are fundamental blocks that are either inadequately engineered or missing in the current info structure, or still are deprived of the required interoperability. It promises a national identity management framework extended to banks, insurers and telecom operators, and that the digital signatures will allow citizens to digitally sign documents. The Government's own blueprint acknowledges the need for this integration. This Bill does nothing to deliver it.

Enabler 2, Madam Speaker, identifies a comprehensive legal program well beyond the ETA. GDPR aligned data protection. A Freedom of Information Act, cybersecurity law revision, ICT Act amendments. The ETA amendment is one piece of a much larger program being rushed into this House while the rest remain on the drawing board.

Enabler 3, Madam Speaker, is the most revealing. Madam Speaker, it proposes a National Digital Transformation Bureau modelled on Singapore's GovTech, a National Cyber Resilience and Cybersecurity Agency. A Data Management Office and – listen carefully –, a new entity for digital identity management, including ID card, mobile ID, digital service authentication and trust services of digital signature.

The blueprint states that identity management services will be recognised by this entity, thus providing legal sanctity to electronic identity management services. These are the very institutions needed to make this Bill work. Not one of them exists. Not one is created by this Bill.

Enabler 4, Madam Speaker, commits that the Government's certification authority will be upgraded to offer secure e-signature, time stamping and workflow-based approvals for all sectors, including banking, legal, insurance and e-commerce.

A direct acknowledgement that the current infrastructure is inadequate. But this is a policy commitment in the blueprint, not a provision in the Bill. Madam Speaker, I am not holding the Government to the Opposition's standards. I am holding it to its own. The

Government's own blueprint identifies five enablers that must work together. This Bill delivers part of one. Four out of five remain in the drawer.

Madam Speaker, what are the specific concerns with the Bill? Madam Speaker, beyond the infrastructure deficit, three specific concerns merit this House's attention.

Madam Speaker, on the electronic transferable records, the Bill's Section 8E contains only a general reliability standard. Unlike Singapore's section 160 (2), there is no presumption of reliability for accredited ETR management system because there is no accredited regime. Singapore's section 16Q to 16S establish comprehensive regulatory powers for ETR providers. Our Bill is silent.

Madam Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister when a Mauritian exporter attempts to issue an electronic bill of lading under this new framework, which platform will they use? Who will accredit it? What presumption will attach to it in court? What insurance status will it carry? The Bill provides no answers. The blueprint provides no answers.

The Government's own strategy document does not mention trade trust, does not mention ETR management system accreditation, and does not mention cross-border ETR interoperability arrangements. This is not an oversight, Madam Speaker. It is an absence that renders ETR provision aspirational rather than operational. Madam Speaker, on automated contracts, Sections 14A to 14D give legal recognition to contracts formed without human review.

Section 14D on contract terms' transparency is an innovation not found in Singapore's ETA. Credit where due, but it is a disclosure obligation without teeth. What are the consequences of non-compliance? The Bill does not say. A mandatory cooling-off period for high-value automated contract would have been a meaningful consumer safeguard.

Madam Speaker, our elderly, our pensioners, our less digitally literate citizens are already vulnerable to mobile banking fraud. This Bill gives automated systems the legal capacity to bind citizens to contract without human review while providing no consumer protection infrastructure beyond a reactive error correction right and a toothless disclosure obligation.

Madam Speaker, on electronic signatures, the shift to a reliability-based standard in the new Section 8 is sound in principle. The addition of alteration detectability in Section 16 (e) goes further than Singapore and aligns with IDAS. Again, credit where due, but placing the burden of assessing reliability on our courts without an accreditation framework or

widespread digital signing infrastructure will produce uncertainty and inconsistent outcome. Precisely the opposite of business facilitation.

Let me give another example, Madam Speaker. If an automated contract is triggered by a server in Europe, executed in an Asian cloud network, and drains an asset right here, in Port Louis, which court has jurisdiction? The Bill is dead silent. What do we do? Mauritius, the Republic needs a Digital Economy Act, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the ICT Act 2001 was written for a different era. It has been amended in 2009, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2024. Each time bolting new functions onto a framework not designed for them. The digital economy needs new legislative foundation.

Madam Speaker, we call on the Government to bring forward a comprehensive digital economy Act establishing –

- a dedicated digital economy authority;
- a statutory controller with defined qualification and operational independence;
- an accreditation regime for ETR management system;
- mandatory integration of the mobile ID with the ETA secure signature framework;
- evidentiary presumptions for electronic records,
- consumer protection for automated contracting, and
- the legal basis for cross-border digital trade.

The Government's own Blueprint proposes most of this institutional reform. What is missing is the legislative vehicle to deliver them. We propose, Madam Speaker, pending the comprehensive reform, six measures for this Bill –

- (i) a mandatory implementation roadmap within 12 months of the commencement covering the control function, the CA regime, mobile ID integration and the ETR management platform;
- (ii) an accreditation regime for the ETR management system with presumptions of reliability, modelled on Singapore's Section 16Q to 16S;
- (iii) engagement with the open-source TradeTrust framework for immediate cross-border interoperability;

- (iv) evidentiary reforms establishing presumptions for electronic records and a certification mechanism for record keeping systems;
- (v) phased commencement of the ETR provisions, operative only once supporting infrastructure is in place;
- (vi) a commitment on the record of this House to a comprehensive ICT Act review and the development of a digital economy Act within a defined time frame.

Madam Speaker, a digital economy cannot be built on legislative text alone. Singapore understood this. The UK understood this. The EU understood this. The Government's own blueprint understands this. It identifies five enablers that must work together. Madam Speaker, this Bill delivers part of one enabler. The institutions the Blueprint promises do not exist. The technology platforms that the Bill presupposes do not exist. The PKI infrastructure serves primarily e-procurement and has not been scaled. The evidentiary framework has not been reformed.

Madam Speaker, we do not oppose this Bill in principle. We oppose the recklessness of enacting it without the supporting infrastructure. The citizens of Mauritius deserve better than a legislative facade. They deserve a digital economy built on solid foundations, not one that copies the text of advanced jurisdiction while leaving our people, our businesses, and our court without the infrastructure to make it work.

Madam Speaker, a digital economy cannot be built on hype and legal ambiguity. We cannot sacrifice security at the altar of speed. The Government owes this House and this Republic, not just a Bill, but a plan.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Narsinghen!

(6.06 p.m.)

The Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr H. Narsinghen): Thank you, Madam Speaker. For so many years, the predecessor of our hon. Minister Ramtohul has been sleeping. No amendment, no change. Hon. Baboolall has also accepted that it is high time to come with amendments.

Before coming to my main arguments, I have listened carefully to hon. Baboolall. He is mentioning that the Ministry and the hon. Minister has been following the model of Singapore. I beg to disagree. To a certain extent, yes, because when you see what Singapore

has done, you will understand that Singapore and US, when it comes to electronic transactions, electronic commerce, are big risk takers. And I am sure that the hon. Minister, in an ideal world, hopefully one day, will have people like the actual hon. Minister of IT unlike the *laptop éclaté*. He is an expert. He was working for one of the biggest IT companies and also, he has a legal background.

So, certainly, we did not blindly copy Singapore. Why? He has produced what is known as a synthetic model, taking, looking at what the EU has been doing, what Singapore has been doing, what other countries, Hong Kong has been doing. This is what he has done. There is nothing wrong to seek inspiration from all these countries which are model countries. At the same time, what I cannot understand from hon. Baboolall, he wants to create multiple regulatory bodies.

We have already one regulatory body and for the time being, you know for sure, you know well that we are in a very difficult financial and economic situation. And he knows as a learned lawyer, that in the ICT Act, there are ample provisions and leeway for the Minister to come with regulations to beef up the institutional framework. He knows fully well also that Mauritius is not Singapore yet. We have been dreaming for so many years to become Singapore. Unfortunately, Singapore is much, much ahead of us. So, we have to take our time, and we have to take what is known as an incremental approach. If we read the Blueprint, this is exactly what the hon. Minister and his technicians, his learned advisors, I would say in that Ministry, chosen by hon. Dr. Ramtohol.

At the same time, the hon. Minister explained clearly that we are not touching Consumer Protection Law. Consumer Protection Law and Contract Law, which is found in the Code Napoleon, would be the same. So, I do not know why these comments are warranted.

He also mentioned that there are provisions, we have not touched the law of evidence. As a learned lawyer, he knows fully well, when you pass a legislation, the specialised legislation which is in front of us, the Bill today, would certainly prevail over other provisions. So, the specific thing prevails over the generality. This is the basic principle of interpretation; the canons of interpretation that we have in our law. These are some of the comments. So, a Bill which has been passed in 2000 with a few amendments, it is high time to recognise that the Electronic Transactions Bill of 2026 represents a significant

modernisation of Mauritius legal framework, governing digital commerce, electronic signatures, automated transactions and paperless trade.

The reforms, Madam Speaker, aim to align Mauritian law with modern commercial realities and also internationally recognised standards for electronic transactions as mentioned by the hon. Minister. Electronic documents shall have the same legal standing as paper ones. International trade law, Madam Speaker, is different from other branches of law. Here we must allow the best practices to develop and then, subsequently, after a number of years, the law maker can intervene to consolidate the legal architecture and this is what the Ministry of IT and the hon. Minister are doing today.

And, Madam Speaker, we have to also understand the context of the actual legislation. In 2000, when the law was being passed, the existing Electronic Transactions Act was enacted at a time when digital commerce, Fintech, automated contracting systems and electronic trade documentation were far less developed and I would say still at its infancy stage. Since then, the rapid expansion of online banking, e-commerce, mobile payments, AI-assisted platforms and cross-border digital trade have exposed several practical and legal gaps within the actual framework. So, what are the loopholes and lacuna in the actual framework? The earlier legislation was enacted when digital commerce, as I mentioned, was at its infancy stage. Over time, what we have seen and what the Ministry of IT has seen is that there are a number of weaknesses which are, for example, regarding automated electronic contracting, paperless trade documentation, cross-border digital transactions, modern authentication systems, evolving Fintech structures, cyber security vulnerabilities, online fraud and also identity theft and reliability standards for electronic systems which were missing.

Madam Speaker, as technology evolved, these legal gaps created uncertainty and exposed businesses and consumers to greater risk, and this is what this Bill is trying to tackle today; to have legal certainty and to remove this risk. We have seen today itself in South Africa, how South Africa, with its ripping effects in Mauritius, had to suffer from a massive cyber-attack. And we have also seen, Madam Speaker, as transactions migrate online, risks associated with digital commerce have also increased significantly and modern cyber threats include phishing attacks, hacking, identity theft as I mentioned, fraudulent electronic transfers and fake digital documentation and also manipulation of electronic records.

So, these amendments therefore seek to strengthen today the trust in digital systems by reinforcing authentication mechanisms, electronic record integrity –very important. The hon.

Minister also mentioned about traceability of transactions and accountability standards, legal recognition of secure systems. The reforms are intended not only to facilitate digital commerce, but to also create a safer legal environment for electronic transactions. The paradox and the difficulties of the Ministry and the hon. Minister are how to make electronic transactions quicker, easier, but also safer. This is what the Bill is trying to do. Over time Mauritius has learned from experience itself and also from abroad. This is why all these corrective measures are being taken today. And as I mentioned – not only in Mauritius but also from abroad – it is important to learn lessons from abroad.

Today, the hon. Minister has spent a lot of time on very technical issues and as a Junior Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have to explain the strategy of the new Government and the vision of the hon. Prime Minister and also the vision which the former hon. Deputy Prime Minister had. Our focus today is obviously, without forgetting trade with our traditional partners, be it the US, be it Europe, be it India, China, we are focusing on Africa and this Government has a dream, how to bridge India, Africa using Mauritius as a platform. This is what purposely this Bill will do today. This is why within a span of one and a half years, the hon. Prime Minister has given great importance to Africa, travelling three times to Africa to facilitate trade and this is why my colleague, hon. Ramful and myself, we are focusing on Africa to facilitate trade. Without such a Bill, things will not happen.

We cannot just brag, we cannot just talk about Africa without trying to bring the proper legal framework. The institutions will follow, as I mentioned, the ICTA is here and I am sure the hon. Minister will use the powers which he has under the law to bring the necessary regulations to cater for all the amendments which are in the pipeline. So, we are having a number of, as you know, treaties, be it COMESA, be it SADC, be it the AFCFTA, but if we do not update our legislations, if we do not beef up our legislations, nothing will happen. We are going to talk and talk, refer to Singapore, refer to South Korea, refer to all these emerging economies, but nothing will happen. This is why I have to commend the work which is being done by the hon. Minister.

What are the objectives of the Bill, Madam Speaker? The amendments therefore seek to

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- (i) to modernise the legal recognition of electronic transactions.
- (ii) which is very important, to improve, and I hammer on that, legal certainty for businesses and consumers, and also

- (iii) very important, to strengthen the trust in digital systems and to facilitate paperless trade and digital finance.

Above all, why are we doing all that? To support the ambition of Mauritius as a regional Fintech and international financial services hub. This is where the Ministry of Financial Services and the Ministry of IT and our Ministry, that is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Regional Integration and obviously Ministry of Industry and other Ministries, we have to work hand in hand, not only us, this is why regional integration is important. This is where we have to work hand in hands with our African brothers and African sisters to make things happen. The hon. Minister and his team, as I mentioned, have core challenges, what I qualify initially as a sort of regulatory paradox, that is, to make digital transaction easier, faster, while at the same time, simultaneously making them structurally more secure. That is why we cannot go too fast. This is why I mentioned initially, we have to take what is known as an incremental approach.

Now, what are the improvements introduced by these amendments, Madam Speaker? Number one, as mentioned by the hon. Minister, we have technology neutral electronic signatures. You will notice that the actual legal framework adopted a narrower and more rigid approach towards electronic signatures.

The present legislation was drafted during an earlier phase of digital development and relied, unfortunately, at that point in time, on prescribed forms of authentication and technological assumptions that risk becoming outdated. This created uncertainty regarding whether new forms of authentication would be legally recognised, the reliability of evolving digital signature technologies and also, the enforceability of electronically signed transactions using emerging systems.

Now, what is the position under the new Bill? This time, the amendments replace the restrictive approach, which I qualify – and the Minister did also – as technology neutral, and a more what we can qualify as a reliability-based framework.

The new approach, Madam Speaker, an electronic signature, will be legally valid if the method used is sufficiently reliable. This is a test of reliability for the purpose concerned. Madam Speaker, the law no longer depends on one specific technology or authentication model. The framework becomes adaptable – very important – to future technological developments.

So, what is the significance of the report? The change is particularly important because technology evolves rapidly, and a rigid legal framework can quickly become obsolete. The new approach ensures that the law remains flexible and capable of accommodation. In this new Bill, there is also recognition of automated contracts, which was not there before, and this is very important.

Madam Speaker, we have also seen an alignment with international standards. My learned and good friend, hon. Baboolall, mentioned that we have been following Singapore. But Singapore itself, at that point in time, when it passed its law, it followed the sort of prescription of OECD, the prescription of the World Trade Organization and so many other international organisations. We, today, are following the same best standard models. Of course, we have borrowed what is good from Singapore. We cannot blindly follow Singapore. We have been borrowing what is good from the European Union and from the US. We are certainly not like the US. We are certainly not like Singapore. So, this is what has been done.

I think what is important to note is that, in law, we have to strike the right balance. We have to reckon with our realities. We are still a SIDS. We are NSVs. So, we have to reckon with our realities.

I think the Minister, his Ministry and his technicians have done an excellent work, and this is why I would strongly commend this Bill to the hon. Members.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Minister Ameer Meea!

(6.23 p.m.)

The Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives (Mr A. Ameer Meea): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise, today, with conviction to support the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill and to emphasise how this piece of legislation is important, not only for the digital economy but also, for the real economy. Our manufacturers, our SMEs, our cooperatives, our

exporters, our logistics operators and all those who produce, trade and create value in Mauritius.

First of all, I must say that the amendments being brought to the Bill go a long way in further enhancing the ease of doing business, reducing business costs, and above all, sending a strong signal that this Government is fully committed to making Mauritius an investor-friendly destination.

But more than that, Madam Speaker, this Bill sends a clear message. Mauritius must modernise the way business is done. We cannot ask our enterprises to compete globally while keeping them dependent on paper-based processes, physical signatures, courier delays and outdated administrative habits.

Madam Speaker, manufacturing remains a vital pillar of our economy, contributing around 13% to GDP and supporting thousands of direct and indirect jobs across production, logistics, distribution and services. All efforts are currently being pursued to reinvigorate industrial growth after years of weak industrial performance and insufficient growth. This is precisely why the timing of this Bill is important. We are working to rebuild our productive base. We are working on a new industry Bill. We are working on a new industry policy. We are working to support SMEs, strengthen exports, improve productivity, and make Mauritius a more serious platform for regional and international trade.

The proposed amendments to the Electronic Transactions Act come at an opportune time when much emphasis is being laid on the digital transformation of the manufacturing sector to generate higher value addition and significantly increase industrial output and revenue. I must also acknowledge that compared to other developed countries, we are still lagging behind when it comes to realigning the legal and administrative framework governing day-to-day business transactions in order to reflect the digital realities of global commerce.

This Bill is, therefore, timely as the key enablers will now be put in place to keep pace with technological advancements in the field of electronic transactions for a higher level of competitiveness. For a large company, delays in paperwork may be an inconvenience. For an SME, it can affect cash flow. For an exporter, it can mean missing a shipment deadline. This is why legal transformation matters. It must improve the daily life of businesses.

Madam Speaker, just to respond to the Member from FPM, I would like to make a quick comparison as to what this Bill contains in relation to that of Singapore.

- In terms of policy direction, in the Bill that we have, today, in the House, focused on digital economy, paperless, trade, cross-border recognition are similar objectives as in Singapore the law.
- In terms of technology neutrality, in our Bill, we have reliability based on electronic signature regime. Singapore also moved from a rigid digital signature focus to technology neutral approach.
- In terms of electronic signatures, a signature is valid if the method used identifies party and indicates intent, and reliability standard applies. Same functional equivalence principle in the Singapore ETA.
- Automated transaction AI system. In the Bill, today, there are explicit recognitions of contracts formed by automated message systems. In Singapore ETA, there already exists contracts formed by automated systems.
- Electronic transferable records – the Bill, today, introduces full framework for ETR. In Singapore, it was introduced in the Bill in 2021.
- Exclusive control concept. This requires reliable method to establish exclusive control. In Singapore also, it uses controls as digital equivalent of possession.
- Cross-border recognition. Foreign ETRs and signatures cannot be denied validity merely because of issuance abroad. In Singapore, it also adopts the same cross-border inter-operability principle.
- Input errors in automated system. User may withdraw mistaken communication if no correction opportunity exists. This is in the Bill today. In Singapore also, in its ETA, it contains equivalent consumer commercial safeguard.

Madam Speaker, I can go on with long list in terms of comparison. This amendment is highly significant because it makes Mauritius more compatible with Singapore, the UK, the United Arab Emirates and also to other digital trade jurisdictions.

Madam Speaker, I will now refer to the different clauses of the Bill which in my view represent a decisive step forward for the industrial sector and for business facilitation more broadly. I particularly wish to highlight the significance of the amendments brought to clause 5 relating to electronic signatures. Indeed, the Bill introduces a more reliability-based and technologically neutral approach regarding electronic signatures. Nowadays, it is common to use several authentication methods which are far more sophisticated than the original Act that was passed in the year 2000. The legal framework must, therefore, be updated with greater flexibility so as to unintentionally constrain the benefits of innovation and as technological progress. The proposed amendments rightly move away from an overly restrictive approach towards a more diversified and recognised means of authentication for documents. This approach is commercially pragmatic and internationally aligned.

For industry operators, the proposed amendments create greater operational flexibility while maintaining the necessary safeguards when it comes to authenticity and security. By giving clearer legal recognition to electronic signatures, this Bill allows businesses to move faster, reduce administrative costs and transact with greater confidence.

Madam Speaker, I will now dwell on clause 6, Part IIA of the Bill relating to Electronic Transferable Records, which I believe is probably the single most transformative position of the Bill from the perspective of industrial development. It is an undeniable fact that international trade is transitioning rapidly towards a paperless ecosystem. In this context, paper-based transactional systems are increasingly viewed as cumbersome and outdated since they often generate delays, administrative burdens and additional compliance costs. Nowadays, the trend is more towards online transactions whereby physical documents are being digitised in order to increase transactional efficiency, accelerate speed of execution and improve traceability and transparency.

Madam Speaker, to illustrate my point, let us take example of a Mauritian exporter shipping goods to Europe. Today, that exporter may still need to physically handle paper bills of lading, bills of exchange, promissory notes, warehouse receipts and other trade-related documents that still depend heavily on manual handling. These paper documents can take several days and, in some cases, even longer depending on courier times, banking processes and document handling. With the proposed amendments to the Electronic Transaction Act, an important legal obstacle to paperless trade is being addressed. The legal foundation is now being created for such documents to be issued, transferred and verified electronically where

the relevant systems, institutions and trading partners are ready to accept them. This is a major step forward for our exporters and manufacturers. This is not an abstract legal form. It has a direct impact on trade. If a textile exporter has a shipment ready, if an agro-processing SME is sending goods to a regional market, if a recycling manufacturing is importing inputs and exporting finished products, every day lost in paperwork affects competitiveness. In international trade, speed matters, reliability matters, traceability matters. The buyer does not wait for our administrative system to catch up. The buyer simply moves to another supplier. This Bill therefore helps Mauritius move closer to paperless trade. It supports exporters, it supports SMEs, it supports our ambition to position Mauritius as a serious production and export platform between Africa, Asia and the rest of the world.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to highlight that Section 8D under clause 6 addresses a critical issue of control and possession. Indeed, the Bill provides that where an enactment requires possession of a transferable document, this requirement shall be satisfied through a reliable method establishing exclusive control over an electronic transferable record. This legal bedrock is fundamentally important because it gives confidence to manufacturers, to exporters and industry operators that electronic documents will carry the same commercial and legal weight as their paper equivalents. This is essential, Madam Speaker. Businesses will not adopt digital trade document if banks, insurers, buyers, custom brokers and logistic operators are uncertain about their validity. Legal certainty is the foundation of business confidence. Without it, digitalisation remains a slogan. Without it, digitalisation becomes a working tool for trade.

Madam Speaker, for an island economy such as Mauritius, heavily dependent on international trade, it is crucial that we move swiftly towards the new norms of digital transactions if we are to remain competitive and maintain our market shares. I am confident that this course of action is imperative to engage our manufacturers, exporters, freight forwarders and logistic operators in the required direction so that they may respond more effectively to ever-changing requirements of global business. This is also relevant to our regional value chain ambition.

If Mauritius wants to help structure regional production costs across Africa, we must be able to move documents, contracts, trade instrument quickly and securely. A regional value chain cannot function properly if each link is slowed down by paper, physical signatures and manual verifications. Modern industry needs modern transactions.

Madam Speaker, I shall now focus on section 14B under clause 8, which relates to contract management, means of electronic communication. This aspect of the law is particularly critical because industry operators have very often approached me regarding the difficulties encountered in formally engaging in such processes, especially due to the lack of awareness and legal clarity surrounding these practices. Across the manufacturing sector, many enterprises are already using automated procurement systems, digitised purchase order platforms and electronic vendor management tools to reduce operational costs and improve efficiency. I have reviewed feedback from several industry operators indicating that there exists a legal vacuum when it comes to procurement contracts concluded through electronic systems, especially where there is no physical review transaction. This has been a significant impediment.

Madam Speaker, this issue is now being addressed under Section 14B of clause 8, which provides that contract formed or performed through automated systems will not be denied validity or enforceability solely because no natural person reviewed or intervened in each individual action carried out by the automated system. This is not merely a small technical amendment. It gives a clear indication of the extent to which government is willing to go in encouraging industry operators and potential investors to confidently embrace digitalisation and modern contract management systems.

From the perspective of industrial development, whose advancement falls under my responsibility, I view this as a practical legal enabler for industry 4.0 in Mauritius, which my Ministry is actively promoting within the manufacturing sector. Indeed, up to now, there has been some reluctance amongst businesses to fully automate procurement and order management processes in the absence of a sufficiently clear legal framework.

This grey area is now being brightened through the provision of this Bill and industrial operators will feel more comforted in this digitalisation drive by increasingly adopting enterprise resource planning systems and other digital solutions that will now enjoy clear legal recognition.

For example, a manufacturer using an Enterprise Resource Planning, commonly known as an ERP system, may automatically generate a purchase order when raw material stock reaches a minimum level. The supplier may confirm the order electronically. The production team, finance team and warehouse team can then work from the same information in real time. These are not future scenarios. These are already part of modern business. The law must

not stand behind the economy; the law must support it. This is also important for SMEs. Many SMEs are now selling through online platform, WhatsApp Business, websites and digital catalogues. They are not always using complex systems, but they are already transacting electronically. This Bill gives more clarity to this reality.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to refer to section 14 (d) which deals with the availability of contractors. This provision is important because digital contracting must be fast, but it also must be fair and clean. Businesses must ensure that contract terms are provided in a clear and accessible manner. This is good for trust. It protects consumers, it protects SMEs, it protects suppliers, it reduces disputes, it encourages proper documentation. In practical terms, it means that when business is done electronically, the terms must not be hidden, vague or inaccessible. This is a sensible requirement. Modernisation should not mean confusion; it should mean clarity.

Madam Speaker, I also welcome the provision recognising foreign certificates and electronic signatures. Mauritius is a trading economy. Our businesses do not transact only with our borders. They deal with buyers, suppliers, banks, shipping lines and investors from different jurisdictions. If we want Mauritius to remain credible as an international business and trading platform, our legal framework must be able to accommodate cross-border electronic transaction. This Bill takes us in that direction. Let me reiterate that Electronic Transaction (Amendment) Bill is not merely a technical piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, I wish to congratulate my colleague, hon. Minister of Information and Technology for bringing forward this important and forward-looking piece of legislation, which is poised to bring about a major transformation in the digitalisation landscape of our country.

My Ministry stands ready to work with his Ministry and with all relevant institutions to ensure that manufacturers, SMEs, exporters and cooperatives understand and make proper use of this new framework once enacted. Sensitisation will be important; implementation will be important. The private sector must know how to use these new tools safely and efficiently.

With this word, Madam Speaker, I fully support this Bill and I wish well to my colleague.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister. That was perfect timing.

Hon. Minister of Labour.

(6.45 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations (Mr R. Uteem): Madam Speaker, during the break, I was joking with my colleague, hon. Dr. Arvin Boollel, and I was telling him that the hon. Minister of Technology has explained this highly technical Bill so clearly that any lawyer will only stand up and say –“I fully concur with my learned friend,” and sit down but, listening to the hon. Member from FMP, *complètement à côté de la plaque*; he did not understand a single word because he did not even listen to what the hon. Minister said. He was more enthusiastic reading what was prepared for him to read. How can you explain that he went on and on and on about Singapore when the hon. Minister never even once mentioned Singapore?

Because our law today is not inspired by Singapore. No, Madam Speaker. If he had listened carefully, he would have heard the hon. Minister talk about UNCITRAL, United Nation Commission on International Trade Law, which is the United Nation arm responsible for progressive harmonisation and modernisation of the law of international trade. He would have heard the hon. Minister make reference to the Model Law devised by this UNCITRAL, the Model Law on Electronic Commerce 1996, the Model Law on Electronic Signature 2001, the United Nation Convention on the Use of Electronic Communication in International Contract 2005.

These are the articles that inspired today's Bill, not Singapore. And if he had listened carefully, what the hon. Minister has been talking about is e-signature, electronic signature. And he doesn't even make a difference; he doesn't even know the difference between an electronic signature and a digital signature. What is an electronic signature?

Let me explain it very basically, Madam Speaker, for hon. Members of the House to understand what an electronic signature is. The electronic signature is an electronic version of your handwritten signature. For example, sometimes you would go in a restaurant, they will ask you to sign on a tablet. They give you a tablet and then you sign electronically. You use your own signature.

Madam Speaker: Even in the bank!

Mr Uteem: Sometimes you would have a PDF copy of your signature, you will affix it to a contract. And, sometimes, you would go on the internet, they will tell you to click if you accept the term, tick or click acceptance. This is electronic signature. And the law provides

for more secure electronic signature. It is found in section 16 of the Electronic Transaction Act, where it is unique to the person using it, capable of identifying such person and created in a manner using the means under the sole control of the person using it. This is electronic signature. This is what we're dealing with today.

Then there is what the hon. Member went on and on about, which is digital signature. Digital signature is a specific, highly secure type of electronic signature which uses cryptographic technology. When he was talking about PKI, I'm sure a lot of people thought he was talking about performance indicators. No. PKI is Public Key Infrastructure.

You know, in order to secure this digital signature, you have a public key, which is with the authority that certifies this digital certificate, the digital signature, and then you have a private key, which is personal to the user. And digital signature has been used since 2000, since the Bill was passed. The law today is amending section 8 which deals with electronic signature. The provisions relating to digital signature in part 6 is not being amended. We are not talking about the authority – who is going to be licensed to issue certificate. In fact, we do not even need to have a licensing authority in Mauritius. Anyone can go on the internet today and buy a digital signature. Better still, they can go and download one, using Microsoft and have their own signature.

The hon. Minister for Financial Services did not intervene. But maybe if she had intervened, she would no doubt have mentioned that since October 2023, the Financial Services Commission has issued guidelines for digital signatures.

So, today, if you want to apply for a license to the Financial Services Commission, you can do it online using the platform of the FSC, but you cannot use any type of e-signature, you have to use a digital signature. When they talk about digital signature, you know what the FSC requires? The criteria? One of the criteria is that the digitally signed document shall be in PDF format. The digital certificate that he was talking about, the ICTA is not able to do it. Maupass is not able to do it.

The digital certificate used to sign the document shall have been issued by a certificate authority listed on the Adobe approved trust list. If you want to use digital signature, you just go on Adobe, which is a PDF format, and see who are the trusted certificate agencies who can give you, who can deliver you a digital signature.

So, there is no need, in order to implement the Bill, to create a new organisation who is going to issue those certificates in Mauritius. It already exists. So, this is why, Madam

Speaker, when I was listening to him, he is clearly on the wrong side of the fence, on the wrong side of the Bill.

Now, the Bill is very important because the Bill uses UNCITRAL Model Law. Why is this important? Precisely because of the issue raised by the hon. Member of the Opposition when he says – how are we going to prove things in court? What is the evidential value? How are we going to litigate it? If he had taken the time to go on UNCITRAL website, download those model laws and the convention, he would have seen that with the model law, there is an explanatory note; *les travaux préparatoires*, which go clause by clause, article by article, which explain what each article means, how it can be proven, why it is there, why we use that language and not the other language.

If you go to court tomorrow, this is the same *travaux préparatoires* that are going to be used by lawyers to try to understand what was the intent of Parliament in drafting this. So, that is why we are not copying Singapore. We are taking the model law and we are going by the explanatory notes in the UNCITRAL law.

The electronic transaction, Madam Speaker, is already here. Anyone who goes to book a plane or to book a hotel today, they go on the website. Now, what do they do? How do they form the contract? They sign everything and then they tick the box or they click the acceptance button.

Now, the question is, if there is a dispute, how would we know that the person who clicked that button is really the contracting person? How would we know that there has not been someone else who have impersonated him? We are talking about OTP. The other day, a lady came to see me, Madam Speaker. She was telling me how she was victim of identity theft. How a hacker got into her phone. Each time, the bank keeps sending OTP, it went to that hacker. By the time the bank realised that she was dealing with a fraudster, the lady had lost close to Rs1 million! An hon. Member of the Government, my colleague, also told me how he was victim of the hackers.

This is why, today, in Section 8, for the first time, we are introducing the concept of reliable method. So, an electronic signature is not enough. You need to have a reliable method to identify the person who electronically signed it and his intention behind signing it. So, that it can prevent any dispute in the future.

Now, Madam Speaker, do you think that there is an urgency for us to make sure that we are able to fight against fraud? Or do you think we have to do what the hon. Member of the

Opposition suggests and implement the whole master plan, wait for a couple of years with the infrastructure, with the architecture, with a digital signature, and then pass the law? We are passing the law because electronic transaction is a reality. E-commerce is a reality.

How many people have now attempted to import goods directly? I won't cite the name of the platform, but we all do it.

Madam Speaker: No names, I said!

Mr Uteem: No names, but what I am saying is, it is a reality. We are already into e-signature. What this law provides is certainty, legal certainty, so that tomorrow, if there is a dispute in court, the court will stand guided by the UNCITRAL law and the Explanatory Memorandum.

The big chunk is the e-signature. The other thing that this law does is to deal with a situation where you are dealing with an automatic messaging system. See, the question has been raised: if you are you have two individuals, two human beings negotiating a contract, it is very easy for you to understand the terms to discuss. What happens if you go on a website and you sign? I gave you the example of booking a hotel, you click on accept. On the other side, there is no human being. It is a machine. Automatically, the machine is concluding your contract. It sends you a confirmation – booking confirmed. No refund most of the time. But is this valid? Is a transaction between a human being and a robot and a computer valid? That was missing in our law. What Section 14 introduces is a whole series of provisions which clarify that a contract will not be nullified just because it is done between a human being and an automatic system.

Then, when you have an automatic system – it has happened to all of us –, what happens when you make an error? What happens when you have a mistake? Today, if there are two people dealing with each other, you have ordered goods and then you realise, ‘Oh my God, I forgot to on the description, or I have booked a hotel. Oh, I forgot, I got the date wrong, the month wrong,’ you can automatically call the travel agency and tell them to rectify the hotel booking or call directly the hotel. But you can't do that with a computer.

Once you go on the website and you are booking your hotel, if you make a mistake, the platform does not have any procedure for you to correct the mistake. That is it! You are done. You have lost your money. If you place an order for the wrong good, they will ship it and you have to accept it. Now, what is being proposed in this legislation is a section of the law which

will allow people to correct an error where the platform does not give you the opportunity to correct that that mistake.

This is very important because a lot of the people who use the platform today are not computer savvy. They are not computer literate. They are not very good at typing. A lot of them have certain ways, you know, and they make mistakes.

So, this law is going to protect those people who make errors inadvertently. First, was the electronic signature. Second, was dealing with the machine. The third important reform is what my hon. colleague, hon. Ameer Meea, went at length with is the validity of the electronic records, that is going to facilitate trade.

Today, if someone is importing goods, to be able to remove the goods from the ship, unload it, go through customs, he needs to have the original of the bill of lading. So, someone from the country where the goods have been loaded needs to courier the bill of lading in original form to the importer, and then the importer takes that bill of lading. Now, if it is credited, if he has received funding from the bank, he then needs to physically write, endorse it, assign it to the bank. This takes time. The third reform that is proposed in this Bill is to recognise and give effect to the electronic records. That will be a game changer because once Mauritius adopts and recognises this electronic transaction, the validity, the authenticity of these transactions, we will be able to be a real trans-shipment centre for Africa, for the region. And we could not do that because for the time being we are still using the archaic method of physically requiring documents, shipping documents, bill of lading in order to clear goods.

So, Madam Speaker, for me, this is a landmark Bill, today. It is not a technical Bill. It is a Bill to facilitate trade. It is a Bill to protect Mauritians who already make use of electronic signature - not digital signatures - to protect them. I congratulate my hon. friend for coming up with this Bill, and I gladly support this Bill.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Minister, now you are summing up.

Maybe your replies, I do not know.

(7.03 p.m.)

Dr. Ramtohul: Yes, sure.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all my hon. colleagues, Ministers, who have supported this Bill and also, hon. Baboolall for the comments made with regards to certain provisions.

It is undeniable, Madam Speaker, that we cannot accept the status quo. We have to break that cycle, and we have to move forward. Moving forward also entails making decisions that would actually give hope to people, at the same time, there could be critics and we accept the critics. We are in a democracy. But the first thing that I would I would ask my colleague, hon. Baboolall, to do is probably to review the IT advisor that has probably been advising on this matter. *Li'nn rat lamer kout ros, kouma nou dir*. Because he is talking about digital signatures and I explained, as explained by hon. Uteem, it is about electronic signatures, not about digital signatures, here.

Digital signatures rely on the Public Key Infrastructure, which is now an old technology. Now, with electronic signatures, there are different types of technologies that have come up, one of which is blockchain. Having said this, one of the key features of this legislation is that this Bill is technology agnostic. And this is why we are taking independence from any situation of vendor lock-in, as we call it. We do not want to be locked in by any vendor. We want to be technology agnostic so that we can do what is best for this nation with the funds contributed into the Consolidated Fund by that very nation.

So, this is what drives.

Madam Speaker: Technology agnostic - I like that.

Dr. Ramtohol: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, now I can I have a question for hon. Member there, when he is taking bookings for his operations from the tourists who are abroad, when he is accepting it, what is the protection that he has today? Should those tourists who are booking his facilities dysfunction? There is no recognised contract. There is no recognised contract.

Now, when you see an offer on a portal, that means it is an invitation to trade. When the customer accepts it, then there is an agreement that is formed; when consideration moves, then there is a contract that is formed. In the absence of those contracts, you are left with no help. You should actually say thank you to me, to this Government, to having brought this legislation which we are using to even protect you.

(Interruptions)

With that, we are protecting you for your operations that you that you conduct. Yes, absolutely.

Therefore, this is one of the key features. We are bringing protection, the legal basis for further protection, and my colleague hon. Yeung Sik Yuen will certainly build up on that for consumer protection online. We have set the foundation, Madam Speaker, for that to take place. I am also very glad that hon. Baboolall read the Blueprint with a lot of attention. I am sure his ICT advisor did as well. In an ideal world, in an ideal world, Madam Speaker, we read the Blueprint, we sleep, the next morning when we wake up, it is all done. All the infrastructures are there, all the digital certificates or electronic signatures are there, and everything is there. This is called utopia. But here we are in the real world, and in the real world, we do not go with a big bang approach. We go with a progressive approach.

We build little by little and little by little. This is how you became lawyer as well. You had to do your first degree, your Bar, you build little by little. It is all the same because we are in a real and practical world. It does not work otherwise.

Now, when we when we talk about IT, we, as we said, we break the status quo. Look at the previous IT Minister, he lived in the status quo. He did not break it. But we, we have the courage, we have the courage to break the status quo and we are breaking it. And you have seen the support that we are getting from the hon. Ministers in this House.

The enablers and the pillars that you spoke about. Yes, they are intertwined. They are in some cases interdependent, but with regards to this legislation, there is no dependency. So, this legislation comes as an additional brick on which we can build further. There are other elements that depend on this. This is why in a chronological order, we have to build this new Mauritius that we are talking about. That aligns as well with what with the statements made by hon. Uteem.

With regard to timing of messages. We have actually built up within this legislation the time stamp of messages when they leave and messages when they come into systems. Of course, there are difference of microseconds because these are transiting through fibre optics cable and they can be submarine cables as well. From Singapore, from the UK to Mauritius, they come within seconds. But from a legal standpoint, it is critical for us to establish what is the time at which this message left, what is the time at which this message came. In the absence of this, we rely on the very archaic postal rule. This is an extension to actually

actualise it within the electronic world because the postal rule works best in the physical world.

With regards to jurisdictions. You are a learned lawyer. You would know that one of the doctrines of contract of law is the freedom of contracting. They have the liberty to establish which country will have jurisdiction on the contract.

Therefore, we leave it open to the parties for them to contract; this is exercising the freedom of contracting. Now, we also recognise geographical neutrality. As you said it, I mean, by way of your own admission, we are living in a world where we are using cloud technologies. Now, if the somebody signs the document in the UK, his place of business is Mauritius. Do we take the place of business as the UK or Mauritius for the purpose of the law? It has to be Mauritius. So, this brings as well geographical neutrality by way of the amendments that we are bringing. I would really love it for you, hon. Member, if you could visit our Data Centre.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you should address me, not him.

Dr. Ramtohul: Okay, sorry, I address you, Madam Speaker. So, I would really love it, Madam Speaker, if someday we could together visit the Data Centre of the Government, which is housed within the premises of Mauritius Telecom at Rose Belle. It is a state-of-the-art infrastructure. Now, that is infrastructure, but infrastructure is seamless, that is behind us. He sees only the front. He does not see the back because infrastructure is seamless. We do not want to show all the servers that are there. We want to show the services. This is why we had to enact this law so that those services could sit on this legislation, and the electronic signatures could be recognised.

To my surprise, there was no comment there with regards to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area. Because this legislation opens the way forward, not just for transfer of people, of capital, of services, but also for transfer of data. This is where the transferable electronic records are actually very important because we can now trade with Kenya through electronic means. The contracts are formed electronically and data, transactions and payments would flow but this is a critical part. Why do I say that also? Because we want AI to play a critical role within our jurisdiction but without recognising a contract being formed, how will that transaction initiated by AI algorithms gain legal basis in our courts of law? It would not if we do not have recognisable transferable electronic records and this is what this legislation is bringing.

With regard to the physical presence of people at the post offices, earlier, we had this biometric means of doing remote registration on MauPass but because of what the previous Government did with regard to the trust system on cyber security, we decided that we had to stop that biometric recognition because we were not sure how that was being used. Do we now expose our nation's personal data because the previous Government was doing it? Makes no sense. We have come with the promise to make a difference, to bring the change. And by way of this legislation, we are also bringing that change. You mentioned public key infrastructure, as we said, yes, that is one technology that is used and it is old and now we are moving forward with secure electronic digital signatures. We believe that this legislation is setting the base for us to have a more modern Mauritius.

And on this note, I believe we have addressed most of the points, but I have got two points for hon. Ms Henriette-Manan. With regard to Rodrigues, we are very pleased that you mentioned those points. Now, obviously, the changes that we are bringing here applies to the Republic, to Mauritius, to Rodrigues, to Agalega, to all the outer islands. We have a special place for Rodrigues in our hearts and this is why we, my team and myself, upon the approval of the hon. Prime Minister, are travelling to Rodrigues next week to talk about cyber security, artificial intelligence to our people from Rodrigues and we are also going to create ambassadors for KOREK, so that those ambassadors can then take that message forward to them.

And on this note, Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to also tell the House that we are bringing changes to the Cyber Security and Cybercrime Act, which will actually establish the institution that we mentioned in the blueprint. The name given to that institution in the blueprint is the National Cyber Security and Resilience Agency. So, that is a name that has been given. Obviously, that will be finalised when we have the right types of discussions around this but I want the House to rest assured that every word that appears in that blueprint is implementable and it will be implemented and this is one of the first few steps that we have established.

And on this note, Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank all the hon. Members for the support, for the input. I would like to thank my team as well for all the work that we have done. And I would like to thank also the hon. Member Baboolall for the critics because those are constructive.

And with this note, I would like to commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister for seconding your Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2026) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill (No. V of 2026) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 26 May 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bhagwan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned!

At 7.15 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 26 May 2026 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENCES – ARRESTED/SUSPENDED POLICE

OFFICERS

(No. B/720) 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 drug trafficking offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the

Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers arrested and/or suspended in connection therewith since 2014 to date, indicating the number thereof convicted and where matters stand regarding the remaining cases.

(Withdrawn)

POLICE OFFICERS – MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS – PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

(No. B/721) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third 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 Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number of mental health professionals attached thereto and
- (b) whether their psychological assessment is mandatory and, if so, indicate –
 - (i) at what frequency same is carried out;
 - (ii) the number thereof referred for psychological counselling/stress management/psychiatric treatment over the past five years and how their mental well-being is monitored, and
 - (iii) whether same will be reviewed.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL MARITIME ZONE – MONITORING & SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

(No. B/722) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the national maritime zone, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) systems currently in place for the monitoring thereof, indicating whether same are deemed adequate, and
- (b) number of existing National Coast Guard stations, indicating their respective locations and in each case, the number of personnel posted thereat and helicopters and vessels at the disposal thereof.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – FINANCIAL SITUATION – REMEDIAL MEASURES

(No. B/724) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the financial situation thereof, indicating the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS BROADCASTING CORPORATION – TELEVISION LICENCE FEE –
PROPOSED ABOLITION**

(No. B/725) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed abolition of the monthly television licence fee of Rs 150 imposed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to where matters stand, indicating the timeframe set therefor, if any.

(Withdrawn)

**BANK OF MAURITIUS – PUBLIC NOTICE 12 MAY 2026 – MONEY PRINTING
ALLEGATIONS**

(No. B/726) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Public Notice dated 12 May 2026 issued by the Bank of Mauritius in respect of allegations of money printing to the tune of Rs 83 billion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank of Mauritius, information as to the actions, if any, taken or being envisaged in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

AIR MAURITIUS LTD – AIRCRAFTS SOLD, PURCHASED & HIRED

(No. B/727) 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

aircrafts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to, since 2014 to 2024, the number thereof –

- (a) sold, indicating in each case, the proceeds thereof and time of service at time of sale, and
- (b) purchased and hired, indicating in each case the –
 - (i) cost thereof;
 - (ii) time in service at the time of purchase/hire, and
 - (iii) number of times same was grounded, indicating the reasons and duration thereof.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – MONEY LAUNDERING – TRACKING & COMBATING ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS

(No. B/728) Mr J. 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 tracking and combating of money laundering and illicit financial flows in Rodrigues, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the measures, including investigations and inquiries, initiated into reported cases thereof, indicating in each case where matters stand, and
- (b) state what further actions are being envisaged in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)

GRA – FORMER CHAIRPERSON, MR V.C. – RESIGNATION

(No. B/729) 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 Mr V.C., former Chairperson of the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the reasons for his resignation, giving details of the –

- (a) severance package or otherwise paid or payable thereto, if any, and
- (b) outcome of the inquiry/disciplinary proceedings, if any, initiated against him.

(Withdrawn)

**ST. FELIX PUBLIC BEACH – ALLEGED MURDER – ARRESTS &
SAFETY/SECURITY MEASURES**

(No. B/732) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance, Minister for Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the St. Felix Public Beach, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) where matters stand regarding the alleged murder committed thereat on or about 14 April 2026, indicating the number of arrests effected in connection therewith, if any, and
- (b) the measures being contemplated to enhance safety and security thereat, particularly during weekends and public holidays.

(Withdrawn)

**COVID-19 PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT FUND – SILVER BANK (2022) –
INVESTMENT**

(No. B/734) 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 then COVID-19 Projects Development Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the date on which the sum of Rs 2.5 billion, invested at the Silver Bank in 2022, was withdrawn therefrom, indicating the reasons therefor, further indicating why the remaining sum of Rs 500 million was not withdrawn.

(Withdrawn)

**GROS CAILLOUX – RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTIONS – PRELIMINARY
ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT**

(No. B/759) Ms J. Bérenger (First Member for Vacoas & Floréal) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the construction of 25 residential building units at Gros Cailloux by Morcellement Baobab Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether a Preliminary Environmental Report was applied and issued in connection therewith and, if so, indicate the date of application and of issue thereof.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD – SECURITY SERVICES – CONTRACTS

(No. B/760) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the security services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the company/companies to which the provision thereof have been awarded since 2015 to date.

(Withdrawn)

NCE EXAMINATIONS – ABOLITION – ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS & MEASURES

(No. B/761) Mr C. Baboolall (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the National Certificate of Education Examinations, he will state whether same will be abolished after the holding of the 2026 edition thereof and, if so, indicate the alternative pathways and measures being envisaged for students thereafter.

(Withdrawn)

CATTLE IMPORTATION – PUNGANUR DWARF COW – CONDITIONS & REQUIREMENTS

(No. B/762) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries whether, in regard to the importation of cattle, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether the importation of the Punganur dwarf cow is being envisaged, indicating the implications thereof and the conditions and requirements therefor.

(Withdrawn)

STATE COLLEGES – AFTER-SCHOOL HOURS – SPORTS FACILITIES

(No. B/763) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the existing sports facilities at the State colleges, including football pitches and gymnasia, he will

state whether consideration will be given for putting same after school hours at the disposal of sportspersons, in particular, high-level athletes residing in the vicinity thereof.

(Withdrawn)

BLACK RIVER DISTRICT – SCAVENGING SERVICES – CONTRACTORS

(No. B/764) Mr B. Babajee (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to scavenging services in the Black River District, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) name of the contractor/s;
- (b) value thereof;
- (c) number of lorries available;
- (d) number of staff deployed, and
- (e) areas covered.

(Withdrawn)

GOODLANDS BY-PASS ROUNDABOUT – TRAFFIC CONGESTION – MEASURES

(No. B/765) Mr N. Beejan (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure whether, in regard to heavy traffic congestion occurring along the By-Pass from the Goodlands Roundabout to the Espace Maison/Rouillard Roundabout between 7 00 a.m. to 9 00 a.m. and between 3 30 p.m. to 7 00 p.m., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to whether consideration will be given for the construction of –

- (a) an additional lane along same, and
- (b) a separate road stretch after Clos de la Fôret, Daruty, for commuters converging towards the Vale and Petit Raffray.

(Withdrawn)

ELECTRIC AUTOCYCLES, BICYCLES & SCOOTERS – LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

(No. B/766) Mr T. Apollon (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Land Transport whether, in regard to the use of electric-powered autocycles, bicycles and scooters on public roads, particularly by minors, he will state whether consideration is being given for the introduction of an appropriate legislative and/or regulatory framework in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**MAURITIUS & RODRIGUES – WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR LOAN SCHEME –
TERMS & CONDITIONS**

(No. B/767) Mr F. François (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Women Entrepreneur Loan Scheme, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the –

- (a) terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) number of applications received in the current financial year from women in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island respectively, indicating the number thereof approved and total value of loans disbursed as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

ADOPTION BILL – PROPOSED INTRODUCTION

(No. B/768) Ms D. Henriette-Manan (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of the Adoption Bill in the Assembly, she will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

**ENS AFRICA (MAURITIUS) – ALLEGED DISCRIMINATORY DISMISSAL –
LABOUR LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

(No. B/769) Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations whether, in regard to the recent findings of the Equal Opportunities Commission in respect of the alleged discriminatory dismissal of two employees of ENSafrica (Mauritius) for the wearing of the hijab, he will state where matters stand as to the consultations held with the Attorney-General's Office with a view to reinforcing the labour legislative framework to prevent any recurrence of similar discriminating practices.

(Withdrawn)

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – PROTECTION ORDERS – CASES & MONITORING
MECHANISM**

(No. B/770) Dr. F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port-Louis South & Port-Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to Protection Orders in cases of domestic violence, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number thereof issued over the past three years, on a yearly basis, indicating the –

- (a) authority responsible for the monitoring of adherence thereto;
- (b) number of reported cases of serious breaches thereof, and
- (c) measures being envisaged to prevent the recurrence of domestic violence following the issue thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

(No. B/772) Mr A. Ramdass (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the elaboration of a Solid Waste Management Strategy, he will state where matters stand, indicating the –

- (a) expected implementation date thereof, and
- (b) measures being envisaged to encourage –
 - (i) waste segregation at source, and
 - (ii) composting of market waste by local authorities.

(Withdrawn)

**CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS – MAURITIAN CANDIDATES’
PERFORMANCE – REMEDIAL MEASURES**

(No. B/773) Mr R. Jhummun (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to the performance of Mauritian candidates in the last Cambridge International Examinations, he will state the –

- (a) remedial measures being envisaged to address same, and

- (b) responsibility of the different authorities, particularly, the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division, in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**CONSTITUENCY NO. 7 – WATER LEAKAGES & DAMAGED PIPELINES –
COMPLAINTS & REPAIRS**

(No. B/774) Dr. S. Prayag (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the complaints of water leakages and damaged pipelines in Constituency No. 7, Piton and Rivière du Rempart, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the number thereof received over the past two months, indicating the number thereof attended to, indicating in each case, the time taken between reception of the complaint and repairs effected and the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY – FINANCIAL SITUATION – LOANS

(No. B/775) Mr C. Ramkalawon (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the financial situation thereof, giving details of loans entered into and currently being repaid and indicating the amounts owed to contractors as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

**MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT – WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP – ENHANCEMENT
& STRENGTHENING**

(No. B/777) Ms S. Anquetil (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to women entrepreneurship, she will state the vision of her Ministry for the enhancement and strengthening thereof amid the current Middle East conflict.

(Withdrawn)

**REHABILITATION YOUTH CENTRE – PROPOSED TRANSFER – LEGISLATIVE
AMENDMENTS**

(No. B/780) Ms A. Savabaddy (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

whether, in regard to the issue of the transfer of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre from under the responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office to her Ministry, she will state whether the committee set up to look thereinto has recommended same and, if so, indicate the expected implementation date thereof and whether amendments to the Children's Act 2020 or to any other relevant legislation are being contemplated to facilitate same and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**LA POINTE KOENIG, LES SALINES, RIVIERE NOIRE – CONSTRUCTION
PROJECTS – EIA LICENCES**

(No. A/44) Dr. Ms B. Thannoo (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change whether, in regard to the ongoing construction projects at La Pointe Koenig at Les Salines, Rivière Noire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether same stand on *Pas Géométriques* and whether Environment Impact Assessment Licences have been granted in respect thereof and, if not, indicate the remedial measures being envisaged in relation thereto.

Reply: Since 2006 to date, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has issued thirteen Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Licences in the region of Les Salines, Rivière Noire.

The Ministry of Housing and Lands has informed that, out of the thirteen EIA Licences issued, ten projects stand on *Pas Géométriques* – State Land while two projects stand on private land and one project is situated partly on both *Pas Géométriques* and Private lands. Furthermore, the Ministry of Housing and Lands has informed that two additional projects stand on *Pas Géométriques* – State Land, out of which one has been completed and the other one is ongoing. These two projects are not subject to EIA Licences.

To date, out of the thirteen Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Licences issued for projects, only one project has been completed, three projects are under implementation and three projects have not yet started. It is to be highlighted that five of the projects will not be implemented and that the EIA Licence issued in respect of one project has been revoked.

With regard to projects subject to EIA Licences, joint monitoring, in collaboration with the relevant authorities, is being ensured during both the construction and operation phases.

Moreover, as regards the two projects which are not subject to EIA Licences, the District Council of Black River is ensuring that the proponents are in compliance with the conditions imposed in their respective Building and Land Use Permits.